

Political Alchemy: Bismarck's Brew of Alliances and Policies in the Late 19th Century

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Abstract: This research explores Otto von Bismarck's multifaceted political journey from 1871 to 1890, focusing on his alliance with the "National Liberals," economic policies, and the failed Kulturkampf. Bismarck's shift towards conservative parties in 1878, marked by economic reforms and resistance against emerging social democracy, reveals the complex interplay of political forces. The study also delves into Bismarck's fervent anti-socialist stance and the subsequent ban on the Social Democratic Party in 1878, leading to the adoption of social laws. The paper examines Bismarck's failed attempts to garner worker support and the political consequences of the 1890 elections. Additionally, the research evaluates Bismarck's diplomatic successes in foreign policy, including the Three Emperors' League (1872), the Dual Alliance (1879), and the Triple Alliance (1882). Bismarck's intricate web of alliances and diplomatic finesse are explored, culminating in his resignation in 1890 amid conflicts with Emperor William II, leaving Europe in need of diplomatic stability.

Key Words: Otto von Bismarck, Policies, Social Laws, Dual Alliance, Diplomatic Stability

Introduction

During the time from Metternich to the age of Hitler and Stalin, Otto von Bismarck had a significant and long-lasting impact on European and global history. Starting in 1862 as a disliked minister of a struggling monarchy and a state with a secondary status in Germany and Europe, Bismarck's political skills, stemming from his background as a Pomeranian Junker, propelled him to a crucial position in German politics and as a key figure in European diplomacy for almost twenty-five years. Bismarck's exceptional accomplishments strengthened and maintained the existing European order for a longer period than expected. His greatest accomplishment, the consolidation of Germany, elevated the nation to a leading position without majorly disturbing the fragile balance of Europe. Furthermore, he skillfully managed a succession of crises, averting the outbreak of hostilities that could have been extremely disastrous. (Pflanze, 1958)

Bismarck was able to successfully thwart and reroute the path that the liberal movement and its political parties were taking within the borders of Germany. As a result of the institutions that Hitler constructed for the German Reich and the new synthesis that he instilled in the collective consciousness of the German people, the birth of political democracy was delayed until 1918, when it emerged in an unorthodox manner, following the furnace of military defeat. Bismarck was able to exert a tremendous degree of influence over his contemporaries in both domestic and international affairs despite the fact that he was confronted with challenges, such as his struggles against the Center and Socialist Parties. There is no denying the fact that he was one of the most skilled strategists and tacticians in the annals of political history, despite the fact that some of his techniques may have been vulnerable to criticism.

In order to solve the mystery of Bismarck's achievements, it is not enough to simply attribute them to intellectual prowess. However, it is equally plausible that his success was the result of a profound

understanding of the nature of politics and the effectiveness of his political methodology. Although the core of his success was the remarkable acuity of his intellect, which enabled him to recognize the implications of each political situation more quickly and clearly than his contemporaries, it is also possible that his success was the result of his political methodology. Therefore, investigating these aspects provides a rich environment for inquiry and analysis, allowing us to get insights that not only expand our appreciation of this unique individual but also improve our comprehension of the complex political processes that make history. (Häge, 2017) (Pflanze, 1955)

Alternately, one may argue that Bismarck's philosophy was never a conscious blueprint for political activity but rather the spontaneous response of a passionate pragmatist who was confronted with the complexities of political existence. This is an alternative viewpoint. As was explained before, he was confronted with a political environment that was marked by chaotic rivalry and opposing interests, which rendered the statesman relatively powerless in terms of achieving his goals. In this maze of politics, the statesman resembles a perennial wanderer, warily navigating amid perils and uncertainties in pursuit of an elusive exit that remains endlessly elusive. Under ideal conditions, the sole option available to the politician is to select one of several courses of action that involve varying degrees of danger. Bismarck's strategic approach of presenting alternatives arose as his instinctive strategy for limiting risks by establishing the potential of such choices. This strategic approach was developed by Bismarck. This strategy enabled him to systematically examine and identify "the possible" when he was confronted with confusing situations. As a result, he was able to navigate through the complexities of politics with a discernment eye for choices in circumstances that were plagued with uncertainty. (Pflanze, 1958)

Problem Statement

The research on Otto von Bismarck's political and diplomatic initiatives throughout the period of 1871-1890 provides a narrative that is not only rich but also particularly complicated. To shed light on the complexities of Bismarck's relationships and the consequences of those alliances, it is necessary to discuss the intricate interplay that exists between Bismarck's domestic political strategies and his dynamic foreign policy endeavors. The literature that is now available offers insights into specific areas, but in order to comprehend the overall impact that Bismarck's actions had on Germany's political landscape and Europe's diplomatic balance, a full investigation is required.

Scope of the Study

The purpose of this study is to present a comprehensive analysis of Otto von Bismarck's political development and diplomatic operations that occurred between the years 1871 and 1890. Bismarck's fluctuating political alliances, economic policies, the Kulturkampf, and his partnership with the "National Liberals" are all included in the scope of this discussion. The scope of the study encompasses his anti-socialist actions, his accomplishments in foreign policy, such as the Three Emperors' League, the Dual Alliance, and the Triple Alliance, as well as the repercussions of his departure in the year 1890. The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive knowledge of Bismarck's impact on the history of Germany and Europe by diving into the many facets that comprise this influence.

Objective of the Study

The main goal is to provide a thorough analysis of Otto von Bismarck's political and diplomatic initiatives during the chosen era. This entails analyzing the internal workings of his political partnerships, economic strategies, and conflicts with new political entities. The study seeks to assess the influence of Bismarck's

foreign policy actions on Europe's geopolitical environment. The project aims to offer detailed insights into the motivations, triumphs, and failings of Bismarck's leadership, enhancing our understanding of this crucial historical period.

Research Questions

- What were the circumstances that caused Bismarck to form conservative coalitions in 1878, both internally and outside, and how did this influence Germany's political trajectory?
- What were the consequences and results of Bismarck's Kulturkampf campaign against political Catholicism in Germany?
- How did Bismarck strategically manage and shape the development of socialist movements, resulting in the prohibition of the Social Democratic Party in 1878?
- Discuss the reasons behind and outcomes of Bismarck's diplomatic actions, including the Three Emperors' League, Dual Alliance, and Triple Alliance, on the balance of power in Europe.
- How did Bismarck's resignation in 1890 affect the diplomatic stability of Europe, and what were the following changes in the region?

Methodology

When it came to Otto von Bismarck's political and diplomatic actions between the years 1871 and 1890, a comprehensive literature assessment was conducted in order to find extant scholarly works and primary materials relevant to these activities. Among these are the examination of scholarly articles, books, historical documents, and publications that were published at the same time in order to determine the current state of knowledge and locate areas of comprehension that are lacking. On top of that, primary sources from the time period were investigated, which included government documents, letters, speeches, and pieces from newspapers. In order to guarantee a nuanced interpretation of the events, the primary focus was on evaluating the dependability, credibility, and biases of these sources.

Domestic Policy

Bismarck was allied with "National Liberals" from Austria's fall in 1866 until its dissolution in 1878. They succeeded in getting Germany to switch to free trade and adopt the gold standard, as well as in the creation of a criminal and civil code for the new empire. They noticed a man who had lost grip of his orthodox upbringing. Earlier, he was considered extremely politically conservative. And wrote him as an extremely politically conservative.

Bismarck had overthrown conservative kings, waged war on them, and implemented policies that accelerated industrialization. In 1873, Otto von Bismarck joined the liberals' oppressive campaign against "Political Catholicism." He did not predict the rise of new emerging parties. The parties such as the Catholic Center and the Social Democratic Party both parties campaigned in the early 1870s for Prussian and imperial elections. He referred to them as an opponent of the empire, including the left, liberal, and progressive parties. His idea of a united Germany was rejected by everybody in their unique way. The progressives questioned the empire's capitalist nature. The progressives thought it was excessively conservative, and the aristocracy was fundamentally feudalist. Moreover, the empire was overly centralized and protestant the center.

Bismarck wanted to eliminate the Catholic Center Party. Bismarck and the liberals were concerned about the party's appeal to most of the Germans who identified themselves as Roman Catholics. Adalbert Falk (the minister of education and public worship in Prussia) introduced many bills legalizing civil marriage,

restricting clergy travel, and abolishing religious orders. State approval was required for all religious appointments. The Prussian government fired all its clerical civil officials. There were vacant positions in many bishoprics and hundreds of parishes. The Kulturkampf was a failure and fell short of its objectives. And if anything, it helped the Catholic minority believe that their concern about the assault was reasonable. Following the unexpected passing of Pius IX, an energetic pope, in 1878, Bismarck eventually ended his campaign in severe condition. However, he never lost his animosity for Ludwig Windthorst (the head of the Centre and a Hanoverian). He had previously been the victim of Bismarck's policies when his kingdom was annexed. Bismarck's anticlericalism remarks persisted up until his downfall in 1890. (Pflanze, 1890)

In 1878-1879, at the expense of liberal parties, Bismarck allied with conservative parties. He made fundamental changes in the economic policies. Heavy taxes were imposed on iron and grains. The "great depression" engulfed Europe and the U.S. in the middle of 1870 and resulted in the making of new policies. The change by Bismarck had significant political ramifications since it represented his opposition to any further advancement of political democracy as a result of the resignation of the ministers Falk and Rudolf von Delbrück, who were liberals. Robert von Putt Kamer was appointed (minister of education and public worship) in 1879 and minister of the interior in 1881. The Prussian Junker estate owners, who were the principal opponents of political reform, received subsidies from the grain tariffs that helped to cut them off from the global market. The landed class, powerful industrialists, the military, and the higher civil servants allied together in 1879 to resist the emergence of social democracy. (Pflanze, 1963)

The hatred for Anarchists and Socialists has grown in the mind of Bismarck ever since the Commune of Paris in 1871. He attacked them most severely or rigorously. Thus, he injected a filthy and repulsive discourse into ordinary German politics that would endure for a long time. In 1871, there were two socialist seats in the Reichstag. They gained members and supporters with success in each election. Eventually, they won thirty-five seats in 1890.

Otto von Bismarck attempted to pass legislation banning the party soon in the year 1876, but he failed to ban the party due to the lack of support after two failed attempts to assassinate William I. He postponed the parliament and then started a campaign against socialists. Because he held them responsible for the assassination attempts on the emperor. The SDP (Social Democratic Party) was abolished in 1878 because of the victory of the conservative parties. The ban was extended until 1890. The adoption of the social laws to attract workers to move away from political radicalism and undermine Social Democracy. Later, the government introduced and put into practice socialized medicine throughout the 1880s, as well as accident and old age insurance. (Khoudour-Castéras, 2008)

However, Bismarck tried multiple strategies to win the support of workers for the regime failed. With each election, Social Democrats garnered support from the masses. For Bismarck, the 1890 election proved to be a disaster. The Center Party, The Social Democrats, and The Progressives won a majority of the seats. Earlier, he labeled them adversaries of the empire. William (Wilhelm) II, who served as Prussia's emperor and monarch from **1888** to 1918, did not wish to start his rule with a massacre or a military takeover. Bismarck, who was 75 years old in 1890, resigned from the job. The anti-socialist ordinance had not been restored, and the newly elected administration started a campaign to win over the labor. Bismarck's retirement was made more difficult by the fact that he was now a prince and very wealthy. He published severe critiques of his successors for the following eight years until his death in **1898**. He was elected to the Reichstag but declined to accept a seat. He published his autobiographies, which were best sellers. (Khoudour-Castéras, 2008)

Foreign Policy

The success of Otto von Bismarck's diplomacy contributed to his popularity. His effective international policies, which were accomplished against all obstacles, included his handling of (the Schleswig-Holstein) issue, his quest for German dominancy, and the handling of the candidacy of Hohenzollern. Bismarck was the only person in charge of German foreign affairs throughout William I's reign. 1871 is remembered as the year when Bismarck's foreign policy naturally changed. Bismarck reconstructed a new Germany from 1862 to 1871, but he required peace to continue his work. He must demonstrate to the European nations that Germany had almost no wish to establish a Gross Deutsch Reich that would include thousands of German residents who resided abroad. (Senne & Moore, 2015)

Policy of International Alliances

Following the 1871 peace agreement with France, Otto von Bismarck started talks to rebuild relations and bring about peace in Austria, but Austria was receptive to compromise. Wilhelm I, Alexander II, and Bismarck gathered in Berlin a year later to publicly commit to maintaining the status quo. The military agreement between Germany and Russia was considered. Later, another agreement between Austria and Russia was also prompted by this formal pact in 1873. The "Three Emperors' League" principal purpose was to portray the monarchical unity to preserve the status quo. It was the outcome of these negotiations. The Three Emperor League, in Bismarck's view, represented harmony among European nations and provided a means of averting possible Austro-Russian confrontation over the Balkans.⁶ The newly created Emperors' League was put to the test during the German-French crisis, which followed the collapse of Thiers. Their weakness compelled Bismarck to reconsider the German union with Austria and Russia. In 1875, an uprising against the Turkish government broke out, and this re-inspection gained urgency. Bismarck's top priority became restoring relations between Austria and Russia. (Crawford, 2007)

Alliance of the Three Emperors 1872

Germany participated in the initial three territorial wars before the unification: in 1864 with Denmark, in 1866 with Austria, and from 1870 to 71 with France. Germany had remained largely peaceful during Bismarck's career despite the busy diplomatic activity of the time. Bismarck's diplomacy ultimately focused on (Austria, Russia, and Italy). Bismarck supported the "League of Three Emperors" in 1872 along with the Russian and Austrian governments. The plan was to maintain the status quo, develop an alliance to destroy socialism and create a foundation for peaceful coexistence. The fact that the partnership was not a military one made this idea look weak. Considering this, Bismarck pushed for an international conference to be held in Berlin, which looked at the settlement that Russia had forced on Turkey and attempted to satisfy the demands of the participating nations. The biggest surprise regarding Bismarck's international policy is that it caused significantly less controversy than domestic policy. The extent to which Bismarck succeeded diplomatically, his pursuit of the supremacy of the German empire, and his handling of the candidacy of the Hohenzollern all had an impact on his popularity. Bismarck's greatest concern after the "wars of unification" was French isolation. The "Treaty of Frankfurt"⁷ and the unpredictability of French Domestic Politics are considered to have prevented the military and economic recovery. The Three Emperor League was initially thought to be the result of mutual Austro-Russian mistrust, but it was occasionally regarded as an attempt to isolate France. Bismarck dismissed Russia's shady and motivating argument for maintaining the status quo in the Balkans.

The League was little more than a formalized declaration by the three nations that they wanted to live in peace and consult with one another before making any unilateral decisions in the case of war. (Ge, 2005)

Bismarck saw the League as isolating the French government and sparing Germany the need to choose between Austria and Russia.

The Dual Alliance, 1879

One of the key issues in European diplomacy was the conflict between Austria and Russia for control over the Balkans. One of Bismarck's greatest accomplishments was his harsh but impartial policy toward Russia and Austria. In 1876, Russia and Austria were engaged in a fierce war, but Bismarck was forced to choose sides in the hopes of keeping the peace. Bismarck made it clear in his expression that Germany would not permit Austria's power and position to become very weak. Because the European nations, especially Britain, were worried about these contemporary issues, a congress was planned to discuss the Balkans' power structure and resolve existing conflicts. The Berlin Congress was prepared on June 13, 1878, for a previous secret agreement on May 30, 1878, between Britain, Turkey, and Russia to divide Bulgaria and an Austro-British agreement on June 6, 1878, to create Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁸ The congress's agenda revealed Germany's early dominance in Europe and Bismarck's prominence. At the Berlin Congress, Bismarck served as an umpire. The preservation of peace and the support for Britain's treaty with the states of Russia and Austria were Bismarck's primary interests and motivations. He did not care about the Balkans, though. Bulgaria was divided into two parts at the Berlin conference, as had already been decided by Russia, Britain, and Austria. Even though the division did not result in any land lost by Russia, they were furious and blamed Bismarck for their loss. In October 1879, Bismarck shifted his affiliation to Austria due to concerns that the Russo-Turkish conflict might endanger the stability of Europe. (Jelavich & Jelavich, 1957)

By allying with Austria, Bismarck's foreign policy was transformed from one of a free hand to one of a strong, unwavering commitment. The alliance produced a complex system that Bismarck maintained to keep Germany in its dominant position and the peace in Europe. Bismarck's dual alliance was not anti-Russian. It was based on the belief that the Russian government would seek peace through conflict. [In addition to the dual alliance, two more alliances were made: in June 1881, "the Austrian-Serbian Alliance," and in October 1883, the "Austro-Rumanian Alliance." Bismarck was troubled by the Russian rivalry. The Russian government was under pressure from Bismarck to reach a neutrality pact (known as the Reinsurance Treaty) in June 1887. The pact had nothing to do with a conflict between Russia and Austria or between France and Russia. (Medlicott, 1945)

Triple Alliance 1882 (Germany, Austria, and Italy)

The Three Emperors' Alliance did not maintain mutual German-Russian unity. When Italy urged an alliance with Austria, Otto von Bismarck grabbed the chance to create a "Triple Alliance"¹⁰ with a stronger Austria. However, Italy benefited more from the alliance, while Germany and Austria agreed to help in the case of a French assault. Italy agreed to support the alliance with military aid. The main advantage of the "Triple Alliance" to Bismarck was the removal of the threat of an Italian attack on Austria. On the other hand, Bismarck wholeheartedly approved the alliances with Serbia and Romania in 1882 and 1883, which helped Austria further strengthen her position in the face of Russian aggression. Even if the tariffs were later raised in 1885 and 1887, Bismarck tried to intensify the developing economic breach between Germany and Russia by refusing requests for future tariff increases from Russian Junkers and manufacturers. With the formation of the Triple Alliance, Germany became one of Europe's five great powers.

Moreover, the alliance symbolizes that Bismarck's goal of creating a complicated web of alliances has been accomplished. One of the best alliances Bismarck had ever built. Even though the alliance did not prove to be the stronger system, in the end, Bismarck took advantage of the chance to make sure that each ally was based in Germany and intricately connected to Berlin. Emperor William II and Bismarck started a conflict in March 1890 over certain domestic matters, and it later spread over foreign policies. In addition, he wished to prevent my reunion between France and Russia, but it was William II who lacked faith in Russia. Caesar and Bismarck had growing disagreements before Bismarck was forced to resign. The emperor later accepted his resignation. At the time of Bismarck's resignation on 20 March 1990, Europe was in dire need of diplomacy."

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research illuminates Otto von Bismarck's transformative role in shaping German politics and diplomacy from 1871 to 1890. Bismarck's alliance with the "National Liberals" demonstrated his adaptability, steering Germany towards free trade and the gold standard while simultaneously instituting fundamental legal structures for the newly unified empire. The shift to conservative alliances in 1878 marked a turning point, with economic policies imposing heavy taxes and fostering collaboration between the landed class, industrialists, and the military.

Bismarck's fierce opposition to political Catholicism and subsequent Kulturkampf revealed his determination to establish a unified, Protestant-centric Germany. However, the failure of these endeavors underscored the resilience of the Catholic minority and the limitations of Bismarck's strategies.

On the international stage, Bismarck's diplomatic prowess is evident in the formation of alliances such as the Three Emperors' League, the Dual Alliance, and the Triple Alliance. His meticulous web of alliances, aimed at maintaining peace and isolating France, showcased strategic finesse. Yet, Bismarck's resignation in 1890, prompted by conflicts with Emperor William II, left a diplomatic void in Europe.

The research highlights the complexities of Bismarck's political maneuvers, from internal policy shifts to intricate foreign alliances. His legacy, marked by both successes and failures, underscores the intricate nature of political leadership during a critical period in German and European history. As Bismarck exits the stage, the geopolitical landscape stands at a crossroads, emphasizing the need for continued examination of the dynamics that shaped this pivotal era.

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