

The Role of Nationalism and Ethnic Conflicts Before and During WWI: The Case of Pan-Slavism, Pan-Germanism and French Revanchism

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Abstract: This article is dedicated to discussing some hidden but crucial reasons that led to the outbreak of World War I, that is, nationalism and national conflicts, through three nationalisms: Pan-Slavism, Pan-Germanism, and French revanchism which have significant impacts on the occurrence and expansion of the war and how nationalism influenced the thinking and decision-making of European politicians at that time. At the same time refuted the consistent statement (The uneven distribution of interests among European empires especially between the British Empire and the German Empire led to the war.) through some government behaviors that deliberately incited national hatred and advocated war. This article will mainly demonstrate three aspects: The conflict between Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism in the Balkans triggered the war; Pan-Slavism became the pioneer in enlarging the war; French revanchism gave birth to the desire to participate in the war and its post-war impact.

Keywords: WWI, Nationalism, Pan-Slavism, Pan-Germanism, French Revanchism

1. Introduction

The reasons for the outbreak of the First World War are complex. Some fields have been widely studied and some fields have been rarely discussed. This has led to the former gradually becoming an authoritative view. However, such a research method has limitations. We should explain the outbreak of the First World War from different aspects which is also the original intention of this article. At present, many scholars believe that the First World War originated from the struggle for material interests, that is the struggle for colonies and market share. In Europe, at the beginning of the 20th century, the old empire controlled huge colonies and markets, but its economic strength was declining gradually, and the colonies became its supply tool or survival tool instead of an active free market under the rule of the empire. The economic strength of emerging empires continues to grow, and their original resources and lands can no longer meet the needs of rapid economic development. Therefore, they actively expanded territories and markets but found that there were very few areas available for development, they were all under the control of the old empire, so conflicts arose. The newly rising empire continued to challenge the authority of the old empire in overseas colonies in various forms. In the end, some diplomatic mistakes and impulsive decisions led to intensified competition and moved toward the War. However, scholars seldom explored the secrets behind the First World War

from the perspective of ideology and culture, which led to the neglect of some key factors, such as the promotion of nationalism. This article will devote itself to exploring the respective characteristics and contradictions of the three major European nationalisms (Pan-Slavism, Pan-Germanism, and French Revanchism) on the eve of World War I, and to study their impact on political decision-making. We hope to re-examine how the First World War broke out from a non-material perspective and hope to come up with a brand-new explanation, that is, the war is not purely out of contention for material interests, but is based on a mental strength aimed to achieve a specific spiritual goal. This article collects some incidents of the policies issued by major European countries before the war (here refers to the policies issued by several major powers after the Sarajevo incident), and demonstrates the relationship between the direct consequences of these policies and the course of the war. The driving force of doctrine.

2. Literature Review

What caused WWI has become a controversial topic as scholars study it more and more deeply. Although many historians have emphasized that nationalism played a certain role in the outbreak of WWI, most of them believed that the main reason was an uneven distribution of interests between European Empires especially the conflict between Germany and Britain. A typical representative was Marxism, they believed that the escalation of imperialism's hegemony led to this war. It has to be admitted that their opinions are not completely unreasonable, but if attention was paid to some intrinsic facts, for example, Russia's military mobilization which prepared to attack the Austro-Hungarian Empire after the war between Serbia and Austria-Hungary began, there were a lot of clues which indicated that the expansion and fanaticism of nationalism are crucial for the outbreak of the Great War. This article aims to clarify the direct connection between nationalism and the outbreak of World War I and the critical role that nationalism played in the outbreak and expansion of World War I, although this form of connection and role was not always Present in a way that is obvious to people. This article will elaborate on the three major nationalisms on the European continent in 1914, firstly discussing how the contradiction between Pan-Slavism and Pan-Germanism laid the foundation for the outbreak of the war, and then discussing Pan-Slavism and French Revenge respectively. How doctrine drives politicians to expand wars, showing readers how nationalist sentiments can fervent political decisions and intensify conflicts. The main objects of discussion in this article are the three different nationalisms on the European continent, namely the Pan-Germanism of Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Pan-Slavism of Russia, and the revanchism of France, but it does not include the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan, and other European countries. regional nationalism. At the same time, many reasons led to the outbreak of World War I. Here we only describe the influence of nationalism on the war. In addition, this paper focuses on whether nationalism can be defined as a decisive factor affecting the outbreak of this war. Because the main subject of the discussion is nationalism, this article will discuss it by theme. However, considering that the research direction is the impact of nationalism on the First World War, it will be narrated in chronological order, and the three major nationalisms will be introduced while describing. The starting point of the timeline is around 1914. It first discusses the long-term struggle between Pan-Slavism and Pan-Germanism in the Balkans (part of the content before 1914 is involved here) and introduces the two respectively. Then it will describe how the contradiction between the two ended up in a more detailed way. It was embodied radically, and then led to the Sarajevo incident, the fuse of the world war, and then described how Pan-Slavism, Pan-Germanism, and Revanchism affected the political decisions of Russia, Germany, and France and prompted them to expand the war. change. In short, nationalism played a considerable role in the outbreak of World War I. The main research direction of this article is the connection between nationalism and the outbreak of the World War. The impact of nationalism on political decision-making is the focus of this article, and it is also the

characterization of its status in the First World War. Although the article can demonstrate that the uneven distribution of interests among powerful countries and the struggle for world hegemony are not the decisive factors leading to the war as many scholars believe, and can demonstrate the importance of nationalism in the outbreak of the war, it still cannot rule out other factors. Larger influencing factors, so it needs to be improved by future research.

3. Materials and Methodologies

This article aims to analyze how the war started from a different perspective, that is the influence of nationalism sentiment in political decision-making. There were some records of government behaviors about incitement war (eg. The establishment of the French Yellow Book) which can be evidence to prove that some governments intended to provoke the war. There was also another fact, that Germany tried hard to mediate the war instead of declaring war on the German nation's enemy directly. As for Britain, it maintained natural until Belgium cited the Treaty of London. So, by displaying this evidence, it is easy to derive that the uneven distribution had a slight impact on the outbreak of the war, it only caused intense competition. In contrast, the countries whose policies were completely influenced by nationalism such as Pan-Slavism in Russia were more likely to go to war and even expand the war.

4. The ethnic conflict between Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism in the Balkans and its pre-war impact

At the end of the 19th century [1], and at the beginning of the 20th, the Balkan area was a constant explosive situation. The related problems have been gathered by the historians under the heading: "The Balkan Question." This, however, had been preceded by the "Eastern Question." The ethnic composition of the Balkans is complex, and there are conflicts and even hatred among different ethnic groups due to historical, social, and religious reasons. However, small-scale ethnic disputes, or conflicts between ethnic groups that are not in the dominant position themselves, are not terrible. Ethnic conflict between the Russian Empire and the Germanic-dominated Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Balkan region is located at the meeting point of multiple civilizations. Historically, it was an area where major civilizations competed, wars occurred frequently here. The traces left by the old rule and the new rule coexisted, resulting in complex social components and disordered order. In the 20th century, with the weakening of the Ottoman Empire, its influence gradually withdrew from Southeast Europe, and Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire became the hegemonies of the region [2]. The Balkan Wars and the territorial changes that ensued spurred the rebirth of Pan-Slavic activities in Russia. Scrutinizing the entanglements among Russian foreign policy, diplomacy, and public opinion, this chapter describes how officials and civilians—far away from the battlefields—became agitated in 1912–13, and how Pan-Slavism as a political discourse reemerged within Russian society on the eve of the First World War. As early as the Crimean War, other European powers expressed their support for Turkey to contain Russia's expansion in the Black Sea, the Middle East, and the Balkans, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire was no exception. Although the politicians at the time were more motivated by political interests than nationalist sentiments, we can still easily see that Europeans were unwilling to regard Slavic Russia as a European country. First reflected in the distribution of political interests, and extended to ideology in the early 20th century. The first is Pan-Germanism. Some German princes and the Habsburg Empire have always wanted to establish a unified Germanic cultural circle, that is, to unify all Germanic living areas expand outward, and promote the majesty of the Germanic nation [3]. Research evidence proves that the most elementary definition of pan-Germanism, a belief or 'desire' for German unity and a common mission, is best suited for assessing the breadth of pan-Germanism in Austria both before and after the monarchy's collapse in 1918. After

the unification of Germany in 1871, it was quickly promoted. The alliance between Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire was not only a cooperation based on political interests, but also a manifestation of national unity [4]. The outbreak of the First World War on 1 August 1914 was welcomed by the PanGermans as an opportunity to unite the German people. The Pan-German discourse adopted the language of moral purification and images of resurrection, as they spoke about war and domestic reconciliation. 1 For Claß, the war was to bring about the domestic —healing of the ethnic community, the guarantee of its physical as well as moral health for all time. Because it is surrounded by powerful countries on three sides and has a narrow sea estuary, the expansion direction of the Austro-Hungarian Empire can only be the Balkans in the southeast. The Habsburg dynasty controlled many parts of the Balkans in the past century and annexed them in 1908. Bosnia. However many Slavs are living in these areas, and they are dissatisfied with the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. On the one hand, it is because of the high-pressure policy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and on the other hand, it is secretly influenced by Russian Pan-Slavism. Similar to Pan-Germanisms, Pan-Slavism also emphasizes the unification of all Slavic settlements and the establishment of a large empire ruled by the Slavs [5]. The strength of Pan-Slavism is said to be proved by the fact that in a century, it never quite disappeared. It had its high and low tides but it formed at all times a strong and persistent current of life in the Slavic world. The millions of Slavs scattered from the Black to the White Sea, and from the Adriatic to the Pacific, presumably never ceased to cherish the idea of race solidarity. The government of Russia is supposed to have been consciously inspired all these years by the vision of a great state in which all the Slavic peoples would be nestled under the wide wings of her double eagle. It is worth mentioning that Russia has many directions to expand, and many other regions are inhabited by Slavs, but Russia has a special idea of the Balkans, although the Russians declare their actions (including ideological infiltration, rebellion, chaos, etc.) are to rescue the Slavs oppressed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it is undeniable that this also contains political ambitions, that is, they want to take the opportunity to attack their opponents, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and expand their own in Europe. Influence. Therefore, Russia's policy towards the Balkans more or less includes some content that actively creates disputes. Although for the Russians, all they want is more voice and more rights for their compatriots in the Balkans, the Slavs living in the Balkans are not only satisfied with this, they hate alien rule. They want to achieve independence and accept the rule of Russia at all costs. There are many fanatics among these people. Although they are deeply influenced by Pan-Slavism, they are not under the jurisdiction of the Russian government. On the contrary, many of them are civil organizations. Members, of these organizations often promote fanatical nationalism and advocate the use of violence and revenge to achieve national independence. Therefore, the Sarajevo incident is not accidental, it is just a concentrated expression of the Slavs' desire to break away from the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and join the Slavic nation-state, but this desire is so strong that when formulating specific plans, these non-governmental Slavic groups tend to Using radical and violent means, they ignore the consequences and only achieve their goals. This is also a typical case of nationalist sentiment influencing decision-making. In short, in the Balkans before 1914, there was a force influenced by Russian Pan-Slavism. While pursuing national liberation, they also tried to challenge and deter the empire built by the Germans to expand the influence of the Slavic nation as a whole.

5. Pan-Slavism became the pioneer in enlarging the war

After the Sarajevo incident, the Austro-Hungarian Empire issued a series of ultimatums to the Kingdom of Serbia. These ultimatums had a strong political color, but surprisingly, the Serbian government accepted most of the terms, except for a few that involved violations of Serbia's sovereignty. This shows that the Serbian government did not intend to fight against the Habsburg Empire, but adopted limited compromises to ensure its security and strive for opportunities for

reconciliation. In reality, which is far from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they try their best to avoid war, which is very different from the fanatical Serbian national liberation groups. Although the Austro-Hungarian Empire finally declared war on Serbia, it only marked the beginning of the war between the two countries. If Serbia lost, the international community would generally take it for granted. Even if the Austro-Hungarian Empire lost, it would just lose some influence. All this seems to be at a small cost, and it is difficult for people to connect it with a tragic war with 40 million casualties. However, everything changed when the Tsar announced his support for Serbia and a general mobilization of the army. Almost immediately after Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, Tsar Nicholas II expressed support for his fellow Serbians and prepared to send Russian troops into the war. This war had nothing to do with Russia, but the Tsar believed that he was the leader of the entire Slavic nation and had an obligation to protect his "people", so he chose to fight against the Austro-Hungarian Empire with Serbia. Political decision-making based on sentiments of communism is irrational and emotional, and the tsar's decision can also be seen as an active expansion of pan-Slavism, which means taking the opportunity to attack the Germanic rule in the Balkans on the grounds of protecting compatriots, and at the same time expand the influence of the Slavic peoples in the region, striving to free several regions from the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to form independent Slavic states or to join existing Slavic states and accept Russian control. The military strength of the Austro-Hungarian Empire itself is weaker than that of Russia. The Tsar's participation in the war will undoubtedly lead to the disastrous defeat of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Tsar is likely to make more territorial claims after winning. These are the Habsburg Empire itself in crisis. It is fatal to rule. The Germans also have nationalist sentiments. This is most vividly reflected in Germany. The Tsar intends to put pressure on his compatriots. The Germans were naturally very unhappy, even though many people in Germany strongly demanded to support the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Together to fought back against Russia, but the imperial government first chose a more rational and moderate way, that is, negotiation. Kaiser Wilhelm II proposed to Tsar Nicholas II to stop the general mobilization, hoping that Russia would take the initiative to withdraw its troops, but the stubborn Tsar rejected this request and insisted on sending troops to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In this way, Germany was in a very passive position. The location, on the one hand, Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire belong to the same Germanic nation and have concluded a military alliance. If it is ignored, it will not only hurt the national feelings but also lose the credibility of cooperation. On the other hand, the strength of Russia should not be underestimated. losses, thus giving old rival France a chance to re-emerge and possibly exact revenge on Germany. But the Kaiser is not a staunch pacifist. He is also a fanatical nationalist. In his eyes, the interests of the Germans are inviolable. With the unanimous decision of the high-level people, the Kaiser finally chose to go to war against Russia, the purpose of which was naturally to teach Russia a lesson and stabilize the rule of the Germanic nation in the Balkans. At this point, the battlefield has completely turned into an international war. To sum up, we can find that whether it is Pan-Germanic Germany or Pan-Slavic Russia, the primary factor that determines whether they participate in the exhibition is whether the national interests and dignity are violated. Both of them participated in the war to protect their national dignity. and vested interests, the rulers can do everything for the glory of the nation (this glory can refer to defeating the opponent to win the war, or to spread the influence of the nation, etc.), which is a good explanation of the nationalism that dominates the politicians their political decisions, which led to a series of wrong policies and worsened relations with opposing countries, which eventually led to wars. Russia was the first country to do this, which may have something to do with its democratization. The degree has a lot to do with it. In general, democracies will be more rational when making decisions, but this is not the focus of this article. In short, the world war was not only caused by the struggle for hegemony between old and new forces but also by a series of radical and irrational political decisions (these decisions were influenced by strong nationalist sentiments). After all, without policies and

orders, the armies of various countries cannot be dispatched Yes, the war will not break out. According to the aforementioned contents, it is obvious that the conflicts about world hegemony and colonies between Germany and Britain were not the initial factor for the outbreak of the Great War which means former scholars' opinions had a limited statement about how the war began. There were other reasons for the participation of Germany as well, for instance, some internal issues like socialist movements [6]. Despite many differences of emphasis and opinion, it is fair to say that a far-reaching consensus of German, British, and American historians now agrees that German foreign policy after 1897 must be understood as a response to the internal threat of socialism and democracy. In 1897 the Imperial government decided to deal with domestic discontent by pursuing an aggressive foreign policy; subsequently, it regarded a foreign war as a useful option should domestic problems become intolerable. This in turn has led to the view that Berlin helped unleash war in 1914 because war had become the only way out of Germany's domestic difficulties. So the theory that emphasized the desire and conflict for hegemony is the main reason why WWI started is not capable of taking the dominant place in academia. The factors usually come from reality, but such conflict did not influence the war, instead, some detailed factors, for example, nationalism, internal crisis, and so on involved directly.

6. French revanchism gave birth to the desire to participate in the war and its post-war impact

Revanchism refers to the act of regaining territory lost to a country after a war through political campaigns, which can occur many years after the end of the war. Generally speaking, the germination of revanchism is based on restoring national dignity, rebuilding the geopolitical influence of the avenger, or gaining economic benefits by defeating the enemy. The thought of extreme revanchism is often hawkish, and most believe that the recovery of lost ground can only be resolved by violence. A typical example of revanchism is France. After the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, France was forced to cede Alsace-Lorraine to Germany. Most republican politicians in the newly established French Third Republic declared that they would take back the lost land. An atmosphere of revanchism prevailed in French society, and paintings emphasizing the humiliation of defeat, such as those of Alphonse-Marie-Adolphe de Neuville, were popular at the time. Influenced by this idea, France worked hard to find allies, which led to the Franco-Russian alliance in 1894 and the later Triple Entente. This was the earliest cause of the outbreak of the First World War [7]. The Franco-Prussian War defined the concept that a nation's identity was linked to its military capabilities and its heritage could be represented physically by geographic territory. This nationalism of blood and soil defined the evolution of France and Germany between 1871 and 1914 and equated land and identity. Before the war, the French nation and German nations had plenty of ethnic conflicts which were mainly caused by territory change [8], between 1871 and 1945, in the course of three conflicts control of Eastern France passed between France and Germany four times. With rule changes came changes in perspective on the different conflicts, particularly in terms of commemoration.

Three phases of memorialization are investigated: firstly, the initial period of commemoration following the Franco-Prussian War; secondly, the period of commemoration which began almost twenty years after this conflict; and finally, the period following the First World War. A typical one was in Alsace-Lorraine [7]. Thus, from 1870 to 1914, the Alsace-Lorraine region retained the potential to reignite international conflict. Rather than being a minor border issue, it became a pitting of national identities and varying conceptions of democratic ideals against one another. "It appears that the question of Alsace is not only the result of a conflict between two rival nations but it can be seen as an episode of the secular struggle that continues between the democratic spirit." Alsace-Lorraine became a symbol of what it fundamentally meant to be French or German. It was the first place where those newly developed French and German identities truly came into conflict. In their desire to create new fundamental and defining national identities, France and Germany used the desire

for revenge against one another, and their believed superiority to each another, to unite their populations. French revanchism also influenced the 1919 Treaty of Versailles after World War I, which returned Alsace-Lorraine to France and demanded reparations from defeated Germany. The Treaty of Versailles led to revanchism in Germany. On July 28, 1914, the Austro-Hungarian Empire declared war on Serbia, but the order for general military mobilization was not issued until July 31, and the actual execution was the next day (the release date of the telegram was revised in the Orange Book after the outbreak of the war to July 26, and the content was also revised to (the general mobilization order of the whole army has been signed), and the French yellow book inserted a fictional communiqué, which was issued on July 31, stating that the Russian order was based on the Austro-Hungarian Empire's comprehensive mobilization, but also based on continuous covert mobilization measures in Germany over six days. It is worth mentioning that Germany had sent a request to the French government to ask it to maintain neutrality after joining forces with Austria-Hungary to start a war against Russia and Serbia. It can be seen that Germany did not intend to start a war against France at the beginning, but France had already allied with Russia at this time. For the alliance, on the other hand, the French feel that this is a good opportunity to regain lost ground. France and Russia attacking Germany from the west and east respectively will put Germany into a disadvantageous situation of fighting on two fronts, thereby increasing the chances of the French-Russian alliance winning. Once you win or gain an advantage, you have the opportunity to avenge Germany and regain national dignity. Therefore, the French government trumpeted in the Yellow Book that Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire had assembled troops ready to attack themselves and their allies. As the first country to expand the war, Russia's behavior was described by the French government as a just counterattack against the provocations of Germany and the Habsburg Empire. In this way, the reasons for France's participation in the war became reasonable, although France could choose to stand by and watch, just like many members of the alliance in European history, refusing to join the war between the allies and other countries in order not to lose their strength. It needs to be compensated. The victory of the war should be used to restore the dignity and pride of the nation (that is, to compensate for the spiritual loss), and the material loss suffered by oneself should be compensated with high compensation and harsh treaties and soon after, it rose to racial attacks [9]. Racism and nationalism did not join because racism was ill-defined but because an integral or all-inclusive nationalism developed in such a way during the nineteenth century as to meet and marry this worldview. However, the French government promoted the German threat theory, and the already high revanchist sentiment became more intense. The French believed that they might be plundered by Germany for the second time, so they were ready to strike first, although Germany did not have such a similar attack at the beginning. Affected by nationalist sentiments, politicians deliberately intensified national hatred, provoked the desire of the people to join the war, and then realized their political and territorial ambitions. When revanchism replaced everything, politicians naturally would not consider war with Germany. Instead, they mobilized all available forces at all costs to recapture the lost national dignity. Although there are many ways to reshape national dignity, the characteristic of nationalism is that at certain times people will pursue some spiritual satisfaction does not hesitate to pay a greater material price. The Paris Peace Conference after the war was another climax of French revanchism. At the meeting, France bluntly stated that it wanted revenge, that is, to seize German territory, ban German armed forces, and prohibit Germans from resisting the occupation of the Allies (especially France). High compensation and so on. In other words, what the French lost in the Franco-Prussian War should be doubled. This is an almost fanatical revanchist sentiment. What should be dealt with after the war should be rationality and prudence, to ensure the international order. The stability and avoidance of more possible conflicts, the strong attitude of France even prevented the implementation of the proposals of some other participating countries, and finally a harsh "Treaty of Versailles" was sent to the negotiating table. Germany, which already has

strong emotions, should have a stronger revenge emotion after suffering such unfair treatment. In this way, revanchism was passed on to Germany, and national hatred not only did not ease but deepened. This also indicates that a bigger war is coming. In conclusion, this was not about hegemony and colonies, it was just for national glory, that's why I believe former scholars' view has limitations though to some extent they were correct. (eg. Wars outside Europe and battles between Germany and Britain)

7. Conclusion

This article aims to illustrate that irrational political decisions based on nationalistic sentiments were the decisive factor in the outbreak of the First World War, or that it was because of it that the war expanded from a war between two countries to an international war. At the same time, this article focuses on the conflict between Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism as well as French revanchism, intending to emphasize that these three nationalisms are the prominent representatives of the national conflicts on the eve of the First World War and the crucial impetus for the outbreak of WWI. This article aims to provide a new perspective on why the First World War broke out which is supposed to make readers not simply think that the conflict of interests among European empires (or the uneven distribution of colonial interests) led to the First World War, but rather focusing on more hidden factors, that is, the way of thinking and decision-making with nationalist sentiments. It also demonstrates the secret incitement to nationalism and advocacy of war by some participating countries on the eve of the war, and by focusing on 'Britain's passive participation in the war' and 'Germany tried to mediate the war and hoped that France would maintain neutral' to clarify that the imbalance in political and economic development between countries caused not war but competition, the outbreak of war had other secrets, namely nationalism and ethnic conflicts. This article attempts to collect and present more details of national conflicts and decisions with national sentiments, but because the consistent view of WWI is that the interests of the empires were unevenly distributed, most of the reports about the high-level government with the secret decision-making materials made by national sentiments have not been formally recorded or have been deliberately erased by the relevant governments. As a result, there are not many materials that can be found that can directly prove that nationalist sentiments provoked the First World War. It is a pity that this article cannot explain exactly whether the nationalist sentiment led European politicians to desire interests or whether they adopted nationalism as an approach to achieve their goals because they were driven by interests. This article hopes that future scholars can further improve the accurate relationship between interests and nationalist sentiment, and at the same time hope to provide another suggestion for political decision-making, that is, to make rational judgments based on reality instead of making policy with subjective emotions, although subjectivity cannot be completely ruled out, it should not dominate policy formulation.

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