

## Domestic Affairs, 1848-1870

After the 1848 revolutions, the question of unity roiled first Italy and then, for different reasons, Germany. As already discussed, Britain remained fixed on its course of reform and Russia that of reaction. Major changes occurred in three states during this period, allowing them to achieve a precarious—and as it turned out temporary—stability.

### Spain: Military Rule and Monarchy

Spain remained quiet during the 1848 revolutions in the rest of Europe. Its government continued to alternate among several generals and their civilian supporters. For important dates in Spanish history of this period, to help orient you, go to <http://www.sispain.org/english/history/19th.html>).

Power rotated between General Ramon Narvaez ([http://93.1911encyclopedia.org/N/NA/NARVAEZ\\_RAMON\\_MARIA.htm](http://93.1911encyclopedia.org/N/NA/NARVAEZ_RAMON_MARIA.htm)), who was in office six times between 1844 and 1868, and General Leopoldo O'Donnell ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leopoldo\\_O'Donnell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leopoldo_O'Donnell)), considered more liberal than Narvaez. He founded the Liberal Union party, a coalition of former moderates and progressives who avoided extreme measures and adopted a centrist position. Other generals in Spanish politics who were important during this period included Baldomero Espartero

(<http://www.famousamericans.net/baldomeroespartero/>), Francisco Serrano (<http://reference.allrefer.com/encyclopedia/S/Serranoy.html>), and Juan Prim (<http://www.answers.com/topic/juan-prim>). The Queen, Isabella II, was not particularly well-liked. Observers considered her a nymphomaniac. She lived apart from her husband and bore several children. In 1857, she had a son, rumored to be the child of an army captain, who eventually became king as Alfonso XII.

Isabella became increasingly unpopular because of her affairs, despite the economic progress of Spain during the 1850s which saw the construction of a railway network and telegraph lines. The last straw for many people came when she took the son of a cook for her lover. Her major supporters, Generals Narvaez and Serrano, were both dead. In September 1868, a revolution broke out and the Queen went into exile, while the Carlists had revived and were demanding the throne. Elections took place for a Cortes. A coalition of liberal unionists and progressives dominated it and called for a limited democratic monarchy in 1869.

Juan Prim searched Europe to find one (he is supposed to have remarked: "Finding a democratic king in Europe is like looking for an atheist in heaven"). During this search, the Spanish first settled on a Hohenzollern (a branch of the Prussian ruling house) prince, a choice that provided the spark for a war between France and Prussia. Prim next offered the Spanish throne to Amedeo of Savoy, son of the new king of Italy, whose father pressured him into



accepting the job. Amedeo and the Spanish both resented each other. After elections for the Cortes of 1872 were rigged, Amedeo abdicated and left Spain.

Following the abdication, the Carlists intensified their push for the throne, but the Spanish republicans acted quickly and set up a republic. This republic proved unstable and lasted less than a year (1873-1874). In this turmoil, the army intervened and proclaimed Alfonso XII as king in 1875. The king promised to end the anarchy and in 1876 a new constitution was promulgated.

#### Austria: Birth of the "Dual Monarchy"

Following the 1848 revolutions, Austria chose once again the path of absolutism: the state was to be ruled solely by the Emperor and his advisers.

However, in the 1860s the government made some concessions to a constitutional government. In 1860 an attempt was made to issue a sort of constitution (the "October Diploma") which was stillborn. In 1861 the "February Patent" (<http://www.answers.com/topic/february-patent>) was issued. This established a bicameral assembly with limited representation. This arrangement did not include Hungary, which opposed it and also opposed being ruled from Vienna. During the next several years the Hungarians offered to help the state if certain concessions were granted by the government. The Hapsburgs took them up and the Austrians and Hungarians moved toward a compromise. This reconciliation, therefore, was well underway before 1866, when Austria lost the Seven Weeks' War against Prussia, and, with it, domination of Germany.



In 1867, the “Augsleich” [Compromise] was achieved. This agreement made Austria and Hungary into two separate units. They had in common only the monarch and three ministers (War, Foreign Affairs, Finance). A customs union was formed between the two countries and was to be renewed every ten years. This developed into a difficult project as Austria became more industrialized and demanded cheap food while agricultural Hungary wished to keep high tariffs. Nevertheless, “Austria-Hungary” had been formed.

This compromise did not resolve the basic problem faced by both Austria and Hungary: the issue of different nationalities. While the minorities problem continued in Austria (for example, with the Czechs and the Poles after most of the Italians were in Italy after Italian unification), the Hungarians had major problems with the Slavs. Like the Austrians, the Hungarians kept power in their own hands and resisted Slav demands for a share in that power. There were suggestions for extending the “Compromise” to other nationalities such as the Slavs, but both the Austrians and the Hungarians resisted. Austria-Hungary thus never resolved the major problem that would eventually destroy the ancient Hapsburg Empire.

### Failure of the Second French Republic

Following the restoration of order by General Cavaignac (estimated deaths during the “June days”: 4500), the Constitutional Assembly published the Second Republic’s constitution. This instrument provided for a unicameral



legislature of 750 deputies elected by universal male suffrage. It established a president, elected by universal suffrage, with a four year term. The President could not be reelected.

This constitution had several weaknesses. If the President and the Legislature disagreed on something, it did not provide a mechanism for resolving the problem. Since four years is a short time, this term encouraged the Legislature not to compromise with the President because he would soon be out of office. A strong president might then be tempted to stage a takeover in order to get his policies through. A theoretical possibility was to amend the constitution so as to allow the President a second term, but in effect the process was so complicated as to be impossible. The framers did this on purpose because they believed (rightly) that the majority in France was monarchist and would amend the constitution so as to get rid of the republic and reestablish a monarchy.

These weaknesses set the stage for the republic's overthrow. The person who was overwhelmingly elected president was Louis Napoleon, Napoleon I's nephew, who benefited from his famous name. Louis Napoleon considered himself the standard bearer of the Napoleonic legend (Napoleon's son died young) and wished to continue his uncle's legacy. As soon as he became President, Louis Napoleon began fighting with the Legislature as to personnel and policies. Louis Napoleon was advised by his councilors to prepare a coup d'état, but he went slowly. First he tried cooperating with the Legislature with the hope of getting its support to amend the constitution and to win a second term,



but this proved impossible. He also followed a shrewd policy by appearing to champion universal suffrage when the Legislature reduced the number of voters from 10 million to 7 million by implementing a number of restrictions (1850) and by gaining prestige when it strengthened the Church in education by passing the “Falloux Laws” in the same year. Louis Napoleon also positioned himself as the savior of society as rumors of possible disorder when he was out of office surfaced.

As the end of the President’s term approached, Louis Napoleon took tours of the provinces, where he was strongest, and reviewed military detachments that cried “Long Live the Emperor.” Both of these groups remembered his uncle and supported the nephew. The Legislature tried to censure him but failed, adding to its loss of prestige which hit a new low.

With the Legislature’s popularity gone and his term almost at an end, Louis Napoleon acted. With help of his half-brother and adviser, the Duc de Morny (<http://www.answers.com/topic/duc-de-morny>), the coup d’etat took place on the night of December 1-2, 1851, the anniversary of the Battle of Austerlitz, one of Napoleon’s greatest victories. Prominent leaders were arrested, troops occupied strategic parts of Paris, and manifestoes announcing the Legislature’s dissolution and the restoration of universal suffrage were printed. Morny became Minister of the Interior. Hardly anyone defended the republic. Radical republicans later tried to oppose the coup, too late and with little effect.



Louis Napoleon announced that the republic would remain. On December 20, he held a plebiscite on the coup—“plebiscitary democracy” in the tradition of his uncle—and won approval from the nation. In January 1852, he issued a constitution that was based on his uncle’s constitution; this document reserved most of the power for the President: he appointed the ministers and the Senate and kept the legislative initiative for himself; the lower house (Corps Legislatif) was elected by universal suffrage but was restricted as to what it could discuss. Under certain circumstances, however, this constitution had the possibility of evolving into a more liberal document, which it eventually did.

Louis Napoleon aimed to make himself Emperor, as his uncle had done. After assuring himself that he had support after a triumphal tour of the provinces, he declared himself Emperor Napoleon III in November (the title Napoleon II was given to Napoleon I’s son, who had reigned for a few days). Once again, a plebiscite approved this move.

### The Second Empire

After Louis Napoleon took over the Second Republic and then established the Second Empire, the European powers feared that he would pursue the aggressive foreign policy followed by his uncle. In general, he did not do so even if the suspicion remained strong; for example, his ally in the Crimean War (1856) against Russia, Britain, kept a watchful eye on him. In 1859, he participated in a war against Austria that was important for Italian unification, and in the 1860s he



attempted to expand into Mexico during the American Civil War by supporting Archduke Maximilian. Napoleon III's foreign policy in Europe, however, lacked the expected aggressiveness.

The suspicion of the powers became clear in several ways. The monarchs addressed him as "My dear cousin" instead of the usual "My dear brother." When he looked for a wife from one of the European royal houses they refused to provide him with a princess. Louis Napoleon ended by marrying a Spanish noblewoman Eugene de Montijo, a very straight-laced, authoritarian, and Catholic woman (<http://www.bartleby.com/65/eu/Eugenie.html>). She was anti-liberal and anti-Italian and would oppose Italian unification and the development of liberalism in France. Her husband became afraid of her, especially in his later years when he became ill.

In domestic affairs, the period of the Second Empire brought a period of peace. Napoleon was very much interested in the development of science and financed scientific projects out of his own pocket when he could not get the government to pay for them. He rebuilt Paris into the modern city it now is through the efforts of Baron Haussmann (<http://baron-haussmann.area51.ipupdater.com/>), who destroyed the medieval city and built wide boulevards (the better to prevent barricades in case of revolution, it was said).

Emergence of the "Liberal Empire"





Early in Napoleon III's reign, the constitution of 1852 began its evolution into a liberal instrument. This movement accelerated when he became ill and culminated just before the end of the Empire. Very important in this process was his half-brother Morny, a liberal and a "man of action" as opposed to the "dreamer" Napoleon. Morny was President of the Corps Legislatif, where he could help guide the process, which, Napoleon believed especially after his health declined, would safeguard the throne for his son.

In July 1857, a bloc of opposition Republicans won election. Although it consisted only of five deputies, they had proved they could get elected despite government pressure and rigging of elections through official government candidates. The Republican leader was Emile Ollivier (<http://reference.allrefer.com/encyclopedia/O/Ollivier.html>), who would play a fundamental role in liberalizing the empire.

In 1859, Napoleon participated in a war against Austria on the side of Piedmont against the advice of his advisers and his wife. The domestic result of this war was that he alienated the conservatives and the Catholics. His need to garner support made him turn to the liberals. In November 1860, he gave Parliament the right to reply to the speech from the throne. This brought a favorable response from Ollivier which dismayed his fellow Republicans. Although he did not make this clear at the time, if Napoleon would continue to give reforms, Ollivier would support the Empire and drop his demand for a republic. Morny promised that the reforms would continue, giving rise to a



Morny-Ollivier alliance supported by Napoleon. In February 1864, Morny and Ollivier collaborated on a bill that increased workers' rights, including giving them the right to strike, although it did not admit unions in principle. The Republicans became infuriated with Ollivier.

Morny and Ollivier were next planning to pass a liberal press law, but Morny died. From now on, Ollivier would deal directly with Napoleon, who continued on the path to liberalism because of the collapse of his Mexican policy and the failure of France to receive compensation for the gains Prussia made in Germany as a result of the Seven Weeks' War.

In 1867, Napoleon decided that government ministers had to defend their policies before Parliament, further liberalizing the political system. He also wished to liberalize the press laws, but was opposed by his wife. In 1868, Ollivier got into more hot water with the Republicans. He refused to contribute to a subscription for a monument to a deputy who had been killed during Louis Napoleon's coup in 1851. In turn, the Republicans refused to allow him to become a candidate for the 1869 elections, forcing him to run as an independent. Bonapartists opposing him tried to sabotage his election, but Napoleon intervened and Ollivier won election.

The election of 1869 gave great momentum to the liberalization of the empire. Despite government interference, 40 opposition deputies were elected (30 Republicans). The popular vote was even more significant, with government



candidates defeating the opposition only by a million votes nationwide. These elections showed that the government would probably lose free elections.

When the new legislature met in July, Ollivier got 116 deputies to sign a petition asking for ministerial responsibility, i.e., a government that would be voted in or out by Parliament. Napoleon rejected the request of persons in his camp to reverse direction and gave the Corps Legislatif new powers but stopped short of ministerial responsibility. On July 12, he made conservative changes to his cabinet, but in October he spoke to Ollivier about supplanting the cabinet he had named. Their talks also ranged widely about other issues, including foreign policy. On November 29, Napoleon addressed the Corps Legislatif and asked for its help. A new petition for ministerial responsibility was drawn up, this time signed by 136 deputies—and the Republicans promised their support.

Once he completed this operation, Napoleon dismissed the July cabinet and asked Ollivier to suggest the names of ministers. On January 2, 1870, the new cabinet was constituted. This event marked the birth of the “Liberal Empire.”

However, it was still unclear to what extent ministerial responsibility had been established. On September 8, 1869, the Senate had issued a confusing declaration stating that the ministers would be “dependent” on the Emperor but “responsible” to the Corps Legislatif. In the cabinet, there was no Prime Minister and two factions existed, one led by Ollivier that wanted to keep Louis Napoleon’s influence strong and another that wished to liberalize the empire



further. In May 1870, a plebiscite was held that overwhelmingly approved the changes, strengthening Napoleon's hand.

It would have taken years of parliamentary practice to sort out the question of whether the executive or the legislative branch had more power, but the Liberal Empire had run out of time. In 1870, the Franco-Prussian War broke out, the Empire collapsed, and Louis Napoleon himself was captured. A new republic was declared in France, setting off a new round of revolution and instability.