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Europe in Crisis: The World Wars in Europe
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Lecture Notes

Europe in Crisis: Class 1 – 19th Century Europe

Slide 1

- On display, I have a photo of an American soldier standing in a bombed out church. The church is in a small town called Aserno, Italy, and was built in the late 19th century. I think this picture is pretty symbolic. I want you to introduce yourself to your neighbor, and talk to them a bit about why I might think this picture is symbolic.
 - Europe was destroyed by WWI
 - European influence reached its pinnacle in the late 19th century – the time when this church was built. That influence was squandered by the World Wars
 - The United States helped clean up both wars, and after the wars, emerged as a dominant power on the world stage.

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- Both wars resulted in a tremendous number of military and civilian deaths. 10 million died in WWI, about 73 million died in WWII. Both wars had devastating effects on Europe's economy, culture and morale.
- People were less hopeful, more beaten down after the wars. Young people, in particular, had watched their friends die in a war started by older men. Many young women had to give up dreams of marriage because so many men had died.
- Europe's economy never recovered from either war. In 1900, European countries like France, Britain and Germany were the world's superpowers. By 1950, this mantle had passed the USSR and the USA.
- Why did Europeans fight such devastating wars? Why did they allow their way of life to be destroyed in such a vital way? This is the main question this class will try to answer.

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- **Review of European Geography**
 - **France:** France has the Atlantic Ocean to the west, and the English Channel to the north – just twenty miles from its ally, Britain. To the south in the Mediterranean Sea, and to the east is France's ancient enemy, Germany. France reached its high point in the early 19th Century under **Napoleon Bonaparte**. Napoleon took power about ten years after the French Revolution, in 1789, in which the French monarchy was overthrown and replaced with a republic. When Napoleon took power, he declared himself the emperor of France, and proceeded to conquer most of Europe. Napoleon was eventually defeated, but his empire left many Europeans with a dislike for the French. France spent the rest of the century in slow decline. She was politically unstable, and experienced more revolutions and changes in government throughout the 19th century. After 1871, though, France stabilized as a democracy. However, France's economy stays strong during this era.
 - **Russia:** Russia is the largest country in Europe. It spans from the German Empire and the Holy Roman Empire in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the East. Most of Russia is wasteland, but there is a lot of industry and population in the most western third. Russia

has historically been somewhat separate from the rest of Europe – part Asian, part European. Historically, Russia is poorer and slower than other European countries. In the 19th century, Russia is still ruled by an autocratic monarch known as the **tsar**.

- **Britain:** Britain is an island, which means it is almost impossible to invade, and can often avoid the constant land wars that plague continental Europe. Britain is the richest country in Europe, thanks to its capitalist economy and worldwide empire. Britain is interested in maintaining a **balance of power** on the continent, so that no country is strong enough to wage war on another country. Britain wants to maintain a peaceful environment so that its trade with continental countries is not disrupted, and also so it does not need to fear that one power on the continent becomes powerful to threaten the British Isles.
- **The BeNeLux Countries:** Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg. These countries are wealthy and peaceful. However, since they are sandwiched between Germany and France, they are often forced to go to war.
- **Italian States:** at this point, Italy is still divided into city-state, such as Tuscany, Sardinia, Piedmont and Sicily. Italy will unify into something very close to modern-day Italy in the 1870. Italy, however, will stay a monarchy until 1913, and will not make the transition to true democracy until well after WWII.
- **The Ottoman Empire:** Back in the 1500s, the Ottoman Empire could threaten Europe, and their borders stretched to Vienna. However by the 19th century, the Ottomans haven't threatened Europe in a long time – their empire has disintegrated due to bad governance during the last 300 years, and they don't have anywhere near the power necessary to hurt Europe. This will cause problems though, down the road, because the fall of the Ottoman Empire will leave a power vacuum in Europe. Traditionally, the Ottoman Empire served to contain and distract Russia and Austria. This prevented these countries from becoming too powerful and disturbing the balance of power throughout Europe. However, as the empire weakens, Russia and Austria begin taking pieces of it for themselves, gaining land, population, and ports.
- Now there is this odd green and blue mess where modern day Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary are.
 - Most of the green mess will eventually be Germany, but right now its just German city-states, like in Italy. Germany also unifies around 1870.
 - The blue is the Austrian Empire. The Austrians are Germans, and German is the official language of the empire. However, many of the groups they rule over are not Germanic, such as Romanians, Poles, Hungarians and Serbs.
 - The dark green region is a Germanic state called **Prussia**. Prussia experienced enormous growth in the 1700s, and they have one of the best militaries in Europe. They will be the city state that leads German unification, and Prussians, and the militaristic Prussian culture will be prominent in German society and politics until the end of WWII.

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- Outline of the rest of the class

- Industrialization
 - New Technology
 - Social Changes: rise of the middle class and the new proletariat
- Liberalism
 - Socialism/Communism
 - Democracy
 - Nationalism
 - National Unification

Slide 5

- Industrialization
 - Why are we talking about industrialization? What does that have to do with war?
 - Allows a huge amount of weapons to be created in a short time, making war more deadly.
 - Causes changes in social patterns that lead to social tensions: people no longer live in the countryside, but are crammed into cities, social class is more obvious in a consumer society.
 - Industrialization starts in Britain in the 1780s. Industrialization during this era was fairly simplistic – an ironmonger or a weaver would come up with a new way of doing things:
 - For example, a better way of spinning wool, by using a “**spinning jenny**,” which could produce 8 times the amount of wool that a normal spinning wheel could.
 - This early industrial revolution did not produce big cities and smokestacks like we associate with the industrialization – rather, it usually consisted of maybe 10 or 20 people working in an artisan’s workshop. However, as we progress into the 1810s and 1820s, this style of factories does begin to appear.
 - Britain begins to produce these materials more quickly and efficiently, making it a leader in production of cloth, for example. For a while, Britain is called **the workshop of the world**, because it produces so many items.
 - But not for long. During this 1780-1810 era, other countries are beginning to industrialize in the same way. However, no other country is able to industrialize fully.
 - While in Britain, a general trend emerges, other countries only see pockets of industrialization, in places like Northern France and Prussia.
 - However, in the 1840-1870s, more countries begin looking into industrialize, such as Germany and France. These industrial revolutions were not organic like the British one – they were usually state-sponsored to a certain extent.
 - Governments realized they needed to keep up with Britain.
 - Also, industrialization was seen as good military strategy. Many generals saw much promise in railroads, for example, which could be used to move troops around the country, and mass production, which could be used to make weapons quickly.
 - In the 1890s-1910s, a third wave of countries industrialize, including Russia, Austria and Italy. These countries rely greatly on government support. They need to grow quickly

and buy technology and innovation from more developed countries so they can keep up. These countries do not have a chance to catch up, though, before WWI strikes, halting economic progress.

- During this third wave, new fields also develop, like chemical engineering and electrical engineering. Germany thrives using these new technologies and its economy comes close to surpassing Britain's.

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- Some Effects of Industrialization:
 - Economies become more intertwined:
 - Regions used to have more self-sustaining economies. Most goods you bought were probably made within 50 miles of your home. However, during the 19th century, economies became more interdependent. Wool from English sheep might be used to make clothes in Germany. Because economies were so interdependent, the effects of war were more drastic on the world economy.
 - The government had more control over the economy now simply because it was so complicated. This made it easy to harness in times of war.
 - Social Effects
 - There were great migration shifts from the country to the city. People had to live in very tight quarters, which made social distinctions, such as the suffering of the poor and the wealth of the rich, more obvious.
 - Also, a new class, the **bourgeois**, began to emerge. The bourgeois were basically the upper middle class. They were bankers, lawyers, doctors, white-collar workers and industrialists who thrived in an industrialized society in which competence and knowledge brought you success.
 - The bourgeois were not as wealthy as the aristocracy, but there were more of them, so they had lots of influence in the government.
 - The bourgeois tended to be liberal and were behind many of the great changes of the century.
 - Education
 - Now that people were living in the city, social problems, such as child labor became more obvious.
 - Also, governments realized they needed an educated populace to produce more technological innovations.
 - The bourgeois and the *petit-bourgeois* (lower middle class) insisted that their children be educated, because they saw it as a way to rise in the world.
 - The population became more educated, literacy rates soared, public schools were instituted in many countries.

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- Liberalism

- During the 19th Century, a vein of thought known as “liberalism” emerges. “Liberalism” meant something quite different in the 19th century than it does now.
 - Liberals were usually bourgeois
 - Liberals wanted a more democratic system. In the early 19th century, most political power was held by aristocrats. Liberals supported limited democracy, in which wealthy white males would have the vote.
 - Liberals supported **capitalism**, and by extension, industrialization. Capitalism is the economic system used in the United States. In a capitalist economy, the government interferes as little as possible, and tries to foster entrepreneurship.
 - **Liberals** were usually bourgeois who did not like the current political system, in which the aristocracy had a lot of power, and wanted to bring about a more democratic system. They believed voters should be fairly wealthy males. They supported industrialization.
- Liberals were great reformers and were **very optimistic**. Many 19th Century liberals believed that the world’s problems could be solved with new technology. Most did not imagine that technology could be responsible for anything like the horrors of the world wars.
 - This optimism is useful in defining liberals. The era before WWI, from about 1880 to 1914, is known as the *Belle Epoch*. During this era, there was overall economic growth, and most people’s standard of living increased.

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- Here’s a chart that show the difference between liberals and conservatives. The juxtaposition will help you understand what liberalism means.

Concept	Liberal	Conservative
Political System	Limited male suffrage, limited monarchy.	Monarchy and aristocracy. Institution is infallible.
Economic	Capitalism, Industrial	Mercantile, Agricultural
Social	Individualism, Class System	Bloodline
Religious	Good for the common people, but not necessarily the educated.	State church, maintain tradition
Constitution	Preserves our rights	Government should be based on dynasty, not a piece of paper
Technology	Useful to propel the economy and society forward.	Somewhat suspect. Should be controlled.

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- Out of these sentiments grew socialism:

- Socialism is multifaceted, but basically, a socialist was someone who believed that industrialization and capitalism had ultimately proved to be harmful to the lower class, that it was bad that the lower class was being harmed, and that property rights had to be ignored in order to attain equality.
- Utopian Socialism: offshoot of the Romantics. Believed that socialism was needed to bring about an ideal society. Were generally nonviolent, and were often ingratiated with the middle and upper classes. Worked through grassroots efforts, set up small communities they thought would look like ideal societies. Believed wealth would be controlled by the government in an ideal society.
- While generally nonviolent, Utopian Socialist strains had definitely been present in the 1848 revolutions. Shortly after these revolutions, Marx and Engels published *The Communist Manifesto*, arguing that socialism should be approached from a scientific point of view. They argued that socialism should be pursued not because it was a nice thing to do, but because it was inevitable.
 - Human history is nothing but the story of class struggle, and this struggle will continue until we achieve a classless society.
 - People are inherently good, but have been corrupted by man-made institutions (church, state, etc.)
 - Right now, we are in the cruelest stage of the struggle, when the working class is dominated by the bourgeois.
 - We need to educate the proletariat about the importance of revolution soon, so that we can bring about the coming of the new society.
 - A dictatorship of the proletariat will reign, led by a benign dictator and the communist party. Eventually, the benign dictator will be killed, and the state will disappear, and a perfectly communist society will exist.
- By arguing that communism was inevitable, Marx gave many socialists faith that they were right. In some ways, it was a religious experience analogous to Christianity: if you suffer through life here, eventually, you will thrive in the afterlife.
 - Marxists began working to mobilize the lower class to form trade unions, etc. It worked. By 1914, 4 million people in Britain were members of unions, which was about 10% of the population.
 - Marxism scared a lot of governments. Even if his predictions weren't correct, they inspired people to revolt.

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- Nationalism
 - Nationalists believe that their race, ethnic group or nation was somehow better than other races, ethnic groups or nations. Nationalism became very prominent during this era.
 - Nationalists and liberals often aligned because they were against the ruling government.

- Nationalists believed that governments functioned best when political leaders were of the same ethnic group as the people they governed. For example, only an Irishman could understand Ireland well enough to govern it: the British were not qualified.
- Nationalism takes off at the beginning of the century
 - French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars: The French Revolution glorified the French people, which led to nationalism. Also, since France was attacked shortly after the revolution, democracy, equality and fraternity were perceived by many Frenchmen to be uniquely French notions that the rest of the world was not ready for.
 - Napoleon took over huge swathes of Europe. Nations found this embarrassing, and it awoke in them a greater sense of national consciousness, especially in the German states, which had always been proud of their military tradition.
 - Romanticism: Romanticism was an artistic movement in the early 19th century that focused on feelings and emotions and greatly admired the myths and magic of Europe's medieval past. They rediscovered folktales and almost-dead languages like Gaelic and Hungarian. This led to greater national consciousness and pride.
- Many of these "nations" were governed by someone who was of a different race. Examples:
 - Slavs: The Slavs were a large ethnic group that was spread all over Eastern Europe. Slavs included Russians, Poles, Serbians and Ukrainians. The pan-Slavic movement aimed to unite all the Slavic peoples under Russian rule. Russia often tried to help out the Serbs, who lived under Ottoman and Austrian rule.
 - German: Germany unified in 1870, thanks to the leadership of Prussia's secretary of state, Otto von Bismarck. Otto von Bismarck was a brilliant politician, who manufactured a series of wars that allowed him to take over many of the German states, or convince them that it was in their best interest to unite behind Prussia. Germans were extremely proud
 - Richard Wagner was a German composer and a Romantic who was popular mid-century. He wrote operas glorifying Germany's military past and folklore.

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- German Unification
 - The green and blue mess on the map I showed at the beginning of class used to be the medieval Holy Roman Empire. The HRE was a confederacy of states, ruled by an emperor. Each state had a unique culture and government. However, most of these states spoke German.
 - As years passed, two states became extremely powerful: Prussia and Austria.
 - **Prussia:** Prussia was once a tiny little backwater. However, in the 1700s, thanks to a string of unusually competent leaders, Prussia developed into an economic and military powerhouse. Prussian leaders used public education, high taxes and frugal budgets to achieve this.

- The Prussians developed a culture of diligence and respect for the military.
- **Austrian Empire:** Austria has been ruled by the **Hapsburg** Family since the middle ages. The Hapsburgs are a German family that has gained control over much of Eastern Europe through conquest and marriage. However, much of their empire is not German – it is composed of a hodgepodge of ethnicities: Hungarians, Poles, Ukrainians and Serbs, to name a few. These ethnic groups are angry that they are ruled by a German minority. They will eventually gain more power and cause dissension in the empire. While Prussia is a rising power, Austria is falling. They have fallen behind economically, and the monarchy is having trouble holding on to power.
- The rest of the green mess on the map is made up of small states, like Hanover and Saxony, where the people are Germans, but the monarchs and leaders are not very powerful.
- Many German intellectuals wanted to unite all the German-speaking people in one country. They believe either Prussia or Austria will do the job.

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- However, it would be conservative **Otto von Bismarck**, a Prussian advisor to Kaiser Wilhelm I who would unite the German speaking people under Prussia.
 - No one believed German unification was possible at this point, but Bismarck was determined.
 - Bismarck realized that to achieve his goals, he would have to allow some industrialization and constitutionalism in Germany, so that he could attract the public support and money to achieve his goals.
 - Bismarck practiced something called **realpolitik**: the idea that in politics, the ends justify the means.
 - The king of Germany, Kaiser Wilhelm I, trusted Bismarck.
- Bismarck's best tool was the **Prussian military**, which was one of the best in the world.
 - The Prussian army, wounded by its defeat at Napoleon's hands had created a much more efficient army.
 - Thanks to **expanded public schools**, most **soldiers were well educated**. The most talented of these soldiers were allowed to rise through the ranks, so that military command became a profession, not a pastime for the nobility.
 - The Prussian Army was also the first army to **plan for war in advance**. Before, war plans were made in haste a few weeks before the battle. The Prussian Army, however, developed wings that were devoted to planning an offensive war with France, a defensive war with France, etc, even if such a war seemed unlikely. They were the first group of planners to play war games on tables while planning.
 - The Prussian army **exploited industrialization**, by investing in new technologies, which were mass produced by industrialization, and using new tools, like

railroads (to move soldiers) and telegrams (to communicate with the front line) in war planning.

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- Bismarck had a great military, a pliable monarch and a willing people. Now he needed a plan to unite Germany *slowly*, so there would be no great change all at once.
 - **1864:** Bismarck picked a fight with Denmark over some German-speaking Danish provinces. He made it out to be wounding the pride of German nationalism. The Prussian army easily crushes the Danish army, showing Prussia's military prowess, and Bismarck's commitment to German nationalism.
 - **1868:** Bismarck picked another fight with the Austrians for similar reasons in what is known as the **Seven Weeks War**. Even though the Austrians had a bigger military, the Germans had better weapons, the advantage of first attack and a General Staff that had planned the battle years in advance. By winning this war, Bismarck showed the German people that it would be Prussia, not Austria that united Germany.
 - **1870:** Bismarck picks a fight with France. He edits a telegram, called the **Ems Telegram** that Wilhelm I sends back from a diplomatic trip to France so that it seems like the French insulted Wilhelm I. He uses this insult as an excuse to go to war with the French. The Prussians and their Germanic allies win easily, and take the province, Alsac-Lorraine back from the French. (This province historically changes hands many times).
 - **1871:** Bismarck uses the good will and unity caused by this victory to unite all the German speaking people except the Austrians. However, he establishes friendly diplomatic relations with the Austrians, and Germany and Austria become strong allies.
 - Arguing that the Germans needed to protect themselves from the eventual French revenge war, he pushed through economic reforms that strengthened German industry. To prevent the lower class from getting too angry, he instituted social reforms like welfare and child labor laws. He did not, however, give the people any real political power.