Historical background – anthems

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| 1. Germany     The "official" name of the German National Anthem is "Lied der Deutschen," or simply, the "Deutschlandlied." The song is often called "Deutschland über Alles," simply because those are the opening words of the first stanza. It is virtually unknown today that the expression "über alles," or "over all" refers not to the conquest or enslavement of other countries or the establishment of German hegemony over other peoples, but rather to a call for all Germans to abandon their concept of being a subject or citizen of this or that principality or region (such as Bavaria or Prussia) and to realize the common bond they had with one another by simply being German. This concept was considered "revolutionary" at the time the words were written in 1841, since loyalty to "Germany" was considered by the princelings and kings of the disunited Reich (divided into 40-plus separate states) to be disloyalty to themselves. This "All-German" idea was suspect because it was also associated with the rising middle classes and their suppressed Frankfurt assembly of 1848. The song's words were penned by the teacher Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben, who had been a fervent supporter of German unity and republican government, and who, because of his activities on behalf of these causes, was forced to flee to the North Sea island of Heligoland, where the verses were actually written. The music is taken from the String Quartet in C major (the Kaiser-Quartet), Op. 76,3 of Joseph Haydn, composed in 1797. It was officially ignored during most of the Second Reich (1871 to 1918), which had no official anthem as such. The "Deutschlandlied's" real popularity began with World War I, when it was sung on the battlefield by young soldiers from every Gau of the Reich who were thrown together against a common foe. Ironically, the song did not become the official national anthem until declared so by President Ebert of the Weimar Republic in March 1922. Not surprisingly, during the next European War, the words "über alles" were ruthlessly exploited by Allied propagandists. Banned after 1945 by the victors, the "Deutschlandlied" is again the German national anthem, but only the third stanza is used. The first stanza is absolutely verboten, since it refers to the traditional ethnographic boundaries of Germany ("from the Maas [in Belgium] to the Memel [between the present day Kaliningrad area of Russia and Lithuania], from the Etsch [on the Austro-Italian border] to the Belt [in Denmark]"). Likewise, the propagandistic mistranslation of the words "über alles" has now become accepted "truth", thus precluding their use. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, proposals were made to combine the hymns of West and East Germany (the anthem of which was an officially commissioned postwar piece by the communist poet Johannes R. Becher and leftist composer Hans Eisler) to create a "unified" national anthem. At that point, musicologists made the ironic discovery that, in terms of rhythm and meter, the words of the former GDR's anthem "Auferstanden aus Ruinen" (perhaps not accidentally) fit the musical score of the "Deutschlandlied" perfectly!   1. Greece   ***The National Anthem***   The National Anthem of Greece consists of the first two verses of the poem "Hymn to Freedom" which was written in May 1823 in Zakynthos by the poet Dionysios Solomos. A year later it was published in Mesolonghi and the same year Foriel included it in a collection of Greek folk songs. In 1828, Nicholas Mantzaros, a Corfu musician and friend of Solomos, set the poem to music, based on a folk theme, not as a march but for a four-voice male choir. After that the "Hymn to Freedom" was regularly heard on national holidays.   (The Hellenic National Anthem. A translation in English by Rudyard Kipling, 1918)   ***We knew thee of old,  Oh, divinely restored,  By the lights of thine eyes,  And the light of thy Sword,   From the graves of our slain,  Shall thy valour prevail.  As we greet thee again–  Hail, Liberty! Hail!***   In 1844 the poem was set to music for a second time by Mantzaros, and submitted to King Otto in the hope that it would be accepted as the national anthem. In spite of N. Mantzaros being awarded the Silver Cross of the Order of the Redeemer and D. Solomos the Gold Cross of the same Order, the work was not ratified as the national anthem but became popular as a battle song.   In 1861 the Minister for the Military asked Mantzaros to compose a march based on the "Hymn to Freedom". The musician altered the rhythm of Solomos' hymn, giving it the rhythm of a march and in 1864, after the union of the Ionian Islands with Greece, the "Hymn to Freedom" was established as the national anthem. The national anthem, along with its music, was printed for the first time (27 copies) in London in 1873.   The poem "Hymn to Freedom" consists of 158 four-line verses of which the first 24 verses were established as the National Anthem, in 1865. Of these the first two are those which are usually played and which always accompany the raising and the lowering of the flag and are sung on official occasions. During the playing of the national anthem one stands to attention.   1. Italy |
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The music was composed by Michele Novaro in 1847, to words written by Goffredo Mameli, a very young poet. The song is also known as the "Inno di Mameli." Beginning in 1861, when Italy became a united nation, the song was known as the "March of the House of Savoy," and it became the official Anthem in 1948 when Italy finally was proclaimed a republic. "Fratelli d'Italia, l'Italia s'è desta" translates to "Italian Brothers, Italy has Arisen". The words are meant to remind the battles for freedom waged by the Lombard towns, the Florentine republic, the Genoese, together with the young Balilla, against the Austrians, and the Sicilians against the French in the so-called Sicilian Vespers. There are different versions of how Mameli actually came to write the anthem. One reports that Mameli took the anthem to the musician Michele Novaro, a friend who lived in Turin. Novaro composed the music, and Mameli returned to Genoa where he presented the words and music to his friends. Shortly thereafter, it was played for the first time at a popular assembly. The tune ran like wildfire throughout the peninsula. It was on everyone's lips, in defiance of the Austrian, Bourbon, and Papal police. The other and equally persuasive story goes that one evening in 1847, in the house of the American consul, the center of discussion was the uprisings of the day. Urged by many of the consul's guests, Mameli improvised a few lines on the spot and later wrote the rest. A few days later a friend took the poem to Turin and read it aloud at a nobleman's party. The composer Michele Novaro who was a guest at the same party, tried a few notes on the piano and then, too, went home to compose the sequel. The anthem was sung for the first time the next day by a group of political exiles in the Caffè della Lega Italiana of Turin.

1. Norway

After Norway had become an autonomous state within a personal union with Sweden in 1814, a competition to select a national anthem was held in 1820. The winning poem "Sønner af Norges det ældgamle Rige" ("Sons of Norway's ancient empire") was written by Henrik Anker Bjerregaard, and the music was composed by Christian Blom from Christiania (which was the name of Oslo at that time).    
   
Although there are two mistakes in the title (German font "ö" instead of the Norwegian "ø", and "Norge" instead of "Norge**s**", I have no doubt that the sheet music above from an early 20th century German source is the correct melody, since also "C. Blom" is mentioned as the composer.   
   
The anthem remained in use until the current national anthem "Ja, vi elsker dette landet" was officially adopted on 17th May 1864, the 50th anniversary of the Norwegian constitution.

1. Portugal

During the Monarchy, the concept of the Portuguese nation was based on the power of the king. There was no notion of a national anthem, and for this reason musical pieces with public or official character were identified with the reigning monarch. In this context, in 1826, the "Patriotic Hymn," written by Antonio Marcos Portugal, was considered a national anthem. This anthem was inspired by the final part of the cantata La Speranza o sia L'Augurio Felice, composed and offered to Prince-Regent Dom Joao when he was with the Court of Brazil, and which was presented at the Sao Carlos Theatre in Lisbon on 13 May 1809 to celebrate his birthday. The lyrics of the "Patriotic Hymn" had different versions depending on the circumstances and events of the era, naturally becoming generalized and national because of its pleasant martial expression, which rallied Portuguese spirits, inviting them to continue with heroic actions. With the return of the King to the country, in 1821, the same author dedicated a poem to him which, when sung with the music of the hymn, spread rapidly and came to be solemnly intoned. Meanwhile, following the revolution of 1820, on 22 September 1822, the First Liberal Portuguese Constitution was approved, sworn by D. Joao VI. D. Pedro, then Prince Regent in Brazil, composed the "Imperial and Constitutional Hymn," dedicated to the Constitution. After the death of the King, and with the rise to the throne of D. Pedro, he presented to the Portuguese a Constitutional Charter. The hymn he had written spread with the official denomination of the "Hymn of the Charter," being considered officially as the national anthem and therefore obligatory at all public ceremonies, after May 1834. Using the music of the "Hymn of the Charter," various works of public nature were composed or dedicated to important events and personalities, identifying it completely with political and social life of the last seventy years of the Monarchy in Portugal. At the end of the 19th century, "A Portuguesa," a vibrant and stirring march, with strong patriotic sentiment, by affirming the independence it represented and the enthusiasm it drew out, became naturally and on its own merits, a national symbol. The "Hymn," meanwhile, which had been conceived to unite the Portuguese around a common sentiment, because it was sung by the revolutionaries of 31 January 1891, was downplayed by the monarchs and its performance was prohibited at official and ceremonial events. With the installation of the Republic in 1910, "A Portuguesa" flowered spontaneously again with popular voice, being sung and played in the streets of Lisbon. The same Constitutional Assembly of 19 June 1911 that approved the national flag proclaimed "A Portuguesa" as the national anthem. This meant that the composition written by Alfred Keil and Henrique Lopes de Mendonça became official; it was an extraordinarily happy alliance of music and poetry that was able, in 1890, to successfully interpret the patriotic sentiment of revolt against the English Ultimatum, imposed in humiliating and arrogant terms against Portugal. In 1956, there were a number of variations of the anthem, not just in its melodic line but also in the instrumentation, especially for a band. Recognizing this, the government named a commission charged with determining the official version of "A Portuguesa." This commission prepared a proposal which, approved by the Council of Ministers on 16 July 1957, remains in effect to this day. The anthem is officially played at national civil and military ceremonies where praise is given to the nation, the national flag or the President of the Republic. In addition, its performance is obligatory whenever a foreign head of state is officially received on national territory after hearing the anthem of the represented country.