

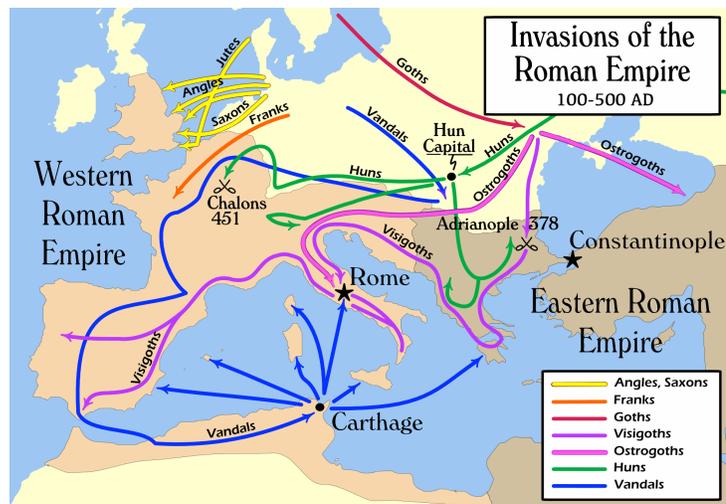
V. A Higher Resolution View of the Europe of Nations

A. Adding New Components

1. Now that we have built up a basic framework of European history from start to finish, we need to expand our outlook beyond the core (France and Germany) to the other important members of the European Union.
2. **Russia** played a huge role in both world wars and has been one of two countries that is not part of the European Union whose presence has deeply shaped the rise of the EU. (The other, of course, is the United States.) Russia is the eastern-most peripheral member of the European world. It is geographically massive—spanning across to the Pacific—but its culture has always faced West to Europe and been deeply affected by it, as per its ultimate adoption of communism (a European theory of government.)
3. **Great Britain**, like Russia, is a country on the edge of Europe—in effect, both in and out. As an island nation, it has kept a certain degree of separation from continental affairs. It played a major role in both world wars, and in the construction of the European Union since—though never fully joining—and now, as many know, its population recently voted to exit the European Union altogether.
4. **Spain and Portugal** are among the initial twelve founding member of the European Union. The two countries occupy the Iberian peninsula, and are thus are not among the core members of the EU, geographically speaking. Nonetheless, their history makes them key players in the formation of the European of nations, especially the Reformation and Religious Wars that was so crucial in shaping national cultures.

B. The Reconquista (711-1492 AD) and the formation of Spain and Portugal

1. We already know that Rome fell in 476 AD, when Romulus Augustus was deposed. Let's take a look at the movement of the primitive tribes throughout the European world during that time. As this map illustrates, the territory of Iberia was ultimately claimed by a barbarian tribe called the Visigoths.
2. After a few centuries, however, Iberia was invaded by a new enemy that arrived across the Strait of

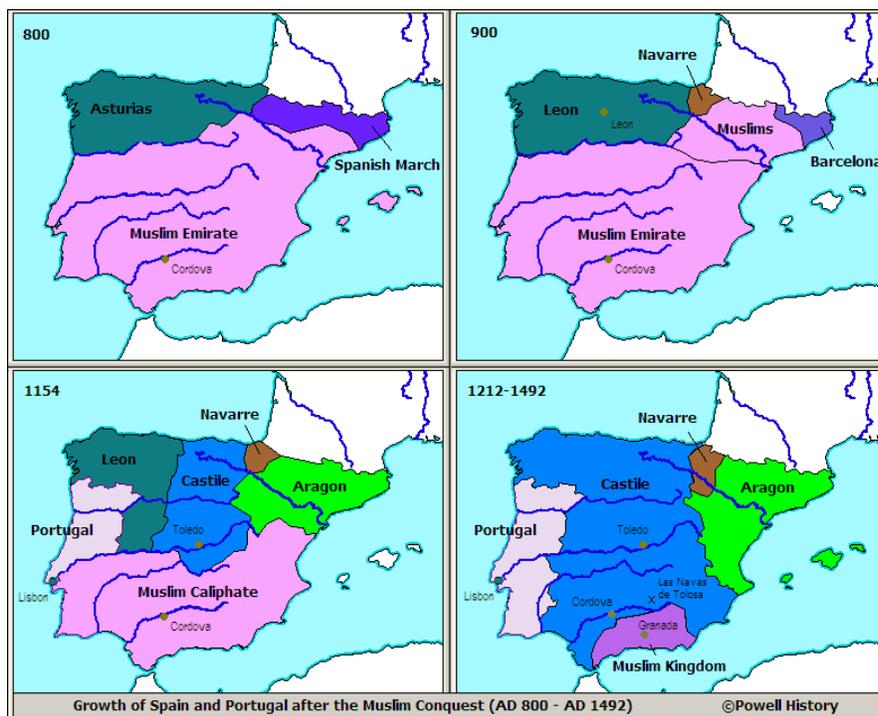


Gibraltar from Africa. This new enemy—Imperial Islamic civilization—would permanently shape the fate of the region:



The Growth of the Muslim empire—the Caliphate—from the time of Muhammad’s death (c. 632 AD) to the penetration of Iberia in the West and India in the East (c.711 AD).

3. The Christians of Iberia were either conquered by the invading Muslims or pushed up into the northwest corner of the peninsula into the mountain stronghold of Asturias (see map below).
4. From there, the Christians gradually fought to reclaim their land. The Spanish word for “reconquest” is “reconquista,” thus this long torturous period of the rise of the nations of Spain and Portugal is called *the Reconquista* (711-1492).
5. The first of the two modern countries to form during this extended series of wars was Portugal, when one of the leaders in the war effort named Afonso, the Count of Portugal, declared his county an independent kingdom. The other Christian kingdoms could not dislodge him from power while also managing their own affairs and fighting to expand further into Iberia, thus permitting the small country of Portugal to develop side-by-side with its neighbors and over the centuries to become the modern *nation* that it is.



6. Meanwhile, the area we think of today as Spain continued to be split by a shifting patchwork of kingdoms, with its two main kingdoms Castile and Aragon finally united by the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile.
7. The unity of Spain made possible the final push against Muslim-held Granada in the south of Spain, which was finally conquered in 1492.



The Conquest of Granada, by Francisco Pradilla Ortiz depicts Ferdinand (in red) and Isabella (on the white horse) receiving the final submission of the Muslims in 1492.

8. The essential historical significance of the *Reconquista* is that it indelibly shaped the culture of the nations of Spain and Portugal. Nations are countries with unique histories and traditions. A nearly 800-year war to expel a conqueror of a different religion naturally led the Spanish and Portuguese to acutely identify as Christians.