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European History

Q: Unification of Italy and Unification of Germany occurred simultaneously. Their historical touch and overlap at points and at times helped each other. Discuss.

Introduction:

In the 19th Century, Europe saw two important movements: the unification of Italy and the unification of Germany. Before these unifications, both Italy and Germany were divided into many small states and principalities, each with its own government, culture and interests. The Congress of Vienna in 1815 tried to return Europe to its state before Napoleon's rule, but this inadvertently sparked nationalist movements that later led to unification.

"Ideas grow quickly when watered by the blood of martyrs"

Giuseppe Mazzini

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Italy path to unification, known as the Risorgimento, involved key leaders like Giuseppe Mazzini, Count Camillo di Cavour, Giuseppe Garibaldi and King Victor Emmanuel II. Germany's unification was led by the strategic Otto von Bismarck and King Wilhelm I of Prussia. Both movements aimed to bring together these fragmented territories into unified, sovereign nations.

"The great questions of the day will not be settled by means of speeches and majority decision but by iron and blood"

(Otto von Bismarck)

Historical Background :

1. Italy Before Unification :

Before unification, Italy was divided into multiple states and principalities including the kingdom of Sardinia, the Papal States, and the kingdom of the two Sicilies. These regions were influenced by foreign powers like Austria and France. There was a growing nationalist movement, known as Risorgimento, aiming to unify Italy into a single nation.

2. Germany before Unification:

Before unification, Germany was made up of many small states and principalities, loosely grouped in the German Confederation. Prussia and Austria were the most powerful states, often competing for influence. Nationalist sentiments were rising, with many people wanting to unite these states into one German nation.



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Significant Events and Overlapping Histories:

1. Revolutions of 1848:

The Revolutions of 1848 were a series of widespread uprising across Europe, driven by demands for political reforms, national unification and social justice. In both Italy and Germany, these revolutions intensified nationalist movements and explains the desire for unified nation-states. Although most uprisings were suppressed, they set the stage for future unification efforts.

"The history of all previous societies has been the history of class struggle" (Karl-Marx)

2. Second Italian War of Independence (1859):

The Second Italian War of Independence in 1859 saw the Kingdom of Sardinia allied with France, defeat Austria, leading to the annexation of Lombardy.

This conflict involved about 150,000 troops on each side and resulted in significant territorial gains for the Italian unification movement.

3. Austro-Prussian War (1866):

The Austro-Prussian War of 1866, also known as the Seven Week War, was a conflict between the Kingdom of Prussia and the Austrian Empire, leading to Prussian victory. Prussia's modern army of 285,000 troops quickly defeated Austria's 280,000 troops, resulting in the dissolution of the German Confederation. This victory allowed Prussia to establish the North German Confederation, a key step towards German unification.

"Never depart from the path of duty, my calling is and remains that of a soldier and king"

(King Wilhelm I)

4. Franco-Prussian War: (1870-1871)

The Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871) saw Prussia and its German allies decisively defeat France, leading to the capture of Emperor Napoleon III and the proclamation of the German Empire in 1871. This was involved over 1.2 million soldiers and resulted in the unification of Germany under Prussian leadership.

Mutual Influences and Support and Between Italian and German Unification:

(A) Inspirational and Successes in Italy and Germany:

The successful unification of Italy inspired German nationalists by demonstrating that fragmented states could be united. Similarly, German unification efforts motivated Italian leaders to pursue their own national consolidation.

"It is not Prussia that leads the German people, but rather Germany that leads the Prussian State"

(Johann Gustav Droysen)
German historian.

(B) Shared Diplomatic and Military Strategies:

Italian and German leaders exchanged ideas and strategies, learning from each other's diplomatic and military tactics. Otto von Bismarck's Realpolitik and Count Cavour's alliances exemplified the effective use of pragmatism and alliances in achieving unification.

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C) Support from major European Powers:

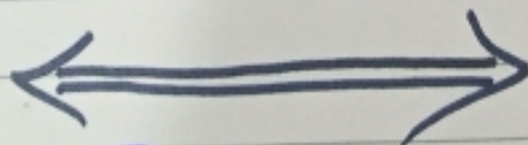
Both the Italian and German unifications received indirect support from major European powers like France and Britain, France allied with Italy against Austria in the Second Italian War of Independence, while Britain preferred a strong Germany to counterbalance France and Russia. This support helped to weaken Austria's influence, facilitating the unification processes.

"We shall see a new Italy arise, strong and free, which shall no longer require our support"
(Napoleon III of France)

Conclusion :

The unifications of Italy and Germany in the 19th century were historic events that reshaped Europe's political landscape. Both processes were marked by strategic diplomatic, military actions and inspirational leadership.

These movements occurring simultaneously, often overlapped and influenced each other, demonstrating the interconnectedness of European nationalism. Key events like the Austro-Prussian War and the Second Italian War of Independence weakened common adversaries, while the support of major powers such as France and Britain further facilitated their successes. Ultimately, the unification of Italy and Germany transformed fragmented regions into unified, powerful nations, setting the stage of modern Europe.



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