

### **III. European History 1.0**

#### A. The Simple Answer

1. Why is modern Europe a culture of *supranationalism*? The explanation can only be found in its history.
2. The simple answer is: *the World Wars*.
3. European civilization experienced two successive cataclysms in the early twentieth century. These were contests between rival nations, with the major ones all possessing or seeking to establish empires.
4. When the rampant nationalism of these rivals led to this succession of catastrophes, European culture was faced with the challenge of redefining itself. Seeking a way to avoid wars between its nations, its leaders decided to try to create a set of cultural values to override nationalism. That set of values is *supranationalism*.

#### B. The Question That Follows

1. The simple idea that *supranationalism* was adopted as a way to counteract *nationalism* after the *World Wars* is fine as far as it goes. However, *all* the world's major cultures experienced the *World Wars* in one way or another, but only Europe turned to *supranationalism* afterwards. The *World Wars* are not themselves the explanation for the rise of *supranationalism*. They are merely the "trigger." The explanation is found deeper in European history.
2. The questions must thus be asked: how did Europe become the kind of culture that would almost destroy itself in the *World Wars*, leading to *supranationalism*?

#### C. The Origin of European Civilization

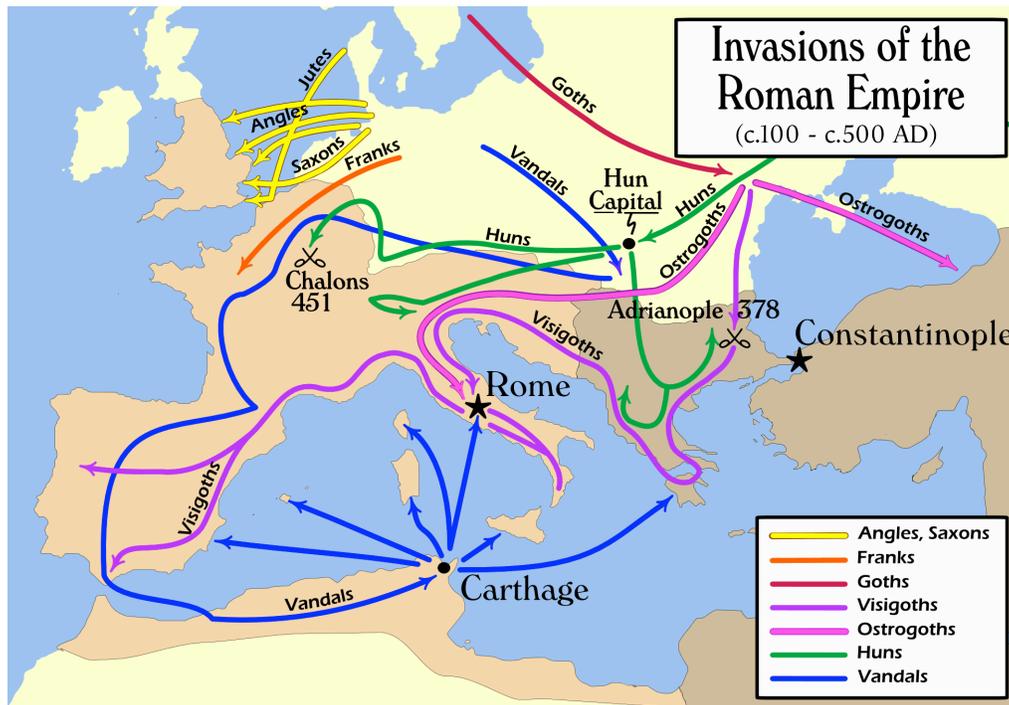
1. To understand the evolution of European civilization, we must grasp the scope of its history. We know where it "ends" (today), but where does it begin?
2. The simple answer is: with the Fall of Rome.
3. The Roman Empire was a vast Mediterranean empire that encompassed much, but not all of Europe. It began in ancient times, and lasted until it was dismembered by "Germanic" barbarian tribes.
4. It took about a century for the Roman Empire to collapse, but it is useful to designate a particular year and event as the decisive moment to mark its end.
5. In the year **476 AD**, the last Roman leader to call himself an "emperor" in Rome was deposed. His name was Romulus Augustus.
6. In **476**, Romulus's authority was mere pretense. Rome's territory was overrun by tribes that could not be controlled.
7. The Romans had tried to recruit some of those tribes to help them deal with the problem of other tribes, which had worked in some ways and for a while, but ultimately a tribal

leader named Odovacar decided that there was no point in pretending that he owed Rome's leader any allegiance. The Romans had nothing left to offer him.

- Romulus Augustus gave up his throne and disappeared from history. Little else is known about Odovacar either. His tribe, the Heruli, were swept up in the chaos of the period and made no further significant contributions to history.

#### D. The Era of Musical Kingdoms

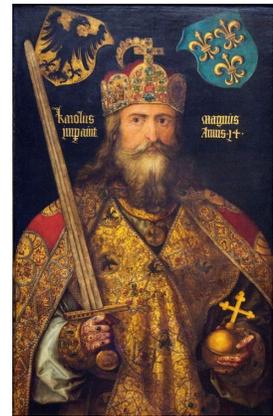
- The anarchy of the period continued for centuries, with many barbarian tribes competing to claim some part of the map for themselves.
- This period is often usefully designated as the "Dark Ages." Since it was characterized by the dominance of illiterate barbarians at war with one another, this is a legitimate characterization, especially when compared to the time of the Roman empire, which boasted a complex governmental apparatus, relative stability, and technology such as running water.



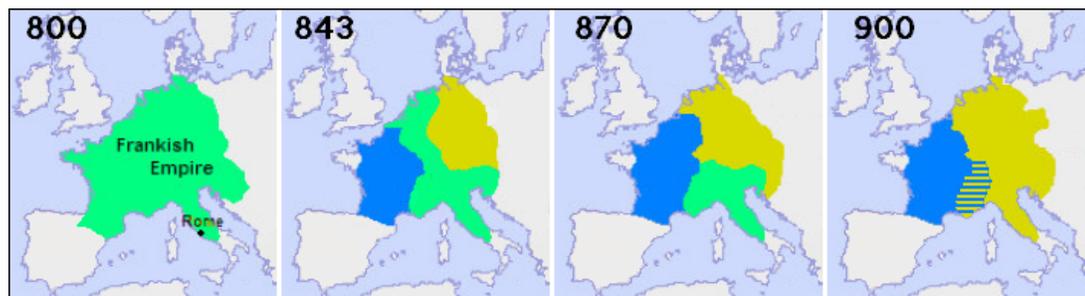
During the extended anarchy of the "Dark Ages," barbarian tribes migrated continually and fought one another for control over the carcass of the Roman Empire.

- In terms of its wider significance for European history, however, I prefer to give the period after the **Fall of Rome** the name "The Era of Musical Kingdoms," because it resembles a giant game of musical chairs.
- When the game came to an end, one tribe—the Franks—had achieved primacy, and one leader—Charlemagne—had become the undisputed leader of a newly united Europe.

5. Having united what are France and Germany, and everything in between, Charlemagne entered Italy and liberated the leader of the Roman Catholic Church, the pope, from the power of the other tribes there. Here was rewarded with the title “Emperor of the Romans” in **800 AD**.
6. Charlemagne’s empire did not last, however. His was a charismatic monarchy, meaning a monarchy powered by his “charisma” (an undefinable “gift” of leadership ability).
7. After Charlemagne died, his own son passed on the empire to *three grandsons*. It was a Frankish tradition that the king passed on his land to *all* his male heirs, not just the oldest. The result in **843 AD** was the breakup of a united Europe into at first three kingdoms, and then after wars between the brothers, just two: *essentially France and Germany*.



Charlemagne - the first emperor of a European union, c.800 AD.



The evolution of the Frankish empire from its peak, under the rule of Charlemagne—through to its disintegration under his heirs into separate French and German domains.