

Transition material for GCE History 9HI0 2D Unification of Italy 1830 – 1870

Key Facts & Summary of Italian Unification.

- Also known as Risorgimento, the Italian unification was a political and social movement that consolidated different states of the Italian peninsula into a single state of the Kingdom of Italy in the 19th century.
- The process began in 1815, with the Congress of Vienna acting as a detonator, and was completed in 1871 when Rome became the capital. However, the last Italian territories under foreign rule did not join the Kingdom of Italy until 1918, after Italy finally defeated Austria-Hungary in World War I.
- As other foreign powers were responsible for the situation of Italy, their very presence motivated Italians to strive for unification, however, Italy's successful unification, ironically, would not have come to pass without the help of other foreign powers.
- The situation of Italy after unification can best be described after the statement of professor Serge Hughes: "Now that we have made Italy, we must make Italians."
- Giuseppe Garibaldi, Giuseppe Mazzini, Count Cavour and Victor Emmanuel II are considered to be "the fathers of the fatherland".

Prologue

Italy was first united by Rome in the third century B.C. It remained for over 700 years the de facto extension of the capital of the Roman Republic and Empire. It experienced a privileged status and evaded being converted into a province. Even with the fall of the Western Roman Empire, Italy remained united under the Ostrogothic Kingdom. However, this would later be disputed between the Kingdom of the Lombards and the Eastern Roman Empire.

Following the conquest of the Frankish Empire, the title of King of Italy merged with the office of Holy Roman Emperor. The emperors that followed had little concern for the governance of Italy as a state. This led Italy to gradually devolve into a system of city-states. Southern Italy was governed by the Kingdom of Sicily or Kingdom of Naples, initially established by the Normans. Central Italy was governed by the Pope as a temporal kingdom known as the Papal States.

It remained as such through the Renaissance but began to deteriorate with the rise of modern nation-states. Italy, including the Papal States, became the site of proxy wars between the major powers: The Holy Roman Empire including Austria, Spain, and France. Harbingers of national unity appeared as early as 1454, beginning with the Italic League treaty and in the 15th century, the foreign policy of Cosimo de Medici and Lorenzo de Medici helped to emphasize this.

This influenced and led Renaissance writers such as Dante, Petrarch, Machiavelli and Guicciardini to express opposition to foreign domination. The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 formally ended the rule of the Holy Roman Emperors in Italy but the Spanish branch of the Habsburg dynasty continued to rule most of Italy down to the War of the Spanish Succession in 1701-1714. After this war, Spain ceded Naples, Milan and Sardinia to the Austrian Empire and Sicily to Savoy.

Italian Unification

Italy was thus divided into many small principalities, and it would remain that way until the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789.

Below are a series of maps showing the different situations of the Italian peninsula on the way to unification.

Task: Create a time line of these maps and outline the events of each that resulted in the map changing. Track the names of the main protagonists during this time. Mazzini, Cavour, Victor Emmanuelle, Charles Albert, Pope Pius IX, Napoleon, and actions of Austria Hungary.







Unification under Napoleon

During the French Revolution, Napoleon Bonaparte rose to power and proceeded to conquer the Italian states. This conquest was a success and it brought the small principalities under a single administrative unit. Through this process, Italy became part of the French Empire and thus imbibed the ideals of the French Revolution which promoted liberty, equality, fraternity and strengthened the people's participation in the political process. The empire established by Napoleon had served as a fuel for revolutionary ideas, as he even encouraged nationalism.



Napoleon thus implemented a wide array of liberal reforms in France and across Continental Europe, especially in Italy and Germany, as summarized by British historian Andrew Roberts: "The ideas that underpin our modern world—meritocracy, equality before the law, property rights, religious toleration, modern secular education, sound finances, and so on—were championed, consolidated, codified and geographically extended by Napoleon.

CODE CIVIL

DES FRANÇAIS.

TITRE PRÉLIMINAIRE.

DE LA PUBLICATION, DES EFFETS ET DE L'APPLICATION DES LOIS EN GÉNÉRAL.

Décrété le 14 Ventôse an XI.

Promulgué le 24 du même mois.

ARTICLE 1.^{er}

LES lois sont exécutoires dans tout le territoire français, en vertu de la promulgation qui en est faite par le **PREMIER CONSUL**.

Elles seront exécutées dans chaque partie de la République, du moment où la promulgation en pourra être connue.

La promulgation faite par le **PREMIER CONSUL** sera réputée connue dans le département où siègera le Gouvernement, un jour après celui de la promulgation ; et dans chacun des autres départemens, après l'expiration du même délai, augmenté d'autant de jours qu'il y aura de fois dix myriamètres [environ vingt lieues anciennes] entre la ville où la

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To them, he added a rational and efficient local administration, an end to rural banditry, the encouragement of science and the arts, the abolition of feudalism and the greatest codification of laws since the fall of the Roman Empire." Napoleon directly overthrew remnants of feudalism in much of western Continental Europe and established the Napoleonic Code – Code Civil. The Napoleonic Code focused on clearly written and accessible laws, it was a major step in replacing the previous patchwork of feudal laws.

As the Napoleonic Wars went on in Europe, Napoleon's reign began to fail and other national monarchs he had installed tried to keep their thrones by feeding those nationalistic sentiments, setting the stage for the revolutions to come. Among these monarchs were the viceroy of Italy, Eugène de Beauharnais, who tried to get the Austrian Empire's approval for his succession to the Kingdom of Italy, and Joachim Murat, who called for Italian patriots' help for the unification of Italy under his rule.

Both men failed to consolidate their grip on Italy. Eugène fought in the Battle of Lützen in 1813 and was then ordered by Napoleon to go back to Italy and defend it from Austria. He was holding out at the Battle of Mincio until Napoleon abdicated in 1814. Murat fought in the Battle of Leipzig and despite France's defeat in Leipzig in 1813, Murat reached an agreement with the Austrian Empire in order to save his throne.

However, during the Hundred Days, the period in which Napoleon although defeated, returned from his exile and tried to consolidate power again, Murat realized that the European powers meeting at the Congress of Vienna, intended to remove him as well from power. Murat issued a proclamation to the Italian patriots in Rimini and moved north to fight against Austria in the Neapolitan War in order to strengthen his rule in Italy by military means. He was however defeated by the Austrian in the Battle of Tolentino in 1815.

Congress of Vienna – Italy is split again

The Congress of Vienna in 1815 aimed to restore Europe to its former position, reversing everything that happened since the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, however, they couldn't undo everything. The desire for unification increased even more than before.



They tried to set aside Napoleon's changes and restore the old rulers back on their thrones. Italy was once again divided into numerous states: the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, the Duchy of Parma, the Papal States, and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies – fused together from the old Kingdom of Naples and Kingdom of Sicily.

Although the Kingdom of Italy established by Napoleon crumbled, and the Italian peninsula remained fragmented through the mid-1800s, the concept of a united Italy began to take root.

Revolutions of 1848

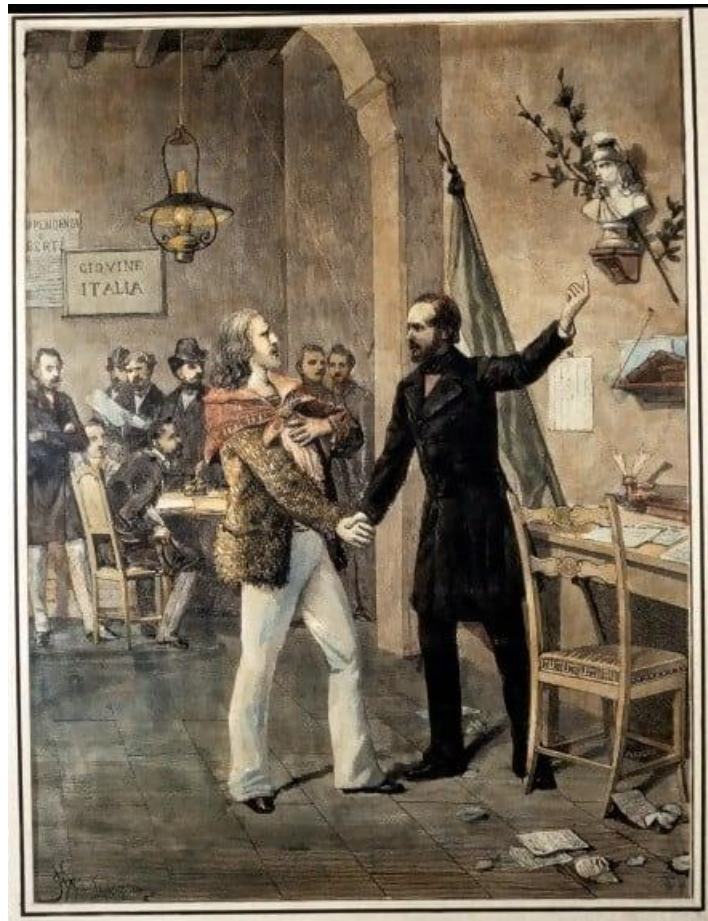
It quickly became clear to many Italians that the Italy created by the Congress of Vienna was inefficient and ineffective. Hunger due to crop failures, lack of employment and other necessities were absent, the ruling class idle, unmoved and unwilling to make changes.

Secret societies formed to oppose the newly established conservative regimes. Several of these societies also promoted Italian nationalism and the idea of a unified Italian political state. One such society was the Carbonari, and it aimed to liberate Italy through armed uprisings. The Carbonari were inspired by the principles of the French Revolution.



They were persecuted by the reigning authorities, condemned to death for even attending Carbonari meetings. The society, however, continued to exist and was at the root of many of the political disturbances in Italy from 1820 until after unification. Giuseppe Mazzini was a member of the Carbonari and the creator of another organization called Young Italy. He is one of the most important figures that led to the Italian unification.

Young Italy was formed in 1831 and aimed at the independence and unification of Italy and the subsequent establishment of a republic. This organization tried to encourage young men to join and support the cause of unification. Thus, the movement of Italian unification, a process referred to as the Risorgimento, proliferated by mid-century. Young Italy attracted the attention of Giuseppe Garibaldi, another iconic figure in the Italian unification. Garibaldi joined forces with Mazzini in 1833 and together they worked forward to accomplish their ideals. In February 1834 a failed Mazzinian insurrection in Piedmont forced Garibaldi to flee to South America.



During his stay there, he participated in a couple of battles and raised an Italian legion named the Red Shirts. He was always thinking of his homeland though, and when a new pope was elected Pius IX in 1846, he saw an opportunity to return. The new pope had already made some reforms that appealed to most of the Italians that wanted a change including Mazzini who was in exile. During the outbreak of the revolution in Palermo in 1848, Garibaldi could no longer stay put and came back to Italy.

Garibaldi returned amidst the turmoil of the revolutions in 1848 and offered his services to Charles Albert of Sardinia. He offered assistance to the provisional government of Milan which revolted against the Austrians. In the course of the following unsuccessful First Italian War of Independence, Garibaldi won minor victories.



However, the new pope soon proved to be of no use for the unification, he ordered his troops to retreat and the rest of the revolutionaries were vastly outnumbered. A crushing defeat at the battle of Novara in 1849, forced Garibaldi to move to Rome and support the recently proclaimed Roman Republic in the Papal States after the pope was forced to flee due to many Italians protesting against his previous decision.

However, Napoleon III of France sent an army to return the papacy to Rome, wishing to gain favour with the pope. Mazzini urged Garibaldi to take the defence of the city of Rome. Despite a great victory over France's superior numbers, it was clear that they couldn't hold the city for much longer. The Roman Assembly met and debated three options: surrender, fight or retreat to the Apennine mountains and continue the resistance, Garibaldi chose the third option and said: "Wherever we will go, that will be Rome." The two sides negotiated a truce and withdrew from Rome. Mazzini and Garibaldi parted on different paths, yet they would continue to fight for Italy's unification, their actions, although thwarted, managed to.

Second Italian War of Independence

Charles Albert was forced to abdicate during the revolutions, leaving the crown to his son Victor Emmanuel II, the third great figure of Italian unification.



In 1859 Piedmont-Sardinia managed to secure a secret defensive pact with France. Because the pact was purely defensive, Cavour, the prime minister of Piedmont-Sardinia and the last great figure of Italian unification, decided to provoke the Austrians into fighting. He accomplished this by stationing troops close to the border prompting the Habsburg government to issue an ultimatum that was rejected.

The war had begun but not long after, France entered into secret negotiations with Austria fearing the possibility of Prussian involvement. An armistice was signed which granted Sardinia-Piedmont the state of Lombardy but Austria would retain control over the central states of Italy. Much to Emmanuel's dismay, this latter term was never enforced, however, and the French made no attempt to expel the Italian garrisons that then assumed control over the regions since the outbreak of the war.

In return for French backing, Cavour ceded Nice and Savoy to France. This decision enraged the Italians and the preeminent general during the conflict namely Giuseppe Garibaldi, who had returned to Italy since 1854. Garibaldi abandoned Mazzini's republican ideal of the liberation of Italy, assuming that only Emmanuel II could achieve it together with the help of Cavour and so they allied.



When Cavour ceded Nice, which was the birthplace of Garibaldi, it led to frictions between the two. Garibaldi would continue to protest and promote the Italian irredentism and promptly launched an expedition against Sicily and managed to conquer it in his name. In this time, Cavour secured the incorporation of Parma, Modena, Tuscany and the Papal States with the exception of Rome. Cavour was worried that Garibaldi, a democrat, was replacing Sardinia, a constitutional monarchy, as the unifier of Italy.

In order to stop Garibaldi, Cavour ordered Sardinian troops into the Papal States and the Kingdom of Naples. He organized a plebiscite to annex Naples to Sardinia. Garibaldi was thus outmanoeuvred by Cavour's *realpolitik*, a notion that states that politics should be conducted in terms of a realistic assessment of power and the self-interest of individual nation-states by any means.



Cavour understood the relationships between national and international events. Garibaldi was on the road to an inevitable conflict with the monarchies of Europe while he, representing a monarch, blended perfectly with the political situation in Europe at the time. Cavour's rapid annexation of the mentioned states forced Garibaldi to cede his control of Naples and Sicily to Emmanuel II. Later in 1861, Italy was declared a united nation-state under the Sardinian king Victor Emmanuel II.

Austro-Prussian War

Although most states of the Italian Peninsula were united and the Kingdom Of Italy was created, Venice and the much reduced Papal States were still far from their control. Garibaldi took up arms again in 1866, this time with the full support of the Italian government. The increasing discord between Austria and Prussia over the German Question turned into open war in 1866, granting an opportunity for Italy to try and capture Venice.

The German state of Prussia was aware of the tensions provoked by Austria's presence in Venice, and the Italian Government seeking an ally against Austria, so they decided to ally with Italy. On the 8th of April, 1866, Alfonso La Marmora, the President of the Council, entered into an agreement with Otto von Bismarck, the Prussian Prime Minister. Italy would now vow to support Prussia in the case of war against Austria. Austria soon realized the brewing threat and offered the transfer of Venice back to Italy as an olive branch.

Faced with a difficult choice, La Marmora tried to stall and decided not to support a war against either Prussia or Austria. Prussia, on the other hand, would not wait and on June 12th, cut all ties with Austria and invaded some of its territories four days later. Italy finally joined the battle on June 23rd starting the Third Italian War of Unification.



The Austrian Empire had no chance against these combined forces and after suffering numerous defeats, mostly to Prussia, a peace treaty ensued. The cessation of hostilities was agreed to at the Armistice of Cormons signed on 12 August, followed by the Treaty of Vienna on 3 October 1866. The terms of the Peace of Prague included the giving of the Iron Crown of Lombardy to Victor Emmanuel II, the King of Italy. Venice was won by Italy after a plebiscite but Trentino, Rome, Friuli and Trieste remained to be captured.

End of the unification

By the end of the war, Italy's desire for unification had been emboldened, making the Third War for Independence another crucial step on the path to full national unity.

In 1871 Prussia attacks France starting the Franco-Prussian War. France, which had some troops in Rome, had to pull them back in order to fight the Prussians. Italy sees its chance and invades Rome successfully conquering it and making the Pope a prisoner in his own home.

This will turn the Pope against the Italian state for several decades. Officially, the capital was not moved from Florence to Rome until July 1871.

The unification of Italy was thus completed by the Capture of Rome and later by the annexation of Trentino, Friuli and Trieste at the end of World War I, also called in Italy the Fourth Italian War of Independence.

Aftermath

Dante Alighieri, Machiavelli, Cesare Borgia developed the national consciousness of Italy, however, their work and aspirations were developed and completed by Cavour, Mazzini, Garibaldi and Emmanuel II, men considered to be the fathers of Italy.

After the unification, Italy faced a number of problems. The middle class and aristocracy had never truly been won over by the revolutionary ideals that trickled down from France. The Pope was still against the state until Mussolini came to power.

In addition, the Italian parliament experienced gridlock as socialists and liberals failed to compromise on even the most basic pieces of legislation. Italians were still as disunited as ever, these issues plague Italy throughout the 19th century and some could say even today.

Online resources

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kjFscoiE8eI>

10 minute history Unification of Italy.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ut5eAN040vQ>

Unification of Italy. Focus on roles of Mazzini, Garibaldi and Cavour.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSjDe9_jZk8

Crash course in Italian unification.

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[8.] Jasper Ridley, *Garibaldi* (2001)

[9.] Denis Mack Smith, *Mazzini* (1996).

[10.] Nelson Moe, “‘This is not Italy!’: Ruling and Representing the South, 1860-1861”, in *The View from the Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question, 156–183* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 166.

Image source:

- [1.] <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/00/Italian-unification.gif>
- [2.] https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/92/Episodio_delle_cinque_giornate_%28Baldassare_Verazzi%29.jpg
- [3.] https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e7/Code_Civil_1804.png
- [4.] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concert_of_Europe#/media/File:Europe_1815_map_en.png
- [5.] https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b1/Museo_Torre_di_San_Martino_della_Battaglia_-_affresco_05.jpg
- [6.] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giuseppe_Mazzini#/media/File:Giuseppe_Mazzini.jpg
- [7.] https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/98/First_meeting_between_Giuseppe_Garibaldi.jpg
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