

Attempts to Unify during the Early 19th Century

Original Document: Giuseppe Mazzini's Nationalism

Giuseppe Mazzini was a revolutionary in the romantic tradition, and his attempts to unify Italy in the 1830s and 1840s failed, only to be accomplished under Cavour's more pragmatic, conservative leadership later in the century. Nevertheless, Mazzini remained an influential exponent of nationalism, as is indicated by his most famous essay, "The Duties of Man," which is excerpted below.

"But you tell me . . . The individual is too insignificant, and Humanity too vast. The mariner of Brittany prays to God as he puts to sea: Help me, my God! my boat is so small and thy ocean so wide! And this prayer is the true expression of the condition of each one of you, until you find the means of infinitely multiplying your forces and powers of action. This means was provided for you by God when he gave you a country; when, even as a wise overseer of labour distributes the various branches of employment according to the different capacities of the workmen, he divided Humanity into distinct groups or nuclei upon the face of the earth, thus creating the germ of Nationalities. Evil governments have disfigured the divine design But the Divine design will infallibly be realized. Natural divisions, and the spontaneous innate tendencies of the peoples, will take the place of the arbitrary divisions sanctioned by evil governments

O my brothers, love your Country! Our country is our Home, the house that God has given us, placing therein a numerous family that loves us, and whom we love"

Between 1815 and 1845, two charismatic leaders – Giuseppe Mazzini and Vincenzo Gioberti – led unsuccessful movements to unite Italy. Mazzini sought a centralized democratic republic based on universal suffrage and the will of the people, and Gioberti – a Catholic priest – called for a federation of existing states under the leadership of the pope. When Mazzini's republicanism was defeated by Austria in 1848, another option for unification became more viable – consolidation of states under Sardinia's monarch, Victor Emmanuel I, who granted a liberal constitution to his country in 1848. Sardinia had a parliamentary government, with elected representatives who had real power over taxes. To many middle-class liberals, this option seemed much more reliable than Mazzini's radical republicanism. The pope, too, became reconciled to unification under a constitutional monarch after he was

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temporarily driven from Rome during the upheavals of 1848, a situation that caused him to fear republicanism.

Cavour and Garibaldi in Italy

Victor Emmanuel's able chief minister, Camillo Benso di Cavour, emerged as an important architect for the unification of Italy during the 1850s. Cavour – an aristocrat – embraced the economic doctrine and business activities associated with the prosperous middle class, and so he led the way for the alliance between the aristocracy and the middle class under the banner of the strong nation-state. He joined the Crimean War on the side of France and Britain, and impressed the diplomats at the peace conference with his intelligence and political ability. His national goals were limited and realistic; until 1859 he sought unity only for the states of northern and perhaps central Italy in a greatly enlarged Sardinia. His program of highway and railroad-building, civil liberties, and opposition to clerical privilege appealed to moderates throughout northern Italy. In order to drive Austria from the northern Italian states, Cavour enlisted the aid of Napoleon III to goad Austria into attacking Sardinia. Napoleon came to Sardinia's defense, but once victorious, he turned on Sardinia and made a compromise peace with the Austrians. Cavour felt betrayed, but the war had driven Austria from most of northern Italy, and dedicated nationalists in central Italy supported his cause, so that the people in several central Italian states voted in early 1860 to join with Sardinia under Victor Emmanuel's rule.

By 1860 Napoleon was quite concerned about the rising power of Sardinia, but Cavour expanded his dream of a united Italy by calling on superpatriot Giuseppe Garibaldi for support. Garibaldi had fought in the revolution of 1848 for the cause of republicanism, but he set aside his ideological differences with Cavour in order to achieve unification. He seized the momentum gained from the unification of northern Italy to support Sicilian rebels who rose against the Bourbon-controlled government of the kingdom of Naples. In May 1860, Garibaldi set sail from Genoa with a thousand poorly-trained but dedicated red-shirted volunteers to Palermo, where his forces defeated the better-equipped government army, and within two months he had occupied almost all of Sicily. Volunteers from all over Italy joined Garibaldi, and with this support, he sailed to the Italian mainland, where he won the entire kingdom of Naples.

Cavour shared Garibaldi's goal of unification, but he feared that

Garibaldi's charisma would unleash support for republicanism, so he sent his army to occupy the Papal States to ensure that Garibaldi did not overthrow the pope, who was reluctant to give up his lands to a unified Italy. Although Garibaldi supported republicanism over constitutional monarchy, he accepted the leadership of Sardinia, and he willingly submitted the southern part of Italy – which he controlled – to King Victor Emmanuel II. Garibaldi and the king met in Naples to seal the union of north and south, and their historic ride through the streets together symbolically created the country of Italy. Venice became part of the kingdom in 1866, and Rome joined in 1870. The new kingdom was neither radical nor democratic, and Cavour had succeeded in turning popular nationalism in a conservative direction.

The Unification of Germany

After the Frankfurt Assembly failed to achieve German unification in 1848-1849, German nationalists looked to Austria and Prussia as the only two states powerful enough to lead the unification movement. However, these two traditional rivals constantly sought to check one another's influence, and so little progress toward a united Germany was made during the 1850s. Eventually, by the early 1860s, Austria's fear that nationalism would tear its empire apart tilted the leadership toward Prussia. Another factor that supported Prussian leadership was the rapid growth of industry in the north, which – along with the German customs union (Zollverein) – greatly enriched Prussia. Austria tried to destroy the Zollverein, but without success, so that the exclusion of Austria from the new Germany became an economic reality.

The Rise of Bismarck

Italy's Sardinian-led national uprising greatly encouraged Prussia to do likewise in Germany. The Prussian king, Wilhelm I, came to power in 1861, and he had great ambitions to strengthen the country further through military reform. However, Prussia had emerged from 1848 with a parliament populated by the landed aristocracy and the wealthy middle class whose goal it was to make Prussia less, not more, militaristic. Above all, these representatives wanted to establish that parliament, not the king, had the ultimate political power. In 1862, the king appointed Count Otto von Bismarck as prime minister, and hoped that together they could enlarge and strengthen the military. Bismarck ignored parliament's opposition to the reforms, and he collected the necessary taxes and reorganized the government

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anyway. From 1862 to 1866, Bismarck governed Prussia with little input from the legislature, and he promoted an active foreign policy, which led to war and German unification. In 1863, elections sustained the liberal majority in parliament, so Bismarck found a way to attract popular support away from parliament and toward the monarchy and the army. He played on German nationalism to support the military in its conquests, and he, like Cavour in Italy, brought about unification through conservative institutions, and held populist republican impulses at bay.

Bismarck's approach to Germany unification is often termed *realpolitik*, or the politics of reality. Rather than following an ideal dream of natural brotherhood, he strategized from a practical perspective, meeting facts and situations as they arose. The wars that he waged were chosen when all other diplomatic alternatives had been exhausted and after he was reasonably confident that he could win. *Realpolitik* is a German term, and Bismarck was its most famous proponent, but many others – including Louis Napoleon and Camillo di Cavour – also used it to their advantage.

Original Document: Bismarck's "Blood and Iron" Speech

In September 1862 there was a crisis in Prussia where the Prussian Landtag, or lower parliamentary house, refused to approve increased military spending in defiance of the king's wishes. On September 17th, the crisis had reached such a pitch that Wilhelm I seriously considered abdicating his throne. His royal authority was saved by the appointment of Otto von Bismarck as prime minister, who asserted authoritarian control over the unruly legislators with these famous words:

"The position of Prussia in Germany will not be determined by its liberalism but by its power. ..Prussia must concentrate its strength and hold it for the favourable moment, which has already come and gone several times. Since the treaties of Vienna, our frontiers have been ill-designed for a healthy body politic. Not through speeches and majority decisions will the great questions of the day be decided – that was the great mistake of 1848 and 1849 – but by iron and blood."

Over time, the last phrase of the speech has been reversed, so that it is known in history as the "blood and iron" speech, a tribute to military might and the Industrial Revolution.

Wars with Denmark and Austria

Bismarck's first war was against Denmark over the duchies of Schleswig

and Holstein after the Danish king tried again in 1864, as in 1848, to claim them for a centralized Danish state. Their populations were a mixture of Germans and Danes, with Holstein belonging to the German Confederation, and Bismarck convinced Austria to join him in attacking Denmark. Together the two large states easily defeated Denmark, and they agreed to divide the supervision of the two duchies, with Prussia taking Schleswig and Austria administering Holstein. However, Bismarck used this joint supervision to create friction with the Austrians and provoke them into a war in the summer of 1866.

Austria went to war with the support of most small states in the German Confederation. Within a few weeks the modernized Prussian army, using railroads and breech-loading rifles against the more traditional Austria military, won a decisive victory. Bismarck then was in a position to exclude Austria from German affairs, and he organized a North German Confederation controlled by Prussia. He coerced the south German states to sign a military treaty with Prussia, and he also established a customs parliament for all the members of the Zollverein, including the southern German states. The southern states, though, were Catholic and sympathetic to Austria, so further measures were needed to convince them to unify under Prussian control.

War with France

Bismarck realized that a patriotic war with France would convince the south German states to accept Prussian leadership of a unified Germany, and he understood the ambitions of the French emperor, Napoleon III. The pretext for the dispute was whether a distant relative of Prussia's Wilhelm I might become king of Spain. However, the French needed little prodding to declare war in 1870, since Napoleon III wanted to bolster his star power with the French people, and he also reacted with alarm to Bismarck's growing power. With the motivation of teaching Prussia a lesson, France declared war on Prussia on July 15, 1870. The south German states reacted as Bismarck had calculated they would, and they gave the Prussians their wholehearted support. The war was short, and it ended on September 1, 1870, with Prussia's decisive, humiliating defeat of the French army at a battle at Sedan, where Napoleon III himself was captured. Three days later, republicans in Paris vowed to continue fighting in an effort to restore the French Republic, but they surrendered in January 1871 to Bismarck's siege.

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The victorious Wilhelm I was proclaimed emperor (“*kaiser*,” a derivative of the word “Caesar”) of Germany in the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles Palace in the splendid surroundings that had once graced the court of Louis XIV. There the Second German Empire was proclaimed as a follow-up to the Holy Roman Empire that Napoleon I had destroyed. The terms of the peace treaty signed in May 1871 required France to cede the rich industrial provinces of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany and to pay a multibillion-franc indemnity. As a result of this great victory, Germany had become the most powerful state on the Continent in less than a decade. At last, Germany was united and liberals rejoiced, although the deed had been accomplished by an authoritarian monarchy using military might, an illustration of the adaptability of the concept of nationalism. All ideologies embraced nationalism as it became a powerful force in reshaping virtually every corner of Europe.