

Introduction to the making of modern Britain 1951-2007

The Establishment of the Post-War Consensus, 1954-64

By [Andrew Boxer](#) | Published in [History Review 2010](#)

[Political 20th Century Britain](#)

Andrew Boxer explains why party political strife lacked real substance in the period after 1945.

In February 1954 *The Economist* invented a new word – ‘Butskellism’. The magazine thought that the policies of Chancellor of the Exchequer of the day, the Conservative R.A. Butler, were so similar to those of his Labour predecessor, Hugh Gaitskell, that they had been devised by a ‘Mr Butskell’. The name caught on – there really did seem to be no difference between the economic policies of the two main parties.

‘Butskellism’ outlived both Butler and Gaitskell because successive Conservative and Labour governments appeared, not only to tackle Britain’s economic problems in the same ways, but to share a wide range of policies and attitudes. Most historians today accept this view and argue that, for 30 years after the Second World War, there was a widespread agreement among the British people and their political leaders about the policies and style of their government. This is known as ‘the post-war consensus’ – and, it is claimed, it remained in place until it was dismantled by Mrs Thatcher’s governments of the 1980s.

Consensus did not mean that the political parties abandoned their ideological labels, and they certainly continued to argue with one another. But, once in government, political leaders seemed to accept that their role was to manage the nation’s resources, arbitrating between the important and powerful sectors of British society to achieve an agreed set of goals, rather than imposing doctrinaire, ideological policies. This post-war consensus covered four principal areas: the maintenance of a mixed economy, pursuing the goal of full employment, maintaining a comprehensive welfare system and, finally, adjusting foreign and imperial policy to Britain’s place in the post-war world.

Impact of the Second World War

The experience of the Second World War was crucially important in determining the nature of the post-war consensus. National unity is essential in wartime and Churchill, Prime Minister from 1940 until 1945, recognised this. Although a Conservative, he brought members of the other two main parties into his government. Clement Attlee, the Labour leader, became Deputy Prime Minister, Herbert Morrison Home Secretary and Ernest Bevin, the leader of the Transport and General Workers’ Union, Minister of Labour. The Liberal leader, Sir Archibald Sinclair, became Air Minister. There was also an electoral truce. In contrast to the United States, there was no general election during the war. Furthermore, at byelections, the major parties agreed not to field candidates in seats they did not already hold.

This spirit of unity extended to the nation at large. Although the propaganda image of a nation fully united behind the war effort and pluckily defying Hitler’s bombs was an exaggeration, it was not entirely bogus. The war did create a sense of common purpose, even if there was plenty of grumbling about how fairly the privations of war were being shared. The war required the mobilisation of all the nation’s resources and manpower, so it gave almost everyone a role to play in the war effort. As a result, there were opportunities for talented people to thrive, and promotion in wartime depended on ability, not class. The war did not radically alter Britain’s social structure but it did generate a widespread desire to see a better world built once the conflict was over.

Demand for Welfare Reform

This aspiration explains why a dry government report of 1942, the Beveridge Report, was enormously popular and sold over 600,000 copies. Beveridge identified five targets for government action: poverty, disease, unemployment, ignorance and inadequate housing. The report recommended the creation of a national health service, the maintenance of full employment and a comprehensive welfare scheme to provide coverage for everyone ‘from the cradle to the grave’. An opinion poll showed that 86 per cent of

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the British people were in favour of its implementation. Beveridge's proposals became an important part of the post-war consensus in part because the war had made them necessary. The scale of German bombing in the Blitz had exposed the inadequacy of Britain's hospital provision. The wartime government created a statefunded Emergency Hospital Service in which doctors and nurses were paid by the government, so that patients were not charged. In 1941 the Minister of Health announced that, after the war, 'a comprehensive hospital service' would be created which would make treatment 'available to every person in need of it'.

War and the Economy

The war radically changed accepted views about the part that governments could, and should, play in managing the nation's economy. During the 1930s Treasury officials had believed that government attempts to regulate the economy would not work. But in wartime there was no alternative: resources, investment and manpower had to be directed to ensure that war production had priority. Rationing was introduced so that scarce food supplies could be shared fairly. Major sectors of the economy, such as coal mines and railways, were brought under government control and manpower was supervised by Bevin's ministry to give priority to war industries and production. The result of these policies was that unemployment (which, between the wars, had never fallen below a million, and had reached three million in the early 1930s) virtually disappeared. The government's wartime economic measures could not be successfully implemented without the co-operation of the trade unions. This enhanced the unions' status and made them virtually equal partners with government and business in the management of the economy.

Cambridge economist John Maynard Keynes had argued for some time that the problems of the inter-war years, in particular high unemployment, could be eliminated by government economic management. Not surprisingly, by the end of the war, Keynes's ideas of demand management became the new economic orthodoxy. Furthermore, the wartime spirit of national unity reinforced the notion that the government could and should run important sectors of the economy. This applied particularly to the services that everyone needed, such as gas, electricity, telephones and public transport. The collective spirit engendered by the war helped to make the idea of nationalising these utilities – bringing them permanently under the control of the state – not only acceptable but desirable.

The 1945 General Election

Because the war had changed the mood and expectations of the British people, the 1945 election manifestos of the two main political parties did not differ very much. Both parties committed themselves to the maintenance of full employment and, influenced by the Beveridge Report, both promised to create an extensive social security and health system. The result of the election, however, was a surprise to most people at the time. Despite Churchill's personal popularity, the Labour Party won in a landslide, gaining an overall majority of 146 seats. The Conservatives were blamed for the failures of the 1930s – high unemployment and the appeasement of Hitler – and the electorate believed that the Labour Party was more committed to building the new Britain that the wartime mood demanded.

Shocked by the scale of their defeat, the Conservative Party leaders decided to rethink their ideology and policies. RA Butler was one of the key figures in this process, and he explained in his memoirs the purpose of the Conservatives' 1947 policy document, *The Industrial Charter*:

Our first purpose was to counter the charge and the fear that ... full employment and the Welfare State were not safe in our hands ... The Charter was ... first and foremost an assurance that, in the interests of efficiency, full employment and social security, modern Conservatism would maintain strong central guidance over the operation of the economy.

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This explains why there was so little Conservative opposition to the reform measures introduced by the Labour Government.

Establishing a Mixed Economy

The Labour Governments of 1945-51 brought some important sectors of the economy directly under state control in a process known as nationalisation. These sectors included the Bank of England, coal mining, transport, telecommunications, electricity, gas and the production of iron and steel. For many in the Labour Party, nationalisation of key sectors of the economy was part of their programme of making Britain 'socialist'. As the Party's 1945 election manifesto proclaimed, 'The Labour Party is a Socialist Party, and proud of it. Its ultimate purpose at home is the establishment of the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain – free, democratic, efficient, public-spirited, its material resources organised in the service of the British people.' And yet, despite the Conservatives' ideological faith in free market economics and intense dislike of socialism, they offered only token resistance to the majority of Labour's reforms. This was because, not only had Keynes's views been accepted by both main parties, but there was a consensus that many of these industries (in particular, coal and transport) needed levels of investment that only the government could provide. Furthermore, both parties accepted that some nationalised industries, such as gas and electricity, produced services that ought to be available to everyone wherever they lived. This meant that they needed to be planned and managed in the interests of the community rather than run purely for the profit of shareholders. Indeed, it was the Conservative-dominated governments of the inter-war years that had begun this process by extending government control over, and investment in, the coal industry, civil aviation, telecommunications, and transport in London. The generation of electricity had been in public hands since 1926 when a Conservative Government had created the National Grid; and most gas distribution was already run by municipal authorities. Nationalising these industries offered the most efficient way of providing vital services to the whole country. The Conservative governments of 1951-64 made no attempt to return any of these industries and services to private ownership, with the exception of iron and steel.

There was a furious row within the Labour Party when, in 1959-60, the leader Hugh Gaitskell tried unsuccessfully to remove the open-ended commitment to nationalisation from the Party's constitution. But this was a debate about symbols rather than substance. Only the left-wing of the Labour Party wanted nationalisation greatly extended. As Gaitskell realised, they were out of touch with the national consensus that Britain needed a 'mixed economy': the industries nationalised by the 1945-51 Labour Government should remain under the control of the state, everything else would remain in private hands.

The Goal of Full Employment

In 1944 Winston Churchill's wartime coalition government issued a White Paper (an official set of proposals) which stated: 'the Government accepts as one of its primary aims the maintenance of a high and stable level of employment'. This assumed, for the first time, that full employment was something that governments could, and should, try to achieve. That this commitment should have been made by a Conservative-dominated wartime coalition shows how much the Second World War had destroyed the economic thinking of the 1930s, when Treasury officials had assumed that it was neither desirable, nor possible, for governments to manage employment levels in this way.

The Conservatives also accepted the need to treat the trade unions as part of the political establishment and as legitimate partners in the shaping of economic, especially industrial, policy. When Churchill returned to Downing Street in 1951, he was determined to preserve industrial peace, even if it meant giving in to potentially inflationary wage demands. He instructed his Minister of Labour to avoid conflict with the unions. Two rail strikes, in 1953 and 1954, were averted by capitulation to the men's terms and, although the government was prepared to use existing law to deal with unofficial strikes that threatened

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vital services, any new legislation that risked confrontation with the Trades Union Congress was ruled out. This was because, as the Minister warned in 1955, 'any government initiative in the field of industrial relations should carry the greatest possible measure of TUC approval and concurrence. Unless we carry with us the responsible elements, who are at present in a majority, we run the risk of uniting the whole movement against us.'

The Welfare State

The Labour Government encountered some opposition from the Tories in parliament when it set about creating a national health service. Although the Conservative Party had accepted the principles of the Beveridge Report they were worried about the cost. But the principal opposition came from the medical profession which feared that, in a government-run medical service, politics and money – rather than medical need – would determine policy. Also, most family doctors, who ran their practices as privately-owned businesses, did not want them taken over by the state. The Minister of Health, Aneurin Bevan, overcame their resistance by making some key concessions. He allowed the NHS hospitals to accept private patients and ensured that GPs received a generous fee for every patient on their books. Bevan's success in creating the National Health Service has proved to be the most lasting achievement of the post-war Labour Government. The NHS made medical services available to everyone and, initially at least, these were all free.

In opposition, the Conservatives had criticised supposedly wasteful expenditure on the administration of the welfare system, but in government they treated it with reverence. Pensions and national assistance benefits continued to rise, and it is an indication of the uncontroversial nature of the NHS during this period that the Minister of Health did not sit in the Cabinet between 1952 and 1962.

Imperial Policy

Britain was still a major imperial power in 1945 but the bulk of the Empire had been dismantled by 1964. This, too, was a development on which there was surprisingly little disagreement in Britain. The post-war Labour Government granted independence to India and Pakistan, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Burma and Palestine between 1947 and 1948. Only a few die-hard Tories grumbled ineffectively about this and it is probable that, had a Conservative government been elected in 1945, these countries would still have been given their freedom. This was for two reasons. Britain, virtually bankrupt after the Second World War, could not afford to retain them. Nor could it resist the powerful demands for independence from within the countries themselves. Britain's problems in India were summed up succinctly by Hugh Dalton, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his diary entry for 24th February 1947: 'If you are in a place where you are not wanted, and where you have not got the force, or perhaps the will, to squash those who don't want you, the only thing to do is to come out.'

However, for about 15 years after the war the leaders of both main parties believed that Britain's African, Caribbean and Far Eastern colonies were not ready for independence. Britain had a duty, it was thought, to build democratic political, administrative, legal, economic and educational institutions in their colonies before independence could be granted. These high-minded objectives were, in the minds of British politicians, reconcilable with exploiting the resources of the colonies to help overcome Britain's economic problems.

Yet by the mid-1950s a number of factors had combined to disrupt these aims, and the rapid withdrawal from the bulk of Britain's remaining imperial possessions became irresistible. The policy of simultaneously exploiting the colonies economically while attempting to develop their capacity for self-government merely fostered the kind of nationalist resentment against British rule that Dalton had observed in India. At the

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same time, Britain and other Western European imperial powers could hardly claim to stand for 'freedom' against Soviet 'tyranny and oppression' in the Cold War while denying independence to their colonies.

When Macmillan became Prime Minister in January 1957, following the disastrous failure of Britain's forceful attempt to reassert its control over the Suez Canal in Egypt, he immediately called for a review of Britain's imperial possessions. He wanted to know 'which territories are likely to become ripe for independence over the next few years – or, even if they are not ready for it, will demand it so insistently that their claims cannot be denied'. Macmillan was the prime minister who presided over Britain's rapid withdrawal from the bulk of its African empire and from major possessions in the Caribbean, the Mediterranean and the Far East. This imperial retreat encountered some domestic opposition. The right-wing of the Tory Party felt that the white settlers of Kenya and Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) were being abandoned, and there was left-wing criticism of some of the heavy-handed policing of nationalist protest in the colonies. But the principle that Britain's imperial days were over was widely accepted, and the public at large was mostly indifferent to the loss of the colonies.

Foreign Policy

No British government, whether Labour or Conservative, has liked to admit that, despite the loss of empire, Britain is anything other than a major power. This explains why there was a consensus, among the leaders of the main parties at least, that Britain should retain its independent nuclear capability. The initial decision to build a British nuclear bomb made sound strategic sense. In 1946 the US Congress passed the McMahon Act forbidding the sharing of American nuclear information and research with any other power, thereby ending the wartime Anglo-American co-operation in the development of the first nuclear bomb. The Labour Government was fearful that, if any future US government returned to America's pre-war isolationism, Western Europe might have to face the growing Russian threat alone. Although this fear receded once the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was created in 1949, British governments continued to invest in nuclear weapons technology and Britain tested its first atomic bomb in 1948 and its first hydrogen bomb in 1955.

In February 1960 Macmillan had an opportunity to scrap the British bomb when his government decided to cancel Blue Streak, the independent British medium-range missile system, because it was too expensive and vulnerable to an enemy pre-emptive strike. Instead, Macmillan decided to purchase a US delivery system, first the Skybolt missile and then the Polaris submarinelaunched missile. It is possible to argue that this reliance on the US makes nonsense of any British claim to nuclear independence. However, no British government has been prepared to renounce the status that membership of the nuclear 'club' confers.

Britain's membership of NATO is another issue on which there is consensus. This means that Britain's close identification with the USA during the Cold War was widely accepted. Significantly, the one occasion on which British foreign policy became highly controversial was in 1956 when Prime Minister Anthony Eden acted in defiance of the USA by using force to attempt to recover control of the Suez Canal.

Limits of Consensus

Despite the consensus, there was still plenty of dispute, disagreement and debate. Political rhetoric continued to be fierce. Aneurin Bevan in 1948 famously described the Tories as 'lower than vermin' and, throughout the period, the Conservatives referred to their Labour opponents as 'socialists' in order to suggest that there was an important ideological difference between the two parties. Some issues aroused strong passions both in Westminster and the country at large. Capital punishment, the police crackdown on homosexuals in the early 1950s (male homosexual acts had been illegal since 1885) and what to do about the growing numbers of Commonwealth immigrants all divided opinion so starkly that governments were reluctant to contemplate reform.

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There was also significant division over how Britain should react to growing European unity. Having stood aside in 1958 when six Western European nations formed a trading bloc known as 'the Common Market' (the forerunner of the European Union), Britain's decision to apply for membership in 1961 proved controversial. The French president, Charles de Gaulle, vetoed the application in 1963 but this did not end the argument in Britain over attitudes to Europe.

It is also clear that the consensus itself came under increasing strain towards the end of the 1950s. The future of secondary school education is a good example of this. The 1944 Education Act was broadly welcomed at the time but its provision of a competitive examination (taken at the age of 11) which determined whether children went to academic 'grammar' schools or vocational 'modern' schools came under increasing attack during the 1950s. Its critics claimed that the '11 plus' exam was inefficient and discriminatory: too many of the nation's children, it was argued, were being condemned to a second-class education on the basis of a single exam taken too early in life.

Finally, one of the main planks of the consensus – the government's management of the economy – also became a matter of fierce dispute. Britain's failure to keep pace with the economic development of its European rivals caused the breakdown of the relationship between government and trade unions. Communist control of the Electricians Union became a *cause célèbre* and contributed to the increasingly hostile public perception of trade unions. Strikes increased in frequency. The number of working days lost to industrial action rose from 1.7 million in 1951 to 5.7 in 1962. TUC opposition to wage-restraint clashed with the government's attempts to control inflation by an incomes policy. By the early 1960s confidence that Keynesian demand management could maintain full employment and low inflation had been eroded.

Distinctiveness of Mr Butskell

It would be wrong to suggest that the post-war period was the only period of British history when there was a consensus. A set of shared values about national traditions, free speech, the rule of law and the legitimacy of elected governments is vital to the successful functioning of democracy. In this sense Britain has long enjoyed consensus. But the post-war period was distinctive in the degree to which it was assumed that governments could, and should, take responsibility for the management of national affairs for the public good. Confidence in Mr Butskell stemmed from the shared experience of wartime, but he was beginning to lose his gloss by the early 1960 – long before Mrs Thatcher's frontal assault on him in the 1980s. Even in his heyday Mr Butskell was not universally admired (least of all by *The Economist* article which coined his name), but he does symbolise the mood of the post-war period.

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Tasks

A. Answer the questions in full sentences and use any further research to help you give detailed answers.

1. What are the four main principles of Post-War consensus?
2. How did Churchill run the country during the War? Provide specific examples
3. What impact did this change in system have on Britain's social structure?
4. What were the 5 areas identified in the Beveridge report?
5. What did the Minister for Health announce in 1941?
6. What does nationalisation mean?
7. Why did Labour win the 1945 election?
8. What was the benefit of nationalisation?
9. Why did Churchill want to work alongside and with the unions?
10. What is a welfare state?
11. Why did Britain not grant independence to all of its colonies?
12. Why did Britain need nuclear power?
13. What success did Britain have with nuclear power?
14. How important were Keynes and Beveridge in forging a consensus in Britain?
15. On which issues was consensus strongest and on which was it weakest in 1945-64?
16. Had consensus broken down by 1964?

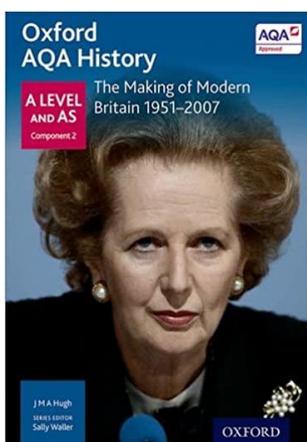
B. Complete the keyword definition list

C. You must complete the timeline and fill it with political, economic, social and foreign events. Make sure you have a key and at least 10 example for each factor for the time period. (*If possible print the timeline out on A3-the timeline cannot be edited so create your own if using the computer*)

D. Make a list of Prime ministers, Chancellor of the Exchequer's and Home Secretaries since 1945-1979 include what party they are.

TEXTBOOK for the course

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Oxford-AQA-History-Level-1951-2007/dp/0198354649/ref=sr_1_1?crid=3EHFHVH66A1C&dchild=1&keywords=making+of+modern+britain+textbook&qid=1586165916&prefix=making+of+modern%2Caps%2C172&sr=8-1



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Keywords

Imperial	
Mixed economy	
Free market	
Keynesian	
Welfare state	
Conservative party	
Labour party	
Liberal party	

Radical	
Extreme	
Invaluable	
Ideology	
Socialism	
Consensus	
Deference	

Summer Reading: The *Kaiserreich*, 1871–1914

GERMANY, 1871



Prussia and Germany

- No single country called Germany until 1871.
- Before = large number of small, independent states, loosely allied in the German Confederation
- Creation of Germany was the work of Prussia's chief minister, Otto von Bismarck
- King of Prussia, Wilhelm I became the first German Kaiser (Emperor)
- Created in 1871, Germany consisted of the Kingdom of Prussia and 24 lesser states: three smaller kingdoms, 18 principalities and three free cities
- 'Prussification' is a better description of what happened in 1871 as Prussia dominated the German Empire in every way
- After 1871 Prussia ceased to be an independent country and in her place Germany became one of the most powerful countries in Europe.

The constitution of the Second Reich- Kaiser, Chancellor and Reichstag

- Of Prussian origin, Bismarck sought to protect the power of Prussia and the Prussian ruling elite in his constitution, while allowing an element of popular democracy.
- Under constitution, component states kept their own governments but military matters were controlled by the King of Prussia
- There was to be a central law-making body with limited powers
- To outward appearance the German Empire was not a straightforwardly autocratic state like its neighbour to the east, Tsarist Russia:
- Germany had its Kaiser and also had a high-profile imperial parliament (the Reichstag) which was elected on the basis of universal suffrage
- The power of the Reichstag was LIMITED. It COULD NOT INITIATE LEGISLATION; it could only reject or amend proposals which were handed down to it by the Bundesrat
- The Bundesrat was controlled by the Kaiser
- Government ministers, chief of whom was the Imperial Chancellor (Prime Minister), were not in any way accountable to the Reichstag. They were appointed by the Kaiser and kept office as long as they retained his confidence.

The Constitution (summary)

Kaiser (Emperor of Germany and King of Prussia)

- Hereditary monarch (King of Prussia)
- Appointed/dismissed government
- Could dissolve the Reichstag (Parliament)
- Gave assent to all laws (with the Chancellor)
- Controlled foreign policy and armed forces

Chancellor and Government Ministers

- Appointed/ dismissed by Kaiser
- Proposed new laws to the Reichstag
- Gave assent to all laws (with the Kaiser)
- Not dependent upon support in the Reichstag to stay in office

Bundesrat (Upper House of Parliament)

- Presided over by the Chancellor
- Could initiate new laws
- Had to approve new laws (along with the Reichstag, Kaiser and Chancellor)
- Could veto laws passed by the Reichstag

Reichstag (Lower House of Parliament)

- Members (called deputies) elected
 - Men over 25 voted in Reichstag elections every three years
 - Gave consent to all laws
 - Could question, debate, agree to or reject a law proposed by the chancellors
 - Could not amend a law
 - Could not demand the dismissal of the chancellor or any other ministers
-

Political parties

- Conservatives
- National Liberals (moderate conservatives)
- Progressive (Liberals)
- Socialists
- Zentrum or Centre (representing the interests of Catholics)

The Constitution of Imperial Germany

Brainchild of Otto von Bismarck and designed to ENSURE THE DOMINANCE BY PRUSSIA OF THE NEW GERMAN REICH

The Key features...

- The Kaiser; the king of the largest state, Prussia, was also Kaiser of Germany. He had the power to appoint and dismiss the Chancellor and government ministers. He had the power to dissolve the Reichstag.
- Wilhelm II came to the throne in 1888 aged 29. He believed it was the Kaiser's responsibility to rule rather than to share power with the Reichstag. He was a poor decision maker and relied heavily on the military for advice. He had little regard for the Reichstag or democracy.
- The Chancellor; directly responsible to the Kaiser and in charge of the appointments of ministers. Could ignore the resolutions passed by the Reichstag. His success depended on his political ability, the character of the Kaiser and the composition of the Reichstag.

- The Bundesrat (UPPER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT); the German Reich was composed of 25 sovereign states. The Bundesrat contained 58 representatives from state governments. Prussia had 17 representatives in the Bundesrat. Decisions decided by a majority vote needed a majority of 14.
- The Reichstag (LOWER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT); Deputies to the Reichstag were elected by universal male suffrage. The government was not accountable to the Reichstag. Limited powers to initiate legislation. A majority in the Reichstag could do nothing against the Chancellor; if they voted against him, he did not resign, but dissolved the Reichstag.
- The Government; the government and ministers were appointed and dismissed by the Kaiser. It proposed new laws to the Reichstag.
- The Army; very important role in state as creation of unification. Not accountable to Reichstag – directly accountable to the Kaiser. Swore an oath of allegiance to the Kaiser. Army could declare martial law (army rule) and the elite in the army had little respect for democracy – many came from Junkers (Prussian landed class).

Bismarck's Reich was designed to give Germany stability and peace; but ultimately it doomed Germany to upheaval and war.

Political tensions

- The Kaiser's regime was backed by a number of powerful elites in Germany society.
 - Prussian landed class – the Junkers.
 - Senior officers of the German Army.
 - Bureaucrats and financiers who rose to prominence on the back of rapid economic growth in the 1880s.
- The main threat to the Kaiser's regime, SPD – Social Democratic Party – this was nominally Marxist but in practice the party for the most part was reformist and moderate. It sought to advance the socialist cause by lawful methods.
 - By 1912 it was the largest party in the Reichstag and that for a Germany committed to a monarchical ruling was worrying.

Religious divisions

- German society was divided by religion as well as by social class. Largely protestant in the North and central parts of the country but the southern states were strongly Catholic (20 million).
- In the 1870s, the Catholics formed their own political party in the Zentrum.
- Bismarck, fearing that Zentrum would become a standard bearer for all opponents of Prussian dominance, responded with a *Kulturkampf* (cultural struggle) designed to intimidate and weaken the Catholic Church.
- Although this was abandoned in the 1880s it left a legacy of bitterness behind.

STRENGTHS OF CONSTITUTION

- The regime was backed by the key elites in Germany
- Full universal male suffrage
- Autocratic nature was efficient.

WEAKNESSES OF CONSTITUTION

- Despite a national currency (*Reichsmarck*) based on the gold standard, and national criminal and civil law codes, there was an underdeveloped sense of national identity – no flag.
- The Chancellor was more powerful than the elected Reichstag.
- There was continued Prussian dominance, both in the Bundesrat and within the administration of government. There was considerable resentment from other states at this central role for Prussia.
- The constitution created a political structure that was not clear, that was fragmented and that was dominated by the conservative elites, especially those of Prussia.

How influential was the army in Germany?

- Power of the Prussian military machine enabled Bismarck to forge German unification out of three wars, 1864-1871.
- All-important role the army had played in the unification process helped to raise out of all proportion the status of its members in the Kaiserreich society.

Therefore, the German army was to be found at the centre of the political and social life of Imperial Germany:

- The oath of loyalty signed by German officers was to the military leader, the Emperor; not the state and so the military elite enjoyed great social status.
- The system of conscription for two to three years helped to instil its military values throughout the country.
- The army was virtually independent of the Reichstag and was not constrained by annual approval, since the military budget had a five-year grant.
- Within society the prestige of the army was high e.g. civilians got out of the way of officers on the pavement.
- The majority of the army officers were conservative and unsympathetic to democracy.

CHANCELLORS AFTER BISMARCK (1871-1890)

- CAPRIVI (1890-1894)

- HOHENLOHE (1894-1900)

- BÜLOW (1900-1909)

- BETHMANN-HOLLWEG (1909-1917)

Economic developments:

Before 1850 Germany lagged far behind the leaders in industrial development, Britain, France and Belgium.

German states were catching up, and by 1900 Germany was a world leader in industrialization, along with Britain and the United States.

Economic growth:

- Germany's economic growth was exceptional between 1890 and 1914.
- On average economy expanded by 4.5% a year.
- Coal and iron production almost doubled in these years.
- By 1914, Germany's share of world trade was equal to that of Britain.
- Germany's steel industry (dominated by the massive Krupp Corporation) was particularly strong
- Steel production exceeded Britain by 1900 and this fuelled the expansion of other industries e.g. armaments and the railways.

New industries:

- Germany excelled in industries that used new and innovative technologies, such as chemicals, pharmaceuticals, electrics and motor manufacture.
- Daimler and Diesel developed cars, while AEG and Siemens became huge electrical businesses
- By 1913 Germany produced around 50% of the world's electrical goods.
- In chemicals, Germany led the world in the production of synthetic dyes and pharmaceuticals and in precision engineering.

An industrial economy:

- These economic developments resulted in a growing proportion of the population working in the industrial and service sectors of the economy.
- Industry contribution to GNP rose from around 33% to 45%.

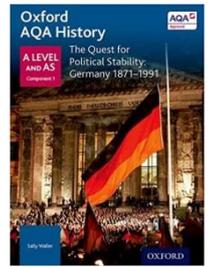
Improved transport infrastructure:

- Germany's transport network also developed with trains, tramways and trolley buses constructed to facilitate travel and industrial development.

Social consequences**Urbanisation:**

- Population boom and new jobs in industry stimulated urbanisation.
- By 1910, 60% of the population lived in urban areas, the highest rate in Europe.
- The populations of Breslau, Cologne, Hamburg and Munich all exceeded half a million by 1910, while Berlin had in excess of 2 million inhabitants.
- The growth of the urban working class led to the emergence of trade unions and the SPD. To the traditional elites (e.g. the Kaiser and Junkers) this represented a serious challenge to their authority.
- Peasants suffered during the social and economic changes of these years; thousands of peasants left the land in search of work in the new industrial towns and cities. The percentage of the population employed in agriculture fell from 50% in 1871 to 35% in 1907.
- the middle class expanded significantly in size during this period. White collar workers in industry, business and administration all became more numerous.
- the landowning Junker class came under more pressure in this period as incomes from agriculture fell. Some landowners were forced to sell their estates to the newly rich upper middle class families from the cities.

A-level History: Summer Research Tasks



Textbook you must have for the A-level:

- Sally Waller, *Oxford AQA History for A Level: The Quest for Political Stability: Germany 1871-1991* (Oxford University Press, 2015) **ISBN-10:** 0198354681

You could buy this over the summer to help you complete the summer research tasks. The textbook can be purchased on Amazon or from the publisher:

https://global.oup.com/education/searchresults?search_input=germany+1871+1991®ion=uk

AQA Unit 1L: The quest for political stability: Germany, 1871–1991

The first section of Unit 1L covers the *Kaiserreich* (German Empire) between 1871 and 1914.

Throughout year 12 you will need to consider the following key questions:

- How was Germany governed and how did political authority change and develop?
- How effective was opposition?
- How and with what results did the economy develop and change?
- What was the extent of social and cultural change?
- How important were ideas and ideology?
- How important was the role of key individuals and groups and how were they affected by developments?

Task 1: Complete the tasks below that relate to the key questions. *To complete these tasks use the 'summer reading.'* This can be found on the school website.

There will be a knowledge test on the questions when you begin Year 12.

- ***How was Germany governed and how did political authority change and develop?***

1) What do the following German key words mean in English? These key words relate to the system of government in Germany from 1871.

Kaiser:

Chancellor:

Reichstag:

Bundesrat:

2) What powers did these have? Add details above.

3) What are the names of the different *Kaisers* and *Chancellors* between 1871 and 1914?

Kaisers:

Chancellors:

- ***How effective was opposition?***

4) What were the main opposition groups to the *Chancellors* and *Kaisers* between 1871 and 1914?

Left-wing ←————→ **Right-wing**

Stretch yourself: Try to arrange these on the political line.

• **How and with what results did the economy develop and change?**

5) In what ways was there rapid economic growth between 1871 and 1914?

• **What was the extent of social and cultural change?**

6) What were the different social groups that made up German society between 1871 and 1914? (E.g. working class)

• **How important were ideas and ideology?**

7) What do the keywords conservative, autocracy, democracy, socialism and liberalism mean? Use a dictionary to find definitions for these keywords, for example <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/> or <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/>. Relate the definitions to the years 1871-1914 in German history.

Conservative:

Autocracy:

Democracy:

Socialism:

Liberalism:

Task 2: Complete the timeline for German History between 1871 and 1914, which is on the next page. Complete the timeline on the computer so you can include lots of key events and details.

To complete the timeline add dates and details for political, religious, economic and social events. Also add details that relate to the 'key dates' column. You need to use:

- The 'summer reading'
- The online timeline:

<http://fdslive.oup.com/www.oup.com/oxed/secondary/history/The%20Quest%20for%20Political%20Stability%20Germany%20timeline.pdf>

- Your own research. Britannica Online is very useful: <https://www.britannica.com/>

You *could* also use:

- Pages 1 to 58 in the textbook: Sally Waller, *Oxford AQA History for A Level: The Quest for Political Stability: Germany 1871-1991* (Oxford University Press, 2015) **ISBN-10:** 0198354681

Other books to support the A-level:

- Mary Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany* (Cambridge University Press, 2019)
- Steve Ellis and Alan Farmer, *AQA A-level History: The Quest for Political Stability: Germany 1871-1991*, (Hodder Education, 2015)
- Derrick Murphy, Terry Morris and Mary Fulbrook, *Flagship History: Germany 1848-1991*, (Collins Educational, 2008)

German History, 1871-1914

	Key dates	Political events	Religious events	Economic events	Social events
1870	<p>1871 German unification: Second Reich declared. <u>Wilhelm I</u> first Kaiser and <u>Bismarck</u> first Chancellor.</p> <p>1873 May Laws directed against Catholic Church in Prussia.</p> <p>1875 Social Democratic Party (SPD) formed.</p> <p>1878 Anti-Socialist Law passed.</p>				
1880	<p>1883 Medical Insurance introduced beginning series of welfare reforms.</p> <p>1888 <u>Wilhelm II</u> became Kaiser.</p>				
1890	<p>1890 Bismarck was forced to resign. Caprivi became Chancellor and introduced 'new course.'</p> <p>1894 Prince Hohenlohe became Chancellor.</p> <p>1897 <i>Weltpolitik</i> (world policy) launched– an expansionist foreign policy.</p> <p>1898 Naval League founded. First German Naval Law.</p>				
1900	<p>1900 Bülow became Chancellor.</p> <p>1900-1908 National debt doubled.</p> <p>1907 Bülow Bloc.</p> <p>1908 Daily Telegraph Affair.</p> <p>1909 Bethmann-Hollweg became Chancellor.</p>				
1910	<p>1912 Social Democrats became the largest party in the Reichstag.</p> <p>1913 Zabern Affair produced protests against the military. Vote of no-confidence against Chancellor in Reichstag, but Kaiser kept him in office.</p> <p>1914 Germany declared war on Russia then France and <u>World War I</u> broke out.</p>				
1914					