

Unification of Italy

The unification of Italy is defined as the unification of different Italian states into one kingdom. It was a famous social and political movement of the 19th century that resulted from a series of events given below. In the 1820s, the Carbonari secret society attempted to organize mass protests in Palermo and Naples but had little accomplishment owing to the Carbonari's lack of peasant support. Giuseppe Mazzini, a nationalistic writer, founded the Young Italy national revolutionary movement (1831). Mazzini advocated for a unified republic. His ideologies quickly spread among large segments of Italian citizens.

The revolutionary cells of young Italy spread across the Italian peninsula. After 1830, breakthrough rhetoric in pursuit of the unification of Italy started to resurface, and a sequence of insurrections set the stage for the establishment of a single nation along the Italian peninsula.

History of Unification of Italy

In this section, you will learn the historical background behind the unification of Italy movement. In the third century BCE, Italy was consolidated under the Roman Republic, which managed to stay for approximately 700 years. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the Ostrogothic Empire took its place, followed by the Byzantine or Eastern Roman Empire, under which Italy stayed unified for the timeframe.

The intervention by the Byzantine Empire deteriorated unity, and many city-states arose. Starting in the eighth century, the north of the country was governed by the Holy Roman Empire, while central and southern Italy was alternately ruled by the Kingdom of Naples, the Papal States, and the Kingdom of Sicily.

Following the Renaissance, the power dynamics shifted in the 15-16th centuries as the city-states of Milan and Venice grew in power. Multiple wars erupted between the strong city-states as well as the Holy Roman Empire. Renowned Renaissance writers such as Dante, Machiavelli, Petrarch, Guicciardini, and Boccaccio, documented those times.

The Italian battles took place between French rulers and Spanish enemies from 1494 to 1559. In 1648, the Treaty of Westphalia officially ended the authority of the Holy Roman Emperors in the state of Italy. But even so, until the War of the Spanish Succession, the Spanish offshoot of the Habsburg dynasty, a further branch that supplied the Emperors, remained in control of most of Italy (1701–14). Italy stayed in this state until the start of the French Revolution of 1789.

Factors against the Unification of Italy

The Congress of Vienna in 1815 determined the fate of the regions of Italy, and regained the pre-Napoleonic mishmash of individual governments, either straightforwardly ruled or heavily influenced by the predominant European powers, notably Austria.

As a result, the five major divisions were restored, indicating the high standard of Austrian control. Austria reigned the northern Italian provinces of Venetia and Lombardy and numerous other small states. The Spanish Bourbon family ruled the Empire of the Two Sicilies in the south. The Grand Duchy of Tuscany and the Papal State were both based in Central Italy.

The following factors worked against the unification of Italy:

- Italy is divided into nine states.
- The Apennine Mountains divide the territory in half, running north and south.
- The Po River divides the territory in half, running east and west.
- The Pope desired to retain influence over the Papal States.
- Other European countries were concerned that a powerful Italy would throw off the power balance.

Moreover, there had been rising dissatisfaction with the foreign rulers; Italians had joined forces in a war against Austria in order to reclaim the provinces she had obtained in the preceding war. Carbonari, one of the secret revolutionary associations, had become active in the 1820s. The Carbonari members assisted the preliminary flawed revolutionary activities for the reunification of Italy known as Risorgimento, with the faint concept of establishing an Italian state. They ended in failure mainly due to a lack of a concrete plan and governance.

Three Leaders of Unification of Italy Movement

The unification of Italy could not have been possible without the contributions of some of the most renowned and prominent political figures. These figures include Giuseppe Mazzini, Count Camillo di Cavour, and Giuseppe Garibaldi. All major contributions by these figures are discussed in the section below.

Giuseppe Mazzini

Giuseppe Mazzini was 26 years old when his actions in the Carbonari landed him in prison. While imprisoned, he concluded that Italy must be unified. He devised a plan to establish an unrestricted, independent, and republican state with Rome as its capital. Upon his discharge in 1831, he moved to Marseille and founded La Giovine Italia, modern political society in Young Italy. The latest society, whose tagline was "God and the People," aimed for the unification of Italy.

In the early 1830s, it had 60,000 followers. In early 1833, he organized a revolution. However, the plot was revealed prior to it being carried out, and several revolutionaries were taken into custody and executed. Mazzini went missing, was convicted in absentia, and handed a death sentence. Revolts erupted in eight Italian peninsula states during the turbulent year of 1848.

Mazzini led a republican government in Rome for a short time. He presumed that nation-states reflected Europe's best chance for social and economic justice, democracy, and harmony. Even so, the 1848 insurrections in Italy, as in the rest of Europe, failed. Mazzini, as well as other nationalist figureheads, were forced into exile by the erstwhile rulers of the Italian states. He continued to remain in hiding for many years. He attempted multiple unsuccessful resurrections before succumbing to lung disease in 1872.

Camillo di Cavour

Piedmont-Sardinia was the largest and most powerful Italian state and was rather friendly to nationalists. In 1848, the Kingdom also embraced a liberal constitution. Since Mazzini's democratic idealism had already failed, nationalists saw the unification of Italy under Piedmont-Sardinia as a credible option. Count Camillo di Cavour was appointed Prime Minister of Sardinia

by King Victor Emmanuel II in 1852. He was an affluent, middle-aged aristocrat who worked tirelessly to widen the power of Piedmont-Sardinia. His initial goal was to solidify Sardinia's power rather than the unification of Italy.

Cavour's initial priority was to seize possession of the northern region of Italy for Sardinia. Austria was the most major hindrance to colonising northern Italy. Cavour reached a settlement with France to remove the Austrians from the north. In the year 1858, French Emperor Napoleon III agreed to assist Austria in cruising them away from the northern regions of Lombardy and Venetia.

As a result, a conflict between the consolidated French-Sardinian army and the Austrian army erupted, resulting in Austria's defeat. Sardinia was successful in wresting control of all of northern Italy from the Austrians, with the exception of Venetia.

Giuseppe Garibaldi

Giuseppe Garibaldi played a pivotal role in unification of Italy. After conquering the majority of northern Italy, Cavour turned his attention to the south. He began secretly assisting nationalist rebels. A small cadre of Italian nationalists headed by Giuseppe Garibaldi captured Sicily from Bourbon Kings in 1860. This effective expedition is often identified as the Expedition of the Thousand. Garibaldi marched north from Sicily to Rome, crossing the Italian mainland.

The Volunteers rallied around him. He desired to capture Rome, but Cavour convinced him not to since French troops might arrive to safeguard the Pope. Expedition of the Thousand culminated in a revolt in 1860, in which voters granted Garibaldi approval to integrate the southern areas that he had conquered along with the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia. Cavour arranged for a conference between Garibaldi and King Victor Emmanuel II in Naples. Garibaldi agreed to stand down and allow the Sardinian king to prevail.

As a result, this was the final territorial achievement before the formation of the Kingdom of Italy that happened on March 17, 1861, another milestone advancing towards unification of Italy. Sardinian King Victor Emmanuel II was declared King of Italy. The Kingdom of Italy remained until 1946, till the Italians elected a republican government. The Austrian state of Venetia was annexed by Italy in 1866.

The provinces of the Papal States were also captured by Italian troops in 1870. The Roman city was now under Italian command. The pope, on the other hand, would remain in power over a portion of Rome widely recognized as Vatican City. Garibaldi, who is currently regarded as one of Italy's "fathers of the fatherland" as well as the "Hero of Two Worlds" because of his exceptional contribution towards the unification of Italy, decided to retire to the island of Caprera, not accepting any remuneration for his operations. He later fought in the Austro-Prussian War. He died in the year 1875, with his final wish being a simple cremation, after a turbulent political career.

Unification of Italy and Germany

Even though democracy was not fully established in both countries, the **unification of Italy and Germany** marked a significant step forward in their respective histories. Other countries were experiencing the same forces that fueled these revolutionary movements. Their victory in one

region fueled the flames of revolt and incentivized change throughout the world. They are still felt globally, morphing social, political, and economic order worldwide.

The below-mentioned revolutions, alongside the Industrial Revolution, had a significant impact on the trajectory of human history:

- The unification of Italy and Germany was carried out by conservative powers using militarism and nationalism discourse to accomplish their own objectives rather than by liberal and nationalist-influenced mass rebellions.
- The recognition of these 2 different nationalist initiatives resulted in consequences beyond the two countries involved.
- There were distinct revolutionary events in various European countries, although they were inspired by new and popular nineteenth-century doctrines.
- Liberalism was important in almost every situation, but so were conservatism and, to a smaller degree, socialism.
- Nonetheless, in both Italy and Germany, nationalism lingered taller than almost any other factor.
- Those who wished for national unification in Italy and Germany in 1848 hoped for a widespread populist uprising to unify these countries.
- Moreover, the cautionary tale of 1848 was that it'd take much more widespread popular revolts to unite Italy and Germany.
- It could very well take high-level leadership, some armed actions, and diplomacy.
- Conservatives across both Italy and Prussia may not have liked the concepts of nationalism, but they understood the strength that it possessed that could be utilized by astute politicians to attain their own objectives and boost their own control.
- As a result, such conservatives embraced nationalism's language towards their own agendas.
- Cavour in Italy and Bismarck in Germany were the two major Conservatives who exploited the trappings of nationalism for personal gain.
- These political figures reshaped the map of Europe by combining competent diplomacy with potent armed forces.
- Ethnic minorities' nationalism was restricted to a small group of scholars or elites who envisioned their own state in the 1850s and 1860s.
- However, the unification of Italy and Germany diminished the power of the Habsburg monarchy, resulting in multiple modifications that crippled the empire, like the Compromise of 1867.

Challenges to the Unification of Italy

Many challenges were faced during the process of implementation of the unification of Italy, including the language barrier amongst citizens of dissimilar regions and the presence of disorderly parties in the parliament. Some of the major problems are explained in depth below:

- The Unification of Italy wasn't a magic solution for each of Italy's issues. The centuries of disconnection had resulted in bitter rivalries between the various Italian provinces.
- The fact that the northern region of the nation was industrially developed while the southern part was agriculturally sound, was a major point of contention in Italy. The citizens from these two regions were so dissimilar that they conversed in two different versions of Italian and struggled to understand each other.
- The Italian Parliament quickly became clogged with disorderly parties and ambiguous politics. Cabinets and prime ministers were frequently reshuffled.

- Due to economic troubles, violent peasant uprisings erupted in the south. A variety of strikes and riots also impacted the northern regions. As a result, by the turn of the twentieth century, Italy was in a deplorable state.

