



World History

Unification of Germany and Italy

Name: _____

Section: _____

Score: ____/5

Directions: Read the following article on the similarities and differences in the Unifications of Germany and Italy and complete the similarities and differences table at the end.

Compare and contrast the Italian and German unifications.

By 1871, Europe was remapped with the rise of two newly united nations - the Kingdom of Italy and the German Empire. The unification movements of both countries took place at roughly the same time in the mid-19th century and were motivated by the same historical trends - that of liberalism and nationalism. The following discussion presents a comparison of the two unifications.

Pre-1815 Before the French Revolution and Napoleon Bonaparte, both Italy and Germany shared some similar features. Italy was divided into a number of separate states which were ruled by despotic kings. Yet the Italians shared a common language and a common history - the Roman Empire. Many still had memories of the ancient unity and glory.

Germany was actually more divided than Italy. She had more than three hundred petty independent states, and they had no form of common government. Nonetheless, the Germans had a common language and shared some memories of unity in medieval times.

Both the French Revolution and Napoleon affected the two countries. Italy was particularly influenced by the career of Napoleon who first rose to fame with his Italian campaign (1796). At first, Napoleon and his invading armies were treated by Italians as liberators who taught them liberalism and nationalism. In fact, Napoleon instituted some reforms in Italy and even created a united Kingdom of Italy. These reinforced the impact of liberalism and nationalism. However, when Napoleon became more and more a dictator, he was opposed by Italians who rose into rebellion against Napoleonic dominance.

As for Germany, the French Revolution and Napoleon gave the first impetus to nationalist and liberal forces; On the one hand, Napoleon reduced the number of German states from over three hundred to thirty nine and grouped them into a Confederation of the Rhine. On the other hand, both Austria and Prussia, major German states, were soundly defeated by Napoleon in several battles. Their harsh treatment nursed strong patriotic feeling among the Germans. In particular, Prussia modernised her army and government in order to fight back Napoleon. This was successfully carried out in the Battle of Leipzig (1813) when Prussia led other German states to defeat Napoleon.

In short, liberal and nationalist sentiments in Italy and Germany were much aroused by the French Revolution and Napoleon.

Congress of Vienna When Napoleon was defeated and exiled, representatives of the European countries met at the Congress of Vienna to settle European affairs. They again divided the Italian peninsula into petty states with restored legitimate rulers. Italy was described to be merely a geographical expression and there was not even a loose confederation of states, to give a sense of political unity. Worse still, Austria, a foreign country, exerted strong influence over all Italian states except Piedmont-Sardinia.

In Germany, absolute governments were restored in all the states by the Congress of Vienna. Unlike Italy, a loose German Confederation of the thirty-nine states was created to preserve a vague sense of German unity.

However, the Confederation and its Diet were powerless and by no means resembled a central government. Austria, holding the presidency of the Diet, was very influential in German affairs.

Such turning the clock back greatly frustrated Italian and German liberals and patriots. Discontented, they sought various means to seek liberty and unity. Thus, in the following decades, revolts broke out periodically until it culminated into great revolutions by 1848.

Leadership In post-1815 Italy, most Italian states, such as the Kingdom of Sardinia, the central Duchies and the Papal States, were strongly influenced by Austria. As a multi-racial empire, and occupying the Italian provinces of Lombardy and Venetia, Austria had no wish to see Italy unified. Mettemich tried to suppress whatever liberal and nationalist aspirations that surfaced in Italy, and he was successful until 1848. In the meantime, three schools of thought emerged on how to achieve Italian unification. As events unfolded, the monarchist idea that championed the leadership of Piedmont-Sardinia became the main stream. That country alone had the will and strength to lead in the Italian unification movement. She became the rallying point of Italian nationalists.

In Germany, as in Italy, Austria- was the main obstacle to unification. Nonetheless, inside the Confederation, Austria had to face the rivalry of another powerful German state - Prussia. Both contended after 1815 for leadership of the Confederation; For several decades, at least until 1850 when Prussia was humiliated by Austria in the Treaty of Olmutz, Austrian leadership was undisputable. Yet, Austria sought only to lead, but not to unify the states. As nationalism gathered momentum, more and more Germans lost hope in Austria and turned to Prussia for leadership in the unification movement.

Economic factor As a matter of fact, Prussia's status in the Confederation had been raised with the success of the Zollverein. This Customs Union was launched by Prussia in 1818 and it contributed to making Prussia the most economically progressive German state. It also strengthened the Prussian ties with other states at the expense of Austria. In a general sense, the economic union did much to pave the way for later political unity in Germany.

In Italy, no customs union comparable to the Zollverein aided the movement towards unification. Only Piedmont herself, under the guidance of Prime Minister Cavour, implemented some economic reforms that made the country the most economically advanced Italian state. This indirectly strengthened Piedmont to challenge the Austrian presence in Italy.

1848 Revolutions Revolutionary spirit persisted in Italy since 1815, as witnessed from the sequel of uprisings throughout the decades. _In 1848, revolts broke out in every Italian states for the sake of liberty and unity. The Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia also declared war on Austria to fight for Italian unification. Despite some initial successes, the revolutionary movement failed as revolts were ultimately suppressed by despotic rulers and Piedmont was defeated by Austria. Nonetheless, Piedmont greatly increased her prestige among Italian nationalists and liberals for her brave fighting against Austria and her promulgation of a constitution in 1848.

Germany was equally affected by the great revolutionary tide. The two major German states, Austria and Prussia, were shocked by revolts in their capital cities. Some concessions were granted to the revolutionaries, such as the resignation of Metternich, the calling of constituent assemblies, and the creation of liberal governments. Nonetheless, counter revolution prevailed in the end when despotic rule returned to most German states, usually after the suppression of revolts by loyal imperial forces.

In the midst of early revolutionary successes, German nationalists assembled at Frankfurt to seek German unification by constitutional means. Their endless debates on basic principles as well as on Greater or Lesser Germany, together with their lack of real power, contributed to their ultimate failure by 1850.

As such, the 1848 revolution failed to bring liberty or unity to Germany, as it had failed in Italy. Only in Prussia did the king grant a constitution, but it was far from what the liberals had wanted. Whereas Piedmont's prestige

among Italians had been raised after the 1848 episode, no state in Germany increased her prestige in the eyes of liberals and nationalists.

Personal leadership In the post-1848 decades, both Italy and Germany were heading towards unification under the guidance of capable leaders.

In 1852, Cavour became Prime Minister of Piedmont. He contributed greatly to the cause of Italian unification. Cavour, a farsighted and able statesman, advocate of a constitutional monarchy, looked to liberals in other Italian states to support him. He strove to modernise Piedmont's economy and government once he was in power. Yet, his greatest contribution to Italian unification was in the realm of diplomacy.

Bismarck became Minister-President of Prussia in 1862. His temperament was quite different from Cavour. He was far more a strong leader of the autocratic type, masterful, anti-democratic and scornful of liberals. His "blood and iron" speech and his unscrupulous treatment of the Prussian liberals vividly revealed his nature as a Junker leader.

Diplomacy and war In achieving Italian and German unifications, both Cavour and Bismarck made great use of diplomacy and war. At the risk of over-simplification, Cavour had to rely more on diplomacy than war than Bismarck.

Alone, the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia was no match for Austria. The military defeats in 1848-49 were good lessons to learn. Cavour had to try his best to secure foreign-allies and to isolate Austria in his attempt at unification. With this in mind, Cavour first entered the Crimean War on the side of France and Britain. Then he met Napoleon III at Plombieres to secure French military assistance to drive Austria out of Italy. In the Austro-Piedmontese war that followed, partial Italian unification was achieved. Despite the sudden French armistice with Austria, Piedmont had gained Lombardy from Austria. In the meantime, Cavour took advantage of nationalist uprisings in the central Italian Duchies as well as the Garibaldi's expedition in Naples-Sicily to further complete Italian unification. By the time Cavour died in 1861, only Venetia and Rome remained outside the newly created Kingdom of Italy.

Between 1861 and 1870, Italian unification was completed not so much by Italian efforts as by Prussia's defeats of Austria (1866) and France (1871). In the first instance, Italy allied with Prussia and seized Venetia - from Austria. In the second case, when French garrisons at Rome returned home to fight Prussia, Italian forces marched into the city despite the Pope's opposition. By then, the Italian unification had finally been completed.

Unlike Cavour, Bismarck was able to achieve German unification without foreign assistance and more with the use of military force. With the helpful assistance of his military leaders, Bismarck had at his disposal a powerful military machinery. In 1866, he defeated Austria by first isolating her diplomatically from possible allies, then overwhelming her with superior arms. This Seven Weeks War between Prussia and Austria enabled the former to annex some German states to form a North German Confederation, and to drive Austrian influence out of Germany.

Also unlike Cavour who died when Italian unification was only half-accomplished, Bismarck completed German unification himself by another war against France between 1870-71. The Prussian victory over France aroused strong nationalist sentiments and induced German states to unite in the name of a German empire, under the leadership of Prussia. Thus, Prussian militarism had unified Germany unaided.

Conclusion Italian unification owed much to the leadership of Piedmont and Cavour, and to French and Prussian military role. Yet, forces from below were also important, especially the liberals and nationalists who rallied to Cavour and Garibaldi. As a matter of fact, those spontaneous uprisings in central and southern Italian cities in 1860 were important factors in the process of unification. On the other hand, "unification from above" was clearly the pattern in Germany. It was achieved mainly by Prussia, her army, her ruling Junker class, and the Junker leader Bismarck.

Italian and German Unification	<u>Similarities</u>	<u>Differences</u>
Pre-1815		
Congress of Vienna		
Leadership		
Economic factors		
1848 Revolution		
Personal leadership		
Diplomacy and War		