



# History A level

## Course plan

This plan shows the structure of the course and gives an outline of the contents. Sections 1–5 cover the requirements of the AS and Part 1 of the A level; Sections 6–10 cover Part 2 of the A level. You need to do Sections 1–10 to prepare for the A level.

## Getting Started

- Introduction
- Making the most of the course
- A level History Course guide

## Section 1 The growth of parliamentary democracy c1785–c1870

- Topic 1 The unreformed Parliament up to 1785
- Topic 2 Demand for reform c1785–1815
- Topic 3 The Great Reform Act 1815–32
- Topic 4 Towards Chartism 1832–48
- Topic 5 The 1867 Reform Act
- Assignment 1

## Section 2 Industrialisation, protest and trade unionism c1785–c1870

- Topic 1 Industrial growth c1785–c1870
- Topic 2 Living and working conditions c1785–c1850
- Topic 3 Protest and reform c1785–c1870
- Topic 4 Unionism and cooperation c1785–c1850
- Topic 5 New Model Unionism c1850–c1870
- Assignment 2

## Section 3 Poverty and pauperism; the abolition of the slave trade

- Topic 1 Poverty and pauperism c1785–1834
  - Topic 2 After the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834
  - Topic 3 The abolition of the slave trade 1
  - Topic 4 The abolition of the slave trade 2
  - Topic 5 The abolition of the slave trade 3
- Assignment 3

## Section 4 The unification of Germany 1: c1840–51

- Topic 1 Popular pressure and causes of revolution 1840–48
  - Topic 2 Failure of revolution 1848–51
- Assignment 4

## Section 5 The unification of Germany 1: c1852–71

- Topic 1 Austro-Prussian rivalry 1852–66
  - Topic 2 Prussia and the Kleindeutschland solution 1866–71
- Assignment 5

## Section 6 Coursework

- Topic 1 The 'Great' Reform Act?
  - Topic 2 The suffragettes: contextual background
  - Topic 3 The suffragettes: help or hindrance?
  - Topic 4 Writing the assignment
- Assignment 6 brief
- Assignment 6

## Section 7 Prosperity and social change, Germany 1871–1990

- Topic 1 Social change: the urban working class
  - Topic 2 Social change: artisans, Junkers, women
  - Topic 3 Economic change 1871–1929
  - Topic 4 Economic change 1929–90
- Assignment 7

## Section 8 Germany united 1871–1935

- Topic 1 Ruling the Second Reich 1871–9
  - Topic 2 The birth of democratic Germany 1917–19
  - Topic 3 A New Reich 1933–35
- Assignment 8

## Section 9 Germany divided and reunited 1945–90

- Topic 1 The new Federal Republic 1949–60
  - Topic 2 Reunification: Germany 1989–90
- Assignment 9

## Section 10 Revision

- Topic 1 Preparing for the exam
  - Topic 2 Paper 1 Section A/B
  - Topic 3 Paper 1 Section C
  - Topic 4 Paper 2 Section A
  - Topic 5 Paper 2 Section B
  - Topic 6 Paper 3 Section C
- Assignment 10



## Sample of the A Level History Course from Section 4

### Topic 1

# Popular pressures and causes of revolution 1840–48

## Introduction

In Topic 1 we cover the first key topic of Edexcel Option 2D: Popular pressure and causes of revolution, 1840–48, which will help to set the scene for the events surrounding Germany in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1840, 'Germany' was not a single united country; it was actually made up of a number of independent states. Some were large, like Austria and Prussia, and some small, like the city State of Hamburg. These states only had a very loose association with one another in what was called the 'German Confederation', which had been formally established in 1815.

A series of revolutions throughout Europe in 1848 significantly impacted on these German states and how they were governed in the long term. Both German liberals and revolutionaries were seeking a more democratic form of government for their respective states, but many of them were also seeking to engineer some sort of unified German nation. In Topic 1 you will look at the forces that supported and opposed these aims, and in particular, at the popular pressures and causes of revolution in 1848 and the political developments that followed.

Economic developments in Germany, both before and after the 1848 revolutions, were to prove crucial in the long-term process towards German unification. This was because the economic ties that came to link Prussia and most of the other states (with the exception of Austria) provided a sort of preparation for their eventual unification as one single nation. Since Prussia was to prove the key to unification, you will be concentrating on its urban and industrial development and the reasons for, and extent of, its economic domination by the 1850s. You will see the implications of Prussian industrial growth for its military strength and the ways in which the economic ties and dependency of the Zollverein (the Prussian Customs Union) encouraged the development of political links.

You will also examine the contrast between Prussian economic growth and Austrian economic growth, as this would prove important in the unification to come in 1871.

You will probably need around 6 hours to complete this topic.

## Objectives

When you have completed this topic you should be able to:

- describe the political situation in Germany, in particular the German Confederation, during the 1840s
- explain the growth of nationalism in the German states in the 1840s
- outline the short-term causes of revolution in 1846–47
- identify the various events surrounding the outbreak of revolution in Germany in 1848.

## The political situation in the 1840s

In 1840, the nation of Germany didn't exist as a single country. Half a century earlier the area we now know as Germany had consisted of over 350 different states, linked by their common language. Until it was abolished in 1806, the 350 states had been part of the Holy Roman Empire, first ruled over by Charlemagne at the start of the ninth century. Later, these lands were identified as the First Reich, or Empire. (In a broader historical context, this title distinguishes it from the Second Reich, the unified German Empire of 1871–1918, and the Third Reich, Hitler's Germany, 1933–45.)

The Austrian Habsburgs had ruled the Empire, almost without a break, from the middle of the fifteenth century and Austria dominated the German territories in terms of political power and influence. However, outside their own Austrian territories (which were considerable in their own right and which included more non-Germans than Germans) the Habsburg emperors had enjoyed only nominal authority over the other German states since the middle of the seventeenth century.

## Political geography of the German Confederation

At the Congress of Vienna in 1815, at the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, the 350 or more German states had been reduced in number to just 39. The Congress set up a **German Confederation** for these states, with the same boundaries as the old Holy Roman Empire. This was not a prototype Germany though, and it included many non-German areas. For example, parts of Austria's large non-German empire were included and some German-speaking groups were excluded.

There was also no central government for the Confederation and individual states remained independent. A federal **diet** (assembly) did meet at Frankfurt, but this was little more than a debating chamber where member states protected their own interests rather than seeking to promote a unified German state. There was therefore very limited political coordination between the members of the German Confederation in the initial period that followed its establishment.

## The dominance of Austria

Because of its historical supremacy, significant geographical size and still considerable power, the Habsburg Empire (styled the Austrian Empire since 1806) regarded itself, with good reason, as the foremost state in the German Confederation. The Austrian Chancellor, Prince Klemens Von Metternich, was the dominant figure within this body between the years 1815–48, specifically following the Congress of Vienna.

While there were some within the Confederation who looked to the day when a single German nation might emerge, they were in a minority in 1815, and Austria wanted to keep as much control over the divided German states as possible. In the early part of the nineteenth century, German **nationalism** was still in its early stages and was certainly not looked on favourably by the Habsburg

rulers and their ministers. For them the bigger danger was that German nationalism could be a catalyst to provoke more persistent nationalist demands from the Hungarians, Italians, Czechs and others living within the multi-national Habsburg Empire.

The other great 'ism' of the nineteenth century, **liberalism**, was also a dream of some of the more reformist elements within the German Confederation. However, it, again, faced stern resistance from most, if not all, of the Confederation's political rulers.

## The growth of nationalism and the 1840 crisis

It has been a matter of historical debate as to what extent nationalism impacted on Prussia, as well as across the wider German states, between the years 1840 and 1848. The year 1848 was certainly a pivotal one, which saw a series of revolutions break out in German territories and other parts of Europe, and the concept of nationalism was an important aspect and influence behind such occurrences.

Nationalism was arguably a steadily developing reaction to the defeat of the German states in the Napoleonic Wars and to the terms of the 1815 Congress of Vienna. These terms were to Austria's advantage and sought to repress any nationalist tendencies. The idea of a much larger unified German nation was therefore a steadily emerging development in a number of the smaller German-speaking states, although in practice a relatively small number of people held nationalist views, and those reformers who, instead, prioritised liberal and democratic reforms were not necessarily nationalist-inclined.

Even among those political activists who *were* nationalist-orientated, there was limited agreement about how they could develop their ideas further. The geographical divisions of nationalists based in different German states were also an obstacle to progress. The many cultural, regional, religious, economic and political divisions continued to divide German states rather than unify them.

Chancellor Metternich retained a firm grip at the helm of the dominant State of Austria, and this role saw him continue to suppress nationalist feeling within various German regions in the years up to 1848. Such nationalist feelings ultimately appeared to be rather volatile and emerged only at times of crisis, while generally struggling to be sustained at other times. Significantly,

nationalism also appeared to grow in line with economic developments, and this would therefore suggest that economic factors were of significance in delivering political change within the German states during the period in question.

However, there is evidence that nationalism did have *some* significance in the events leading up to the revolutionary atmosphere of 1848. The various tensions and crises to emerge with neighbouring countries, such as France in 1840 and Denmark in 1846, gave the impression of a common enemy that brought the various German states closer together. The 1840 border dispute with France over the River Rhine saw the French claim German Confederation territory and this certainly stirred nationalist feeling within the German states. This 'Rhine crisis' created a situation where France looked likely to invade German territory at one point, although the French ultimately backed off from this course of action. In a similar vein in 1846, the Prussians and Austrians managed to persuade the Danish king not to absorb the various German speakers within the province of Schleswig-Holstein under direct Danish control. Both of these episodes with other nations led to a rise in nationalist feeling within Germany.

Some of the nationalist feeling that emerged within Germany at this time was 'romantic' in nature, linked to older traditions and past cultures, which were unlikely to re-emerge in practical terms. Artistic and cultural works began to appear which further drew the German-speaking people together. For example, the lyrics of what would become the German national anthem, *Deutschland über alles* (meaning 'Germany above the others'), were written in 1841, and the song would become an emblem of the revolutionary mood and nationalist views that prevailed throughout the next decade and which peaked in 1848. Growing levels of literacy and the expansion of the popular press were further factors fuelling the growing nationalist mood at this time.

## Growth of liberalism

As previously highlighted, liberalism was becoming an increasingly significant influence in terms of motivating those in favour of political reform. While the French had adopted a more revolutionary and radical approach to achieving political change in 1789, liberal ideas had certainly been evident in the language of the revolution. Such ideas had held a similar influence over the American Revolution during the 1770s. However, a more moderate and reformist approach stemmed from the ideas of various liberal thinkers, which tradition could be linked to the Enlightenment (see



Section 1, Topic 2) of the mid seventeenth to late eighteenth century.

This viewpoint favoured moderate constitutional reform of the existing political system (rather than overthrowing it), and it primarily focused on improving the political and democratic rights of ordinary citizens via the existing political system. The Germans were the most literate population in all of Europe. Books, pamphlets and newspapers promoting and arguing for liberal reforms started to circulate in increasing numbers, and public meetings to discuss such ideas became more common. In 1847 a key newspaper was launched which espoused both liberal and nationalist sentiments – *Die Deutsche Zeitung* (The German Newspaper). Links subsequently began to emerge between the ideas of nationalism and liberalism, with both having the shared goal of delivering change to the status quo.

Both nationalism and liberalism can therefore be seen as driving forces behind the developing idea of eventual unification. The growth in liberal ideas and proposed practical reforms was particularly evident in the Hippenhelm Meeting of 1847. This occasion saw various liberal figures from across the German states meet to discuss proposals to create more democratic political structures within their provinces, including an elected diet that would control and restrict the powers of otherwise **autocratic** monarchs.

While the established political order was largely resistant to such demands, liberal ideas were also becoming evident in other parts of Europe, and they gradually came to be seen as an appropriate accompaniment to the more radical nationalist agenda at the forefront of the various uprisings of 1848. Nationalism was ultimately more willing to justify direct action and potential revolution in the pursuit of its goals than was liberalism, but together they produced significant popular pressure in the cause of German unity.



Chapter 1, Section 4 of your textbook (Farmer & Stiles) gives you a summary of the key demands of the Hippenhelm Meeting of 1847. As you read this, consider which demands you think were of most significance and why.

## Prussia under Fredrick William III

Prussia (a kingdom since 1701) was comfortably the largest of the 39 states in the German Confederation and was becoming a serious rival to the more established power of Austria. The Prussians had played an important part in the downfall of Napoleon, not least at

the Battle of Waterloo, and various smaller German states increasingly looked to this more powerful entity for political guidance and support. Due to its prominent military role, Prussia was able to claim its rewards as a victor power at the Congress of Vienna, where it had gained considerable territories in the Rhineland, Westphalia and elsewhere under the territorial settlement. As a result it had more than doubled its population and gained access to raw materials that boosted its industrial potential.

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Under the traditional and rigid monarchical rule of King Frederick William III between 1797 and 1840, Prussia increasingly challenged Austrian supremacy, and this created increased tensions with Austria as the nineteenth century progressed, although liberal and political reforms within Prussia were very limited. (You will be

looking at the growth of Prussian economic and industrial strength in more detail later.)



Read Sections 1 and 2 of Chapter 1 of your textbook for more information on the setting up of the German Confederation in 1815 and developments between 1815 and 1848 in Austria and Prussia. Carefully study the map of Germany in 1815; this shows you what the German Confederation looked like between 1815 and the eve of the year of revolutions, 1848.

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### Activity 1

(Allow 15 minutes)

- 1 Using the information you've read so far, and the map in your textbook, write a brief summary of the political and geographical structure of the German Confederation in the 1840s.
  - 2 Look at Source E in Section 4 of your textbook. What does it suggest about the state of German patriotism during the 1840s?
- 

You should have written something along these lines.

- 1 Following its creation at the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, the German Confederation had developed as a body of neighbouring yet separate states that each retained a significant amount of independent political power but which shared a common language and similar cultures. Austria was clearly the largest of these German-speaking states, and its position was boosted by the fact that it controlled the vast Austro-Hungarian Empire. However, there were emerging states growing steadily in political and economic power; the geographically large State of Prussia was the best example of this.

While the various German states valued their freedom and independence and were often suspicious of each other, the growing forces of nationalism and liberalism made their politicians and citizens gradually realise that more could potentially be achieved if they worked together in a more cooperative relationship.

By the 1840s therefore, the Confederation had reached something of a crossroads in its development, and it remained to be seen whether the 39 states would increasingly combine

their efforts in response to external pressures and international threats. If they gradually adopted a more cooperative approach (which became more likely after the revolutionary events of 1848) it was also becoming less obvious which State – Austria or Prussia – would emerge in the long term as the most dominant and powerful within the Confederation.

### Exam hint

When you come to analyse written sources in the exam, start by looking at *who* has written the source (what is their role/relationship to the events described?), *when* they were writing (at the time, soon after, 40 years later, etc.) and *what* is the nature of the writing (personal correspondence, newspaper article, official document, etc.). What you're trying to do here is assess the reliability or possible bias of the writer. A politician writing a letter to a friend will, arguably, speak in a more unguarded way than he or she would to a political colleague. On the other hand, someone writing 20 years after a particular event may not recall it as well as they imagine.

- 1 Source E was written in 1847 by Prince Hohenlohe, who is described as 'liberal-minded Bavarian'. Always bearing in mind that this is the textbook's description, not that of a contemporary, 'liberal-minded Bavarian' suggests he would be in favour of some degree of political reform. The extract is taken from a memorandum written by him at this time, so we can assume it to be a fairly accurate reflection of his personal feelings and attitudes.

In the memorandum, Hohenlohe expresses his frustration at not being able to describe himself as a German, and suggests that being associated with the various individual states is an inferior identity by comparison. The source therefore indicates that while the author has a Bavarian identity, he also has a suppressed German identity which potentially overrides it, and which he is unable to express or articulate. Prince Hohenlohe is clearly frustrated by this situation and the extract therefore suggests a significant restriction on German patriotism during the late 1840s due to the lack of a single German identity.

## Economic and social developments in the 1840s

As we have seen, Austria had been the most powerful member of the German Confederation at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. However, Prussia had won a lot of valuable territory at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and had been gaining ground on Austria since then. The combination of a larger and growing population, the increased access to valuable raw materials, and the massive potential for further industrial growth marked Prussia out as the coming power, ready to challenge Austrian dominance. This economic growth had wider social and political repercussions. Therefore while Austria remained the strongest of the German states throughout the 1840s, the situation was steadily changing. Increasingly, as was shown during the revolutionary threats of 1848, the other German states looked to Prussia rather than Austria as the power to cultivate and apply to for protection.

As well as being political rivals within the broader German region, Austria and Prussia were also economic rivals. It became apparent by the early 1840s that whoever had the most successful economy could lay claim to be in a stronger overall position within the German Confederation. These two leading German powers were trading rivals and were in significant disagreement when it came to the concept of a customs union, with Austria preferring a **protectionist** approach in relation to its own goods and commerce. The Prussian-controlled **Zollverein** (see below) emerged as a powerful economic weapon working in Prussia's favour. This cooperative economic structure gradually undermined the commercial interests of Austria, which did not join this body. The 1840s therefore witnessed the firm establishment of a pattern of Prussian economic dominance within Germany that looked set to continue for the foreseeable future.

### Significance of railway building

One yardstick of economic progress in the middle of the nineteenth century was the extent of a country's railway development. Railway building was a reflection of economic progress, growth of infrastructure and industrialisation, yet by 1850 Prussia lagged behind the railways pioneer, Britain, with just under 6,000 kilometres of track against 10,500. By 1870, though, Prussia had closed the gap and improved its own rail network considerably, with 8,500 kilometres of track. This network continued to grow in the years that followed.

Growth in the rail network improved transport links both across Prussia and between other German states, facilitating cooperation and coordination between states. The growth in Prussia's rail network also made the transport of key goods much cheaper and quicker. These developments encouraged nationalist feeling, with the main railway focus centred on the Prussian capital of Berlin. This would have longer term implications for the evolution and eventual creation of a single German state.

## The Zollverein

The first post-war sign of greater closeness between Prussia and its German neighbours was economic cooperation. In 1818 Prussia, keen to take advantage of its growing trading and industrial strength, had established a Prussian Customs Union. Internal duties were abolished and only a low tariff was imposed at the Prussian border for external goods. Other Confederation members formed their own unions, but many were gradually absorbed into the Prussian Union, which took on the name of the Zollverein (or Customs Union) in 1834. Prussia's superior resources and central position in the Confederation gave it control over many trade routes and waterways, and these were very persuasive factors in making membership of the Zollverein attractive to other states.

Seventeen of the German states were members at the outset, and it covered a population of 23.5 million. By 1836 there were 25 members, containing two-thirds of the German population and territory, creating a free trade area of 26 million people. Austria was not a member, and this was both a political and economic disadvantage in the long term. Its failure to join was due to a combination of Prussian opposition, Austria's protectionist trading system and the opposition of Metternich to the whole idea.

By the time of the 1848 revolutions Prussia already had the economic leadership of Germany, and the Zollverein was a key reason for this. More states joined over the coming years and when Hanover and Oldenburg joined in 1854 only a handful of others, notably the traditionally independent north German maritime city States of Hamburg, Bremen and Lubeck, remained outside.

Prussia continued to gain considerable economic benefit from the Zollverein and with this gain came greater political clout. Despite the apparent setbacks of 1850–51, as economic leader in the Confederation it seemed increasingly natural for Prussia to take on the mantle of political leader, while at the same time isolating Austria. As the 1850s progressed, the combination of Prussian economic and political strength made the prospect of German

unity, should it come, increasingly likely to be on Prussian terms. This was because the Zollverein members formed the basis of a potential German state, albeit a smaller version without Austrian membership.

Source 1 Economic activity in the Zollverein 1820–70

Resource	1820	1840	1850	1870
Railways (km)	-	549	5,821	8,560
Coal (million tons)	1	-	6.9	29.4
Pig iron (million tons)	0.046	0.17	0.53	1.4

## Activity 2

(Allow 15 minutes)

- Using the information in Source 1, summarise the impact of the Zollverein on Prussia's economic and political position as the nineteenth century progressed.
- What might the limitations be of this type of source?

Your summary should have covered the following points.

- The Zollverein had a significant and generally positive impact on Prussia's economic position from the early nineteenth century onwards. The customs union was a key element in Prussia's developing economic and political significance within the German Confederation, and it was a significant factor in generating the appropriate financial investment for essential industries such as coal, rail and iron to prosper and expand. Such industries were crucial to building up the Prussian state's infrastructure and industrial capacity, and the table indicates that in all such areas there was considerable growth in output throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century and up to the date of German unification in the early 1870s.

As the century developed, it became evident that the Zollverein's capacity to generate economic growth was a vital

factor in Prussia's emergence as one of the leading states within the German Confederation, with smaller German states increasingly looking to it for political leadership. In the aftermath of the 1848 revolutions, Prussia's increasingly healthy financial position put it in a position to emerge as a serious rival to the traditionally larger German-speaking power, namely the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and to be positioned at the forefront of the emerging forces of German nationalism.

- 3 On the face of it, the figures in Source 1 suggest that the Zollverein had a positive effect on Prussia's economy, but in your exam answers you should always acknowledge the limitations of a particular source. We cannot know from this information alone what other factors were in play that may also have served to boost the Prussian economy.



Consolidate your understanding of the importance of the Zollverein and Prussia's growing economic strength and influence compared with that of Austria by reading Chapter 1, Section 3 and the conclusion to Chapter 1 in your textbook.

## Impact of urbanisation and industrialisation

As in many industrialised nations around this time, Prussia and the other German states saw large towns and cities emerging and expanding to accommodate the workers required for the new factories. Class divisions and tensions soon began to appear between the workers and labourers on the one hand, and the managers and middle classes who ran the factories and businesses on the other. This was a common trend across most of the German states that were going through a process of steady industrialisation and modernisation, which on a geographical level saw rural areas and populations being absorbed by expanding urban sprawls.

The Communist writer Karl Marx would later distinguish between such socio-economic groups and identify what he believed were areas of fundamental and irreconcilable conflict between them. Marx subsequently described the working classes as the **proletariat** and the middle classes as the **bourgeoisie** – and he applied such terms to the populations of all developing industrial nations. Such a focus on class divisions appeared to have the potential to undermine the emerging mood of nationalism.

However, in contrast to class-based conflict, nationalism did offer the prospect of drawing together and unifying the competing political, economic and social interests that stemmed from the diverse range of German states.



In Great Britain (the acknowledged leader in the so-called Industrial Revolution) private enterprise had played the key role in raising the capital necessary to accelerate industrial growth and railway-building. By comparison, Prussian growth owed much more to direct State involvement. To take one example, the nationalised body going under the name of the **Seehandlung** (Overseas Trading Corporation) was involved in the ownership of engineering plants, textile mills and chemical works. It owned and operated the new steamships on the often newly developed waterways to transport raw materials and goods and then controlled the trade generated by these industrial developments. In this way, the State played a key role in affecting the social and urban conditions of the new industrialised workforce of Prussia.

## Progress check

At this point you should feel able to achieve the following objectives for this topic:

- describe the political situation in Germany, in particular the German Confederation, during the 1840s
- explain the growth of nationalism in the German states in the 1840s.

## Causes of revolution 1846–48

By the late 1840s, a series of factors and pressures had led to a growth in demands for radical change – and, indeed, revolution – across various German states, including Prussia. This resulted in a series of revolutionary uprisings across the various parts of Germany in early 1848. There were a number of short-term factors behind this outbreak of revolutionary behaviour.

### Economic crisis 1846–47

In the short term at least, social and economic factors (such as poor harvests and bad living conditions affecting many poorer citizens) were common factors in the growth of revolutionary attitudes among German citizens. There was considerable hardship on the land for many German peasants – a reason for emigration in the middle years of the century. Tenant farmers often found rents too high and making a living was difficult. In the towns, countryside migrants made jobs harder to come by and helped to cause atrocious living and working conditions. Unemployment and overcrowded slums were common, poor sanitation caused disease

and strikes and riots had become commonplace even before 1848. (You'll recall similar problems in Britain, see Section 2.)

More immediately, the economic crisis of 1846–47 had been caused by disastrous corn harvests and a severe potato blight. Food prices rose, especially in the towns, as in the Berlin 'potato revolution'. Starvation and food riots followed. Poverty meant reduced spending power, which in turn led to unemployment, wage cuts and a fall in living standards. Wages, housing and hours of work were the key issues for most workers.

Karl Marx (often in partnership with Friedrich Engels) observed these economic and social developments, and pointed to all this as evidence of a coming **class war**, as outlined in his key text, *The Communist Manifesto*, which was published in early 1848. Those who supported Marx's analysis became known as communists, or **Marxists**, and this viewpoint firmly rejected nationalism. However, both the economic and Marxist perspective placed great emphasis on the importance of 'popular pressure' in leading the demands for political reform.

## Middle-class nationalism and liberalism

In addition to the above factors, the ambitions of middle-class men (the bourgeoisie) who demanded the right to share political power with the aristocrats and monarchs was gradually becoming more evident. This was certainly the case across various European nations, including Britain, and within the German states in particular.

This trend saw articulate figures emerging from the middle classes and the professions (lawyers, doctors, teachers, academics, etc.) who held liberal values but who were also increasingly influenced by a nationalistic mood that was steadily developing across German-speaking territories. Political power invariably rested with the rulers and the land-owning nobility, and middle-class and educated Germans (much like their British counterparts) resented being kept out of the political process and – in the case of the German middle classes – being subjected to censorship and the secret police.

The rejection of nationalism by those revolutionaries and radicals who supported Marx was something of a minority view. Increasing numbers of middle-class liberals were embracing nationalist aspirations and calling for significant reforms to the traditional model of political rule. This would involve some sort of parliamentary system to guarantee the middle classes a much greater degree of political involvement and enhanced civil rights.

Many such reformers were therefore coming round to the idea of a united Germany, and the State of Baden in particular led the way in middle-class pressure for a liberal constitution and a united Germany.

## Constitutional crisis in Baden

The southern German State of Baden would gradually emerge as one of Prussia's key allies in the south along the road to German unification. Located at an important strategic location on the border with France, Baden was significantly influenced by revolutionary developments in Paris, and this resulted in a constitutional crisis in 1848. Despite having a liberal constitution since 1811, and then further liberal reforms after 1830 (including press, judicial and police reforms in the mid-1840s), Baden was the first state in Germany to experience significant revolutionary unrest. This initially involved peasants attacking the mansions of landowners and aristocrats in February 1848, reflecting the class-based tensions that Marx had highlighted.

At the end of February 1848, Baden citizens organised themselves into an assembly at Mannheim and demanded further liberal reforms in the form of a bill of rights. Other German states took similar steps as a result, notably in Württemberg, Hesse-Darmstadt and Nassau, and such moves generated significant popular support. The popular demands were largely granted by fearful and frightened rulers. The **March Revolution** erupted in Vienna the following month. This led to demands for further reform, which, in turn, led to further revolt across a number of German states, including Baden.

The popular demand was for an elected representative government and for the unification of Germany. Fear on the part of the princes and rulers of the various German states caused them to concede the demand for reform. This resulted in the approval of a 'preparliament' (or **Vorparlament**), which met between March 31 and April 4 1848 in Frankfurt, in the neighbouring State of Hesse-Darmstadt.

This assembly sought to frame a new constitution based on the principles of the 'Fundamental Rights and Demands of the German People'. Most of its supporters were **constitutional monarchists**, as opposed to revolutionaries. Baden sent two democratic delegates to this body (Gustav von Struve and Friedrich Karl Franz Hecker), but they quickly became frustrated at the lack of progress and walked out in protest at the beginning of April 1848, amidst an atmosphere of ongoing revolutionary feeling. The 'preparliament' subsequently passed a resolution calling for an All-German National Assembly, and by 8th April 1848, a law in support of universal suffrage and an

indirect (two-stage) voting system was agreed. This represented clear progress in terms of meeting key liberal demands for reform. (There is more on the Vorparlament and subsequent Frankfurt Parliament in Topic 2.)

However, while political progress appeared to be under way in Frankfurt, in Baden the situation remained unstable. Republican activists were responsible for creating unrest and disorder, and the Baden government subsequently increased the size of its army and looked for assistance from neighbouring states to restore order. Joseph Fickler, a journalist who led Baden's democrats, was arrested, causing further protests. This culminated in the outbreak of a much bigger uprising on April 12 1848, which was crushed with the support of Bavarian and Prussian troops. This ended what was later referred to as the 'Hecker Uprising' – in recognition of Hecker's role in leading it. Calm was eventually restored by mid-1848, but significant tensions remained.



Consolidate your understanding of the growing influence of liberalism within Prussia and other German states by the section entitled 'The growth of liberalism' in Chapter 1, Section 4 of your textbook.

## Impact of revolution in France

The year 1848 is viewed by historians as a year of revolutions throughout Europe. Detailed analysis of the reasons for the wider 1848 revolutions across the continent is outside the scope of these studies, but of the major powers in west and central Europe, only Great Britain, Belgium and Holland escaped (although the unrest inspired by the Chartist movement that year certainly worried the British government, as you saw in Section 1, Topic 2).

The year of revolutions started in France in February 1848, a country with a history of revolutionary unrest and political and social upheaval. Liberal and economic pressures saw an upsurge of popular protest and barricades erected on the streets. These turbulent events culminated in the abdication of the French monarch, King Louis Philippe, on the 24th February.

The developments in France acted as encouragement to those within the German Confederation who sought change or improvement to their difficult living conditions. Berlin-based Prussian newspapers described the 'amazement, terror and confusion' created by the news of such political and social turbulence that was spreading from France, and the established political order in a number of European nations grew fearful of the potential for revolutionary uprisings extending further as a result.

The messages contained within Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto* generated radical revolutionary feeling among many of those who read it. Indeed, Marx had industrialised areas like Germany in mind when he predicted the likelihood of revolutionary upheaval.

#### Source 2 Marx and Engels' views of the 1848 revolutions

The year 1848 is turning out well. By this glorious revolution the French proletariat has again placed itself at the head of the European movement. All honour to the workers of Paris!

Our age, the age of democracy, is breaking. The flames of the Tuileries and the Palais Royal are the dawn of the proletariat. Everywhere the rule of the bourgeoisie will now come crashing down, or be dashed to pieces.

(Marx/Engels *Collected Works*, vol.6, 1845–48, p.558)

### Progress check

At this point you should feel able to achieve the following objective for this topic:

- outline the short-term causes of revolution during 1846–47.

## Outbreak of revolution 1848

Revolutionary uprisings broke out in the German states in March 1848, and popular pressure was the key. Most states were affected in some way, in particular Austria, Baden, Saxony and Bavaria. The first significant occurrences of unrest were fairly chaotic, but developments in Austria forced the once dominant conservative figure of Metternich to resign and flee into exile (see below) although he returned in an advisory role in 1849.

In the Austrian Empire the revolutionary unrest was exacerbated by the ambitions of those such as the Hungarians and Italians who were seeking national independence (**self-determination**). Austria's problems raised the hopes of those who wanted to see a reduction of Austrian power both within its own empire, as well as within the German Confederation.

Support for revolution against the rulers of the German Confederation states transcended class differences, and the peasants and workers saw an opportunity to alleviate their daily hardships. Violence broke out in most of the German states. The revolutionary agitators achieved some initial successes: the ruling authorities were unprepared for such sustained and concerted

uprisings and generally didn't react very effectively, in the short term at least.

In the southern German states there was some evidence of radical republican feeling from more educated middle-class citizens, but this was harshly suppressed by the authorities, and few liberal reformers supported such extremist methods. Most of the agitators were primarily focused on securing improved political and civic rights, an element of democracy and a reformed constitutional monarchy. However, while some concessions were made by the ruling classes, the established political authorities gradually regained control of the situation from the revolutionary activists.

Wherever there was unrest within the Confederation, and whatever its driving force, the middle classes invariably came together to hijack the revolution from a mixture of nationalist and liberal motives. They saw an opportunity to win concessions from their rulers that would allow their increasingly numerous, wealthy and influential members a share in political power (hitherto the preserve of the nobility) and many such demands were gradually achieved. This liberal middle-class impetus was accompanied by a demand for a move towards the creation of a unified Germany.



For an overview, listen to the Radio 4 broadcast *1848: The Year of Revolution* from the *In Our Time* series, presented by Melvyn Bragg. Go to

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/series/ioth/all>

Scroll down the page to '1848: The Year of Revolution'.

### Activity 3

(Allow 15 minutes)

- 1 How much weight do you give the evidence of Source 2 with regard to the extent to which communist ideology could be said to have influenced the various European revolutions of 1848?
- 2 To what extent was communist ideology the main factor behind such uprisings?
- 3 What other political ideologies were significant?

### Exam hint

'How much weight?' questions are typical of Section A part b) questions in the AS.

Part a) questions are in the form 'Why is Source X valuable to the historian for an enquiry about....?'

You probably covered some of the following points in your answers.

- 1 Source 2 originates directly from the writings of Marx and Engels, whose work is still viewed as a major influence on the global development of communist thought and ideas. In this extract, the authors are making direct connections between the revolutionary events in Paris in 1848 and their own communist ideology and texts. While there was certainly a degree of communist awareness among some elements of the revolutionaries in Paris and other European locations, the numbers would have been small due to relatively low literacy levels and the fact that such Marxist texts were not in wide circulation. As historians, we must therefore be aware that Marx and Engels may well have been exaggerating and inflating the significance of their own writings in shaping the revolutionary events across various parts of Europe. In 1848, as there were certainly other factors that contributed to such developments.
- 2 Whether communism was the main factor behind such uprisings is open to debate but there was certainly a growth in working-class consciousness in the early part of the nineteenth century, specifically a growing awareness that many workers were being poorly paid and exploited by the middle-class business and factory owners. This viewpoint was most effectively articulated in the early writings of Marx and Engels during the first half of the century, following their observations of the effects of industrialisation across many European societies. In particular, their specific ideology of 'communism' sought to highlight the potential power of the working-classes in a prospective 'class war' against the capitalist middle classes.

Whilst there was a variety of factors shaping and influencing the 1848 revolutions across central and western Europe (and specifically within the German Confederation), communist class-consciousness certainly influenced the actions of some of those involved in revolutionary activity. Linked to this were the economic pressures that many workers found themselves



facing, particularly following the slump in agriculture during the mid-1840s. This had a significant impact on people's quality of life and economic well-being within various German states.

- 3 The emerging forces of nationalism and liberalism were other developing and significant contemporary influences, both of which advocated political reform rather than the revolutionary approach of communism. These had particular appeal to the educated middle classes, who generally favoured a reformist approach. Both of these growing political concepts were significant alternative factors in explaining why the 1848 revolutions occurred. Despite Marx's predictions about the primacy of class conflict, it was arguably a combination of all of these key factors (to varying degrees) that shaped the events of 1848.

## Revolution in the Austrian Empire

Up until 1848 there was little doubt that Austria remained the dominant German state, although Prussia was closing the gap. Austrian Chancellor Metternich continued to be the most prominent figure within this region, and his regime was therefore taken by surprise by the turbulence of 1848. These events were triggered by protests from university students on 13 March, and there was a major street demonstration in the capital city of Vienna. Press coverage saw these events generating attention in other German states, and this, in turn, encouraged similar activity elsewhere within the German Confederation.

Such demonstrations were encouraged by the sermons of the liberal clergy and resulted in key liberal demands for universal male suffrage (or manhood suffrage) and a constitution enshrining key civil and political rights for all Austrian citizens. This triggered the beginning of the so-called March Revolution. The initial response of Metternich and Austrian Emperor Ferdinand was to send in troops to crush the protests; several of the student protestors were killed when they got close to the royal palace. However, the protestors' numbers were boosted by the city's working-class population, and the situation quickly developed into an armed response by the protestors. The Austrian authorities were alarmed by such developments and a sense of panic set in. Metternich was subsequently asked to resign by the country's Diet and the Emperor reluctantly agreed to this request.

Events were now moving quickly and Metternich went into exile in London. Emperor Ferdinand replaced him with more liberal



ministers and a new constitution for the country was drafted at the end of April 1848. However, this was rejected by the Austrian protestors as it still denied most of the population the right to vote; this right remained the preserve of the more wealthy (male) property-owning members of society. In response, Vienna's citizens continued to protest and take to the streets in significant numbers, and between 26–27 May they began to erect barricades. This was in preparation for a likely attack by the country's military forces, but it alarmed the Austrian authorities as it had been a revolutionary tactic that was successfully used in Paris.

In response to these events, Emperor Ferdinand and his family fled to more rural Innsbruck, and the Emperor issued two **manifestos** (in May and June 1848) making concessions to the demands of the liberal reformers. The country's Imperial Diet was to become a Constituent Assembly directly elected by the people alongside some general political reorganisation within Austria. The Emperor felt confident enough to return to the capital in August 1848, but the proposed reforms failed to appease the protestors.

On 21 August there were further working-class protests focused on the growing unemployment levels and the government's proposed wage reductions. The government again resorted to a hard-line approach, and on 23 August troops fired on unarmed demonstrators. In a further development, in late September 1848, Emperor Ferdinand sent troops to Hungary (another province within his Empire) to crush a similar uprising there.

The crisis came to a head on 29 September when Austrian forces were defeated by Hungary's insurgents, and by the first week of October there were further protests in Vienna. Emperor Ferdinand I vacated the throne in Vienna on 7 October 1848, taking up residence in eastern Moravia. On 2 December 1848, Ferdinand formally abdicated and was succeeded by his nephew Franz Josef. This represented a significant outcome to the Austrian 'revolution' of 1848.

## Revolution in Prussia 1848–49

In Prussia, while it had been the workers who initially manned the barricades and started the revolution, it was the bourgeoisie with their nationalist and liberal agendas who took it over. This class had already improved their economic status as a result of the growing industrial economy and the creation of the Zollverein. However, this hadn't been matched by any changes to the standard pattern of power throughout all the states in the Confederation, where rulers and nobility invariably continued to rule the roost.

Faced with revolution and demands for change from different social classes in 1848, Frederick William IV (1795–1861) didn't react to the rebels in an overly confrontational way. He withdrew the garrison from Berlin and appointed a liberal ministry under Camphausen at the end of March. Like most of his fellow German rulers, he was forced to make some political concessions. He therefore agreed to the summoning of a constituent assembly, elected by universal suffrage, to map out a new, more democratic Prussia. Some middle-class and moderate liberals subsequently became government ministers.

To sum up, there were several reasons why revolution broke out in Prussia (and in other German states) in 1848:

- Long-term economic and social problems were fuelled by specific factors such as high rural rents, low wages in the towns and a growing overall population. The rural problems subsequently had a direct impact on events in the towns and cities, leading to the spread of social unrest.
- Poor harvests in 1846–47 proved a short-term economic factor that contributed to the revolutionary uprisings of 1848.
- There was a spread of revolutionary feeling from France, where the 1848 revolutions had begun, and this impacted on Prussia and various other parts of Europe.
- There was also some notable influence on events in Prussia from the State of Baden, which at this early stage supported a united Germany.
- There was a growth in publications (magazines/newspapers) that supported German nationalism and which were now increasingly available to the more educated Prussian middle classes, e.g. *Die Deutsche Zeitung*.
- There was also a growth in liberal feeling and attitudes within the State of Prussia (and, indeed, in other German states), and this led to a growth in demands from the middle classes for greater political and liberal rights – which came to be increasingly associated with the nationalist political agenda.



Chapter 2 of your textbook gives you more information on the causes and course of the 1848 revolutions within the various parts of the German Confederation. Read this chapter now and take notes on it. Then use the information to focus on the most important reasons for why revolution broke out in 1848.

## Progress check

At this point you should feel able to achieve the following objective for this topic:

- Identify the various events surrounding the outbreak of revolution in Germany in 1848.

### Activity 4

(Allow 20 minutes)

As a revision activity, summarise the three most important reasons for the outbreak of the 1848 revolutions and the three most important consequences of the revolutions across the German states. You might want to do this in table form.

You probably covered the following points in your summary.

Arguably, the three most important reasons for the outbreak of revolution in 1848 were:

- The growth in liberal political ideas spreading across western Europe, leading to demands for political reform within the German Confederation.
- The growth in nationalist feeling within the German states and across other parts of Europe, creating closer unity within otherwise divided states over issues such as shared language and culture.
- The failure of the established rulers and politicians of various German regimes to address demands for change in the years prior to 1848, as well as their inability to deal with worsening economic and social conditions (as highlighted by Marxists in particular).

You probably identified the three most important consequences as being:

- The divided parts of the German Confederation came to realise they had common national and political interests, which hastened the likelihood of eventual German unification.
- Austria was significantly weakened, thus damaging its reputation as the leading German-speaking nation in Europe. However, due to divisions within the revolutionary forces, it managed to

maintain its relatively powerful position in the short term at least.

- Prussia was emerging as the most powerful and influential state within the German Confederation, with its citizens and politicians playing a prominent part in the revolutionary events and subsequent reforms that occurred during 1848–49.

## Self check

(Allow 15 minutes)

Test your recall of developments in the German Confederation up to and immediately after the revolutions of 1848. Read the following statements and mark them with a tick (for true statements) or a cross (for false statements).

- 1 The Habsburgs had ruled the Holy Roman Empire for most of its existence.
- 2 Prussia became a kingdom at the Congress of Vienna in 1815.
- 3 Under the peace settlement Prussia gained territories in the Rhineland and Hanover.
- 4 The Austrian Empire included non-Germans such as Italians, Czechs and Hungarians.
- 5 There were 39 states in the German Confederation set up in 1815.
- 6 Great Britain was the only European state to escape revolution in 1848.
- 7 The example of France encouraged German revolutionaries in 1848.
- 8 The Prussian king who made concessions to liberals in 1848 was Frederick William IV.
- 9 The Vorparlament or Frankfurt Assembly was dominated by the middle classes.
- 10 Marx and his followers were pro-nationalist.

You will find feedback to self checks at the end of Section 4.

## Summary

Having worked through this topic you should now feel confident in your understanding of the main developments that led to the revolutionary events of 1848 and the consequences of those developments. You have seen that:

- Up to 1815 'Germany' was not a single united country but was actually made up of 350 independent states of widely different sizes. The Congress of Vienna (of this same year) reduced this number to just 39.
- These various German states continued to co-exist in some form of limited cooperation within the German Confederation up until the late 1840s. Revolutions in Europe in 1848–49 triggered German revolutionaries, who were seeking a more democratic form of government for their respective states and supported some sort of unified German nation.
- Middle-class liberal Germans, taking advantage of the revolutions sweeping through Germany, set up a Vorparlament at Frankfurt in May 1848. The hope was that this would bring about German unification and the creation of one single country under a constitution that allowed for middle-class participation.
- However, the various nationalists and liberals in different states were divided in their aims and they could not agree on a clear approach to pursuing key goals. This allowed conservative forces to regain control of the situation and frustrate the growing mood of liberalism and nationalism that was emerging from across the different German states.

## Key terms

**Autocratic:** a political system in which one person (often a monarch) has unrestricted power

**Bourgeoisie:** the upper-middle classes, usually capitalists, manufacturers and employers, as referred to by Karl Marx

**Class war:** a left-wing (Marxist) analysis of society, where different social classes would compete with each other for political control of the same State

**Constitutional monarchist:** believer in a system of government where a monarch remains in office with limited powers, but where most political power is held by democratically elected politicians

**Diet:** a state assembly or parliament

**German Confederation:** a loose union of 39 German states, formed in 1815 under the presidency of Austria and dissolved in 1866 after Austria's defeat by Prussia

**Liberalism:** political views that are broadly in favour of progress and political reform, usually linked with the middle classes and their belief in constitutional reform, free trade and moving away from absolutism

**Manifesto:** a public statement of policy and aims

**March Revolution:** an uprising in the Austrian capital of Vienna in March 1848, which led to the overthrow of the country's conservative Chancellor, Metternich

**Marxists:** followers of Karl Marx, founder of communism, whose ideas became influential across Europe from the mid-nineteenth century onwards

**Nationalism:** the belief that the nation and national unity is the driving force behind political activity and decision-making

**Proletariat:** the working classes and labourers who primarily worked in the industrialised factories, as referred to by Karl Marx

**Protectionist:** a country imposing tariffs (additional taxes) on foreign imports in order to protect its own domestic industries and businesses

**Seehandlung:** the Overseas (maritime) Trading Corporation, a Prussian nationalised organisation that owned engineering plants, textile mills and chemical works, and was involved in exporting goods and trade to other countries

**Self-determination:** the ability of a country to govern and rule itself, as opposed to being controlled by a larger power

**Vorparlament:** literally 'pre-parliament'; a parliament (also known as the Frankfurt Assembly) that prepared the way for a permanent German-wide parliament during the revolutions of 1848–49

**Zollverein:** the Prussian Customs Union, established in the early part of the nineteenth century, which represented an early stage in German unification

## References

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Murphy, D, Morris, T and Fulbrook, M (2008) *Germany 1848–1991*, Flagship History, Collins Educational, Chapter 2

## What next?

We hope this sample has helped you to decide whether this course is right for you.

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