**Italy in the Early 19th Century**

* A united Italy seemed a political fantasy in 1815.
* Strength of local loyalties and bitter regional antagonism
* Secret societies like the Carbonari failed to generate mass support
* A few dreamt of Italy becoming a single nation with a democratic parliament
* BUT common desire to kick out the absolute monarchs and free Italy from Austria

**Mazzini, Gioberti and Balbo**

* In 1831 Giuseppe Mazzini launched ‘Young Italy’
* Mission to make Italy ‘one free, independent republican nation’
* Educated + urban middle class w/ little faith in the peasantry and land reform
* Too idealistic to be a practical blueprint for revolution.
* However, his writings helped put a united Italy firmly on the political agenda
* Later militant nationalists such as Garibaldi hugely influenced by his vision
* Gioberti in the early 1840s dismissed total Italian unity as ‘madness’
* Instead he saw the Pope as leader of a federation of existing Italian states
* Balbo claimed that Piedmont was the only Italian state capable of expelling Austria
* He thus advocated that its king should lead the federation

**The 1848-9 Revolutions**

* Poor harvests in 1846 and 1847 created a potential revolutionary situation
* News of Feb 1848 revolution in Paris + Mar revolution in Vienna reached Italy
* BUT local grievances were more important than Italian nationalism in risings
* Roman Republic, headed by Mazzini was attacked by 20,000 French troops.
* Garibaldi led a gallant defence of Rome before the city fell in July 1849.
* Piedmont, unlike the papacy, gave some hope to Italian nationalists in 1848-9
* Mar 1848 Charles Albert allied with the liberal nationalists + granted a constitution
* Then went to war with Austria to annex Lombardy and Venetia (not a united Italy!).
* Eventually defeated, he abdicated in favour of his son Victor Emmanuel II.
* Lesson of 1848-9 was that idealism could not succeed unless supported by force
* If Italy was to be liberated + united it would be by the military strength of Piedmont
* The National Society which rose in influence from 1857, promoted this view.
* It had only a few thousand members but substantial influence.

**Victor Emmanuel and Cavour**

* Victor Emmanuel was 29 in 1849. Likeable, courageous, shrewd + politically cautious
* Main aim was to speed up Piedmont’s recovery so that it could fight Austria
* Hoped to extend Piedmontese influence in Italy using the idea of Italian nationalism.
* In 1852 Count Camillo di Cavour became Piedmont’s prime minister
* No revolutionary, loyal to King VE + believed in parliamentary institutions
* Had no faith in full democracy and vehemently opposed Mazzini’s republicanism
* Cavour realised the importance of foreign assistance if Piedmont was to beat Austria
* In 1855 Piedmont joined Britain and France in the Crimean War, left Austria isolated
* Napoleon III of France told Cavour he wanted ‘to do something for Italy’
* Wanted a federation of Italian states with Piedmont acting as a French puppet
* July 1858 Napoleon and Cavour met + a deal was struck.
* Essentially Cavour would provoke Austria into war.
* France would then help Piedmont evict the Austrians from Lombardy and Venetia
* These provinces would be added to Piedmont + France would take Savoy and Nice

**The First War of Italian Liberation**

* Things did not go quite to plan. Cavour’s efforts to provoke Austria into war failed.
* Intervention from Russia and Britain resulted in Napoleon losing his nerve
* Austria now came to Piedmont’s rescue as on 29 April they declared war instead
* VE ‘People of Italy! Austria assails Piedmont - I fight for the right of the whole nation’
* Few Italians outside Piedmont acted, but Napoleon kept his word and declared war
* 100,000 French troops defeated Austria in 2 brutal battles at Magenta and Solferino
* But events were moving too fast for Napoleon who backed out…
* The war provoked popular revolts across central Italy (Tuscany, Parma, Modena)
* Rebels in these regions established provisional governments allied with Piedmont
* The National society’s role was important in influencing these region’s choices
* These then voted for union with Piedmont, but VE did not join up immediately
* Cavour returned to power in January 1860 after resigning over NIII’s reversal
* NIII ready to accept Piedmont joining central Italy w/ Savoy and Nice ceded to France
* Plebiscites in central Italy March 1860, led to huge majorities for Piedmont union
* N and central Italy, Venetia apart, now united under Victor Emmanuel.
* Cavour wanted to stop there. Garibaldi had other ideas.

**Garibaldi**

* Impetuous, charismatic, devoted to Italian unity, real ability as a guerrilla leader
* Inspired devotion among his men and a near-religious adoration among the masses.
* Unlike Mazzini, he was practical + rested upon his actions rather than his thoughts.
* April 1860 a revolt broke out in Sicily based in support of events in N Italy
* May 1860 - 1,089 red-shirted volunteers + Garibaldi sailed for Sicily
* 25,000 troops in Sicily and the revolt had been crushed.
* However, Garibaldi won over the Sicilian peasants with land reform + tax reduction
* After a surprise victory at Calatafimi, army withdrew to Naples, Sicily was Garibaldi’s
* Cavour worried Garibaldi might get too much credit for uniting Italy if he continued
* 18-19 August, Garibaldi, dodged Piedmontese ships, ferried 3,360 men to mainland.
* With support of poor peasants, he headed north + entered Naples on 7 September
* Garibaldi now aimed to advance on Rome, but delayed which gave Cavour time
* Aware the ‘1000’ had swelled to 50,000+, Cavour feared Garibaldi might take Italy
* VE led Piedmont army south + Garibaldi now had to acknowledge VE or fight him
* 26 October Garibaldi saluted Victor Emmanuel as ‘the first king of Italy’
* Plebiscites were organised + a huge majority in favour of union was returned
* From 1860, Piedmontese systems were imposed upon the rest of the country
* Unification close, but Rome under papal control and Venetia was still Austrian

**The Risorgimento Completed**

* 1861 - d’Azeglio remark to VE ‘Sir, we have made Italy. Now we must make Italians’
* 1860s govts struggled to make a united Italy a reality - they faced huge difficulties
* Strong local loyalties remained + the rivalry between N and S was a major problem
* In the South, it was hard to distinguish between unification and colonisation
* Law and order broke down, by 1863 90,000 Italian troops were peacekeeping there
* Govt won, but more lives lost in ‘Brigands’ war’ than in all the battles for unification
* Pope’s hostility added problem, as was Garibaldi (Rome and Venetia his new targets)
* The international situation led to the addition of Venetia and Rome to the new Italy
* 1866 - Italy agreed if Prussia went to war w/Austria within 2 months, she would join
* While the war was a disaster for Italy, Prussian victory led to Italy taking Venetia
* Then the 1870 Franco-Prussian war led to French forces being withdrawn from Rome
* Italian troops occupied the city + in Oct 1870 Rome voted overwhelmingly for union

**Conclusion – who was responsible…?**

* Mazzini had wanted Italy to ‘make itself’. This is not quite what happened.
* Piedmontese expansion, rather than Italian nationalism, was the real driving force
* Italy that was created by 1861 was not the Italy that nationalists like Mazzini wanted
* Nevertheless, nationalism was a vital element in the Risorgimento,
* Especially in 1859-60 when National Society persuaded Italians to support Piedmont
* The three musketeers of unification were Mazzini, Cavour and Garibaldi
* Mazzini provided intellectual basis for the nationalist movement + inspired others
* Cavour was once seen as an Italian nationalist determined to promote unification.
* His focus was Piedmontese power + he used the appeal of a united Italy to secure it
* Garibaldi’s contribution to Italian unity was vital + his exploits made him a focal point
* His conquest of the south in 1860, was a major element in the unification process.
* He believed national unity to be more important than personal ambition.
* Victor Emmanuel is often seen as lucky – a ruler in the right place at the right time.
* However, perhaps he made his own luck + should not be under estimated.
* He appointed the right people like Cavour who carried out his policies successfully…