

## Other Nation-Building Efforts

Italy and Germany represent the most salient examples of nationalism's power to unify states. However, already territorially unified states, such as France and Russia, worked toward greater internal cohesion through reform. The following states demonstrate three different models of reform.

### Russia: Alexander II's Modernization

The Crimean War demonstrated Russia's weakness vis-à-vis the other great powers. Recognizing the backwardness of his nation, Alexander II (r. 1855-1881) embarked on a series of top-down reforms that proved ultimately too little too late to save the Romanov dynasty. Fearing violent peasant upheaval, Alexander abolished serfdom in 1861. By terms of the liberation, peasants continued to live on the village *mir*s until they paid for the land they received. Russian agriculture continued to suffer from land shortages and rural overpopulation into the 20th century. In addition, Alexander introduced equality into the legal system, abolished corporal and capital punishment, created local assemblies known as *zemstvos*, and reformed the army. These wide-ranging reforms did not heal the growing rift in Russian society between those who emphasized Russia's unique traditions (called Slavophiles) and those who believed Russia must become more modern (Westernizers). Led by discontented intellectuals, such as Alexander Herzen and Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876), anarchism gained support in the context of an autocratic and archaic Russia. Eventually, an anarchist-inspired movement known as the People's Will succeeded in 1881 in assassinating Alexander after numerous failed attempts.

### Austria-Hungary: The Dual Monarchy

The tattered Austrian empire was until the First World War ruled by Franz Joseph I (r. 1848-1916), a leader not known for his decisive action or ambitious projects. Franz Joseph attempted to hold together his diverse realm through the bureaucracy, the army, and loyalty to the Habsburg dynasty. Following the revolutions of 1848, Austria focused on internal development, building railroads and promoting industry, as well as centralization around the German language. These policies further alienated the Slavic and Magyar ethnic minorities. Following losses in the Italian and German wars of unification, Franz Joseph allowed the creation of the Dual Monarchy in 1867. This new Austro-Hungarian monarchy allowed autonomy for the Magyars

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but maintained unity through common ministries of finance, foreign affairs, and war. However, neither of these kingdoms was democratic. In fact, the Hungarians pursued Magyarization in their part of the empire, suppressing Slavic languages and culture. Not until 1907 did Austria grant universal male suffrage and even then, the imperial Reichsrat so often descended into ethnic conflict that Franz Joseph was forced to rule by decree. Austria-Hungary's ethnic problems laid the powder trail that ignited into the First World War.

### • SKILL SET

Looking ahead, the ethnic and nationalist Issues facing Austria proved one of the most Intractable causes of World War I. In fact, one might argue that the inability of this great power to resolve its Internal Issues represents the most Important cause of the conflict that would end up destroying it (CAUS).