

THE RISE OF NATIONALISM IN EUROPE

CHAPTER COVERAGE

- ◆ French Revolution and the idea of the nation
- ◆ Emergence of Nationalism in Europe
- ◆ The age of Revolutions 1830-1848
- ◆ Visualising the Nation
- ◆ Nationalism and Imperialism



INTRODUCTION

The concept and practices of a modern state in which a centralised power exercised sovereign control over a clearly defined territory had been developing over a long period of time in Europe. But a nation state was one in which the majority of its citizens and not only its rulers, came to develop a sense of common identity and shared history or descent. This commonness did not exist from time memorial it was forged through struggles, through the actions of leaders and the common people.



THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND THE IDEA OF THE NATION

France was a full fledged territorial state in 1789 under the rule of an absolute monarch. The political and constitutional changes that came in the wake of French Revolution led to the transfer of sovereignty from the monarchy to a body of French citizens. The **revolution proclaimed** that it was the people who would hence forth constitute the nation and shape its destiny.

◆ Steps Taken by French Revolutionaries :

- (i) A centralised administrative system was put in place and it formulated uniform laws for all citizens within its territory.
- (ii) Internal customs, duties and dues were abolished and a uniform system of weights and measures was adopted.
- (iii) Regional dialects were discouraged and French as it was spoken and written in Paris, became the common language of the nation.

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. Their activities and campaigns prepared the way for the French armies which moved into Holland, Belgium, Switzerland and much of Italy in the 1790s. With the out break of the revolutionary wars, the **French armies began to carry the idea of nationalism abroad.**

◆ Role of Napoleon :

- (i) Though a return to monarchy Napoleon had, no doubt, destroyed democracy in France, but in the administrative field he had incorporated revolutionary principles in order to make the whole system more rational and efficient.

- (ii) The civil code of 1804-usually known as the **Napoleonic code** did away with all privileges based on birth, established equality before the law and secured the right to property.
- (iii) This code was exported to the regions under French Control.
- (iv) In the Dutch Republic in Switzerland, in Italy and Germany. Napoleon abolished the feudal system and freed peasants from serfdom and memorial dues.
- (v) In the towns too guild restrictions were removed.
- (vi) Transport and communication systems were improved
- (vii) Peasants, artisans, workers and new businessmen enjoyed a new-found freedom.

➤ THE MAKING OF NATIONALISM IN EUROPE

In the mid-eighteenth century. Germany, Italy and Switzerland were divided into Kingdoms, duchies and cantons whose rulers had their autonomous territories. Eastern and Central Europe were under autocratic monarchies within the territories of which lived diverse people. They did not see themselves as Sharing a collective identity or a common culture. Such differences did not easily promote a sense of political unity. The only tie binding these diverse groups together was common allegiance to the emperor.

(i) The Aristocracy and the New Middle Class :

- (1) The members of this class were united by a common way of life that cut across regional diversions. They owned castles in the countryside and also town houses. This powerful aristocracy was however, numerically a small group. The majority of the population was made up of the peasantry.
- (2) Industrialisation began in England in the second half of the 18th century, but in France and parts of the German states it occurred only during the 19th century.
- (3) In its wake new social groups came in to being a working class population and *middle classes made up to industrialists, businessmen, professionals*. It was among the educated, liberal middle classes that ideas of national unity following the abolition of aristocratic privileges gained popularity.

(ii) What did Liberal Nationalism Stand for ? :

- (1) The term 'Liberalism' derives from the Latin root 'liber' meaning free. For the new middle classes liberalism stood for freedom for the individual and equality of all before the law. Politically it emphasised the concept of government. Since the French Revolution, liberalism had stood for the end of autocracy and clerical privileges a constitutional and representative government through parliament.
- (2) 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. During the 19th century this was a strong demand of the emerging middle classes.
- (3) Napoleon's administrative measures had created out of countless small principalities a confederation of 39 states. Each of these possessed its own currencies, and weights and measures. Which involved time-consuming calculations.
- (4) In 1834, a customs union or zollverein was formed by 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. The creation of network of railways further stimulated mobility, harnessing, economic interests to national unification. According to Prof. Riedrich List, the aim of the zollverein was to bind the Germans economically into a nation.

(iii) A New Conservatism after 1815 : After the death of Napoleon in 1815 European governments were driven in a spirit of **conservatism**. It means a political philosophy that stressed the importance of tradition established institution and customs and preferred gradual development to quick change.

In 1815 representatives of the European powers. Britain, Russia, Prussia and Austria. Who had collectively detected Napoleon met at Vienna to draw up a settlement for Europe.

- (1) The Bourbon dynasty, which had been deposed during the French revolution, was restored to power, and France lost the territories it had annexed under, Napoleon.
 - (2) A series of states were set up on the boundaries of France to prevent French expansion in future. Thus the kingdom of the Netherlands, which included Belgium, was set up in the north and Geneva was added to Piedmont in the South
 - (3) Prussia was given important territories on its western frontiers, while Austria was given control of northern Italy. But the German confederation of 39 states that had been set up by Napoleon was left untouched. Russia was given part of Poland while Prussia was given a portion of Saxony. The main intention was to restore the monarchies that had been overthrown by Napoleon and create a new conservative order in Europe.
- (iv) **The Revolutionaries :** After 1815, the fear of repression drove many liberal nationalists underground. Secret societies sprang up in many European states to train revolutionaries and spread their ideas. To be revolutionary at this time meant a commitment to oppose monarchical forms that had been established after the Vienna Congress and to fight for liberty and freedom. Most of these revolutionaries also saw the creation of nation states as a necessary part of this struggle for freedom.

Giuseppe Mazzini

One such was the Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini. He became a member of the secret society of the Carbonari. He subsequently founded two more underground societies first, Young Italy and Young Europe, whose members were like minded. Mazzini believed that God had intended to be the natural interest of mankind.

➤ THE AGE OF REVOLUTIONS : 1830-1848

- (1) The first revolt took place in France in July 1830. The kings who had been restored to power during the conservative's reaction after 1815, were now overthrown by liberal revolutionaries who installed a constitutional monarchy with Louis Philippe. '**When France Sneezes**' Metternich once remarked 'the rest of Europe catches Cold'.
 - (2) **Uprising in Brussels :** The July Revolution sparked an uprising in Brussels which led to Belgium breaking away from the United Kingdom of the Netherlands.
 - (3) **Uprising in Greece :** Greece had been part of the Ottoman Empire since the fifteenth century. The growth of revolutionary nationalism in Europe sparked off a struggle for independence amongst the Greeks which began in 1821. Nationalists in Greece got support from other Greeks living in exile and also from many West Europeans who had sympathies for ancient Greek culture. Poets and artists lauded Greece as the cradle of European civilisation and mobilised public opinion to support its struggle against a Muslim empire. The English poet Lord Byron organised funds and later went to fight in the war, where he died of fever in 1824. Finally, the Treaty of Constantinople of 1832 recognised Greece as an independent nation.
- (i) **The Romantic Imagination and National Feeling :**
- (1) Romanticism, a cultural movement which sought to develop a particular form of nationalist sentiment.
 - (2) Romantic artists and poets generally criticised the glorification of reason and science and focused instead on emotions, intuition and mystical feelings. Their effort was to create a sense of shared collective heritage of common cultural past.
 - (3) The other Romantics as the German philosopher Johann G. Herder claimed that true German culture was to be discovered among the common people. It was through folk songs, folk poetry and folk dances that the true spirit of the nation was popularised.
 - (4) The emphasis on Vernacular language and the collection of local folklore was not just to recover an ancient national spirit, but also to carry the modern nationalist message to large audiences who were mostly illiterate.
 - (5) Karol Kurpinski, for example, celebrated the national struggle through his operas and music, turning folk dances like the polonaise and mazurka into nationalist symbols.

- (6) Language too played an important role in developing nationalist sentiments. After Russian occupation, the Polish language was forced out of schools and the Russian language was imposed everywhere.

(ii) Hunger, Hardship and Popular Revolt :

- (1) The 1830s were years of great economic hardship in Europe. Population from rural areas migrated to the cities to live in over crowded slums. Europe where the aristocracy still enjoyed power, peasants struggled under the burden of feudal dues and obligations.
- (2) The year 1848 was one such year. Food shortage and widespread unemployment brought the population of Paris out on the roads. Barricades were erected and Louis Philippe was forced to leave. National Assembly proclaimed a Republic, granted suffrage to all adult males above 21 and granted the right to work. National workshops to provide employment were set up.
- (3) On 4 June at 2 P.M. a large crowd of weavers emerged from their homes and marched in Paris up to the intention of their contractor demanding higher wages. They were treated with scorn and threats alternately. Following this a group of them forced their way into the house, smashed its window panes; furniture proclaimed. The contractor fled with his family to a neighbouring village, which however refused to shelter such a person. He returned 24 hours later having requested the army. In the exchange that followed eleven weavers were shot.

- (iii) **1848 : The Revolution of the Liberals :** Parallel to the revolts of the poor, unemployed and starving peasants and workers in many European countries in the year 1848, a revolution led by the educated middle classes was under way. Events of February 1848 in France had brought about the abdication of the monarch and a republic based on universal male suffrage had been proclaimed. In other parts of Europe where independent nation states did not yet exist such as Germany, Italy, Poland, the Austro Hungarian Empire men and women unification. They took advantage of the growing popular unrest to push their demands for the creation of a nation-state on a parliamentary principles a constitution, freedom of the Press and freedom of association

Frankfurt Parliament :

In the German regions a large number of political association came together in the city of Frankfurt and decided to vote for an all-German National Assembly. On 18 May 1848, 831 elected representatives marched in a festive procession to take their places in the Frankfurt parliament convened in the Church of St. Paul. They drafted a constitution for a German nation to be headed by a monarchy subject to a parliament.

Obstacles :

- (i) Friedrich Wilhelm IV, King of Prussia rejected it and joined other monarchs to oppose the elected assembly.
- (ii) While the opposition of the aristocracy and military became stronger, the social basis of parliament eroded. The parliament was dominated by the middle classes who resisted the demands of workers and artisans and consequently lost their support.
- (iii) Issue of extending political rights to women was a controversial one within the liberal movement, they were denied suffrage rights during the election of the Assembly.

Outcomes :

- (i) Though conservative forces were able to suppress liberal movements in 1848, they could not restore the old order.
- (ii) In the years after 1848, the autocratic monarchies of Central and Eastern Europe began to introduce the changes that had already taken place in Western Europe before 1815.
- (iii) The Habsburg rulers granted more autonomy to the Hungarians in 1867.

➤ THE MAKING OF GERMANY AND ITALY

(i) Germany - Can the Army be the Architect of nation ? :

- (1) Nationalist feelings were spreading among middle class Germans, who in 1848 tried to unite the different regions of the German confederation into a nation state governed by an elected parliament.
- (2) This liberal initiative to nation building was however, repressed by the combined forces of the monarchy and the military supported by the large land owners (called Junkers) of Prussia. From then on Prussia took on the leadership of the movement for national unification.
- (3) The nation building process in Germany had demonstrated the dominance of Prussian state power. The new state placed a strong emphasis on modernising the currency, banking, legal and judicial system in German Prussian measures and procedures often became a model for the rest of Germany.

(ii) Italy unified :

- (1) During the middle of the 19th Century, Italy was divided into seven states of which only one Sardinia predominance was ruled by an Italian princely house. The north was under Austrian Habsburgs, the centre was ruled by the Pope and the southern regions were under the domination of the Bourbon Kings of Spain. Even the Italian language had not acquired one common form and still had many regional and local variations.
- (2) Chief Minister Cavour who led the movement to unify the regions of Italy was neither a revolutionary nor a democrat. Like many other wealthy and educated members of the Italian elite, he spoke French better than he did Italian.
- (3) Through a tactful diplomatic alliance with France engineered by Cavour, Sardinia Piedmont succeeded in defeating the Austrian forces in 1859. Apart from regular troops a large number of armed volunteers under the leadership of Giuseppe Garibaldi joined the fray in 1860, they marched into south Italy and the kingdom of the Two Sicilies and succeeded in winning the support of the local peasants in order to drive out the Spanish rulers.
- (4) In 1861 Victor Emmanuel was proclaimed king of united Italy. However, much of the Italian population, among whom rates of illiteracy were very high, remained blissfully unaware of liberal nationalist ideology. The peasant masses who had supported Garibaldi in Southern Italy had never heard of 'Italia' and believed that 'La Italia' was Victor Emmanuel's wife.

(iii) The strange case of Britain :

- (1) In Britain the formation of the nation state was not the result of sudden upheaval or revolution. It was the result of a long draw-out process. There was no British nation prior to the 18th century. The primary identities of the people who inhabited the British islands were ethnic ones-such as English, Welsh, Scot or Irish. All of these ethnic groups had their own cultural and political traditions.
- (2) But as the English nation steadily grew in wealth, importance and power, it was able to extend its influence over the other nations of the islands. The English Parliament, which had seized power from the monarchy in 1688 at the end of a protracted conflict, was the instrument through which a nation state with England at its centre, came to be forged.
- (3) The Act of union (1707) between England and Scotland that resulted in the formation of the 'United Kingdom of Great Britain' meant in effect, that England was able to impose its influence on Scotland. The British Parliament was henceforth dominated by its English members.
- (4) Ireland suffered a similar fate. It was a country deeply divided between Catholics and Protestants. The English helped the Protestants of Ireland to impose their dominance over a largely Catholic country.

Catholic revolts against British dominance were brutally suppressed. After a failed revolt led by Wolfe Tone and his United Irishmen (1798). Ireland was forcibly incorporated into the United Kingdom in 1801. A new 'British nation' was forged through the propagation of dominant English culture.

➤ VISUALISING THE NATION

- (i) Artists in the 18th and 19th centuries found a way out by personifying nation. In other words they represented a country as if it were a person.
- (ii) Nations were then portrayed as female figures. The nation did not stand for any particular woman in real life, rather it sought to give the abstract idea of the nation a concrete form.
- (iii) That is, the female figure became an allegory of the nation. After this so many countries used the same symbol (female) like Marianne in France and Germania in Germany.

➤ NATIONALISM AND IMPERIALISM

- (i) The most serious source of nationalist tension in Europe after 1871 was the area called the Balkans. The Balkans was region of geographical and ethnic variation comprising modern day Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece, Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia, Serbia and Montenegro whose inhabitants were broadly known as the Slavs.
- (ii) A large part of the Balkans was under the control of the Ottoman Empire.
- (iii) The spread of the ideas of romantic nationalism in the Balkans together with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire made this region very explosive.
- (iv) All through the 19th century the Ottoman Empire had sought to strengthen itself through modernisation and internal reforms but with very little success. One by one its European subject nationalities broke away from its control and declared independence.
- (v) The Balkan people asked their claims for independence or political rights on nationalistic and used history to prove that they had once been independent but had subsequently been subjugated by foreign powers.
- (vi) Hence the rebellious nationalities in the Balkans thought of their struggles as attempts to win back their long lost independence.

GLOSSARY

1. **Nationalism** : A sense of belonging to one nation. Feeling or pride and patriotism towards the country one belongs.
2. **Absolutist** : Unrestricted, despotic and authoritarian often refers to a centralised repressive monarchical government.
3. **Utopian** : An ideal situation a vision too good to be realised in practice.
4. **Nation state** : A state having a common and contiguous boundary with inhabitants, people sharing common language, race and religion. Majority of its citizen develop a sense of common identity and share a common history.
5. **Plebiscite** : A direct vote by which the people of a region, themselves decide to accept or reject a proposal.
6. **Sovereignty** : Supreme Power.
7. **Monarchy** : Form a government headed by a monarch or a hereditary or dynastic ruler.
8. **The Estates General** : Referred to the French Parliament an elected body which was renamed as the National Assembly after the revolution of 1789.
9. **Civil Code** : A systematic set of laws for the citizen.
10. **Habsburg Empire** : The empire that ruled Austria, Hungary including the Alpine region of Tyrol, Austria, Sudetenland, Bohemia. It also included Italian provinces of Lombardy and Venetia.
11. **Liberalism** : Derived from the word 'liber' meaning free. The idea of liberalism stands for freedom of individual and equality of all before law. Politically it refers to representative government.
12. **Suffrage** : The right to vote.
13. **Elle** : Elle was used to measure cloth, prevalent in German states.
14. **Zollverein** : A custom union, formed in 1806 in Prussia to remove barriers of trade.
15. **Conservatism** : A spirit or philosophy which believes in maintaining and preserving traditional values and institutions. It prefers gradual change to quick and drastic change.
16. **Carbonari** : A secret society of Italy consisting of young revolutionaries.
17. **Young Italy** : A secret society founded by Mazzini at Marseille for organising revolutionary activities.
18. **Ottoman Empire** : Turkish empire ruled by the caliph. The spiritual and temporal head of the muslim.
19. **Romanticism** : A cultural movement which aimed at developing a particular form of national sentiment and promote a feeling of collective heritage as the basis of motion .
20. **Das Volk** : A German word meaning common people.
21. **Republic** : A state where the head of the state is elected and does not hold a hereditary position.
22. **Feminist** : People who advocate women's right on the basis of equality of sexes.
23. **Ideology** : System of ideas reflecting a particular social and political vision.
24. **Allegory** : Symbol representing an abstract idea; an idea identified through a person or a thing.
25. **Balkan region** : A region in Europe with geographical and ethnic variation. The region covers the states of modern day Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece, Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro. The inhabitants of the region are known as the Slavs.