

ELM303 Unit5: Nations and Nationalism

Nations and Nationalism are words that look similar, but they represent two different concepts: A nation is a **group of people**, and nationalism is an **idea or movement** that drives nations.

1. The Nation (The "Who")

A nation is a **community of people** who share common cultural characteristics. It is not necessarily a country (which is a "State"), but rather a group that feels they belong together because they share a common language, religion, history, traditions, or ethnic origin. Hence, they are bonded in an "imagined community." even if they never meet every person in the nation but still feel a deep connection to them because of shared heritage. Examples, the Melanesian of PNG, Solomon Island, and Vanuatu. The Kurds are a nation of people with a shared culture and language, but they do not have a single "State" or country of their own.

2. Nationalism (The "Why" and "How")

Nationalism is the **ideology or belief system** that the nation should have its own government and territory. It is the political engine that moves the nation due to these

- The nation is the only legitimate basis for government.
- The nation should be "sovereign" (self-governing).
- National identity is more important than other identities (like class or religion).

Nationalism bonds people together: It is a sense of intense loyalty or "patriotism." It can be used to unite people (like during an independence movement) or to divide people (by excluding those who don't "fit" the nation). Example, the movement in Papua New Guinea leading up to 1975 was driven by nationalism—the belief that the various peoples of the territory should be united as one independent nation-state.

Differences between a Nation and Nationalism

Feature	Nation	Nationalism
Nature	A cultural entity (the people).	A political ideology (the belief).
Focus	Shared identity and belonging.	Power, sovereignty, and loyalty.
Foundation	Language, history, and ethnicity.	Political movements and propaganda.
Stability	Can exist for centuries without a state.	Often fluctuates depending on politics.

Relationship and how they work

Think of the **Nation** as a *car* and **Nationalism** as the *fuel*. The car (the people) exists regardless of whether it's moving, but it needs the fuel (the ideology) to go somewhere—such as toward independence, war, or economic development. When a Nation successfully uses Nationalism to gain a territory and a government, it becomes a **Nation-State**.

Varieties of Nationalism

Nationalism is not a single, unified ideology but a collection of different beliefs about what defines a "nation" and how that nation should relate to its people and the world. The varieties of nationalism usually differ based on what holds the community together—whether it is shared blood, shared laws, or shared culture.

1. Liberal Nationalism

This is the oldest form of nationalism, dating back to the French Revolution. It is based on the idea that the nation is a community of **equal citizens**.

- **Key Belief:** Membership in the nation is based on **civic loyalty** and an allegiance to political institutions (like a constitution), rather than ethnicity.
- **Goal:** To create a sovereign state that protects individual rights and promotes national self-determination.
- **Example:** The United States or France, where being a "citizen" is defined by law and shared political values.

2. Conservative Nationalism

Conservative nationalism focuses on **social cohesion** and the preservation of national traditions. It often arises when a nation feels its identity is being threatened by internal change or external influence.

- **Key Belief:** The nation is an organic entity that has evolved over centuries. It emphasizes symbols like the monarchy, national flags, and traditional holidays.
- **Goal:** To maintain order and stability by fostering a strong sense of historical belonging.
- **Example:** British nationalism centered around the Monarchy and the Church of England.

3. Expansionist (Chauvinistic) Nationalism

This is a radical and aggressive form of nationalism that believes in the **superiority** of one's own nation over others.

- **Key Belief:** National glory is achieved through military conquest and the domination of other "lesser" nations. It often involves intense patriotism combined with a "them vs. us" mentality.
- **Goal:** Territorial expansion and the assertion of national power.
- **Example:** The ultra-nationalism seen in the lead-up to World War II (Fascism and Nazism).

4. Ethnic (Cultural) Nationalism

In this variety, the nation is defined by a shared **ethnic heritage**, which usually includes a common language, religion, and "bloodline."

- **Key Belief:** You are born into a nation; you cannot simply "join" it by moving there or getting a passport. It is based on *exclusive* identity rather than *inclusive* citizenship.
- **Goal:** To protect the unique cultural or ethnic purity of the group.
- **Example:** Various independence movements in Eastern Europe or tribal-based nationalisms where common ancestry is the primary bond.

5. Post-Colonial (Anti-Colonial) Nationalism

This variety emerged during the 20th century as nations in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific fought for independence from European empires.

- **Key Belief:** The nation is defined by the **common struggle** against an external oppressor. It often blends nationalism with "socialist" or "developmental" goals to build the new state from scratch.
- **Goal:** To achieve political independence and economic self-sufficiency.
- **Example:** The independence movements in Papua New Guinea (leading to 1975) or India's struggle against British rule.

Comparison of Core Elements

Variety	Defining Bond	Attitude Toward Others
Liberal	Citizenship & Laws	Respectful (Internationalism)
Conservative	Tradition & History	Defensive (Protecting Status Quo)
Expansionist	National Superiority	Aggressive (Conquest)
Ethnic	Ancestry & Language	Exclusive (In-group focus)
Post-Colonial	Shared Oppression	Liberating (Nation-building)

Civic vs. Ethnic Nationalism

A helpful way to categorize these is the "Civic vs. Ethnic" divide.

- **Civic Nationalism** is *voluntary*: You choose to belong by following the laws.
- **Ethnic Nationalism** is *ascriptive*: You belong because of who your parents are and the language you speak.