National Rivalries

Two Kinds of Nationalism

There were two kinds of nationalism in 19th Century Europe:

(i) the desire of subject peoples for independence -

It led to a series of national struggles for independence among the Balkan peoples. Other powers got involved and caused much instability.

(ii) the desire of independent nations for dominance and prestige -

As the powers try to dominate each other in Europe, their rivalries may be regarded as one of the causes of the First World War.

Nationalism in Germany

Germany was united in 1871 as a result of the Franco-Prussian War, and she rapidly became the strongest economic and military power in Europe. From 1871 to 1890, Germany wanted to preserve her hegemony in Europe by forming a series of peaceful alliances with other powers. After 1890, Germany was more aggressive. She wanted to build up her influence in every part of the world. German foreign policy in these years was best expressed by the term 'Weltpolitik' (World Politics). Because German ambitions were extended to many parts of the globe, Germany came into serious conflicts with all other major powers of Europe (except Austria-Hungary) from 1890 to 1914.

Nationalism in Italy

Italy was unified in 1870. She was barely powerful enough to be counted as a great power. Her parliamentary system was corrupt and inefficient. Her industrial progress was slow. But Italy had great territorial ambitions. She wanted Tunis and Tripoli in northern Africa. This brought her into conflicts with France because Tunis was adjacent to the French colony, Algeria, and was long regarded by France as French sphere of influence. Italy also wanted Italia Irredenta--Trieste, Trentio and Tyrol. Although the majority of the people in these places were Italians, they were kept under the rule of the Dual Monarchy . Thus Italy came into serious conflicts with Austria-Hungary.

Nationalism in Austria-Hungary

Austria-Hungary was established as the Dual Monarchy in 1867. The Dual Monarchy ruled over a large empire consisting of many nationalities, but only the Austrians (racially they were German) and the Hungarians had the right to rule. The other nationalities Czechs, Slovaks, Serbs, Croats, Rumanians and Poles resented their loss of political freedom. They desired for political independence. Thus the policy of the Dual Monarchy was to suppress the nationalist movements both inside and outside the empire. The particular object of the Dual Monarchy was to gain political control over the Balkan Peninsula, where nationalist movements were rife and were always giving encouragement to the nationalist movements within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The centre of the nationalist movements in the Balkans was Serbia. Serbia always hoped to unite

with the Serbs in the Austro-Hungarian Empire so as to create a large Serbian state. Therefore the first enemy of Austria-Hungary from 1871 to 1914 was Serbia. Besides Serbia, Austria-Hungary also hated Russia because Russia, being a Slav country, always backed up Serbia in any Austro-Serbian disputes.

Nationalism in Russia

Russia was the largest and most populous country in Europe. It extended from the shores of the Arctic Ocean to those of the Black Sea and from the Baltic Sea eastwards to the Pacific Ocean. Two thirds of her people were Slavs. She was still territorially ambitious. She wanted to expand in all directions. In 1870, Russia broke the Treaty of Paris (see below) and renewed her aggression in the Balkans. Thus, her territorial ambitions clashed with the interests of Austria-Hungary and Britain. However, Russia did not retreat. Being a 'landlocked' state, she wanted to acquire warm water ports in the Balkans (e.g. Constantinople). Moreover, as most of the Balkan peoples were of the Slavic race, Russia could claim to be the protector of her brother races in her expansion.

> *Note: Treaty of Paris and Russia*
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> *In 1856, Russia was defeated by Britain and France in the Crimean War. She was forced to sign the Treaty of Paris, which stopped her expansion into the Balkans from 1856 to 1870. Britain wanted to establish her influence in the Balkans because the Balkan area borders the Mediterranean Sea. If Russia controlled the Balkan area, British naval power and trade in the Mediterranean Sea would be threatened.*

Nationalism in France

France had been the dominant power in Europe for centuries. Napoleon I and Napoleon III had attempted to dominate Europe. In 1871, France was defeated by Germany. She had to lose two provinces: Alsace and Lorraine. She also needed to pay heavy indemnities. From 1871 onwards, France's greatest ambition was to recover Alsace and Lorraine from Germany. She also wanted to prevent another defeat by Germany, to recover her national prestige by acquiring overseas colonies (e.g. Morocco) and to make diplomatic alliances with other important powers in Europe.

Nationalism in Britain

In 1870 Britain was the most industrially advanced country in Europe. She also possessed the largest overseas empire and the largest navy in the world. She did not want to trouble herself with the continental affairs of Europe. Her main concern was to preserve her overseas empire and her overseas trade by maintaining a large navy. Before 1890, her chief enemies were France and Russia. The colonial interests of France often clashed with those of Britain . (Britain and France had colonial rivalries in Asia and Africa--for example, India, Burma, Thailand, Egypt.)

Russia's interest in the Balkan area also alarmed Britain, as British naval interests in the Mediterranean Sea would be immediately threatened. After 1890, as Germany went on increasing her naval strength and threatened British naval supremacy and the British overseas interests, she became Britain's chief enemy.

(Back to Introduction page)

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