

The French Revolution and the Idea of the Nation

Introduction to Nationalism and the French Revolution (1789)

- **Start of Nationalism-** The French Revolution's significance in the history of nationalism lies in its role as the catalyst for the idea that a nation is defined not by its rulers but by its citizens. This marked a shift from a monarchy-centred identity to a citizen-centred identity.
- **Pre-Revolutionary France-** Before the Revolution, France was a patchwork of legal systems and regional differences, unified under the rule of an absolute monarch. The king's authority was considered divine, and the state's identity was closely tied to the monarchy.
- **Sovereignty Transfer-** The pivotal moment of the Revolution was the assertion that sovereignty belonged to the people. This was a radical departure from the notion that sovereignty was vested in the monarch by divine right.

Measures to Build a Collective French Identity

- **La Patrie and Le Citoyen-** These concepts were revolutionary in creating a sense of belonging and unity among the French people. "La Patrie" (the fatherland) invoked a sense of collective ownership of the country, while "Le Citoyen" (the citizen) emphasised the role of the individual within this collective entity.
- **Symbols and Institutions-** The adoption of the tricolour flag and the transformation of the Estates General into the National Assembly were symbolic of the new republic. These symbols and institutions were designed to replace the old monarchical and feudal allegiances with a unified national identity.
- **Administrative and Legal Reforms-** The establishment of a centralised administrative system and the adoption of uniform laws were crucial in standardising the legal and administrative framework across France, thereby fostering a cohesive national identity.
- **Language Unification-** The promotion of a standardised French language served not only to diminish the influence of regional dialects but also to forge a more integrated national culture.

Spreading Nationalism Beyond France

- **European Liberation-** The revolutionary zeal of France was seen as a beacon for other oppressed peoples in Europe. The French Revolutionaries' mission to spread these ideals laid the groundwork for the nationalist movements that would later sweep across the continent.
- **Jacobin Clubs-** These clubs were instrumental in disseminating revolutionary ideals. They became a network for like-minded individuals, promoting the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity.
- **Revolutionary Wars-** The military campaigns of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic eras were not only territorial conflicts but also ideological crusades, carrying the torch of nationalism and revolutionary ideals across Europe.

Napoleonic Reforms

- **Administrative Efficiency-** Napoleon's reforms, while consolidating his own power, also streamlined and modernised administrative practices, making governance more efficient and less dependent on the whims of the nobility.
- **Napoleonic Code-** This legal code was a landmark in establishing a coherent set of civil laws that abolished feudal privileges and emphasised equality before the law, property rights, and individual freedoms.
- **Export of Reforms-** The spread of these reforms across the Napoleonic Empire helped to dismantle the old feudal order in Europe and laid the foundation for the modern nation-state.

Impact and Reactions

- **Economic Liberalisation-** The removal of internal trade barriers and standardisation of weights and measures facilitated commerce and industry, contributing to the rise of a bourgeois class that would become a key supporter of liberal nationalism.
- **Mixed Local Reactions-** While the initial response to French rule in many territories was positive, the imposition of French laws, conscription, and taxes, coupled with the suppression of local customs and institutions, often led to resentment and resistance.

The Making of Nationalism in Europe

Pre-Nation-State Europe

- **Diverse Political Landscape-** Prior to the concept of the nation-state, Europe was a mosaic of diverse political entities. This diversity extended beyond political boundaries to include linguistic, cultural, and ethnic differences, which

were often contained within the domains of larger empires or loose confederations of smaller states.

- **The Habsburg Empire as a Case Study-** Emblematic of the challenges to national unity, the Habsburg Empire encompassed a vast array of languages, cultures, and ethnic groups. This lack of a shared identity made it difficult to foster a sense of national belonging or political unity, with loyalty primarily directed towards local lords or the distant emperor.

Emergence of Nationalism

- **Socio-Economic Changes-** The rise of the middle class, fueled by industrialization and economic development, brought about a shift in social dynamics. This emerging class sought political representation and rights that were at odds with the existing aristocratic order, laying the groundwork for nationalist movements.
- **Ideological Foundations of Liberal Nationalism-** Liberalism, with its emphasis on individual rights, freedom, and equality, became intertwined with nationalism. The desire for self-determination and democratic governance led to the push for nation-states where sovereignty resided with the people rather than monarchs.

Key Historical Events and Developments

- **Influence of Napoleonic Wars-** Napoleon's conquests, while imperial in nature, inadvertently spread the revolutionary ideals of France across Europe, challenging old feudal structures and introducing concepts of legal and administrative reform.
- **The Vienna Congress-** The 1815 Congress aimed to restore the old order but in doing so, it also set the stage for future conflicts by ignoring burgeoning nationalist sentiments. The redrawing of Europe's political map without regard to ethnic or linguistic realities sowed the seeds for future nationalist uprisings.
- **Economic Nationalism and the Zollverein-** The establishment of the German Customs Union (Zollverein) was a critical step towards economic unity, which, in turn, bolstered the case for political unity among the fragmented German states.

Revolutionary Movements and Figures

- **Role of Intellectuals and Revolutionaries-** Thinkers and activists like Giuseppe Mazzini played a pivotal role in articulating the vision of nation-states and mobilising support for these ideas. Their work laid the ideological foundations for nationalist movements across Europe.

- **Secret Societies and Political Activism-** In response to oppressive regimes, revolutionaries often operated through secret societies, spreading their nationalist and liberal ideas covertly and laying the groundwork for future uprisings.

Impact and Legacy

- **Cultural Nationalism-** The emphasis on a common language and shared cultural heritage was instrumental in building national identities, particularly in regions with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This cultural unification was as crucial as political or economic factors in the rise of nationalism.
- **Liberal Reforms and National Movements-** The liberal reforms that followed the Napoleonic era, including the push for constitutional governance and legal equality, were both a cause and a consequence of the growing nationalist sentiments across Europe.

The Age of Revolutions- 1830-1848

This era is characterised by a widespread challenge to conservative regimes across Europe, fueled by the aspirations of liberalism and nationalism. The revolutions were not isolated incidents but part of a broader wave of ideological shifts towards more democratic and nationalistic governance.

Key Revolutions and Movements

July Revolution in France (1830)

- **Backdrop-** Post-Napoleonic France saw the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy, which attempted to re-establish old regime principles, leading to widespread discontent.
- **Events-** The liberal opposition's victory led to the abdication of Charles X and the crowning of Louis Philippe, marking a shift towards a constitutional monarchy. This event underscored the power of liberal forces and set a precedent for revolutionary movements across Europe.

Belgian Revolution (1830)

- **Context-** The July Revolution ignited nationalist and liberal aspirations in the Southern Provinces of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands.
- **Outcome-** Belgium's successful secession and the establishment of an independent constitutional monarchy reflected the growing trend of nationalism breaking down older political structures.

Greek War of Independence (1821-1832)

- **Significance-** This was one of the first successful national liberation movements in Europe against Ottoman rule, deeply influenced by the Romantic glorification of ancient Greece.
- **European Involvement-** The war attracted widespread support from Europeans, including prominent figures like Lord Byron, highlighting the interplay between cultural romanticization and political action in nationalist movements.

Romanticism and Nationalism

Cultural Nationalism and Romanticism

- Romanticism provided a cultural foundation for nationalism by emphasising a return to national roots, folklore, and traditions, countering the Enlightenment's rationalism.
- Romantic artists and writers, through their work, crafted an idealised vision of the nation's past, which became integral to nationalist ideologies.

Johann Gottfried Herder's Contributions

- Herder's philosophy stressed the importance of Volk (the people) and their culture (Volksgeist) as the essence of a nation, advocating for the preservation and celebration of folk traditions as a source of national identity.

The Grimm Brothers and German Nationalism

- Through their collection of folktales, the Grimms sought to preserve German folklore against the backdrop of French cultural dominance, contributing to a burgeoning sense of German national identity.

Language and National Identity

The Role of Language

- Language became a crucial battleground for national identity, especially in regions under foreign dominance. Efforts to revive and standardise vernacular languages were part of broader nationalistic movements, aiming to unify and galvanise populations around a shared cultural and linguistic heritage.

Poland's Resistance Through Language

- In the face of Russian efforts to Russify Polish territories, the Polish language emerged as a symbol of resistance. The persistence of Polish language and

culture, despite political subjugation, underscored the resilience of national identity.

Implications and Insights

- **Liberalism vs. Conservatism-** The revolutions highlighted the growing ideological conflict between liberal forces advocating for constitutional governance, civil liberties, and national self-determination, and conservative elements seeking to preserve traditional monarchical and aristocratic order.
- **Cultural Identity as a Unifying Force-** The period illustrated how cultural elements like language, folklore, and historical narratives could serve as powerful unifying forces, transcending political and social divisions.
- **International Dimension of Nationalism-** The Greek War of Independence, in particular, demonstrated how nationalist movements could draw international support, influencing diplomatic relations and international politics.

Hunger, Hardship, and Popular Revolt

Economic Context of the 1830s and 1840s

- The era was marked by significant economic challenges, including rapid population growth that outpaced job creation, leading to heightened competition for employment and urban overpopulation.
- Industrialization, particularly advanced in England, introduced cheap, mass-produced goods into markets across Europe. This development severely impacted local artisans and small-scale producers, whose traditional methods couldn't compete on price or scale, especially in the textile industry.
- Rural areas were not immune to hardship; many regions still operated under feudal systems, where peasants were burdened with dues and obligations to aristocratic landowners. Combined with variable food prices and the risk of poor harvests, these conditions fostered widespread poverty and discontent.

The Catalysts of 1848

- The accumulation of economic pressures reached a tipping point in 1848. In Paris, for example, acute food shortages and rampant unemployment spurred masses to take to the streets, erecting barricades and ultimately leading to the abdication of King Louis Philippe.
- The establishment of the Second French Republic was a direct response to these upheavals, with the new government attempting to address unemployment through the creation of national workshops.

Silesian Weavers' Revolt (1845)

- This specific incident exemplifies the dire conditions faced by workers and the harsh responses from those in power. The revolt was a reaction to exploitative wage reductions by textile contractors, highlighting the broader tensions between the working class and the economic elites.

Revolution of the Liberals

Intersection of Liberalism and Nationalism

- The revolutionary fervour of 1848 was not limited to economic grievances but was also propelled by liberal and nationalist aspirations. The educated middle class, including professionals, businessmen, and intellectuals, sought constitutional reforms and national unification.
- These movements were particularly pronounced in regions lacking unified nation-states, such as the German states and the Italian peninsula, where the call for national unification was intertwined with liberal demands.

Frankfurt Parliament and German Nationalism

- The Frankfurt Parliament was a seminal event in German nationalism, representing an attempt by liberal nationalists to establish a unified German nation through constitutional means. However, the parliament's failure highlighted the complex interplay of regional loyalties, conservative resistance, and the limitations of middle-class leadership in achieving broad-based support.

Liberal Ideology and Women's Rights

- The liberal movements of the time exhibited a significant contradiction in their treatment of women's rights. Despite the active participation of women in the revolutionary activities, they were largely excluded from political rights, such as suffrage, which were extended only to men. This discrepancy underscores a fundamental tension within liberal ideology regarding equality and representation.

Deeper Analysis

- **Economic vs. Ideological Motivations-** It's crucial to understand the revolutions of 1848 as driven by both immediate economic hardships and deeper ideological shifts towards liberalism and nationalism. The interplay between these factors created a potent mix that varied in expression across different European contexts.
- **Role of Intellectuals and Cultural Movements-** The influence of intellectuals, artists, and writers in shaping nationalist sentiment and liberal ideals cannot be

overstated. Their work in fostering a sense of national identity and political engagement was crucial in mobilising support for the revolutions.

- **Outcomes and Legacy-** While many of the 1848 revolutions failed to achieve their immediate goals, they had lasting impacts on the political landscape of Europe, leading to eventual reforms and the gradual expansion of rights, including the slow progress toward gender equality.

The Making of Germany and Italy

The Making of Germany

Germany – Can the Army be the Architect of a Nation?

Post-1848 Shift

- After the failure of the 1848 revolutions, which were driven by liberal nationalist ideals, nationalism in Europe, especially in Germany, began to align more with conservative forces and state power rather than with democracy and revolution.

Prussian Leadership in Unification

- Prussia, under Otto von Bismarck, emerged as the leader of German unification, utilising the Prussian military and bureaucracy rather than democratic means to achieve this goal.
- Bismarck orchestrated three decisive wars against Denmark, Austria, and France between 1864 and 1871, each contributing to Prussian expansion and the eventual unification of Germany under Prussian dominance.
- The proclamation of the German Empire in 1871 at Versailles, with William I of Prussia as the Kaiser, marked the culmination of this conservative-driven unification process.

Modernization and Integration

- The newly formed German Empire undertook significant modernization efforts, particularly in legal, financial, and administrative sectors, often modelling these changes on Prussian systems. This helped create a cohesive national identity and efficient governance.

The Making of Italy

Political Fragmentation and Early Movements

- Italy's political landscape before unification was fragmented, with various regions under different foreign or local rulers. Early nationalist movements, led by figures like Mazzini and his Young Italy society, laid the ideological groundwork for unification, though initial uprisings were unsuccessful.

Sardinia-Piedmont's Role

- The Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont, under King Victor Emmanuel II and Prime Minister Cavour, emerged as the unifier of Italy. Cavour's diplomatic skills, particularly the alliance with France, were crucial in defeating Austrian influence in the north.

Garibaldi's Expedition

- Giuseppe Garibaldi, a charismatic revolutionary, led a volunteer army to conquer the southern Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. His success was instrumental in rallying support for unification among the peasantry and lower classes, who were less influenced by nationalist ideology.

Completion of Unification

- By 1861, Victor Emmanuel II was declared the king of a unified Italy, though Rome and Venetia were only incorporated into Italy in 1866 and 1870, respectively, completing the unification process.

The Strange Case of Britain

Gradual Nation-State Formation

- Britain's path to becoming a nation-state was marked by a gradual, non-revolutionary process. The union of England and Scotland in 1707 formed the United Kingdom of Great Britain, centralising power in London and beginning the process of cultural and political integration.

Cultural and Political Suppression

- The integration of Scotland and later Ireland involved significant cultural suppression, such as bans on Gaelic language and traditional dress, and political measures to enforce dominance, including the Act of Union with Ireland in 1801 following the Irish Rebellion of 1798.

Creation of British Identity

- A unified British identity was promoted through the dominance of English cultural symbols and institutions, overshadowing the distinct identities of

Scotland and Ireland. This process involved both the suppression of non-English traditions and the promotion of symbols like the Union Jack and the English language.

Visualising the Nation- The Concept

- **Personifying Nations-** Artists in the 18th and 19th centuries faced a challenge- how do you show what a nation looks like? Their solution was to personify the nation, which means they represented countries as if they were people, usually female figures.
- **Why Female Figures?-** These female figures weren't meant to represent any specific real-life woman. Instead, they were used to give a tangible form to the abstract idea of a nation, making the concept of the nation more relatable and understandable to people.

Using Allegories

- **Allegories-** An allegory is like a symbolic story or image where characters or things represent bigger ideas. For example, artists used female allegories to symbolise ideas like Liberty or Justice during the French Revolution. Liberty might be shown with a red cap or broken chains to symbolise freedom, while Justice might be shown as a blindfolded woman with scales, representing fairness.
- **National Allegories-** In the 19th century, artists created female allegories to represent whole nations. These allegories were like characters that stood for the country and its values.

Examples of National Allegories

- **Marianne for France-** Marianne became the symbol for France. Her image combined elements of Liberty and the Republic, such as the red cap and the tricolour (the French flag's colours). Marianne's statues were put up in public places, and her image appeared on coins and stamps, reminding French people of their national unity and values.
- **Germania for Germany-** Germania was the symbol for Germany. She was often shown wearing a crown made of oak leaves (because the oak tree symbolises heroism in Germany) and represented strength and heroism.

Symbols and Their Meanings

- Artists used specific objects or symbols with each allegory to represent different ideas-

- **Broken Chains**- Freedom from oppression.
- **Breastplate with Eagle**- The strength of the German empire.
- **Crown of Oak Leaves**- Heroism.
- **Sword and Olive Branch**- Readiness to defend but also a willingness to make peace.
- **Tricolour Flag**- Represents the liberal-nationalists of 1848 and their values.
- **Rays of the Rising Sun**- The start of a new era.

Significance of Changes in Allegories

- Changes in allegorical images over time often reflected changes in political attitudes or historical events. For example, replacing the Kaiser's crown with a broken chain in an image of Germania might symbolise moving away from monarchical rule towards freedom and national unity.

Relating to Allegories

- These allegorical images were not just for looking at; they were meant to inspire and resonate with the public. For example, seeing the image of Germania in a significant public setting like the Frankfurt parliament would evoke feelings of national pride and unity among the attendees, regardless of gender.

Nationalism and Imperialism

Shift in Nationalism

- By the late 19th century, the positive and democratic aspects of nationalism had changed. Nationalism became more narrow-minded and focused on specific, often aggressive goals.
- Nations started to become less tolerant of each other, and conflicts between nationalist groups became common.

Nationalism for Imperial Aims

- Big European countries used the nationalist feelings of smaller nations or groups to further their own empire-building goals. This means they took advantage of these nationalist movements to expand their own power.

The Balkans- A Tension Hotspot

- The Balkans, a region in Southeast Europe with many different ethnic groups known as the Slavs, became a major centre of nationalist tension.

- Much of the Balkans was controlled by the Ottoman Empire, which was weakening. As the Ottoman Empire started to fall apart, the different groups in the Balkans wanted to become independent countries.
- These independence movements were fueled by romantic nationalism and the desire to return to past independence before Ottoman rule.

Conflicts in the Balkans

- The Balkan states, now wanting independence or more land, were in conflict with each other, each wanting to gain territory from the others.
- The situation got more complicated because big European powers (like Russia, Germany, England, and Austro-Hungary) also wanted to influence the Balkans for their own benefits, leading to many conflicts and wars in the region.

Lead-up to World War I

- The intense rivalry and conflicts in the Balkans, along with the involvement of the major European powers, eventually contributed to the start of World War I.

Nationalism Beyond Europe

- In the colonies controlled by European powers, anti-imperial movements began to rise. These movements were nationalist in nature, aiming to create independent nation-states free from European control.
- While these movements were inspired by European nationalism, they developed their own unique forms of nationalism, tailored to their specific circumstances and cultures.

Nationalism and Nation-States

- The idea that societies should be organised into "nation-states" (countries with specific territorial borders and a unified national identity) became widely accepted as the standard, influenced by the unfolding events of nationalism and imperialism.

Key Dates to Remember

French Revolution and Napoleonic Era

- **1789**- Start of the French Revolution, marking the rise of nationalism.
- **1799-1815**- Napoleon Bonaparte's rule, including the Napoleonic Wars.

Congress of Vienna and its Aftermath

- **1814-1815**- The Congress of Vienna, aiming to restore pre-Napoleonic order.

Greek War of Independence

- **1821**- Beginning of the Greek War of Independence against Ottoman rule.
- **1832**- Recognition of Greece as an independent nation with the Treaty of Constantinople.

Revolutions of 1848

- **1848**- A series of interconnected revolutions broke out across Europe, driven by demands for national sovereignty and liberal reforms.

Unification of Italy

- **1859-1861**- Wars of Italian Unification leading to the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy.
- **1870**- Capture of Rome and completion of Italian unification.

Unification of Germany

- **1866**- Austro-Prussian War, leading to the exclusion of Austria from German affairs.
- **1870-1871**- Franco-Prussian War, culminating in the proclamation of the German Empire in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles.

Later Nationalist Movements

- **1905**- Emergence of Slav nationalism in the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, signalling the growing unrest in these multi-ethnic empires.

July Revolution (France, 1830)-

Overthrew the restored Bourbon monarchy, leading to the establishment of a constitutional monarchy under Louis Philippe. This event signified the power of liberal ideas and had a domino effect across Europe.

Belgian Revolution (1830)-

Inspired by the July Revolution, it led to Belgium's independence from the United Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Greek War of Independence (1821-1832)-

Marked by the struggle of Greeks against Ottoman rule, it gained widespread support from Europeans who admired ancient Greek culture. The involvement of figures like

Lord Byron highlighted the romanticization of the Greek cause, culminating in Greece's recognition as an independent nation by the Treaty of Constantinople in 1832.