**Bismarck’s “Blood and Iron” Speech -** *Prince Otto von Bismarck,* 30 September 1862

**Background:**

Otto von Bismarck, a Prussian aristocrat (a *Junker)* managed the unification of German states. Eschewing democracy and its plebiscites, Bismarck used a series of military conflicts with Denmark, Austria, and France to secure a united German aristocracy behind the King of Prussia. Later in life, Bismarck weaved a series of military alliances with other European states to protect German interests and devised the Congress of Berlin (1884-5) that established rules for Europe’s conquest of Africa.

There are members of the National Association [Nationalverein] – of this association that has achieved a reputation owing to the justness of its demands – highly esteemed members who have stated that all standing armies are superfluous. Yes, if only a public assembly had this view! Would not a government have to reject this?! – There was talk about the “sobriety” of the Prussian people. Yes, the great independence of the individual makes it difficult in Prussia to govern with the constitution (or to consolidate the constitution?); in France things are different, there this individual independence is lacking. A constitutional crisis would not be disgraceful, but honorable instead. – Furthermore, we are perhaps too “well-educated” to support a constitution; we are too critical; the ability to assess government measures and records of the public assembly is too common; in the country there are a lot of catiline [conspiratorial] characters who have a great interest in upheavals. This may sound paradoxical, but everything proves how hard constitutional life is in Prussia. – Furthermore, one is too sensitive about the government’s mistakes; as if it were enough to say “this and that [cabinet] minister made mistakes, as if one wasn’t adversely affected oneself. Public opinion changes, the press is not [the same as] public opinion; one knows how the press is written; members of parliament have a higher duty, to lead opinion, to stand above it. We are too hot-blooded, we have a preference for putting on armor that is too big for our small body; and now we’re actually supposed to utilize it. Germany is not looking to Prussia’s liberalism, but to its power; Bavaria, Württemberg, Baden (German states) may indulge liberalism, and for that reason no one will assign them Prussia’s role; Prussia has to coalesce (combine) and concentrate its power for the opportune moment, which has already been missed several times; Prussia’s borders according to the Vienna Treaties [of 1814-15] are not favorable for a healthy, vital state; it is not by speeches and majority resolutions that the great questions of the time are decided – that was the big mistake of 1848 and 1849 – but by iron and blood.

**Questions to Reflect On and Answer:**

1. What is the purpose of this landmark speech delivered by Bismarck?

2. Define what you think *blood and iron* means based on prior knowledge and on this speech?

3. Think back to the Enlightenment: What was an example of nationalism that we looked at, specifically in the pre-American Revolution?

4. Can you think of any relevant examples in which force or **militarism** is used to unite several groups that share a common culture together?

**Debatable Questions/Statements – German Unification:**

**Take a few minutes to silently reflect on whether you agree or disagree with the following statements. This is where I am looking to see some critical thinking, your evaluation of the statement or issue (IN YOUR OWN WORDS) and some original perspective. Be prepared to discuss and respectfully debate your thoughts!**

**1. Agree or Disagree:** Nationalism fuels economic success such as industrial revolutions.

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| **Agree** | **Disagree -** |

**2. Agree or Disagree:** Effective leadership must be REALIST leadership in order for nationalism to be effective and successful.

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| Agree | Disagree |

**3. Agree or Disagree:** Guaranteeing healthcare to all citizens is necessary under a unified government. Consider what Bismarck did in terms of providing health care after unifying Germany. Consider how this is being played in the SUPREME COURT today with Obamacare!

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| **Agree** - | Disagree |

4. **Final Thoughts:** In your groups of three or four, decide **TOGETHER** if you believe German nationalism was effective or ineffective, and CITE specific evidence from what you learned today. When you are finished, share your thoughts on one of the boards in the classroom!

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| Agree | Disagree |