

SSWH16: ANALYZE THE RISE OF NATIONALISM AND WORLDWIDE IMPERIALISM



Element A: Compare and contrast the rise of the nation state in Germany under Otto von Bismarck and Japan during the Meiji Restoration.

Germany and Japan's Rise as Nation-States

- ❑ Germany as a political unit had only vaguely existed as the Holy Roman Empire before its rise as a modern nation-state in 1871.
- ❑ Japan on the other hand was generally unified under a feudal imperial system for more than 1,000 years prior to its emergence as a modern nation-state in 1867.
 - In both cases, nationalism, rooted in a shared common identity, drove this unification.
 - Also, in both of these cases, threats from foreign powers awakened this national pride which was then harnessed by an authoritarian government who used a combination of industrialization and military might to forge a modern nation-state.
- ❑ Both the people of the German lands and the people of the Japanese islands shared a common identity that unified them culturally.
 - While regional dialects existed in both areas, both the Germans and Japanese were generally unified by a common language family that differentiated them from neighboring people.
 - Both regions also shared a common history, real and mythical stories of common ancestors provided another force for unification.
 - Other common elements for culture, like religion and social customs, further served to create a sense of sameness that could be used to breed nationalism when threatened by outsiders.

Germany's Rise as a Nation-State

- ❑ For the German's threats from abroad were largely manufactured by the authoritarian leader of unification, Otto Von Bismarck, the Prussian Prime Minister.
- ❑ Bismarck assumed leadership in the most powerful of the German states after a failed attempt at liberal reform.
 - Bismarck, with the support of the Prussian King Wilhelm I, declared in 1862 that he would rule Prussia with “blood and iron”, which he did quite efficiently.
- ❑ While the German speaking lands were loosely organized into a weak political union in 1815 called the German Confederation, this was dominated by Austria-Hungary.
 - Bismarck was determined to create a German empire ruled by the Prussian King. To accomplish this, Bismarck incited three wars with neighboring states.
 - Each of these wars stirred national pride among the German speaking states as Prussia easily defeated her enemies.
 - First Denmark then Austria and finally France surrendered to Prussian armies.
 - With each victory, more German states unified with Prussia and by January of 1871, King Wilhelm I became Kaiser Wilhelm the emperor of Germany which included almost all of the German speaking lands in Europe.



Japan's Rise as a Nation-State

- While Bismarck largely manufactured the foreign threats that inspired nationalism in Germany, the foreign threats to Japan were very real. Unlike Prussia, Japan was far from a great power in the mid-1800s.
 - For more than 200 years, Japan had been mostly isolated from the outside world. Modest trade with China, Korea and the Dutch had not exposed Japan to the benefits of industrialization and as a result by 1850 Japan was still a feudal society with technology that matched.
 - Japan was well aware of China's defeats in the first Opium War and British, French, Russian, and American ships were regularly appearing on the horizon.
 - Japan's leader, Tokugawa Yoshinobu was ill prepared to deal with this threat.
 - The situation became unsustainable in 1853 when the United States navy arrived in what is now Tokyo Harbor under the command of Commodore Matthew Perry.
 - The large black naval ships powered by steam and armed with cannon shocked the Japanese who defended Japan with swords and bows.
 - Perry brought a letter from President Millard Fillmore that asked Japan to open its ports to US trade. Perry told the Shogun that he would be back in one year with a larger fleet for the answer.



Japan's Rise as a Nation-State

- ❑ Lacking the technology to defend Japan, the Shogun agreed to the demands when Perry returned the following year.
 - The capitulation of Yoshinobu coupled with British and French naval attacks in the south of Japan inspired indignation in the Japanese people.
 - Like in Germany, foreign threats bred nationalism. In this case nationalism led to regime change as the Japanese people looked to their symbolic head of state, the emperor.
- ❑ Traditionally the Japanese Emperor wielded little to no political power. This tradition essentially stayed the same but the Emperor, Meiji as he came to be called, became a powerful symbol of unity and pride for the Japanese people.
 - With this new sense of pride, the authoritarian oligarchies of the Meiji government was able to rally the people to the cause of reform.
 - These reforms included industrialization, political consolidation, and westernization.



Germany and Japan's Rise as Nation-States

- ❑ As Germany and Japan evolved into modern nation-states, both turned to industrialization to build powerful militaries.
- ❑ National pride and economic opportunity motivated both nations to turn to empire building.
 - Germany built a vast empire in Africa and Southeast Asia while Japan took large parts of East Asia.

