

X. The Changing Face of Europe (1848-1914)

A. The Birth of the Second French Empire

1. In 1848, the French people had elected Louis Napoleon as the president, but as the nephew of Napoleon he wished for the same kind of power his uncle had once had.
2. The new French parliament gave him the excuse he needed to seize power when it proposed to change the election rules in France by taking away the right to vote from many poorer people in the country who wanted the “right to work.”
3. The French people were swayed by Louis Napoleon's claims to be in their favor, and he was able to declare the Second French Empire, with himself at as Napoleon III. (Napoleon had had a son, known as Napoleon II.)

B. The Unification of Italy (1815-1861)

1. In answer to the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 in France, the main northern Italian kingdom of Sardinia had tried to lead the charge towards the unification of Italy.
2. To succeed, however, Sardinia needed an alliance with Napoleon III against Austria.
3. As temporary allies, France and Sardinia both wished to weaken Austria, and in exchange for help to become the King of Italy, Sardinia could offer Napoleon the return of French lands taken away by Metternich.
4. With help from France, the rebellion against Austria began in 1859 and gradually succeeded.
5. A few small pieces of Italy remained separate for a time, but basically, the modern nation of Italy was created by 1861.

C. The Birth of the German Empire (1848-1871)

1. In 1848, when France became a republic again, people throughout Germany wanted to create their own combined parliament called the Frankfurt Assembly.
2. The Frankfurt Assembly soon offered the kingship of a united Germany to the King of Prussia, but at Olmutz in 1850, Austria and Russia forced Prussia to accept a divided Germany. In German history, this is known as the “Humiliation at Olmutz.”
3. In 1861, Wilhelm I became King of Prussia. Wilhelm’s main advisor was a man named Otto von Bismarck, who believed that Prussia must defeat Austria and create a new Germany through “blood and iron” (war).
4. In 1864, Prussia and Austria combined forces to conquer the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein in northern Germany from Denmark, but Prussia insisted on keeping both, leading to a second war.
5. When the arguments over how to manage the newly German lands led to war, Prussia defeated Austria in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, and Prussia took over most of northern Germany.
6. Prussia was fast becoming the major power in central Europe, but understood that if he tried to take over the rest of Germany he would end up in a war against France. He welcomed this fact, but he needed the rest of Europe to stay out of the conflict, so he set about tricking Napoleon III into looking like the villain in the coming conflict.
7. First he tricked Napoleon into asking to split up Germany between them, and when Napoleon tried to negotiate the takeover of Bavaria, Bismarck revealed Napoleon’s plans to the German kingdoms, who easily became his allies against Napoleon.
4. Then he tricked Napoleon III into declaring war against Prussia over the possibility of a Prussian prince becoming the new king of Spain.
5. Prussia was far better prepared for the war, thanks to Bismarck, and easily won.
6. In 1871, the German Empire was proclaimed in the palace built for Louis XIV at Versailles!

D. Impact of German Unification on France

1. The defeat of France and the proclamation of the German Empire at Versailles were demoralizing events for the French people.
2. Instead of being “crowned in glory,” Napoleon III was blamed for the terrible events that had happened, and deposed.
3. The Second French Empire was ended and the Third French Republic was declared.

E. Impact of German Unification on Austria

1. As German unification proceeded, the Austrians realized that they would be left out, and that their own empire could not be sustained in the long run. Increasingly, the different non-German people within the empire were looking to become independent.
2. The Austrians, who made up 1/4 of the Empire's population decided to ally themselves with the Hungarians, who made up 1/5 of the population, in order to control the rest.
3. The Austrian Empire thus became the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a.k.a. Austria-Hungary, or the “Dual Monarchy.”
4. The Austrian Emperor was also King of Hungary, but Hungary had its own parliament, its own constitution, and special privileges in ruling part of the empire.

F. The Scramble for Africa

1. Germany, finally unified after hundreds of years of disintegration, now wanted to join the club of great European nations by creating a global empire.
2. With every major area or continent either already taken or too strongly independent to be taken, the only place still open to colonization was Africa.
3. The From 1882 to 1914, a tremendous rush of activity (called the “Scramble for Africa”) saw the various countries of Europe take over almost all of Africa.

G. The Triple Alliance and Triple Entente

1. The Formation of Germany represented a major shift in the Balance of Power in Europe. The Germans both wanted to expand further, and feared that France would seek revenge for the Franco-Prussian War.
2. Germany was able to take advantage of a conflict between Russia and Austria over control of Eastern Europe to make an alliance with its former enemy, Austria. Italy joined this alliance, and it became known as the Triple Alliance.
3. Russia responded by choosing to temporarily ally with France and England, in an alliance called the Triple Entente.
4. The two huge and powerful alliances faced each other in 1914, and the slightest move might now set off a major war. Historians have called this situation a “powder keg.”