**Question: Discuss the concept of nationalism.**

**Answer:** Nationalism is a political, social, and economic ideology and movement characterized by the promotion of the interests of a particular [nation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nation), especially with the aim of gaining and maintaining the nation's [sovereignty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sovereignty) over its [homeland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homeland). Nationalism holds that each nation should govern itself, free from outside interference, that a nation is a natural and ideal basis for a [polity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polity), and that the nation is the only rightful source of political power. It further aims to build and maintain a single [national identity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_identity)—based on shared social characteristics such as [culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture), [language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language), [religion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion), politics, and belief in a shared singular history—and to promote national unity or [solidarity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solidarity).

Nationalism can also be understood as ‘a state of mind in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is due to the nation-state’. Understood in this sense, it also encourages pride in national achievements, and is closely linked to patriotism. National symbols and flags, national anthems, national languages, national myths and other symbols of national identity are highly important in nationalism.

Nationalism as an ideology is modern. Throughout history, people have had an attachment to their tribes and traditions, to territorial authorities and to their homeland, but nationalism did not become a widely-recognized concept until the 18th century. Industrialization and [capitalism](https://www.thebalance.com/capitalism-characteristics-examples-pros-cons-3305588) strengthened the need for a self-governing nation to protect business rights, and merchants partnered with national governments to help them beat foreign competitors. The steam-powered printing press helped enable nations to promote unity within and prejudice against outsiders. In the late 18th century, the American and French revolutions formalized large nations that were no more ruled by kings. They ruled by democracy and endorsed capitalism. By the 20th century, the entire American and European continents were governed by sovereign nations.

Indian nationalism is an instance of territorial nationalism, inclusive of its entire people, despite their diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. It developed as a concept during India’s freedom struggle against the colonial role of the British. The nationalist movement of India took organized form in 1885 when the Indian National Congress was set up and brought with it new hopes and aspirations for independent India. Nationalism in India can be defined as the growth and development of anti-colonial sentiment – from a movement for reasonable constitutional reforms to a struggle for complete independence.

Critics of nationalism have argued that it is often unclear what constitutes a "nation", or whether a nation is a legitimate unit of political rule. Nationalists hold that the boundaries of a nation and a state should coincide with one another, thus nationalism tends to oppose [multiculturalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiculturalism). It can also lead to conflict when more than one national group claims rights to a particular territory or seeks to take control of the state. In this context, the critics emphasize the violence of nationalist movements, the associated militarism, and on conflicts between nations.

Another criticism says that nationalism is inherently divisive because it highlights perceived differences between people, emphasizing an individual's identification with their own nation. The idea is also potentially oppressive because it submerges individual identity within a national whole, and gives elites or political leaders potential opportunities to manipulate or control [the masses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_people). It is also argued that nationalism suppresses minorities, places country above moral principles and creates a dangerous individual attachment to the state.