

The zollvereins significance



How far do you believe that the Zollverein was the most important reason for the change in the balance of power between Austria and Prussia in the years 1848-66? As industrialisation increased in Germany, the German businessmen wanted to maximise their available markets in order to increase their profits.

However as there was trade between the 39 countries but with so many tariffs cutting up the states it was impossible for the businessmen to get into the other states, this was where the Zollverein was introduced. This was created by Prussia, the most powerful and largest state in Germany, who scrapped all trade barriers and tariffs in its territory and offered the Zollverein with similar trade concessions to the other German states. They then began to build new networks of trains and road works allowing trade to flow in and out of the states freely and easily therefore increasing communication, trade and ideas throughout Germany. The Zollverein was important in the change in the balance of power from 1848-66 for several reasons, firstly it allowed trade to travel far and wide throughout the German states, this allowed ideas and feelings to spread quickly over vast distances uniting the German people. This also helped to spread different languages. Secondly the Zollverein gained a better society with raw materials being transported in and out of the states creating further industrialisation but most importantly it helped Prussia become politically dominant. However it could be argued that this was not the most important reason for the change in the balance of power, there are reasons such as Austria trying to keep their large empire alive through fighting which ironically ended up weakening them further through losses in Italy for example. Also there is the

fact that Austria had a large standing army which was very costly to keep active constantly therefore draining Austria's wealth and resources.

Another reason why the Zollverein may not have been the most important factor is because of Bismarck who was very influential in these times, and the last point I will be arguing is about the language barriers that were part of Austria at this time. To start I will argue why I believe the Zollverein was very important, if not the most important factor in turning the tables of power between Prussia and Austria to Prussia's favour. With the Zollverein being created this allowed Prussia to become the most industrialised state in the whole of Germany, this powerful economically allowed for further development in things such as the army and trade. The tariffs abolition allowed trade to take place throughout all of the German states, which meant language barriers were knocked down in order for the trade to take place. The language barriers in Prussia were also abolished allowed a sense of unity to take place meaning ideas started to be exchanged meaning the people had the similar feelings towards unity overpowering Austria. The Zollverein increased trade which meant that raw materials such as coal and iron went on to improve the army as it helped to create roads and railways in and out of Prussia allowing troops and weapons to be transported quickly and efficiently making them a very powerful and threatening state.

This is a very important reason because the Zollverein helped to make Prussia so powerful and it meant Prussia made economic alliance with the other states in Germany, their profit and trade helped to build a stable economy and army with equipment and soldiers being transported easily,

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this made Prussia very powerful. However other ideas also helped to contribute towards Prussia becoming dominant over Austria such as the state of Austria at the time. They had a very large empire during the period of 1848-1866 meaning they were very often occupied with other things such as retaining their land in Italy. A good example of this was the Crimean War (1854-56) where Austria refused to help Russia in its war against France and Britain and therefore lost a major ally as a result. Austria was then further defeated in a war against the French and northern Italian states. As a result, it had been forced to surrender some territories meaning it was weakened significantly.

Austria also had a standing army which drained their money and resources which meant they didn't have the money they needed to create a sustainable economy. Without a good economy the Austrian empire and the people within it then were not supportive of Austria's aims to become dominant over Prussia and gain land in the German states. Even if Austria did have the equivalent of Prussia's Bismarck, it would have been hard for this person to get everyone behind him because the Austrian people all spoke different languages. This caused problems to gain national support and to even keep the army motivated for most of the time period. To conclude Austria was weakened for many different reasons of which Prussia did not have to worry about such as language barriers and losing parts of their empire.

The last point that I am going to argue which allowed Prussia to become dominant over Austria was through the help of Otto Von Bismarck. Bismarck had very straight forward aims and was very aggressive in his approach, this

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sort of leadership meant he got things done. An example of this is that Bismarck wanted to build up Prussia's army in case his unification plans led to war and to do this he needed money. The Prussian parliament refused to allow money to be raised for Bismarck's military reforms so instead of attempting to persuade parliament Bismarck ignored the Reichstag and simply collected the money for army reforms through general taxation and never bothered to obtain permission from the Reichstag. This meant he could reform the Prussian army resulting in the Prussians being able to match the size and efficiency of Austria's army. Bismarck wanted to unify Germany however he knew that Austria was a very large obstacle in the way of this, he therefore began to attempt to make Austria weak in their position in Europe.

This meant that not only would Austria be weak within the country but they would also be in a weak position within Europe with no allies isolating them and making it easier for Prussia to take control over them. He then began to gain large allies around Prussia including when they refused to help Poland when it rebelled against Russian control allowing Bismarck to gain a powerful alliance with Russia. Bismarck then formed another key alliance with France in a meeting with Napoleon III, he promised to support France in its plans to invade and control Belgium and lastly he made a deal with Italy and Italy promised to help Prussia in any war against Austria, as long as Austria was the aggressor and Italy gained Venetia in return. This meant that Prussia was very powerful by now, bit by bit they were gaining allies and support whereas Austria was just losing support and becoming dangerously inferior. Lastly Bismarck had a huge influence in making Prussia dominant when he

got his excuse for a war against Austria during a territorial dispute over two small German states, Schleswig and Holstein.

These were under the control of Denmark and in 1863 the King of Denmark declared Schleswig and Holstein to be a part of Denmark. However a year later Prussia and Austria teamed up and declared war on Denmark, a battle of which they won very easily. Bismarck then created the treaty of Gastein with Austria which he knew would provoke the Austrians into wanting to take the land that Prussia was awarded in the treaty. The Austrians tried to get control over both Holstein and Schleswig which angered Bismarck and Prussia of which meant he could then declare war on Prussia. This war was won by Prussia because of their power and allies compared to the very small amount that Austria had. Bismarck was very influential in helping to further weaken Austria and to help Prussia gain dominance in order to begin unification of the German states. To conclude I believe that the Zollverein was a very important part of Prussia becoming dominant over Austria, it led to Prussia being able to have money and resources allowing Prussia to reform their army and economy.

This meant that they were seen as an influential figure to other countries who became allies with them, not only meaning they were safe but it also meant that Prussia became an even more powerful. Roads and railways were built with the new profits in order to allow the transportation of goods and soldiers creating a very unified feeling in Prussia as well as the other states in Germany becoming economic allies with Prussia. However the Zollverein wasn't the only factor contributing to Prussia's dominance, this is because even with all of their new power, they still wouldn't have been a match for <https://assignbuster.com/the-zollvereins-significance/>

Austria. This is where Austria being weakened by other countries became very important because this meant not only where Prussia becoming stronger but their enemy was becoming weak allowing them to gain dominance over them. Lastly Bismarck had a very large input in making Prussia dominant because he further helped to make Austria weak in order for Prussia to defeat them, he reformed the army and persuaded people to get behind his ideas of unification. He was a turning point in Prussian history because people began to believe that unification was possible.

So my opinion on the question in hand is that the Zollverein was important in the kick start of making Prussia a very powerful state but it was in need of other factors in order to allow them to become more powerful than Austria.