

Chapter 13

THE CONSOLIDATION OF LARGE NATION- STATES, 1859–1871



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The rise of nineteenth-century nationalism and the quest for unified national governments led to a remarkable consolidation of nation-states during the 12 years after 1859. Notable political unifications and reforms in Europe during this period included the formation of a new German empire, a unified kingdom of Italy, the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary, and the introduction of drastic internal changes in tsarist Russia. Although this chapter focuses mainly on national consolidations within Europe, it is also important to note that the historical movement toward the unification of larger national states was part of a global pattern that included the triumph of central authority after a civil war in the United States, the creation of an independent, united Dominion of Canada, and the emergence of a modernizing government and economy in the empire of Japan. All these disparate events reflected profound changes that

accompanied the development of new technologies such as the railroad, steamship, and telegraph. The communication of ideas, exchange of goods, and movement of people over wide areas became more frequent and easier than ever before. New technologies and the rapid expansion of new industries strengthened the political power of nation-states, which gained increasing influence in the evolving social, economic, and cultural life of all modern societies.

Chapter emblem: Detail from a painting by Anton von Werner of the Proclamation of the German Empire at Versailles in 1871. (Bismarck Museum/Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY)

63. BACKGROUNDS: THE IDEA OF THE NATION-STATE

Before 1860 there were two prominent, relatively coherent nation-states in Europe—Great Britain and France. Spain, united on the map, was internally so fragmented as to belong to a different category. Portugal, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the Scandinavian countries were nation-states, but small or peripheral to the main national centers of European power. The characteristic political organizations were small states comprising fragments of a nation, such as were strewn across the middle of Europe—Hanover, Baden, Sardinia, Tuscany, or the Two Sicilies—and large sprawling empires made up of all sorts of peoples, distantly ruled from above by dynasties and bureaucracies, such as the Romanov, Habsburg, and Ottoman domains. Except for recent developments in the Americas the same mixture of small nonnational states and of large nonnational empires was to be found in most of the rest of the world.

Since 1860 or 1870 a nation-state system has prevailed. The consolidation of large nations became a model for other peoples large and small. In time, in the following century, other large groups of people undertook to establish nation-states as they gained independence from European colonial empires in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Small and middle-sized populations increasingly thought of themselves as nations, entitled to their own political sovereignty and independence. Some of these sovereignties that emerged after 1945 comprised fewer people than a single modern city. The idea of the nation-state has thus served both to bring people together into larger units and to break them apart into smaller ones. In the nineteenth century, outside the disintegrating Ottoman Empire, from which Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania became independent, and in which an Arab national movement also began to stir, the national idea served mainly to create larger units in place of small ones. The map of Europe from 1871 to 1918 was the simplest it has ever been before or since (see map, pp. 000–000).

This book has already had much to say about the idea of the nation-state and the emergence of modern nationalisms. Earlier chapters have described the ferment of national ideas and political movements stirred up by the French Revolution and by the Napoleonic domination of Europe, the nationalist agitation and repression of nationalism in the years after 1815, and the general failure to achieve popular patriotic aspirations in Germany, Italy, and central Europe in the Revolution of 1848. For many in the nineteenth century, nationalism, became a kind of modern secular faith; and it spread throughout most of Europe, stimulating an emotion-laden desire for national unity, independence, and the creation of a national state that could embody and protect a distinctive national culture. For most devout nationalists, the nation represented higher truths as well as collective and personal aspirations for a better future life.

A nation-state may be thought of as one in which supreme political authority somehow rests upon and represents the will and feeling of its inhabitants. There must be a people, not merely a swarm of human beings. The people must basically feel some common cultural and political identity and have the will to create a sovereign government. They must sense that they belong—that they are members of a community, participating somehow in a common social and cultural life, that the government is their government, and that outsiders are “foreign.” The outsiders or foreigners are usually (though not always) those who speak a different language. The nation is usually (though not always) composed of persons sharing the same speech. A nation may

Unity and disunity

Characteristics of nation-states

also possess a belief in common descent or racial origin (however mistaken), or a sense of a common history (remembered as coherent and purposeful), a common future, a common religion, a common geographical home, or a common external menace. Nations take form in many ways. But the people in all nations are alike in feeling or imagining themselves to be communities, permanent communities in which individual persons, together with their children and their children's children, are committed to a collective destiny on earth. Such beliefs in a shared collective culture do not arise spontaneously in large populations. They develop over time and are sustained by the social networks in which individuals go about their daily lives. People learn to identify with their nations as they grow up in the families, schools, social organizations, religious institutions, and holiday rituals that shape a sense of selfhood in modern human societies.

In the nineteenth century governments found that they could not effectively rule or develop the full powers of state except by enlisting this sense of membership and support among their subjects. The consolidation of large nation-states had two distinguishable phases. Territorially, it meant the union of preexisting smaller states. Morally and psychologically it meant the creation of new ties between government and governed, the admission of new segments of the population to political life, through the expansion of education and through the creation or extension of liberal and representative institutions. This process of national integration and institution-building was repeated in widely disparate cultures, ranging from western Europe and, tsarist Russia, to Japan and the frontier societies of North America. Although there was considerable variation in the real power of the new political institutions and in the extent of self-government actually realized, parliaments were set up for the new Italy, the new Germany, the new Japan, the new Canada; and there was eventually movement in Russia in the same direction. In Europe, some of the nationalist aims that the revolutionists of 1848 had failed to achieve were now brought about by the established authorities.

They were brought about, however, only through a series of wars. To create an all-German or an all-Italian state, as the revolutions of 1848 had already shown, it was necessary to break the power of Austria, render Russia at least temporarily ineffective, and overthrow or intimidate those German and Italian governments that refused to surrender their sovereignty. For almost 40 years after 1815 there had been no war between established powers of Europe. Then in 1854 came the Crimean War; in 1859, the Italian War; in 1864, the Danish War; in 1866, the Austro-Prussian War; and in 1870, the Franco-Prussian War. Concurrently the Civil War in the United States maintained national unity by suppressing a secessionist movement for southern independence. After 1871, for 43 years there was again no war between the major European powers.

The Crimean War, 1854–1856

Before moving on to the first of the national consolidation movements, the Italian, we must examine the Crimean War, which, though seemingly remote, helped to make possible the success of the European national movements. Its chief political significance for Europe is that it seriously weakened both Austria and Russia, the two powers most bent on preserving the peace settlement of 1815 and on preventing national changes. The Crimean War also had significant cultural and social influences, however, because it became a new kind of modern national war in which telegraph communications kept the civilian populations of the western belligerent powers more immediately informed about

distant military campaigns. It was the first war covered by newspaper correspondents and the first to be portrayed to noncombatants in the visual images of early photography; and it was the first war in which women, led by Florence Nightingale, established their position as army nurses.

Russian pressure

The pressure of Russia upon Ottoman Turkey was an old story. Every generation saw its Russo-Turkish war. In the last Russo-Turkish war, to go back no further than 1828–1829, Tsar Nicholas I protected the independence newly won by Greece and annexed the left bank of the mouth of the Danube. Now, in 1853, Nicholas again made demands upon the still large but weakened Ottoman Empire, moving in on the two Danubian principalities, Wallachia and Moldavia (later to be known as Romania), with military forces (see map, p. 000). The dispute this time ostensibly involved the protection of Christians in the Ottoman Empire, including the foreign Christians at Jerusalem and in Palestine. Over these Christians the French also claimed a certain protective jurisdiction. The French had for centuries been the principal Western people in the Middle East. They had often furnished money and advisers to the Ottoman sultan, they carried on a huge volume of trade, they staffed and financed Christian missions, and they often talked of building a Suez canal. Napoleon III thus had his own aspirations in the eastern Mediterranean, and he encouraged the Ottoman government to resist Russian claims to protect Christians within the Ottoman Empire. War between Russia and Turkey broke out late in 1853. In 1854 France joined the side of the Turks, as did Great Britain, whose settled policy was to uphold Ottoman Turkey and the Middle East against penetration by Russia. The two Western powers were soon joined by a small ally, the kingdom of Sardinia, better known because of its Italian mainland territory and seat of government as Piedmont. Sardinia had no visible interest in the issues in the Middle East, but it entered the war as a means to influence the Italian question.

The British fleet successfully blockaded Russia in both its Baltic and Black Sea outlets. French and British armies invaded Russia itself, landing in the Crimean peninsula, to which all the important fighting was confined. The Austrian Empire had its own reasons to oppose Russian expansion into Ottoman territories; and the Austrians did not want Russia to conquer the Balkans, or to see Britain and France master the situation alone. Austria therefore, though not yet recovered from the recent upheaval of 1848–1849, mobilized its armed forces at a great effort to itself and occupied Wallachia and Moldavia, which the Russians evacuated under this threat of attack by a new enemy. Tsar Nicholas died in 1855, and his successor, Alexander II, sued for peace.

Peace in 1856

A congress of all the great powers made peace at Paris in 1856. By the treaty the powers pledged themselves jointly to maintain the “integrity of the Ottoman Empire.” The Russian tide ebbed a little. Russia ceded the left bank of the mouth of the Danube to Moldavia and gave up its claim to the special protection of Christians in the Ottoman Empire. Moldavia and Wallachia (united as Romania in 1858), together with Serbia, were recognized as self-governing principalities under protection of the European powers. At the Congress of Paris European diplomacy seemed to be achieving a more harmonious international system.

But trouble was in the making. Napoleon III needed glory. The Italians wanted some kind of unified Italy. The Prussians, who had done nothing in the Crimean War and were only tardily invited to the Congress of Paris, feared that their status as a great power might be slipping away. Napoleon III, the Italian nationalists, and the Prussians all stood to gain by change. Change in central Europe and Italy meant a tearing up of the Treaty of Vienna of 1815, long guarded by Metternich and unsuccessfully challenged by the revolutionaries of 1848. Now, after the Crimean War, the forces opposing change were very weak. It was



The Crimean War weakened the international position of Austria and Russia, but its most enduring effect on nations such as Britain may have come in the ways that wars were described in the popular press and in the new role of women nurses. Florence Nightingale arrived in the Crimea with 36 nurses and was at first opposed by army doctors. She is pictured here in one of the hospitals where she began to create the new military and social identity of the female nurse. (Time Life Pictures/Mansell/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images)

the Russian and Austrian empires that had stood firmly for the status quo. But these two powers, which had most seriously attempted to uphold the Vienna settlement, could do so no longer. The first proof came in Italy.

64. CAVOUR AND THE ITALIAN WAR OF 1859: THE UNIFICATION OF ITALY

Italian Nationalism: The Program of Cavour

In Italy there had long been about a dozen sizable states, together with a few very small ones. Several of them had dissolved in the wars of the French Revolution, and all had been reorganized, first by Napoleon and then by the Congress of Vienna. The governments of these states were generally content with their autonomy and independence. But the governments were remote from their peoples.

There was a widespread disgust in Italy with the existing authorities, and a growing desire for a liberal national state in which all Italy might be embodied and through which the Italian grandeur of ancient times and of the Renaissance might be resurrected. This sentiment, the dream of an Italian Risorgimento, or resurgence, had become very heated at the time of the French Revolution and Napoleon, and had then been transformed by the writings of Mazzini and other nationalists into an

Italian Risorgimento

Historical Interpretations and Debates

The Roots of Modern Nationalism

Nationalist movements gained wide influence during the nineteenth century by combining a popular belief in the distinctive cultural traits of different human communities with an equally popular claim that every such cultural group should have its own sovereign political state. Most historians of nationalism agree that these ideas spread widely in modern schools, newspapers, political parties, and government institutions. They frequently disagree, however, about the influence of modern social and economic changes on the rise of nationalism; and they propose different interpretations of the possible continuities between pre-modern cultures and modern national identities. Compare the views of Ernest Gellner and Anthony D. Smith as they analyze the social roots and pre-modern origins of modern nationalisms and national identities.

Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (2nd ed., 2006)

Contrary to popular and even scholarly belief, nationalism does not have very deep roots in the human psyche. . . . What is crucial for its genuine explanation is to identify its specific roots. . . .

The roots of nationalism in the distinctive structural requirements of industrial society are very deep indeed. This movement [toward nationalism] is the fruit neither of ideological aberration, nor of emotional excess. . . .

Universal literacy and a high level of numerical, technical and general sophistication are among [industrial society's] functional prerequisites. Its members are and must be mobile and ready to shift from one activity to another. . . . The educational system which guarantees this social achievement becomes large and is indispensable. . . .

. . . This educational infrastructure is too large and costly for any organization other than the biggest one of all, the state. . . .

. . . State and culture *must* now be linked, whereas in the past their connection was . . . often minimal. Now it is unavoidable. That is what nationalism is about, and why we live in an age of nationalism. . . .

But nationalism is *not* the awakening of an old, latent, dormant force, though that is how it does indeed present itself. It is in reality the consequence of a new form of [industrial] social organization, based on deeply internalized, education-dependent high cultures, each protected by its own state. . . .

Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (2000)

[I] stress the importance of treating the history of collective cultural identities and ideologies like nations and nationalism over long time spans. This is quite compatible with the evidence that nationalism is a modern ideological movement and that many nations are both recent and novel. But these modern nations are not created *ex nihilo*; they have premodern antecedents that require investigation in order to establish the basis on which they were formed. . . .

. . . The central components of ethnic and national phenomena [are] both sociocultural and symbolic, rather than demographic or political. Apart from various symbols, like language, dress, emblems, rituals, and artifacts, these elements consist in memories, myths, values, and traditions and in the institutionalized practices that derive from them. . . .

. . . We can begin to interpret the historical record of collective cultural identities and sentiments as predominantly one in which *ethnies* flourished alongside other collectivities in the ancient and medieval epochs of empires, city-states, and kingdoms. . . . Thus, in several cases we find elements of nationhood stretching back to the late medieval period. . . . We can still agree that nations, like nationalisms, are for the most part relatively recent. . . .

Ernest Gellner... (*contd...*)

Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny are a myth.

Anthony D. Smith... (*contd...*)

But this does not entail the acceptance of the modernists' further contention that nations are the products of modernity or modernization. . . . We cannot derive the identity, the location, or even the character of the units we term nations from the processes of modernization *tout court*.

Sources: Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd ed., introduction by John Breuilly (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 34, 36–37, 46–47.

Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000), pp. 63, 69.

intensely moral campaign for Italian national unity. Mazzini had seen his hopes for a unified republican Italy elevated for a brief moment and then blasted in the general debacle of 1848. In the stormy events of 1848 the papacy vehemently rejected the radical romantic republicanism of Mazzini, Garibaldi, and other firebrands; and the pope could no longer be expected to support the cause of Italian nationalism. The same events had shown that Austria could not be ousted from the Italian peninsula without the aid of an outside power.

These lessons were not lost on the prime minister of Piedmont, which was ruled since 1848 as a constitutional monarchy and was now under King Victor Emmanuel. This prime minister after 1852 was Camillo di Cavour, one of the shrewdest political tacticians of that or any age. Cavour was a liberal of Western type. He tried to make the state a model of progress, efficiency, and fair government that other Italians would admire. He worked hard to establish constitutional and parliamentary practices. He favored the building of railroads and docks, the improvement of agriculture, and emancipation of trade. He followed a strongly anticlerical policy, cutting down the number of religious holidays, limiting the right of church bodies to own real estate, abolishing the church courts—all without negotiation with the Holy See. A liberal and constitutional monarchist, a wealthy landowner in his own right, he had no sympathy for the revolutionary, romantic, and republican nationalism of Mazzini.

Cavour shared in that new realism described in the last chapter. He did not approve of romantic republicans but was willing to work with them surreptitiously. He did not idealize war but was willing to make war to unify Italy under the royal family of Savoy. With unruffled calculation he took Piedmont into the Crimean War, sending troops to Russia in the hope of winning a place at the peace table and raising the Italian question at the Congress of Paris. It was evident to him that against one great power one must pit another and that the only way to get Austria out of Italy was to use the French army. He therefore developed a master plan to provoke war with Austria, after having assured himself of French military support.

It was not difficult to persuade Napoleon III to collaborate. The Bonapartes looked upon Italy as their ancestral country, and Napoleon III, in his adventurous youth, had traveled in conspiratorial Italian circles and even participated in an Italian insurrection in 1831. Now, as emperor, in his role as apostle of modernity, he entertained a “doctrine of nationalities” that held the consolidation of nations to be a forward step at the existing stage of history. To fight reactionary Austria for the freedom of Italy would also mollify

Cavour's “politics of reality”

liberal opinion in France, which in other ways Napoleon was engaged in suppressing. Napoleon III therefore reached a secret agreement with Cavour. In April 1859, Cavour tricked Austria into a declaration of war. The French army poured over the Alps.

There were two battles, Magenta and Solferino, both won by the French and Piedmontese. But Napoleon III was now in a quandary. In Italy, with the defeat of the Austrians, revolutionary agitation broke out all over the peninsula, as it had a decade before—and the French emperor was no patron of popular revolution. The revolutionaries overthrew or denounced the existing governments and clamored for annexation to Piedmont. In France, as elsewhere, the Catholics, fearful that the pope's temporal power would be lost, upbraided the emperor for his godless and unnecessary war. The French position was indeed odd, for while the bulk of the French army fought Austria in the north, a French military detachment was still stationed in Rome, sent there in 1849 to protect the pope against Italian republicanism. Napoleon III, in July 1859, at the height of his victories, stupefied Cavour. He made a separate peace with the Austrians.

Franco-Austrian agreement

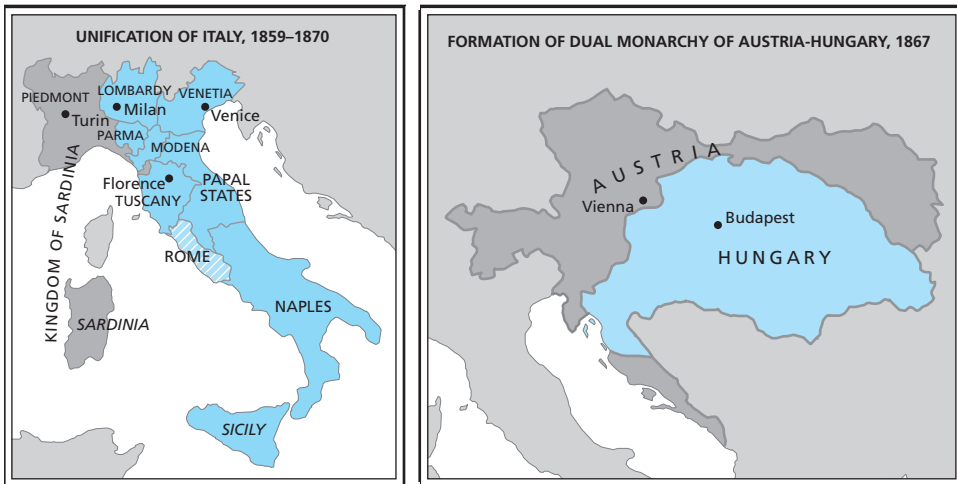
The Franco-Austrian agreement gave Lombardy to Piedmont but left Venetia within the Austrian Empire. It offered a compromise solution to the Italian question, in the form of a federal union of the existing Italian governments, to be presided over by the pope. This was not what Cavour or the Piedmontese or the more fiery Italian patriots wanted. Revolution continued to spread across the northern Italian states. Tuscany, Modena, Parma, and Romagna drove out their old rulers. They were annexed to Piedmont, after plebiscites or general elections in these regions had shown overwhelming popular favor for this step. Because Romagna belonged to the papal states, the pope excommunicated the organizers of the new Italy. Undeterred, representatives of all north Italy except Venetia met at the Piedmontese capital of Turin in 1860 in the first parliament of the enlarged kingdom. The British government hailed these events with enthusiasm, and Napoleon III also recognized the expanded Piedmontese state, in return for the transfer to France of Nice and Savoy, where plebiscites disclosed enormous majorities for annexation to France.

The Completion of Italian Unity

There were now, in 1860, a north Italian kingdom, the papal states in the middle, and the kingdom of the Two Sicilies, ruled by a Bourbon king in Naples and still standing in the south. The latter was being undermined by revolutionary agitation, as often in the past. A Piedmontese republican, Giuseppe Garibaldi, brought matters to a head. Somewhat like Lafayette, Garibaldi was a “hero of two worlds,” who had fought for the independence of Uruguay, lived in the United States, and been one of the Triumvirs in the short-lived Roman Republic of 1849. He now organized a group of about 1,150 personal followers—Garibaldi's Thousand, or the Red Shirts—for an armed expedition that he would lead from northern Italy to the kingdom of the Two Sicilies in the south. Garibaldi landed in Sicily and soon crossed to the mainland. Revolutionists hastened to join him, and the government of the Two Sicilies, backward and corrupt, commanding little loyalty from its population, collapsed before this picturesque intrusion.

Garibaldi now prepared to push from Naples up to Rome. Here, of course, he would meet not only the pope but also the French army, and the international scandal would reverberate far beyond Italy. Cavour, examining the new opportunities with his usual pragmatism, decided that so extreme a step must be averted, but he also saw that Garibaldi's successes must be used to advance the national

Garibaldi's compromise



NATION BUILDING, 1859–1867

In the eight years after 1859 Italy was unified (except for the city of Rome, annexed in 1870) and the Habsburg government tried to solve its nationalities problem by creating the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary. The maps show the political components of the new Italian nation-state and the two adjoining regions that formed the Habsburg-ruled Dual Monarchy in central Europe.

cause. Garibaldi, though not all his followers, was now ready to accept a monarchy as the best solution to the problem of Italian unification. The chief of the Red Shirts, the one-time foe of kings thus consented to ride in an open carriage with Victor Emmanuel through the streets of Naples amid cheering thousands. Plebiscites held in the Two Sicilies showed an almost unanimous willingness to join with Piedmont. In the remainder of the papal states, except for Rome and its environs, plebiscites were held also, with the same result. A parliament representing all Italy except Rome and Venetia met in 1861, and the Kingdom of Italy was formally proclaimed, with Victor Emmanuel II as king “by grace of God and the will of the nation.” Venetia was added in 1866, as a reward for Italian aid to Prussia in a war against Austria. Rome was annexed in 1870 after the withdrawal of French troops in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870.

So Italy was “made,” as the phrase of the time expressed it. It had been made by the high-minded cultural nationalism of Mazzini, the audacity of Garibaldi, and the cold realism of Cavour. In the end, however, the Italians also achieved national unification through insurrections, armed violence, and the endorsement of popular votes.

Persistent Problems after Unification

Very little was settled or ended by unification. Even territorially, the more pronounced nationalists refused to believe that Italian unity was completed. They looked beyond to regions of mixed population where Italians were numerous or preponderant—to the Trentino, to Trieste, to certain Dalmatian islands, or to Nice and Savoy. They saw in these regions an *Italia irredenta*, “an unredeemed Italy,” awaiting in its turn the day of incorporation. Irredentism even passed into the English language as a word signifying a vociferous demand, on nationalist grounds, for annexation of regions beyond one’s own frontiers.

This photograph of Giuseppe Garibaldi suggests the confident, charismatic personal style that enabled him to lead a spirited group of Italian nationalists or “Red Shirts” into southern Italy, to form an alliance with King Victor Emmanuel of Piedmont, and to help establish a unified Italian nation-state.

(Hulton Archive/Getty Images)



Occupation of Rome

The occupation of Rome in 1870 by the Italian government further widened the rift between the church and the Italian national movement.

The pope, deprived of territories the papacy had held for a thousand years, renewed his condemnations and chose to remain in lifelong seclusion in the Vatican. His successors followed the same policy until 1929. Hence good Italian patriots were bound to be anticlerical, and good Catholics were bound to look upon the Italian state with unfriendly eyes. The regional differences between northern and southern Italy did not disappear with unification. Many nationalists in the north still looked upon the agrarian south—the land of priest, landlord, and impoverished peasant—as disgracefully backward.

The new Italy was parliamentary but not democratic. At first the vote was only given to some 600,000 persons out of more than 20 million. Not until 1913 was the suffrage significantly broadened. Meanwhile parliamentary life, confined to a few, was somewhat isolated from the mass of the population and frequently corrupt. But the dream of ages was realized. Italy was one. The period of fragmentation and foreign rule that seemed so shameful to patriots, the long centuries that had elapsed since the Renaissance, were now terminated in the glories of a successful Risorgimento.

65. THE FOUNDING OF A GERMAN EMPIRE AND THE DUAL MONARCHY OF AUSTRIA-HUNGARY

To play upon the divisions among the Germans, keeping them in rivalry with each other and dependent upon outside powers, had been the policy of France ever since the Reformation and of Russia since it began to take part in the affairs of Europe. To keep the Germanic world divided was in fact a kind of negative prerequisite to the development of modern European history as we know it, for without it the economic and cultural leadership of Europe would hardly have become concentrated along the Atlantic seaboard; nor would a great military empire have arisen in Russia and spread along the Baltic and into Poland.

Gradually, as we have seen, the Germans became dissatisfied with their position. They became increasingly nationalistic during and after the Napoleonic wars. Many German thinkers held that Germany was different from both western and eastern Europe, destined someday to work out a peculiarly German way of life and political system of its own.

To the Slavs the Germans felt immeasurably superior. German philosophy, as shown most clearly in Hegel, took on a certain characteristic tone. It tended to criticize modern individualism and to skip lightly over liberal conceptions of individual liberty; it also tended to glorify group loyalties, the nation, and the state. It emphasized the progressive evolution of history, which in the thought of Hegel, and after him Marx, became a vast impersonal force that was moving in clear directions and almost independent of human beings or human will. History was often said to ordain, require, condemn, justify, or excuse. What one did not like could be dismissed as a mere historical phase, opening into a quite different and more attractive future. What one wanted, in the present or future, could be described as historically necessary and bound to come.

The German States after 1848

In 1848 a series of revolutions had unseated the several governments of Germany. At the Frankfurt Assembly a group composed essentially of private citizens had tried to organize a united Germany by constitutional methods. They failed because they had no power. Hence after 1848 the Germans began to think in terms of power, developing a somewhat excessive admiration for *die Macht*. The men of Frankfurt failed also, perhaps, because they were insufficiently revolutionary. The Germans were still attached emotionally to their various regional states. What happened in Italy, a revolutionary destruction of all the old governments except that of Piedmont, could not readily happen in Germany.

After the failure of the 1848 revolution German nationalists and liberals were confused. By 1850 the old states were restored—Austria and Prussia, the kingdoms of Hanover, Saxony, Bavaria, and Württemberg, together with about 30 other states ranging in size down to the free cities of Hamburg and Frankfurt. The loose confederation of 1815, linking all these states together, was restored also (see map, p. 000). But within this framework great economic and social changes were occurring. Between 1850 and 1870 the output of both coal and iron in Germany multiplied sixfold. In 1850 Germany produced less iron than France; in 1870, more. Germany was rapidly gaining economic unity and overcoming the economic and social lag that had separated Germans from the fast-developing industrial and global commerce in northwestern Europe. The German cities were growing, bound together by railroad and telegraph, requiring larger supporting areas on which to live. Industrial capitalists and industrial workers were becoming more numerous. With the advantages of unity more obvious than ever, with the ideals of 1848 badly compromised, with a strong philosophical respect for the state and for power, and with a habit of accepting the successful event as the “judgment of history,” the Germans were ripe for what happened. They did not unify themselves by their own exertions. They fell into the arms of Prussia.

Advantages of unity

Prussia in the 1860s: Bismarck

Prussia had always been the smallest and most precarious of the great powers. Ruined by Napoleon, it had risen again. It owed its international influence and internal character to its army. Actually it had fought rather fewer wars than other great powers, but its army enabled Prussia to expand by conquest or diplomacy. The taking of Silesia in 1740 by force, the acquisition of parts of Poland in the partitions of the 1770s and 1790s, and the addition of the Rhineland in 1815 by diplomatic or international agreement were the highlights of Prussian growth. After 1850 those who controlled the destinies of Prussia were

apprehensive. Their state had been shaken by revolution. In the Crimean War and at the Congress of Paris they were hardly more than spectators. It seemed as if the hard-won and still relatively recent position of Prussia might be waning.

Since 1815 the population of Prussia had grown from 11 to 18 million, but the size of the army had not changed. Merely to enforce existing principles of conscription would therefore almost double the army. But this would require increased financial appropriations. After 1850 Prussia had a parliament. It was a parliament, to be sure, dominated by men of wealth; but some of the wealthy Prussians, notably the industrialists of the Rhineland, were liberals who wished the parliament to have control over government policies. These men did not like professional armies and considered the Prussian Junkers, from whom the officer corps was recruited, as their main rivals in the state. The parliament refused the necessary military appropriations. The king at this juncture, in 1862, appointed a new chief minister, Otto von Bismarck.

Parliamentary
politics

Bismarck was a Junker from old Brandenburg east of the Elbe. He cultivated the gruff manner of an honest country squire, though he was in fact an accomplished man of the world. Intellectually he was far superior to the rather unsophisticated landlord class from which he sprang and for which he often felt an impatient contempt. He shared in many Junker ideas. He advocated, and even felt, a kind of stout Protestant piety. Although he cared for the world's opinion, it never deterred him in his actions; criticism and denunciation left him untouched. He was not a nationalist. He did not look upon all Germany as his Fatherland. He was a Prussian. His social affinities, as with the Junkers generally, lay to the East with corresponding land-owning elements of the Baltic provinces and Russia. Western Europe, including the bulk of Germany, he neither understood nor trusted; it seemed to him revolutionary, free-thinking, and materialistic. Parliamentary bodies he considered ignorant and irresponsible as organs of government. Individual liberty seemed to him disorderly selfishness. Liberalism, democracy, socialism were repugnant to him. He preferred to stress duty, service, order, and the fear of God. The idea of forming a new German union developed only gradually in his mind and then as an adjunct to the strengthening of Prussia.

Bismarck

Bismarck thus had his predilections and even his principles. But no principle bound him; no ideology seemed to him an end in itself. He became the classic practitioner of *Realpolitik*. First he made wars; then he insisted upon peace. Enmities and alliances were to him only matters of passing convenience. The enemy of today might be the friend of tomorrow. Far from planning out a long train of events, then following it step by step to a grand consummation, he seems to have been practical and opportunistic, taking advantage of situations as they emerged and prepared to act in any one of several directions as events might suggest.

In 1862, as minister president, he set out to thwart the liberals in the Prussian parliament. For four years, from 1862 to 1866, Bismarck waged this constitutional struggle. The parliament refused to vote the proposed taxes. The government collected them anyway. The taxpayers paid them without protest—it was the orderly thing to do, and the collectors represented public authority. The limitations of Prussian liberalism, the docility of the population, the respect for officialdom, the belief that the king and his ministers were wiser than the elected deputies—all clearly revealed themselves in this triumph of military policy over the theory of government by consent. The army was enlarged, reorganized, retrained, and reequipped. Bismarck fended off the showers of abuse from the liberal majority in the chamber.

Constitutional
struggle

Otto von Bismarck's pragmatic use of power and his successful campaign to create a unified German nation-state made him the most successful practitioner of *Realpolitik* in late nineteenth-century Europe. This photograph suggests the talent for well-focused observation that enabled Bismarck to see clearly what was at stake in the many political and diplomatic conflicts of his generation.

(Hulton Archive/Getty Images)



The liberals declared that the government's policy was flagrantly unconstitutional. The constitution, said Bismarck, could not have been meant to undermine the state. The government, said the liberals, was itself undermining Prussia, for the rest of Germany hoped to find in Prussia, as Italy had found in Piedmont, a model of political freedom. What the Germans admired in Prussia, replied Bismarck coldly, was not its liberalism but its power. He declared that the Prussian boundaries as set in 1815 were unsound, that Prussia must be prepared to seize favorable opportunities for further growth. And he added one of his most memorable utterances: "Not by speeches and majority votes are the great questions of the day decided—that was the great error of 1848 and 1849—but by blood and iron."

Bismarck's Wars: The Creation of the North German Confederation, 1867

A favorable opportunity was not long in presenting itself. The Danes, engaged in a process of national consolidation of their own, wished to make the duchy of Schleswig an integral part of Denmark. The population of Schleswig was part Dane and part German. The diet of the German confederation, unwilling to see Germans thus annexed outright to Denmark, called for an all-German war upon the Danes. Bismarck had no desire to support or strengthen the existing German confederation. He wanted not an all-German war but a Prussian war. To disguise his aims he acted jointly with Austria, a fellow member of the German confederation. In 1864 Prussia and Austria together went to war with Denmark, which they soon defeated. It was Bismarck's intention to annex both Schleswig and the duchy of Holstein to Prussia, gaining whatever other advantages might present themselves from future trouble with Austria. He arranged a provisional occupation of Schleswig by Prussia and of Holstein by Austria. Disputes soon arose over rights of passage, the keeping of internal order, and other problems with which occupying forces are commonly afflicted. While pretending to try to regulate these disputes he allowed them to ripen.

He now proceeded to discredit and isolate Austria. Other European powers were preoccupied with their own domestic issues and not much concerned with Austrian interests in a regional territorial dispute, so Bismarck used strategic diplomatic negotiations to ensure that no foreign state would ally itself with Austria or intervene in German affairs. To weaken Austria within Germany, Bismarck presented himself as a democrat. He proposed a reform of the German confederation, recommending that it have a popular chamber elected by universal male suffrage.

Bismarck as democrat

He calculated that the mass of the German people were wedded neither to the well-to-do capitalistic liberals, nor to the existing government structures of the German states, nor to the house of Habsburg. He would use “democracy” to undermine all established interests that stood in his way.

Meanwhile the occupying powers continued to quarrel over Schleswig-Holstein. Austria finally raised the matter formally in the German federal diet, one of whose functions was to prevent war between its members. Bismarck declared that the diet had no authority, accused the Austrians of aggression, and ordered the Prussian army to enter Holstein. The Austrians called for federal sanctions in the form of an all-German force to be sent against Prussia. The result was that Prussia, in 1866, was at war not only with Austria but also with most of the other German states. The Prussian army soon proved its superiority. Trained to an unprecedented precision, equipped with the new needle-gun, by which the infantryman could deliver five rounds a minute, brought into the zone of combat by an imaginative use of the new railroads, and skillfully commanded, the Prussian army overwhelmed the Austrians and defeated the other German states soon thereafter. The Austro-Prussian, or Seven Weeks’ War, was amazing in its brevity. Bismarck hastened to make peace before the other European powers could realize what had happened.

Seven Weeks’ War

Prussia annexed outright, together with Schleswig-Holstein, the whole kingdom of Hanover, the duchies of Nassau and Hesse-Cassel, and the free city of Frankfurt. Here the old governments simply disappeared before the axe of the “red reactionary.” The German federal union disappeared likewise. In its place, in 1867, Bismarck organized a North German Confederation, in which the newly enlarged Prussia joined with 21 other states, all of which combined it greatly outweighed. The German states south of the river Main—Austria, Bavaria, Baden, Württemberg, and Hesse-Darmstadt—remained outside the new organization, with no kind of union among themselves.

For the North German Confederation Bismarck produced a constitution. The new structure, though a federal one, was much stronger than the now defunct Confederation of 1815. The king of Prussia became its hereditary head. Ministers were responsible to him. There was a parliament with two chambers. The upper chamber, as in the United States, represented the states as such, though not equally. The lower chamber, or Reichstag, was deemed to represent the people and was elected by universal male suffrage. Such flirting with democracy seemed madness to both conservative Junker and liberal bourgeois. It was indeed a bold step, for only France at the time exemplified universal suffrage in Europe on a large scale, and in the France of Napoleon III neither old-fashioned conservatives nor genuine liberals could take much satisfaction. As for Great Britain, where voting rights were extended in this same year, 1867, they were still given to fewer than half the adult male population. Bismarck sensed in the “masses” an ally of strong government against private interests. He negotiated even with the socialists, who had arisen with the industrialization of the past decade, and who, in Germany at this time, were mainly followers of Ferdinand Lassalle. The Lassallean socialists, unlike the Marxian, believed it possible to improve working-class conditions through the action of existing governments. To the great annoyance of Marx, then in England (his *Capital* first appeared in 1867), the majority of the German socialists reached an understanding with Bismarck. In return for a democratic suffrage they agreed to accept the North German Confederation. Bismarck, for his part, by making use of democratic and socialist sentiment, won popular approval for his emerging empire.

A new constitution



THE GERMAN QUESTION, 1815–1871

From 1815 to 1866 there were 39 German states joined in the German Confederation (the largest states are shown here). The movement to create a unified Germany gave rise in this era to opposing nationalist groups: the Great Germans, who favored an all-German union that would include Austria; and the Little Germans, who were willing to exclude Austria and its empire from a new German nation-state. Bismarck was a Little German but a Great Prussian. He (1) enlarged Prussia by conquest in 1866; (2) joined Mecklenburg, Saxony, and other regions with Prussia in the North German Confederation of 1867; and (3) combined this Confederation with Bavaria, Württemberg, and other southern states to form the German Empire in 1871. He also (4) conquered Alsace-Lorraine from France and (5) excluded Austria from the new German empire. These boundaries remained unchanged until 1918.

The Franco-Prussian War

The creation of the North German Federation greatly expanded Prussia's political influence, but the situation was not yet stable. The small south German states were left floating in empty space; they would sooner or later have to gravitate into some orbit or other, whether Austrian, Prussian, or French. In France there were angry criticisms of Napoleon III's foreign policy. France had sent troops to Mexico during the early 1860s and (with the collaboration of Mexican monarchists) had managed to place Napoleon's own chosen ruler—an Austrian archduke named Maximilian—on a precarious Mexican imperial throne. But this French-style empire lacked broad support, and a popular republican movement overthrew Maximilian's regime in 1867, soon after Napoleon III withdrew his military forces. Maximilian was executed, and the whole Mexican intervention became a transatlantic imperial fiasco. Meanwhile, a united Italy had been allowed to rise on France's borders. And now, contrary to all principles of French national interest observed by French governments for hundreds of years, a strong and independent power was being allowed to spread over virtually the whole of Germany. Everywhere people began to feel that war was inevitable between France and Prussia. Bismarck played on the fears of France among the leaders and populations in the south German states. South Germany, though in former times often a willing satellite of France, was now sufficiently nationalistic to consider such subservience to a foreign people disgraceful. To Bismarck it seemed that a war between Prussia and France would frighten the small south German states into a union with Prussia, leaving only Austria outside—which was what he wanted. To Napoleon III, or at least to some of his advisers, it seemed that such a war, if successful, would restore public approval of the Bonapartist empire. In this inflammable situation the responsible persons of neither country worked for peace.

Meanwhile, in a totally unexpected chain of events, a revolution in Spain had driven the reigning queen into exile, and a Spanish provisional government invited Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern, the king of Prussia's cousin, to be constitutional king of Spain. Installing a member of the Prussian royal family as the head of government in Spain would clearly provoke strong opposition from France. Three times the Hohenzollern family refused the Spanish offer. Bismarck, who could not control such family decisions but who foresaw the possibility of a usable incident, deviously persuaded the Spanish to issue the invitation still a fourth time. On July 2, 1870, Paris heard that Prince Leopold had accepted. The French ambassador to Prussia, Benedetti, at the direction of his government, met the king of Prussia at the bathing resort of Ems, where he formally demanded that Prince Leopold's acceptance be withdrawn. It was withdrawn, and the French seemed to have their way. Bismarck was disappointed.

France thwarts new Spanish king

The French government now went still further. It instructed Benedetti to approach the king again at Ems and demand that at no time in the future would any Hohenzollern ever become a candidate for the Spanish throne. The king politely declined any such commitment and telegraphed a full report of the conversation to Bismarck at Berlin. Bismarck, receiving the telegram, which became famous as the "Ems dispatch," saw a new opportunity, as he put it, to wave a red flag before the Gallic bull. He condensed the Ems telegram for publication, so reducing and abridging it that it seemed to newspaper readers as if a curt exchange had occurred at Ems, in which the Prussians believed that their king had been insulted and the French believed that their ambassador had been snubbed. In both countries the war party demanded satisfaction. On July 19, 1870, on these trivial grounds, and



The French suffered a crushing defeat at Sedan in northeastern France during the brief Franco-Prussian War in 1870. Napoleon III was captured along with much of his army. French civilians fled from both the battle and advancing Prussian troops, as can be seen in this German engraving of terrified people crossing a dangerous, crowded bridge.

(De Agostini Picture Library/Getty Images)

with the ostensible issue of the Spanish throne already settled, the irresponsible and decaying government of Napoleon III declared war on Prussia.

A short war

Again the war was short. Again Bismarck had taken care to isolate his enemy in advance. The British generally felt France to be in the wrong. They had been alarmed by the French operations in Mexico, which suggested an ambition to re-create a French American empire. The Italians had long been awaiting the chance to seize Rome; they did so in 1870, when the French withdrew their troops from Rome for use against Prussia. The Russians had been awaiting the chance to upset a clause of the Peace of 1856 that forbade them to keep naval vessels in the Black Sea. They did so in 1870.

The War of 1870, like the others of the time, failed to become a general European struggle. Prussia was supported by the south German states. France had no allies. The French army proved to be technically backward compared with the Prussian. War began on July 19; on September 2, after the battle of Sedan, the principal French army surrendered to the Germans. Napoleon III was himself taken prisoner. On September 4 an insurrection in Paris proclaimed the Third Republic. The Prussian and German forces moved into France and laid siege to the capital. Though the French armies dissolved, Paris refused to capitulate. For four months it was surrounded and besieged.

The German Empire, 1871

With their guns encircling Paris, the German rulers or their representatives assembled at Versailles. The château and gardens of Versailles, since Louis XVI's unceremonious departure in October 1789, had been little more than a vacant monument to a society long since dead. Here, in the most sumptuous room of the palace, the resplendent Hall of Mirrors, where the Sun King had once received the deferential approaches of German princes, Bismarck on January 18, 1871, arranged for the German Empire to be proclaimed. The king of Prussia received the hereditary title of German emperor. The other German rulers (excepting, to be sure, the ruler of Austria, and those whom Bismarck had himself dethroned) accepted his imperial authority. Ten days later the people of Paris, shivering, hungry, and helpless, opened their gates to the enemy. France had no government with which Bismarck could make peace. It was not at all clear what kind of government the country wanted.

Bismarck's demands

Bismarck insisted on the election of a Constituent Assembly by universal suffrage. He demanded that France pay the German Empire a war indemnity of five billion gold francs (then an enormous and unprecedented sum) and cede to it the border region of Alsace and most of Lorraine.

Though most Alsatians spoke German, most of them also felt themselves to be French, having shared in the general history of France since the seventeenth century. There was strong local protest at the transfer to Germany; thousands of Alsatians moved to other places within the new French republic or to Algeria, and the French never reconciled themselves to this cold-blooded amputation of their frontier. The peace dictated by Bismarck was embodied in the treaty of Frankfurt of May 10, 1871. Thereafter, as will be seen, the French Constituent Assembly gradually proceeded to construct the Third Republic.

The strength of the German state

The consolidation of Germany transformed the face of Europe. It reversed the dictum not only of the Peace of Vienna but even of the Peace of Westphalia. The German Empire, no sooner born, was the strongest state on the continent of Europe. Rapidly industrialized after 1870, it became more potent still. Bismarck had astutely exploited the conflicting ambitions of other European states and used three short wars to bring about a German unification that most European governments had long sought at all costs to prevent. He outwitted everybody in turn, including the Germans. The united all-German state that issued from the nationalist movement was a Germany conquered by Prussia. Within the new empire Prussia directly controlled about two-thirds of the whole imperial territory. Before such unanswerable success the Prussian liberals capitulated, and the Prussian parliament passed an indemnity act; the gist of it was that Bismarck admitted to a certain high-handedness during the constitutional struggle but that the parliament legalized the disputed tax collections *ex post facto*, agreeing to forgive and forget, in view of the victory over Austria and its consequences. Thus liberalism gave way to a triumphant nationalism.

The German Empire received substantially the constitution of the North German Confederation. It was a federation of monarchies, each based in theory on divine or hereditary right. At the same time, in the Reichstag elected by universal male suffrage, the empire rested on a kind of mass appeal and was in a sense democratic. Yet the country's ministers were responsible to the emperor and not to the elected chamber. Moreover, it was the rulers who joined their territories to the empire, not the peoples. There were no popular plebiscites as in Italy. Each state kept its own laws, government, and constitution. The people of Prussia, for example, remained for Prussian affairs under the rather illiberal constitution of 1850 with its three-class system of voting; in affairs of the Reich, or empire, however, they enjoyed an equal vote by universal suffrage. The emperor, who was also the king of



The new German Empire was officially proclaimed in January 1871 at the historic French palace in Versailles. King Wilhelm of Prussia became the German Emperor. This painting by Anton von Werner shows how Bismarck assembled military officers and representatives from all of the constituent German states in the famous “Hall of Mirrors”—a symbolic site of past French grandeur that made the German celebration all the more humiliating for the French. (Bismarck Museum/Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY)

Prussia, had legal control over the foreign and military policy of the empire. The German Empire in effect served as a mechanism to magnify the role of Prussia, the Prussian army, and the East Elbian Prussian aristocracy in world affairs.

The Habsburg Empire after 1848

Bismarck united Germany, but he also divided it, for he left about a sixth of the Germans outside his German Empire. These Germans of Austria and Bohemia had now to work out a common future with the dozen other nationalities in the Danubian domain. The clumsiness of the old Habsburg multinational empire is clear enough, but more impressive is its astonishing capacity to survive the recurring upheavals in central European societies. Having survived repeated attempts to dismember it during the eighteenth century, the Napoleonic wars, and the revolutions of 1848, the empire held together until the cataclysm of the First World War. But the events of the 1850s and 1860s greatly altered its character.

The essential question, in a nationalist age, was how the Habsburg government would react to the challenges that emerged from the expanding campaigns for national self-expression. By Habsburg, in this period, one means primarily Francis Joseph, who as emperor from 1848 to 1916 reigned even longer than his famous contemporary, Queen Victoria. Francis Joseph, like many others, could never shake off his own tradition. His thoughts turned on his royal house and on its rights. Buffeted unmercifully by the waves of change and by central European nationalisms, he cordially disliked everything liberal, progressive, or modern. Personally, Francis Joseph was incapable of enlarged views, ambitious projects, bold decisions, or persevering action. And he lived in a pompous dream world, surrounded in the imperial court by great noble-men, high churchmen, and bespangled personages of the army.

Yet the government was not idle; it was, if anything, too fertile in devising new deals and new dispensations. Various expedients were tried after 1849, but none was tried long enough to see if it would work. For several years the ruling idea was centralization—to govern the empire through the German language and with German efficiency, maintaining the abolition of serfdom as accomplished in 1848 (and which required a strong official control over the landlords if it was to work in practice) and favoring the building of railroads and other forms of material progress. This Germanic and bureaucratic centralization was distasteful to the non-German nationalities, and especially to the Magyars. It is important to say Magyars, not Hungarians, because the Magyars composed less than half of the very mixed population within the then existing borders of Hungary. Nevertheless the Magyars, as the strongest of the non-German groups, and hence the most able to maintain a political system of their own, felt the Germanic influence as most oppressive.

Germanic centralization

The Compromise of 1867

In 1867 a compromise was worked out between the Germans of Austria-Bohemia and the Magyars of Hungary. It worked to the common disadvantage of the Slavs, who were viewed as a backward, less civilized people by both the Germans and the Magyars. The compromise created a Dual Monarchy, of a kind unparalleled in Europe. West of the river Leith was the Empire of Austria; east of it was the Kingdom of Hungary. The two were now judged exactly equal.

A dual monarchy

Each had its own constitution and its own parliament, to which the governing ministry in each country was henceforth to be responsible. The administrative language of Austria would be German; of Hungary, Magyar. Neither state could intervene in the other's affairs. The two countries were joined by the fact that the same Habsburg ruler should always be emperor in Austria and king in Hungary. Yet the union was not personal only; for, though there was no common parliament, delegates of the two parliaments were to meet together alternately in Vienna and Budapest, and there was to be a common ministry for finance, foreign affairs, and war. To this common ministry of Austria-Hungary both Austrians and Hungarians were to be appointed.

Both Austria and Hungary under the Dual Monarchy were in form constitutional parliamentary states, but neither was democratic. In Austria, after much juggling with voting systems, a true universal male suffrage was instituted in 1907. In Hungary, when the First World War came in 1914, still only a quarter of the adult male population had the vote. Socially, the great reform of 1848, the abolition of serfdom, was not allowed to move toward more upsetting political or economic conclusions. The owners of great landed estates, especially in Hungary (but also in parts of the Austrian Empire) remained the



Hungary and Austria formed a political union under a Dual Monarchy and common government ministries after 1867, but most of the population continued to live a traditional agrarian life. This painting by the Hungarian artist Miklos Barabas, *The Arrival of the Bride* (1856), portrays one of the enduring rituals of rural societies, which were often romanticized in nineteenth-century nationalism.

(Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary/The Bridgeman Art Library)

unquestionably dominant class. They were surrounded by landless peasants, an agrarian proletariat, composed partly of lower classes of their own nationality and partly of entire peasant peoples, like the Slovaks and Serbs, who had no educated or wealthy class of their own. National and social questions therefore came together. For some nationalities, especially the Magyars, not only a national but also a social and economic ascendancy was at stake. Landlordism became the basic social issue. A landowning class, increasingly educated in the knowledge and organizational methods of modern European cultures, faced a depressed peasant mass that was generally left out of the advancing civilization of the day.

National and social questions

66. TSARIST RUSSIA: SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE LIMITS OF POLITICAL REFORM

Tsarist Russia after 1856

For Russia also the Crimean War set off a series of changes. The ungainly empire, an “enormous village” as it has been called, stretching from Poland to the Pacific, had proved unable to repel a localized attack by France and Great Britain, into which neither of the Western

powers had put anything like its full resources. Alexander II (1855–1881), who became tsar during the war, was no liberal by nature or conviction. But he saw that something drastic must be done. The prestige of western Europe was at its height, because the most successful governments and advanced industrial economies had developed in the western European nation-states. The reforms in Russia therefore followed, at some distance, the European model.

Imperial Russia was a political organization very difficult to describe. Its own subjects did not know what to make of it. Some, called Westernizers in the mid–nineteenth century, believed Russia was destined to become more like western Europe. Others, the Slavophiles, believed Russia was entrusted with a special destiny of its own, which imitation of Europe would only weaken or pervert.

Autocracy of the tsar

That Russia differed from other regions of Europe, at least in degree, was doubted by nobody. The leading institution was the autocracy of the tsar. This was not exactly the absolutism known in earlier European monarchies. In Russia certain very old European conceptions were missing, such as the idea that spiritual authority is independent of even the mightiest prince or the old feudal idea of reciprocal duties between king and subject. The notion that people have certain rights or claims for justice at the hands of power, which no one in the early modern European states had ever expressly repudiated, was in Russia a somewhat doctrinaire importation from western Europe. The tsardom did not rule by law; it ran the country by ukase, police action, and the army. The tsars, since Peter and before, had built up their state very largely by importing European technical methods and technical experts, often against strong objection by native Russians of all classes, upon whom the new methods were, when necessary, simply forced. More than any state in Europe, the Russian empire was a machine superimposed upon its people without organic connection—bureaucracy pure and simple. But as more Russians entered into contact with the other cultures of Europe many people acquired European ideas in which the autocracy was not interested—ideas of liberty and fraternity, of a just and classless society, of individual personality enriched by humane culture and moral freedom. Russians who began to espouse such ideas found themselves chronically critical of the government and of Russia itself. The government, massive though it seemed, was afraid of such people. Any idea arising outside official circles seemed pernicious, and the press and the universities were as a rule severely censored.

The severity of Russian serfdom

A second fundamental institution, which had grown up with the tsardom, was legalized bondage or serfdom. The majority of the population living on Russia's vast landed estates, in the households of wealthy landlords, or in rural villages were serfs dependent upon masters. Russian serfdom was more onerous than the serfdom that existed in east-central Europe until 1848. It resembled the slavery of the Americas in that serfs were "owned"; they could be bought and sold and used in occupations other than agriculture. Some serfs worked the soil, rendering unpaid labor service to the gentry. Others could be used by their owners in factories or mines or rented out for such purposes. Others were more independent, working as artisans or mechanics, and even traveling about or residing in the cities, but from their earnings they had to remit certain fees to the lord or return home when he called them. The owners had a certain paternalistic responsibility for their serfs, and in the villages the gentry constituted a kind of personal local government. The law, as in the American South, did little or nothing to interfere between gentry and servile mass, so that the serfs' day-to-day fortunes depended on the personality or economic circumstances of their owners.

By the mid–nineteenth century most Russians agreed that serfdom must some day end. Serfdom was in any case ceasing to be profitable; some two-thirds of all the privately owned serfs (that is, those not belonging to the tsar or state) were mortgaged as security for

loans at the time of Alexander II's accession. Increasingly serfdom was recognized as a bad system of labor relations, making the serfs illiterate and stolid drudges, without incentive, initiative, self-respect, or pride of workmanship, and also very poor soldiers for the army.

Educated Russians, full of Western ideas, were estranged from the government, from the Orthodox church, which was an arm of the tsar, and from the common people of their own country. They felt ill at ease in a nation of uneducated peasants and a pang of guilt at the virtual slavery on which their own position rested. Hence arose another distinctive feature of nineteenth-century Russian life, the intelligentsia. In Russia it seemed that the experience of being educated, debating ideas, and reading books made the intelligentsia more self-conscious of themselves as a class apart. They were made up of students, university graduates, and persons who had a good deal of leisure to read. Such people, while not very free to think, were more free to think than to do almost anything else. The Russian intelligentsia tended to embrace sweeping reformist philosophies, and they believed that intellectuals should play a large role in society. They formed an exaggerated idea of how thinkers could direct the course of historical change. Their characteristic attitude was one of opposition. Some, overwhelmed by the mammoth immobility of the tsardom and of serfdom, turned to revolutionary and even terroristic philosophies. This only made the bureaucrats more anxious and fearful, and the government more fitfully repressive.

Western ideas and education

The Emancipation Act of 1861 and Other Reforms

Alexander II, on becoming tsar in 1855, attempted to enlist the support of the liberals among the intelligentsia by implementing a whole series of significant reforms. He gave permission to travel outside Russia, eased the controls on the universities, and allowed the censorship to go relatively unenforced. Newspapers and journals were founded, and those written by Russian revolutionaries abroad, like the *Polar Star* of Alexander Herzen in London, penetrated more freely into the country. The result was a great outburst of public opinion, which was agreed at least on one point, the necessity of emancipating the peasants. This was in principle hardly a party question. Alexander's father, Nicholas I, had been a noted reactionary, who abhorred European liberalism and organized a system of secret political police until then unparalleled in Europe for its arbitrary and inquisitorial methods. Yet Nicholas I had taken serious measures to alleviate serfdom. Alexander II, basically conservative on Russian affairs, proceeded to set up a special branch of the government to study the question. The government did not wish to throw the whole labor system and economy of the country into chaos, nor to ruin the gentry class without which it could not govern at all. After many discussions, proposals, and memoranda, an imperial ukase of 1861 declared serfdom abolished and the peasants free.

By this great decree the peasants became legally free from the control of their former masters. They were henceforth subjects of the government, not subjects of their previous owners. It was hoped that they would be stirred by a new sense of human dignity. As one enthusiastic official put it shortly after emancipation: "The people are erect and transformed; the look, the walk, the speech, everything is changed." The gentry lost their old quasi-manorial jurisdiction over the villages. They could no longer exact forced and unpaid labor or receive fees arising from servitude.

It is important to realize what the Act of Emancipation did and did not do. Roughly (with great differences from region to region) it allocated about half the cultivated land to the gentry and half to the former serfs. The latter had to pay redemption money for the land they received and for the

Land allocation





EUROPE, 1871

This map shows the existence of the newly unified German Empire and a unified Kingdom of Italy. The German domain was enlarged by the incorporation of Schleswig (in the neck of the Danish peninsula) and the annexation from France of Alsace and parts of Lorraine (the regions around Strassburg and Metz on the map). From 1871 to 1914, Europe had fewer separate states than at any other time in its history. There were no further changes in national borders during this period except for the voluntary separation of Norway and Sweden in 1905 and various realignments in southeastern Europe as the Ottoman Empire withdrew from the Balkans.

fees that the gentry lost. The government actually paid the redemption money directly to the gentry at the time of emancipation, but the emancipated serfs were required to repay these funds to the government over many years and decades. The Russian aristocracy was thus far from weakened; in place of a kind of human property largely mortgaged anyway, they now had clear possession of some half the land, they received the redemption money, and they were rid of obligations to the peasants.

The peasants, on the other hand, now owned some half the arable land in their own right—a considerable amount by the standards of almost any European country. They did not, however, possess it according to the principles of private property or independent farming that had become prevalent in Europe. The peasant land, when redeemed, became the collective property of the ancient peasant village assembly, or *mir*. The village, as a unit, was responsible to the government for repayment of the redemption money and for collection of the necessary sums from its individual members. The village assembly, in default of collection, might require forced labor from the defaulter or a member of his family; and it could prevent peasants from moving away from the village, lest those remaining bear the whole burden of payment. It could (as in the past) assign and reassign certain lands to its members for tillage and otherwise supervise cultivation as a joint concern. To keep the village community intact, the government presently forbade the selling or mortgaging of land to persons outside the village. This tended to preserve the peasant society but also to discourage the investment of outside capital, with which equipment might be purchased, and so to retard agricultural improvement and the growth of wealth.

Not all peasants within the village unit were equal. As in France before the Revolution, some had the right to work more land than others. Some were only day laborers. Others had rights of inheritance in the soil (for not all land was subject to reassignment by the commune) or rented additional parcels of land belonging to the gentry. These lands they worked by hiring other peasants for wages. None of the Russian peasants, however, after the emancipation, possessed full individual freedom of action. In their movements and obligations, as in their thoughts, they were restricted by their villages as they had once been restricted by their lords.

Alexander II proceeded to overhaul the legal system with reforms that brought the Russian system closer to the judicial practices in western European countries. With the disappearance of the lord's jurisdiction over his peasants a new system of local courts was needed in any case, but the opportunity was taken to reform the courts from bottom to top. The arbitrariness of authority and defenselessness of the subject were the inveterate evils. They were greatly mitigated by the edict of 1864. Trials were made public, and private persons received the right to be represented in court by lawyers of their own choosing. All class distinctions in judicial matters were abolished, although in practice peasants continued to be subject to harsh disadvantages. A clear sequence of lower and higher courts was established. Requirements were laid down for the professional training of judges, who henceforth received stated salaries and were protected from administrative pressure. A system of juries on the English model was introduced.

While thus attempting to establish a rule of law, the tsar also moved in the direction of allowing self-government. He hoped to win over the liberals and to shoulder the upper and middle classes with some degree of public responsibility. He created, again by an edict of 1864, a system of provincial and district councils called *zemstvos*. Elected by various elements, including the peasants, the *zemstvos* gradually went into operation and took up matters of education, medical relief, public welfare, food supply, and road maintenance in their localities. Their

Inequality among peasants

A system of self-government



The emancipation of the peasants in Russia transformed the legal status of the former serfs and opened opportunities for the development of more prosperous peasant communities. There was still much poverty in the Russian countryside after 1861, but the people who are drinking and playing music outside this rural Russian house seem to be part of a more prosperous post-emancipation peasant class.

(Fotosearch/Getty Images)

great value was in developing civic sentiment among those who took part in them. Many liberals urged a representative body for all Russia, a Zemsky Sobor or Duma, which, however, Alexander II refused to concede. After 1864 his policy became more cautious, and he resisted the kinds of political institutions that contributed to the development of more liberal nation-states in other societies. A rebellion in Poland in 1863 inclined him to take advice from those who favored repression. He began to mollify the vested interests that had been disgruntled by the reforms and to whittle down some of the concessions already granted. But the essence of the reforms remained unaffected.

Revolutionism in Russia

The autocrat who thus undertook to liberalize Russia barely escaped assassination in 1866, had five shots fired at him in 1873, missed death by half an hour in 1880 when his imperial dining room was dynamited, and in 1881 was to be killed by a bomb. The revolutionaries were not pleased with the reforms, which if successful would merely strengthen the existing order. Some of the dissatisfied intelligentsia in the 1860s began to call themselves “nihilists”: they believed in “nothing”—except science—and took a cynical view of the reforming tsar and his zemstvos. The peasants, saddled with heavy redemption payments, remained basically unsatisfied, and intellectuals toured the villages fanning this discontent. Revolutionaries developed a mystic conception of the revolutionary role of the Russian masses. Socialists, after the failure of socialism in Europe in the Revolution of 1848, came in many cases to believe, as Alexander Herzen wrote, that the true future of socialism lay in Russia, because of the very weakness of capitalism in Russia and the existence of a kind of collectivism already established in the village assemblies or communes.

Bakunin and anarchism

More radical than Herzen were the anarchist Bakunin and his disciple Nechaiev. In their *People's Justice* these two called for terrorism not only against tsarist officials but against liberals also. As they wrote in the *Catechism of a Revolutionist*, the true revolutionary “is devoured by one purpose, one thought, one passion—the revolution. . . . He has severed every link with the social order and with the entire civilized world. . . . Everything which promotes the success of the revolution is moral, everything which hinders it is immoral.” Terrorism (which in that time generally meant assassination) was rejected by many of the revolutionaries, especially by those who in the 1870s took up the scientific socialism of Karl Marx. To Marx it did not seem that violence against some specific government officials would advance an inevitable historical or social process. But other groups, recognizing the inspiration of men like Bakunin and Nechaiev, organized secret terrorist societies. One of these, the People's Will, determined to assassinate the tsar. In an autocratic state, they held, there was no other road to justice and freedom.

Alexander II, alarmed by this underground menace, which of course did not escape the attention of the police, again turned for support to the liberals. The liberals, who were themselves threatened by the revolutionaries, had become estranged from the government by its failure to follow through with the reforms of the early 1860s. Now, in 1880, to rally support, the tsar again relaxed the autocratic system. He abolished the dreaded secret police set up by his father, allowed the press to discuss most political subjects freely, and encouraged the zemstvos to do the same. Further to associate representatives of the public with the government, he proposed, not exactly a parliament, but two nationally elected commissions to sit with the council of state. He signed the edict to this effect on March 13, 1881, and on the same day was assassinated, not by a demented individual acting wildly and alone, but by the joint efforts of the highly trained members of the terrorist society, the People's Will.

CHRONOLOGY OF NOTABLE EVENTS, 1853–1871

1854–1856	France and Britain join with Ottoman Turkey to defeat Russia in the Crimean War
1861	Italians establish the unified Kingdom of Italy
1861	Tsar Alexander II abolishes serfdom in Russia
1861–1865	Civil War in the United States; federal union is upheld and slavery is abolished
1867	Austria and Hungary join together in a “Dual Monarchy” under the Habsburg ruler Francis Joseph
1867	Creation of the independent Dominion of Canada
1870	Prussia defeats France in brief war; Napoleon III abdicates and Parisians proclaim a Third French Republic
1871	King Wilhelm of Prussia becomes emperor in newly established German Empire

Alexander III, upon his father’s death, abandoned the project for elected commissions and during his whole reign, from 1881 to 1894, reverted to a program of brutal resistance to liberals and revolutionaries alike. The new regime established by peasant emancipation, judicial reform, and the zemstvos was nevertheless allowed to continue. The process of creating new political institutions for a more modern state did not move forward in late nineteenth-century Russian society. How Russia finally received a parliament in 1905 is explained below in the chapter on the Russian Revolution. At present it is enough to have seen how even tsarist Russia, under Alexander II, shared in a liberal movement that was then at its height. The abolition of serfdom, putting both aristocrat and peasant more fully into a money economy, opened the way for capitalistic development within the empire. Between the two confining walls of autocracy and revolutionism—equally hard and unyielding—European ideas of law, liberty, and humanity began to spread in a tentative way; and the Russian government, in its own halting way, began to move toward the political and legal consolidation that was developing more rapidly in the national states of western Europe.

*Between autocracy
and revolutionism*

67. NATION BUILDING IN THE WIDER ATLANTIC WORLD: THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

The history of Europe, long interconnected with the history of other societies around the world, remained connected to the history of the new American nations that had gained their independence from European empires in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. European cultures were still influential in all parts of the Americas, and Europeans were much involved in the North American societies that emerged from earlier English, French, and Spanish colonies. The United States steadily expanded its economic and political power during the nineteenth century, Canada moved gradually toward independence from Great Britain, and Mexico struggled to protect its sovereignty and lands against invasions from both the United States and European forces coming from France. This book mostly examines the societies, cultures, and states of Europe, but the significance of European nation-building becomes more apparent within the context of other developments in the transatlantic world. The European processes and models of national consolidation also influenced North America—where many Europeans immigrated during the nineteenth century and where the growing populations were also constructing more unified national states.



Les négres affranchis colportant le décret d'affranchissement du président Lincoln.

The victories of Union armies during the American Civil War preserved the unity of the United States and also gave the national government the power to abolish slavery. This illustration from a French journal in 1863 provides a European image of newly freed people celebrating President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and leaving the places where they had been enslaved. Lincoln's proclamation is posted on the side of the coach. The abolition of slavery became another example of how the consolidation of large nation-states took place on both sides of the Atlantic.

(RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY)

Immigration, Civil War, and National Consolidation in the United States

The immigrants to the United States in this era (except for an uncounted, illegal importation of enslaved Africans) came almost entirely from Europe, and before 1860 most of the immigration flowed from Great Britain, Ireland, and Germany. Few concessions were made to the non-English immigrant populations. English was the language of the public schools, the police, law courts, local government, and public documents, all of which contributed to the nationalism and new national identity that spread across American society. The immigrants did not constitute minorities in the

European sense. They generally learned to speak English, and they were more than willing to accept the eighteenth-century political traditions of republicanism, self-government, and individual liberty. Immigrants also embraced the popular belief in the social component of America's national creed, which confidently asserted that the future would be better in America than either the present or the past in Europe. Such ideas contributed to a collective affirmation of national destiny and unity among the nation's diverse social classes and immigrant communities.

But at the same time the United States was falling to pieces, in large part because the Industrial Revolution in the Atlantic world had different effects on the U.S. North and South. The South became closely connected to the British economy, producing raw cotton for British textile mills and depending on an enslaved labor force to generate the exports that were the region's main economic product. In the North, the Industrial Revolution led to the building of factories, for which the manufacturers needed both tariff protection and new workers, many of whom were recent immigrants from Europe. Conflicts over free trade and tariffs thus became entangled with the issue of slavery; and the conflict over slavery became part of a larger debate about individual rights and liberty on both sides of the Atlantic. Over the course of the nineteenth century, slavery had come under increasing moral condemnation in both Europe and the Americas. It was abolished in the British colonies in 1833, in the French colonies in 1848, and in the Spanish American republics at different dates in the first half of the century. Similarly, legal serfdom was abolished in the Habsburg possessions in 1848 and in Russia in 1861. The slave system in the American South was increasingly out of step with the nineteenth-century liberal movement toward individual legal and political rights.

Northern and Southern economies

The westward expansion of the United States thus extended a conflict that France and Great Britain had once waged for control of lands beyond the Allegheny Mountains. Now the Northern and Southern states in the American republic competed to make the western territories either free or slave. In 1846 the United States made war upon Mexico by methods that anticipated the aggressive tactics Bismarck would soon use to expand the territories of Prussia. Many Northerners denounced the war as an act of Southern aggression, but the new conquests became permanent possessions of the United States. This territory, which extended from Texas to the Pacific coast, was more than half of the land in the entire Mexican Republic, and its conquest by the United States showed how European methods of national state expansion and consolidation were also used in North America.

Mexican-American War

The Mexican-American War further intensified the sectional conflict in the United States, especially after the first new state created in this vast new region of the country, California, joined the Union as a free state. The American opponents of slavery, the Abolitionists, were part of a transatlantic humanitarian movement; and their political goals somewhat resembled the aspirations of the radical democrats who came forward in Europe in 1848. Meanwhile, a growing sectionalism in the American South came to resemble the new nationalism felt by many peoples in Europe who were seeking to separate from larger empires or older monarchical states. Like the Magyar landowners of the Austrian empire, Southern white elites began to believe that their way of life could be best maintained by separation from a Union in which they were likely to become a permanent political minority. When the new, Northern-based Republican party was able to elect Abraham Lincoln as the American president in 1860, the advocates for Southern independence moved quickly to secede from the United States and to form the Confederate States of America. This secession set off a prolonged

Secession of the American South

civil war, which attracted wide international attention, in part because some of the battles were as large as the major battles in Europe during the Napoleonic wars.

European governments, while never recognizing the Confederacy, were mostly partial to the South. The United States stood for principles still considered revolutionary in Europe, so that while the European working classes generally favored the North, the upper classes were willing enough to see the North American republic collapse into fragments. In this respect, Great Britain and France viewed the breakup of the United States as a strategic opportunity that they had formerly seen in the breakup of the Spanish empire: an independent Confederate nation might provide convenient access to agricultural commodities that were needed in European factories, and it might open a new tariff-free market in which Europeans could sell their manufactured goods. The breakup of the United States might also offer new opportunities for European expansion in other parts of the Americas. It was, for example, during the American Civil War that Napoleon III sent a French army to Mexico and set up a kind of satellite empire under the Austrian archduke Maximilian. The most serious European attempt to challenge the Monroe Doctrine, violate the independence of a Latin American republic, and revive European colonialism thus occurred at the time when the United States was in dissolution.

European responses to American Civil War

But the North won the war and the Union was upheld; the Mexicans soon got rid of their unwanted European emperor; and Tsar Alexander II sold Alaska to the United States. More generally, the war ended the older idea that the United States was a Union or confederation from which member states might withdraw at will. The outcome of the American Civil War therefore settled a political argument about the meaning of the American republic, and the United States in the 1860s affirmed the increasingly popular view of the nation-state as it was defined in Europe. The United States would be a national state, composed not of member states but of a unitary national people irrevocably bound together. This doctrine was now written explicitly into the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution, which pronounced all Americans to be citizens not of their several states but of the United States. Meanwhile, the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery everywhere in the country (without compensation to the former slaveholders) and linked the United States somewhat belatedly to the broader nineteenth-century European campaign to abolish slavery and serfdom. The Northern triumph in the Civil War thus ensured the continuing consolidation of a unified North American nation that could be counted among those countries such as Germany and Italy that were also unifying diverse territories under more centralized national governments during this same era.

The Union upheld

The Union victory in the American Civil War expanded the influence of Northern industrialists and others who sought to advance the nation's internal economic development through manufacturing and finance. As in France under Napoleon III, there was a good deal of corruption, fraud, and irresponsible speculation, but industry boomed, the cities grew, and the American national state became more like other industrializing nations in Europe as it promoted the building of railroads, provided public lands for the creation of state-supported universities, and facilitated the growth of new business corporations. In short, the American Civil War, which might have reduced English-speaking America and its diverse regions into competing minor republics, resulted instead in the economic and political consolidation of a large nation-state, liberal and more democratic in its political principles, officially opposed to slavery, and committed to the expansion of a capitalist industrial economy. In all of these ways, the history of the United States in this era can be seen as part of a wider process of nation-building throughout the Atlantic world.

Influence of business and finance

The Dominion of Canada: A New Model for Decolonization

North of the United States, at the time of the American Civil War, lay a vast territory that was still part of the British Empire and in varying degrees still dependent on Great Britain. The European population in this territory had originated in three great streams. One part was French, settled in the St. Lawrence Valley since the seventeenth century. A second part was made up of descendants of United Empire Loyalists, the old seaboard colonists who had fled from the United States after the American Revolution. A third part consisted of recent immigrants from Great Britain, men and women of the working classes who had left the home country to improve their lives in America.

European population

Although there were recurring tensions and conflicts between the French-speaking and English-speaking populations, the people in Canada had shown little inclination to separate from Great Britain. During the 1840s and 1850s, however, the British government moved toward a new system of self-government for its enormous North American colony. This transition drew on the recommendations of Lord Durham, a Whig political leader who had served as a governor in Canada and also written an influential report on Canadian affairs. Durham's Report was long regarded as one of the classic documents in the rise of the British Commonwealth of Nations—the international system that gradually evolved out of the modern British Empire. His recommendations included proposals for economic improvements such as the building of railroads, but Durham's Report also put forward new political plans. He urged the granting of virtual self-government for Canada (united in one great province of French- and English-speaking populations) and the introduction of the British system of “responsible government,” in which the prime minister and cabinet should be responsible to and under the control of the elected assembly in the province. The British governor would become a kind of legal and ceremonial figure like the sovereign in Great Britain.

Lord Durham's Report

Self-government

Lord Durham's proposals were generally adopted, and Canada moved toward the autonomous governing of its internal affairs. The principle of responsible government was established by the late 1840s, so that the British governors of Canada allowed the elected assembly to adopt policies and appoint or remove ministers as it chose. This system became the foundation for an even more independent Canadian state that began to emerge while the Civil War was tearing apart the United States. In the face of this example (and despite the concerns of many French Canadians), the Canadian political elites decided to form a strong union in which all powers were to rest in the central government except those specifically assigned to the various provinces. A new federal constitution, drafted in Canada by Canadians, was passed by the British Parliament in 1867 as the British North America Act, which constitutionally established the Dominion of Canada. The eastern maritime provinces (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island) joined Quebec and Ontario in the new Dominion. These political arrangements established a united country that facilitated rapid westward expansion to the Pacific coast, and Canada became another example of the transatlantic movement toward modern national consolidation.

British North America Act

The Dominion of Canada, though at first not large in population, possessed from the beginning a significance beyond the mere number of its people. It was the first example of successful devolution, or granting of political liberty and independence, within one of the European colonial empires. It embodied principles that Edmund Burke and Benjamin Franklin had vainly recommended a century before to keep the thirteen colonies loyal to

Model for dominion status

Great Britain. The Dominion after 1867 moved forward from independence in internal matters to independence in such external affairs as tariffs, diplomacy, and the decisions of war and peace. Although Britain would continue to expand its empire in other parts of the world after 1870, its policies in Canada pioneered the development of a “dominion status” that became the precedent for other European “settler societies” that later gained political independence—Australia (1901), New Zealand (1907), and the Union of South Africa (1910). A similar model was also used in the 1920s, temporarily, in Ireland. By the middle of the twentieth century the same idea, or what may be called the Canadian idea, was also applied in various ways to the worldwide process of decolonization as the British Empire gave up control of its colonies in Asia and Africa. Despite their often difficult and conflicted transitions to national independence, people in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the former British colonies in Africa chose to become postcolonial republics that would remain loosely and voluntarily joined together and to Great Britain in a Commonwealth of Nations.

More immediately, in America, the founding of the Canadian dominion stabilized relations between British North America and the United States. Both Canada and the United States regarded their long national border as final; and each of these expanding nations now set out to develop their national territories (a process that would include the displacement of indigenous peoples and new internal conflicts among the different regions of each nation). The withdrawal of British control from Canadian affairs also furthered the long-developing conception of an American continent entirely free from European political control, though the European model of state-building and national cultures would remain influential long after the departure of the last British colonial administrators.

The unifying North American nations therefore exemplified a wider process of national consolidation that spanned the Atlantic Ocean and spread across Europe to Russia (reaching also into Japan). It was an era in which emerging modern societies were revolutionized economically by the railroad and steamship and also revolutionized politically by the consolidation of new national political institutions. These states increasingly embodied certain liberal and constitutional principles, or at least the machinery of representative government. But the whole earth had also become an arena in which powerful national states sought to promote their economic and political interests with little respect for the constitutional principles that were becoming important in domestic political institutions. The most powerful European states in 1871 included Great Britain, Germany, France, Austria-Hungary, and Russia. Britain had developed a new political mechanism for the emergence of a postcolonial nation in Canada, but the main European powers were at this time more interested in acquiring colonies than in promoting decolonization. Whether the newly united Italian nation should be called a Great Power was not yet clear. All agreed that the United States would eventually play a large role in international affairs, but it had not yet become a major influence on the politics and economies of Europe.

Power of National States



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