

ANANTAM IAS · OPTIONAL NOTES

History Optional Nation-State System

Paper 2 · Unit 19

Vienna, 1830, 1848, and the unifications of Germany and Italy: 90 marks in four years and the unit that supplies the vocabulary for every other Section B answer.

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UPSC SYLLABUS

Nation-state system: rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century; nationalism, state-building in Germany and Italy; disintegration of empires in the face of the emergence of nationalities across the world.

The Vienna settlement and the conservative order

Asked directly in 2026 on the three principles. Every nineteenth century European question begins from the order Vienna built and the pressures that broke it, so this section earns its place at the front of many answers.

- Meeting from September 1814 to June 1815, the **Congress of Vienna** was dominated by **Metternich** of Austria, with Castlereagh for Britain, Tsar Alexander I for Russia, Hardenberg for Prussia and Talleyrand representing a restored France.
- **Legitimacy** meant restoring the dynasties displaced by the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, so the Bourbons returned in France, Spain and Naples, and hereditary right was reasserted against popular sovereignty.
- **Restoration** meant rebuilding the pre-revolutionary institutional order where possible, including the Papal States and the German princes, though the Holy Roman Empire was not revived and the German Confederation of thirty nine states took its place.
- **Compensation** meant territorial reward for the victors and the construction of barriers around France: Prussia gained the Rhineland, Austria took Lombardy and Venetia, the Netherlands absorbed Belgium, and Piedmont received Genoa.
- Great power consultation was institutionalised through the **Concert of Europe** and the congress system, with meetings at Aix-la-Chapelle, Troppau, Laibach and Verona, institutionalised great power consultation, and the **Holy Alliance** of Russia, Austria and Prussia added an ideological pledge to suppress revolution.
- Its achievement was durable: there was no general European war between 1815 and 1854, and none of Napoleonic scale until 1914, which is the strongest defence of it.
- Its failure was that it treated nationalism and liberalism as diseases to be suppressed rather than as forces to be accommodated, and Italy and Germany were left as geographical expressions rather than states.
- Britain's semi-detachment under Canning, refusing to underwrite intervention against liberal revolutions, broke the congress system by the 1820s, and the recognition of Latin American independence and of Greek independence in 1830 showed the limits of the conservative order.

KEY TERMS

Concert of Europe — The practice of great power consultation to manage crises collectively, established at Vienna and eroded by divergent interests from the 1820s.

Geographical expression — Metternich's dismissal of Italy as a mere region rather than a nation, quoted in almost every question on Italian unification.

What nineteenth century nationalism actually was

The 2025 paper asked how nationalism could be a force for both integration and disintegration, which requires you to define it before you illustrate it.

- **Cultural nationalism** derived from Herder's argument that each people has its own language, folk culture and spirit, which made philology, folklore collection and history writing political activities.
- **Civic nationalism** derived from the French Revolution and defined the nation as the community of citizens sharing rights and laws, which made it in principle open to anyone who accepted them.
- **Mazzini's** Young Italy from 1831 and the associated Young Europe combined the two, holding that each nation had a divinely appointed mission and that free nations would naturally cooperate.
- **Integration** was its effect where a people was politically divided: Germany's thirty nine states and Italy's seven became two, and the same logic later applied in the Balkans and beyond.
- **Disintegration** was its effect where a state contained many peoples, and the Habsburg, Ottoman and Romanov empires were all corroded by exactly the same principle that built Germany and Italy.
- That symmetry is the whole answer to the 2025 question: nationalism is not a force for unity or for division but a principle that political and cultural boundaries should coincide, which unites where they are fragmented and divides where they overlap.
- **Benedict Anderson's** imagined communities and **Ernest Gellner's** argument that industrial society requires a standardised high culture are the two frameworks to cite, and **Eric Hobsbawm's** invention of tradition supplies the third.
- Asked about in 2026, the **1830 revolutions** illustrate the point: Belgium separated from the Netherlands, Poland's rising against Russia failed, and France replaced one monarchy with a more liberal one, so the same year produced national, liberal and constitutional outcomes in different places.

The July Revolution of 1830 and the revolutions of 1848

The 2026 paper asked about 1830 and the 2023 paper about 1848. They are two waves of the same pressure and are best learned together.

- The **July Revolution of 1830** in France followed Charles X's July Ordinances dissolving the chamber and restricting the press, and three days of Parisian fighting replaced him with **Louis Philippe** as a constitutional Orleanist monarch.
- Its significance, which the 2026 question asks for, is that it established the principle that the monarchy existed by national consent rather than divine right, widened the franchise modestly, and demonstrated that the Vienna settlement could be revised.
- 1830 spread outward: **Belgium** won independence from the Netherlands and was recognised as a neutral state in 1831, revolts occurred in Poland, in the Italian duchies and in several German states, and Britain's Reform Act of 1832 was passed under the same pressure.
- Beginning in Palermo and then Paris in February, the **1848 revolutions**, spread to Vienna, Berlin, Budapest, Prague, Milan and Rome, and produced Metternich's flight and the abdication of Louis Philippe.

- Meeting in 1848 and 1849, the **Frankfurt Parliament** attempted German unification by constitutional means, deadlocked over **Grossdeutsch** and **Kleindeutsch** solutions, and its offer of the imperial crown was refused by Frederick William IV of Prussia.
- 1848 failed almost everywhere because the liberal middle classes broke with the workers once social demands appeared, most starkly in the **June Days** in Paris; because the national movements collided with each other, as Hungarians did with Croats and Romanians; and because the imperial armies remained loyal.
- The 2023 quotation, that the revolutions were shaped by democracy and nationalism, is accurate but incomplete, because the social question of employment and bread was the third force and it is what split the coalitions.
- The consequences were nonetheless real: serfdom was abolished in the Habsburg lands, Piedmont kept its constitution and became the nucleus of Italian unification, and the failure of liberal nationalism discredited idealism in favour of the **Realpolitik** that Cavour and Bismarck then practised.

KEY TERMS

Grossdeutsch and Kleindeutsch — The greater German solution including Austria versus the lesser German solution excluding it, the deadlock that killed the Frankfurt Parliament.

Realpolitik — Politics conducted on calculation of power and interest rather than on ideology or sentiment, the method of Cavour and Bismarck.

The unification of Italy

The 2023 paper asked for the stages from 1848 to the occupation of Rome in 1870, so the chronology has to be secure and each stage needs its agent named.

- Three programmes competed after 1815: **Mazzini's** democratic republic, **Gioberti's** neo-Guelph federation under the Pope, and the **Piedmontese** monarchical solution which finally succeeded.
- **Cavour**, prime minister of Piedmont from 1852 under Victor Emmanuel II, modernised the state, built railways, and pursued unification by diplomacy rather than insurrection.
- Cavour's participation in the **Crimean War in 1855** bought Piedmont a seat at the Paris peace conference and French sympathy, which is the classic example of using a distant war for a domestic purpose.
- The **Plombieres agreement of 1858** with Napoleon III secured French help against Austria in exchange for Nice and Savoy, and the war of 1859 delivered Lombardy, though Napoleon's separate armistice at Villafranca left Venetia Austrian.
- Plebiscites in 1860 brought Parma, Modena, Tuscany and the Romagna into the Piedmontese state.
- **Garibaldi's** expedition of the Thousand, the **Mille**, sailed in May 1860, took Sicily and then Naples, and his decision to hand the south to Victor Emmanuel at Teano rather than proclaim a republic is the single most consequential act of restraint in the whole process.
- The **Kingdom of Italy** was proclaimed in March 1861, **Venetia** was gained in 1866 by siding with Prussia against Austria, and **Rome** was taken in September 1870 when the French garrison withdrew for the Franco-Prussian war.

- The unification's limits are examinable: the south was annexed rather than integrated, producing the **Southern Question** and brigandage; the papacy refused to recognise the state until 1929; and the franchise remained tiny, which is the background to Massimo d'Azeglio's remark that having made Italy they must now make Italians.

The unification of Germany

The 2024 paper asked whether it was as much a product of coal and iron as of blood and iron, which is an invitation to give the economic account equal weight with the diplomatic one.

- The economic foundation came first. The **Zollverein** customs union, led by Prussia and effective from 1834, created a German economic space that excluded Austria and made Prussia the natural centre before any war was fought.
- Railway construction, Ruhr coal and Silesian iron, and Krupp's armaments gave Prussia the industrial base that Austria lacked, which is the substance of the coal and iron half of the 2024 quotation.
- **Bismarck**, minister president from 1862, resolved the constitutional conflict over army funding by governing without a budget, and his blood and iron speech of that year announced the method.
- The **Danish War of 1864** over Schleswig and Holstein was fought with Austria as an ally, deliberately creating the joint administration under the Gastein Convention that would provide the pretext for the next war.
- Decided at Koniggratz, the **Austro-Prussian War of 1866**, was ended on generous terms so that Austria would not seek revenge, and it produced the North German Confederation and the exclusion of Austria from Germany.
- The **Franco-Prussian War of 1870 to 1871**, triggered by the Ems telegram, brought the southern states in and ended with the proclamation of the German Empire at Versailles in January 1871 and the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine.
- **Bismarck after 1871** turned to preserving what he had made, describing Germany as a satiated power and building the alliance system that kept France isolated, which is the diplomatic bridge to the origins of the First World War.
- The **Alsace-Lorraine** annexation is the strategic error to name: it guaranteed permanent French hostility and shaped European alliances until 1914.
- Both halves are necessary to answer the 2024 question. The Zollverein and industrial superiority made Prussian leadership possible and Austria's exclusion economically real, while Bismarck's three wars converted that latent supremacy into a state; neither alone is sufficient.
- The **character** of the new empire matters: it was a Prussian-dominated federal monarchy with a chancellor answerable to the emperor rather than the Reichstag, which built the authoritarian constitutional structure that Weimar later inherited.

	Italy	Germany
Leading state	Piedmont-Sardinia	Prussia
Statesman	Cavour	Bismarck
Economic base	Weak, north only	Zollverein, Ruhr coal, Silesian iron
Method	Diplomacy plus Garibaldi	Three planned wars
Completed	1870, occupation of Rome	1871, proclamation at Versailles
Structural legacy	Southern Question, weak parliament	Authoritarian constitution, Alsace-Lorraine

Italy and Germany compared. Both were made by a leading state, not by popular revolution.

The disintegration of empires

The syllabus names this and it is the mirror image of the two unifications, so it belongs in any answer on nationalism as a double-edged force.

- The **Habsburg** monarchy contained Germans, Hungarians, Czechs, Poles, Ruthenes, Romanians, Croats, Serbs, Slovaks, Slovenes and Italians, and the **Ausgleich of 1867** created the Dual Monarchy by satisfying the Hungarians at the expense of the Slavs.
- That settlement is the classic case of a partial concession intensifying the problem, since Czech and South Slav demands were now blocked by Hungarian as well as Austrian resistance.
- The **Ottoman Empire** lost Greece in 1830, saw Serbian and Romanian autonomy consolidated, and after the Congress of Berlin in 1878 lost most of its European territory, which the powers managed as the Eastern Question.
- **Balkan nationalism** produced the wars of 1912 and 1913 and then the Sarajevo assassination, so the disintegration of two empires supplied the immediate cause of the First World War.
- The **Romanov** empire faced Polish risings in 1830 and 1863 and Finnish, Baltic and Ukrainian national movements, and answered with Russification, which converted cultural movements into political ones.
- At Paris the **1919 settlement** applied self-determination selectively, creating Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Hungary and the Baltic states while leaving large minorities inside each, which is why the principle produced new grievances rather than resolving old ones.
- The extension beyond Europe is the part most candidates omit: the same principle underwrote Indian, Egyptian, Irish and Chinese nationalism, and Wilson's rhetoric at Paris was heard in Cairo, Delhi and Beijing even though it was not intended for them.
- Close on this: the nation-state became the only internationally legitimate form of political community during this century, and the empires that could not convert themselves into nation-states dissolved, which is the framework for the Liberation from Colonial Rule unit.

Nationalities emerging outside Europe

The syllabus says across the world, not across Europe, and candidates almost always stop at the Balkans. Taking the argument outside Europe is the cheapest way to lift a Section B answer into the top band.

- **Latin America** produced the first wave, with Bolivar and San Martin leading independence from Spain between 1810 and 1826, and the resulting states were creole-led and territorially defined by colonial administrative units rather than by ethnicity.
- That Latin American pattern is what **Benedict Anderson** used to argue that nationalism was invented in the Americas and exported to Europe, which reverses the usual diffusion story and is worth citing.
- **Japan** is the case of a state converting itself successfully, using Meiji institution building and compulsory education to manufacture a national identity, and then acquiring an empire of its own by 1910.
- The **Ottoman** response ran from Tanzimat reform through Abdul Hamid's pan-Islamism to the **Young Turk revolution of 1908**, which began as an inclusive Ottomanism and hardened into Turkish nationalism, with catastrophic consequences for the Armenians in 1915.
- **Egypt** produced the Urabi revolt of 1881 to 1882 against European financial control, which triggered the British occupation, and then a mass nationalist movement under Zaghlul and the Wafd after 1918.
- **China** moved from the anti-Manchu nationalism of Sun Yat-sen and the 1911 revolution to the **May Fourth Movement of 1919**, provoked by the transfer of German concessions in Shandong to Japan at Versailles rather than to China.
- **India** is the largest case and the most instructive, because a nation had to be constructed across languages, religions and castes, which pushed Indian nationalism towards a civic and constitutional definition rather than an ethnic one.
- The comparative point that scores: European nationalism generally assumed a pre-existing cultural nation seeking a state, while colonial nationalism generally began with a state boundary drawn by an empire and had to build a nation inside it, which is why the two look so different and why the second was harder.

KEY TERMS

May Fourth Movement — The Chinese protest of 1919 against the Versailles award of Shandong to Japan, and the cultural and political awakening that followed it.

Creole nationalism — Anderson's term for the American-born colonial elites who led Latin American independence within existing administrative boundaries.

Nationalism and its critics

A short analytical section that lifts an answer above narrative. Examiners reward candidates who can stand outside the story.

- **Lord Acton** argued in 1862 that the nation-state was inherently intolerant of minorities because it made political legitimacy depend on ethnic or cultural homogeneity, which the twentieth century amply confirmed.
- **Marxists** treated nationalism as a bourgeois ideology masking class interest, though Lenin's support for national self-determination as an anti-imperial weapon shows the tension inside that position.
- **Liberal nationalists** such as Mazzini and John Stuart Mill believed free nations would cooperate, and the century between 1815 and 1914 tested that belief severely.
- **Gellner's** functionalist account, that industrial society needs a mobile literate population sharing one high culture, explains why nationalism arose when it did rather than merely that it did.

- **Anderson's** emphasis on print capitalism connects the movement to the newspaper and the novel, which is directly usable in Section A when writing about the Indian press.
- The Indian application to note in passing: Indian nationalism had to construct a nation from linguistic and religious plurality rather than discover one, which is why it produced a civic and constitutional rather than an ethnic definition, and why the failure of that project in 1947 was partial rather than total.

How to structure the answers

Six questions came from this unit in four years, and they are all twenty markers with a similar shape.

- For Vienna, name the three principles, give a territorial example of each, then judge the settlement by its durability against its blindness to nationalism.
- On 1830 or 1848, use a three part structure of causes, course across at least three countries, and reasons for success or failure, and always include the social question as the third force alongside liberalism and nationalism.
- For Italy or Germany, run the stages chronologically with the agent named at each, then close on the structural legacy, the Southern Question or the authoritarian constitution.
- Comparative questions want the table structure of leading state, statesman, economic base, method and legacy, which converts a narrative into an argument.
- For any question on nationalism as a general force, use the integration and disintegration symmetry and cite Gellner or Anderson, and take the argument outside Europe at least once.

Last-mile revision

- Vienna 1814-15: legitimacy, restoration, compensation; Metternich, Castlereagh, Alexander I, Talleyrand; Concert of Europe and Holy Alliance.
- 1830: July Ordinances, Louis Philippe, Belgian independence 1831, Polish rising crushed.
- 1848: Palermo and Paris February, Metternich flees, Frankfurt Parliament and the Grossdeutsch-Kleindeutsch deadlock, June Days split the coalition.
- Italy: Cavour 1852, Crimea 1855, Plombieres 1858, war 1859 and Lombardy, plebiscites 1860, Garibaldi's Mille and Teano, Kingdom 1861, Venetia 1866, Rome 1870.
- Germany: Zollverein 1834, Bismarck 1862, Danish War 1864, Koniggratz 1866, Ems telegram and Franco-Prussian War 1870-71, proclamation at Versailles, Alsace-Lorraine.
- Empires: Ausgleich 1867, Congress of Berlin 1878, Balkan wars 1912-13, Russification, 1919 self-determination applied selectively.
- Theory: Herder cultural, French Revolution civic, Mazzini's synthesis, Gellner, Anderson, Hobsbawm, Acton's warning.

Common errors to avoid

- Reducing German unification to blood and iron. The Zollverein and industrial superiority preceded and enabled the wars, which is what the 2024 question is testing.

- Saying 1848 achieved nothing. Serfdom ended in the Habsburg lands and Piedmont kept its constitution, which made 1859 possible.
- Forgetting the social question in 1848. Liberalism and nationalism alone do not explain why the coalitions broke.
- Treating Garibaldi as a rival to Cavour throughout. His surrender of the south at Teano is what made the kingdom possible.
- Presenting nationalism as inherently unifying. The same principle dissolved three empires, and the 2025 question asks for exactly that symmetry.
- Confining the disintegration story to Europe. Wilsonian self-determination was heard in Delhi, Cairo and Beijing.

Mains Practice

The Vienna Settlement of 1815 was based on three principles: restoration, legitimacy and compensation. Elucidate.

20 marks · 250 words · 2026

“Nationalism in the nineteenth century was a driving force for both integration and disintegration.” Illustrate with examples from Europe and other parts.

20 marks · 250 words · 2025

Discuss the different stages of the unification of Italy from 1848 to the occupation of Rome in 1870.

20 marks · 250 words · 2023

'The July Revolution of 1830 marked a significant turning point in the advancement of liberalism and constitutionalism in France.' Analyse.

10 marks · 150 words · 2026

The unification of Germany was as much a product of coal and iron as it was of blood and iron.

10 marks · 150 words · 2024

“The Revolutions of 1848 were shaped by the ideas of democracy and nationalism.”

10 marks · 150 words · 2023