Class 10 History Chapter 1: The Rise of Nationalism in Europe - Notes, Important Questions and MCQs (2026-27)

Free PDF notes from Nextoper.in | Session 2026-27 | Read online:
https://nextoper.in/class-10-history-chapter-1-pdf-notes/

These The Rise of Nationalism in Europe Class 10 notes cover Class 10 History Chapter 1 completely: the French Revolution and the idea of the nation, Napoleon’s reforms, liberal nationalism, the conservative order after 1815, the revolutions of 1830 and 1848, the unification of Germany and Italy, the strange case of Britain, visualising the nation and the link between nationalism and imperialism.

Along with clear explanations, you get an important dates timeline, a symbols table, a comparison of Italian and German unification, NCERT-style questions with answers, 10 MCQs and a free PDF with no signup, so you can revise the whole chapter from one page.

Use the table of contents below to jump to the part you need, or read top to bottom for a complete revision of the chapter.

Table of Contents

- Chapter Overview
- Important Topics and Concepts
- Important Dates and Timeline
- Meaning of Symbols
- Unification of Italy vs Unification of Germany
- Important Definitions and Terms
- Short Answer Questions
- Long Answer Questions
- MCQs with Answers
- Quick Revision Points
- Chapter Summary
- Exam Tips and PYQ Pattern
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Conclusion

Want notes for every chapter? Explore the full Class 10 Social Science notes on Nextoper, arranged book-wise and chapter-wise.

Chapter Overview

In the nineteenth century, nationalism became a force that completely changed the political map of Europe. Old multinational dynastic empires gave way to nation-states, in which people came to share a common identity and history rather than simply being subjects of a king.

The chapter begins with Frédéric Sorrieu’s 1848 prints, which imagined a world of democratic and social republics. It then traces how the French Revolution created the idea of the nation, how liberals and conservatives clashed, how culture and romanticism shaped national feeling,

Important Topics and Concepts

Frédéric Sorrieu’s utopian vision

In 1848, the French artist Frédéric Sorrieu prepared a series of four prints visualising a world of democratic and social republics. The first print shows the peoples of Europe and America marching past the Statue of Liberty, with the shattered symbols of absolutist institutions in the foreground. The nations are identified by their flags and costumes; the USA and Switzerland lead, followed by France and Germany. Christ, saints and angels look down from heaven, symbolising fraternity among nations.

The French Revolution and the idea of the nation

- The 1789 revolution transferred sovereignty from the monarchy to a body of French citizens.
- Ideas of la patrie (the fatherland) and le citoyen (the citizen) created a sense of a united community with equal rights.
- A new tricolour flag replaced the royal standard; the Estates General became the National Assembly.
- A centralised administration, uniform laws, the abolition of internal customs duties and a uniform system of weights and measures were introduced.
- Regional dialects were discouraged and French, as spoken in Paris, became the common language.
- Revolutionaries declared it their mission to liberate other peoples of Europe from despotism.

Napoleon and the Civil Code of 1804

Napoleon destroyed democracy in France but made the administration more rational. His Civil Code of 1804 (the Napoleonic Code) abolished privileges based on birth, established equality before the law and secured the right to property. In conquered regions he simplified administrative divisions, abolished the feudal system, freed peasants from serfdom, removed guild restrictions and improved transport and communication. Over time, increased taxation, censorship and forced conscription made his rule unpopular.

The making of nationalism in Europe

In the mid-eighteenth century, Germany, Italy and Switzerland were divided into kingdoms, duchies and cantons. Eastern and Central Europe were ruled by autocratic monarchies with diverse peoples, such as the Habsburg Empire, which ruled over Austria-Hungary and many language groups. The landed aristocracy dominated socially and politically, while most people were peasants. Industrialisation created a working class and a new middle class of industrialists, businessmen and professionals, among whom ideas of national unity grew.

What liberal nationalism stood for

- Liberalism comes from the Latin liber, meaning free. It stood for individual freedom and equality before the law.

- Politically, it meant government by consent, an end to autocracy and clerical privileges, a constitution and representative government. However, voting rights were limited to property-owning men.
- Economically, it meant freedom of markets and the abolition of state restrictions on the movement of goods and capital.
- In 1834, the Zollverein (customs union) was formed at Prussia's initiative; it abolished tariff barriers and reduced the number of currencies from over thirty to two. A network of railways added to economic unity.

A new conservatism after 1815

After Napoleon's defeat, European governments wanted to preserve traditional institutions: monarchy, the Church, social hierarchies, property and the family. At the Congress of Vienna (1815), Britain, Russia, Prussia and Austria, hosted by Austrian Chancellor Duke Metternich, drew up the Treaty of Vienna. It restored the Bourbon dynasty in France, created buffer states around France, left the German Confederation of 39 states untouched and gave new territories to Prussia, Austria and Russia. The new regimes were autocratic and used censorship to control criticism.

The revolutionaries: Giuseppe Mazzini

Secret societies trained revolutionaries to fight for liberty. Giuseppe Mazzini, born in Genoa in 1807, joined the Carbonari. After being exiled in 1831, he founded Young Italy in Marseilles and Young Europe in Berne. He believed nations were the natural units of mankind and that Italy should be a unified republic. Metternich called him "the most dangerous enemy of our social order".

The age of revolutions: 1830–1848

In July 1830, the Bourbon kings were overthrown in France and a constitutional monarchy under Louis Philippe was set up. The July Revolution sparked an uprising in Brussels, and Belgium broke away from the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Greek war of independence began in 1821; supported by West European sympathisers and poets like Lord Byron, it ended with the Treaty of Constantinople (1832), which recognised Greece as independent.

The romantic imagination and national feeling

Culture helped create the idea of the nation. Romanticism focused on emotions, intuition and a shared heritage. Johann Gottfried Herder believed true German culture lay among the common people (das volk), expressed in folk songs, poetry and dances. Language was also a weapon: in Russian-ruled Poland, the clergy used Polish in Church gatherings, and Karol Kurpinski turned Polish folk dances like the polonaise and mazurka into nationalist symbols.

Hunger, hardship and the revolutions of 1848

The 1830s were years of economic hardship: population growth, unemployment, competition from machine-made goods and food shortages. In 1845, weavers in Silesia revolted against contractors. In 1848, food shortages in Paris led to the abdication of Louis Philippe and a republic with suffrage for all adult males. In German states, the Frankfurt parliament (831 elected representatives, convened in the Church of St Paul on 18 May 1848) drafted a constitution under a monarchy subject to parliament, but Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia rejected the crown. Women formed associations and newspapers but were denied the vote.

The unification of Germany

After 1848, conservatives used nationalism to strengthen state power. Prussia, under Chief Minister Otto von Bismarck, led German unification with the help of the army and bureaucracy. Three wars over seven years with Austria, Denmark and France ended in Prussian victory. In January 1871, the Prussian king William I was proclaimed German Emperor in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. The new state modernised its currency, banking, legal and judicial systems.

The unification of Italy

Italy was divided into seven states; only Sardinia-Piedmont was ruled by an Italian princely house. After Mazzini's failed uprisings of 1831 and 1848, King Victor Emmanuel II of Sardinia-Piedmont took the lead. His Chief Minister Cavour, through a tactful alliance with France, defeated Austria in 1859. In 1860, Giuseppe Garibaldi led his volunteers (the Red Shirts) into South Italy and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and drove out the Spanish Bourbon rulers. In 1861, Victor Emmanuel II was proclaimed king of united Italy. Many peasants did not even know the word "Italia".

The strange case of Britain

Britain did not become a nation-state through a sudden revolution. The English parliament took power from the monarchy in 1688. The Act of Union (1707) joined England and Scotland into the United Kingdom of Great Britain, letting England impose its influence on Scotland. Ireland, divided between Catholics and Protestants, was forcibly incorporated in 1801 after a failed revolt led by Wolfe Tone. A new British nation was forged with English culture, the Union Jack, the national anthem (God Save Our Noble King) and the English language.

Visualising the nation

Artists represented nations as female figures (allegories). In France, the allegory was named Marianne, with the red cap, tricolour and cockade; her statues and images on coins and stamps reminded people of national unity. Germania became the allegory of the German nation, wearing a crown of oak leaves, as the German oak stands for heroism.

Nationalism and imperialism

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, nationalism became a narrow creed with limited ends. The Balkans, a region of ethnic variation under the Ottoman Empire, became the most serious source of tension after 1871. Each Balkan state wanted more territory, and the big European powers (Russia, Germany, England and Austria-Hungary) competed for influence there. This rivalry led to a series of wars and finally the First World War in 1914. Meanwhile, anti-imperial movements in colonies also drew on the idea of the nation-state.

Important Dates and Timeline

Use this timeline to write answers in the right sequence.

Year	Event
1789	French Revolution
1797	Napoleon invades Italy; Napoleonic wars begin
1804	Napoleonic Code (Civil Code)

Year	Event
1814–1815	Fall of Napoleon; Vienna Peace Settlement
1821	Greek struggle for independence begins
1830	July Revolution in France; Belgium breaks away
1832	Treaty of Constantinople recognises Greece
1834	Zollverein formed
1848	Revolutions across Europe; Frankfurt parliament
1859–1870	Unification of Italy
1866–1871	Unification of Germany
1871	William I proclaimed German Emperor at Versailles
1905	Slav nationalism gathers force in the Habsburg and Ottoman empires
1914	First World War begins

Meaning of Symbols

Symbols used in the allegories of Germania and Marianne are frequently asked as one-mark questions.

Symbol	Significance
Broken chains	Being freed
Breastplate with eagle	Symbol of the German empire: strength
Crown of oak leaves	Heroism
Sword	Readiness to fight
Olive branch around the sword	Willingness to make peace
Black, red and gold tricolour	Flag of the liberal-nationalists in 1848, banned by the Dukes of the German states
Rays of the rising sun	Beginning of a new era
Red cap	Liberty (worn by Marianne)

Unification of Italy vs Unification of Germany

Feature	Italy	Germany
Leading state	Sardinia-Piedmont	Prussia
Key leaders	Mazzini, Cavour, Garibaldi, Victor Emmanuel II	Otto von Bismarck, William I
Method	Diplomacy (alliance with France), wars and Garibaldi’s volunteers	Army, bureaucracy and three wars
Main wars	Against Austria (1859), Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (1860)	Against Denmark, Austria and France (1864–1871)
Completed	1861 (Rome added 1870)	1871
Ruler	Victor Emmanuel II, King of Italy	William I, German Emperor

Feature	Italy	Germany
proclaimed		

Important Definitions and Terms

Term	Meaning
Nation-state	A state in which most citizens share a common identity, history and territory
Absolutist	A government with no restraints on the power of the ruler
Utopian	A vision of an ideal society that is unlikely to exist
Plebiscite	A direct vote by the people to accept or reject a proposal
Suffrage	The right to vote
Liberalism	A belief in individual freedom and equality before the law
Conservatism	A belief in preserving traditional institutions and practices
Zollverein	German customs union formed in 1834
Carbonari	A secret society of revolutionaries in Italy
Romanticism	A cultural movement stressing emotion, intuition and folk culture
Allegory	An idea expressed through a person or thing
Ethnic	Relating to a common racial, tribal or cultural origin
Feminist	Supporting women’s rights based on equality of the sexes
Junkers	Large landowners of Prussia

Short Answer Questions

Q1. What was the Napoleonic Code? State two of its features.

The Napoleonic Code was the Civil Code of 1804 introduced by Napoleon. It abolished privileges based on birth and established equality before the law, and it secured the right to property. It also freed peasants from serfdom and removed guild restrictions in towns.

Q2. What steps did the French revolutionaries take to create a sense of collective identity?

They introduced the ideas of la patrie and le citoyen, adopted a new tricolour flag, renamed the Estates General as the National Assembly, created centralised administration with uniform laws, abolished internal customs duties, introduced uniform weights and measures and made French the common language.

Q3. What was the Zollverein? What was its importance?

The Zollverein was a customs union formed in 1834 at the initiative of Prussia and joined by most German states. It abolished tariff barriers and reduced the number of currencies from over thirty to two, which strengthened economic and national unity.

Q4. Who was Giuseppe Mazzini? What role did he play?

Giuseppe Mazzini was an Italian revolutionary born in Genoa in 1807. He founded Young Italy in Marseilles and Young Europe in Berne, and he believed Italy should be a unified republic. His ideas inspired national movements across Europe.

It was a settlement drawn up by Britain, Russia, Prussia and Austria after Napoleon’s defeat. It restored the Bourbon dynasty, created buffer states around France and aimed to undo the changes brought by the Napoleonic wars.

Q6. What was the role of culture in creating national feeling in Europe?

Art, poetry, music and stories helped express national feelings. Romantics like Herder promoted folk culture as the true spirit of the nation, and language became a symbol of resistance, as in Poland under Russian rule.

Q7. Why did the Balkans become a source of tension after 1871?

The Balkans had many ethnic groups who wanted independence from the Ottoman Empire, and each state wanted more territory. Big European powers competed for control there, and this rivalry led to wars and the First World War.

Q8. What do the female allegories Marianne and Germania represent?

Marianne represents France and the idea of a people’s nation, with the red cap and tricolour. Germania represents the German nation and wears a crown of oak leaves symbolising heroism.

Long Answer Questions

Q1. Describe the process of German unification.

In 1848, middle-class liberals tried to unite Germany through the Frankfurt parliament, but the Prussian king rejected the crown and the monarchy, army and Junkers suppressed the effort.

Prussia then took over the leadership of unification. Its Chief Minister Otto von Bismarck was the architect of the process, carried out with the help of the Prussian army and bureaucracy.

Three wars over seven years, with Denmark, Austria and France, ended in Prussian victory and completed unification.

In January 1871, the Prussian king William I was proclaimed German Emperor at Versailles. The new state emphasised Prussian power and modernised its currency, banking, legal and judicial systems.

Q2. Describe the process of Italian unification.

Italy was divided into seven states; Austria ruled the north, the Pope the centre and the Bourbon kings of Spain the south. Only Sardinia-Piedmont had an Italian ruling house.

Giuseppe Mazzini tried to create a unified Italian republic through Young Italy, but uprisings in 1831 and 1848 failed.

King Victor Emmanuel II of Sardinia-Piedmont then took charge. His Chief Minister Cavour formed an alliance with France and defeated Austria in 1859.

In 1860, Giuseppe Garibaldi and his Red Shirts marched into South Italy and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and drove out the Spanish rulers.

In 1861, Victor Emmanuel II was proclaimed king of united Italy, and Rome joined in 1870.

Q3. How did nationalism develop in Britain? Why is it called a "strange case"?

Britain did not become a nation-state through revolution; it was the result of a long process.

The Act of Union (1707) joined England and Scotland, and England imposed its influence on Scotland, suppressing its culture. Ireland was forcibly incorporated in 1801.

A new British identity was promoted through the Union Jack, the national anthem and the English language, while older nations survived only as subordinate partners. This is why it is called a strange case.

MCQs with Answers

1. Who prepared a series of four prints visualising a world of democratic and social republics in 1848?(a) Giuseppe Mazzini (b) Frédéric Sorrieu (c) Otto von Bismarck (d) Johann HerderAnswer: (b) Frédéric Sorrieu

2. The Napoleonic Code was introduced in(a) 1789 (b) 1797 (c) 1804 (d) 1815Answer: (c) 1804

3. The Zollverein was a(a) Secret society (b) Customs union (c) Peace treaty (d) ParliamentAnswer: (b) Customs union

4. Young Italy was founded by(a) Cavour (b) Garibaldi (c) Mazzini (d) Victor Emmanuel IIAnswer: (c) Mazzini

5. The Treaty of Constantinople (1832) recognised(a) Belgium (b) Greece (c) Italy (d) PolandAnswer: (b) Greece

6. Who was the architect of German unification?(a) William I (b) Friedrich Wilhelm IV (c) Otto von Bismarck (d) MetternichAnswer: (c) Otto von Bismarck

7. Victor Emmanuel II was proclaimed king of united Italy in(a) 1859 (b) 1860 (c) 1861 (d) 1871Answer: (c) 1861

8. The crown of oak leaves on Germania stands for(a) Peace (b) Heroism (c) Freedom (d) StrengthAnswer: (b) Heroism

9. The Act of Union of 1707 was between England and(a) Ireland (b) Wales (c) Scotland (d) FranceAnswer: (c) Scotland

10. Which region became the most serious source of nationalist tension after 1871?(a) The Rhineland (b) The Balkans (c) Scandinavia (d) IberiaAnswer: (b) The Balkans

Quick Revision Points

- Sorrieu’s 1848 prints: a dream of democratic and social republics.
- French Revolution (1789) gave la patrie, le citoyen and the tricolour.
- Napoleonic Code (1804): equality before law, right to property, end of feudalism.
- Zollverein (1834): customs union; currencies cut from over 30 to 2.
- Vienna (1815): Bourbons restored; conservative order; censorship.
- Mazzini: Young Italy and Young Europe.
- 1830: July Revolution; 1832: Greece independent; 1848: Frankfurt parliament.
- Germany unified by Bismarck (1871); Italy by Cavour, Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel II (1861).

- Britain: Act of Union 1707; Ireland incorporated 1801.
- Balkans + imperialism → First World War (1914).

Chapter Summary

Nationalism in Europe began with the French Revolution, which turned subjects into citizens and created symbols of a shared nation. Napoleon spread uniform laws through his Civil Code, while liberals demanded constitutions, freedom and free markets. After 1815, a conservative order tried to suppress these ideas, but revolutionaries like Mazzini, cultural movements such as romanticism and economic hardship kept national feelings alive, leading to the revolutions of 1830 and 1848.

After 1848, nationalism moved away from democracy and revolution. Germany was unified by Prussia under Bismarck through war, and Italy by Sardinia-Piedmont under Cavour, Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel II. Britain became a nation-state through a long process led by England. By the late nineteenth century, nationalism joined with imperialism, turning the Balkans into a flashpoint that led to the First World War.

Exam Tips and PYQ Pattern

- Long answers on German or Italian unification and the role of culture in nationalism are asked very often.
- Learn the symbols table; one-mark questions on Marianne and Germania are common.
- Case-based questions may use Sorrieu’s prints or Frankfurt parliament passages.
- Write answers in a time sequence using dates from the timeline.
- Assertion-reason questions often test the Zollverein, the Treaty of Vienna and the Napoleonic Code.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main idea of The Rise of Nationalism in Europe?

It explains how nation-states replaced multinational empires in nineteenth-century Europe through revolutions, cultural movements and the unification of Germany and Italy.

Who unified Germany and Italy?

Germany was unified by Prussia under Otto von Bismarck in 1871. Italy was unified by Sardinia-Piedmont under Cavour, Garibaldi and Victor Emmanuel II in 1861.

Is there a PDF of these notes?

Yes. Use the "Save Free Notes PDF" link at the top of this page; no signup is needed.

Which dates are most important in this chapter?

1789, 1804, 1815, 1830, 1834, 1848, 1861 and 1871 are the most frequently asked dates.

Conclusion

The Rise of Nationalism in Europe explains how the modern map of Europe was made. Learn the sequence from the French Revolution to 1871, understand the different paths taken by Germany, Italy and Britain, and revise the symbols and timeline tables. These notes give you

More Notes: Class 10 History Chapter 2: Nationalism in India notes | Class 10 History Chapter 2: Nationalism in India notes | All Class 10 Social Science notes

Author Bio: Written and reviewed by the Nextoper Editorial Team, a group of CBSE social science educators who build chapter notes directly from the NCERT textbook and past board paper patterns.

Freshness Note: These notes follow the NCERT Class 10 History textbook, India and the Contemporary World – II (Reprint 2026-27), and the CBSE syllabus for the 2026-27 session. Last checked on 8 November 2026.