

## **Lesson 4: Unification of Italy**

### **Lesson -4: Video Lecture**

#### **Brainstorming Question**

What were the obstacles and favorable factors in the process of Italian unification?

#### **Competencies**

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

.State factors that facilitated the Italian unification

#### **Lesson Overview**

The unification of Italy, also known as the Risorgimento, was the 19th-century political and social movement that in 1861 resulted in the consolidation of various states of the Italian Peninsula and its outlying isles into a single state, the Kingdom of Italy.

### **1.Unification of Italy**

The political and social process that united the separate states of the Italian Peninsula into a single nation in the nineteenth century was known as Italian unification. It is difficult to put the exact dates for the beginning and end of Italian reunification, but most historians agree that it began with the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and the end of Napoleon's rule, and it ended with the Franco-Prussian War in 1871.

In 1852, Italy was still politically divided and Austrian influence was still supreme. In the north, the two rich provinces of Lombardy and Venetia were part of the Austrian Empire. In the north-central part of Italy, there were the petty states of Parma, Modena and Tuscany, which were very much under Austrian influence and ruled despotically by rulers related to the Hapsburg emperor of Austria. The Papal States still covered a vast territory across Italy, consisting of the provinces of the Romagna, the Marches, Umbria and Rome and the patrimony. In addition to being the spiritual head of Catholics all over the world, the pope was the sovereign ruler of the Papal States. Since 1849, there had been a French garrison in Rome to protect the pope against any revolution and to show Austria that France had an interest in Italy and did not accept that Italy was an exclusively Austrian sphere of influence. The south of Italy and the island of Sicily were part of the kingdom of Naples. The kingdom was poor, feudal and backward. It was ruled despotically, and its king was closely allied with Austria. In the northwest of Italy was the kingdom of Piedmont, consisting of the mainland territory, which was its most important territory, and the island of Sardinia. Piedmont was the only Italian state that was really independent of Austria and that had a constitution, a parliament and civil rights, though these had only existed since

1848. This situation made it possible for Piedmont to take the lead in the movement for Italian unification. Because liberals and nationalists all over Italy saw their best hope of a united Italy in unification with Piedmont under the constitutional monarchy of King Victor Emmanuel II (r.1849-1878) of Piedmont.

The main obstacle to Italian political unification was the power of Austria. Austria wanted to maintain the status quo. Another obstacle was the weakness of national sentiment in Italy. A favorable factor in the struggle for unification was the diplomatic isolation of Austria after the Crimean war (1855–56) and rivalries between France and Austria in Italy, which meant that Italian nationalism was able to use French help for Italian aims.

Camillo Cavour (1810–61) prime minister of Piedmont from 1852–62 was the main architect of Italian unification “from above.” He prepared Piedmont for the role of leadership in Italian unification. In 1858, Cavour met the French emperor, Napoleon III, secretly at Plombiere, in France, and succeeded in reaching an agreement with Napoleon for an alliance of France and Piedmont against Austria. Cavour contributed a lot to the successful unification of Italy. In the end, Cavour successfully gained control of Lombardy, Tuscany, Parma and Modena, which greatly helped the unification process.

In April 1859, Cavour successfully provoked a declaration of war by Austria on Piedmont. Napoleon III then intervened on the side of Piedmont against Austria. The combined force invaded Lombardy and defeated the Austrian army at the Battles of Magenta and Salferino in June 1859. The Austrians were driven out of Lombardy but still held Venetia. One of the results of the Battle of Salferino was the establishment of the International Red Cross Association by the Swiss humanitarian Henri Dunant. Napoleon, however, concluded a unilateral peace treaty with Austria on the basis that Austria ceded Lombardy to Piedmont but kept Venetia.

Other developments resulting from the war also took place. The papal province of Romagna and the states of Parma, Modena and Tuscany revolted against their rulers in 1859. Their rulers were overthrown. Provisional governments were established which were in close touch with the government of Piedmont and demanded union with Piedmont. Once the north had been united as the Kingdom of Italy, the unification movement turned to absorbing the powerful Kingdom of Two Sicilies in the south. In 1860, there was an uprising in Sicily against the unpopular government of the Kingdom of Naples. At that time, the successful military leader, Garibaldi, was invited to come from Piedmont to lead the Sicilian uprising. Garibaldi agreed to lead the Sicilian uprising provided that the people accepted the program of unification with the rest of Italy under Victor Emmanuel. He recruited his famous Thousand Volunteers in the North and took them to Sicily, where they joined by other volunteers, advanced up the peninsula and took the city of Naples on September 7, 1860.

The reasons for Garibaldi’s success were: first, his own skill as a leader in guerrilla warfare and his magnetic personality, which made people of all classes eager to fight and die under his leadership. Second, his successful mobilization of the Sicilian masses. The masses supported him partly because of his personal qualities but also because they hoped that his

movement would bring them freedom from oppression and bitter life. Third, on the mainland, his success was largely owing to the demoralization of the army of Naples and to the defeatism and treachery of many of the officials of the Naples government.

The fall of Gaeta brought the unification movement to a successful conclusion. Only Rome and Venetia remained to be added. In February 18, 1861 Victor Emmanuel assembled the deputies of all the states that acknowledged his supremacy at Turin, and in their presence, he assumed the title of King of Italy. Victor Emmanuel II, king of Piedmont, changed his title too to Victor Emmanuel II, king of Italy. Four months later, Cavour, having seen his life's work nearly completed, died.



Camillo Cavour on left and Giuseppe Garibaldi

Source: Grade 12 History Text Book, page, 14.

The Italian government used the 1866 Austro Prussian War and the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian war to complete Italian unification. In 1866, in preparation for war against Austria, Bismarck made an alliance with Italy on the basis that Italy would go to war against Austria on the side of Prussia and, in return, would get Venetia. In spite of Italy's poor showing, Prussia's success in the war forced Austria to cede Venetia. In 1870 the Franco- Prussian war forced Napoleon to withdraw French troops from Rome. The Italia

### **Key Concepts and Terminology**

Unification

*It refers to a process of building of the nation-state.*