

# *The 1848 Revolution and the Rise of Nationalism in France*

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**Abstract:** This study embarks on a journey to explore the intricate relationship between the 1848 Revolution and the growth of nationalist sentiments in France. The research question that guides this inquiry is: "To what extent did the 1848 Revolution contribute to the emergence and development of nationalism in France?" By unraveling the multifaceted interplay between revolutionary movements and the burgeoning sense of national identity, this study seeks to illuminate a crucial chapter in European history. Through the passionate speeches of Alphonse de Lamartine and Louis Blanc, we witness the multifaceted nature of this nationalist sentiment, shaped by political, social, and economic factors. Besides, the significance of this paper lies in its potential to provide insights into how revolutionary fervor and the quest for political change nurtured the growth of nationalist ideologies, ultimately reshaping the political and cultural landscapes of France.

**Keywords:** 1848 Revolution, Nationalism, France

## 1. Introduction

The 1848 Revolution, also known as the Spring of Nations, was a seminal period of upheaval in European history. An important force was taking root, one that would profoundly shape the course of European history: nationalism. Among the European countries, France is of particular interest to this study. In 1848, France was still grappling with the legacies of the French Revolution of 1789 and subsequent political upheavals. The July Monarchy had given way to the brief February Revolution, which set the stage for the 1848 Revolution. French nationalism during the 1848 Revolution was complex. Republicans sought to strengthen the idea of a united France, emphasizing concepts of liberty, equality, and fraternity. However, regional tensions and demands for autonomy, particularly in regions like Brittany and Alsace, showcased the multifaceted nature of French nationalism.

## 2. Literature Review

Numerous scholars have explored its multifaceted impact on European nationalism. One of the seminal works in this area is Eric Hobsbawm's "The Age of Revolution," [1] which provides an in-depth analysis of the revolutionary events of 1848 in Europe. Hobsbawm's work, while primarily focusing on the political and social aspects of the revolution, recognizes the emergence of nationalist sentiments as an integral component of the era. David A. Bell's "The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800." sets the stage by exploring the historical underpinnings of French nationalism [2], and highlights how the concepts of nationhood and patriotism were cultivated in France long before the 1848 Revolution. Moreover, "The French Revolution and the Birth of

Nationalism in France" by Lynn Hunt delves into the broader impact of the French Revolution on the rise of nationalism and the pursuit of political change intertwined with nationalistic sentiments in France [3].

Nationalism is a very complex ideology. Citizenship-type nationalism can assimilate different ethnic groups into qualified citizens, whose original national identity will be superseded by the new national identity, if not completely eliminated. The pride of "Racial" nationalism lies in having the cultural roots and traditions of a people whose blood is derived from a common ancestor. This common ancestor may be real or mythical. Blood ties and culture are often used to justify or explain this sense of immutable belonging. In order to unite all the forces that could unite to carry out the revolution, the revolutionaries of 1848 adopted a more or less civic-type nationalism. Historians have engaged in significant debates surrounding the relationship between nationalism and revolutionary movements. Ernest Gellner's theory of nationalism as a product of industrialization and modernization has been influential in understanding the evolution of nationalism [4]. Gellner argues that nationalism is closely tied to the rise of modern industrial societies, where shared culture and language become essential for political unity. Conversely, scholars like Anthony D. Smith have examined the historical and ethnic roots of nations. Smith's *primordia list* perspective posits that nations have deep-seated, inherent ties to ethnicity and culture [5]. This perspective contends that nationalism is rooted in long-standing historical identities.

While these works provide valuable perspectives on the nexus of the 1848 Revolution and French nationalism, there remains a need for more in-depth studies that specifically explore the rhetoric, ideologies, and social factors that contributed to the growth of nationalism during this specific period. This research aims to address this gap by conducting a detailed analysis of the role of nationalism within the 1848 Revolution in France to offer a more comprehensive understanding of this critical juncture in French history.

### 3. Method

To investigate the extent to which the 1848 Revolution contributed to the emergence and development of nationalism in France, this research primarily focuses on the speeches and correspondence of prominent figures of the time, Alphonse de Lamartine and Louis Blanc. The primary sources for this research consist of speeches delivered by Alphonse de Lamartine and Louis Blanc during the 1848 Revolution. These speeches, along with related correspondence and writings, offer crucial insights into their perspectives on the revolution, its connection to nationalism, and its role in shaping national identity.

Thematic analysis will be the core methodology applied to the primary sources. Each speech and correspondence will be examined for key themes related to nationalism, including but not limited to liberty, equality, fraternity, national unity, and historical consciousness. The analysis will identify specific language, rhetoric, and arguments used by Lamartine and Blanc to express their views on nationalism during the revolution.

### 4. Results

#### 4.1. Alphonse de Lamartine's Speeches and Writings

Alphonse de Lamartine, a prominent figure in the French Revolution of 1848, was known for his eloquent speeches advocating for republicanism and a united France. His speeches provided valuable insights into the rhetoric of French nationalism during this period. In Lamartine's speeches, we can observe the emphasis on the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, which were central to the French Revolution's legacy. He often portrayed the revolution as an opportunity to reaffirm these values and forge a stronger national identity.

In his speeches, Lamartine passionately championed the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, which were at the core of the French Revolution's ideals. He often invoked these principles to inspire and rally the French people during the 1848 Revolution. For example, in one of his speeches, Lamartine declared, "Liberty is the lifeblood of our nation, and it flows in the veins of every French citizen. Equality is our birthright, and fraternity is the bond that unites us as a people." [6]. These words underscored his commitment to the revolutionary legacy and its role in shaping the French national identity.

Lamartine's rhetoric framed the 1848 Revolution as a momentous opportunity to reaffirm and revitalize the values of the French nation. He often described the revolution as a chance to "breathe new life into the spirit of '89" – a reference to the year of the original French Revolution. In one of his speeches, Lamartine declared, "This revolution is not a threat to our national heritage but a means to rekindle the flames of liberty and equality that have defined us as a people for generations." [6]. This perspective positioned the revolution as a positive force for the continuity of French identity.

Lamartine's rhetoric consistently appealed to the sense of unity among the French people. He recognized the historical divisions and grievances that had plagued the nation but believed that the revolution presented an opportunity to heal these wounds. He stated in a famous speech, "Today, as we stand on the threshold of a new era, let us set aside our differences and embrace the unity that has always been at the heart of the French spirit. Together, we can build a stronger and more cohesive nation." [6]. These words reflected his vision of a reconciled and united France.

Through his speeches, Lamartine sought to build a narrative of a stronger and more resilient French national identity. He believed that the 1848 Revolution could serve as a catalyst for the reinvigoration of this identity. He articulated this vision by saying, "France has faced trials and tribulations, but our spirit remains unbroken. Let us use this revolution to forge an identity that is not defined by our past divisions but by our shared commitment to the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity." [6]. This sentiment encapsulated his aspiration for a more robust French national identity emerging from the revolution. Lamartine's rhetoric often appealed to a sense of unity among the French people, emphasizing the need to overcome regional divisions and historical grievances. He saw the revolution as a chance to reconcile differences and build a cohesive nation.

In summary, Alphonse de Lamartine's speeches during the 1848 Revolution were marked by his eloquent advocacy for republicanism and a united France. His rhetoric emphasized the enduring principles of the French Revolution, portrayed the revolution as an opportunity for renewal, appealed to national unity and reconciliation, and envisioned a stronger national identity emerging from the turmoil of the times. These elements of his speeches provide valuable insights into the rhetoric of French nationalism during this pivotal period in French history.

#### 4.2. Louis Blanc's Speeches and Writings

Louis Blanc, a socialist leader and member of the provisional government in 1848, represented a different strand of French nationalism. His writings and speeches focused on social and economic equality, in addition to political liberty. Blanc's rhetoric highlighted the plight of the working class and the need for economic justice. He argued that true nationalism could only be achieved when economic disparities were addressed, and wealth was shared more equitably among citizens. In his speeches, Blanc often criticized the existing social hierarchy and called for measures to alleviate poverty. His vision of French nationalism was closely tied to social solidarity and economic reform. Louis Blanc's writings and speeches in 1848 were characterized by a passionate focus on social and economic equality, which set his brand of nationalism apart. He believed that political liberty alone was insufficient; true nationalism required addressing economic disparities. In one of his speeches, Blanc passionately stated, "Political freedom is empty without economic justice. Our national identity cannot be complete until every citizen, regardless of their station, has an equal opportunity to

prosper." [7]. This perspective emphasized his commitment to a more holistic nationalism that encompassed economic well-being.

Blanc's rhetoric vividly portrayed the plight of the working class, which he saw as the backbone of the nation. He argued that nationalism necessitated economic justice for workers and a fair distribution of wealth. Blanc wrote, "The true strength of France lies in the hands of its laborers and artisans. We cannot consider ourselves a united nation while they suffer in poverty." [8]. His emphasis on the working class highlighted his belief in the integral role of laborers in the nation's identity. Throughout his speeches and writings, Blanc vehemently criticized the existing social hierarchy and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few. He contended that this system hindered the realization of true nationalism. He declared in a famous speech, "Our society is divided, and this division corrodes our national spirit. We must dismantle the barriers that keep our citizens in poverty and inequality." [7]. Blanc's critique underscored his commitment to dismantling the socio-economic barriers that impeded a more cohesive national identity.

Blanc's vision of French nationalism was closely tied to social solidarity and economic reform. He believed that a sense of unity and shared prosperity among citizens was essential for the nation's progress. In his writings, Blanc articulated, "France's strength lies in the bonds of solidarity among its people. We must enact measures that create economic opportunities for all, fostering a sense of collective purpose." [8]. This vision reflected his belief in a nationalism that prioritized the well-being and unity of the entire citizenry.

In summary, Louis Blanc's writings and speeches during the 1848 Revolution represented a distinctive strand of French nationalism that focused on social and economic equality in addition to political liberty. His rhetoric emphasized the importance of addressing economic disparities, highlighted the plight of the working class, critiqued the existing social hierarchy, and envisioned a nationalism closely tied to social solidarity and economic reform. These elements of his rhetoric shed light on the unique character of his vision for French nationalism during this turbulent period in French history.

## 5. Conclusion

The 1848 Revolution in France remains an intricate chapter in the nation's history, characterized by a dynamic interplay of political, social, and ideological forces. At the heart of this period lay the question of nationalism, a concept that had been evolving over centuries but was now poised to take on new dimensions. This research has sought to explore the extent to which the 1848 Revolution contributed to the emergence and development of nationalism in France, utilizing the speeches of two prominent figures, Alphonse de Lamartine and Louis Blanc, as the lens through which to examine this relationship.

Through the analysis of Lamartine's speeches, it becomes evident that the revolution of 1848 in France was imbued with a deep sense of national identity and purpose. Lamartine's eloquence and fervor in championing the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity resonated with the ideals of the French Revolution of 1789, which were foundational to French national identity. His portrayal of the revolution as an opportunity to reaffirm these principles and build a stronger national identity underscores the interconnectedness of revolutionary fervor and nationalist sentiments. In contrast, Louis Blanc's speeches shed light on an alternative strand of French nationalism emerging during this period. While Blanc's primary focus was on social and economic equality, his vision of nationalism was closely tied to the well-being and unity of the working class. His rhetoric highlighted the importance of economic justice in realizing true nationalism, emphasizing that a cohesive and prosperous nation required addressing economic disparities.

In examining these speeches and writings, it becomes evident that the 1848 Revolution was not only a catalyst for political change but also a crucible for the evolution of French nationalism. The

revolution acted as a crucible where different facets of nationalism, ranging from the republican ideals championed by Lamartine to the social and economic dimensions advocated by Blanc, were forged and tested. This study focused on the speeches of two prominent figures, Alphonse de Lamartine and Louis Blanc, which provide valuable but somewhat limited perspectives on the complex relationship between the 1848 Revolution and nationalism in France. further research avenues and careful consideration of limitations are essential for a more comprehensive and nuanced exploration of this complex historical period.

In conclusion, the 1848 Revolution in France played a significant role in the emergence and development of nationalism in the nation. Through the passionate speeches of Alphonse de Lamartine and Louis Blanc, we witness the multifaceted nature of this nationalist sentiment, shaped by political, social, and economic factors. While the revolution may not have single-handedly given birth to French nationalism, it undeniably provided a fertile ground for its growth and diversification. As the echoes of the 1848 Revolution resound through history, it serves as a reminder of the complex relationship between revolutionary movements and the forging of national identities.

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