

Nationalism in england and germany essay

[Business](#), [Industries](#)



1.

Introduction Historians refer to the nineteenth century by way of three time frames. While the Gregorian calendar obviously demarcates it from 1800 to 1900, some historians refer to it as the era between the Vienna Congress in 1815 and the commencement of the First World War in 1914. Others, among them Dr Eric Hobsbawm of the University of London, refer to a “long nineteenth century”, which lasted from 1789 to 1914. The period is crowded with historical happenings that profoundly affected the destinies of nations and peoples and it is thus difficult to single out a few events that could take precedence over others. In America, the century saw the dominance of European settlers, the complete annihilation of Native Americans, the abolition of Slavery, and the American Civil War; a fratricidal conflict that nearly divided the country and led to more than 500,000 military deaths. The century also marked the end of Empire as a political reality. The Mughal and Holy Roman Empires ended, the Spanish and Portuguese started self-destructing, and by the end of the century, even the mighty British Empire had just a few more decades to go.

The 19th century also saw the emergence of nation states and the establishment of nationalism, an idea wherein citizens of a country identified with each other and their homeland because of shared history, culture, ethos, and pride. Nationalism is basically a collective state of mind or consciousness in which people believe their primary duty and loyalty is to the nation-state. Often nationalism implies national superiority and glorifies various national virtues. Thus, love of nation may be overemphasized; concern with national self-interest to the exclusion of the rights of other

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nations may lead to international conflict.[1] In Europe, the century began with the overwhelming shadow of Napoleon Bonaparte looming over European affairs and ended with the defeat of France, her humiliation at the hands of Germany and the creation of the German Empire. At the same time, momentous events were also happening in the British Isles. The United Kingdom, formed by the union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in 1800, was marching towards becoming the greatest maritime, political and economic power in the world. The nineteenth century saw the ascendancy of the British Empire, very much the greatest empire of all time, with hegemony over one third of the world's area and one fourth of its population.

“ The United Kingdom of Great Britain (and, after 1801, Ireland) would become the most powerful among the composite states of Europe, and would command the greatest of all the European overseas empires”[2] The union of 1800 was one of the initial developments that helped to forge a common British identity and initiated the concept of nationalism in the UK. The period also witnessed the emergence of the United States and Germany as strong economic states and the establishment of the Prussian dominated German State as the leading European power. The European nations extended their domination over the rest of the world, a process that had begun three centuries ago with the colonization of the Americas, the formation of the Dutch and British East India companies and the beginning of the Slave Trade. This startling redistribution of global power was, in the main, due to the unending greed and rapaciousness of European countries, none of whom balked from large-scale oppression of the working classes at home (during the industrial revolutions), or from aggression and annexation

outside their borders, in order to create monopolies and appropriate the wealth of other countries. This created a skewed and grossly inequitable world order, the effects of which last even today. While England grew to dominate a major part of the world, both militarily and economically, a sequence of events in Europe led to the rise of the German state and its pre-eminence in Europe. It is the objective of this assignment to analyse the sequence of events and developments in two countries, namely England and Germany, in the nineteenth century with particular reference to their ideas and practice of nationalism.

The essay aims to assess the reasons behind the rise of nationalism and examine how it brought people together and gave them a sense of national identification. The bibliography contains the texts, journals and magazine articles used for the essay.

2. Commentary

The rise of Britain in the nineteenth century happened because of two major developments, the industrial revolution and international expansionism. These two events happened because of progress in science, technology and industry, the enormous buildup of infrastructure and trade, as well as maritime expansion and the desire to get rich fast. Trade and commerce in Britain had grown phenomenally in the 1700s and the country had become a huge production base for many items supplied to the continent, the Americas and through overseas trading centers by the end of the 18th century. The industrial revolution of the early nineteenth century saw a number of changes that increased economic output manifold. The advent of large power driven technology in the late 18th century revolutionized industry.

Workers and artisans came out of their houses and began working in big buildings where the use of power driven machinery enabled undreamt scales of production. Nowhere was this trend more striking than in Britain's textile trade. Early inventions improved both the quality and quantity of yarn produced by the dispersed wool industry, which accounted for 50 % of the country's exports. With the introduction of larger, more powerful machinery, workers were increasingly forced out of their homes and into purpose built three and four storey factories.

[3]The construction of railroads across the country led to the development of small industrial townships and the erection of smoke emitting factories that produced a range of engineering and mechanical items. The invention of the gas light enabled work to continue for long hours during the day and night, even as men, women and children toiled for long hours in inhuman conditions. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Britain had secured her position of commercial dominance and goods manufactured in England flooded the markets of Europe, the Americas and her expanding empire. This immensely prosperous society was, however built on human suffering, based upon the labor of English men, women and children who belonged to the working classes and worked for appalling hours in unspeakable conditions, packed together in dense tenements and often even having to go without salaries during periodic recessions. The cities of England, especially London and other industrial towns had distinct segments occupied separately by the rich and the middle class, and the workers. There was practically no sanitation and living conditions in the poorer sections remained horrific, with periodic outbreaks of cholera and typhoid. Nevertheless, despite the

wretched conditions British factories produced an unending stream of goods, spurred first by the wars in Europe and later from the expansion in the colonies. Numerous banks came into being, lubricating the wheels of trade and business.

In the midst of this growing affluence, wealth remained unevenly divided, worker salaries, and working conditions remained poor and abysmal. The growing dissatisfaction of the workforce became a matter of concern and associations of workers, resisted continuously by owners and lawmakers slowly started taking shape. The other major development of this period was the advent of capitalism. Owners of factories came out strongly with demands for minimal state interference, free flow of goods and the determination of trade through market economics.

England thus came to have three specific social sections, the aristocracy, which controlled law making and parliament, the industrialists and traders, who controlled business, and the workforce, who lived lives of absolute misery and remained outside the electorate because of their lack of property. The economy of the country, its riches, and its industrial production kept on growing and this, in combination with its maritime and military might worked in tandem to expand the borders of empire. Nationalism and pride oozed from the opinions published in the national press, and in the utterances of its rulers and aristocrats. “‘ We are capable’ wrote Queen Victoria in her diary on April 29, 1852 ‘ of doing anything’” [4]The concept of empire greatly excited the emotions and nationalism of English men and women in the 19th century, much more so than the United Kingdom’s

predominance in world trade. The expansion of empire had a number of consequences. Its phenomenal power and extensive reach led to feelings of moral and intellectual superiority in the British people, as evidenced by the opinions of aristocrats like Lord Curzon who took it upon themselves to spread the empire to the corners of the world. The secret of the mastery of the world is, if they only knew it, in the possession of the British people." Lord Curzon's words, written four years before he became viceroy of India in 1898, were a clarion call to his countrymen to hold fast to the greatest empire known to man.

Curzon had no doubts that the destinies of all the underdeveloped regions of the world had been entrusted by Providence to the British and that it were their bounden duty to diffuse the civilizing influence of British rule across the globe." [5] It did not really strike any British sensitivity when Gandhi, asked for his opinion on western civilization, stated rather wryly, "it would possibly be a good idea." The enormous commercial success and military victories imbued a feeling of superiority in the minds of most Englishmen.

Continuous pomp and pageantry on public occasions served the purpose of instilling loyalty and a feeling of triumphal nationalism and destiny in the population. By the end of the nineteenth century, the British Empire extended to India, Africa, the Arab states of the Middle East, Australia, New Zealand and Canada and South East Asia. Britishers remained unconcerned about the fact that most of these dominions were originally trading posts given to the British because of the largesse of local rulers, who in return had their trust and faith repeatedly betrayed by British expansionists. The British

naval and military effort required the services of young men who needed to be convinced of the idea of English superiority and of the divine place of the English in the scheme of things.

The concept of empire stirred the emotions of poets and writers like Kipling whose writing disguised the fact that the British treated the dominions as captive markets, where internal production needed elimination in order to make the people dependent upon English manufacture. One of the major challenges to British sovereignty in the 19th century was the occurrence of the Indian revolution of 1857, which took place when Indian soldiers of the East India Company revolted and briefly captured a number of important towns, including Delhi, in the North of the country. The revolution did not last long as British forces, aided by local Indian troops, quickly suppressed it and retook the captured cities. The revolution gave a fillip to nationalism; much like the Falklands War did in recent times.

It led to the administrative control of India coming under the control of the British crown and the adoption of the title of Empress of India by Queen Victoria. Tales of British heroism and valor in far away lands also brought British nationalism to the fore. British pride and nationalism in the nineteenth century owed its rise to three factors, the immense success of England's commercial and industrial effort, its military reach and the establishment of the largest empire in the history of the world. These developments led to increased British arrogance and gave Britishers a sense of superiority and divinity. It established in the eyes of the English, their place as superior people, ordained to rule over other lesser countries.

The fact that these factors rested firstly, upon the oppression of thousands of British workers who did not have a franchise to vote, and secondly upon the unilateral and determined aggression of weaker and fragmented countries and their peoples to further commercial and political objectives, was considered to be irrelevant by the British Jingoists until nationalistic movements in the dominions started coming to the fore towards the end of the nineteenth century. The rise of German nationalism followed an altogether different path. The English people had been living in their island country for centuries, and were to a certain extent isolated by the sea from the rest of the world. The last invasion of England had happened practically 800 years ago when the Normans crossed over from the continent. The English had, since then never had to suffer any foreign intrusion, even though their ships sailed all over the world annexing territories and setting up colonies in other countries. The Germans, on the other hand lived in Europe where conflicts, aggressions and realignment of borders happened frequently, making it impossible for the German speaking peoples to bond together with one common identity.

Even towards the middle of the 19th century, they belonged to numerous different kingdoms. In the 1840s, the lands of the German speaking peoples comprised a mosaic of 39 separate states, ranging from great kingdoms and principalities to miniscule duchies and archduchies whose imposing names disguised their lack of political significance. The two giants in this complex medley were Austria and Prussia, which were themselves made up of diverse territories. The kingdom of Prussia consisted of two separate parts, one region included Berlin and the other stretched eastwards towards the Baltic

Sea.[6]The first move towards a federation, if not unification happened in 1815 at the Congress at Vienna with the formation of the German confederation. However, real unity remained fragile for nearly half a century, until things changed, with the emergence of Otto von Bismarck on the German stage in 1847. Bismarck, known as Germany's Iron Chancellor took 23 years to achieve his goal of German unification. His efforts led to three wars, the last of which, known as the Franco Prussian War, ended in 1871 with the defeat of the French and the proclamation of Wilhelm I as German Emperor at Versailles.

The formation of the German Empire, at the end of wars with the French and the Austrians, resulted in a certain amount of bondage and instilled feelings of nationalism in the people. It is pertinent to understand that the German Empire was born after a war with France. Germans were fighting next to each other after 50 years against the enemy they had confronted in the wars of liberation, in 1813. It is possible that they felt and developed a sense of common destiny, forged in the surcharged atmosphere of war and conflict. Experts also feel that Prussia's military valor and economic superiority overshadowed the appeal of Austria to many non-Prussians and separate nationalisms thus never came into being; most Germans preferring to express German feelings. The German state, though fractured politically and socially because of the existence of various power groups like the Junkers, the South Germans, the Catholics, the liberals and the minorities, remained united and the concept of German nationalism grew with economic progress and the increasing military might of Germany under the stewardship of Bismarck. The people, even though never very affluent enjoyed political and

social privileges and came to identify with the state and their common heritage as German speaking people. Germany under Bismarck was also never politically very aggressive and eschewed the colonial aspirations of countries like Britain.

The nationalism forged in Germany in the nineteenth century was primarily ethnic and united people, who spoke the same language and lived in contiguous areas, into one German state. A unified Germany created a strong power in central Europe for the first time in European history. Aided by a hard working and disciplined people, armed with abundant iron and coal resources, Germany, by the end of the century, became the greatest power in Europe.

3. Summary and Conclusion

The nineteenth century saw the rise of a number of nation states in Europe wherein citizens of different countries identified and bonded with each other as people with common heritages, languages and cultures, rather than as subjects of royal or feudal structures. The development of nationalism in the states of Europe happened concurrently with the industrial revolutions and the expansion of European colonialism. The course of nationalism in England and Germany, while it happened roughly at the same time followed very different paths. The English, because of their status as citizens of a protected and somewhat isolated island state did not have to forge a national identity, either to confront a common threat or because of common culture, traditions or language.

While the British Isles went through a process of political unification in 1800, which resulted in the formation of the United Kingdom, the British never had

to face the divisiveness of the European nations, the problems of flexible and ever changing borders, or of continuous conflicts with bordering states.

English nationalism rested upon a common political structure that was applicable to all the inhabitants of the island and was greatly spurred by the country's enormous economic and military success. This enormous hegemony, characterized by the Pax Britannica, led to global domination and gave Britishers affluence, status and self-esteem. England's writers and poets worked upon this sentiment through their literary outpourings and helped to forge a national identity, irrespective of the fact that the majority of British citizens lived miserable lives and that most of the Empire had come about because of greed, avarice and unilateral aggression. Clichés typified by the likes of " Britannia rules the Waves" and " The sun never sets on the British Empire" became standard British speak, bestowed at random by English authors. The rise of German nationalism was due to the desire of the widely dispersed and separately ruled people, who were mainly of Teutonic descent and spoke the German language, to come together under one national umbrella. The emergence of an extraordinary leader like Bismarck made this aspiration possible and the closing decades of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of the German Empire, easily the most powerful nation in Europe. The concurrence of the industrial revolutions, the expansion of colonial Europe and the nationalist movement possibly leads a researcher to the assumption that nationalism in Europe was a result of the other two phenomena. However, this appears to be unlikely and while explosion in business and trade as well as expansionism and the oppression of the working classes characterized the nineteenth century, nationalism was a

parallel movement that grew out of the many revolutions, notably the French and American revolutions, that preceded this period, the crumbling of the monarchic order and the growing self esteem of people who had hitherto been subjects and who now found in nationalism a sense of identification, togetherness and bonding. Bibliography Armitage, David.

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