

#### 14. Was Nationalism a 19<sup>th</sup> century European Invention?

Four centuries ago, our world was not only bordered by continents but territories were further divided amongst the traditional powers who exercised absolute power. But now masses of individuals rebelled, blood was shed and thousands were death. Why? Partly for one vital reason, Nationalism. Nationalism signified the feeling of having common culture, religion, social order, historic tradition and physical descent. The insensible division of territories between the powers ignored all sense of Nationalism, since although individuals belonged to the same country they differed from one another. No state had its own identity, but each state continuously craved for one. It was a matter of time until Nationalist movements took action and started struggling for their ultimate goal.

Nationalism is portrayed as a modern development, yet its roots go back to primitive tribalism. The ancient Greeks nurtured a feeling of common nationality, but owed their political loyalty to the city state. The Roman Empire achieved the loyalty, or at least the passive acquiescence ( agreement without protest), of almost the entire Mediterranean. In such times the type of Nationalism we know today was not much present, however there was a already a sense of individuality. In medieval times a person still identified himself mainly by his religious faith and his social class rather than by nationality. Despite the fact that this is not what Nationalism truly meant , it will be the push to further alter the actual meaning.

The American Revolution (1775-1783) will be in fact the primary agent of Nationalism. Across the Atlantic sea lied America, a massive land which was at that time separated into thirteen British colonies. Most of the original settlers were British, nonetheless there were also early colonists of two other nationalities-the Dutch in New York, and the Swedes along the Delaware River. Each nationality brought its own way of living, however learned many useful things from the native Indians. By the end of the colonial period one here starts encounter differences not among the colonies of the origin but regional differences that had developed in America. The Americans, were highly controlled by the British Empire in terms of economy, law and commerce. Consequently, American inhabitants opted to break free from the British Empire and hence join up the thirteen states and replace it as the "United States". After eight years, the American Revolution was a success and in fact America was declared independent by 1776. It is crucial to not exclude the fact that victory was partly obtained due to the foreign military help from countries such as France.

Following the American Independence, France was now inspired in obtaining similar achievements. In France, the people were under the feudal system, in which not everyone was considered to be equal. The French outcries for "**Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité**", which signified the desire to abolish the monarchy and thus follow the Enlightenment that emphasized national identity and created a romantic view of cultural self-expression through nationhood. At this point, the French opted for a revolution by the year of 1789 in order to create a modern nation-state. By centralizing administration and seeking to destroy social classes, the French Revolution gave power full impetus to nationalism all across the continents. Their Revolution had left in fact such an impact that it will lead to a wave of revolutions in the coming years.

## Part 2; European intellectual movements and ideologies up to 1870

Subsequently the Congress of Vienna was held by 1814. As soon as the July Revolution ended the current world powers (Britain, Austria, Russia, Prussia and France) sought to revive the Old political structure which had been destroyed by the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars. The principal aims for such congress were to reorganize the territories in order to preserve balance of power and mostly to prevent future French aggression. The adjustment of territorial claims was made in such a way that the principle of Nationality was totally ignored. For instance, Sweden was joined with Norway, Poland was subjected to Russia, Genoa became part of the kingdom of Piedmont, Belgium and Holland were united, Italy was subjected to Austria and divided into eight parts (Parma, Modena, Tuscany, Lombardy, Venetia, Piedmont-Sardinia, the Papal States, Naples-Sicily) which were ruled by distinct governors. The Congress of Vienna preserved the balance of power in Europe, but it could not check the spread of revolutionary movements on the continent. It is that the further divisions made, the more the sense of Nationalism grew. By now one can observe, that the sense of Nationalism conducted in the French Revolution still survived and was in fact the spark for future revolutions since “when Paris sneezes, Europe catches a cold”.

Firstly, by 1830 a wave of revolution hit a definite amount of territories. Once more it was inspired mostly by the French, after their short uprising in the streets of Paris. As a result, Charles X was overthrown and thus became the last of the Bourbon kings in France. Such uprising further altered agitation in other parts of Europe. In Great Britain, for example agitation increased to reform electoral laws and as a result mass meetings and demonstrations were held until voting practices were liberalized. The Belgians then ruled by the Dutch, revolted and proclaimed their Independence. On the other hand, however revolts in Italy and Poland were futile as they were soon crushed by the powers. At these periods, it is crucial to mention that Metternich a [German-Austrian politician](#) and statesman, exerted a lot of power over Europe. Between 1814-1848 Metternich was highly effective in monitoring Nationalism in Europe and this proves why certain revolts were suppressed. Nevertheless, the unsuccessful outcome of the previous revolution didn't suppress Nationalist ideas. Those under foreign rule still believed that there is hope in obtaining Independence and thus acquiring a sense of Nationalism.

Such idea reached its peak by 1848, when liberal, nationalist movements swept through much of Europe. This is what is known as the 1848 Revolutions. Many took another chance to mark the end of Capitalism and obtaining Unification or Independence in their region. Unfortunately, it was immediately followed by repressive action in most of the countries involved. The “Spirit of '48,” however was not entirely unsuccessful, it inspired the Unification of Germany and Italy and the introduction of constitutional government throughout most of Europe later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The first glimpse of revolutions in the had now firstly appeared in midst of the Mediterranean. During January, people on the island of Sicily, rebelled against their King, Ferdinand II. Meanwhile, in parts of Italy ruled by Austria, anti-Austrian riots broke out. In the following month, France overthrew King Louis Philippe and established a Republic. Once again, the news of the uprising in France touched off revolts in Vienna, Budapest, and some of the German states. In Austria, Emperor Ferdinand I was forced to allow the demands for the election of a national assembly. In December, his nephew replaced his throne as Francis Joseph I and at this time Hungary proclaimed Independence from Austria.

.....German and Italian Unification .....

