

BENJAMIN DISRAELI

HISTORICAL CRISIS COMMITTEE

WAR, REALPOLITIK, AND FATHERLAND: GERMAN UNIFICATION AND THE PATH TO EMPIRE

In the labyrinthine corridors of 19th-century European politics, I, Benjamin Disraeli, stand as a figure of distinct prominence and intrigue. As the Prime Minister of the British Empire during a pivotal historical period, my role is central in an era marked by the pursuit of German unification. This period, unfolding against the backdrop of significant European upheaval, is defined by the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire and the rise of the German Confederation. It initiated a sequence of events that dramatically reshaped the political landscape of Europe. The Austro-Prussian War of 1866, resulting in the exclusion of Austria from German affairs, and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, culminating in the proclamation of the German Empire in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, were more than regional conflicts; they were pivotal moments that heralded a significant realignment of power. These events, occurring alongside the unification of Italy and the decline of Ottoman influence in the Balkans, set the stage for a new era of nation-states. In this evolving scenario, my responsibility as Britain's Prime Minister is to navigate these transformative events. I must ensure that the emerging German unification, driven by Bismarck's astute use of Realpolitik, does not destabilize the delicate balance of power in Europe—a balance maintained since the Congress of Vienna in 1815—or undermine Britain's imperial interests, which hinge on a stable and divided continent.

Amidst these geopolitical shifts, my personal background and political journey have uniquely prepared me for this monumental task. Born in 1804 into a Jewish family and later baptized into the Church of England, my rise in British politics, despite the prevalent anti-Semitic sentiments, is a testament to my resilience and political acumen. My journey, marked by my novel-writing and my eventual rise through the Conservative Party, has been driven by a deep understanding of the British political landscape and an unwavering commitment to the British Empire. As a proponent of one-nation conservatism, I have always strived to balance social reforms with imperial expansion, as seen in my support for the Reform Act of 1867 and the expansion of the British Empire in Asia and Africa. My tenure as Prime Minister has been marked by significant foreign policy achievements, including playing a pivotal role in the Congress of Berlin in 1878, where I successfully navigated the Eastern Question, maintaining Britain's influence in the face of Russian expansionism. These experiences have honed my skills in diplomacy and international relations, equipping me to address the challenges and opportunities presented by the shifting dynamics of European politics. The unification of Germany, alongside the rise of nationalism and the redefinition of statehood, poses a unique challenge to the established order. My approach is informed by a need to maintain the multipolar balance in Europe, ensuring that no single power, including a unified Germany, dominates the continent. Employing a blend of diplomatic tact, economic influence, and military strength, I am committed to ensuring that Britain continues to play a decisive role in shaping European affairs, particularly in response to the rising tide of German nationalism and the strategic ambitions of Otto von Bismarck.

To address the unfolding situation of German unification, I have developed a comprehensive and multi-faceted plan, meticulously crafted to ensure the preservation and enhancement of Britain's global influence and strategic interests. Diplomatically, my primary objective is to forge and fortify alliances with key European powers, especially France and Austria. This strategy involves

not only formal diplomatic negotiations, which are critical in presenting a united front, but also covert operations designed to subtly align these nations' interests with Britain's. For example, through diplomatic channels, I intend to propose mutual defense treaties and trade agreements, and in the shadows, I plan to engage in intelligence sharing and possibly even coordinated political maneuvers to counterbalance the emerging power of a unified Germany. Economically, my strategy revolves around leveraging Britain's industrial might and financial resources to influence the smaller German states, persuading them to resist aligning with Prussian ambitions. To this end, I plan to offer a series of lucrative economic incentives, such as preferential trade agreements and investment opportunities. For instance, I envision extending special trading conditions to key states within the German Confederation, providing them with access to British markets and capital, thereby creating a network of economic dependencies. These economic ties will not only serve as a means to influence the political leanings of these states but also bind their economies to Britain's, making a potential alliance with Prussia less appealing. On the military front, while direct confrontation is to be avoided, a demonstration of our military prowess is essential. I plan to enhance Britain's naval capabilities significantly, commissioning the construction of advanced warships and increasing our naval presence in key strategic areas such as the North Sea and the Mediterranean. This increased military visibility will serve as a clear signal of Britain's readiness to defend its interests. Furthermore, conducting joint naval exercises with allied nations will not only display our military strength but also reinforce our commitment to the mutual defense pacts we establish. Recognizing the diversity of interests and internal divisions within the German states, I intend to exploit these differences to our advantage. By providing covert support to anti-Prussian factions and encouraging political dissent, I aim to foster a climate of fragmentation within Germany. This may involve discreetly funding opposition groups, facilitating diplomatic connections for dissident leaders, and in certain cases, offering asylum to key opposition figures. This strategy is designed to make the prospect of a Prussian-led unification less appealing and more challenging to achieve. Additionally, I am prepared to deploy a sophisticated propaganda campaign to shape public opinion both within Britain and across Europe. This campaign will emphasize the risks associated with a powerful, unified Germany and the potential destabilization it could bring to the European order. Through carefully crafted messages disseminated through newspapers, pamphlets, and diplomatic channels, we will highlight the benefits of a balanced European power structure and the role Britain plays in maintaining this stability. I have also developed a series of detailed contingency plans to address various potential outcomes of the German unification process. These plans are meticulously crafted to adapt to different scenarios, ensuring that Britain remains a step ahead in the evolving political landscape. For example, should Germany unify under a leadership amenable to British interests, our strategy will focus on nurturing this relationship through diplomatic support and economic partnerships. Alternatively, if unification leads to a fragmented Germany, we will work to strengthen our ties with individual states, ensuring their alignment with British interests. Each contingency plan includes specific diplomatic, economic, and military strategies, tailored to each potential scenario. Through these multifaceted efforts, Britain is not merely positioned to respond reactively to the events unfolding in Europe but is poised to emerge as a more influential and dominant global power. Our position in the reshaping of Europe's political landscape will remain unchallenged, as we deftly navigate and influence the course of German unification in a manner that aligns with Britain's enduring interests and strategic objectives.