Rise of Nationalism

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"In space, no one can hear you think."

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1.1 Defining Nationalism: Concepts and Origins

Nationalism stands as one of the most powerful and transformative forces in modern human history, a phenomenon that has redrawn maps, toppled empires, sparked revolutions, and continues to shape political landscapes across our world. At its heart, nationalism represents a complex interplay of identity, allegiance, and political aspiration, yet its precise meaning and origins remain subjects of vigorous scholarly debate. To understand nationalism's profound impact and its enduring appeal, we must first untangle its conceptual threads and examine the intellectual frameworks through which it has been analyzed.

The scholarly landscape of nationalism studies offers diverse definitions that reflect the phenomenon's multifaceted nature. Ernest Gellner, the influential anthropologist and social theorist, defined nationalism as "primarily a political principle which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent." For Gellner, nationalism emerged as a functional requirement of industrial society, creating homogenous cultural units necessary for modern education and economic systems. Benedict Anderson, meanwhile, offered a more culturally nuanced perspective, conceptualizing nations as "imagined communities"—social constructs wherein individuals feel comradeship with millions of people they will never meet, bound together by shared language, media, and historical narrative. Anderson's work illuminates how print capitalism and shared reading experiences enabled this imagining of national communities across vast territories. Anthony Smith, drawing from his ethno-symbolist approach, emphasized the cultural foundations of nationalism, arguing that modern nations often built upon pre-existing ethnic cores or "ethnies," with their myths, memories, values, and symbols providing the raw material from which modern national identities were forged.

These scholarly perspectives reveal nationalism operating simultaneously as a political ideology, a cultural sentiment, and a social movement. As an ideology, nationalism puts forth specific claims about how political power should be organized and who rightfully belongs to the political community. As a cultural sentiment, it evokes emotional attachments to symbols, narratives, and imagined kinship. And as a social movement, it mobilizes collective action toward nationalist goals, from cultural revival to political independence. The distinction between nationalism and patriotism proves particularly consequential in understanding these dimensions. While both involve attachment to one's country, patriotism typically denotes a more benign love of homeland and its achievements, whereas nationalism carries stronger implications of political action and often involves claims to distinctiveness or superiority. As the scholar Michael Billig noted, patriotism might be expressed through flying the national flag on holidays, while nationalism might demand that this flag fly over a particular territory or represent a specific political arrangement.

The origins of nationalism have sparked one of the most enduring debates in the social sciences. Modernist scholars, following Gellner's lead, argue that nationalism is distinctly modern, emerging in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a consequence of specific historical developments. According to this view, the decline of religious worldviews, the rise of industrial capitalism, the expansion of state bureaucracies, and the development of mass communication systems collectively created conditions where nationalism became both possible and necessary. The French Revolution of 1789, with its emphasis on popular sovereignty

and citizenship rather than dynastic rule, represents for modernists the crucial turning point when the first modern nation-state emerged, replacing older forms of political organization based on divine right or feudal allegiance.

Ethno-symbolist scholars, such as Anthony Smith and John Hutchinson, challenge this modernist chronology by identifying deeper historical roots for national identities. They point to the persistence of ethnic communities throughout history, with their shared cultural characteristics, collective memories, and sense of distinctiveness. While acknowledging that nationalism as a full-fledged political ideology is modern, ethno-symbolists argue that it drew upon pre-existing cultural materials and sentiments. The medieval kingdom of Scotland, for instance, maintained distinct institutions and cultural practices despite political union with England, providing foundations for later Scottish nationalism. Similarly, the Jewish people preserved a powerful sense of collective identity through millennia of diaspora, creating cultural continuities that would later inform Zionist nationalism.

Primordialist perspectives push these historical origins even further back, viewing nations as natural, ancient communities with deep roots in human kinship structures and territorial attachments. Clifford Geertz suggested that these "primordial attachments" derive from the "givens" of social existence—immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly—by virtue of which people perceive themselves as distinct from others. For primordialists, modern nationalism represents merely the political expression of these ancient affiliations rather than their creation. The Greek sense of national identity, for example, can be traced through continuous historical consciousness from classical antiquity through Byzantine and Ottoman periods to the modern Greek nation-state, suggesting remarkable continuity alongside transformation.

Nationalism manifests in diverse forms across different contexts and historical periods, reflecting varying conceptions of national belonging and political organization. Perhaps the most fundamental distinction is between civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism. Civic nationalism, often associated with Western liberal democracies like the United States and France, defines national membership primarily in political terms— through adherence to shared values, constitutional principles, and civic participation. The American ideal of becoming a citizen through acceptance of democratic values regardless of ethnic background exemplifies this approach. Ethnic nationalism, by contrast, bases national identity on shared heritage, language, ancestry, and cultural traditions, often emphasizing blood connections and historical continuity. German nationalism in the nineteenth century, with its emphasis on language and cultural heritage, illustrates this ethnic conception, as does the Serbian nationalist idea that all Serbs should live within a single state regardless of political boundaries.

Beyond this civic-ethnic spectrum, nationalism also varies along ideological dimensions. Liberal nationalism emphasizes individual rights within the national community, democratic governance, and peaceful relations between nations. Conservative nationalism tends to emphasize tradition, social order, and the preservation of established national institutions. Revolutionary nationalism, as seen in anti-colonial movements, seeks to radically transform existing political structures to achieve national independence or self-determination. The contrast between expansionist or imperial nationalism and anti-colonial or liberation nationalism further reveals nationalism's paradoxical nature. Imperial nationalism, as manifested in nineteenth-century European

powers or twentieth-century Japan, justified domination over other peoples in the name of national greatness and civilization. Anti-colonial nationalism, conversely, employed similar principles of self-determination to resist imperial rule, as seen in India's independence movement or Algeria's struggle against French colonialism.

As we move beyond conceptual definitions and theoretical debates, we must explore the historical antecedents that provided fertile ground for nationalism's emergence. The long development of collective identities before the modern era—how ancient peoples conceived of their communities, how medieval empires managed diverse populations, and how early modern developments began to shape proto-national identities—offers crucial insights into nationalism's deeper roots in human social organization.

1.2   Pre-Modern Precursors to National Identity

As we move beyond conceptual definitions and theoretical debates, we must explore the historical antecedents that provided fertile ground for nationalism's emergence. The collective identities forged in ancient and medieval societies, while distinct from modern nationalism in form and function, planted crucial seeds that would later blossom into national consciousness. These pre-modern conceptions of belonging, territory, and shared destiny created reservoirs of sentiment and tradition upon which modern nationalists would draw, consciously or unconsciously, in their quest to mobilize populations and legitimize political authority.

Ancient civilizations developed sophisticated frameworks for collective identity that transcended immediate kinship groups. In the Greek world, the concept of *Hellenism* distinguished Greeks from *barbarians*—foreigners whose languages sounded like meaningless "bar-bar" to Greek ears. This cultural identity, based on shared language, religion, and participation in pan-Hellenic festivals like the Olympic Games, persisted despite the intense political fragmentation of the Greek city-states. When faced with the Persian invasion in the early fifth century BCE, this broader Hellenic identity proved crucial in mobilizing resistance against a common "other." Similarly, the Roman Empire cultivated a powerful civic identity that evolved over centuries. Initially defined by citizenship—a legal status granting specific rights and duties—Roman identity gradually expanded beyond the city of Rome to encompass diverse peoples across the Mediterranean. By the Edict of Caracalla in 212 CE, citizenship was granted to nearly all free inhabitants of the empire, creating a vast political community united by law, administration, and Latin culture. This Roman identity proved remarkably durable, persisting in the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire for nearly a millennium after the Western Empire's fall and continuing to inspire European political imagination through concepts like the Holy Roman Empire.

Medieval Europe saw the emergence of Christendom as a overarching civilizational identity that transcended political boundaries. Latin Christianity provided a shared religious framework that united disparate peoples from Ireland to Hungary and from Scandinavia to Sicily. The Crusades, beginning in the late eleventh century, powerfully reinforced this sense of a unified Christian world confronting Islamic "infidels," creating a potent us-versus-them dynamic that would echo in later nationalist rhetoric. Within this broader Christian identity, however, more particularistic attachments flourished. Kingdoms like England, France, and Castile developed distinct administrative traditions, legal systems, and nascent cultural characteristics. The Hundred

Years' War (1337-1453), for instance, fostered growing animosity between English and French peoples, with chroniclers like Jean Froissart contrasting the virtues and vices of each nation. Outside Europe, the Islamic concept of *Dar al-Islam* (the Abode of Islam) similarly created a transnational civilizational identity united by faith and law, while the Chinese imperial system cultivated a sophisticated cultural identity based on Confucian values, written characters, and the "Mandate of Heaven" that justified dynastic rule across diverse ethnic groups.

Pre-modern empires developed ingenious methods for managing diverse populations without demanding cultural assimilation. The Byzantine Empire maintained control through its sophisticated bureaucracy, Orthodox Christianity, and Greek language, while tolerating various ethnic groups under its rule. The Ottoman Empire perfected the *millet* system, granting substantial autonomy to religious communities (Orthodox Christians, Armenian Christians, Jews) to govern their own affairs according to their religious laws—a pragmatic approach that preserved imperial stability for centuries. Similarly, the Mughal Empire in India integrated Hindu and Muslim elites into a shared administrative culture while respecting religious differences. These imperial strategies of pluralism created complex layers of identity that individuals navigated simultaneously—local, regional, religious, and imperial—without the exclusive allegiance that modern nationalism would later demand.

The early modern period witnessed profound transformations that began to reshape these pre-modern identities into more recognizably proto-national forms. The Protestant Reformation, beginning in 1517, shattered the religious unity of Western Christendom and created new communities of belief that often coincided with emerging political boundaries. In England, the break with Rome under Henry VIII fostered a distinct Anglican identity intertwined with English patriotism. The phrase "God and English right" became a rallying cry, suggesting divine favor for the nation's political and religious independence. Similarly, Lutheran identity became deeply embedded in Scandinavian and German territories, while Calvinism took root in Scotland, the Netherlands, and parts of Switzerland and France. These religious divisions often reinforced political boundaries, creating closer alignments between cultural identity and territorial state that would prove foundational for later nationalism.

The rise of centralized monarchies in early modern Europe accelerated the development of state-centered identities. In France, the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715) exemplified this process through the promotion of a unified French language at court, the creation of state symbols like the Sun King persona, and the development of a centralized bureaucracy that reached into the provinces. The intendants, royal officials sent to govern France's regions, helped standardize administration and propagate a common political culture. Similarly, in Spain, the Habsburg and Bourbon monarchs worked to forge a unified Spanish identity from the disparate kingdoms of Castile, Aragon, and others, though regional identities like Catalan and Basque remained resilient. In Russia, Peter the Great (1682-1725) forcibly Westernized the elite and created new symbols of Russian state power, including the founding of St. Petersburg as a "window on the West." These state-building efforts cultivated loyalty to the monarch and the emerging state apparatus, creating emotional attachments to territory and political institutions that would later be transferred to the nation itself.

Perhaps the most transformative development of the early modern period was the invention of the printing

press by Johannes Gutenberg around 1440. The proliferation of printed materials in vernacular languages rather than Latin began to create standardized linguistic communities across large territories. Martin Luther's German translation of the New Testament (1522) not only made scripture accessible to ordinary people but also helped standardize the German language. Similarly, William Tyndale's English Bible translations (1520s-1530s) and the King James Bible (1611) shaped English language and literature profoundly. Printers in regional centers like Venice, Paris, Antwerp, and London produced books, pamphlets, and newspapers that reached increasingly literate populations, creating shared reading experiences and reference points across geographical distances. Benedict Anderson would later identify this print capitalism as crucial to creating the "imagined communities" of modern nations, but its roots clearly lie in these early modern developments. The expansion of vernacular printing created the possibility for mass communication in common languages, allowing for the dissemination of ideas, news, and cultural expressions

1.3   The Enlightenment and Nationalism's Intellectual Foundations

The expansion of vernacular printing in early modern Europe created not just shared languages but increasingly shared discourses, setting the stage for the intellectual ferment of the Enlightenment that would profoundly reshape political identity. As the previous section highlighted, the proliferation of books, pamphlets, and newspapers in common tongues facilitated the circulation of new ideas across territorial boundaries, creating transnational networks of intellectual exchange. Yet, paradoxically, these very ideas about reason, liberty, and human rights would ultimately provide the conceptual tools for constructing distinct national identities and justifying their political aspirations. The Enlightenment, often characterized by its universalist aspirations and cosmopolitan outlook, inadvertently laid the intellectual groundwork for modern nationalism by fundamentally reconfiguring notions of sovereignty, community, and political legitimacy.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau stands as perhaps the most pivotal figure in bridging Enlightenment thought to nationalist ideology. His seminal work, *The Social Contract* (1762), introduced the revolutionary concept of the "general will" (*volonté générale*), which proposed that legitimate political authority derives not from divine right or hereditary succession but from the collective will of the people themselves. Rousseau argued that individuals, by entering into a social contract, surrender their particular interests to form a new collective body—the sovereign people—whose general will expresses the common good. This radical notion of popular sovereignty effectively transferred ultimate political authority from monarchs to nations, conceived as communities of citizens bound together by mutual commitment to the collective welfare. Rousseau's emphasis on the distinct character of different peoples, evident in his *Considerations on the Government of Poland* (1772), further suggested that each nation possessed unique qualities requiring tailored political institutions. His influence permeated revolutionary circles; the Jacobins during the French Revolution drew heavily on his ideas to justify their vision of a republic based on civic virtue and the indivisible sovereignty of the French nation. Rousseau's assertion that "whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be compelled to do so by the whole body" underscored the potential tension between individual liberty and national authority that would haunt nationalist movements thereafter.

Complementing Rousseau's political theory, Johann Gottfried Herder provided a cultural foundation for na-

tional identity through his concept of the *Volksgeist*—the unique spirit or genius of a people. Herder, writing in the late 18th century, reacted against the Enlightenment's universalist tendencies, arguing instead that human diversity was natural and valuable. In works like *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Humanity* (1784-1791), he posited that each nation (*Volk*) possessed a distinctive character shaped by its language, environment, history, and cultural traditions. Language, for Herder, was not merely a tool for communication but the very vessel of a people's collective soul, carrying its unique worldview and accumulated wisdom. He famously declared, "Denn jeder Volk ist Volk; es hat seinen Nationalcharakter wie sein Sprach" (For every people is a people; it has its national character as it has its language). Herder's collection of folk songs, *Voices of the Peoples in Songs* (1778-1779), aimed to preserve what he saw as authentic expressions of national spirit before they were lost to homogenizing forces. His ideas resonated powerfully among stateless peoples, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, where intellectuals began to explore vernacular languages, collect folklore, and write national histories as acts of cultural assertion. The Czech national revival, for instance, drew inspiration from Herderian principles, with scholars like Josef Dobrovský and Josef Jungmann systematically documenting Czech language and literature to revive a distinct national consciousness after centuries of German dominance.

Immanuel Kant, though less directly concerned with national questions, contributed significantly to the intellectual framework that would underpin nationalist thought. His political philosophy, articulated in works like *Perpetual Peace* (1795) and *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), emphasized the autonomy of rational beings and the importance of republican government based on the rule of law. Kant argued that true freedom could only exist under a system where citizens both obey laws and, as rational legislators, could be seen as authors of those laws themselves. This conception of citizenship as active participation in self-governance provided a crucial link between individual autonomy and national political community. While Kant advocated for international peace and cosmopolitan cooperation, his insistence on the right of peoples to determine their own form of government—what he termed "the right of a state"—lent philosophical weight to emerging nationalist claims for self-determination. The American Revolutionaries, particularly in their framing of the Declaration of Independence (1776), echoed Kantian themes when they asserted the right of "one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another" and to assume "the separate and equal station" among nations to which the "Laws of Nature and of Nature's God" entitled them. Kant's vision of a federation of republican states, while internationalist in scope, presupposed the existence of distinct national communities as its constituent units.

The Enlightenment's universalist rationalism soon provoked a powerful counter-movement in Romanticism, which emerged in the late 18th and early 19th centuries as a celebration of emotion, tradition, and particularity against the perceived cold abstraction of reason. Romantic thinkers like Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Schlegel, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge reacted against Enlightenment cosmopolitanism by emphasizing the unique spiritual essence of each nation and the importance of historical rootedness. Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation* (1808), delivered while Berlin was under French occupation, exemplifies this Romantic nationalist turn. He portrayed the German people as possessing a primordial language and spirit that made them uniquely suited to fulfill a special historical destiny, calling for national renewal through education and moral regeneration. This invocation of national mission and historical destiny became a recurring theme in

nationalist discourse across Europe.

Folklore and folk culture assumed unprecedented importance in this Romantic nationalist imagination. The Brothers Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm, began collecting German fairy tales and folktales in the early 19th century not merely as entertainment but as a means to uncover and preserve the authentic soul of the German people. Their *Children's and Household Tales* (1812-1815) presented these stories as emanations of the *Volksgeist*, embodying the collective wisdom and distinctive character of the nation. Similarly, in Finland, Elias Lönnrot compiled the *Kalevala* (1835), an epic poem woven from ancient Finnish folk songs, which became a foundational text for Finnish national identity and inspired the nationalist movement that eventually led to independence from Russia. The Scottish poet James Macpherson's *Ossian* cycle (1760-1763), though later revealed as largely his own creation rather than authentic translations of ancient Gaelic verse, nonetheless ignited European fascination with primitive Celtic culture and contributed significantly to the development of Scottish Romantic nationalism. These cultural artifacts served as tangible evidence of a nation's unique heritage and historical continuity, providing emotionally resonant symbols around which national consciousness could coalesce.

Medievalism emerged as another potent expression of Romantic nationalism, with thinkers and artists idealizing the Middle Ages as an era of organic community, chivalric virtue, and spiritual unity before the disruptive rise of modernity and secularism. In Germany, the Gothic revival in architecture, championed by figures like Karl Friedrich Schinkel, sought to reconnect with a perceived

1.4   The French Revolution and the Birth of Modern Nationalism

authentic German cultural heritage. This fascination with medieval forms was not merely aesthetic but deeply political, representing a yearning for an imagined past of unity and distinctiveness that could serve as a counterpoint to the universalizing tendencies of Enlightenment rationalism and French cultural hegemony. It was precisely against this backdrop of emerging nationalist consciousness, fueled by both Enlightenment political philosophy and Romantic cultural particularism, that the French Revolution erupted in 1789, transforming abstract ideas about nationalism into concrete political practice and creating the first modern nation-state.

The French Revolution marked a decisive break with the old order of dynastic states and allegiance to monarchs, establishing instead a political community based on citizenship and popular sovereignty. When the Third Estate declared itself the National Assembly in June 1789 and subsequently took the Tennis Court Oath, it fundamentally reimagined the source of political authority. The Assembly's Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (August 1789) proclaimed that "the principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation," effectively transferring ultimate authority from the king to the collective people of France. This revolutionary conception of the nation as the legitimate source of political power represented a profound departure from prevailing European norms. The revolutionaries actively worked to create citizens rather than subjects through a series of transformative measures. They abolished the feudal system in August 1789, dismantling the legal privileges of nobility and clergy that had divided French society. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy (1790) subordinated the Catholic Church to the state, requiring clergy to swear allegiance to the nation rather than the Pope. The division of France into eighty-three departments of roughly equal size

replaced the historic provinces with administrative units designed to foster a unified national identity and facilitate central control. Perhaps most symbolically significant was the abolition of guilds and corporations in the Le Chapelier Law of 1791, which eliminated intermediate bodies between the individual and the state, reinforcing the direct relationship between citizens and the nation.

Mass mobilization became a defining feature of revolutionary nationalism, as the new French nation called upon its citizens to actively participate in its defense and governance. The levée en masse of August 1793, decreed by the National Convention, represented an unprecedented mobilization of the entire population for war, declaring that "the young men shall fight; the married men shall forge arms and transport provisions; the women shall make tents and clothes and shall serve in the hospitals; the children shall turn old linen into lint; the old men shall betake themselves to the public squares in order to arouse the courage of the warriors and preach hatred of kings and the unity of the Republic." This total mobilization blurred the distinction between soldier and civilian, making every citizen a participant in the national struggle. Popular sovereignty was not merely an abstract principle but a lived experience through institutions like the primary assemblies, where citizens gathered to elect representatives and deliberate on national issues. The revolutionary slogan "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité" encapsulated the new national values—freedom from arbitrary power, equality before the law, and brotherhood among citizens bound together in a single political community.

The revolutionaries understood the power of symbols, rituals, and festivals in forging this new national identity. They created a new calendar in 1793, replacing traditional saints' days with celebrations of agricultural cycles, revolutionary events, and abstract virtues. The Festival of the Supreme Being, designed by Robespierre and celebrated in June 1794, sought to provide a civic religion that would bind citizens together in reverence for the nation and its values. Revolutionary symbols like the tricolor flag, combining the colors of Paris (blue and red) with the royal white to represent the union of people and monarchy, became powerful national emblems. La Marseillaise, composed in 1792 by Rouget de Lisle and adopted as the national anthem, embodied the martial spirit of revolutionary defense against foreign invaders. The transformation of Louis XVI from "King of France and Navarre" to "King of the French" in 1789, and finally to the plain "Citizen Capet" before his execution in 1793, symbolized the revolutionary transfer of sovereignty from monarch to nation. These symbolic innovations were not mere theatrical flourishes but essential instruments in creating the emotional attachments and shared consciousness that constitute national identity.

As revolutionary France exported its ideals through military conquest, the Napoleonic era (1799-1815) paradoxically both suppressed nationalist aspirations in occupied territories and stimulated nationalist reactions against French domination. Napoleon Bonaparte, who rose to power in the coup of 18 Brumaire (November 1799), initially presented himself as both heir to the Revolution and its tempering force. He preserved many of the Revolution's centralizing achievements, including the departmental system and the Civil Code (1804), which standardized laws across France and its empire. However, his imperial ambitions eventually provoked nationalist resistance across Europe. In Spain, the uprising of May 2, 1808, against French occupation sparked a brutal guerrilla war that became known as the Peninsular War. Francisco Goya's haunting paintings, particularly "The Third of May 1808," immortalized the savagery of this conflict and the suffering of the Spanish people, creating powerful visual symbols of resistance against foreign oppression that would inspire later nationalist movements. The Spanish resistance, though ultimately unsuccessful in expelling

the French without British assistance, demonstrated how nationalist sentiment could mobilize populations against occupying forces.

In German territories, Napoleonic conquests initially seemed to confirm French cultural and political superiority, but eventually stimulated a powerful intellectual and cultural nationalist reaction. The philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte delivered his influential Addresses to the German Nation in Berlin in 1808, while the city was under French occupation, calling for moral and educational renewal as the foundation of German liberation. The Prussian reforms implemented after the defeat at Jena-Auerstedt (1806), including the abolition of serfdom, military reorganization, and educational reforms, were partly motivated by the need to strengthen the state against French domination. The War of Liberation (1813-1814) against Napoleon was framed explicitly as a national struggle, with volunteers from across German territories joining in what they perceived as a common cause. The Lützow Free Corps, composed of volunteers from various German states and distinguished by their black uniforms with red and gold insignia, became a symbol of this pan-German nationalist aspiration. The colors black, red, and gold would later become the German national flag, directly linking the anti-Napoleonic resistance to later German nationalism.

Russia's experience of the Napoleonic invasion of 1812 similarly fostered a powerful sense of national identity. The Grande Armée's advance into Russian territory and the burning of Moscow created a narrative of national sacrifice and resilience against foreign invaders. Leo Tolstoy would later immortalize this period in War and Peace, presenting the Russian people's resistance as a spontaneous, almost mystical manifestation of national spirit. The Russian Orthodox Church framed the conflict as a holy war against the antichrist Napoleon, blending religious and national identity in a potent combination. Although the Russian victory owed much to strategic factors like the vast

1.5   19th Century Nationalism: Unification and Independence Movements

The defeat of Napoleon and the subsequent Congress of Vienna (1814-1815) attempted to restore a conservative European order based on dynastic legitimacy and the balance of power. Yet, the very forces unleashed by the revolutionary and Napoleonic period—mass mobilization, popular sovereignty, and the potent idea of the nation—could not be contained. The 19th century witnessed an extraordinary wave of nationalist movements that fundamentally reshaped the political map of Europe and reverberated across the globe. These movements pursued two primary objectives: the unification of fragmented peoples sharing language and culture into single nation-states, and the liberation of nations from the rule of multi-ethnic empires. The century became an age of national awakening, characterized by passionate intellectual ferment, cultural revival, political agitation, and ultimately, the redrawing of boundaries through war and diplomacy.

The most dramatic and successful examples of national unification occurred in Italy and Germany, lands long divided into numerous separate states. Italian unification, or the *Risorgimento* (Resurrection), was a complex process spanning decades, driven by a combination of liberal idealism, royal diplomacy, and charismatic military leadership. Key figures emerged with distinct visions and methods. Count Camillo di Cavour, the shrewd Prime Minister of Piedmont-Sardinia, pursued a *realpolitik* strategy of astute diplomacy and limited war. Understanding Piedmont's limitations, he masterfully exploited the Crimean War (1853-1856) to gain

international standing and, crucially, secured French military support against Austria through a secret agreement at Plombières in 1858. This led to the victorious Franco-Piedmontese War of 1859, resulting in the annexation of Lombardy. Meanwhile, the revolutionary Giuseppe Garibaldi embodied the romantic, popular strand of nationalism. His legendary expedition of the "Thousand" red-shirted volunteers, sailing from Genoa in May 1860 to conquer Sicily and Naples in the name of Victor Emmanuel II, captured the imagination of Italians and demonstrated the power of popular insurgence. Garibaldi's astonishingly rapid victories against the Bourbon armies, culminating in his handover of conquered territories to the Piedmontese king at Teano, were pivotal. The process culminated symbolically in the capture of Rome in 1870, when Italian troops breached the walls of the Eternal City, ending papal temporal power and completing the unification, though the "Roman Question" would strain relations with the Vatican for decades. The path was neither linear nor universally embraced; significant regional differences persisted, and the new state faced immense challenges in forging a unified national identity from such disparate parts.

German unification followed a different trajectory, characterized less by popular revolution and more by the calculated statecraft of Prussia under its iron-willed Minister-President, Otto von Bismarck. Bismarck's famous declaration that "the great questions of the day will not be settled by speeches and majority decisions… but by iron and blood" (1862) signaled his ruthless determination to achieve unification under Prussian dominance, excluding Austria. He orchestrated three short, decisive wars, each serving a specific strategic purpose. The war against Denmark in 1864, fought jointly with Austria, secured the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, creating a pretext for future conflict. Bismarck then masterfully provoked Austria into the Seven Weeks' War of 1866. Utilizing Prussia's superior military organization (exemplified by the needle-gun) and railways, Prussia inflicted a swift defeat at Königgrätz (Sadowa), dissolving the German Confederation and excluding Austria from German affairs. The final step was the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), which Bismarck carefully engineered by manipulating the Ems Dispatch. The shared experience of repelling French aggression proved to be the perfect catalyst for uniting the southern German states with the North German Confederation. Victory over France, symbolized by the proclamation of the German Empire in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles on January 18, 1871, marked the zenith of Bismarck's achievement. While Italian unification leaned heavily on popular myth and revolutionary fervor, German unification was a triumph of authoritarian statecraft and military power, creating a powerful new empire in the heart of Europe that would profoundly alter the continent's balance.

While Italy and Germany achieved unification, the vast multi-ethnic empires of the Habsburgs, Ottomans, and Romanovs faced increasingly assertive nationalist challenges from within. The Revolutions of 1848, the so-called "Springtime of Nations," were a continent-wide eruption of liberal and nationalist aspirations. Within the Austrian Empire, Hungarians led by Lajos Kossuth declared independence, while Czechs, Italians, and other national groups also rose up. However, these movements were ultimately crushed, often by the armies of one nationality suppressing another, revealing the complex interplay of competing nationalisms within the empires. The Habsburgs survived by granting Hungary significant autonomy through the Austro-Hungarian Compromise (Ausgleich) of 1867, creating a dual monarchy. This satisfied Hungarian elites but left the demands of Czechs, Poles, Ruthenians, Romanians, South Slavs, and others largely unaddressed, sowing the seeds for future conflicts. The Ottoman Empire, long derided as the "Sick Man of Europe,"

faced relentless pressure. Greek independence was secured in 1830 after a decade of brutal war, inspiring other Balkan peoples. The Tanzimat reforms (1839-1876) attempted modernization and centralization but often alienated non-Turkish subjects. The rise of the Young Turks later in the century advocated Ottomanism, a civic nationalism based on shared citizenship, but this competed with burgeoning Turkish nationalism and the powerful separatist movements of Serbs, Romanians, and Bulgarians. The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, despite Russian ambitions, led to the Congress of Berlin which recognized the full independence of Serbia, Romania, and Montenegro, and granted autonomy to Bulgaria, significantly fragmenting Ottoman European holdings. The Russian Empire itself was a prison of peoples, with Poles, Finns, Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, and numerous other groups subjected to Russification policies aimed at suppressing distinct languages and cultures in favor of Russian identity. Polish uprisings in 1830-31 and 1863-64 were brutally suppressed, and the January Uprising of 1863 led to the abolition of Polish autonomy and intensified Russification. These empires became crucibles of competing nationalisms, where the aspirations of subject peoples clashed with the imperial project and often with each other.

Nationalist aspirations were by no means confined to Europe. The 19th century witnessed significant independence movements beyond the continent, often inspired by Enlightenment ideals and the successful examples of American and Haitian revolutions but also fueled by distinct local grievances and traditions. In Latin America, the Napoleonic occupation of Spain (1808) created a power vacuum that figures like Simón Bolívar ("The Liberator") and José de San Martín exploited brilliantly. Bolívar, a brilliant Venezuelan criollo, envisioned a united republic of Gran Colombia

1.6   Colonialism, Anti-Colonialism, and Nationalism Outside Europe

Bolívar, a brilliant Venezuelan criollo, envisioned a united republic of Gran Colombia encompassing Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, and parts of Peru, Guyana, and Brazil. His vision, though ultimately fragmented into separate nations, represented the first major wave of anti-colonial nationalism in the Americas, setting important precedents for struggles that would unfold across Asia and Africa in the following century. The Latin American independence movements demonstrated how nationalist ideologies could be adapted to colonial contexts, creating frameworks for liberation that would resonate globally. Yet, these early anti-colonial struggles differed significantly from the later movements in Asia and Africa, particularly in their timing and their relationship to the industrializing European powers that were simultaneously consolidating their imperial reach across the globe.

The construction of national identities in colonized regions was profoundly shaped by the very systems of imperial rule that sought to suppress them. Colonial administrative practices inadvertently created the territorial frameworks that would later become post-colonial nations. The British in India, for example, gradually consolidated their rule over numerous princely states and territories, creating administrative units like the Presidencies of Bengal, Madras, and Bombay, which provided geographical coherence to what would become the Indian nation-state. Similarly, French West Africa brought together diverse ethnic groups under a single colonial administration, creating a political entity that, despite its artificial boundaries, would later form the basis for national identity. The "scramble for Africa" in the late 19th century, formalized at

the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, drew arbitrary borders across the continent with little regard for pre-existing ethnic, linguistic, or cultural realities, yet these very borders would become the contested territories of emerging African nationalisms.

Western education and ideas played a paradoxical role in fostering anti-colonial nationalism. Colonial powers established educational systems to train a local elite capable of administering the empire, but this education exposed students to Enlightenment ideals of liberty, equality, and self-determination that could be turned against colonial rule itself. In India, the establishment of English-language universities like those in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras in 1857 created a generation of Western-educated Indians who became the vanguard of the nationalist movement. Figures like Dadabhai Naoroji, who coined the term "drain of wealth" to describe the economic exploitation of India, and Gopal Krishna Gokhale used their Western education to articulate Indian grievances in terms that the British could understand, while simultaneously drawing upon India's own rich philosophical traditions to frame their demands. Similarly, in French West Africa, the *évolués* (assimilated Africans) who received French education in places like Dakar and Gorée became leaders of nationalist movements, using republican ideals to demand equality and eventually independence.

The formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 marked a significant turning point in anti-colonial nationalism. Initially founded by A.O. Hume, a retired British civil servant, as a safety valve to channel Indian discontent, the Congress gradually transformed into the primary vehicle for Indian nationalism. Under the leadership of figures like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who declared "Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it," the Congress evolved from a body of moderate petitioners to a mass movement demanding complete independence. Mahatma Gandhi's return to India in 1915 and his subsequent leadership revolutionized the movement by introducing the strategies of non-violent civil disobedience (*Satyagraha*) that mobilized millions of Indians across religious, caste, and regional lines. Gandhi's Salt March of 1930, a 240-mile protest against the British salt monopoly, captured international attention and demonstrated the power of mass non-violent resistance. The Congress's ability to maintain a broad coalition, despite tensions between Hindu and Muslim communities that would eventually lead to partition, enabled it to present a unified nationalist front against British rule.

In Southeast Asia, nationalist movements emerged in response to various forms of colonial domination. In Vietnam, French colonialism sparked resistance movements that evolved from localized uprisings to organized nationalist parties. Phan Bội Châu formed the Duy Tân Hội (Modernization Association) in 1904, advocating for both reform and armed resistance. Later, Hồ Chí Minh synthesized nationalist aspirations with Marxist-Leninist ideology, founding the Indochinese Communist Party in 1930 and leading the struggle for independence that would eventually defeat first the French and then the Americans. In Indonesia, the anticolonial movement drew strength from both Islamic organizations like Sarekat Islam and secular nationalist parties. Sukarno, Indonesia's first president, articulated a vision of national unity based on the principles of Pancasila, which sought to reconcile Indonesia's diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural traditions within a single national framework. His declaration of independence in August 1945, two days after Japan's surrender in World War II, marked the beginning of a fierce struggle against Dutch attempts to regain control.

African nationalism developed later than in Asia but followed similar patterns of adaptation and resistance. The formation of the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa in 1912, originally as the South African Native National Congress, represented one of the earliest organized African nationalist movements. Leaders like Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, and Walter Sisulu would later guide the ANC through decades of struggle against apartheid. In West Africa, nationalist leaders like Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana and Léopold Sédar Senghor in Senegal combined demands for independence with visions of pan-African unity. Nkrumah's Convention People's Party, founded in 1949, mobilized mass support through the slogan "Self-Government Now," leading to Ghana becoming the first sub-Saharan African colony to gain independence in 1957. Jomo Kenyatta's Kenya African National Union (KANU) led the struggle against British rule, culminating in independence in 1963 despite Kenyatta's imprisonment during the Mau Mau uprising of 1952-1960.

The paradox of colonial nationalism lies in how anti-colonial leaders adopted and adapted Western nationalist ideas to challenge Western imperialism itself. Nationalism as a political ideology was a product of European modernity, yet it became the primary framework for resistance to European colonialism. Anti-colonial leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Nkrumah, and Fanon were often deeply influenced by Western political thought while simultaneously seeking to reclaim and revalorize indigenous traditions. This created a complex intellectual synthesis that both embraced certain aspects of modernity and critiqued its colonial manifestations. Frantz Fanon, in his influential work "The Wretched of the Earth" (1961), analyzed the psychological dimensions of colonial domination and the violence inherent in both colonialism and its overthrow, arguing that true national liberation required a complete decolonization of the mind as well as political independence.

The

1.7   Nationalism in the Age of World Wars and Decolonization

I need to write section 7 of the Encyclopedia Galactica article on "Rise of Nationalism." This section is titled "Nationalism in the Age of World Wars and Decolonization" and should cover how nationalism evolved during the first half of the 20th century, a period marked by two world wars, the collapse of empires, and the emergence of dozens of new nation-states.

The section should be approximately 1,000 words and cover three subsections: 7.1 World War I and the Principle of Self-Determination 7.2 Interwar Nationalism and its Extremes 7.3 Decolonization and the Post-WWII Wave of Nationalism

I need to build naturally upon the previous content (section 6 on colonialism, anti-colonialism, and nationalism outside Europe), maintain the same authoritative yet engaging tone, and include specific examples and fascinating details. I should avoid bullet points and use flowing narrative prose with transitional phrases.

Let me first review the ending of section 6 to ensure a smooth transition:

"The paradox of colonial nationalism lies in how anti-colonial leaders adopted and adapted Western nationalist ideas to challenge Western imperialism itself. Nationalism as a political ideology was a product of European modernity, yet it became the primary framework for resistance to European colonialism. Anti-colonial

leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Nkrumah, and Fanon were often deeply influenced by Western political thought while simultaneously seeking to reclaim and revalorize indigenous traditions. This created a complex intellectual synthesis that both embraced certain aspects of modernity and critiqued its colonial manifestations. Frantz Fanon, in his influential work"The Wretched of the Earth" (1961), analyzed the psychological dimensions of colonial domination and the violence inherent in both colonialism and its overthrow, arguing that true national liberation required a complete decolonization of the mind as well as political independence."

Now I'll draft section 7, starting with a smooth transition from section 6 and covering the three subsections:

1.8   Section 7: Nationalism in the Age of World Wars and Decolonization

This paradoxical relationship between Western nationalism and its anti-colonial appropriations would reach a critical juncture in the first half of the 20th century, as two devastating world wars shattered the old imperial order and unleashed unprecedented forces of nationalist aspiration. The period from 1914 to 1945 witnessed both the most destructive manifestations of nationalist ideology and its most triumphant moments as a liberating force against colonial domination. Nationalism during this era evolved in response to global conflict, economic crisis, and the accelerating decline of European empires, creating new nation-states while simultaneously generating extreme forms that would plunge the world into unprecedented violence.

World War I (1914-1918) marked a watershed moment in the history of nationalism, transforming the principle of national self-determination from a philosophical ideal into a practical political force that would reshape the map of Europe and beyond. The war itself was fueled by competing nationalisms, from Serbian ambitions in the Balkans that triggered the conflict through the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand to German dreams of imperial expansion and French determination to reclaim Alsace-Lorraine. Yet, as the conflict dragged on and millions perished, the war also unleashed nationalist aspirations among peoples long subject to imperial rule. President Woodrow Wilson of the United States, though entering the war late, articulated a new vision for the post-war world in his Fourteen Points address of January 1918. Point XIV called for "a general association of nations" to ensure mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity, while other points explicitly invoked the principle of self-determination, particularly for the peoples of Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. Wilson's rhetoric, though inconsistent in application (notably excluding colonial territories), resonated powerfully across Europe and beyond, giving voice to aspirations that had been suppressed for decades.

The Treaty of Versailles (1919) and the subsequent peace treaties represented an attempt to implement the principle of national self-determination, though with significant limitations and contradictions. The Austro-Hungarian Empire, which had ruled over a dozen distinct nationalities, was dismantled entirely, replaced by new nation-states including Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia (initially the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes). Poland was reconstituted after more than a century of partition between Russia, Prussia, and Austria. The Ottoman Empire was dismembered, with its Arab territories placed under British and French mandate rather than granted immediate independence, highlighting the selective application of self-determination. These new states, however, faced immense challenges in creating cohesive national identities. Czechoslovakia, under its founding President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, attempted to

build a civic nationalism that would unite Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Hungarians, Ruthenians, and others, but ethnic tensions remained simmering beneath the surface. Similarly, Yugoslavia's attempt to forge unity among South Slavic peoples proved fragile, as Serb, Croat, and Slovene national identities continued to assert themselves. The redrawing of national boundaries also created significant minority problems, with millions of Germans finding themselves citizens of Poland or Czechoslovakia, while Hungarians were suddenly minorities in Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. These unresolved national questions would contribute to the instability that eventually led to World War II.

The interwar period (1919-1939) witnessed nationalism taking increasingly extreme and dangerous forms, particularly in states that felt aggrieved by the post-war settlement or threatened by economic crisis and social upheaval. In Italy, Benito Mussolini's Fascist Party, which came to power in 1922, promoted an aggressive nationalism that glorified war, imperial expansion, and the supremacy of the Italian nation. Mussolini's regime emphasized Roman imperial symbolism and sought to recreate a modern Roman Empire through the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, using brutal methods including chemical weapons to subdue the African nation. Nazi Germany, under Adolf Hitler who became Chancellor in 1933, represented the most extreme and destructive manifestation of nationalism in human history. Hitler's ideology, articulated in Mein Kampf (1925-1926), combined virulent racial theories with expansionist nationalism, demanding the unification of all Germans in a single state (Grossdeutschland) and the acquisition of "living space" (Lebensraum) in Eastern Europe through the subjugation or elimination of Slavic peoples. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 institutionalized racial discrimination, stripping Jews of citizenship rights and establishing the framework for the Holocaust.

In East Asia, imperial Japan developed its own form of aggressive nationalism, blending traditional concepts of imperial divinity with modern racial theories and militarism. The Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and the subsequent full-scale war against China beginning in 1937 were justified by the ideology of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," which claimed to liberate Asia from Western colonialism while in reality establishing Japanese hegemony. The Rape of Nanjing in 1937, in which Japanese troops massacred hundreds of thousands of Chinese civilians, represented the horrifying extremes to which this imperial nationalism could descend.

Economic crisis, particularly the Great Depression following the 1929 stock market crash, provided fertile ground for the rise of extremist nationalism. Mass unemployment, inflation, and social dislocation led many to seek radical solutions that promised national renewal and restoration. The failure of democratic governments to address economic hardships contributed to the appeal of nationalist movements that offered strong leadership and scapegoats for national problems. In Germany, the Nazi Party exploited economic misery to build support, blaming Jews, communists, and the Versailles settlement for Germany's troubles. Similarly, in Hungary, the Arrow Cross Party gained support by promoting anti-Semitism and revisionist nationalism aimed at reclaiming territories lost after World War I.

Not all nationalism during this period took aggressive forms. Many smaller states, particularly in Eastern Europe, developed defensive nationalisms aimed at preserving their newly won independence against expansionist neighbors. The Little Entente, formed in 1920-1921 by Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia,

represented an alliance of states seeking to maintain the territorial settlement against Hungarian revisionism and Bulgarian or Soviet threats. Finland, having achieved independence from Russia in 1917, developed a strong nationalist identity focused on preserving its sovereignty against Soviet pressure, culminating in the heroic resistance during the Winter War of 1939-1940.

World War II (1939-1945) represented both the apex of aggressive nationalism and the beginning of its transformation into a force for decolonization. The defeat of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan discredited the most extreme forms of ethnic nationalism and racial ideology. Yet, the war also fatally weakened European colonial empires, creating conditions for a new wave of nationalist movements across Asia and Africa. The Japanese occupation of European colonies in Southeast Asia during the war, though brutal, undermined the myth of European invincibility and created power vacuums that nationalist movements could exploit. In India, the Quit India Movement launched by Gandhi in 1942, though suppressed by the British, demonstrated the growing strength of Indian nationalism and the increasing difficulty of maintaining colonial rule in the face of mass resistance. The British wartime promise of dominion status for India after the conflict, embodied in the Cripps Mission of 1942, acknowledged the inevitability of Indian independence, though the path remained contested.

The post-war period witnessed an unprecedented wave of decolonization as dozens of new nation-states emerged from the wreckage of European empires. In Asia, the process began almost immediately

1.9   Nationalism in Relation to Other Political Ideologies

The post-war period witnessed an unprecedented wave of decolonization as dozens of new nation-states emerged from the wreckage of European empires. In Asia, the process began almost immediately, with India and Pakistan achieving independence in 1947, followed by Indonesia in 1949. This rapid expansion of sovereign states across the global stage raised profound questions about how these new nations would govern themselves and relate to the established political frameworks of the Cold War era. As nationalism continued to evolve in the second half of the twentieth century, it increasingly intersected, conflicted with, and adapted to other major political ideologies, creating complex hybrid forms that would shape the post-war world order. The relationship between nationalism and other ideological systems proved neither straightforward nor static, revealing nationalism's remarkable adaptability as both a political force and a cultural phenomenon.

The historical connection between nationalism and liberalism represents one of the most significant and enduring political alliances in modern history, albeit one fraught with inherent tensions. From their earliest formulations, both ideologies shared a commitment to popular sovereignty and individual rights, though they often differed in their emphasis between collective self-determination and individual liberty. The American Revolution (1775-1783) and French Revolution (1789-1799) stand as seminal moments where nationalist aspirations for self-governance merged with liberal demands for constitutional government and individual rights. TheDeclaration of Independence (1776) simultaneously asserted the right of "one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another" and proclaimed that all men are "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights," perfectly embodying this dual commitment to national self-determination and individual liberty. John Stuart Mill, in his Considerations on Representative Government

(1861), famously argued that liberal institutions function best within the context of a nation-state, suggesting that "among a people without fellow-feeling, especially if they read and speak different languages, the united public opinion, necessary to the working of representative government, cannot exist." This perspective, while reflecting the Eurocentric assumptions of its time, highlights the functional compatibility many liberals perceived between national identity and democratic governance.

The Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini further developed this synthesis through his concept of "liberal nationalism," arguing that the nation-state represented the natural framework for achieving both individual freedom and social justice. Mazzini's Young Italy movement, founded in 1831, advocated simultaneously for Italian unification, constitutional government, and social reform, demonstrating how nationalist and liberal aspirations could reinforce each other. The liberal nationalism of the nineteenth century, however, often contained significant limitations and contradictions. While championing self-determination for some peoples, liberal nationalists frequently denied it to others, particularly colonial subjects and minority groups within their own nations. The French Republic, for instance, proclaimed universal values while maintaining a brutal colonial empire and suppressing regional languages like Breton and Occitan in the name of national unity.

The tensions between universal liberal values and particularist nationalist claims became increasingly apparent in the twentieth century. Liberalism's commitment to universal human rights and individual dignity often conflicted with nationalism's emphasis on collective identity and particular cultural traditions. Isaiah Berlin, in his essay "Two Concepts of Liberty" (1958), identified this tension as fundamental to modern political life, distinguishing between negative liberty (freedom from interference) and positive liberty (freedom to achieve one's potential). Berlin suggested that nationalism, with its emphasis on collective self-realization, often leaned toward positive liberty, while liberalism traditionally emphasized negative liberty, creating an inherent philosophical tension between the two ideologies.

Contemporary manifestations of liberal nationalism continue to navigate these tensions, seeking to balance respect for national identity with commitment to liberal democratic values. In countries like Canada and Belgium, liberal nationalism has adapted to multicultural realities, developing models of civic nationalism that accommodate multiple identities within a shared political framework. The Canadian policy of multiculturalism, formally established in 1971, represents an attempt to reconcile national unity with recognition of diversity, though tensions persist, particularly in Quebec, where a distinctive nationalist movement has periodically challenged the federal liberal order. Similarly, the European Union embodies an ongoing experiment in liberal supra-nationalism, attempting to preserve distinct national identities while creating frameworks for cooperation and shared governance that transcend traditional nation-state boundaries.

The relationship between nationalism and socialism/communism has been equally complex, characterized by both fierce antagonism and surprising synthesis. Socialist internationalism, with its famous rallying cry "Workers of the world, unite!" proclaimed in The Communist Manifesto (1848), initially viewed nationalism as a divisive ideology that distracted workers from their true class interests. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels dismissed nationalist sentiments as false consciousness that prevented proletarian international solidarity, predicting that capitalism's global expansion would inevitably dissolve national boundaries. Engels wrote

in 1847 that the communists were "internationalists" who recognized the "community of interests of all proletarians, irrespective of nationality." This perspective viewed nationalism as a bourgeois ideology used to manipulate workers into fighting and dying for their capitalist masters' interests rather than recognizing their common exploitation.

The practical challenges of building socialist movements, however, soon forced a more nuanced approach to what became known as "the national question." Vladimir Lenin, writing in The Right of Nations to Self-Determination (1914), acknowledged that nationalism could serve progressive ends when directed against imperialist oppression, arguing that socialists should support the right of nations to self-determination as a means of weakening capitalist empires. This tactical recognition of nationalism's utility did not, however, diminish Lenin's belief that socialism would ultimately transcend national divisions. The Russian Revolution of 1917 and subsequent creation of the Soviet Union attempted to resolve the national question through a policy of federalism that nominally recognized national republics while centralizing power under

1.10   Cultural Dimensions of Nationalism

the Communist Party. This approach recognized over one hundred distinct nationalities within the Soviet Union, each with its own language and cultural institutions, while simultaneously promoting socialist internationalism and the Russian language as a unifying medium. The Soviet policy of "national in form, socialist in content" allowed for cultural expression within strictly defined political boundaries, attempting to harness national sentiments for state-building rather than allowing them to challenge socialist unity. This complex balancing act between socialist internationalism and accommodation of national identity created tensions that would eventually contribute to the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, as nationalist movements in the Baltic republics, Ukraine, and elsewhere seized the opportunity to assert independence.

Beyond the Soviet experience, the relationship between socialism and nationalism produced various hybrid forms across the twentieth century. In China, Mao Zedong developed a distinctive synthesis of Marxist-Leninist ideology with Chinese nationalism, creating a revolutionary movement that simultaneously promised class liberation and national renewal. Mao's famous assertion that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun" combined with his emphasis on China's "century of humiliation" at the hands of foreign powers demonstrated how socialist revolution could be framed as a means of achieving both social justice and national dignity. The Vietnamese struggle for independence, led by Hồ Chí Minh, similarly merged communist ideology with nationalist aspirations, creating a powerful movement that ultimately defeated both French colonialism and American intervention. Tito's Yugoslavia represented another variation, developing "national communism" that balanced federal recognition of constituent republics with strong centralized control and a policy of non-alignment in the Cold War. These examples illustrate how socialist and nationalist ideologies could be combined in various ways, often producing distinctive political systems that defied simple categorization.

The relationship between nationalism and conservatism has been characterized more by alliance than antagonism, as both ideologies typically emphasize tradition, social cohesion, and organic community. Conservative nationalism often emphasizes historical continuity, cultural heritage, and traditional social structures as

essential components of national identity. Edmund Burke, the foundational conservative thinker, expressed skepticism toward abstract political systems in favor of evolved traditions that emerge from a nation's historical experience. In Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), Burke defended the organic development of British constitutional arrangements against French revolutionary rationalism, arguing that society was "a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born." This perspective naturally aligned with nationalist conceptions of the nation as a historical community spanning generations.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, conservative forces frequently embraced nationalism as a defense against revolutionary change and foreign influence. In Germany, conservative nationalists like Johann Gottlieb Fichte and later Paul de Lagarde emphasized German cultural distinctiveness and historical mission, often contrasting it with what they saw as the materialistic and atomizing tendencies of Western liberalism and French rationalism. The Conservative Party in Victorian Britain increasingly adopted imperial nationalism as a core element of its identity, celebrating the British Empire as both an economic asset and a civilizing mission that demonstrated British superiority. Benjamin Disraeli's concept of "Tory democracy" attempted to connect conservative institutions with national unity and social reform, creating a populist conservatism that appealed to working-class voters' patriotic sentiments.

Religion has often played a crucial role in conservative nationalism, providing moral authority and cultural continuity to national identity. In Poland, Catholicism became deeply intertwined with Polish national identity, particularly during the period of partition and foreign domination, with the Church serving as a guardian of national traditions and language. Similarly, in Ireland, the Catholic Church provided both institutional support and spiritual legitimacy to the Irish nationalist movement against British Protestant rule. The concept of "Christendom" itself, though declining in political importance, continued to influence conservative nationalist thought in Europe, framing national identity within a broader civilizational context. Contemporary conservative nationalism often emphasizes the religious foundations of national identity, as seen in movements like Poland's Law and Justice party, which explicitly connects Polish national identity with Catholic traditions, or in Hindu nationalism in India, which seeks to define Indian identity in terms of Hindu heritage and values.

The tensions between nationalism and internationalism represent perhaps the most fundamental ideological divide shaping contemporary global politics. Internationalism, in its various forms, challenges the nationalist premise that the nation-state constitutes the primary and legitimate framework for political organization. Liberal internationalism, exemplified by organizations like the United Nations and the European Union, advocates for cooperation between nation-states based on shared rules, institutions, and values, while still accepting the nation-state as the basic unit of international relations. Socialist internationalism, as discussed earlier, posits a more radical challenge to nationalism, suggesting that class solidarity should transcend national boundaries. More recently, new forms of transnational activism have emerged that explicitly contest nationalist frameworks, including environmental movements, feminist organizations, and human rights advocates who operate across national borders.

The European Union represents the most ambitious attempt to create a post-national political order, pooling

sovereignty among member states while maintaining distinct national identities. The EU's motto, "United in diversity," encapsulates this delicate balance between international cooperation and national particularity. The project has faced significant challenges from nationalist movements across Europe, from Brexit in the United Kingdom to the rise of populist nationalist parties in France, Italy, Hungary, and Poland. These movements often frame their opposition to the EU in terms of defending national sovereignty, cultural distinctiveness, and democratic accountability against perceived bureaucratic overreach in Brussels. The tension between European integration and national sovereignty continues to shape European politics, raising profound questions about the future of both the nation-state and international cooperation.

Transnational movements challenging nationalist frameworks have gained increasing prominence in recent decades. Environmental activism, exemplified by organizations like Greenpeace and Extinction Rebellion, operates across national boundaries, framing issues like climate change as global problems requiring collective action beyond national interests. Feminist movements have similarly developed transnational networks, challenging patriarchal structures that often intersect with nationalist projects. The #MeToo movement, which began in the United States but quickly spread globally, demonstrated how feminist consciousness could transcend national cultures while adapting to local contexts. Human rights organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch advocate for universal standards of justice and dignity that often conflict with nationalist claims to sovereignty and cultural particularity.

Cosmopolitanism has emerged as perhaps the most explicit philosophical alternative to nationalism, emphasizing the moral equality of all human beings regardless of national affiliation. The ancient Greek Stoic philosopher Diogenes, when asked where he came from, replied "I am a citizen of the world" (kosmopolitês), establishing a concept that has challenged nationalist particularity throughout history. Contemporary cosmopolitan thinkers like Martha Nussbaum and Kwame Anthony Appiah argue for a form of moral universalism that recognizes national attachments but subordinates them to broader obligations to humanity. Appiah's concept of "rooted cosmopolitanism" attempts to reconcile local cultural attachments with respect for human diversity and universal ethical commitments, suggesting that it is possible to be both patriotically engaged with one's national community and morally concerned with humanity as a whole.

This complex interplay between nationalism and other ideological frameworks reveals nationalism's remarkable adaptability and enduring appeal. As we move beyond these political dimensions to examine the cultural foundations of national identity, we discover how deeply nationalism is embedded in the fabric of everyday life through language, education, symbols, and media. These cultural dimensions represent both the most intimate and the most powerful aspects of nationalism, shaping individual consciousness and collective belonging in ways that transcend formal political structures and ideological debates.

Language stands as perhaps the most fundamental cultural element in the construction and maintenance of national identity, serving simultaneously as a practical tool for communication

1.11   Economic Nationalism and Protectionism

Language stands as perhaps the most fundamental cultural element in the construction and maintenance of national identity, serving simultaneously as a practical tool for communication and a powerful symbol of collective belonging. Yet, the cultural dimensions of nationalism, however profound, have consistently intersected with material interests and economic policies that shape the daily lives of citizens and the fortunes of nations. The economic dimensions of nationalism represent a crucial realm where ideology meets practical governance, where abstract sentiments of national identity translate into concrete policies that determine trade relationships, industrial development, and resource distribution. Economic nationalism, with its emphasis on protecting and promoting national economic interests, has been a persistent feature of statecraft since the emergence of the modern nation-state, adapting its forms and arguments across centuries while maintaining its core premise that economic policies should serve the national interest.

Mercantilism emerged in the 16th century as the first systematic approach to economic nationalism, predating modern nationalist ideology by several centuries yet establishing many of its foundational principles. Mercantilist thought viewed international economics as a zero-sum game in which one nation's gain necessarily meant another's loss. This perspective led to policies designed to maximize exports, minimize imports, and accumulate precious metals, particularly gold and silver, which were seen as the ultimate measure of national wealth and power. The English navigation acts, beginning in 1651, exemplified this approach by requiring that trade with England and its colonies be conducted on English ships, thereby protecting English merchants and shipbuilders while excluding foreign competitors. Similarly, France under Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV's finance minister, implemented a comprehensive mercantilist system that established state-supported manufactories, imposed high tariffs on imported goods, and developed infrastructure like roads and canals to facilitate internal trade. Colbert's famous declaration that "finance is the sinews of the state" captured the mercantilist conviction that economic strength directly translated into political power and military capability.

Mercantilist policies often went beyond mere protectionism to include aggressive measures to secure resources and markets. The British East India Company, chartered in 1600, combined commercial activities with political and military functions, eventually controlling vast territories in India and establishing a monopoly on trade with Asia. Similarly, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) used its own navy and army to dominate trade in the Indian Ocean, establishing colonies and trading posts from Cape Town to Batavia (modern Jakarta). These chartered companies functioned as instruments of economic nationalism, pursuing commercial advantage for their home countries while extending political influence across the globe. The Spanish Empire, meanwhile, focused on extracting silver and gold from its American colonies through systems like the mita in Peru, which required indigenous communities to provide labor for mines, thereby transferring wealth from the colonies to the metropole. Mercantilism thus established crucial precedents for modern economic nationalism, including the belief that the state should actively shape economic policy, the emphasis on trade surpluses, and the connection between economic strength and national power.

The 19th century witnessed the evolution of mercantilism into more systematic theories of protectionism designed to foster national industrial development. As industrialization transformed economic production, nations increasingly faced the choice between embracing free trade principles championed by British

economists like David Ricardo or protecting nascent industries through tariffs and other barriers. The United States provides perhaps the most significant example of protectionist economic nationalism during this period. Alexander Hamilton, in his Report on the Subject of Manufactures (1791), argued that the United States needed protective tariffs to develop its industrial capacity and reduce dependence on British manufactured goods. This vision was later expanded into what became known as the "American System" by Henry Clay and other nationalist politicians in the early 19th century. The American System combined high tariffs to protect industry, federal support for internal improvements like roads and canals, and a strong national bank to facilitate commerce. These policies deliberately aimed to create an integrated national economy that could compete with European industrial powers while fostering a sense of national economic independence.

The German economist Friedrich List provided the most sophisticated theoretical justification for protectionist nationalism in his National System of Political Economy (1841). List challenged the universalism of British free trade doctrine, arguing that what benefited Britain, as the world's leading industrial power, would not necessarily benefit less developed nations. He proposed a theory of economic stages, suggesting that nations should pass through agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial phases of development, with protective tariffs appropriate during the manufacturing stage to shield infant industries from more established foreign competitors. List's ideas profoundly influenced economic policy in both Germany and the United States, contributing to Germany's rapid industrialization under Otto von Bismarck and the continuation of high tariff policies in America throughout the 19th century. Bismarck's adoption of protectionism in 1879 marked a decisive turn away from free trade policies, combining agricultural tariffs to win support from the conservative Junker class with industrial tariffs to promote German manufacturing. This policy shift helped Germany overtake Britain in steel production by the early 20th century, demonstrating how protectionist policies could accelerate industrial development when strategically applied.

Protectionism also played a crucial role in the industrialization of Japan during the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912). Japanese leaders recognized that without protective measures, the country's fledgling industries would be overwhelmed by Western competition. The government established state-owned enterprises in key sectors like shipbuilding, textiles, and weapons manufacturing before transferring them to private hands once they could compete internationally. Tariff rates remained high until Japan was forced to reduce them through unequal treaties with Western powers, but the government continued to promote industrial development through subsidies, infrastructure investment, and the selective adoption of Western technology. This state-led approach to economic development, combined with nationalist rhetoric about "rich country, strong army" (fukoku kyōhei), created a distinctive form of Japanese economic nationalism that contributed significantly to the country's rapid transformation from feudal society to industrial power.

The debates between free traders and protectionists during this period often reflected deeper ideological divisions about national identity and economic destiny. In Britain, the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 marked a triumph for free trade principles and represented Britain's confidence in its industrial supremacy. Figures like Richard Cobden and John Bright argued that free trade would promote international peace by creating mutual economic interdependence, while also providing cheaper food for British workers. In contrast, protectionists in Britain and elsewhere emphasized national self-sufficiency and economic independence as essential components of national dignity and security. The American economist Henry Carey, for instance,

argued in Principles of Political Economy (1837-1840) that protective tariffs would not only promote industrial development but also create a more equitable distribution of wealth within nations, thereby strengthening social cohesion and national unity.

The late 20th and early 21st centuries have witnessed a resurgence of economic nationalism in response to the forces of globalization. The expansion of international trade through agreements like the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and its successor, the World Trade Organization (WTO), combined with the liberalization of capital flows and the growth of multinational corporations, created an increasingly integrated global economy. Yet, this very integration has provoked nationalist reactions concerned with preserving national economic sovereignty, protecting domestic industries, and controlling national resources. The concept of "economic patriotism" has gained currency in many countries, referring to policies designed to favor national firms and workers over foreign competitors. France provides a notable example, where initiatives like the "economic patriotism" campaign launched in 2005 encouraged French companies to invest domestically and discouraged foreign takeovers of strategic French

1.12   Contemporary Nationalism in the 21st Century

…strategic French firms. This approach to economic nationalism reflects a broader tension in the 21st century between the forces of globalization and the enduring appeal of national sovereignty. As the world has become increasingly interconnected through trade, communication, and migration, nationalism has not disappeared but rather adapted to new circumstances, manifesting in forms that both resist and accommodate global pressures.

Contemporary nationalism in the 21st century exists in a complex relationship with globalization, simultaneously drawing strength from resistance to homogenizing forces while adapting to the realities of an interconnected world. The paradox of globalization is that while it has eroded certain aspects of national sovereignty—particularly in economic regulation—it has simultaneously stimulated nationalist reactions against perceived threats to national identity and autonomy. The Brexit referendum of 2016, in which British voters chose to leave the European Union, exemplifies this dynamic, as supporters framed their decision as a reclaiming of national sovereignty from a distant, unaccountable bureaucracy while opponents warned of the economic consequences of disengaging from global markets. Similarly, the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States in 2016, with his "America First" agenda, represented a nationalist backlash against decades of neoliberal globalization, promising to renegotiate trade deals, restrict immigration, and revitalize domestic manufacturing. These movements tapped into genuine anxieties about economic displacement and cultural change while offering nationalist narratives that promised control and renewal in an era of rapid transformation.

The relationship between economic globalization and nationalist backlash has been particularly evident in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. The economic devastation wrought by the crisis, followed by often painful austerity measures in many countries, created fertile ground for nationalist movements that blamed global elites, international institutions, and foreign competitors for domestic hardships. In Greece, the severe economic crisis that began in 2009 fueled the rise of the far-right Golden Dawn party, which combined

anti-immigrant rhetoric with economic nationalism and nostalgia for a mythologized past of national glory. In Hungary and Poland, nationalist governments have combined critiques of European Union economic policies with measures to assert greater national control over their economies, while in Turkey, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has increasingly combined Islamic rhetoric with economic nationalism, particularly in response to currency crises and pressure from international financial institutions. These examples demonstrate how economic grievances can be channeled into nationalist movements that promise protection from global market forces and international oversight.

Transnational challenges like climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic have further complicated the relationship between nationalism and global cooperation. The pandemic, in particular, tested nationalist assumptions about self-sufficiency and control, as countries competed for medical supplies, implemented travel restrictions, and pursued divergent strategies for containing the virus. The phenomenon of "vaccine nationalism," in which wealthy nations secured large quantities of vaccines while poorer nations struggled to access them, revealed how nationalist priorities could undermine global public health efforts. Yet, the pandemic also demonstrated the limitations of purely nationalist approaches to global problems, as the virus recognized no borders and ultimately required international cooperation for effective containment. Similarly, climate change represents a quintessentially global challenge that nationalist frameworks struggle to address adequately, as greenhouse gas emissions in one country affect the entire planet. The tension between nationalist conceptions of sovereignty and the need for global collective action on climate issues has become increasingly apparent in international negotiations, with some nationalist leaders, like Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, framing environmental protections as infringements on national development rights.

The connection between populism and nationalism has become one of the defining features of 21st-century politics, as populist movements across the globe have increasingly adopted nationalist rhetoric and agendas. Populism, with its Manichean worldview that divides society between "the pure people" and "corrupt elite," finds natural affinity with nationalist narratives that contrast the virtuous nation with external threats and internal enemies. This populist-nationalist synthesis has proven remarkably effective across diverse contexts, from Viktor Orbán's Hungary to Narendra Modi's India, from Rodrigo Duterte's Philippines to Marine Le Pen's National Rally in France. These movements typically combine charismatic leadership, direct appeals to "the people" bypassing traditional institutions, and nationalist narratives that promise to restore national greatness against perceived decline.

The case of India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi illustrates the powerful combination of populism and Hindu nationalism. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has successfully mobilized support through a populist nationalism that emphasizes Hindu cultural identity, critiques of secular elites, and promises of economic development. The 2019 election campaign, which returned Modi to power with an increased majority, combined nationalist rhetoric following tensions with Pakistan with populist welfare promises and attacks on opposition parties as corrupt and disconnected from ordinary Indians. Similarly, in Turkey, President Erdoğan has combined populist appeals to religious and nationalist sentiment with centralized control over state institutions, framing his rule as a defense against both internal enemies and external pressures from Western powers. These examples demonstrate how populist leaders can effectively channel nationalist sentiments into political support, often by creating a sense of crisis that justifies strong leadership and decisive

action.

Nationalism in the 21st century has become increasingly intertwined with identity politics, as movements based on ethnic, religious, or regional identities have adopted nationalist frameworks to advance their goals. This intersection has produced both integrationist and secessionist forms of nationalism, reflecting the complex relationship between identity and political community. In Spain, the Catalan independence movement represents a case of sub-state nationalism that combines cultural distinctiveness with economic grievances and democratic aspirations. The 2017 independence referendum, declared illegal by Spain's Constitutional Court, revealed the tensions between competing nationalisms within a single state, as Catalan nationalists framed their movement as a democratic expression of self-determination while Spanish nationalists emphasized the unity and indivisibility of the Spanish nation. Similar dynamics can be observed in Scotland, where the Scottish National Party has pursued independence through democratic means while still acknowledging the complexities of identity in an increasingly multicultural society.

The tensions between multiculturalism and nationalist conceptions of the nation have become increasingly pronounced in the 21st century. Many Western nations have seen the rise of movements that reject multicultural policies in favor of nationalist narratives emphasizing cultural homogeneity and traditional values. In France, the debate over secularism (laïcité) and Islamic dress has become a focal point for tensions between republican nationalism and multicultural accommodation, with laws banning headscarves in schools and face coverings in public spaces framed as defenses of French secular values against religious particularism. Similarly, in Germany, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party has gained support by opposing what it portrays as the excessive influence of multicultural policies and immigration on German national identity. These movements often express anxieties about cultural change and social fragmentation while offering nationalist visions of unity based on shared heritage and values.

Digital technologies have profoundly transformed nationalist organizing and communication in the 21st century, creating new platforms for the dissemination of nationalist narratives and the mobilization of support. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have enabled nationalist movements to bypass traditional media gatekeepers and communicate directly with potential supporters, often using emotionally resonant content and simplified messages that reinforce in-group solidarity and out-group hostility. The role of social media in the 2016 Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump has been extensively documented, with campaigns using targeted messaging to activate nationalist sentiments among specific demographic groups. Similarly, in India, the BJP's effective use of social media, particularly WhatsApp, has been credited with helping to mobilize support and

1.13   Theories and Debates About Nationalism's Future

Similarly, in India, the BJP's effective use of social media, particularly WhatsApp, has been credited with helping to mobilize support and shape public discourse around nationalist themes, often through the dissemination of content that emphasizes Hindu identity and critiques of secular opponents. This digital dimension of contemporary nationalism represents a significant evolution in how nationalist movements operate, creating new possibilities for both connection and polarization that will likely shape nationalism's future tra-

jectory. As we consider what lies ahead for nationalism in the coming decades and centuries, scholars have developed competing theories that offer contrasting visions of nationalism's future, reflecting fundamental disagreements about human nature, political organization, and the trajectory of global development.

The decline thesis, which argues that nationalism is gradually becoming obsolete, gained prominence in the late 20th century as globalization accelerated and new forms of international governance emerged. Proponents of this view point to several interconnected developments that appear to be eroding the nation-state's primacy. The European Union stands as perhaps the most advanced example of post-national political organization, pooling sovereignty among member states while creating institutions that operate above the national level. The EU's single market, common currency (in many member states), and free movement of people represent a deliberate weakening of national boundaries in favor of deeper integration. Jean Monnet, one of the EU's founding fathers, famously envisioned a United States of Europe that would transcend national rivalries that had devastated the continent. Similarly, the proliferation of international organizations like the United Nations, World Trade Organization, and International Criminal Court suggests an evolving system of global governance that constrains national sovereignty in pursuit of collective goals.

Economic globalization provides further evidence for the decline thesis, as multinational corporations increasingly operate across national boundaries, creating production chains and distribution networks that transcend any single nation's control. The power of global financial markets to discipline national economic policies, as seen in the European debt crisis when Greece, Portugal, and other countries faced intense pressure from international creditors, demonstrates the limits of national economic sovereignty. Cultural globalization, facilitated by digital communication and media conglomerates, has created unprecedented flows of ideas, images, and cultural products across national boundaries, potentially eroding distinctive national cultures. The worldwide popularity of Hollywood films, American music, and Western consumer brands suggests the emergence of a global culture that competes with national cultural traditions.

Demographic changes, particularly increased migration and the growth of cosmopolitan identities, further challenge nationalist frameworks. In many Western countries, younger generations express weaker attachments to national identity and greater comfort with multiple, overlapping identities. Surveys by the World Values Survey have documented a gradual shift in many societies toward post-materialist values that prioritize individual autonomy and self-expression over traditional national attachments. Ulrich Beck, the German sociologist, argued that we are witnessing the emergence of "cosmopolitanism" as a new form of consciousness that recognizes multiple loyalties and embraces cultural hybridity. In this view, nationalism represents an increasingly outdated form of political organization destined to wither away as humanity confronts truly global challenges like climate change, pandemics, and nuclear proliferation that require international cooperation beyond narrow national interests.

Despite these trends, the persistence thesis offers a compelling counterargument that nationalism remains the dominant form of political identity and shows no signs of disappearing. Proponents of this view emphasize the deep psychological roots of national identity and its continued ability to mobilize human emotion and action. The resurgence of nationalist movements across the globe in the early 21st century—from Brexit to the election of Donald Trump, from Hindu nationalism in India to the rise of right-wing parties across

Europe—provides powerful evidence of nationalism's enduring appeal. Anthony Smith, the leading ethno-symbolist theorist, argued that nations possess "ethnic cores" that provide continuity and authenticity that cannot be replicated by purely civic or post-national identities. These ethnic cores, with their shared myths, memories, and cultural traditions, continue to resonate with people seeking meaning and belonging in an increasingly complex and fragmented world.

The persistence thesis emphasizes that nationalism fulfills fundamental human needs for belonging, recognition, and security that cannot be easily eliminated by rational arguments or institutional arrangements. The psychologist Jonathan Haidt has suggested that national identity taps into evolved human predispositions for tribal loyalty and group cohesion that are deeply embedded in human psychology. From this perspective, attempts to create post-national identities are likely to fail because they do not account for these fundamental aspects of human nature. Furthermore, the persistence thesis points out that even in the European Union, often cited as the most advanced example of post-national governance, national identities remain powerful and have actually gained strength in response to perceived threats from Brussels. The economic crisis of 2008 and the migration crisis of 2015 both stimulated nationalist reactions that challenged the EU's authority, suggesting that international institutions may strengthen rather than weaken national identities when they are perceived as threatening national interests.

The transformation thesis occupies a middle ground between decline and persistence, suggesting that nationalism is not disappearing but rather evolving into new forms adapted to changing circumstances. Rather than a simple narrative of progress or decline, this approach sees nationalism as constantly reinventing itself in response to new challenges and opportunities. Michael Billig's concept of "banal nationalism" is particularly influential here, arguing that nationalism is not just an extreme ideology visible in flags and anthems but is reproduced in countless everyday practices and assumptions that establish national identity as natural and normal. From weather maps that depict national territory to sports competitions that pit nations against each other, from the unremarked use of national currencies to the casual references to "our" government or "our" interests, nationalism operates at a level of consciousness so taken-for-granted that it often goes unrecognized.

The transformation thesis suggests that nationalism in the future may become less focused on sovereignty and territory and more oriented toward cultural identity and shared values. The concept of "everyday nationhood," developed by scholars like Tim Edensor, emphasizes how national identity is performed and reproduced through routine practices like cooking national dishes, celebrating national holidays, and following national sports teams. These forms of nationalism may coexist with and even support international cooperation rather than opposing it. Nationalism might also evolve in response to specific future challenges. Climate change, for instance, could foster "ecological nationalism" focused on protecting national environments and resources, while space exploration might eventually give rise to new forms of planetary identity that complement rather than replace national attachments. The transformation thesis invites us to consider how nationalism might adapt to technological changes like artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and genetic engineering, which could create new forms of community and belonging that transcend traditional national boundaries while still drawing on nationalist themes of heritage and distinctiveness.

Looking further ahead, we can speculate about alternative futures that might move beyond nationalism entirely, though such scenarios remain highly uncertain. One possibility is the emergence of global governance structures that gradually render nation-states obsolete, perhaps in response to existential threats like climate change or artificial intelligence that require coordinated action at a planetary scale. Another scenario involves the fragmentation of existing nations into smaller, more homogeneous political units based on regional, cultural, or even ideological identities—a process sometimes called "balkanization" that could create hundreds of micro-states in place of larger nations. Alternatively, technological developments could enable new forms of identity and political organization that we can barely imagine today. Virtual communities, for instance, might become more politically significant than geographic nations, or genetic engineering might create new forms of kinship and belonging that transcend traditional national categories.

Space colonization represents perhaps the most radical alternative to terrestrial nationalism, as human communities established on Mars, the Moon, or beyond might develop entirely new forms of political identity and organization. The unique challenges of extraterrestrial environments and the vast distances from Earth could create truly post-national societies that bear little resemblance to the nation-states of today. Yet even in these scenarios, elements of nationalist thinking might persist, as human beings continue to seek the meaning, belonging, and recognition that national identities have historically provided. The history of nationalism suggests that it is remarkably adaptable, capable of surviving and even thriving in changing circumstances by reinventing itself while preserving its core appeal to the human need for collective identity and recognition. Whatever the future holds, nationalism seems likely to remain a significant force in human affairs, though perhaps in forms we can only dimly glimpse today. As humanity faces the challenges of the 21st century and beyond, the perpetual tension between particularist national identities and universalist aspirations will continue to shape our political landscape, reflecting both the diversity and the common humanity of our global civilization.