



# The Battle of Königgrätz: Prussia's Victory over Austria, 1866

*Gordon A. Craig*

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Königgrätz, a city overlooking the river Elbe, was a western strongpoint of the Austrian Empire. On the morning of July 3, 1866, Prussia attacked the city against high odds and defeated the Austrian army in a single day, despite the Austrian advantage in heavy artillery and command of the high ground. The fall of Königgrätz transferred power over the German states from Austria to Prussia, marking the beginning of the German nation, a political consequence considered to be among the most important of any conflict in modern history.

The battle for the city of Königgrätz—now called Hradec Králové, located in the Czech Republic—was the largest of its time, with nearly half a million troops involved. It was also the first battle where the outcome was directly determined by the availability of new technologies, including the railroad, telegraph, cast steel rifled cannon, and breech-loading rifle. It also marked a lesson in the fallacy of dependence on technology at the expense of sound strategy.

In this full account, distinguished historian Gordon A. Craig discusses the state of political affairs surrounding the battle, the personalities involved, the weaponry, and the tactics in order to recreate the battlefield in all its complexity.

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