

CHAPTER  
**14**

**Democratic and Nationalist Revolutions  
19th Century**

**Nationalism - Rise in European States**



In the previous chapter we studied about democratic revolutions – most of these were also nationalist in character. Europe at that time was divided into small kingdoms and large empires. The democratic and nationalist movements sought to establish powerful states which were based on the active participation of citizens who felt that they shared a common history, culture and economic life. The end result of these changes was the emergence of the nation-state in place of the multi-national dynastic empires of Europe.

The concept and practices of a modern state, in which a centralised power exercised sovereign control over a clearly defined territory, had been developing



Map 1: Europe after the Congress of Vienna - 1815.

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 and descent. This commonness did not exist from time immemorial; it was forged through struggles, through the actions of leaders and the common people.

The political and constitutional changes that came in the wake of the 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 henceforth constitute the nation and shape its destiny. The revolutionaries further declared that it was the mission and the destiny of the French nation to liberate the peoples of Europe from despotism, in other words to help other peoples of Europe to become nations.

The French Revolution gave the term 'nation' its modern meaning . A nation is not the territory that the people belonging to it inhabit but people themselves. France was not merely the territories known as France but the 'French people'. From this followed the idea of sovereignty, that a nation recognises no law or authority above its own. And if a nation is sovereign, that means the people constituting the nation are the source of all power and authority. There cannot be any rulers above the people, only a republic in which the government derives its authority from the people and is answerable to the people. It is interesting to remember that when Napoleon became emperor he called himself the 'Emperor of the French Republic'. Such was the strength of the idea of people's sovereignty. It was this idea of the people being the sovereign that gave France her military strength. The entire nation was united behind the army which consisted of revolutionary citizens. In a war in which almost all of Europe was ranged against France, she would have had no chance with just a mercenary army.

**Jacobin clubs:** Club for radical democracy thinkers.

Under the Jacobin constitution, all people were given the right to vote and the right of insurrection. The constitution stated that the government must provide the people with work or livelihood. The happiness of all was proclaimed as the aim of government. Though it was never really put into effect, it was the first genuinely democratic constitution in history. The government abolished slavery in the French colonies. Napoleon's rise to power was a step backward. However, though he destroyed the Republic and established an empire, the idea of the republic could not be destroyed. After the defeat of Napoleon, the old ruling dynasty of France was restored to power. However, within a few years, in 1830, there was another outbreak of revolution. In 1848, the monarchy was again overthrown though it soon reappeared. Finally, in 1871, the Republic was again proclaimed.

The Revolution had come about with the support and blood of common people – the city poor and peasants. In 1792, for the first time in history, workers, peasants and other non-propertied classes were given equal political rights.

The right to vote and elect representatives did not solve the problems of the common people. The peasants got their lands. But to the workers and artisans – the

people who were the backbone of the revolutionary movement – the Revolution did not bring real equality. To them, real equality could come only with economic equality. France soon became one of the first countries where the ideas of social equality, of socialism, gave rise to a new kind of political movement.

- In what ways do you think Napoleon’s conquests would have helped in the emergence of nationalism in those countries?

## Kingdoms of Europe



If you look at the map of mid-eighteenth-century Europe you will find that there were no ‘nation-states’ as we know them today. What we know today as 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 peoples. They did not see themselves as sharing a collective identity or a common culture. Often, they even spoke different languages and belonged to different ethnic groups. The Habsburg Empire that ruled over Austria-Hungary, for example, was a patchwork of many different regions and peoples. It included the Alpine regions – the Tyrol, Austria and the Sudetenland - and Bohemia, where the aristocracy was predominantly German-speaking. It also included the Italian-speaking provinces of Lombardy and Venetia. In Hungary, half of the population spoke Magyar while the other half spoke a variety of dialects. In Galicia, the aristocracy spoke Polish. Besides these three dominant groups, there also lived within the boundaries of the empire, a mass of subject, peasant peoples – Bohemians and Slovaks to the north, Slovenes in Carniola, Croats to the south, and Roumans to the east in Transylvania. Such differences did not easily promote a sense of political unity. The only tie binding these diverse groups together was a common allegiance to the emperor.

- How did nationalism and the idea of the nation-state emerge?
- Discuss the importance of language and popular traditions in the creation of national identity.

## The Aristocracy and the New Middle Class

Socially and politically, a landed aristocracy was the dominant class on the continent. The members of this class were united by a common way of life that cut across regional

### Some important years

1797 -	Napoleon invades Italy; Napoleonic wars begin.
1814-1815-	Fall of Napoleon; the Vienna Peace Settlement.
1821 -	Greek struggle for independence begins.
1848 -	Revolutions in Europe; artisans, industrial workers and peasants revolt against economic hardships; middle classes demand constitution and representative governments; Italians, Germans, Magyars, Poles, Czechs, etc. demand nation-states.
1859-1870-	Unification of Italy.
1866-1871-	Unification of Germany.
1905 -	Slav nationalism gathers force in the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires.

divisions. They owned estates in the countryside and also town-houses. They spoke French for purposes of diplomacy and in high society. Aristocratic families were often connected by ties of marriage. This powerful aristocracy was, however, numerically a small group. The majority of the population was made up of the

**Serfs:** Who were bound to the land of a particular lord and could not migrate without his permission.

peasantry. To the west, the bulk of the land was farmed by tenants and small owners, while in Eastern and Central Europe the pattern of landholding was characterised by vast estates which were cultivated by serfs.

Western and parts of Central Europe witnessed growth of industrial production and trade. This meant the growth of towns and the emergence of commercial classes whose existence was based on production for the market. Industrialisation began in England in the second half of the eighteenth century, but in France and parts of the German states it occurred only during the nineteenth century. In its wake, new social groups came into being: a working-class population, and middle classes, the others were industrialists, businessmen, various kinds of professionals. In Central and Eastern Europe these groups were smaller in number till late nineteenth century. It was among the educated, liberal middle classes that ideas of national unity and the abolition of aristocratic privileges gained popularity.

### Liberal Nationalism

Ideas of national unity in early-nineteenth-century Europe were closely allied to the ideology of liberalism. 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 by consent. Since the French Revolution, liberalism had stood for the end of autocracy and privileges of the Church, a constitution and representative government through parliament. Nineteenth-century liberals also stressed the inviolability of private property.



Yet, equality before the law did not necessarily stand for universal suffrage. You will recall that in revolutionary France, which marked the first political experiment in liberal democracy, the right to vote and to get elected was granted exclusively to property-owning men. Men without property and all women were excluded from political rights. Only for a brief period under the Jacobins did all adult males enjoy suffrage. However, the Napoleonic Code went back to limited suffrage and reduced women to the status of a minor, subject to the authority of

**Suffrage:** The right to vote

fathers and husbands. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries women and non-property men organised opposition movements demanding equal political rights. 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 nineteenth century this was a strong demand of the emerging middle classes.

Let us take the example of the German-speaking regions in the first half of the nineteenth century. Napoleon's administrative measures had created a confederation of 39 states out of countless small principalities. Each of these possessed its own currency, and weights and measures. A merchant travelling in 1833 from Hamburg to Nuremberg to sell his goods would have had to pass through 11 customs barriers and pay a customs duty of about 5 per cent at each one of them. Duties were often levied according to the weight or measurement of the goods. As each region had its own system of weights and measures, this involved time-consuming calculation. The measure of cloth, for example, was the **elle** which in each region stood for a different length. An elle of textile material bought in Frankfurt would get you 54.7 cm of cloth, in Mainz 55.1 cm, in Nuremberg 65.6 cm, in Freiburg 53.5 cm.

Such conditions were viewed as obstacles to economic exchange and growth by the new commercial classes, who argued for the creation of a unified economic territory allowing the unhindered movement of goods, people and capital. 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. The creation of a network of railways further stimulated mobility, harnessing economic interests to national unification. A wave of economic nationalism strengthened the wider nationalist sentiments growing at the time.

### 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. Most conservatives, however, did not propose a return to the society of pre-revolutionary days. Rather, they realised, from the changes initiated by Napoleon, that modernisation could in fact strengthen traditional institutions like the monarchy. It could make state power more effective and strong. A modern army, an efficient bureaucracy, a dynamic economy, the abolition of feudalism and serfdom could strengthen the autocratic monarchies of Europe.

- In what ways do you think the old kingdoms prevented the growth of trade and industry?
- In what ways would liberal democracy have helped to develop trade and industry in those countries?

- Do you think our country has a liberal democratic political system? Give your reasons.

- Hold a debate in the class between those who agree with conservatism and those who agree with liberal democracy on what is best for the welfare and development of people in Europe or in India.
- Why do you think conservatism needs to curb freedom to express ones opinion and criticise?

In 1815, representatives of the European powers – 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. The delegates drew up the Treaty of Vienna of 1815 with the object of undoing most of the changes that had come about in Europe during the Napoleonic wars. 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 French expansion in future. The main intention was to restore the monarchies that had been overthrown by Napoleon, and create a new conservative order in Europe.

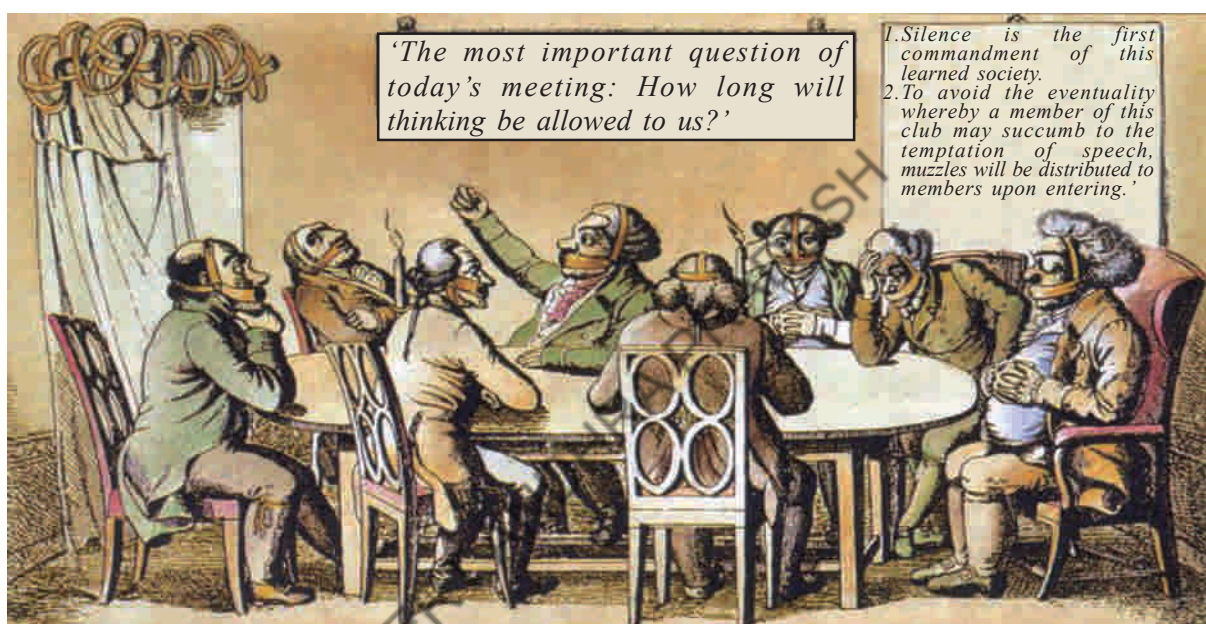


Fig. 14.1: *The Club of Thinkers*, anonymous caricature dating to 1820.

The plaque on the left bears the inscription: 'The most important question of today's meeting: How long will thinking be allowed to us?'

The board on the right lists the rules of the Club which include the following:

1. Silence is the first commandment of this learned society.
  2. To avoid the eventuality whereby a member of this club may succumb to the temptation of speech, muzzles will be distributed to members upon entering.
- What is the caricaturist trying to depict?

Conservative regimes set up in 1815 were autocratic. They did not tolerate criticism and dissent, and sought to curb activities that questioned the legitimacy of autocratic governments. 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 memory of the French Revolution nonetheless continued to inspire liberals. One of the major issues taken up by the liberal-nationalists, who criticised the new conservative order, was freedom of the press.

## The Romanticism 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 nationalist feelings.

Romanticism, a cultural movement which sought to develop a particular form of nationalist sentiment. Romantic artists and poets generally criticised the glorification of reason and science and focused instead on emotions, intuition and mystical feelings.

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.



Fig. 14.2: *The Massacre at Chios*, Eugène Delacroix, 1824.

The French painter Delacroix was one of the most important French Romantic painters. This huge painting (4.19m x 3.54m) depicts an incident in which 20,000 Greeks were said to have been killed by Turks on the island of Chios. By dramatising the incident, focusing on the suffering of women and children, and using vivid colours, Delacroix sought to appeal to the emotions of the spectators, and create sympathy for the Greeks.

- You read in class VIII about how Indian nationalists also sought to revive and give importance to folk arts in India. Why do you think they thought this was important?

## Hunger, Hardship and Popular Revolt

The 1830s were years of great economic hardship in Europe. The first half of the nineteenth century saw an enormous increase in population all over Europe. In most countries there were more seekers of jobs than employment. 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 England, where industrialisation was more advanced than on the continent. This was especially so in textile production, which was carried out mainly in homes or small workshops and was only partly mechanised. In those regions of Europe where the aristocracy still enjoyed power, peasants struggled under the burden of feudal dues and obligations. The rise of food prices



Fig. 14.3: Peasants' uprising, 1848.

or a year of bad harvest led to widespread pauperism in town and country.

The year 1848 was one such year. Food shortages 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, granted suffrage to all adult males above 21, and guaranteed the right to work. National workshops to provide employment were set up.

### The Revolts : 1830 and 1848

As conservative regimes tried to consolidate their power, 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 the Ottoman Empire, Ireland and Poland. These revolutions were led by the liberal-nationalists belonging to the educated middle-class elite, among whom were professors, school teachers, clerks and members of the commercial middle classes.



The Bourbons were restored to the throne of France, as we have seen, when the Congress of Vienna placed Louis XVIII on the throne. Louis was not an autocratic ruler like his brother, Louis XVI. According to a charter of 1814, he had ruled with the consent of a parliament. France was satisfied so long as Louis ruled, but in 1824 a third brother came to the throne as Charles X (1820-1830). He had been an active foe of the Revolution and now he tried to restore special privileges to the nobles and the clergy. When the Chamber of Deputies objected to his measures, he set aside the Charter of 1814 and attempted to rule as he pleased. This bought on an open revolt in which Charles was forced to abdicate and Louis Philippe, a distant cousin, became king (1830-1848).

The revolt against Charles X in 1830 touched off a series of revolts. Holland and Belgium, as you remember, had been united by the Congress of Vienna. This was one of those unions that showed the lack of wisdom on the part of the men of Vienna. The two countries were different in nationality, language, and religion. Moreover, the Dutch people had more power in the government than the Belgians had. In 1830 the Belgians revolted and set up an independent nation. The great powers looked with disfavour upon this, but there was not much that they could do. France had her hands full with her own revolution, and Austria was far away. At last the independence of the Belgians was accepted. They set up a constitutional monarchy similar to that of France under Louis Philippe.

The revolt spread to Poland, most of which had been given to Russia by the Congress of Vienna. The Polish situation was different from that of Belgium because it involved Russia, one of the great powers. The Poles received no help from their neighbours, and though they fought hard, they were defeated. As a result, the Tsar made Poland a part of Russia. Hundreds of Poles were put to death and everything possible was done to wipe out all national spirit among them.



Fig. 14.4: The revolting French people in Paris.

## Revolts of 1848

As in 1830, so in 1848 revolution started in France. Louis Philippe was supposed to have a constitutional monarchy. In fact he was called the ‘citizen king’ at the time of his coronation, and the ceremony, he was crowned ‘by the grace of God’ and ‘by the will of the nation.’ Yet as time passed, his government grew more and more reactionary, until by 1848 he had aroused much opposition to his rule. His opponents were very numerous. The king’s chief minister was unpopular and the king had to dismiss him. A riot broke out in front of the home of the dismissed minister and the king’s soldiers fired on the mob, killing twenty-three of them. The mobs grew so violent that Louis Philippe decided that flight was the only thing left for him. Hearing the cries ‘Long live the Republic’ he slipped out of country as his cousin, Louis XIV, had tried to do and went to England.

In Paris, where the revolutionary spirit was especially strong, street fighting continued. Working men demanded jobs, and for sometime a provisional government attempted to give them work. The leader in this experiment was Louis Blanc, a Socialist. Dishonesty and greed made the plan unworkable and violence continued. The government troops finally defeated the insurgents and imposed severe punishments.

- Explain why Charles X and Louis Philippe fled from France.

## Women and the Revolutions of 1848

The issue of extending political rights to women was a controversial one within the liberal movement, in which large numbers of women had participated actively over the years. Women had formed their own political associations, founded newspapers and taken part in political meetings and demonstrations. Despite this they were denied suffrage rights during the election of the Assembly. The Frankfurt Parliament that convened in the Church of St Paul, women were admitted only as observers to stand in the visitors' gallery.

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

After 1848, nationalism in Europe moved away from its association with democracy and revolution. Nationalist sentiments were often mobilised by conservatives for promoting state power and achieving political domination over Europe.

This can be observed in the process by which Germany and Italy came to be unified as nation-states. As you have seen, nationalist feelings were widespread 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. This liberal initiative to nation-building was, however, repressed by the combined forces of the monarchy and the military, supported by the large landowners called *junkars* of Prussia.



Caricature of Otto von Bismarck in the German reichstag (Parliament), from *Figaro*, Vienna, 5 March 1870.

- Describe the caricature. How does it represent the relationship between Bismarck and the elected deputies of parliament? What interpretation of democratic processes is the artist trying to convey?

Fig. 14.5: The proclamation of the German empire in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles.

At the centre stands the Kaiser and the chief commander of the Prussian army, General von Roon. Near them is Bismarck. This monumental work Anton von Werner (2.7m x 2.7m) was completed and presented by the artist to Bismarck on the latter's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1885.





Map 2: Unification of Germany (1866-1871)

From then on, Prussia took on the leadership of the movement for national unification. Its Prime Minister, Otto von Bismarck, was the architect of this process carried out with the help of the Prussian army and bureaucracy. Three wars over seven years – with Austria, Denmark and France – ended in Prussian victory and completed the process of unification. In January 1871, the Prussian king, William I, was proclaimed German Emperor in a ceremony held at Versailles.

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 systems in Germany. Prussian measures and practices often became a model for the rest of Germany.

## Unification of Italy



Like Germany, Italy too had a long history of political fragmentation. Italians were scattered over several dynastic states as well as the multi-national Habsburg Empire. During the middle of the nineteenth century, Italy was divided into seven states, of which only one, Sardinia-Piedmont, 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.

During the 1830s, Giuseppe Mazzini had sought to put together a coherent programme for a unitary Italian Republic. He had also formed a secret society



*Fig. 14.6: Giuseppe Mazzini and the founding of Young Italy in Berne 1833. Print by Giacomo Mantegazza.*

called **Young Italy** for the dissemination of his goals. The failure of revolutionary uprisings both in 1831 and 1848 meant that the mantle now fell on Sardinia-Piedmont under its ruler King Victor Emmanuel II to unify the Italian states through war. In the eyes of the ruling elites of this region, a unified Italy offered them the possibility of economic development and political dominance.

Prime 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 much better than he did Italian. 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. In 1871 Victor Emmanuel II 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 Talia' was Victor Emmanuel's wife!



*Map 3: Italian States before Unification 1858.*

- Do you think Italy became a true nation state with its unification under King Emmanuel II? Give your reasons.

### Key words

1. Despotism    2. Nationalism    3. Liberalism  
4. Bureaucracy    5. Romanticism    6. New Middle Class



### Improve your learning

1. Choose the correct options. AS<sub>1</sub>
  - Democratic and nationalist movements assumed that a nation has a \_\_\_\_\_ (shared history; shared culture; shared economy; all the above; none of the above)
  - Jacobin clubs were established in different countries by \_\_\_\_\_ (peasants; royalty; middle class; army)
  - During the mid 18th century the land was owned by \_\_\_\_\_ and cultivated by \_\_\_\_\_ (middleclass, army, aristocrats, tenants)
2. After reading about mid-eighteenth century Europe what similarities or difference amongst people existed in the context of: language, ethnicity, trade practices. AS<sub>1</sub>
3. Do you agree with the statement: “when the emergence of nation states the dominance of Aristocracy declined and middle class increased”. Give reasons. AS<sub>2</sub>
4. Write an imaginary dialogue between Mazzini and any of the Indian nationalist you have studied? AS<sub>6</sub>
5. Mark sentences that describe conservatives and liberals. Try to identify examples in our contemporary context. AS<sub>1</sub>
6. Draw a table to show the differences and similarities in the nation building process of France, Germany and Italy. AS<sub>1</sub>
7. Explain what is meant by 1848 revolution of liberals. What were the political, social and economic ideas supported by the liberals? AS<sub>1</sub>
8. Briefly trace process of Germany unification. AS<sub>1</sub>
9. Locate some changes on Europe map drawn up by the Vienna Congress. AS<sub>5</sub>
10. Read the last para of page 177 and comment on it. AS<sub>2</sub>

### Project

Compare the map of Europe of Mid 18th Century (1815) with that of the present map of Europe and note down the changes you find, in a note book.