**HOW DID NATIONALISM ACT AS A MAJOR CAUSE OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR?**

Nationalism, tribalism, or group identity- is a strong allegiance to one’s nation-state is one of the most potent political or social forces. Being able to inspire collective solidarity, nationalism can help build and reinforce the sense of community as it first did in the 18th century during the French Revolution and across other European countries.

On the other hand, nationalistic views are deeply rooted in the idea that one’s nation is more important than every other one, so it’s interests should be put ahead of world cooperation.

Nationality is a political ideology that promotes the identification and support of the interest of one’s nation above all others. It is that strong sense of duty and belonging towards people or places with whom we share common values.

The cries of Liberty and Freedom to the commoners filled European towards the end of the 18th century as the French Revolution led to the Napoleonic Wars.

On June 28th, 1914, Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Bosnia while on a mission to inspect the imperial armed forces. This event would go down in history as the initiation step in a series of chain reactions, ultimately leading to the ‘great war to rewrite the entire course of history forever.

***Europe Before the War***

Europe experienced a long period of peace during the 19th century. However, during the early 20th century, the diplomatic and political landscape of the region began to experience some tension. This was due to globalization, military revolutions , and democratization - and nationalism was at the heart of it all.

While some people were in love of with their nation and motivated to expand its empire, others sought their independence and were all willing to give their lives for their nation’s interest.

***French Nationalism***

Extending over 13,500,000 square kilometers, French Empire was only second to the British in the early 20th century. As such, French nationalism was based on mainly on the people’s pride.

The French were willing to prove their nation’s importance to the world as they built up to large armies and weapons at this time.

This ideology originated from the conquest of Napoleon Bonaparte, the empire’s emperor, in 1804. After the French Revolution, he sought to spread his nationalistic views of ‘Liberty, Equality and Fraternity’ across other regions.

These ideals were unpleasing to the other European powers as it became clear towards the early 19th century that Napoleon’s goal was to expand French control, contrary to his claims of “spreading the goals of the French Revolution.”

Nonetheless, French Nationalism gathered more momentum at this point, and France already had a clear national identity, culture, and values - one they thought was superior and deserving of importation to other nations.

***British Nationalism***

Great Britain was arguably the world’s wealthiest and most powerful nation by the end of the 19th century. As you might expect, this status drove the majority of Britons to believe that they were superior to other nations and, by extension, should replicate their ideologies of democracy in other places.

Then came Prussia’s military into France in 1870, bring the French Empire to its heel within weeks. This triumph raised eyebrows to the Britain; could such happen to the British Empire?

This fears were fueled by the emergence of the “invasion literature” - a genre that planted the ideal of the invasion of Britain by foreign powers like Germany. Anxieties and imaginations of an overrunning of the homeland began to build - a specter of invading armies, and Great Britain would not have it.

Precious Britain must not fall; its people must protect it!

This idea of nationalistic patriotism spurred Britain to Militarism, and preparations for a futuristic war commenced.

***Pan-German Nationalism***

A unified Germany came into existence after Germany ended the French Hegemony in Europe by coming out victorious in the Franco-Prussian war.

They needed a German national identity, and Pan-Germanism- a political ideology that integrates all Europeans speaking the Germanic language was the solution. The German counselor in 1897, embarked on a request for German’s “place in the sun.”

During this period, the government employed the media to push the German nationalistic narrative, which was influential in the nation’s economic growth when applied moderately. However, Pan-Germanism was taken to the extreme by the government and the people, culminating in open ethnocentrism and racism.

German soon started to link its nationalism to its militarism as it saw a nation to be only as strong as its military. They would take their place in the sun, and it would be by force.

These opinions began to materialize when an impassioned Wilhelm II become the Kaiser in 1888. he would soon metamorphose into an image of a nationalistic and militaristic German as he aimed to turn Germany into a global power by targeting other established empires, especially Great Britain.

Nationalism in Germany saw the nation strive to establish itself as a force to reckon with in Europe. This would soon come to the force in the early 20th century during the great war.

***Pan-Slavism***

Pan-Slavism is another nationalistic movement deeply rooted in the desire for a nation - the Slavic nation that shared a common language - to be united. Nationalism among the Slavic people perhaps has the most apparent links to the direct causes of World War I.

The Slavic people who were under the Austro-Hungarian Empire realized that the idea of Austro-Slavism was impossible under the rule of the Austrian Emperor, Franz Joseph I. as a result, they sought their freedom by looking to unite with other Serbia and Russia.

Nationalism in this region was the ideology that all Slavic-speaking nations, such as Russia, Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Ukraine, Slovakia, etc., were one nation and should be united into one big nation-state.

During this period, the movement was robust in Serbia. So, when the dyarchy of Austria-Hungary took over the regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina - under the rule of the then Ottoman Empire -many Serbian radical nationalist groups started recruiting youths in preparation for the protection of their Slavic nation.

A prominent group that time was called *ujedinjenje ili Smrt (Union or Death), also known as the Black Hand.* Their goal was to actualize a greater Serbia, clearly expressing their nationalistic views. The Black Hand was prepared to use force if necessary. They staged political murders and executed them with help of trained saboteurs and Guerillas.

This nationalism triggered the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914 - an event that would later spark the war between Serbia and Austria-Hungary before dragging the remaining European powers into it to become World War I.

**Nationalism in Europe Leading to the War**

Nationalism ideas led to the following, which contributed immensely to world war I

* Imperialism across Europe. It promoted ideology of imperialism and fighting it simultaneously. On the other hand, nationalists who were loyal to their nation’s interests and believed it superior to others welcome expanding the territories of such empires across the globe. It promoted the idea of taking over other nations.
* Militarism - the enlargement of a military’s ability to engage in a skirmish was widespread across all European empires in the decades leading to world war I. Whether for the protection of dear nations, expansion of the nation’s territory, or making the nation’s place in the sun, nationalists to be willing to take up arms for their nation no matter the reason.

**Conclusion**

Distinctly, Nationalism in the sense of superiority to other nations powered imperialist movement in Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, France, and the Balkans. So, it stirred the major Europeans forces to Militarism before the great war. They were sure of their nation’s ideologies and willing to back them up with the requisite amount of force , willingly taking on anyone who stood in their way.

Also, Nationalism pushed Slavic-speaking nations to clamor for their sovereign Slavic nation-state and direct involvement of nationalism in the war.

The war was a matter of when, and when the time come, they were all already to unleash hell on earth.