

10th – The Rise of Nationalism in Europe I



Emergence of the Concept of Nation State: During the 19th century, nationalism emerged as a force, which brought about massive changes in the political and mental world of Europe. It led the emergence of the nation-state in place of the multi-national dynastic empires of Europe. A nation-state was one, in which the majority of its citizens including its rulers came to develop a sense of common identity and shared history or descent. This commonness was achieved through struggles, through the actions of leaders and the common people.

The French Revolution and the Idea of the Nation: The French Revolution (1789) paved the way for the modern nation-state and also had a big part in the birth of nationalism. Across Europe, French Revolutionaries questioned the old monarchical order and encouraged the development of a popular nationalism which was committed to re-drawing the political map of the continent.

The Idea of La Patrie and Le Citoyen: From the very beginning, the French Revolutionaries introduced various measures and practices that could create a sense of collective identity like the ideas of la patrie (the fatherland) and le citoyen (the citizen) amongst the French people. These ideas emphasised the nation of a united community, enjoying equal rights under a Constitution. A new French flag, the tricolour was chosen to replace the former royal standard.

Centralised Administrative System: A centralised administrative system was put in place and it formulated uniform laws for all citizens within its territory. Regional dialects were discouraged and French became the common language of the nation as it was spoken and written in, Paris. When the news of the events in France reached the different cities of Europe, students and other members of educated middle classes began setting up Jacobin Clubs. With the outbreak of the revolutionary wars, the French armies spread the idea of nationalism abroad.

Napoleonic Code: Even though Napoleon destroyed democracy in France, but he incorporated revolutionary principle by introducing the Civil Code of 1804, which came to be known as the Napoleonic code. The code removed all privileges based on birth, established equality before the law and secured the right to property. The feudal system was abolished in countries like Dutch Republic, Switzerland, Italy and Germany. Peasants were freed from serfdom and manorial dues. Guild system was removed and transport and communication system improved. There was establishment of universal laws, standardised weights and measures and common national currency which benefitted each and every section of the society. But, the new administrative arrangements did not assure political freedom as there was increased tax system (Censorship). French armies were required to conquer the rest of Europe etc.

Frederic Sorrieu's Worldview: In 1848, a French artist named Frederic Sorrieu, visualised his dream of a world made up of 'democratic and social republics and prepared a series of four prints. In the first print, peoples of Europe and America are shown marching and playing homage to the Statue of Liberty. The Statue of Liberty is personified as a female figure who bears the torch of enlightenment in one hand and the charter of the Rights of man in the other. The shattered remains of the symbols of absolutist institutions are shown in the foreground of the image. In the utopian views of Sorrieu, peoples of the world are differentiated through their flags and national costume. The difference which followed America and Switzerland in the procession were Germany, France, Austria, the Kingdom of Two Sicilies, Lombardy, Poland, England, Ireland, Hungary and Russia.



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The Making of Nationalism in Europe: If we look at the map of mid-18th century Europe, we will find that there were no nation-states like today. Now, what we know as Germany, Italy and Switzerland were divided into kingdoms, duchies and cantons, whose rulers had their autonomous territories. They did not share a collective identity or a common culture. They spoke different languages. and belonged to different ethnic groups.

The Habsburg empire, which ruled over Austria-Hungary was the patchwork of many different regions and peoples. The only tie binding, these diverse groups together was a common dedication to the emperor. Even though there were many differences, several factors led to the rise of the nation-states. Among them, some important factors were

- The rise of new middle class.
- The spread of the ideology of liberalism.
- The new spirit of conservatism and the Treaty of Vienna.
- The rise of Revolutionaries.

The Aristocracy and the New Middle Class: Socially and politically, a landed aristocracy was the dominant class in the continent. They owned estates and property both in countryside and town houses. They spoke French and their families were connected by ties of marriage. This aristocrat class was numerically a small group. The majority of the populations were peasants. In the west, most of the land was owned by tenants and small owners, but in Eastern and central Europe there were vast estates and land was cultivated by Serfs. In Western and Central parts of Europe, there was an emergence of commercial classes whose existence was based on production for the market. Due to industrialisation, the new social groups – a working class population and middle classes made up of industrialists, businessmen, professionals came into being. It was among the educated, liberal middle classes; the idea of national unity gained popularity.

New Definition of Nation State by Ernest Renan: Another French philosopher Ernest Renan, gave the definition of a nation state. According to him, “A nation is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice and devotion”. He suggests that a heroic past, great men, glory, that is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea. A nation is large scale solidarity; its existence is a daily Plebiscite. The existence of nations is a good thing and it is a guarantee of liberty. If the world has only one law and only one master, then this liberty will be lost.

What did Liberal Nationalism Stand for? Ideas of national unity in the early 19th century Europe were closely related to the ideology of liberalism. For the new middle classes, liberalism stood for freedom for the individual and equality of all before the law. Throughout the 19th and early 20th century, there were the movements demanding equal political rights, i.e. Universal Suffrage or right to vote. In France the right to vote and to get elected was granted exclusively to property-owning person. Men without properties and women were excluded from this right. In the economic sphere, liberalism stood for the freedom of markets and the abolition of state-imposed restrictions on the movement of goods and capital. Hence in 1834, a customs union or zollverein was formed at the initiative of Prussia and joined by most of the German states. The union abolished tariff barriers and reduced the number of currencies from over thirty to two.

Elle: elle was the measure of cloth, which was in each region of Europe stood for a different length. An elle of textile material bought in Frankfurt was equal to 54.7 cm of cloth. In Mainz 55.1 cm, in Nuxemberg 65.6 cm, in Frelburg 53.5 cm.



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A New Conservatism After 1815: Following the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, European governments were driven by a spirit of conservatism. Conservatives believed that established traditional institutions of state and society – like the monarchy, the church, social hierarchies, property and the family should be preserved. The European powers like Britain, Russia, Prussia and Austria, who had collectively defeated Napoleon, met at Vienna to draw up a settlement for Europe. The Congress was hosted by the Austrian Chancellor Duke Metternich and they drew up the **Treaty of Vienna 1815**.

Major Points of the Treaty of Vienna:

- The Bourbon dynasty, which had been deposed during the French Revolution, was restored to power.
- France lost the territories it had annexed under Napoleon.
- A series of states were set up on the boundaries of France to prevent its expansion in future. Thus, the kingdom of the Netherlands, which included Belgium, was set up in the North and Genoa was added to Piedmont in the South.
- Prussia was given important new territories on its Western frontiers, while Austria was given control of Northern Italy.
- German confederation of 39 states that had been set up by Napoleon was left untouched.
- In the East, Russia was given part of Poland while Prussia was given a portion of Saxony.

The main intention of the Congress was to restore the monarchies that had been overthrown by Napoleon and create a new conservative order in Europe. Conservative regimes set up in 1815, were autocratic. Most of them imposed censorship laws to control what was said in newspapers, books, plays and songs and reflected the ideas of liberty and freedom associated with the French Revolution.

The Revolutionaries: During the years following 1815, the fear of repression drove many liberal-nationalists underground. Main objectives of revolutionaries were to oppose monarchical forms that had been established after the Vienna Congress and to fight for liberty and freedom. Most of these revolutionaries saw the creation of nation-state as a necessary part of this struggle for freedom.

The Age of Revolutions: 1830-1848: Liberalism and nationalism came to be increasingly associated with revolution in many regions of Europe such as the Italian and German states, the provinces of Ottoman Empire, Ireland and Poland, The first upheaval took place in France in July 1830. The July Revolution sparked an uprising in Brussels, which led to Belgium breaking away from the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. The growth of revolutionary nationalism in Europe sparked off a struggle for independence amongst the Greeks, which began in 1821, Poets and artists praised Greece as the cradle of European civilisation and mobilised public opinion to support its struggle against a Muslim empire. Finally, the Treaty of Constantinople of 1832, recognized Greece as an independent nation.

The Romantic Imagination and National Feeling: The development of nationalism did not come about only through wars and territorial expansion. Culture played an important role in creating the idea of the nation. Art and poetry, stories and music helped express and shape the nationalist feelings.

Romanticism: It was a cultural movement that developed a specific form of nationalist sentiment. Romantic artists and poets criticised the glorification of



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reason and science. Focusing on emotions, intuition and mystical feelings, they tried to create a sense of a shared collective heritage as a basis of a nation.

Romantic German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), claimed that true German culture was to be discovered among the common people—das volk. The true spirit of the nation (volksgeist) was popularised through folk songs, folk poetry and folk dances.

Nationalism through Music and Language: Poland which no longer existed as an independent territory, kept nationalist feeling alive through music and language.

For example, Karol Kurpinski celebrated the national struggle through his operas and music, turning folk dances like polonaise and mazurka into nationalist symbols. Many members of the clergy in Poland began to use language as a weapon of national resistance. The use of Polish came to be seen as a symbol of the struggle against Russian dominance.

Hunger-Hardship and Popular Revolt: The 1830s were the years of great economic hardship in Europe. The first half of the 19th century saw an enormous increase in population all over the Europe. Population from rural areas migrated to the cities to live in overcrowded slums. Small producers in towns were often faced with stiff competition from imports of cheap machine-made goods from industrially developed England. In those regions of Europe, where the aristocracy still enjoyed power, peasants struggled under the burden of feudal dues and obligations.

Weavers Revolt of 1845: In Silesia village weaving was the most widespread occupation. The misery of the workers was extreme; the desperate need for jobs has been taken advantage of by the contractors to reduce the prices of the goods they order. In 1845, weavers of Silesia village had led a revolt against contractors who supplied them raw material and gave them orders for finished textiles but drastically reduced their payments.

Outbreak of Revolt: On 4th June at 2 pm a large crowd of weavers marched in Paris up to the mansion of their contractor demanding higher wages. They were treated with scorn and threats alternately. A group of the weavers forced their way into the house of the contractor and destroyed his windowpanes, furniture, etc. Another group broke into the storehouse and plundered it of supplies of cloth which they tore to shreds. The contractor fled with his family to a neighboring village which however refused to shelter such a person. Then he requested the army for help He turned 24 hours with the army. In the exchange of weaver's revolt, eleven weavers were shot.

Abdication of Monarch: The rise of food prices or a year of ad harvest led to widespread pauperism (beggarliness) in town and country. In 1848, food shortage and widespread unemployment brought the population of Paris out on the roads. Barricades were erected and Louis Philippe was forced to flee. A National Assembly proclaimed a republic and granted suffrage to adult males above 21 and guaranteed the right to work. Events of February 1848 in France, had brought about the abdication of the monarch.

