"Our Myth Is the Nation"

The Roots of Italian Unification in the Period from 1748-1821

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the social, political, and cultural conditions of the Italian peninsula from 1748 to 1821 in order to explain how Italy’s history of regionalism and foreign domination contributed to the multifaceted national rhetoric of the Risorgimento. It is important to recognize that Italian unification resulted from divergent forces and that the celebrated heroes of the Risorgimento – Giuseppe Garibaldi, Camillo Cavour, and Giuseppe Mazzini – fought for unique reasons and held contrasting visions of Italian unity. Despite their differences, however, these figures managed to create a unified nation state out of a divided peninsula and a provincial populace. To explain unification, then, it is necessary to explore the roots of the peninsula’s division and understand how a basis for national unity emerged out of this diversity.

Historians have traditionally examined the period from 1815 to 1871 in Italian history to explain unification, yet this approach fails to resolve how the diversity of nationalist discourse that existed in the nineteenth century resulted in a relatively peaceful national unification movement composed of distinct, and sometimes oppositional, parts. The goal of this study is to explain the origins of this diversity of opinion and the foundation for eventual unification through an examination of the Italian states prior to Napoleonic rule, Italy’s experience of unity under Napoleon, and the peninsula’s return to a divided political landscape after the Congress of Vienna. This study employs a variety of texts from leading political and cultural figures in Italy in order to illustrate the diversity of opinion in Italy and contrasts these views with the political, social, and cultural developments that occurred both organically within the peninsula and as mandated change from external powers. The study concludes that Italy’s history of regionalization and continued domination by foreign powers accommodated disparate nationalist views and allowed this diversity of thought to serve as the basis for unification in opposition to foreign influence.
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I. Introduction

“There certainly exists an Italy and an Italian breed, conjoined in blood, in religion and in an illustrious written language, even though divided in governments, laws, institutions, popular folklore, customs, sentiments and habits.”¹ Vincenzo Gioberti, politician and author of On the Moral and Civil Primacy of Italians, argued in 1843 that the people of Italy shared a common identity, yet at that time the Italian nation as a political entity existed only in the imagination of Italian nationalists. Gioberti attempted to expunge the peninsula’s diversity through a claim to ‘an Italy and an Italian breed,’ yet even still he conceded substantial differences within the Italian populace. Rather than explicating an inherent Italian identity, then, Gioberti ventured to endow the disparate Italian peoples with a distinct cultural heritage and joint political agency. He attempted to create, out of a diverse peninsula rooted in centuries of conflict and disunity, a common people, and in doing he ignored the distinctions that had long defined the peninsula. Gioberti’s claims, though contributing to the nineteenth century movement to generate an Italian nationality, failed to identify a true national disposition.

Though unification prevailed in 1860, it did not result from a unified people or congruous leadership. Rather, it triumphed in an environment containing a diverse body of opinions that each articulated its own rationale for unification.² Gioberti, who constructed his basis for Italian nationalism around the union of the Italian states and Catholicism, clashed with other nineteenth century nationalists such as Giuseppe Mazzini, Giuseppe Garibaldi, and Camillo Cavour. These men, glorified after unification as the leaders of the Risorgimento, possessed conflicting notions

² I use 1860 as the date for Italian unification because in this year Garibaldi relinquished his conquered territory to Vittorio Emanuele II and the peninsula became a unified kingdom. Venetia would not be added to the Italian kingdom until 1866, Rome in 1870, and Trentino and the South Tyrol would be even later still. Some historians choose 1866 or 1870 as the date of unification, yet I believe these dates coincided not with the creation of the Italian nation but rather a continued process of Italy’s evolution as a nation.
of Italian unity and were but three of the more important participants in a multi-generational and discordant movement. The peninsula’s history had been for centuries too complicated to create a common Italian experience, and this diversity created in the nineteenth century the competing schools of nationalist though that, through their diversity, produced the Italian nation.

Early Italian historiography, epitomized by the historians Bolton King and G. M. Trevelyan, approached the Risorgimento as a logical, linear progression of events that revolved around a common thread of nationalism and unification. Focusing on Mazzini, Cavour, and Garibaldi, these historians assumed a common purpose behind the political leaders and events of unification and failed to analyze the diversity of thought and circumstances that existed throughout the peninsula. While this approach provided a coherent explanation for unification, it overlooked factual discrepancies and played down differences among Italians. Historians assumed that national identity was a natural component of the Italian peninsula with solely Italian roots and, because of this, the rationale for the creation of an Italian nation apparent. As a result of these assumptions, early historians did little to either unpack an actual Italian identity or analyze its origins.

This historiography remained popular until the Second World War and Italy’s experience under Mussolini’s Fascism forced a reexamination of Italian nationalism. In the 1950’s Denis Mack Smith, *Modern Italy: A Political History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 13-16.

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3 Mazzini believed in a romantic patriotism of the Italian people, inspiring rebellion throughout the nineteenth century as a way for the Italian people to assert independence. He believed not only in the unity of the Italian people but in a confederation of all of Europe. Garibaldi opposed the church and called himself a republican, yet he ultimately relinquished his conquered Italian territory to the king of Piedmont. Cavour, a conservative monarchist, approached unification as a means to strengthen Piedmont’s position in Italy and Europe. Denis Mack Smith, *Modern Italy: A Political History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 13-16.
4 I use the phrase early Italian historiography to refer to the period between Italian unification and the emergence of Denis Mack Smith’s work in the 1950’s. In 1911 Trevelyan wrote, “Nothing is more remarkable — though to believers in nationality and ordered liberty nothing is more natural — than the stability of the Italian Kingdom… The building is as safe as any in Europe.” Derek Beales, *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971), 17.
5 The preface to Bolton King’s volume reads, “This book is, as its title indicates, a political history only; of social and religious life, of literature and art and science it only treats, when they border on the field of politics.” Bolton King, *A History of Italian Unity, 1814-1871* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1912), vii.
Mack Smith reexamined the events leading to unification as the products of internal conflict and disunity rather than part of a cohesive nationalist plan. Mack Smith’s work discredited prior studies and shifted focus to both the diversity that existed within the Italian states and the impact of foreign powers in Italy. This new historiography turned away from a comprehensive explanation of the Risorgimento and nationalism, instead emphasizing disunity within the peninsula and challenging the models of a national identity. Rather than explaining the events of the century in relation to unification, modern historians opted to reexamine the specific cultural, economic, and political conditions that occurred throughout Italy in the context of their particular regions and eras. Modern historians such as Lucy Riall, David Laven, and Enrico Dal Lago analyzed the flaws of early historiography and proved through close analyses of particular regions that social and political environments throughout the peninsula were varied.6

These modern examinations provide a greater understanding of experiences throughout the Italian peninsula and create a more accurate image of the political landscape in Italy during the nineteenth century, yet historian Lucy Riall argues that this approach has moved away from any explanation of the political events of the Risorgimento itself.7 By analyzing the diversity of national trends, modern historians have attempted to dispel the notion that trends within Italy can be examined on a pan-peninsular level. Although this modern approach avoids the traditional ‘grand narrative’ of the Risorgimento, it fails to explain how unity was achieved. Modern historians no longer assume a natural spirit inherent to the peninsula, yet in place of this spirit they have produced nothing.

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6 I use the term ‘modern’ to describe historians after Mack Smith’s emergence in the 1950’s who have reexamined Italian nationalism in a post-fascist, post-World War II world and after the myth of Italian national destiny had been dispelled.

7 Riall claimed that reinterpretations of Italian history in the 1980’s and 1990’s “rejected both the ‘grand narrative’ of nationalist triumph... and challenged the Risorgimento’s iconic status as the major turning-point in modern Italian history. In doing so, [historians] abandoned the attempt to explain its (even partial) success.” Lucy Riall, Risorgimento: the History of Italy from Napoleon to Nation State (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), vii.
In order to explain eventual unification, then, the views of early and modern historians must be in part reconciled. Out of the early diversity articulated by modern historians came some sort of order that served as the basis for eventual unification under the contrasting leaderships of Mazzini, Cavour, and Garibaldi. The peninsula’s diversity generated varied beliefs, yet it did so over a platform of growing commonality. What evolved over the period from 1748-1821 was an acknowledgement of Italy’s deprivation and a mutual understanding between the Italian states that foreign powers served as the basis for Italy’s afflictions. The successes of the Risorgimento occurred over a peninsula-wide experience of foreign domination. And, out of the diversity of experience in the peninsula over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the variety of opposing nationalist groups made possible the revolutionary landscape of the Risorgimento and the success of Mazzini, Cavour, and Garibaldi.

This study examines how the diversity of national trends created a foundation for national unity. It demonstrates that the political and cultural changes that took place in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries destroyed the historical barriers to unification without dismantling altogether the regionalism that had prevailed for centuries. Italy’s experience with foreign rule, specifically the experience under Napoleon at the turn of the nineteenth century and the several independent states’ relationships with Austria that followed, inspired a feeling of commonality among the Italian people that gave way to a diversity of nationalist rhetoric across a common basis of continued domination. This study does not analyze the achievements of late nationalists such as Mazzini or Cavour but rather examines the years surrounding Napoleon’s rule in order to explain the foundation for the diversity of national aspirations after 1820 and the continued existence of regionalism in Italian politics through the twentieth century.
The first section of this study focuses on Italy's history of foreign domination through the eighteenth century and the resulting divisions within the peninsula. It addresses the development of the Italian intellectual class and their understanding of Italy's cultural enfeeblement under divided, foreign rule and the development of a national identity in opposition to the oppressor. The following section focuses on the political changes during the years of French rule from 1796-1814, tracing the evolution of the republics and kingdoms instituted by Napoleon and their impact on Italian politics and regional identities. This section analyzes the administrative changes made by Napoleon, the effects brought about by uniting previously divided regions within Italy, the cultural impact of French rule, the relationship between Italy and the Church as a result of Napoleon's policies, and the lingering political and social impact of Napoleon on Italian soil as change imposed from the outside. The concluding section examines the transitional Restoration governments after 1815 until revolution against the new political order broke out in 1820. This section examines the individual Italian states' return to power, the social pressures upon the Italian states as a result of French occupation, how Austrian oversight affected Restoration rule, and how Italy's continued relationship with foreign powers affected the peninsula preceding the revolutions of 1820 and 1821. It examines both the response from Italian political figures and intellectuals and the politics of the states in regards to internal governing and their cooperation with Austria.

The sources used in this study are translated documents that represent a diverse body of opinions concentrated among Italian cultural and political leaders around the turn of the nineteenth century. Vittorio Alfieri's works illustrate the development of the Italian literary tradition and a growing hatred of the French Other; Melchiorre Gioia demonstrates a pragmatic solution to Italy's deteriorated state in the form of a unitary republic; Paolo Frisi presents a
continued and popular tradition of loyalty to regional rulers; Cotti di Brusasco offers a post-Napoleonic opinion on the condition of Italy; and Count Strassoldo reports Italian response to Austrian presence after 1815. Used in conjunction with other prominent figures and supporting documents, these works illustrate the diversity of opinions in Italy and the evolution of thought over the course of French occupation and the Italian states’ cooperation with Austria. These sources require, however, an understanding of the conditions of Italy preceding French occupation, the effects of Napoleon on Italian soil, and the politics of the Restoration states in order to contextualize the arguments. The study therefore interchanges between examinations of Italian beliefs and explanations of the political and social effects occurring over the course of this period.

The Italian writer Pietro Giordani asserted in 1816 that “Occasionally we hear the word Italy, but it finds no echo in people’s hearts.”\(^8\) Though in 1816 this word may not have carried much meaning, nationalists had by 1860 manipulated the term Italy to the point where unification could be achieved in a hitherto diverse peninsula. It did not necessarily adopt a singular significance in terms of national character but came to define a movement destined toward self rule and political unification. The peninsula’s acceptance of unification stemmed from its very diversity and its continued experience of domination by European powers. Though it would take generations of Italians to truly manufacture the myth of the Italian people, the foundation of this identity can be traced back to the period from 1748-1821.

II. The State of Italy Preceding Napoleonic Rule: 1748-1796

The history of the Italian peninsula from the fifteenth century forward had been one of foreign domination and a volatile political and social landscape, challenging the development of any widespread cultural uniformity or historic collectivity. France’s Charles VIII invaded Italy in 1494, initiating a several century period of contention over Italian territory. And, though Spain emerged the dominant foreign power in the peninsula in 1559, peace would not prevail until 1748 when France and Austria concluded their struggles to claim Spain’s Italian territories. The following half century of peace leading to Napoleon’s invasion in 1796 would be the longest Italy experienced in generations, and during this period the Italian people began to establish a loose sense of aggregation that would continue to evolve over the course of the following century.

Centuries of altercations on Italian soil had provided little stability for the Italian people. The combination of volatile rule, regular warfare, famine, and disease forced Italian industry toward survival while the lack of both political security and uniformity impinged the creation of a national spirit. Piedmontese Ambassador Count Cotti di Brusasco described in 1817 the impact this had on the peninsula in the eighteenth century, writing that the Italian states “finally lost not only all hope, but all idea of independence, and grew inured to seeing their estates ravaged by foreigners every fifteen or twenty years as a mean of determining which of these foreigners they

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9 The Italians Wars from 1494-1559 turned the peninsula into a battleground for international conflict that involved France, Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, Switzerland, and the Ottoman Empire, bringing to Italy the most destructive warfare that it had ever faced. Christopher Black, *Early Modern Italy: A Social History* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 8. Count Cotti di Brusasco, a Piedmontese politician in the early nineteenth century, wrote that “the rivalry between Charles V and Francis I, lasting nearly half a century, brought the whole of Europe under arms and turned Italy into a huge field of carnage. Princes were dethroned, republics destroyed, cities plundered, the countryside devastated… Italy has never recovered from the sufferings she underwent at that period.” Cotti di Brusasco to Czar Alexander, March 1818, in *The Making of Italy, 1796-1866*, ed. Denis Mack Smith (Hong Kong: Macmillian Press, 1988), 28.

10 The Peace of Utrecht in 1713 ceded Spain’s hold in the peninsula to Austria and the House of Savoy, ending a single foreign power’s dominance within the peninsula yet initiating further warring between France and Austria. Black, *Early Modern Italy*, 8-10.
were to submit to.” When peace prevailed in 1748, the Italian peninsula remained divided and under the command of foreign figures. Though still unable to assert themselves politically, the following half century of peace leading up to Napoleon’s invasion in 1796 afforded Italians the opportunity to assess their condition and develop a sense of their peninsula’s deteriorated state.

Ex-Jesuit Saverio Bettinelli wrote of Italy in 1775:

> Italy the first innovator of almost all the arts, no longer sees any of them flourish in glory; she once taught and overlorded all peoples, now she follows as adulator, and tribute payer to all; with varied commerce, but bloodless and constrained; with many governments, but little regulation; with fertile lands but poor; with a thousand studies, but few learned men recognized and rewarded, all united and enclosed by the Alps and Sea, but very diverse, and discordant in languages, in genius, in usages, money, measures, laws and the customs of the people.  

The Italian peninsula in the eighteenth century was incongruous and had been all but removed from its potential to greatness by centuries of foreign rule. Manipulated by foreign powers for so long, Italians had lost the cultural and political distinctions that foster a truly unified people.

A Divided Peninsula

Late eighteenth and nineteenth century nationalists such as Vincenzo Cuoco, Filippo Bunarotti, Ugo Foscolo, and Vittorio Alfieri attempted to create an idea of the Italian nation by identifying Italy’s well defined geographical borders and pushing the idea of a common history, religion, language, and culture. These qualities, however, all presented complications as bases for the Italian nation. Not only did they possess inherent complications for Italian unity but Ernest Renan, a French philosopher writing after the success of the Risorgimento, observed that such qualities did not in and of themselves create the basis for a nation. He found geographic decisions arbitrary, religion individualistic, racial composition diverse, and language a poor basis

11 Brusasco to Czar Alexander, 20.
for unity.\textsuperscript{13} Though Renan didn’t believe these factors entirely irrelevant, he judged that any complications could be overcome as long as a nation possessed two other necessary components: “One is the common possession of a rich cultural heritage of memories; the other is the actual consent, the desire to lie together, the will to preserve worthily the undivided inheritance which has been handed down.”\textsuperscript{14} Italy suffered in 1748 from a lack of both of these components, existing as a loose conglomerate of regionalized, independent states that shared little in common outside a common history of continued occupation. And, though nationalists hailed many of Italy’s characteristics as proof of an Italian constitution, the realities of these properties often disclosed only further evidence toward regional distinctions within the peninsula.\textsuperscript{15}

Nationalists founded their geographical claim for a nation upon Italy’s peninsular isolation from Europe.\textsuperscript{16} However, though separated from Europe by the Alps and surrounded on all sides by the Mediterranean Sea, the diverse geography within Italy created distinct regions within the peninsula itself. The difficulty of travel within the peninsula shaped medieval towns to their particular regions, evolving alongside rivers, near passes or travel routes, and on hill slopes or hilltops. The Apennines, curving down the peninsula, inhibited travel and left the valley of the Po in northern Italy the most fertile agricultural land in the peninsula. Climate differences created further distinctions between the North and the South, resulting in poorer and less diverse


\textsuperscript{14} Renan, \textit{What Is a Nation?}, 80.

\textsuperscript{15} Writing in 1858, Milanese politician Giuseppe Ferrari asked, “Where then is Italy? What does it consist of? What bond is there that links the republics, the \textit{signori}, the popes, the emperors and the invasions? What connection is there between individuals and the masses, sectarians and wars, wars and revolutions? Scholarship does not help shed any light. Indeed, far from instructing us, it simply underlines the chaos…” Christopher Duggan, \textit{The Force of Destiny}, New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 91.

\textsuperscript{16} This view was not new to Italian nationalists after the turn of the eighteenth century but could be traced back to the times of the Roman Empire. Cicero acknowledged that “nature had fortified Italy by means of the Alps,” while more contemporary thinkers starting in the fifteenth century began to acknowledge Italy’s geographic separation as a basis for more widespread distinction from the rest of Europe. During the Italian Wars, figures throughout Italy (Giovanni Pontano of Naples, Venetian Marin Sanudo, and the Florentines Francesco Guicciardini and Niccolò Machiavelli in particular) acknowledged the cultural differences between the Italian peninsula and foreign invaders. David Laven, “Italy,” in \textit{What Is a Nation?}, edited by Timothy Baycroft and Mark Hewitson (Oxford: Oxford University, 2006), 261.
agricultural production in Southern Italy that yielded lower standards of living and a more backward system than found in the North. Due to this distinction Northern Italy has traditionally been more civic, dynamic, progressive, and 'modern' while the South tended to be feudal, reactionary, backward, and depressed. And, though the Alps separated Italy from the rest of Europe, the Roman Empire had not seen this as an obstacle to their expansion. The peninsula's geography possessed too little uniformity to bring the peninsula together on its own. Italy's political history also possessed little homogeneity across the peninsula and provided too few examples of uniformity powerful enough to inspire much national sentiment. Italians had to revisit the Roman Empire for an example of true self-rule and a unified peninsula, yet the history of the Roman Empire was not unique to the Italian peninsula. The empire had encompassed too great an area and contained too many distinct peoples to make a strong rationale for Italian peninsular unification or a unique heritage. The Roman Empire's collapse then admitted continuous waves of invaders until the cities of northern and central Italy rebelled against the German emperors in the Middle Ages. The Italian cities then fought bitterly with one another, resulting in an Italy during the Middle Ages which was far more fragmented and experienced greater discord than Italy in the eighteenth century.

Religion, though common to the entire peninsula, was also not limited by Italian borders. Catholicism united much of the European continent, including Italy's oppressors France, Austria, and Spain, and served as a poor identifying factor for the Italian people. Gioberti claimed in 1843

17 Black, *Early Modern Italy*, 4.
18 Gene Brucker, "Civic Traditions of Premodern Italy," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 29, no. 3 (1999): 358. A considerable amount of literature has been produced explaining the division in Italy between the North and the South, and for the sake of length this issue will be little discussed. Southern Italy differed considerably from Northern Italy, and an argument can be made that they should be studied as independent regions. Nevertheless, Italian unification brought these two regions together and they exist today in a unified nation.
20 After the fall of Rome, Italy was invaded by Huns, Goths, Lombards, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, Hohenstaufens, Aragonese, and Angevins. Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 6.
that “Religion is the principal foundation of Italian Primacy. The Catholic principle is inseparable from the national genius of Italy.”

Inseparable though it was, Catholicism was not unique to Italy and could not create a nation where none existed. Furthermore, the temporal power of the papacy threatened a rise to power under the Catholic banner without political opposition from the other Italian states. The Papal State existed as all other independent states in Italy and sought power in the same fashion as would the Duchy of Tuscany or the Republic of Venice. The Pope’s residence in the peninsula and the existence of Catholicism as a political entity served to complicate issues of unification more than it unified the peninsula, and the prevalence of Catholicism often proved to combat progressive change through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Religion, though a uniting component of the Italian populace, possessed inherent flaws and provided a poor basis for national identity.

Language presented another obstacle in the creation of a unified national spirit. Though Italians could look back to Dante’s *On Eloquence of the Vernacular* of 1303, in which Dante had called for a common national tongue as an alternative to clerical Latin, the prevalence of regional dialects in the eighteenth century did more to highlight regional differences than prove linguistic unity. Modern historians have calculated that only between 2.5 and 9.5 percent of the Italian population in 1861 spoke the national tongue, with over half of that population speaking it as a consequence of living in Tuscany. The use of dialects was not restricted to just the masses; the Italian elite preferred their own dialects, and foreign languages, over the principal Tuscan. Renan argued, however, that language could not be the sole determiner or a nation, observing

\[\text{22 Gioberti, “Primato,” 132.}\n\[\text{23 Laven, “Italy,” 262.}\n\[\text{24 Estimates have varied over the percentage of the population speaking the national tongue in 1861 with Tulio De Mauro writing in 1982 that only 2.5 per cent used it while Arrigo Caellani placed the figure higher at 9.5 per cent. De Mauro also added that this number was concentrated in Tuscany, with perhaps 400,000 Tuscans speaking Italian compared to 70,000 Romans and 160,000 from the rest of the peninsula. Laven, “Italy,” 263.}\n\[\text{25 Vittorio Emanuele II, the first king of Italy, spoke better French than Italian and preferred his native Piedmontese dialect over Tuscan. Laven, “Italy,” 264.}\]
that "Switzerland, which owes her stability to the fact that she was founded by the assent of several parts, counts three or four languages." Italy, however, suffered not simply from the lack of a cohesive language but from cultural impairment as a result of language barriers and dependence on foreign tongues. Regional dialects had undermined the Italian literary tradition, and it would not be until Vittorio Alfieri's concerted efforts to promote Tuscan as the national language later in the eighteenth century that the peninsula's tradition become understandable and approachable. Italy's national sentiment in the eighteenth century suffered as a result of its prolonged lack of a cohesive language.

Italy's history, then, was one of discord and contention. Renan claimed that "Forgetfullness, and I shall even say historical error, form an essential factor in the creation of a nation," yet if the Italian states were to forget their history of opposition there would be little to look back upon as a collective. Even the glories of the Renaissance served a marginal historical example as they came from a decadent and divided peninsula that fell easily to foreign domination. Cultural artifacts were relics of regional production and though they came into being through the work of Italian artists, they represented the wealth of specific territories and not the joined effort of national cultural production. Historical military victories, too, were often achieved at the expense of other states, and moments of national defense frequently performed by particular regions in defense of their own interests. The history of Italy, rather than being one of unity and pride, was of division, domination, and a fall from glory. In inventing their

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26 Renan, *What Is a Nation?*, 76.
28 Renan wrote that "Before French culture, German culture, Italian culture, there is human culture. Consider the great men of the Renaissance; they were neither French, nor Italian, nor German." Renan’s cosmopolitan belief of historical cultural production presents a challenge to any claims made by Italians to the great artists of the Renaissance, as it occurred throughout Europe and many of the great Renaissance artists came out of France, Germany, and Spain in addition to Italy. Preceding an Italian nation, these artists produced for humanity rather than Italy. Renan, *What Is a Nation?*, 77.
29 Laven, "Italy," 269.
national traditions, the Czechs could look upon the Kingdom of Bohemia or their Hussite
tradition, Hungarians could emphasize centuries of independence, and Poles could remember the
Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{30} The Italians had only centuries
of division to look back upon. In the eighteenth century they possessed no historical
achievements from the previous several centuries strong enough to carry forth a national
unification movement.

Talk of geographic unity, a cultural heritage, or a unified people could only resonate so
far in the eighteenth century. Discord within the peninsula in 1748 hindered any widespread
desire for unification and it would not be until the late eighteenth century that the permanence of
division began to fade as a result of a growing realization of the continued domination of the
Italian people, the introduction of Enlightenment thought, and Napoleon's invasion in 1796.
These forces began to erode the centuries of division that prevented Italian unification, yet it
would take a concentrated effort by cultural leaders, politicians, and the general public to cast off
those hindrances altogether. Even then, however, the historical divisions within the peninsula
could not be erased from the Italian character and regional identities would persist.

\emph{Cultural Enfeeblement through Foreign Domination}

Vittorio Alfieri emerged in the late eighteenth century as the most prominent modern
Italian literary figure, devoting his mature life to the creation of a new Italian literary tradition.
Mazzini much later called Alfieri 'the first Italian' as he had contributed considerably to the
development of a distinct Italian culture and helped recreate the idea of a historical Italian
people.\textsuperscript{31} Though responsible for the resurgence of the Italian literary tradition in the late

\textsuperscript{30} Laven, "Italy," 269.
\textsuperscript{31} Nicholas Doumanis, \textit{Italy} (London: Arnold, 2001), 44.
eighteenth century, Alfieri spent his early life, like many Italians, fascinated with foreign cultures and focused his energies on the established European cultural tradition. He discovered in his travels abroad, however, that he had become an intellectual slave to the French language and determined to return to Italy in order to master his native Italian and recreate an Italian literary tradition based upon the works of past literary masters such as Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch. Alfieri’s struggle to recreate this tradition and his progression from a cosmopolitan European cultural enthusiast to a modern architect of the Italian language depicted the peninsula’s transition in the eighteenth century from utter dependency on foreign thought to agent in its own cultural progression.

Born in Piedmont in 1749, Alfieri received his education in Turin where, as an aristocrat, he learned to read and write French. Alfieri was of a new generation of Italians beginning in the late seventeenth century who learned through the works of French, English, and Scottish thinkers, and in doing rejected their own cultural heritage. Descartes, Newton, Montesquieu, David Hume, and Rousseau made their way into the Italian intellectual culture, trumping the less established and less accessible Italian works. Italian works, Alfieri articulated, were insignificant to the cultural composition of the peninsula in the eighteenth century as a result of dependence on foreign thought. Alfieri’s study of foreign works led him to develop a disdain for his native culture and, when confronted at age 17 with an original manuscript of Petrarch in the Ambrosian Library in Milan, he returned it “with the greatest indifference... Echoing the opinion of the French and of others equally arrogant and presumptuous [he] repeated after them

34 Black, Early Modern Italy, 212.
35 Alfieri found the classic Italian texts "insipid and anti-tragical," both an allusion to his contempt for previous Italian writers and the weak literary tradition that Italy had produced prior to the nineteenth century. Alfieri, "Memoirs," 99.
that Petrarch was nothing more than a 'frivolous witling.'”

By eschewing Petrarch, who is considered to be one of the fathers of the Renaissance humanist movement, Alfieri had renounced the Italian literary tradition. This act illuminated the opinion of Italy’s educated elite that the foreign cultural establishment was more valuable than their own heritage.

Though Alfieri had abandoned Italian literature, he found himself limited in his mastery of the French language. He attempted his first several plays in French, explaining that “I had sketched them in this meager and unpleasing language, not that I knew it nor even pretended to know it, but because during my five years’ travels it was the only language I heard spoken and because I expressed myself in it better than in any other.”

Alfieri, by focusing on foreign texts, had become a slave to the French language and incapable of expressing himself to his full potential. This dependence on French had contributed to the intellectual enfeeblement of the Italian people in the eighteenth century, trapping them within the confines of a poorly developed foreign tradition.

Renan wrote of a contrasting phenomenon of language in *Poetry for the Celtic Races*, explaining that the Norman in his eleventh century conquests of France and England “forgot his own language to speak that of the race which he had conquered, and to become the interpreter of its genius.” The Normans, after conquering these countries, learned the land’s native tongue in order to assert their dominance over the conquered people. In later centuries, however, the Italians assumed the language of their oppressors as a linguistic medium. Developing neither a uniform language of their own nor full mastery of a foreign tongue, Italians existed in a linguistic

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38 Alfieri described the feeling of his inarticulateness, writing, “I bore a striking resemblance to one of the best runners of Italy who, taken ill, dreams that he is running against his rivals and would certainly win the race, were it not for the state of his legs.” Alfieri, “Memoirs,” 99.
limbo that stifled the Italian literary tradition and inhibited cultural development. Vincenzo
Cuoco, a Neapolitan Revolutionary in the late eighteenth century, explained "We became by
turns French, or Germans, or English; we were no longer anything." Intellectuals who chose to
speak French may have expanded their access to intellectual endeavors but this choice
simultaneously impeded the development of a native culture.

To combat this dependency, Alfieri attempted to recreate an Italian literary tradition by
way of mastering Tuscan, the premier Italian dialect which had been employed by Dante,
Boccaccio, and Petrarch. Tuscan, which through the efforts of Alfieri and much later
Alessandro Manzoni would become the official Italian language, was limited in its use during
Alfieri’s time. Alfieri complained throughout his process of mastering Tuscan of his “want of an
enlightened friend... who could converse in Italian and on Italian literature.” Alfieri was of the
first to tackle these challenges, and in doing so he reinitiated a cultural tradition all but lost
through centuries of foreign domination.

Through their forfeiture of their literary tradition, Italians abandoned their own cultural
and intellectual development and made themselves intellectually subservient to the dominating
powers in the peninsula. Already stripped of political independence, their linguistic attachment to
foreign culture threatened the stagnation of a unique Italian culture and had ensured the fostering
of regional identities. Alfieri’s emergence at the end of the eighteenth century rekindled the
Italian literary tradition and heightened awareness over Italian achievements within the
peninsula. His mastering of the Italian works and promotion of a national linguistic tradition
enabled nationalists in the nineteenth century to revisit early Italian literary works as a part of the
modern intellectual tradition, creating a heritage out of a body of works that had been in many

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ways neglected for generations. Alfieri led this redevelopment of Italian culture at a crucial time, for he began to nurture thought of a cohesive Italian culture immediately prior to Napoleon’s invasion of the peninsula, an event that would again change the course of Italian cultural development. Though Alfieri didn’t immediately recreate an Italian tradition, he pushed the concept of national culture enough that it would impact the peninsula over the course of Napoleon’s reign and beyond, establishing a foundation for resistance against Napoleon on the grounds of rejecting foreign influence and protecting a unique peninsular tradition.

*The Emergence of a National Spirit in Opposition to Foreign Rule*

Alfieri’s hatred of Italian dependency on foreign powers led him in the 1790’s to write *To the Past, Present and Future Italy* in which he demanded that Italy define itself in opposition to the French. He pled, “O Italy, hatred of the French, under whatever standard or mask they present themselves, must be the single and fundamental basis of your political existence, whatever form it may take” as Alfieri believed the hatred of nations “a most precious part of the legacy of our fathers.”

Italy shared above all a long history of oppression, the one thing that unified the regions of the Italian peninsula and linked the centuries of distinct Italian peoples. Each generation of Italians had been tormented by powers from outside the peninsula, and this inherited hatred developed over the centuries to coalesce in the late eighteenth century as a nation-defining antipathy.

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43 By the term ‘nations,’ Alfieri meant “multitudes of men differing from each other on account of climate, location, customs and language.” He drew this distinction in order to exclude the squabbles that arose between towns and cities in the same state or province who “out of foolish jealousy, enable, through their petty, unproductive and impolitic efforts, their giant common oppressors to rejoice and triumph.” While hatred of the foreigner Alfieri found productive, hatred of the brother led to a people’s subjugation by the foreigner. Vittorio Alfieri, "To Past, Present and Future Italy," quoted in Derek Beales, *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971), 109, 110.
Renan explained in 1882 in *What Is a Nation?* that some common historic and ongoing ambition must serve as the basis for national unity. "To have common glories in the past, a common will in the present; to have done great things together, to will to do the like again, - such are the essential conditions for the making of a people."\(^{44}\) For Alfieri in 1790, the limited glories of Italy’s past had been founded in hatred of the French and any chance for future glories found its basis in a continuation of such French-focused animosity. Alfieri advised the Italian people in *To the Past, Present, and Future Italy*: “You ought always to be of One opinion only, in hating with an implacable and mortal loathing those Barbarians from across the mountains who have perpetually brought upon you, and bring upon you still, the most frequent and the most bloody mischiefs… Now these (far from being the Germans) have always been, and are, the French.”\(^{45}\) Alfieri believed the French to be Italy’s mortal enemy and he believed further that Italian hatred for the French served as the ideological foundation for Italian unification. “These hatreds,” he wrote, “have alone worked those true political miracles which are now so much admired in histories.”\(^{46}\) By using generations of communal repugnance, Alfieri believed that the Italian peninsula could unite in opposition to French presence and assert itself as a common people.

Alfieri possessed in the 1790’s little respect for the French, and following the outbreak of French Revolution he feared for the repercussions it would have upon the Italian peninsula. The French Revolution appeared to Alfieri at this time just another regime change in a region prone to transformation, yet French turmoil had historically led to the exploitation of Italy.\(^{47}\) Italy had to deal each time with the new government’s begging and had to satisfy again the French hunger

\(^{44}\) Renan, *What Is a Nation?*, 81.
\(^{45}\) Alfieri, *To Past, Present and Future Italy*, 110.
\(^{46}\) Alfieri, *To Past, Present and Future Italy*, 109.
\(^{47}\) Alfieri wrote that “Three times a century [the French] are reduced by their inept, unthinking and tyrannical governments, their natural poverty and their disproportionate vices, to the anti-social necessity of going begging with weapons in their hands, turning on neighbouring peoples in order to satisfy their hunger and to heal for a time, with the blood of others, their own sordid wounds.” Alfieri, *To Past, Present and Future Italy*, 110.
for Italian riches, ruining the peninsula and continuing the cycle of Italian weakness. The French, according to Alfieri, were responsible for the Italian predicament in the eighteenth century.

Despite Italy's weakened state in the eighteenth century, however, Alfieri believed that Italy was and had always been "for ever One." He dedicated *To Past, Present, and Future Italy* "to you, O Venerable Italy... to that august Matron who represented you for so long, the chiefest seat of all human worth and wisdom; and to Her who represents you now, so conspicuously unarmed, divided, degraded, unfree and powerless." He painted modern Italy as an aberration from the historic norm, a glorious past that seemed to exist without strife or division. "O Noble Italy," he implored, "take on again something of your national aspect." Alfieri was able to manipulate Italy's weakness to achieve a new sense of national identity and his work, written in the last decade of the eighteenth century, possessed explicitly nationalist tones. Alfieri repeatedly referred to Italy's grand past in order to emphasize the weakness of eighteenth century Italy, attempting to place the blame for Italy's atrophy entirely on French occupation. This blame served as the basis for an emerging strain of nationalism at the end of the century based upon unification through opposition. Alfieri created a history that had been destroyed, giving the Italians a goal to strive for that involved independence and an ascension to glory.

*The Nation as Necessary Defense*

Alfieri was not alone in identifying Italy's impaired condition in the late eighteenth century as a product of division and foreign oppression. Melchiorre Gioia, a philosopher from

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48 Alfieri declared that "until an earthquake, a deluge or a devastating comet transform your shape, and so long as your peninsula juts out into two enclosed seas, a narrow and mountainous strip of land crowned by the Alps, your natural frontiers are fixed, and, although you stand divided and subdivided into little morsels, you are for ever One." Alfieri, *To Past, Present and Future Italy*, 110.


50 Alfieri, *To Past, Present and Future Italy*, 110.
Piacenza, approached this same problem in an essay contest held in Napoleon-occupied Milan in 1796 on the subject ‘Which form of free government is most conducive to the happiness of Italy?’ Gioia was one of fifty-seven contributors, most of whom argued similarly that Italy required a unitary republic, yet what differentiated Gioia from the others was that he blamed Italy’s continued failure not on climate, as Montesquieu had argued in *The Spirit of the Laws*, but on the peninsula’s political fragmentation.51 This fragmentation had led to centuries of foreign occupation on Italian soil. And, though French occupation in 1796 surely restricted the content of Gioia’s essay, its sentiment remained similar to that of Alfieri’s *To the Past, Present, and Future Italy*. Rather than naming the French as the ruiners of Italy, however, Gioia warned of the House of Austria “which, alike in peace and war, thinks only of its own expansion.”52 Gioia argued that a conglomerate of independent states would prove incapable of defending the peninsula and would be the ruin of Italy.

Like Alfieri, Gioia believed that the Italian states must unite in order to assert their independence from foreign powers. Petty warring between Italian states had left Italy weak and easily dominated, and Gioia argued that “Both reflection and history will convince us that an Italy divided into small isolated and independent republics can hardly survive. For while these were fighting to dominate each other, their foreign enemies would be watching.”53 Foreign powers, which had time and time again proven their interest in the Italian peninsula, would continue to use Italy’s fractured political landscape as a means of entering into the peninsula and exploiting Italy’s wealth. Until the peninsula asserted itself, Gioia believed, Italy would be

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continuously dominated by foreign powers or allow them in under assumptions of good intent. Drawing from centuries of Italian occupation, Gioia argued against any form of government that could not unite the peninsula and provide adequate defense against a looming threat.

Gioia advocated a unitary republic as the government most capable of defending the peninsula and protecting the privileges of the individual states. He realized that discord would lead to the peninsula's ultimate demise and found the greatest potential for Italian independence in the cooperation of the states. Though ceding the point that division within the Italian states had produced great works, Gioia countered that "if the divisions of Greece and Italy brought glorious talents into existence and gave renewed life and splendor to the arts, they also spilt rivers of blood and dealt mortal wounds to mankind." Though competition may have inspired the works of the likes of Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci, regional rivalries had also led to the continued subjugation of the Italian states. And, as history had already shown, the weakness of the Italian states proved fatal to the whole peninsula. It was time, according to Gioia, for Italy to overcome its petty differences and cast off foreign rule.

Conclusion

While Alfieri had isolated French presence as the single deleterious force in Italy's fall from glory and based his national aspirations on a continued hatred of the French, Gioia

54 "Italy," Gioia wrote, "has almost always been the patrimony of foreigners who, under the pretext of protecting us, have consistently violated our rights, and, while giving us flags and fine-sounding names, have made themselves masters of our estate." Gioia, "Quale dei governi," 15.

55 Gioia explained the flaws in a federalist state, saying, "Anyone who has analyzed political communities and knows how avid they are for esteem, how sensitive to contempt, how ready to take alarm, how difficult to reconcile, how fertile in ruses, obstinate in their scheming yet limited in aims, will readily conclude that a confederation of various political bodies with separate existences, laws of their own and local interests, is inevitably slow when it comes to planning, slower still when it comes to carrying plans out, and only too ready for disagreement." He feared that a confederation of states would be used to please only personal interests and would not function well enough to protect the peninsula. Gioia, "Quale dei governi," 14, 15.


57 "For countless centuries our soil has been the theater over which foreigners have disputed their claims." Unity would be the only defense against continued occupation. Gioia, "Quale dei governi," 15.
admonished political divisions and advocated unity as a means to ensure the independence of the
Italian states from foreign rule. Though arguing from separate positions of cultural and national
defense, Alfieri and Gioia agreed that the greatest future for Italy came about through a
unification of the states and freedom from foreign oppression. These two figures represented
different arguments in the same growing discussion of nationalism at the end of the eighteenth
century. They had lived through the second half of the eighteenth century and seen the state of
the Italian peninsula prior to Napoleon’s invasion, and each was ready for Italy to cast off the
peninsula’s foreign yoke to assert its political and cultural independence. Gioia’s article, written
during the initial French occupation of Italy, was not explicitly anti-French but denounced
foreign rule as adverse to the interests of the peninsula. Citing instead Austria as the foremost
threat to Italian freedom, Gioia raised awareness to the threat of foreign rule in general without
explicit condemnation of French operations. Alfieri held the stronger belief that opposition to the
French created a national spirit, yet they both saw the threat of foreign rule and sought Italy’s
emancipation from its continued oppression.58

Though explicit nationalism existed in only limited pockets prior to the French invasion,
a consensus seemed to emerge among Italian intellectuals over the degenerated state of the
peninsula in the eighteenth century. Centuries of internal division and constant warfare as a
result of outside forces had left the peninsula all but defeated, leading Brusasco to reflect in
1818, “Spectators of such quarrels, and victims of wars waged for such ends as these, how could
Italians preserve any national spirit? Prolonged humiliation leads to indifference, and [Italians]

58 Gioia, who focused mostly on the House of Austria as the Italian oppressor, wrote that “France, Germany and
Spain have held lordship over us in turn. Four countless centuries our soil has been the theater over which foreigners
have disputed their claims.” Though France and Austria presented the most pressing and recent threat to Italian
independence, Spain’s role in the peninsula was undeniable. Gioia, “Quale dei governi,” 15.
finally lost not only all hope, but all idea of independence.” By the end of the eighteenth
century, however, Italians had begun to develop a sense of their deprived state. The half century
of peace from 1748 to 1796 gave Italians time to reflect on their past and weigh their future potential. Though suffering from an inglorious history of oppression, a weak cultural tradition, the lack of a common language, and a disjointed political existence, the Italian people were entering the next phase of their history with a new understanding and appreciation for their place in Europe.

Renan wrote in 1882 that “the essence of a nation is, that all its individual members should have many things in common; and also, that all of them should hold many things in oblivion.” Alfieri began at the end of the century to remind Italy of what it held in common and to admonish also what had kept Italy apart for so long. Though the peninsula continued to suffer from internal division, these petty differences would diminish as divisive factors over the next several decades. Italy’s half century of peace gave the Italian people time to assess what they possessed in common with one another, but it would take the events of 1796-1815 to actually initiate change in the peninsula. This change, however, would come in the form of mandated development imposed by Napoleon. Rupturing the organic development of an Italian spirit and fraternity, Napoleon entered the peninsula and forced unity and reform in his own fashion. He presented new means of developing national sentiment and changed the face of the peninsula. The eighteenth century, however, closed on a changed Italy. The peninsula had become aware of its own history and, though not ready to assert itself as a nation, capable of the germination of such thought.

59 Brusasco to Czar Alexander, 20.
60 Renan, What Is a Nation?, 67.
III. Napoleon's Reign in Italy: 1796-1815

Napoleon’s occupation of Italy from 1796 to 1815 marked a new era in Italian history. French invasion, arresting the half century of peace that had endured since the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1748, ended the ancien régime system in Italy, introduced ideas of equality, increased interregional contact, and altered the political map of the peninsula.61 Patriotism became a malleable term as the states of Italy struggled against or invited Napoleonic rule, changed governments, and merged with other Italian territories to create shifting political allegiances under new modes of governance. The repeated redefinition of patriotism that accompanied this redrawing of political boundaries shaped Italy’s evolving national identity, leaving a varied mark on the peninsula that directly impacted Italian politics in the years following Napoleon’s defeat. And, visible through all of this change, the immutable presence of direct French rule made Italy only more aware of its own subjugation by an outsider.

Napoleon ruled with little regard for Italian opinion, impeding the development of national identity that had been emerging over the previous several decades. Rather than affording Italians the opportunity to progress on their own, French innovations reshaped the political landscape of the peninsula and issued reforms that altered generations of social practices. Napoleon’s imposed uniformity and forced nationalism worked in some ways to unite the peninsula, yet in doing so he created rifts within the populace that displayed themselves in the years after his defeat. And, though he shattered conceptions of geographic permanence in the formation of Italian states, Napoleon could not subvert in just two decades the centuries of

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61 The term ancien régime, or old regime, refers to the governments throughout Europe that were similar to the Ancien Régime in France from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries. The ancien régime states in Italy were not identical to one another but shared the same dependence on the monarchy and divided power between the monarchy, clergy, and the aristocracy.
By forcing the states together, Napoleon incited a backlash against his rule and French influence that led to a refracturing of the peninsula after Napoleon's defeat and a rejection of peninsular unity as a pattern of French occupation. French governing and the fear of foreign domination influenced the Italian states after Napoleon's fall and laid the foundation for unification to be achieved in 1860 with the goal of maintaining regional identities and securing defense from foreign occupation.

*The Italian Political Landscape Preceding French Occupation*

Prior to Napoleon's invasion the *ancien régime* states had failed to achieve much progress and the growing intellectual class, limited in numbers as it was, had begun to doubt the chance for reform in the Italian states. Reform in the eighteenth century had been rather unsuccessful when attempted in the *ancien régime* states and even more disastrous when avoided. In Lombardy, the Habsburg Maria Theresa created a police force and censored speech in order to maintain power, both in the name of progress. In Tuscany, attempted economic modernization under Leopold I failed to achieve growth. Naples and the Papal States, which passed reform either too late or without any urgency, suffered serious economic deterioration. The Italian states needed reforms to catch up economically with the rest of Europe yet the despotic rulers of the eighteenth century failed to usher in such change. Though by 1796 popular sentiment had not turned against the ruling powers, it had become apparent in many of the states that reform was failing.

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64 Doumanis, *Italy*, 28. Talk of reform could not be avoided, however, and though regions such as the Kingdom of Two Sicilies enacted few reforms they were inundated with discussion and prepared for change under Napoleon's reign. Grew, "Finding Social Capital," 413.
Despite the failures of the ancien régime states, however, loyalty to Italy’s despotic rulers remained high. Paolo Frisi, a scientist and political writer, extolled the achievements of the Enlightened Despot Maria Theresa of Lombardy in his *Eulogy of Empress Maria Theresa*. The work, commissioned in 1783 by the Austrian Chancellor Kaunitz, was designed to praise the reign of Maria Theresa, a Habsburg ruler who had presided over the greater Lombardy region in Italy, and therefore portrayed Maria Theresa’s reign positively and highlighted the achievements of enlightened despotism through the mid-eighteenth century. His work both illustrates the propagation of public opinion through this period and popular sentiment under the ancien régime states.

Frisi, in his *Eulogy to the Empress Maria Theresa*, argued that enlightened despotism was the triumph of intellectual progress in good governing. He represented Maria Theresa as a ruler who not only valued men of learning but applied their knowledge to a just and fair rule. Frisi noted that under Maria Theresa “men have generally become better, more respect is paid to our rights, our streets are no longer stained with blood, and the silence of the night is no longer interrupted by the shouts of assassins and the groans of the wounded.” He attributed this new stability in society to the elevation and permission of knowledge under Maria Theresa’s reign, declaring that “Good learning is now no longer confined to a few solitary philosophers. Now ministers commonly possess it, and the spirit of philosophy has reached even to the throne, where it has come to direct the supreme power of judgment and of moderating human laws, and

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65 “It is sufficient,” Frisi wrote, “to consider the differences in the Roman constitution between the time of Marius and that of Augustus, to compare the flourishing state of Florence under Lorenzo the Magnificent with the previous disturbances, the present Italian system with that of feudal government.” For Frisi, enlightened despotism triumphed over other forms of government in its defense of rights and elevation of the standard of living. Paolo Frisi, “Eulogy of Empress Maria Theresa,” quoted in Derek Beales, *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971), 103.

of correcting countless abuses, mostly rooted in the ignorance of the darkest ages." Frisi attributed the achievements of Maria Theresa’s rule to the region’s new environment of open intellectual pursuit, yet it was apparent in Frisi’s writing that Maria Theresa’s rule stressed secular, intellectual development as a means to strengthen the power of the throne.

Though Maria Theresa’s reign showed efforts in the eighteenth century to modernize the state, it proved also that the division of power in society led to a consolidation of power under despotic rule. Maria Theresa separated the powers of the church and the state, secularizing the political sphere and relegating religion to the spiritual realm. This move not only asserted the power of the government over Catholicism but was part of the government’s transition from component within society to director of society. The government assumed the role of sole legislator, executor, and arbiter. Frisi noted that the government both took control of commerce by both managing trade and eliminating the institution of guilds within the region and initiated public works that consisted of erecting workshops, building roads, and creating canals to promote trade within the region. He also claimed that Maria Theresa possessed a “genuine respect for science, letters, fine arts, and for those who cultivate them,” yet praised her for “resuming for the supreme legislative authority the right to censor books.” Maria Theresa asserted the power of the state over religion and, through asserting the sole right to censor books, claimed the privilege of preserving moral and intellectual standards as well.

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68 “The reform of abuses which do not concern dogmatic questions and pure spiritualities cannot derive from the Supreme Pontiff who, except in these two matters, has no true authority in the state.” Frisi, “Eulogy,” 105.
69 “It was forbidden for priests of the sanctuary, who... most particularly profess charity, humility and service, to assume the right to punish: the private prisons of the monasteries were dissolved, and those of the episcopal courts were subordinated ‘to the natural and necessary inspection of the prince.’” Frisi also stated that “the supreme legislative power in all that concerns civil society” resided solely in the prince as well as “the prohibition of further acquisitions of property by the clergy; the regulation of the economy, the discipline and the numbers of monasteries.” Frisi, “Eulogy,” 105.
70 Frisi, “Eulogy,” 106.
72 Frisi, “Eulogy,” 104.
Frisi’s government-commissioned eulogy contained only praise for the rule of Maria Theresa, lauding both her openness to intellectual development and increased security in the state of Lombardy. Though her separation of political power from religious authority represented progress in Italian governing, the means by which Maria Theresa consolidated her power displayed government coercion and a restriction of rights. Maria Theresa created a police force to maintain peace and reserved the ability to ban books, limiting opposition and securing her position as the head of the Lombard government. And, though Frisi praised Maria Theresa’s use of educated ministers, the aristocracy maintained their monopoly within government administration. Frisi’s *Eulogy of Empress Maria Theresa*, however, indicated that loyalty to the ruler remained high despite the fact that the government achieved modernization at the expense of their subject’s rights. Though the governments in Italy prior to Napoleon’s invasion may have been failing their subjects, dynastic loyalty remained strong.

Though most Italians remained loyal to regional rule, a growing middle class had by the late eighteenth century begun to look toward the French Revolution for assistance in bringing change to the peninsula. Jacobinism spread into Italy over the years 1793-1795 and, though the Italian Jacobins remained too weak to threaten the rule of governments, their presence unsettled Italian rulers and put a halt to reforms. These men were sympathetic to the ideals of the French Revolution and sought to overthrow the *ancien régime* in order to restructure the Italian states. Jacobins and other reformists welcomed the French army as Italy’s liberator, clashing with the majority of Italians who remained loyal to the reigning powers.

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73 Doumanis, *Italy*, 28-29.

74 The Italian governments never developed reforming cliques around the throne that could be deposed by the ruling powers, and therefore tension never emerged out of direct conflict surrounding the throne. Furthermore, no radical groups developed outside of the state and complaints toward the monarchy existed almost solely among isolated figures such as Alfieri, Carlo Denina, and Muratori. Though the governments failed to reform, they were criticized little for such inaction. Michael Broers, "Revolution as Vendetta: Patriotism in Piedmont, 1794-1821," *The Historical Journal* 33 (September 1990): 576-578.
An article published in *The Political Thermometer of Lombardy* in 1796 entitled "The 'Italian Republic'" described the support for liberation at the verge of French invasion. The article declared that "The people of Bologna and Ferrara demand freedom. The men of Reggio have acted and proclaimed it. The Lombards are beginning to feel its effects." This was not a collective movement but rather a series of independent undertakings designed to assert freedom from aristocratic oppression. "The 'Italian Republic'" challenged Italians to utilize the opportunity of French invasion as a way to restructure their own rule, to eliminate the social strata, and to create a government with the interest of the people at heart.

Though the article challenged Italians to unite out of the separate states' common interests, no such national movement would occur. The presence of Jacobins, though a minority in Italy, suggested the existence of an Italian population that was ready to progress beyond the *ancien régime*. This growing generation of Italians seeking change, however, did not denote a uniform rejection of Italian rule across the peninsula, as many Italians remained loyal to their regional rulers. Though "The 'Italian Republic'" expressed a desire to emancipate the Italian subject, Frisi's *Eulogy to the Empress Maria Theresa* conveyed satisfaction under the rule of the Italian state. These pockets of revolutionaries and *ancien régime* supporters varied the Italian response to French invasion across the peninsula, allowing for an initial acceptance of French rule that quickly turned to resistance.

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The First Phase of Italian Occupation in Italy: 1796-1999

Napoleon led French troops into northern Italy in the spring of 1796, driving the Austrians out of Italy and securing Italy for French occupation. The reality of French invasion inspired new revolutionaries within Italy to assist the Italian Jacobins in toppling the ancien régime states and establishing impromptu states. Napoleon utilized this native enthusiasm to abolish aristocratic privileges and the existing feudal structure, establish the absolute sovereignty of the state, and institute freedom of religion. These reforms ended the ancien régime structure in Italy and challenged the authority of the Catholic church. Napoleon also initiated a system of conscription to build up the Italian army, established internal free trade, and formed a uniform administration within the republic. The brief existence of the Italian republics during the period from 1796-1799 transformed the governing structures into centralized, bureaucratic republics and imposed nationhood on the Italian peninsula.

While equality and the termination of feudalism appealed to a majority of Italians, Napoleon’s treatment of Catholicism offended the majority of the urban poor and peasantry. The Church had played an important role in the running of the ancien régime states and was an established presence in Italy. Though individual governments within Italy had made moves to

76 Doumanis, Italy, 29.
77 Local patriots made up of political moderates and the Italian Jacobins had already established a Lombard army, adopted an Italian tricolor, and attempted to set up a republic before Napoleon had established to control Milan. Doumanis, Italy, 30.
79 Napoleon first created the Cispadine republic over territory in Bologna, Ferrara, Modena, and Reggio Emilia. This was then merged with the Cisalpine republic, which included Milan and eventually Brescia, Bergamo, and the Valtelline. The Cisalpine Republic spanned the area of five Italian states, possessed its own flag and army, and contained over 3.5 million people. Napoleon, fearful of creating too powerful and Italian state, ceded the Republic of Venice to Austria and chose not to add Ancona or Piedmont to the Cisalpine. The Roman and Neapolitan republics were created after the Cisalpine and lasted until France was expelled from Italy in 1799. Grab, “From the French Revolution to Napoleon,” 27-46.
80 Many aristocratic families followed the tradition of sending one of their sons into the Church, creating ties between Catholicism and the governments of Italy. Priests’ literacy and their contacts with other regions of the
separate the Catholic Church from governing bodies, Napoleon’s radical treatment of the Church went too far by eighteenth century Italian standards. French rule suppressed religious orders, expropriated Church properties to pay for the expenses of the new state, and within two years of entering Italy Napoleon had forced Pope Pius VI from the peninsula. Napoleon’s progressive attempts to minimize the Pope’s role in the peninsula garnered considerable opposition from the Italian masses, turning them against French occupation and setting France as an enemy to Italy’s traditional relationship with the Church. Defense of Catholicism proved to be one of the major battle cries for revolts against the French in 1799 and pitted many Italians against French intrusion from that point forward.

Though many Italians had initially welcomed French invasion, disillusionment settled in after Italians found the French authorities to be more concerned with their own military strength and the harvesting of wealth than in fostering democracy. France siphoned off local revenues through punitive taxes in order to fund its military campaigns, hurting the peasantry and the poor. The Italian masses grew to oppose French rule, developing hostility to looting and France’s cursory attempts to abolish feudalism. Popular opinion toward taxation and conscription tipped Italy toward rebellion. After steady resistance, Italian insurgents fueled

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81 Paolo Frisi wrote in his *Eulogy of Empress Maria Theresa* that “without the positive assent of the prince, in whom alone resides the supreme legislative power in all that concerns civil society, there can be no obligation on subjects to obey ecclesiastical dispositions which, going beyond the limits of pure spiritualia, affect temporal, political and economic matters.” The Lombard government asserted its power in the political sector without challenging the spiritual claims of the Church or impinging upon its rights to continue practicing. Frisi, 105.
82 Kertzer, "Religion and Society," 185.
85 Doumanis, *Italy*, 32.
86 Grab, “From the French Revolution to Napoleon,” 33.
primarily by peasants and the urban poor expelled Napoleon’s troops from the peninsula and caused the collapse of the French republics in 1799.87

Italian sentiment had turned quickly against Jacobins and French rule, yet reforms initiated in this short period of occupation left an undeniable impact on the political and social structure of the peninsula.88 Unprepared as the Italian states had been, lingering effects of French reform would continue to impact Italian society beyond Napoleon’s rule. The Italian states had little time to recover from such rule, however, as Napoleon would return to the peninsula months later, yet it had become apparent that Italy was to reject French rule when at all possible. Italy was not prepared for unification under foreign rule, though it could not resist Napoleon’s influence and would not be able to shed French impositions in the years to come.

Napoleon’s Return to Italy: 1800-1814

By the spring of 1800, Napoleon had returned to the peninsula and quelled Italian resistance movements, restoring rule over most of northern Italy.89 Over the next decade and a half, Napoleon reshaped Italy’s social and political landscape, dividing the peninsula into three unique entities and imposing reform that would leave a permanent mark on the Italian states. Napoleon encouraged a sense of Italian national identity in the Kingdom of Italy in the northeast, annexed western Italy to France, and placed the Kingdom of Naples under the care of his kin. These regions experienced different modes of rule, yet ultimately Napoleonic rule diminished regional distinctions and advanced Italian society.

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88 Riall, Risorgimento, 8.
89 Grab, “From the French Revolution to Napoleon,” 34.
In 1802 Napoleon established the Republic of Italy, which in 1805 he transformed into the Kingdom of Italy and became himself the King. At its height the Kingdom of Italy covered 35,000 square miles, contained 6.7 million inhabitants, and spanned an area that included the territories of Lombardy, Emilia Romagna, the Veneto, the Marche, and Alto Adige.\textsuperscript{90} The kingdom was divided into administratively identical departments headed by elected prefects, each constituting a part of the greater republic’s administration. These bureaucratic institutions minimized regional diversity and assured kingdom-wide uniformity of governance. Napoleon also enforced the creation of roads and waterways to increase travel and trade between different regions within the Kingdom and created a national market by eliminating internal tariffs and spreading a uniform commercial code, a single currency, and a standardized system of weights and measures.\textsuperscript{91} Over the fifteen year span of the Kingdom of Italy, Napoleon’s efforts to diminish regional differences helped increase contact between different areas of the Kingdom and established similar governing structures.

Napoleon, though he feared Italian unity, understood that it was not politically advantageous to crush patriotic hopes in the Kingdom of Italy.\textsuperscript{92} The French Empire needed Italy for its troops and funds, and in order for Napoleon to maintain control the people of Italy needed to be compliant toward his role as overseer. Napoleon had learned from his first invasion that the Italian Jacobins were not numerous enough to assure stability in a new regime, so he sought other ways to assure his rule and managed in the Kingdom of Italy to do it through the

\textsuperscript{90} Grab, “From the French Revolution to Napoleon,” 36.
\textsuperscript{91} Grab, “From the French Revolution to Napoleon,” 40.
\textsuperscript{92} Though he wanted to present the Italians with the illusion of autonomy, Napoleon warned his viceroy in 1805, “You are wrong to think that the Italians are like children. There is evil in them. Do not let them forget that I am the master and can do whatever I wish.” Duggan, \textit{The Force of Destiny}, 30, 31.
stimulation of Italian pride. Napoleon achieved this by fostering a sense of a cultural identity and granting Italians the illusion of autonomy by allowing them to serve in all but the highest position of government. In 1817, Brusasco described Napoleon’s rule in the Kingdom of Italy, writing that “Bonaparte preserved its language, created a national army and a military spirit, appointed people of the country to all official posts, and indeed left no foreigner there except the Viceroy.” By encouraging these aspects, Napoleon increased cooperation between the Italian states and reinforced the growing sense of a common identity that had been building over the eighteenth century.

Napoleon’s rule in Italy opened up new opportunities for Italians to participate in society and the government. Rather than forcing French rule on the Kingdom of Italy as he did in the annexed territories of Piedmont, Liguria, Tuscany, Parma, Umbria, and Lazio, Napoleon filled the Kingdom’s offices with Italian bureaucrats. The Vice-President under Napoleon, Melzi d’Eril, created an efficient, well-operated state comprised of Italian officials. These positions provided jobs for a new class of Italian bourgeois that had been created by Napoleon’s abolition of aristocratic rule, and jobs were given out based upon merit rather than birth. These native administrators, however, were only functionaries acting under the sole executive power held by Napoleon. Though Napoleon presented to Italians the notion that they could participate in the new government, he maintained ultimate control. Italians were once again kept from the seat of power and could not rule their own unified kingdom. Though they received practice in self rule, the Kingdom of Italy was ultimately governed by another body and never united under complete Italian leadership.

93 Napoleon, for example, received an imperial coronation in Milan where he took on the Iron Crown of Lombardy and proclaimed the ancient Lombard formula, “God gives it to me. Let anyone who touches it beware.” Italians met this act with popular enthusiasm. Duggan, The Force of Destiny, 32.
The Italian regions annexed to France experienced similar methods of governing yet were treated as territories of French rule rather than members of an Italian state. The French government divided the annexed regions into departments run by French prefects, and in each of these regions the former citizens of diverse Italian states, like in the other Italian regimes, were placed under the Code Napoleon, paid French taxes, and could be conscripted into the French Grand Armée. These states were forced to abandon regional practices in order to facilitate the state’s centralization of power. Brusasco wrote that

Bonaparte had decided to make several millions of Italians into Frenchmen... Beside the same river, in the same country, the national language was encouraged on one bank and proscribed on the other. To speak of the independence of Italy was a crime in Parma, a virtue in Modena. The whole of French Italy was peopled with French employees, from the prefect to the lowliest tax collect. Italian conscripts were used to fill up the ranks of French regiments, and the humblest petition could be rejected simply on the score of its being written in the language of the country.

Italians in the French territories were banned from government participation and their alienation from government created high resentment toward French rule. Contrary to all natural inclinations, the Italians in the west were forced to become French without any of the political advantages, driving a wedge between the peoples of Italy that would remain to a degree even after French defeat in 1814.

Napoleon’s Effect on Regionalization

After Napoleon’s defeat in 1814, the French institutions of Italy crumbled and the former political distinctions reemerged in the form of the Italian states. Though Napoleonic rule had politically united the peninsula, two decades of imposed unification had not been powerful enough to erase the historical distinctions that had crafted the Italian states. Napoleon’s rule had,

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96 Grab, “From the French Revolution to Napoleon,” 46.
97 Grab, “From the French Revolution to Napoleon,” 36-46.
98 Brusasco to Czar Alexander, 21, 22.
however, been effective in eroding the *ancien régime* system in Italy, allowing after 1814 a
discussion of unity that possessed more potential than had preceded Napoleon’s rule.

Overall, French rule had removed certain distinctions between Italian states that had
served to challenge interregional communication. Though Napoleon treated the Italian regimes
differently, the uniformity of administration in the north helped to remove administrative
distinctions that had contributed to the Italian states’ historic incompatibility.\(^9\) Prior to
Napoleon’s invasion Italy had consisted of ten distinct states, each possessing its own legal
codes, economic structure, administrative institutions, currencies, and dialects.\(^1\) Napoleon’s
rule had minimized these differences as he enforced standards throughout the peninsula and
imposed centralized governments.

Under French rule, Brusasco believed that Italians developed closer bonds and started to
come together as a nation. Brusasco argued that “The inhabitants of these different provinces,
separated hitherto not by distance but by their customs, by the old cleavage between themselves
and the government, began to know one another, to visit, to look upon one another as members
of one same nation.”\(^1\) Brusasco, a firm believer in Italian unity following Napoleon’s collapse,
believed that only governments had held the people of Italy apart. With the ancient regimes
gone, then, it would be possible for Italians to come together. France made possible an organic
unity of the Italian states, though it had attempted to force unity decades before Italy could have
prepared itself.

Regional identification, however, had not been eliminated. In traveling through Italy after
Napoleon’s rule, the French writer Stendhal noted in 1817 that Italy was characterized by

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\(^9\) Napoleon had a more difficult time enforcing legislation in southern Italy, where communication was more

\(^1\) Grab, “From the French Revolution to Napoleon,” 25.

\(^1\) Brusasco to Czar Alexander, 22.
patriotisme d'antichambre, or "the fierce and inordinate pride that local people felt towards their home town or village."\textsuperscript{102} Pride and a sense of belonging, in other words, belonged foremost to the place one was raised and lived. Though regional governments may have governed poorly, patriotisme d'antichambre helped maintain loyalty to local leaders. Napoleon could do nothing to diminish this pride, possessing only the ability to destroy the foundations of government from within. In doing, however, he created a platform for regionalism to reemerge after his defeat in 1814, giving Italians the opportunity to reassert their regional loyalty over the failed foundation of French administration. Napoleon managed to increase interregional contact but historical differences remained and in some cases became stronger as a result of forced amalgamation.\textsuperscript{103}

Though Napoleon had successfully united the Italian states politically and increased regional interaction, his departure in 1814 saw the immediate return to political fragmentation. Established political boundaries had not simply maintained an arbitrary separation of regions but had evolved alongside a deeper divide that existed within the Italian people themselves. In 1815 the differences between the Italian states remained too strong to allow for unity. The Italian states could not be united after only two decades of common political experience.

\textit{French Impact on Culture}

French influence within the peninsula had a tremendous impact on Italian culture around the turn of the century. The years 1796-1799 marked the first time that Italians were free of censorship since the Council of Trent in 1563.\textsuperscript{104} During this three year span Italians experienced complete freedom of speech and censorship and used the opportunity to found journals

\textsuperscript{102} Duggan, \textit{The Force of Destiny}, 110.
\textsuperscript{103} Broers, "Myth and Reality," 708.
throughout the peninsula. From 1796-1799 some 40 journals were begun in Milan, 20 in Genoa, and at least 10 in each of the cities of Rome, Venice, and Naples. Vincenzo Cuoco, after the collapse of the short-lived Neapolitan Republic in 1799, moved to Milan and operated *Il Giornale Italiano*, a journal that declared "to form the public spirit of a nation." Though these journals were not all radical, they were often openly political and facilitated free dialogue under Napoleon's first period of occupation and to a lesser degree even after Napoleon's return. Among the editors of these papers ranked some of Italy's most prominent authors of the early nineteenth century, including Ugo Foscolo and Alessandro Manzoni. These journals assisted in the development of Italy's new generations of patriots and in creating a common experience for their subscribers.  

Though Napoleon didn't reintroduce complete freedom of the press after his return, his reign stimulated Italian culture in other ways. The Kingdom of Italy financed public works, reorganized museums, commissioned paintings and monuments, and established schools, universities, and conservatories. The state funded public projects such as construction of a new wing on the Procuratie in San Marco square in Venice in 1810 and Napoleon ordered the completion of the façade of Milan's gothic cathedral for his coronation in 1805. When Vittorio Alfieri died in 1803, the government commissioned Antonio Canova, Italy's finest sculptor, to design a monument to mark Alfieri's tomb in the church of Santa Croce in Florence. This was all done in the name of civic culture, as the government even hosted concerts, parades,
ceremonies, and patriotic plays for the public. The French promoted culture in order to foster a sense of common identity and in several instances the governments even went so far as to adopt symbols of ancient Rome and use Roman sounding names for official positions and new regions.\textsuperscript{109}

French contribution to Italian cultural development and the respect Napoleon paid to Italy’s cultural heritage continued the work that Vittorio Alfieri had begun before the turn of the century. Napoleon patronized the arts to promote civic culture and strengthen his grip on the peninsula, yet in doing so he advanced Italian cultural unity. Canova’s monument to Vittorio Alfieri, inaugurated in September 1810, was not simply a monument to one of Italy’s greats but a symbol of a growing Italian cultural nationalism. Canova gained inspiration for his monument from both Alfieri’s works and the poet Ugo Foscolo’s \textit{On Tombs}, an ode to the connection between living Italians and the glorious Italian dead. Above all other symbolism, however, Canova’s monument depicted the Italian nation in the form of a graceful woman bowed in grief over her fallen son. This statue embodied Italy’s collective grief over the fallen nation, and after visiting the tomb, Foscolo declared, “Oh, how beautiful Italy is! Beautiful! And yet, for all that, she stands over a grave.”\textsuperscript{110} Though France may have played patron to the arts, a true Italian resurrection could only be achieved when Italy again became free.

\textit{The Evolution of Patriotism under French Rule}

Michael Broers, a modern Italian historian interested in studying particular regions and trends in early nineteenth century Italy, examines the progression of patriotic identity in Piedmont from 1794 to 1821. By extending the definition of patriot from ideologue sympathetic

\textsuperscript{110} Duggan, \textit{The Force of Destiny}, 34-39.
to the French revolution to one who practiced practical, political collaboration with the French, Broers isolates four distinct generations of patriots in Piedmont over the course of Napoleon’s occupation. Broer’s analysis illustrates the changing political spectrum over a two and a half decade span in Piedmont, demonstrating that patriotism evolved quickly and resulted in 1815 with several political generations distinct from the Italian patriot preceding Napoleonic rule.

The first generation of Piedmontese patriot identified by Broers was sympathetic to the ideas of the French revolution and supported Napoleon’s invasion as a means of toppling the House of Savoy and the established aristocracy. Isolated within the Italian elite, this generation found little popular support from the majority of Italians. The second generation emerged after Napoleon’s invasion in collaboration with the French until Piedmont was annexed to France in 1802. This generation was then followed by two more under French rule from 1802-1814, generations that overlapped politically but with the distinction that the fourth generation consisted of patriots who had come to political maturity under Napoleon’s rule. This later generation, truly distinct from the others, entered the post-Napoleonic years with no adult memory of rule under the House of Savoy. The third and fourth generations of Italian patriots would go on to influence the Restoration states after Napoleon’s fall, creating a divide between those who had experienced life under the ancien régime and those who had not. While the first generation of patriots supported the French invasion as a means to end the House of Savoy, the final generation achieved political maturity without any knowledge of political life under the Piedmontese monarchy. The difference of twenty years had created at least four distinct generations of Piedmontese patriots, resulting in a political struggle in 1815 that would both achieve a continuation of Napoleonic reform and a return to pre-Napoleonic practices.\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{111} Broers, "Revolution as Vendetta," 573-597.
The generational divide of Italian politicians resulting from Napoleon’s two decades of rule complicated the Italian states’ return to power in 1815. While Restoration governments after 1815 maintained many of the administrative changes made by Napoleon, many also attempted to return to the practices of the ancien régime and reassert traditional aristocratic privileges. The Italian states’ return to power and the initial years of rule from 1815-1821 would prove to be instrumental in the future of Italy, creating a fragmented political landscape of liberals and reactionaries that would affect the Italian unification movement until 1860.

Conclusion

Napoleon had imposed an incredible amount of reform on the Italian peninsula and irreversibly altered its political landscape. He introduced ideas of equality and the fundamentals of the French Revolution, subverting aristocratic class barriers and opening up positions for a growing bourgeois class in Italy. The social changes in the peninsula provided a new class of Italians with job opportunities and allowed them to fill the ranks of the new administrations, opening up competition in a system based upon meritocracy rather than blood and associations. The ancien régime in Italy, in other words, had ended. Though the old states repopulated the peninsula in 1815, Napoleon’s rule altered their new identities and ensured a change in governing policies. Italy’s experience under French rule, however, complicated this transition of power as many attempted to remove Napoleon’s implementations over the course of his rule.

Napoleon’s rule complicated rule within states and the political and social expectations of individual regions, but on a larger scale his repeated redrawing of political boundaries undermined the legitimacy of the ancien régime states and the established political distinctions of the peninsula prior to Napoleonic rule. Historical geographical distinctions between regions
had helped reinforce the positions of the old Italian dynasties, so by erasing these borders and combining peoples from distinct regions the republics under Napoleon were able to reduce the legitimacy of the recently fallen states. Though the citizens of these regions did not lose their cultural distinctions as a result, they became more susceptible to a shared bond between regions that had been unapproachable by rote.\textsuperscript{112} Napoleon increased interregional contact and made it such that after his rule the Italian states could possess a freer exchange and a new collective history. Thus, Napoleon's rule in Italy ended the taboo of regional cooperation but it did not destroy regional identification altogether. The regions maintained their distinct identities but grew to see each other as fellow Italians as well, joined together in subjugation by the common French ruler.

The Italian states in 1815 possessed little uniformity and the direction of their rule over the next several years would vary from region to region. Napoleon had not left the peninsula with any sense of compelling unity but his rule had served to undermine the established fragmentation that had resulted from centuries of separation. Napoleon's defeat also meant Austria's return to power within the peninsula, continuing Italy's history of foreign intervention. The return to power of the Italian states would prove crucial to the future of the Italian peninsula, for it was in this restoration that an understanding of national unity emerged as a basis for maintaining regional identification and preserving Italy from further ruination by foreign occupiers.

IV. From Napoleon to Revolution: 1815-1821

The Congress of Vienna restored Italy in 1815 to its pre-Napoleonic state. With the exception of the merging of the Republics of Genoa and Piedmont, the old political boundaries

\textsuperscript{112} Riall, \textit{Risorgimento}, 5.
reemerged and the peninsula became again divided. The newly autonomous Italian states faced the decisions of how to maintain their sovereignty in an unstable period and how to deal with the reforms of the previous two decades, testing the tenacity of social and political developments that had been achieved under Napoleon’s rule and in the decades prior to his invasion. Modern historians have found that the Italian states’ return to power in 1815 was not always accompanied by a conservative backlash to Napoleonic advancements but rather varied from state to state. The Restoration governments, however, all incorporated some hybridization of French influence and despotic rule and the variations of this hybridization contributed to a continuation of unique regional identities. This diversity of rule and the variation of both compliance and resistance to change among the populaces enabled the once united Italian states to again diverge from one another after experiencing a platform of recent unity.

The desire to avoid revolution and to maintain both stability and autonomy guided the Italian governments’ ascendancy after Napoleonic rule. These governments, however, faced many obstacles brought about by French occupation and threats of continued foreign dominance. Social unrest inspired by secret fraternities challenged peace in the new governments, new social classes that had developed under Napoleon resented a conservative return to power, officials feared that the newly divided Italian states could not defend themselves from foreign invasion, and Austrian oversight loomed as a threat to domestic governing. Italians, scarred by the experience of Napoleonic rule and influenced by the previous half century of changing sentiment towards foreign occupiers and an Italian spirit, rebelled against Restoration rule in 1820 in Naples and again in Piedmont in 1821 as a result of a growing divide between the governed and the governing. Though concentrated locally, these revolutions intended a broad emancipation of the Italian people and stemmed from widespread disappointment over rule in the Restoration
states and Austrian oversight. Restoration rule conflicted with the changed Italian society, and this conflict laid the foundation for the rest of the century as Italians continued to clash with their new rulers.

The Continued Influence of France on Italian Politics

Looking back on the years before Napoleon’s fall, Piedmontese ambassador Brusasco wrote in 1818 that “it seemed inevitable that with the death of Napoleon, or his fall, the Kingdom of Italy, already constituted, with an established government, an army and political ideas, would become self-supporting, make itself independent of France, and help French Italy to escape from bondage.” Napoleon had laid the foundation for Italian unity and independence, yet at the point of his fall the system collapsed. Liberated from French rule, the Italian states returned to their previous boundaries and went again under the influence of foreign rulers that had persisted up until Napoleon’s invasion in 1796. In reverting back to a series of divided states, Italians opened themselves up to continued foreign dominance.

Unity under French rule had done positive things for the Italian peninsula yet its legacy had been tinged with hostility. Massimo D’Azeglio, an Italian novelist and statesman, wrote in his memoirs after unification that “No one more than I knows the value of every drop of generous French blood spilled on Italian soil, for the redemption of Italy in 1859. But all the same, it is true and must be said, there was immense satisfaction at seeing the French go.” D’Azeglio understood the importance of French rule in Italy from the perspective of 1859,

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113 Santorre di Santarosa, leader of the revolution in Piedmont in 1821, wrote that “true patriots will sacrifice their particular political allegiance whenever the larger interest of their country requires it.” Santarosa believed that, despite the failure of revolution in 1820 and 1821, it would occur within the century and cast off foreign rule from the Italian peninsula. Santorre di Santarosa, "De la révolution piémontaise," quoted in Denis Mack Smith, The Making of Italy, 1796-1866 (Hong Kong: Macmillan Press, 1988), 39-41.

114 Brusasco to Czar Alexander, 22.

having irreversibly shaped the Italian social, political, economic, and cultural landscape, but in 1814 a popular feeling of hatred among Italians had been directed toward their French occupiers. "Those who did not see Turin on that day," D'Azeglio recalled, "do not know what a people is like in a delirium of joy." Italians were happy to see the French depart, yet they were not well enough established to continue as a unified nation and keep foreign powers out.

France had unified Italy for two decades, imparting an unavoidable influence on Italian soil and Joseph de Maistre, a conservative French philosopher and loyalist to the House of Savoy, warned Italians of the threat for continued French influence after Napoleon's defeat. He advised that "in the absence of very skillfully taken precautions, all the nations bordering France will soon have governments like hers." France's proximity and recent collaboration would keep pressure on the peninsula even after direct rule was eliminated. Though Italians grew to hate French occupation, "the hatred which she has rightly attracted by her crimes and extravagances has caused people to shut their eyes to her prerogatives. But they exist still, and her influence, especially over her immediate frontiers, will always be immense." Italy, he argued, mimicked French rule even when the governments believed to be acting on their own. They would not be able to reject French influences altogether.

Maistre was correct in assuming that French rule would leave a lasting impact on Italian soil. The Restoration governments adopted French reforms and advancements as they saw fit, and they ruled with the awareness that French influence lay just across the border. Italy would not continue to be ruled as France had ruled the peninsula, yet it could also not ignore the

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116 D'Azeglio, Things I Remember, 66.
118 Maistre, "Correspondence diplomatique," 117.
119 "Think," Maistre wrote, "how she led us during the Revolution: she suppressed the gabelle, we suppressed it; she abolished tithe, we abolished it; she suppressed the nobility and primogeniture, we imitated her; she took the property of the Church, we took it too." Maistre, "Correspondence diplomatique," 117.
contributions that France had made. The Restoration rulers attempted to find a balance between these two forces, yet within five years of their transition to power many rulers faced revolt.

*The Emergence of the Restoration States*

Emerging after two decades of French rule, the Restoration governments in Italy had to reestablish their sovereignty over their old political domains. Napoleon’s unification of Italy had failed to dismantle differences throughout the peninsula, yet in most states the governments did not simply revert to their old methods of rule. And, though Italy returned to its pre-Napoleonic divisions, the new governments maintained many of Napoleon’s advancements. This created a diversity of rule in the peninsula and hindered any development of a uniform Italian identity.

Furthermore, Enrico Dal Lago, a modern Italian historian, argues the Restoration governments heightened regional distinctions and that their allegiances to regional political entities trumped any feelings of national sentiment. As evidence to this regional differentiation, Lago traces the evolution of the Restoration governments and society in Piedmont, Lombardy, and the Papal State. In Piedmont the aristocracy regained their pre-Napoleonic privileges. They rose back to prominence and again dominated the Savoy administration, creating again a clear distinction between the aristocracy and the bourgeois in Piedmont. The Tuscan government, however, experienced a high level of economic freedom under the rule of the Habsburg-Lorraine that helped develop a growing Tuscan bourgeois class. This economic freedom inspired Tuscan banking which in turn created peninsula-wide and international networks of clients. Tuscany experienced not only economic freedom and social

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120 Other significant studies to take note of this diversity are David Laven’s *The Age of Restoration*, Lucy Riall’s *Risorgimento: the History of Italy from Napoleon to Nation State*, Marco Meriggi’s *State and Society in Post-Napoleonic Italy*, and Michael Broer’s *The Restoration in Piedmont-Sardinia, 1814-1848*. These sources highlight much of the important activity that took place in the transition of power after the Congress of Vienna.
mobility but greater access to the rest of Europe in both goods and ideas. In the Papal State, the
Restoration era saw the abolition of the Code Napoléon and a reorganization of the state
administration. Conservative and progressive forces conflicted with one another to create a blend
of reforms distinct from that of Piedmont and Tuscany, showing that these three particular
regions all moved into the post-Napoleonic era with different governing strategies and adopted
Napoleonic influences as their governments saw fit. None of the Italian states experienced the
same combination of French influences and restored Italian governing, ensuring that the return to
power of the Italian states in 1815 further exacerbated distinctions between the Italian states.¹²¹

Lago’s analysis demonstrates the difficulties of generalizing an Italian identity in the
years following Napoleon’s rule, yet it does not rule out the possibility for some common
experience. Using social and political developments, Lago argues that the Restoration era saw a
resurgence of regionalism over a peninsula-wide foundation of recent collective history. This
recent unity provided a foundation for some degree of ultra-regional sympathy between states
and, though the states experience different rules, their experience under Napoleon provided a
basis for collectivity.

Brusasco had argued in 1818 that Italians under French rule had developed together as a
people. Regardless of political differences after 1815, he believed that “each part of northern
Italy is at exactly the same stage of civilization; there is a general consensus of opinion and a
community of interests.”¹²² Moreover, these similarities distinguished northern Italy from the
surrounding territories. “Not only mountains and languages, but customs, habits and affinities
play their part, for Piedmont has nothing in common with the Dauphiné, nor Venetia with

¹²¹ Enrico Dal Lago, “Society, Economy, and Politics in Restoration Italy: Towards a Regional Synthesis,” The
¹²² Brusasco to Czar Alexander, 29.
Austria.”  Though Brusasco did not claim that Italy could achieve a unified peace on its own, he acknowledged the similarities in northern Italy and distinguished these regions from the surrounding territories. Northern Italy possessed, according to Brusasco, a distinct expression of uniformity regardless of political distinctions.

The similarities in northern Italy claimed by Brusasco, however, did not just separate the region of northern Italy from its European borderlands but also proved distinguishing from Tuscany, Rome or Naples. Uniformity in northern Italy did not mean uniformity in the entire peninsula, making difficult early attempts at peninsular unification after the Congress of Vienna. Napoleon’s rule had been less invasive in Southern Italy and as a result the Kingdom of Naples did not possess the same social structures and had not reached the same level of advancement that northern Italy possessed in 1815.

Joachim Murat, the King of Naples from 1808-1815, proved this absence of national sentiment in Southern Italy with his failed revolution in 1815 after Napoleon’s defeat. He claimed, “from the Alps to the Straits of Sicily can be heard a single cry: ‘Italian independence,’” yet it did not resonate with the Neapolitan people. The French writer Stendhal relayed similar regional disparity, quoting after his travels in 1816 an acquaintance who claimed the peninsula held six focal centers: Turin, Milan, Modena, Florence, Rome and Naples. These centers held historical grudges and could not be combined, for “each city detests its neighbours, and is mortally detested in return.” The differences in these cities alone made Stendhal declare

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123 Brusasco to Czar Alexander, 29.
124 Brusasco to Czar Alexander, 29.
127 Stendhal, "Rome, Naples, and Florence," 120.
that "these different peoples are very far from forming a homogenous nation." Maistre also acknowledged these distinctions, writing that "the union of nations encounters no difficulties on the map, but in reality it is a different matter; there are nations which cannot be mixed together; perhaps the Piedmontese and the Genoese fall into this class, separated as they are by an ancient and ingrained hatred." Maistre recognized the differences that had existed in Italy for generations, believing them an obstacle to unification that France had not erased. Though France had only just been removed from the peninsula, these two peoples would have difficulty uniting under their own desires.

These sources proved that any identity in 1815 was hard to identify. Lago articulates political differences that created real distinctions after 1815, yet Brusasco had believed that northern Italians in 1815 possessed a similar disposition. Italy, though far from being homogenous, possessed certain qualities that ran throughout the peninsula. Emerging from unified rule, the Italian states initially rejected Napoleon’s mold for unification yet this desire to maintain regional identities eventually developed as a means to repel foreign rule. The historical differences that complicated initial post-Napoleonic unification would eventually serve as the basis for unity in 1860.

Defending against Powers from Abroad

Resentment to French rule was so high in 1814 that D’Azeglio remembered experiencing joy in welcoming Austrian troops to the peninsula. “Our joy at seeing the French go,” he wrote,

129 Maistre, “Correspondence diplomatique,” 117.
130 Maistre described the impossibility of such an arrangement, writing that “the imagination tries to see in Genoa a provincial town dependent on Turin, but it does not succeed; it tries also to picture Piedmont as a province of Liguria, but succeeds no better.” Maistre in 1812 could not imagine a situation in which Italian cities would submit themselves after Napoleonic rule to region other than their own historic regions. Maistre, “Correspondence diplomatique,” 117.
"was soon followed by another, not quite so great, that of seeing the Austrians arrive."

Liberation temporarily expunged the Italian hatred for foreign rule as Italians greeted their Austrian redeemers, yet this gratitude quickly turned. Maistre wrote after Italy’s liberation from France that “the clearest interest of the House of Savoy, an interest which it shares with the whole of Italy, is unquestionably that the House of Austria should possess nothing at all in that country.” Maistre understood at the time of the Congress of Vienna that Austria threatened Italian independence and knew as well that Italy in its weakened state would rely on Austria for support. His solution to this problem lay in the expansion of the Piedmontese state.

Brusasco proposed a similar solution to defend Italy from foreign invasion. He pled to Czar Alexander in 1818 for Russian support in defending against the encroaching presence of Austrian rule, as Brusasco believed Piedmont, though the strongest Italian state after 1815, incapable of defending itself against foreign invasion. He wrote that “not only the Piedmontese King but the whole of Italy is more powerless now than before the revolution.” Napoleon’s occupation of Italy had kept the Italian peninsula secure, though under occupation, for two decades yet after the Congress of Vienna the peninsula became again fractured. The recasting of the old political barriers in the peninsula weakened the individual Italian states and compromised their ability to exist in a Europe dominated by large, competing powers such as Austria and France. Only a unified northern Italian state could defend the peninsula from such

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131 D’Azeglio, Things I Remember, 67.
132 Maistre, “Correspondence diplomatique,” 116
133 Russia was one of the four members of the Quadruple Alliance assigned to uphold the provisions of the Congress of Vienna. Czar Alexander had granted Poland the Constitution of the Kingdom of Poland in 1815 and would have wanted to limit Austrian and French power in the Italian peninsula in order to maintain stability in Europe. Brusasco believed Piedmont incapable of defending itself and sought Russian assistance in the creation and defense of a northern Italian state. Brusasco wrote that “occupying as [Piedmont] does such a limited area, with only a small population and military forces greatly disproportional to those of its neighbors, it cannot but live in continual anxiety.” Brusasco to Czar Alexander, 25.
powers, but even then Brusasco saw Russian assistance necessary were one of the bordering powers to become aggressive.\textsuperscript{135}

The Restoration governments in the years immediately following Napoleon’s rule struggled to assert their independence. Officials acknowledged the threat of neighboring powers, yet they feared too for their own government’s stability and in some cases turned toward those foreign powers for assistance. While some figures advocated enlarging the Italian states, no movement was made in this direction and the Restoration rulers ceded power to Austria in order to maintain control of their states. The Restoration regimes had to define their own rule, yet they could not do so without depending upon foreign influences and incorporating Napoleon’s legacy.

\textit{Austria's Early Influence on the Italian Peninsula}

Rather than liberating the Italian peninsula from French rule, the arrival of the Austrians only further incapacitated the state of rule in the Italian peninsula. “By destroying the Kingdom,” Brusasco wrote, “Austrians reduced most of it to the status of dependency, and revived old divisions inside the remainder; they extinguished the hopes of all good Italians... and plunged Italy afresh into the state of weakness, dependence and nullity from which she had been trying to emerge.”\textsuperscript{136} Italy after 1815 could have experienced for the first time a level of self rule that had not previously been allowed, but Austria’s interests within the peninsula eliminated such hopes. The Italian states, too, rejected the French model of rule to return to their pre-Napoleonic borders and, in doing, became even further reliant on Austrian protection to maintain stability within their borders.

\textsuperscript{135} Brusasco reasoned that “Northern Italy, excluding the Duchies of Parma and Modena, would have a population of seven or eight millions. A state of that size could not give rise to jealousy. Situated between two Great Powers, each of which has more than three times its population, it would hardly be able to maintain its independence without the help of Russia.” Brusasco to Czar Alexander, 29.

\textsuperscript{136} Brusasco to Czar Alexander, 24.
Though the Congress of Vienna had relieved Italy of French rule, it also returned direct Austrian rule to Lombardy and Venetia and made the rest of the Italian states dependent upon Austrian support. The Austrian statesman Prince Klemens von Metternich furthermore attempted at the Congress of Vienna to develop an Italian Confederation that would provide a formal structure for Austrian hegemony in the peninsula. Though his proposal failed, Austrian ties to the Italian states remained strong and the reach of the Habsburg Dynasty permeated many of the newly created states.

Aside from Piedmont, which attempted to maintain its independence from Austrian rule, many of the Italian states turned to Austria as a protector. Fearful of their own populaces, the new rulers were willing to sacrifice a degree of autonomy in order to maintain their thrones. King Ferdinand of the Two Sicilies signed a treaty which bound him to make no innovations within his government, the Grand Duke of Tuscany signed a treaty in 1815 that placed Tuscany within the Austrian orbit, and the Habsburg Duke of Modena and Habsburg Archduchess of Parma made their states in effect Austrian provinces. Secretary of State Cardinal Consalvi of the Papal State never made any formal agreements with Austria but believed the best interest of the Papal State was to agree with Metternich. This flocking to Austria as a protector made it appear that the rulers of Italy were willing to forfeit many of their freedoms in order to maintain rule over their citizens. Rather than subjecting their rule to a perilous future in the face of dissent, the Italian princes signed alliances with the Austrians or agreed to Metternich’s terms in order to maintain their autonomy.


Italy’s experience with France had made many of the people of the peninsula wary of direct foreign rule. Though certain Restoration governments may have looked to Austria as a protectorate, it was only viewed that way because without cooperation the Restoration states could fall prey to Austrian advances. The Restoration rulers became allies with Austria out of fear, with the recognition that not submitting to Austrian influence would result in severe complications. Austria knew this, and Austrian policy worked to keep the peninsula divided, to eliminate contrarian opinions, and control the Italian governments.

Thus, the principle of foreign domination remained the same. The Italian states squandered the potential for freedom brought about by the Congress of Vienna, submitting to Austrian rule as separate regions rather than uniting as a peninsula as the French occupation had made possible. Though welcomed as the liberators, as D’Azeglio remembered, Austrians would eventually be seen in the same fashion as Napoleon had become after his years of sapping Italy of its resources and limiting the autonomy of the states.

*The Growth of Dissent: Secret Fraternities and the Fear of Revolution*

Metternich sought to utilize the divisions within Italy to secure Austria’s position in the peninsula. He understood that the Italian states left to themselves would be incapable of diverting revolutionary outbreak. In 1817, aware of popular opinion, Metternich wrote to the Emperor Francis of Austria, warning that “of all the Italian governments the Piedmontese is indisputably the one which calls for the most anxious attention. This country unites in itself all the different elements of discontent.” Resentment had grown in Piedmont in particular as a result of the governments’ conservative restoration and Genoa’s union with Piedmont. Genoa, Metternich

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wrote, “bears the yoke of Piedmont with great impatience and does not conceal its annoyance.” This form of unification, where one of the states was forced to merge with another, caused discontent among the incorporated subjects. Loyalty to regional rulers remained high and Italians stayed resistant to change in the form of forced unification, especially when it was at the expense of losing their historical identity.

Despite this discontent, though, Metternich judged that Piedmont was not a threat to Italian stability. What concerned Metternich more was the growing sense of fraternity and desire for liberty, evident in the prevalence of secret fraternities in Italy in the nineteenth century. The most prominent of the secret fraternities within Italy was the Carboneria, or ‘charcoal burners,’ a group that came to Italy around the 1790’s and developed largely in the south in opposition to Napoleonic rule. Northern Italy housed the Fildadelfia, the Adelfia, and the Guelfia, secret groups that contributed to the idea of liberating Italy from foreign oppression. These secret fraternities, though relatively disorganized, provided a framework of dissent throughout the peninsula. And, though they were often small, their potential to tap into more powerful forces within the peninsula made the secret fraternities a real threat to state authorities.

Most of these groups suffered from municipalism and lacked clear goals, lessening the impact of such societies throughout the peninsula. This led Metternich to write these fraternities off as weak and divided, believing that their internal discord would never allow them to achieve success. The true threat of their existence, however, was in their ability to spread ideas of revolution, not to enact successful rebellion. These societies could disturb the peace, drawing

\[^{140}\text{Metternich to the Emperor Francis, 31.}\]
\[^{141}\text{Duggan, } The Force of Destiny, 60-61.}\]
\[^{142}\text{Doumanis, } Italy, 55.}\]
\[^{143}\text{Metternich wrote that “they fail to enlist leaders of name and character, and lack central guidance and all other necessary means of organizing revolutionary action. In design and principle divided among themselves, these sects change every day and on the morrow may be ready to fight against one another... the surest method of preventing any of them from becoming too powerful is to leave these sects to themselves.” Metternich to the Emperor Francis, 31.}\]
fellow conspirators with “the alluring pretext of Italian independence,” yet Metternich found their presence in 1817 more a nuisance than a threat. Nevertheless, secret societies flourished in Italy and spread ideas of independence.

In 1820, Austria passed secret orders to the Austrian police in Venice to observe the progress of these fraternities and assure that their power did not grow too large. Among many orders made regarding the monitoring of secret societies and public opinion, the Austrian police were responsible for “watching and directing public feelings in all classes of inhabitants, and their views on political events.” These secret orders were a sign that public opinion was turning against Austrian rule and Austrian intervention within the peninsula. As French rule had previously achieved, popular sentiment had turned against the foreign ruler and was leaning toward some form of independence. Austria attempted to combat this growing discontent by monitoring public opinion and shaping it as much as it could, yet they did not shape their governing policies to curb dissent.

The Restoration governments and Austria were more devoted to suppressing revolution than in creating solutions for the growing problem in the nineteenth century. Count Strassoldo, the Governor of Lombardy, wrote to Prince Metternich in 1820 about preparations for revolution. “There are enough troops in Lombardy,” he wrote, “to maintain public peace and calm... our garrisons in Lombardy would still be adequate to hold down the liberals; and this is true despite the considerable numbers of liberals.” Rather than changing policy, Austria rule

144 Metternich to the Emperor Francis, 31.
145 The secret police were responsible for “seeking out and unmasking conspiracies, plots, plans, undertakings and enterprises which tend to endanger... the internal and external public safety of the monarchy.” “Carte segrete e atti ufficiali della polizia Austriaca in Italia,” quoted in Denis Mack Smith, The Making of Italy, 1796-1866 (Hong Kong: Macmillan Press, 1988), 35.
146 “Carte segrete,” 35.
147 “Carte segrete,” 32.
determined to continue as planned and extinguish through arms any dissenting voice in Lombardy.

Unrest in Lombardy stemmed from continual rule under foreign powers. Strassoldo argued that the people of Lombard no longer had any allegiance to the foreign governments, writing that “our Italian possessions at this moment are guaranteed by physical force alone; moral force we lack entirely.”

Austria imposed modern changes on a resistant society, resulting in “the total absence of any political party on [the Austrian] side.” Strassoldo couldn’t understand how a society that had benefitted so much from constitutional governments, that matched in government the best of Europe, could be so tepid to rule. What he reasoned was that the Lombards and Venetians detested “the uniformity by which they have been put on a par with Germans, Bohemians and Galicians.” Lombards and Venetians have long thought of themselves as distinct peoples, have had pride in their regional distinctions, and their common treatment became offensive rather than liberating. They treated Austria with little respect because they believed they could only be governed by their own and they rejected forced unification and equality with Austrians.

Though the Austrian government became more aware of revolutionary dissent in the Italian peninsula, its hold on the Italian states could not guarantee stability. Secret societies developed their networks throughout the peninsula and, though disorganized, fostered enough resistance to Restoration rule that revolution broke out in 1820 and again in 1821.

149 Strassoldo to Metternich, 34.
150 Strassoldo argued that Lombardy and Venetia enjoyed “equality before the law, equality in taxation, a wide toleration, and no arbitrary governmental behavior. Splendid public works have been undertaken and completed. General education has been raised to a level far higher than under the Italian government.” Strassoldo to Metternich, 34.
151 Strassoldo to Metternich, 34.
152 Brusasco wrote that “the Italians have been given a legal system codified by the Austrians, as though the same laws could easily be applied to different peoples.” Brusasco to Czar Alexander, 26.
In 1820, a group of thirty Carbonari accompanied by soldiers from a local garrison marched through the countryside near Avellino in southern Italy crying, ‘Long live liberty and the constitution.’\(^{153}\) They were joined by two Neapolitan regiments led by Gugliemo Pepe, and together conquered the peninsular part of the Kingdom of Two Sicilies and introduced the Spanish constitution. This revolution spread northwards, and later that year demands began to emerge for the granting of a constitution in Piedmont and the liberation of Lombardy-Venetia from Austrian control. The Adelfia began to make preparations for revolt, yet their success hinged upon the willingness of the Piedmontese King to create a Kingdom of Upper Italy. Revolution in Piedmont began in 1821 and spread quickly, but ultimately failed because the temporary regent of Piedmont, Carlo Alberto, did not satisfy his agreement with the revolutionaries and stalled in his decision to send the Piedmontese military into Lombardy.\(^{154}\)

Austria responded to these revolutions by soliciting the support from the other members of the Quintuple Alliance – France, Russia, Great Britain, Austria, and Prussia – to intervene with arms. Meeting at the Congress of Troppau, the powers allowed Austria to step in and restore rule in the peninsula, thus securing Austria’s role in the Italian peninsula as the dominant power. Santorre di Santarosa, the leader of the Piedmont insurrection, wrote after the revolutions’ failure that “the cause of liberty, in spite of misfortune, could be vanquished only by foreign help.”\(^{155}\) The revolutions in 1820 and 1821 proved the instability of the Italian states, yet in doing so the revolutionaries welcomed Austrian power further into the peninsula.

Attempting to further this power and capitalize on Austria’s recent securing of the Italian peninsula, Metternich proposed at the Congress of Verona in 1822 to make Austria’s position in

\(^{153}\) Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 82.
\(^{154}\) Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 82-89.
\(^{155}\) Santarosa, “De la révolution piémontaise,” 39.
the peninsula permanent. Metternich believed that "the principal object of the Congress to be held at [Verona] in 1822 will be the regulation of Italian affairs so as to ward off the danger of new upheavals... an object to which I attach the greatest importance." Metternich found the Italian governments incapable of dealing with the revolutionary tendencies that had erupted since the beginning of the Restoration era and incapable of rule on their own. Sects had grown stronger, disaffection wider, and the position of the Italian princes weaker. In light of revolutionary outbreaks, Austria proposed in Verona to take stronger hold of the Italian peninsula.

Metternich saw that without direct control, revolutions in Italy would continue and eventually succeed. He proposed a Central Investigating Commission, led by Austria, which would monitor dissent and eliminate opposition in the Italian peninsula, fortifying Austrian rule within the peninsula. Nearly all of the Italian princes, wary of continued revolution, responded favorably to Metternich’s response. Naples, already occupied by Austrian troops as a result of recent revolution, had no choice but to comply. Piedmont, occupied by French troops and persuaded by Metternich’s promise that Austria had dropped its former ambitions, agreed to Metternich’s proposal as well. The Archduke Francis IV of Modena, a reactionary ruler, and Archduchess Marie Louise of Parma, daughter of the Austrian Emperor, also cooperated eagerly. The Grand Duke of Tuscany, though he disagreed with Metternich’s arguments, could not resist due to his family connections with the Habsburgs. Only the Papal State, headed by Cardinal Consalvi, rejected Metternich’s proposal. Before Metternich’s proposal passed, however, war broke out in Spain and delayed the talks, allowing enough consideration for opinion to turn

156 Reinerman, "Metternich," 263.
157 Reinerman, "Metternich," 266.
against Austria. Were it not for the eruption of the Spanish Civil War Metternich’s policies may have passed.¹⁵⁸

Though the revolutions in 1820 and 1821 may have attempted an emancipation of the Italian people, the aftermath of revolt saw repressive government response. The south suffered sweeping purges in the army, the civil service, and the judiciary and the Carboneria was reduced to fragments of its former self. Everywhere the influence of the Church reentered almost all spheres of life and society became smothered under Catholic morality and intolerance.¹⁵⁹

D’Azeglio affirmed Cesare Balboa’s claim that “the revolutions in Turin and Naples set back our emancipation by many years.”¹⁶⁰ Though the Restoration states had inspired revolution, the government response following 1821 proved to be even more restrictive and endangered other channels of dissent.

Conclusion

The Restoration governments after 1815 attempted to restore the old regimes while at the same time implementing reforms enacted by Napoleon over the previous two decades. The Italian rulers’ interaction with Metternich at the Congress of Verona, however, proved that Restoration rulers had managed this transition poorly and become afraid of their own people. Revolutions in Naples in 1820 and Piedmont in 1821 validated this fear and proved the readiness of Italians to rebel against continued occupation and arbitrary rule. The way in which revolution was quashed, however, solidified Austrian presence within the peninsula. The intervention of Austria, Santarosa believed, “only rendered our position clearer, our servitude more direct, our

¹⁶⁰ D’Azeglio, Things I Remember, 131.
chains more obvious.” After defeat in the hands of Austria, Santarosa believed Italians obligated to overthrow dependent rule.

Freed from one foreign overseer in 1814, Italy was subject again to rule under another. France had entered the peninsula in 1796, uniting the regions of Italy in various forms over the two decades of his rule, and Italian rulers had rejected this imposed uniformity immediately following Napoleon’s defeat. Austrian occupation proved to be but another variation of French rule, and 1815 saw a continuation of foreign domination on the peninsula. Where France brought radical change and uniformity, however, Austrian rule allowed for a relative return to normality that temporarily masked Austrian intent. Though Austrian rule remained heavy in Lombardy and Venetia, throughout the rest of the peninsula it appeared mostly as the securer of regional sovereignty. Italy, however, had learned from Napoleonic rule of the limitations presented by a foreign oppressor and grew to recognize the impact of Austrian rule on the peninsula.

Though Austria presented itself as a securer of Italian sovereignty, many saw that this was but a veil by which true Austrian intent could hide. Brusasco pointed out that “it is obvious that the Kingdom [of Italy] is looked upon merely as a mine to be exploited, the products of which are to be used to pay the debts and increase the wealth of [Austria].” While foreign powers remained in Italy, the peninsula could not be safe. Though Austrian rule was not as present as French rule had been, it offended the idea of Italian capability in just the same manner. Italians were again made to sit back and be ruled, not to participate in government but to follow the commands of another power.

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161 Santarosa, “De la révolution piémontaise,” 40.
162 Brusasco to Czar Alexander, 27.
V. Conclusion

Centuries of foreign rule had deprived Italy of creating or discovering its own national identity, yet over the period from the mid-eighteenth century to 1821 something new had emerged in the peninsula. Italians began to recognize their deteriorated state and acknowledge its source as a common factor in their existence. What Italy held most in common was its history of subjection under foreign rule, creating a scattered culture and distinct regional identities that challenged any notion of a cohesive national character. It was in this legacy of subjugation and regional diversity that Italy would discover its basis for unification, for Italy’s creation succeeded not through the ascendency of a unified national spirit but through a process that included diversity of opinion and discordant leadership.

The regionalism that prevailed in the eighteenth century was not anomalous to the Italian people but rather represented centuries of historic development in a geographically, politically, and culturally varied peninsula. Unification under Napoleon from 1796 to 1815 had failed to eliminate this diversity and the imposed uniformity under Austrian rule had failed as well. Modern historians demonstrate that regional identities persisted beyond the era of Napoleon’s rule, yet in 1860 unification nonetheless triumphed. Out of the peninsula’s diversity, in other words, there emerged political unity.

When Italian unification was finally achieved in 1860, it did not result from the initiative of a single nationalist leader but sprang from a range of conflicting visions and efforts throughout the peninsula. The foundation for this diversity must be traced back to the period from 1748 to 1821 when the Italian people struggled with a developing culture, changing definitions of regional identity, shifting political allegiances, and rule under various foreign powers. Following such conditions, it is no surprise that the nationalist rhetoric of the nineteenth
century possessed such a variety of distinct notions of the Italian national archetype and conflicting conceptions of unification as to make possible an environment in 1860 welcome to the creation of the Italian nation.

This variance of definitions for an Italian spirit perpetuated the Italian tradition of dissimilarity, and the fact that nationalists continued to disagree as to what constituted a true Italian spirit only emphasized that no universal definition had been achieved. Italians would continue this struggle to define themselves in the years beyond unification, with Prime Minister Francesco Crispi attempting from 1887 to 1891 to initiate war with France in order to assert Italian dominance in Europe and with the Italian populace supporting Benito Mussolini’s Fascist rule from 1922 to 1943. These developments occurred because the Italian people were still attempting to discover their national identity. They had created a nation in the hopes that an Italian character would follow, when in fact the Italian spirit may have been nothing more than a common desire to become free from continued foreign domination and to maintain the regional identities so important to the Italian character. Unification would not synthesize the diversity that existed in Italy but rather served as another stage in the ongoing development of an Italian identity.

Regardless of whether or not an Italian ethos exists, however, the basis for unification emerged in the decades surrounding the turn of the nineteenth century. The complexity of development over this period resulted in a diverse assemblage of nationalists that would compete for decades to produce a unified people, yet in the end they succeeded only to mimic the disunity that had been fortified in the years surrounding Napoleonic rule. Nineteenth century nationalists did not succeed in creating an Italian character, but they developed a desire for the nation that
permeated Italian society and made unification possible. Mussolini explicated this spirit in a speech he made in 1922:

We have created our myth. The myth is faith; it is a passion. It is not necessary that it be a reality. It is a reality by the fact that it is a good thing, a hope, a faith; that it is courage. Our myth is the Nation; our myth is the greatness of the Nation! And to this myth, to this grandeur, that we wish to translate into a complete reality, we subordinate all the rest.  

The nationalist rhetoric that emerged out of the period from 1748-1821 made this nationalist myth possible and enabled unification in 1860 despite the peninsula’s diversity. The rhetoric was a product of the Italian populace’s changing relationship with regional identities and forced unification, and as varied as this experience had been, it served as a platform for eventual unification through a common rejection of outside rule and allowed for a continuation of the tradition of regionalization that had for so long defined the Italian people.

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