NATIONALISM AND NATIONAL UNIFICATION

I. Purpose and overview of Lecture
   A. To trace the growth of the idea of nationalism from the early nineteenth century
   B. To examine the beginnings of the two centrally important national unifications, in Italy and Germany
   C. To suggest some linkages, from points made in previous lectures, of nationalism, social darwinism, racism, and imperialism
      1. And more specifically, the way that this “realistic” age looked to new ways to achieve national unification, after the failure of romanticism and liberalism to do so
   D. This lectures begins to look forward, as did the last one, to late nineteenth century trends
      1. To the Age of the Masses, to the vulgarization of ideas that were first articulated in the liberal years, and to the irrationalist trends of the generation before WWI

II. The Origins of Nationalism: Early nationalist thinkers
   A. The root ideas of peoples and nations can be dated back to the middle ages and beyond
   B. The idea of a specifically modern nationalism is much more complicated than might first appear to be the case
      1. It puts together a complex cluster of ideas, feelings, sentiments that had long been present in Europe
      2. It joins linguistic, cultural, political, historical, and even economic considerations
         a) These tend to cut across class and other kinds of ideologies in intricate ways
      3. There are thus nationalists who supported the ideals of the French Revolution, in the early part of the century, even though many nationalists were also against the French—who brought revolutionary reforms
      4. Right-wing, even reactionary nationalism becomes important by the end of the century—so very different from the left-wing nationalism of the early part of the century
C. A glorification of the “people” becomes central to the French Revolution
   1. Those ideas are quite consciously spread to the rest of Europe by the French
   2. But, ironically, the ideals emerging from the revolution helped to foster anti-French feelings

D. However, the most influential theories of national identity in the early nineteenth century were worked out by Germans
   1. And the most significant successes—and excesses—of nationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were also German
      a) There is an irony here: Germans were for long known as the least nationally minded, the most cosmopolitan of Europe’s peoples
      b) They also thought of themselves as the underdogs and victims—an always perilous conception, if such a group gets power

E. G. Herder (1744-1803)
   1. Nationalist theorizing began as reaction to French hegemony, even before the French Revolution
   2. A number of German thinkers sought to distinguish themselves from the “frivolous” and superficial French
   3. Herder was very widely read and influential, inside Germany and outside—perhaps even more outside
   4. His peculiar contribution: the notion of Volksgeist
      a) Every people has its special genius (and thus should not accept domination from others, such as the French)
      b) The true national spirit emerges from the common people—peasants, artisans—not the artificial and cosmopolitan aristocracy (everywhere corrupted by French manners)
   5. This idea concentrated on language as uniquely expressing the Volksgeist
   6. Herder’s was a broad vision, and one that emphasized culture and ideals, not physical race
      a) He also insisted that he was not talking about the superiority of one culture but rather a uniqueness that should be cultivated as part of a divine plan
b) Many other nationalists, particularly the Slavic peoples, in the nineteenth century based their claims on Herder

F. Fichte
1. However, the notion of specialness is difficult to contain—it easily transforms into a sense of superiority
2. That was true even of Herder, in spite of himself, when he was comparing Germans and the "superficial" French
   a) And ideas of Germanic superiority definitely develop in the course of the wars of liberation against the French
3. With Fichte the notion becomes more explicit that Germans were not only more noble, “deeper” than the French, but also superior to other peoples as well

G. Increasingly a sense of the special destiny of Germans and Germany spreads among German nationalists
1. And more and more there is a deep dissatisfaction with Germany’s political disunity, its lack of political influence in Europe, its vulnerability
2. This sense of a special German destiny, of a superior German national character, or *Volksgeist*, comes to be one of the most powerful forces in the second half of the nineteenth century

H. Yet Germans failed to achieve unity in 1848, and German nationalists were humiliated by that failure
1. And many Germans felt disillusioned with liberalism because of it
2. They began to look for other, non-liberal ways to achieve national unity

III. The Age of national unification and consolidation, 1859-71

A. From the late 1850s to 1871 the dreams of national unification for Italy and Germany were achieved

B. But not only for them
1. Throughout Europe and much of the rest of the world there was a strong tendency toward national consolidation in these years
   a) This tendency fit into the notion of “beneficial struggle”
C. In the United States, Canada, even Austria and Russia national states consolidated themselves (often facing major crises in doing so, as with the American Civil War)
   1. And the nation-state became more powerful, more centralized almost everywhere

D. National consolidation, moreover, was achieved in a “realistic” way
   1. It was no longer romantic, idealist, utopian, but rather sober, hard-headed, respecting physical power—and often bloody

E. This is a time of numerous, though limited wars, of a fundamental change in the balance of power, many internal upheavals

F. Then, after 1871, over forty years of general peace and relative stability ensue

G. The general setting for the period (what really needed to change, before national unification could go forward):
   1. The weakening of Russia and Austria
      a) These two reactionary empires had been the ones to repress efforts at national unification, especially in 1848
      b) It was they, most of all, that wanted to preserve the settlement of 1815
      c) Behind them and dependent upon them were the heads of numerous small states, especially in central Europe, that also feared national movements
   2. This weakening was notably forwarded by the Crimean War (1854-6)
      a) It was an interesting conflict in many regards (Florence Nightingale and female nurses, newspaper correspondents, etc.)
      b) Essentially what happened: The main European powers ganged up on Russia and beat her decisively
      c) Austria was, at the same time, badly strained in the conflict
      d) A situation of weakness was thus created that Count Camillo di Cavour concluded was most
auspicious for his plans to unify Italy

IV. Unification of Italy

A. Recall what the north of Italy looked like after the Congress of Vienna:
   1. There was the buffer state of Piedmont-Sardinia
   2. It was adjoined by the states ruled by Austria: Lombardy and Venetia
   3. Southward, there were several small states, among them Tuscany, then the Papal states and the Kingdom of Two Sicilies

B. Cavour worked to consolidate and develop Piedmont-Sardinia, into a model liberal state—moderate and monarchical
   1. He had “learned the lessons” of 1848, of the failures of the romantic republicanism of men like Mazzini and Garibaldi
      a) He reasoned that such men had not recognized the real power relationships
   2. Moreover, his immediate goals were limited
      a) He looked to a unification of the advanced northern areas, not the backward south—which northern Italians were inclined to see as barbaric, or still living in the dark ages
   3. More to the point, for this "Risorgimento" to succeed, Italian nationalists needed a powerful ally
      a) And again, that ally was obvious: it had to be France
      b) Only France had the physical power to force Austria out of Italy, in other words
   4. Moreover, Napoleon III, Emperor of the French, listened sympathetically to Cavour’s proposals

C. Napoleon was of course ultimately of Italian origin
   1. He had earlier moved in conspiratorial, nationalist circles in Italy
   2. Even from his current position as emperor he saw in nationalism a necessary part of modernism

D. By 1858 the two men had agreed, in utter secrecy, to a war against Austria in the name of liberating the northern Italian
areas

1. In early 1859, Cavour succeeded in tricking Austria into a declaration of war against Piedmont-Sardinia

2. The French poured into Italy to “defend” it and Austria was soon defeated

E. This started a kind of domino effect, not really planned by Cavour—indeed surprising him

1. Other Italian states revolted, drove out their leaders, and clamored to join with Piedmont-Sardinia

F. At this point, Napoleon got cold feet—things were getting out of control—and he made a separate peace with Austria in 1859 (Peace of Villafranca)

1. Cavour was stupefied, and resigned in despair, believing his life work was ruined

G. Yet, he finally returned in 1860 (the last year of his life), working out a deal with Napoleon that allowed the people of central Italy to join an enlarged Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia

1. Of the once Austrian-held lands, he retained Lombardy, though not Venetia

2. The new Kingdom included some of the pope’s lands
   a) which prompted the pope to excommunicate the organizers of the new Italy
   b) A long alienation of the Church from Italian nationalism followed, to be healed only with Mussolini

3. France accepted these changes in part because it was given both Nice and Savoy in the final settlement

H. By 1860 there were thus three main Italian areas:

1. Northern, unified Italy (not including Venetia)

2. The remaining Papal states

3. The southern Kingdom of Two Sicilies

I. At this point, Garibaldi got into the act

1. Garibaldi’s Redshirts, Garibaldi’s “Thousands” might be seen as a momentary revival of the romantic-revolutionary campaigns of 1848
   a) The peasants of the south rallied to him

2. But this episode, too, had a suitable “realistic” ending
a) Cavour’s troops marched south to meet him (Cavour was worried what might happen if Garibaldi had his way throughout Italy)

b) Garibaldi finally gave in to the monarchy, abandoned the idea of an Italian republic

c) He consented to ride with King Victor Immanuel through the cheering crowds of Naples

J. Here then was the new Italy: a liberal monarchy, ruled by a wealthy elite (hardly Garibaldi’s original vision of an Italian republic)

1. This new Italy was not a democracy, not a republic, and it retained enormous internal differences (social, economic, religious) that would plague the country for the next century and more

2. But it was at least a formally united country—indeed, more than Cavour had even intended at first

3. Only a few areas remained in Italia irredenta (unredeemed Italy)

   a) These would come over in connection with German unification in 1866 and 1870-1

V. The Unification of Germany

A. The hero of German unification, Bismarck, has come to symbolize, much more than Cavour, the qualities of this new age

B. He has been called the Iron Chancellor, for a famous remark:

   1. “Not by speeches and majority votes are the great issues of the day decided—that was the error of 1848 and 1849—but by blood and iron.”

C. He was closely identified with the Junker class, the Prussian nobility, although he was brighter and more sophisticated than their average members

D. At first he was known for extremely conservative ideas

   1. But he would later be considered a kind of traitor to conservatism—a "revolutionary" even

E. He was a man of astonishingly firm will, impervious to criticism, though at the same time fiercely resentful of opposition and unrelenting in hatred of opponents

F. What is often confusing to students is that he was not really a
German nationalist in the strictest sense
1. That is, his main fidelities were to Prussia and the Prussians, not to the vaguer notion of "Germany" or the German people
2. He saw his role primarily as someone who brought glory to Prussia, not Germany
3. Indeed, he positively did not want unity of all Germans
   a) That would include too many Catholics, who would tend to outweigh the Prussian element

G. Similarly, he had little in common with the liberal nationalists of the earlier part of the century
1. He was in his deepest feelings anti-liberal, anti-parliamentarian—deeply distrustful of the notion of liberty
2. He was, however, willing enough to ally with liberals, to exploit liberal sentiments, in order to achieve his goals of Prussian glory

H. He was able to create a unified Reich, or empire, in a way that dazzled and deeply impressed his contemporaries, both inside Germany and out

I. He completely overwhelmed the liberals
1. McKay has some interesting quotations from liberals who were "converted" by Bismarck to a more authoritarian state
2. Many believe he fatally weakened liberalism in German history—or exploited and intensified that weakness—finally making Germany especially prone to the appeals of 20th century extreme nationalism and totalitarianism

J. Bismarck was extraordinarily flexible and ruthless in political and diplomatic battles
1. He switched allies rapidly when it suited him, in a machiavelian way
2. He arranged for the diplomatic isolation of each of his opponents in an astonishing fashion
3. First move against Denmark, over Schlesweg-Holstein
   a) In 1864 he arranged that both Austria and Prussia go to war against Denmark
   b) They were then to share in the occupation of it
   c) But he then let friction over the occupation intensify,
leading to a war between the prospective occupiers, Prussia and Austria

K. War against Austria

1. He carefully arranged that Austria have no allies
   a) He bought France off by approving its occupation of Mexico (Cinco de Mayo [tomorrow] celebrates the eventual expulsion of the French)
   b) He so pushed the issue of Schlesweg-Holstein that Austria declared war
   c) Prussia then demolished Austria in a stunning seven-week war (1866)

2. This finally entailed fighting many of the other German states
   a) Many of them were then incorporated into new North German Confederation (formed in 1867)
   b) (At this point of Austria weakness, Italy moved to take over Venetia)

L. War with France

1. The southern German states were still outside the Confederation
   a) But Bismarck also had plans for them—the subject of a future lecture