French defeat during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71: loss of 2 French provinces (Alsace and Lorraine) to Germany

They became model for French and German thinking about nationhood. For German, Theodor Mommsen, nation defined by its language. For French Fustel de Coulanges, nation based on a ‘community of ideas, interests, sentiments, memories and hopes’.

German government gave the Alsace-Lorraine population until 1st October 1872 to decide for German nationality or French citizenship

Loss of A-L led to French policy to eliminate minority languages such as Flemish and Breton: 7th June 1880: only French language accepted in schools 29th September 1902: law bans the use of non-French languages in catechism classes and church sermons

The limitations of nationalist appeal

Nationalism incomplete by 1914

Not all nationalists wanted a nation-state before 1917-18

Other completing doctrines (communism)