

Chronological survey of the period

1 Restoration and repressed uprisings, 1815–31

In 1815 Italy was simply a geographical expression; it had not existed as a unified country since the early Middle Ages. As you can see from Figure 1, it consisted of a number of small, relatively weak states, and the people tended to owe their loyalty to their locality. There was little sense of nationalism (a sense of patriotism, of belonging to a common Italian nation) in the peninsula and only a few envisaged unification (the consolidation of all the states into a single state).

After Napoleon, many of the old states of Italy were restored and Austria was given either direct or indirect control over a number of them. Italy was thus fragmented and dominated by Austria.

Dissatisfaction with restored government among the educated few manifested itself in uprisings in Naples and Piedmont in 1820–1, and in Modena, Parma and the Romagna in 1831. However, in all these cases the repressive hand of Prince Metternich and the Austrian army ensured that native aspirations were soon extinguished.

2 The growth of Italian identity, 1831–47

The growth of Italian identity can be most easily summed up by the three 'p's – the people, the Pope and Piedmont – reflected in the writings of Mazzini, Gioberti and Balbo. All three writers envisaged some sort of unified Italy – Mazzini a republic brought about by a revolution of the people, Gioberti a confederation headed up by the Pope, and Balbo a federation created by Piedmont which would expel the Austrians. All three models for unification were drawn up in the 1830s and 1840s; all three were embraced by a very small educated minority; and all three were totally unrealistic. However, they did reflect a growing wish for Italian independence from Austrian domination which was to manifest itself in 1848–9.

3 The revolutions of 1848–9

The aim of the uprisings of 1848–9 was to expel the Austrians rather than to unify Italy, but in each case the Italians failed. The lesson was that the Italians were no match for the Austrian army; they would need outside help. Nevertheless, national consciousness was raised,



Figure 1 Italy in 1815

and Piedmont rather than the Pope became the focus for future aspirations as Pius IX had set himself against change.

4 Cavour and Napoleon III: the 1850s

Cavour was Prime Minister of Piedmont from 1852. He did not envisage Italian unification. His main aim was to expel the Austrians from Italy, extend Piedmont and create a north Italian kingdom. To

this end he courted Napoleon III for many years, but when Napoleon did finally respond in 1858, it was on the latter's terms and quite by chance. It is clear that despite his central role, Cavour was not in a position to dictate events – but he did take his opportunities.

5 The unification process, 1859–61

Napoleon's war against Austria did not go according to plan, but by exploiting instability in the central duchies (Tuscany, Parma and Modena, as well as the Romagna – see Figure 1) and by giving up Nice and Savoy to France, Cavour was able, by March 1860, to achieve an enlarged Piedmont, his original aim.

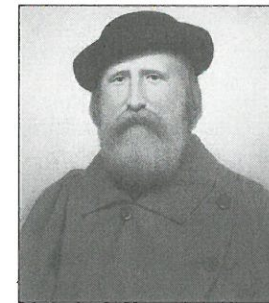
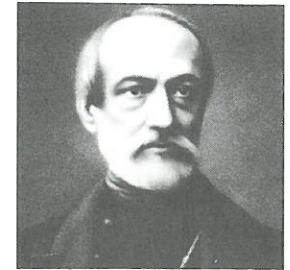
And then, out of the blue, Garibaldi, a disciple of Mazzini, forced Cavour to embrace unification. Garibaldi himself actually believed in unification and set out to achieve it. Taking advantage of an uprising in Sicily, he landed there, conquered the island and then went on to conquer the Kingdom of Naples on the mainland. It was an incredible achievement, a saga so far-fetched it resembles fiction! Garibaldi's threat to the Pope forced Cavour to march south, conquering much of the Papal States and linking up the northern Italian kingdom with Garibaldi's conquests. Garibaldi then generously handed over to King Victor Emmanuel of Piedmont. In 1861 the latter was proclaimed King of Italy.

6 Postscript – Venetia 1866 and Rome 1870

Venetia was still occupied by the Austrians and Rome by the French. Both of these territories came to Italy in somewhat inglorious episodes courtesy of the Prussian Minister, Bismarck. Successful Prussian wars against both Austria and France enabled Victor Emmanuel to complete the process of unification by 1870, though arguably Italy had been Piedmontised rather than unified. What had been hailed as a miracle and a marvel was soon viewed with disillusion and disappointment.

Giuseppe Mazzini, 1805–72

The foremost Italian nationalist, Mazzini was born in Genoa and trained to be a lawyer. He founded Young Italy in 1831, a movement dedicated to the unification of a republican Italy. However, it had little impact beyond publicity though an important convert was Garibaldi. Mazzini briefly took charge of the Roman Republic in 1849 but played no role in the actual unification from 1859. He spent most of his life in exile and was disillusioned with the Italy that eventually came into being. He was subsequently credited as 'father of the nation' and hailed as a prophet.



Giuseppe Garibaldi, 1807–82

Born in Nice, Garibaldi was a merchant seaman when he met Mazzini and became a committed nationalist. He spent some time in exile in South America before returning to Italy during the 1848 Revolutions, where in 1849 he commanded the garrison of the Roman Republic. After another spell of exile he returned and was actively involved in the war against Austria. It was his remarkable expedition to Sicily and then Naples in 1860 that really brought about unification. By now a committed monarchist, he handed over his conquests to Victor Emmanuel but became disillusioned with the new Italy. He led two unsuccessful expeditions against the Pope in Rome in 1862 and 1867. A man of immense charisma, Garibaldi enjoyed superstar status in his day, and crowds filled Trafalgar Square when he came to London in 1864.

Victor Emmanuel II, 1820–78

The first King of Italy, Victor Emmanuel became King of Piedmont-Sardinia in 1849 after his father abdicated, and appointed Cavour as Prime Minister in 1852. He pushed for Piedmontese participation in the Crimean War and actively encouraged the unification process, which he saw as Piedmontese expansion. His coarse manners gave him the common touch, and Garibaldi's respect for him was a significant factor in creating the new state. He was proclaimed King of Italy in 1861. He added Venetia in 1866 and Rome in 1870. Though devious and cunning, he lacked application and was prepared to tolerate the constitution.

