American Diplomats and the Franco-Prussian War: Perceptions from Paris and Berlin

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Description
In July 1870, war between Prussia and France erupted over the candidature of a German prince to the Spanish throne, with far-reaching consequences for the balance of power in Europe. Six weeks later, the German army decisively defeated the French at Sedan and captured the French emperor, Napoleon III. Although this victory precipitated the collapse of the Second French Empire, it did not end the war. Only after a four-month siege of Paris did the French surrender to the Germans on January 28, 1871. Between this date and the signing of the peace treaty at Frankfurt on May 10, both France and Germany underwent far-reaching changes in their governmental structure: the war and its aftermath created the Third French Republic and the Second German Reich.

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The Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1 violently changed the course of European History. Alarmed by Bismarck's territorial ambitions and the Prussian army's crushing defeats of Denmark in 1864 and Austria in 1866, French Emperor Napoleon III vowed to bring Prussia to heel. Digging into many European and American archives for the first time, Geoffrey Wawro's The Franco-Prussian War describes the war that followed in thrilling detail. While the armies mobilized in July 1870, the conflict appeared 'too close to call'. With consummate skill he has woven together diplomatic developments before and during the war, the decisions and motives of the key political and military figures on both sides, and military operations with detailed accounts of the fighting in the different battles … After Prussian victory in the Austro-Prussian war in 1866, Napoleon III of France looked for the purchase of Luxemburg as compensation for neutrality in the war. French diplomat Vincent Benedetti even proposed a draft treaty of Franco-Prussian alliance to Bismarck, which was called "the Benedetti treaty", proposing French annexation of Belgium. He later used them as a means to discredit France before the Franco-Prussian War by disclosing this treaty in The Times on July 25, together with the conspiracy of Napoleon III towards Belgium. At last, this previous dominant power in the Central Europe lost only Venetia, Holstein and the presidency in the German Confederation according to the Treaty of Prague.