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## The Impact of Nationalism on Democracy: Historical, Theoretical and Intellectual Perspectives

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores in depth the complex relationship between nationalism and democracy, which have played a central role in shaping modern political systems. While nationalism seeks to create a collective sense of belonging based on a common identity, culture and history, democracy is defined as a system of government in which political authority derives from popular consent and promotes participation and equality. The study examines the historical development of nationalism and democracy, the theoretical links between these two concepts and the ideas presented by leading thinkers. While Mill emphasized the importance of national unity for the success of democratic governments, Rousseau and Renan discussed the role of national identity and common will in the functioning of democracy. Through the contributions of thinkers such as John Stuart Mill, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Ernest Renan, the supporting and conflicting dynamics between nationalism and democracy are analyzed. This article argues that while nationalism can support democracy, it can also threaten democratic principles, especially when it is exclusionary and ethnically based. It also shows how populist nationalism undermines democracy and upsets the balance between these two concepts. By examining the historical and theoretical contexts of nationalism and democracy, the findings of the study help us understand the impact of these two concepts on modern political systems. At a time when globalization and regional integration are challenging the traditional boundaries of the nation-state, understanding this relationship is critical to assessing the impact of the dynamics between nationalism and democracy on political practices.

**Keywords:** Nationalism, Democracy, Civic Nationalism, Populism, Political Theory.

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### Milliyetçiliğin Demokrasi Üzerindeki Etkisi: Tarihsel, Teorik ve Entelektüel Perspektifler

### ÖZ

Bu çalışma, modern siyasi sistemlerin şekillenmesinde merkezi bir rol oynayan milliyetçilik ve demokrasi arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi incelemektedir. Milliyetçilik ortak bir kimlik, kültür ve tarih temelinde kolektif bir aidiyet duygusu yaratmayı amaçlarken, demokrasi siyasi otoritenin halkın rızasından kaynaklandığı, katılımcılığı ve çeşitliği teşvik eden bir yönetim sistemi olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Çalışma, milliyetçilik ve demokrasinin tarihsel gelişimini, bu iki kavram arasındaki teorik bağlantıları ve önde gelen düşünürler tarafından sunulan fikirleri incelemektedir. Mill demokratik hükümetlerin başarısı için ulusal birliğin önemini vurgularken, Rousseau ve Renan demokrasinin işleyişinde ulusal kimlik ve ortak iradenin rolünü tartışmıştır. John Stuart Mill, Jean-Jacques Rousseau ve Ernest Renan gibi düşünürlerin katkıları aracılığıyla milliyetçilik ve demokrasi arasındaki destekleyici ve çatışan dinamikler analiz edilmektedir. Makale, milliyetçiliğin demokrasiyi destekleyebileceği gibi, özellikle dışlayıcı ve etnik temelli olduğunda demokratik ilkeleri tehdit edebileceğini savunmaktadır. Ayrıca popülist milliyetçiliğin demokrasinin altını nasıl oyduğunu ve bu iki kavram arasındaki dengeyi nasıl bozduğunu göstermektedir. Milliyetçilik ve demokrasinin tarihsel ve teorik bağlamlarını inceleyen çalışmanın bulguları, bu iki kavramın modern siyasi sistemler üzerindeki etkisini anlamaya yardımcı olmaktadır. Küreselleşme ve bölgesel entegrasyonun ulus-devletin geleneksel sınırlarını zorladığı bir dönemde, bu ilişkiyi anlamak, milliyetçilik ve

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demokrasi arasındaki dinamiklerin siyasi pratikler üzerindeki etkisini değerlendirmek açısından kritik önem taşımaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Milliyetçilik, Demokrasi, Sivil Milliyetçilik, Popülizm, Siyaset Teorisi.

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## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between nationalism and democracy has been a subject of intense scholarly debate, reflecting the complex and often contradictory interplay between these two powerful political forces. Nationalism, with its emphasis on the sovereignty and unity of a particular nation, has historically played a significant role in shaping the political landscapes of modern states (Çiçek & Taylan 2023: 420; Şahin 2007: 2). It has been both a unifying force, fostering a sense of shared identity and purpose, and a divisive one, often leading to conflict and exclusion. Democracy, on the other hand, is grounded in the principles of popular sovereignty, political equality, and the rule of law (Przeworski 2023: 29). It aims to provide a system of governance where power is derived from the consent of the governed, and where individuals have the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Understanding the relationship between these two concepts is crucial for analyzing the dynamics of modern political systems, particularly in an era where both nationalism and democracy are undergoing significant transformations. The purpose of this essay is to explore the multifaceted relationship between nationalism and democracy, with the aim of providing a comprehensive analysis of how these two concepts have influenced each other historically, intellectually, and politically. The study will examine the theoretical foundations of nationalism and democracy, tracing their historical development and the ways in which they have interacted over time. It will also analyze the contributions of key thinkers who have engaged with the relationship between nationalism and democracy, and assess the ways in which these ideas have been reflected in political practice. Finally, the essay will explore the dual role of nationalism in both supporting and threatening democratic principles, offering insights into the potential future trajectories of this relationship.

The method of this study is primarily theoretical and historical. It will involve a critical analysis of existing literature on nationalism and democracy, drawing on both classical and contemporary sources. This approach will allow for a nuanced understanding of the concepts and their interplay, as well as an exploration of the diverse perspectives that have shaped scholarly debates on the topic. The study will also employ a comparative analysis of historical

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case studies, examining specific instances where nationalism and democracy have either reinforced or undermined each other. This method will provide concrete examples that illustrate the broader theoretical arguments, grounding the discussion in real-world political contexts. The research questions that guide this study are as follows: (1) What are the key theoretical foundations of nationalism and democracy, and how have these concepts evolved over time? (2) How has the historical interplay between nationalism and democracy shaped their development, and what are the key intellectual contributions that deepen our understanding of their relationship? (3) In what ways do nationalism and democracy support and strengthen each other, and in what ways do they pose threats to each other? (4) What are the implications of the relationship between nationalism and democracy for contemporary political systems, particularly in the context of rising populism and global interdependence?

The hypotheses of this study are formulated in response to the research questions. First, it is hypothesized that nationalism and democracy, while distinct in their theoretical foundations, have historically been closely intertwined, with nationalism often serving as a catalyst for democratic movements. However, the relationship is not unidirectional; democracy has also shaped national identities and contributed to the development of civic forms of nationalism (Tok 2013; Çiçek 2024: 247). Second, it is hypothesized that the intellectual discourse on nationalism and democracy reveals a spectrum of views, ranging from those who see nationalism as a necessary foundation for democracy to those who argue that nationalism inherently threatens democratic values (Abizadeh 2012; Auer 2000; Rokicka et al. 2020). Third, it is hypothesized that the relationship between nationalism and democracy is characterized by both complementarities and tensions (Benner 2020; Helbling 2009; Van de Putte 1996). On one hand, nationalism can provide the cultural and political cohesion necessary for democratic governance; on the other hand, it can also lead to exclusionary practices that undermine democratic principles of equality and inclusion.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex and evolving relationship between nationalism and democracy. In a time when both concepts are at the forefront of global political discourse, it is essential to critically examine how they interact and influence each other. Nationalism is experiencing a resurgence in many parts of the world, often manifesting in ways that challenge democratic norms and institutions (Bieber 2018; Eser & Çiçek 2020; Juergensmeyer 1996; Mihelj & Jiménez-Martínez 2021). At the same time, democracy itself is facing significant challenges, including

rising authoritarianism, declining public trust in democratic institutions, and increasing political polarization (Ertugay 2022; Gümüştü et al. 2024). By analyzing the relationship between nationalism and democracy, this study aims to shed light on the underlying dynamics that shape these phenomena and to provide perspectives that can inform both academic debates and practical political strategies.

One of the key contributions of this study is its focus on the dual nature of nationalism as both a supportive and a threatening force for democracy. This duality is reflected in the historical record, where nationalism has at times been a powerful engine for democratization, as seen in the independence movements of the 19th and 20th centuries (Tilly 1975: 42-44). However, nationalism has also been a source of conflict and authoritarianism, particularly when it takes on an exclusionary or ethnocentric character (McKay et al. 2020; Todosijevic 1999; Tudor & Slater 2021). Understanding this duality is crucial for developing a balanced and nuanced perspective on the relationship between nationalism and democracy. Moreover, this study seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical and empirical analyses of nationalism and democracy. While much of the existing literature tends to focus on either the theoretical aspects of the concepts (Arblaster 1999; Tilly 2011; Touraine 2019; Uslu 2022) or their practical manifestations (Hechter 2024: 203-235), this study aims to integrate both perspectives. By doing so, it will provide a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of the interplay between nationalism and democracy, one that takes into account both the abstract principles that underpin these concepts and the concrete political realities in which they are embedded.

The structure of the essay is designed to facilitate a systematic exploration of the relationship between nationalism and democracy. The first section will provide a broad theoretical framework for understanding both concepts, drawing on key scholarly works and identifying the main theoretical debates. The second section will analyze the historical impact of nationalism and democracy on each other, focusing on specific case studies that illustrate the complex and often contradictory nature of their relationship. The third section will examine the intellectual contributions of key thinkers to the discourse on nationalism and democracy, highlighting the diversity of perspectives and the ongoing relevance of these ideas. The final section will analyze the ways in which nationalism and democracy both support and threaten each other, offering perspectives into the potential future trajectories of this relationship. In conclusion, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and critical analysis of the relationship between nationalism and democracy. By examining the theoretical foundations, historical interactions, intellectual contributions, and contemporary implications of this relationship, the

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essay will contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics that shape modern political systems. The findings of this study have the potential to inform both academic debates and practical political strategies, offering insights into how nationalism and democracy can coexist in a way that supports democratic principles while mitigating the risks of exclusion and authoritarianism.

### **Theoretical Framework**

To thoroughly understand the relationship between nationalism and democracy, it is essential to first establish a robust theoretical framework for both concepts. This section will define nationalism and democracy, explore their respective theoretical underpinnings, and examine the various ways in which these ideas have been conceptualized and debated in political theory. By providing a comprehensive overview of the key theories and debates surrounding nationalism and democracy, this section will lay the groundwork for the subsequent analysis of their historical interplay and intellectual connections. Hechter (2024: 26) defines nationalism as a collective action designed to criticise the boundaries of the nation with the boundaries of the governing unit. According to Bell (2001: 14), nationalism is a political form in which people with sufficient common characteristics, such as language, tradition, beliefs or combinations thereof, are grouped together to behave as homogeneous collective individuals. Nationalism, as a political and ideological force, is rooted in the idea that a distinct group of people, bound together by shared cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or historical characteristics, has the right to self-determination and the creation of an independent political entity. This entity, often referred to as the nation-state, serves as the primary locus of political authority and legitimacy. The concept of nationalism is complex and multifaceted, encompassing a wide range of beliefs, practices, and political movements. It can manifest in various forms, from the inclusive civic nationalism that emphasizes shared citizenship and common political values, to the more exclusionary ethnic nationalism that prioritizes a particular ethnic group's identity and interests over those of others (Uzun 2020; Deniz 2021).

Theories of nationalism can be broadly categorized into three main schools of thought: primordialism, modernism, and ethnosymbolism. Primordialism posits that nations are ancient, natural entities that have existed since time immemorial. According to this view, the bonds of kinship, language, and culture that define a nation are deeply rooted in human nature and are therefore immutable. Primordialists argue that nationalism is a natural and inevitable expression of these deep-seated ties, which have persisted throughout history and continue to shape

contemporary political identities. While this perspective has been influential, it has also been criticized for its deterministic and essentialist assumptions, which overlook the ways in which national identities are constructed and contested (Özkırımlı 2020). In contrast, modernist theories of nationalism argue that nations and nationalism are products of modernity, emerging in response to the social, economic, and political changes that accompanied the rise of industrial capitalism, the spread of literacy and mass communication, and the development of centralized states. Modernists such as Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson emphasize the role of state institutions, economic transformations, and cultural homogenization in the formation of national identities. Gellner (2008), for example, argues that nationalism is a response to the demands of modern industrial society, which requires a culturally homogeneous population capable of functioning within a standardized and bureaucratic state apparatus. Anderson (1983), on the other hand, introduces the concept of “imagined communities” to describe how national identities are constructed through shared narratives and symbols, often disseminated through print media and other forms of mass communication. Ethnosymbolism, a third approach to nationalism, seeks to bridge the gap between primordialism and modernism by emphasizing the symbolic and cultural foundations of national identity. Proponents of this perspective, such as Anthony Smith, argue that while nations are not ancient or immutable, they are rooted in pre-modern ethnic communities that provide the raw material for the construction of modern national identities. Ethnosymbolism highlights the importance of myths, symbols, and collective memories in the formation of national consciousness, and it stresses the role of historical continuity and cultural traditions in shaping the boundaries of the nation (Smith 2009). This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of nationalism, one that recognizes the importance of both historical legacies and modern processes of nation-building.

While the theoretical debates surrounding nationalism are complex and multifaceted, they share a common concern with the question of how national identities are formed, maintained, and transformed. Whether understood as primordial, modern, or symbolic constructs, national identities play a crucial role in shaping political behavior, social cohesion, and the legitimacy of political institutions. Nationalism, in its various forms, has been a powerful force in world history, driving movements for independence, unification, and state-building, as well as contributing to conflicts, wars, and genocides. Understanding the theoretical foundations of nationalism is therefore essential for analyzing its relationship with democracy, a political system that also places a strong emphasis on identity, participation, and legitimacy.

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Democracy, like nationalism, is a concept with deep historical roots and a wide range of theoretical interpretations. At its core, democracy is a system of governance in which political power is vested in the people, either directly or through elected representatives (Demir & Sesli 2022: 276; Eser & Taylan 2018: 285). It is based on the principles of popular sovereignty, political equality, and the rule of law, which together form the foundation of democratic legitimacy. Democracy is often associated with liberalism, a political philosophy that emphasizes individual rights, civil liberties, and the protection of minority interests (Erdoğan 2017). However, democracy is not limited to the liberal model; it can take various forms, from direct democracy, where citizens participate directly in decision-making, to representative democracy, where elected officials make decisions on behalf of the people (Arslan et al. 2016; Çiçek 2022; Çukurçayır 2002).

Theories of democracy can be broadly categorized into three main types: classical democratic theory, liberal democratic theory, and deliberative democratic theory. Classical democratic theory, which has its roots in the political thought of ancient Greece, emphasizes the direct participation of citizens in the decision-making processes of the state. This model of democracy is based on the idea that political power should be exercised by the people themselves, rather than by a ruling elite or a class of professional politicians. Classical democratic theorists argue that direct participation is essential for ensuring that political decisions reflect the will of the people and for fostering a sense of civic responsibility and collective identity. Liberal democratic theory, in contrast, focuses on the protection of individual rights and the establishment of a system of checks and balances to prevent the abuse of power. This model of democracy is based on the idea that political power should be limited and dispersed, with the primary role of government being to protect the rights and freedoms of individuals. Liberal democrats argue that representative institutions, such as parliaments and elected assemblies, are necessary to ensure that political decisions are made in a way that respects individual autonomy and protects minority interests. They also emphasize the importance of the rule of law, an independent judiciary, and a free press in maintaining the integrity of the democratic process (Erdoğan 2017: 259). Deliberative democratic theory, a more recent development in democratic thought, emphasizes the role of rational discourse and public deliberation in the decision-making process. This model of democracy is based on the idea that political decisions should be the result of informed and inclusive discussions among citizens, rather than simply the aggregation of individual preferences through voting.



(Sitembölükbaşı 2005: 147-151). Deliberative democrats argue that public deliberation is essential for ensuring that political decisions are based on reasoned arguments and that they reflect the common good, rather than the narrow interests of particular groups. They also emphasize the importance of inclusivity and participation, arguing that all citizens should have the opportunity to participate in deliberative processes and to have their voices heard.

The theoretical frameworks of nationalism and democracy, as outlined above, reveal both points of convergence and points of tension between the two concepts. On the one hand, both nationalism and democracy are concerned with questions of identity, legitimacy, and political participation. Nationalism seeks to define and promote the identity of the nation, while democracy seeks to ensure that political power is exercised in a way that reflects the will of the people. Both concepts are also concerned with the question of sovereignty: nationalism emphasizes the sovereignty of the nation, while democracy emphasizes the sovereignty of the people (Beriş 2008: 59-60). In this sense, nationalism and democracy can be seen as complementary forces, with nationalism providing the cultural and political cohesion necessary for democratic governance, and democracy providing the institutional framework for the expression of national identity.

On the other hand, there are also significant tensions between nationalism and democracy, particularly when nationalism takes on an exclusionary or ethnocentric character. While democracy is based on the principles of political equality and the inclusion of all citizens in the political process, nationalism can sometimes lead to the exclusion of certain groups, particularly those who are seen as not belonging to the national community. This tension is particularly evident in the case of ethnic nationalism, which prioritizes the identity and interests of a particular ethnic group over those of others. In such cases, nationalism can undermine democratic principles by fostering division, discrimination, and conflict, rather than promoting political participation and inclusion. The relationship between nationalism and democracy is further complicated by the fact that both concepts have evolved over time in response to changing social, economic, and political conditions. The rise of the modern nation-state, the spread of industrial capitalism, and the development of mass communication have all played a role in shaping both nationalism and democracy, leading to the emergence of new forms of national identity and new models of democratic governance (Erdoğan 2021: 168-169). This historical evolution has led to a diversity of forms and practices within both nationalism and democracy, making it difficult to draw clear boundaries between the two concepts or to define their relationship in simple terms.

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One of the key challenges in analyzing the relationship between nationalism and democracy is the need to account for this diversity and complexity. While some forms of nationalism may be compatible with democratic principles, others may not. Similarly, while some models of democracy may be well-suited to accommodating national identities, others may struggle to do so. This diversity is reflected in the wide range of theoretical perspectives on nationalism and democracy, as well as in the different ways in which these concepts have been implemented in practice. Understanding the relationship between nationalism and democracy therefore requires a nuanced and context-sensitive approach, one that takes into account the specific historical and political conditions in which these concepts have developed. In conclusion, the theoretical frameworks of nationalism and democracy provide a foundation for understanding the complex and multifaceted relationship between these two concepts. Nationalism, with its emphasis on identity, sovereignty, and the nation-state, has been a powerful force in shaping the political landscapes of modern states (Atasoy 2018), while democracy, with its emphasis on popular sovereignty, political equality, and the rule of law, has provided a framework for the legitimate exercise of political power (Korkmaz 2017; Mecsek & Yılmaz 2021: 234). The relationship between nationalism and democracy is characterized by both complementarities and tensions, with nationalism sometimes serving as a foundation for democratic governance, and at other times threatening to undermine democratic principles. By examining the theoretical foundations of nationalism and democracy, this section has laid the groundwork for the subsequent analysis of their historical interplay and intellectual connections, which will be explored in the following sections of the essay.

### **Historical Interplay Between Nationalism and Democracy**

The historical interplay between nationalism and democracy reveals a dynamic and multifaceted relationship that has profoundly shaped the development of modern political systems. This relationship is neither static nor straightforward; it has evolved over time, influenced by a range of social, economic, and political factors. Nationalism and democracy have, at various points in history, both supported and undermined each other, contributing to the complexity of their interaction. To fully grasp this relationship, it is essential to examine the historical context in which nationalism and democracy emerged, the ways in which they have influenced each other over time, and the impact of this interplay on the political trajectories of different nations.

The emergence of nationalism and democracy as dominant political ideologies can be traced back to the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a period marked by significant social and political upheaval. The American Revolution (1775-1783) and the French Revolution (1789-1799) were pivotal events that not only challenged existing monarchical and colonial orders but also laid the groundwork for the modern concepts of nationhood and democratic governance. These revolutions were driven by a desire for self-determination and political representation, core principles that would come to define both nationalism and democracy (Greenfeld 1993). In the case of the American Revolution, the struggle for independence was framed in terms of a distinct national identity that sought to establish a new political order based on the consent of the governed. Similarly, the French Revolution, with its rallying cries of “liberty, equality, fraternity”, sought to dismantle the *ancien régime* and replace it with a democratic republic that recognized the sovereignty of the people.

The French Revolution, in particular, played a crucial role in the development of both nationalism and democracy by linking the concept of national identity to the principles of popular sovereignty. The revolutionary government’s efforts to create a unified French nation, through the standardization of language, education, and legal systems, laid the foundations for modern nationalism (Rude 2022: 191-194). At the same time, the revolutionary period saw the first experiments in democratic governance, with the establishment of the National Assembly and the extension of political rights to broader segments of the population. However, the Revolution also highlighted the potential tensions between nationalism and democracy, as the drive to create a cohesive national identity sometimes led to the exclusion or repression of those deemed not to belong to the French nation, such as royalists, religious minorities, and foreign populations (Popkin 2023: 435-450).

The 19th century witnessed the spread of nationalist and democratic ideas across Europe and beyond, as the revolutionary ideals of the late 18th century inspired a wave of nationalist movements seeking to establish independent nation-states (O’Duffy 2009: 73). These movements were often closely linked to the demand for democratic reforms, as nationalist leaders sought to mobilize popular support by appealing to the principles of self-determination and political representation (Breuer 2017: 16-17). The revolutions of 1848, which swept across Europe, are a prime example of this interplay between nationalism and democracy. In countries like Germany and Italy, nationalist movements sought to unify fragmented territories into single nation-states, while simultaneously advocating for constitutional reforms that would limit monarchical power and expand political rights. The revolutions of 1848, though ultimately

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unsuccessful in achieving their immediate goals, marked a significant moment in the history of nationalism and democracy, demonstrating the potential for these two forces to reinforce each other in the pursuit of political change (Greenfeld 1993). Underlining this potential, Zawadki (2018: 218) defines the nation as the political form of democracy. Within this form, individuals make it possible for them to be embedded in the fabric of a collective existence designed as a project and gain political identity.

However, the relationship between nationalism and democracy was not always harmonious, and the 19th century also saw instances where nationalism undermined democratic principles. One of the most notable examples is the unification of Germany under Otto von Bismarck. While Bismarck's efforts to unify the German states into a single nation-state were successful, they were achieved through authoritarian means, including the suppression of democratic movements and the use of military force. Bismarck's brand of nationalism, which prioritized the interests of the state and the consolidation of power, often came at the expense of democratic principles, leading to the establishment of a unified Germany that was characterized by a strong central government and limited political freedoms (Steinberg 2018). This case illustrates the potential for nationalism to be used as a tool for authoritarian rule, rather than as a vehicle for democratic governance.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the further development of both nationalism and democracy, as these ideologies spread beyond Europe to other parts of the world. The rise of nationalist movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America was often closely linked to the struggle for independence from colonial rule, with nationalist leaders drawing on the principles of self-determination and popular sovereignty to challenge the legitimacy of European empires. In many cases, these independence movements were also associated with demands for democratic reforms, as newly independent states sought to establish political systems that reflected the will of their people. However, the relationship between nationalism and democracy in these contexts was often complicated by the legacy of colonialism, which left behind deep social and economic inequalities that made the implementation of democratic governance challenging.

One of the key historical moments in the relationship between nationalism and democracy is the period following World War I, which saw the redrawing of national boundaries and the establishment of new nation-states in Europe and the Middle East. The principle of national self-determination, championed by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson,

played a central role in the post-war settlement, as it sought to align political borders with national identities (Mayall 1999: 475). However, the implementation of this principle was fraught with difficulties, as the drawing of new borders often led to the displacement of populations and the creation of minority groups within new nation-states. This period also saw the rise of authoritarian nationalist regimes in countries like Italy and later Germany, where nationalist rhetoric was used to justify the suppression of democratic institutions and the persecution of minority groups. The interwar period thus highlights the potential for nationalism to be co-opted by authoritarian movements that are fundamentally opposed to democratic principles (Nimni 2009).

The end of World War II and the onset of the Cold War marked a new phase in the relationship between nationalism and democracy. The post-war period saw the spread of democratic ideals as part of the broader project of decolonization, with nationalist movements in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean leading the charge for independence and self-governance. Many newly independent states adopted democratic constitutions, inspired by the principles of national self-determination and the desire to build inclusive political systems. However, the realities of post-colonial governance often led to the erosion of democratic institutions, as nationalist leaders faced the challenges of nation-building, economic development, and internal conflict. In some cases, the pressures of maintaining national unity in the face of ethnic, religious, or regional divisions led to the establishment of authoritarian regimes, which justified their actions in the name of national security and stability (Tudor & Slater 2021; Wien 2008).

The late 20th century witnessed the resurgence of democracy, particularly in Eastern Europe and Latin America, where nationalist movements played a key role in challenging authoritarian regimes and advocating for democratic reforms (Snyder 1993). The fall of the Soviet Union and the subsequent democratization of Eastern Europe are often cited as examples of how nationalism and democracy can reinforce each other, as national identity provided a rallying point for opposition to communist rule and the demand for democratic governance. In Latin America, the transition to democracy in countries like Brazil, Argentina, and Chile was similarly driven by nationalist sentiments that sought to reclaim national sovereignty from authoritarian military regimes. These cases demonstrate the potential for nationalism to serve as a catalyst for democratization, particularly in contexts where national identity is linked to the struggle for political freedom and self-determination. However, the relationship between nationalism and democracy in the late 20th and early 21st centuries has also been marked by significant challenges and contradictions. The rise of populist nationalist movements in both

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established and emerging democracies has raised concerns about the potential for nationalism to undermine democratic norms and institutions. In countries like Hungary, Poland, and Turkey, populist leaders have used nationalist rhetoric to justify the erosion of democratic checks and balances, the restriction of civil liberties, and the exclusion of minority groups from the political process (Mudde 2007; Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017; Rahman & Çiçek 2023). These developments highlight the darker side of the nationalism-democracy relationship, where nationalist sentiments are mobilized to weaken democratic governance and concentrate power in the hands of a few.

The historical interplay between nationalism and democracy thus reveals a complex and often contradictory relationship that has shaped the political trajectories of nations around the world. While nationalism has at times served as a powerful force for democratization, providing the cultural and political cohesion necessary for the establishment of democratic institutions, it has also been used to justify authoritarian rule, exclusion, and conflict. The relationship between nationalism and democracy is highly context-dependent, shaped by the specific historical, social, and political conditions in which these ideologies are mobilized. Understanding this relationship requires not only a theoretical analysis of the concepts themselves but also a careful examination of the historical contexts in which they have interacted. In conclusion, the historical interplay between nationalism and democracy is characterized by both complementarities and tensions. While nationalism has often provided the cultural and political foundation for democratic governance, it has also posed significant challenges to democratic principles, particularly when it takes on an exclusionary or authoritarian character (Bieber 2018). The evolution of nationalism and democracy over the past two centuries reflects the broader dynamics of political change, as nations have grappled with the challenges of state-building, modernization, and globalization. As we move into the 21st century, the relationship between nationalism and democracy remains a critical issue, with important implications for the future of global politics. The historical analysis presented in this section provides a foundation for understanding the intellectual contributions to the discourse on nationalism and democracy, which will be explored in the next section of the essay.

### **Intellectual Contributions Linking Nationalism and Democracy**

The intellectual discourse on nationalism and democracy has been shaped by the contributions of numerous political philosophers, historians, and theorists who have explored the intricate and often contentious relationship between these two concepts. This section delves into the

ideas of key thinkers who have significantly influenced the way nationalism and democracy are understood, both individually and in relation to each other. By examining their intellectual contributions, we can gain a deeper understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of nationalism and democracy, as well as the ways in which these concepts have been interwoven in political thought.

One of the most influential figures in the discourse on nationalism and democracy is John Stuart Mill, a 19th-century philosopher whose work continues to resonate in contemporary political theory. Mill's contributions to the understanding of nationalism and democracy are rooted in his broader philosophical commitments to liberalism, individual freedom, and representative government. In his seminal work, "Considerations on Representative Government" (2017), Mill argued that democracy is the most just and effective form of government because it allows for the participation of citizens in the decision-making process, thereby reflecting the principle of popular sovereignty. However, Mill also recognized that the successful operation of democracy depends on the existence of a cohesive and well-defined national community. He famously asserted that "free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities" (Mill 2017: 352), suggesting that a shared national identity is essential for the stability and functionality of democratic governance. Mill's emphasis on the importance of national unity for democracy highlights a central tension in the relationship between nationalism and democracy: the need to balance the inclusive nature of democratic participation with the potentially exclusionary tendencies of nationalism. Mill's concern was that deep-seated divisions within a country, whether along ethnic, linguistic, or cultural lines, could undermine the efficacy of democratic institutions by fostering internal conflict and weakening the sense of common purpose necessary for collective decision-making (Mill 2017: 350-355). This insight has had a lasting impact on debates about the role of nationalism in democratic societies, particularly in contexts where diverse populations must be integrated into a single political community.

Another key thinker who explored the relationship between nationalism and democracy is Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose ideas about the general will and the social contract have profoundly influenced modern political thought. Rousseau's conception of the general will, as articulated in "The Social Contract" (2019), is closely tied to his vision of a democratic society in which citizens are united by a common purpose and a shared sense of belonging. For Rousseau, the general will represents the collective interest of the people, which is distinct from the mere aggregation of individual preferences. He argued that true democracy requires the

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expression of the general will, which can only be achieved in a community where citizens identify with one another as members of a cohesive national body (Rousseau 2019: 26-27). Rousseau's ideas have been interpreted as providing a foundation for the concept of civic nationalism, which emphasizes the role of shared political values and participation in the creation of a national identity (Simon-Ingram 1993). Civic nationalism, in contrast to ethnic nationalism, is inclusive in nature, as it defines membership in the nation based on adherence to common principles and participation in the democratic process, rather than on ethnic or cultural criteria. Rousseau's emphasis on the importance of a unified national identity for the realization of democratic governance has had a profound impact on the development of modern democratic theory, particularly in contexts where the challenge of integrating diverse populations into a single political community is paramount (King 2020).

Ernest Renan, a 19th-century French historian and philosopher, also made significant contributions to the understanding of nationalism and its relationship to democracy. In his influential lecture, "What is a Nation?" (2018), Renan argued that nations are not defined by objective criteria such as race, language, or geography, but rather by the shared desire of a people to live together and the collective memory of their past. Renan's conception of the nation as a "daily plebiscite" underscores the idea that national identity is not fixed or immutable, but is instead continuously renegotiated and reaffirmed by the members of the nation. This perspective aligns with democratic principles, as it emphasizes the role of popular consent and participation in the formation and maintenance of national identity. Renan's ideas have been influential in shaping the discourse on nationalism, particularly in relation to the concept of civic nationalism. By framing the nation as a voluntary association of individuals who choose to be part of a collective political community, Renan's work provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how nationalism can be compatible with democratic values. His emphasis on the role of collective memory and shared values in the construction of national identity also highlights the importance of historical narratives in shaping the national consciousness, a theme that has been central to subsequent debates about the relationship between nationalism and democracy (Renan 2018).

Eric Hobsbawm, a preeminent historian and theorist, approached nationalism from a critical and historical materialist perspective. His analysis, particularly outlined in his seminal work *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (2020), frames nationalism as a constructed phenomenon deeply rooted in the socio-economic transformations



of the modern era. For Hobsbawm, nationalism is neither timeless nor inherent but is a product of historical processes, especially those tied to industrialization, state-building, and mass communication. His theory emphasizes the “invention of tradition”, arguing that national identities are often fabricated or adapted by elites to create cohesion and legitimacy in emerging nation-states (2020: 121). Hobsbawm’s work situates nationalism as a tool used to solidify state power and manage social fragmentation during periods of rapid change. He draws attention to the late 18th and early 19th centuries as the critical periods when nationalism emerged in tandem with the French Revolution and industrial capitalism (2020: 112-115). These processes required centralized states to foster loyalty and uniformity within their borders, often by constructing historical narratives, rituals, and symbols that engendered a sense of national identity. Hobsbawm asserts that this process was deliberate and contingent on specific socio-political needs rather than organic or inevitable. For Hobsbawm, nationalism is not only a product of modernity but also a dynamic and adaptable ideology that evolves with its historical context. He distinguishes between proto-nationalism, which refers to pre-modern forms of collective identity tied to religion or ethnicity, and modern nationalism, which aligns with the needs of the industrial and bureaucratic state (Hobsbawm 2020). Modern nationalism, in Hobsbawm’s view, serves as a cohesive force that bridges the gap between the governing elite and the governed populace, particularly in multi-ethnic and stratified societies.

Hobsbawm’s approach to nationalism reveals an ambivalent relationship between nationalism and democracy. On one hand, nationalism can facilitate democracy by creating a sense of collective identity and shared purpose essential for the functioning of democratic governance. By fostering loyalty to the state and mutual identification among citizens, nationalism helps establish the solidarity necessary for democratic participation. The unifying narrative of “the people”, central to nationalism, overlaps with the democratic ideal of popular sovereignty, where legitimacy derives from the collective will. On the other hand, Hobsbawm is acutely aware of the tensions nationalism can introduce into democratic systems. Nationalism often constructs a homogenous “people” as the basis of legitimacy, which can clash with democracy’s pluralistic and inclusive principles. For Hobsbawm, this exclusionary tendency is particularly evident in ethnonationalism, where the definition of the nation is restricted to specific ethnic or cultural groups, undermining the universality of democratic rights. Furthermore, nationalism’s reliance on myth and tradition can conflict with the rational-critical discourse that democracy demands, potentially giving rise to authoritarian tendencies masked by nationalist rhetoric (Hobsbawm 2020).

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Hegel, a German philosopher, made a substantial impact on the understanding of nationalism and its connection to the state and freedom, elements that are integral to democratic theory. In his work “*Philosophy of Right*” (2019), Hegel introduced the idea of the state as the realization of ethical life, where the individual finds freedom through participation in the institutions of the state. For Hegel, the nation-state is the manifestation of the “world spirit”, and it represents the culmination of historical processes through which human freedom is actualized. Hegel’s conception of the state as an embodiment of national spirit underscores the connection between national identity and political institutions, suggesting that the nation-state is not only a political entity but also a moral and cultural one (Hegel 2019: 241-247). Hegel’s ideas have had a profound influence on subsequent theories of nationalism, particularly in the context of the relationship between the state and the nation. His emphasis on the role of the state in realizing freedom has been interpreted as providing a justification for the role of nationalism in democratic governance, as it suggests that national identity is essential for the functioning of democratic institutions (Kervegan 2021: 105-108). However, Hegel’s ideas have also been criticized for their potential to justify authoritarianism, as the emphasis on the state as the embodiment of national spirit can be seen as legitimizing the suppression of individual freedoms in the name of national unity.

Benedict Anderson, a 20th-century scholar, made a significant contribution to the study of nationalism with his concept of “imagined communities”, which he introduced in his seminal work “*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*” (1983). Anderson argued that nations are “imagined” because members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet they perceive themselves to be part of a shared community (Anderson 1983: 6). Anderson’s analysis focuses on the role of print capitalism and mass media in the construction of national identities, suggesting that the dissemination of shared narratives and symbols through newspapers, novels, and other forms of communication has been crucial in creating the sense of belonging that underpins modern nationalism. Anderson’s work has had a profound impact on the study of nationalism, particularly in its emphasis on the constructed nature of national identities (Anderson 1983). His analysis of how media and communication technologies have shaped the development of national consciousness has also influenced debates about the relationship between nationalism and democracy. In democratic societies, the media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and facilitating political participation, and Anderson’s insights into the

role of communication in the construction of national identity provide a valuable framework for understanding how nationalism and democracy intersect in the modern World (Xidias 2017).

Karl Marx, while primarily known for his contributions to the critique of capitalism, also engaged with the concepts of nationalism and democracy, particularly in his analysis of the role of the nation-state in the capitalist system. In his writings, Marx was critical of nationalism, viewing it as a tool used by the ruling class to divide the working class and maintain control over the means of production (Niyazi 2018: 28). Marx (2016) argued that the nation-state, as an instrument of capitalist power, served to perpetuate class divisions and hinder the development of international solidarity among workers. However, Marx also recognized the potential for nationalism to play a role in revolutionary movements, particularly in contexts where national liberation struggles were aligned with the broader goals of social and economic emancipation (Nimni 2009: 63-64). Marx's analysis of nationalism and democracy has been influential in shaping subsequent debates about the role of national identity in revolutionary movements and the relationship between nationalism and socialism. While Marx was skeptical of nationalism as a political ideology, his recognition of its potential to mobilize popular support for revolutionary change has had a lasting impact on the study of nationalism, particularly in contexts where nationalist movements have played a central role in the struggle for political and economic justice. Marx's insights into the relationship between nationalism and class struggle also highlight the potential for nationalism to both support and undermine democratic principles, depending on the specific historical and social context in which it is mobilized (Avineri 1991; Berberoglu 2000).

Hannah Arendt, a 20th-century political theorist, provided a critical analysis of the relationship between nationalism and democracy in her work "The Origins of Totalitarianism" (1973). Arendt argued that the rise of totalitarian regimes in the 20th century was closely linked to the emergence of nationalist movements that sought to create homogenous, exclusionary national communities. Arendt was particularly concerned with the ways in which nationalism, when combined with the ideology of racial or ethnic purity, could lead to the dehumanization and exclusion of those deemed not to belong to the national community. She argued that this form of nationalism was fundamentally at odds with democratic principles, as it undermined the pluralism and inclusivity that are essential for the functioning of democratic institutions (Arendt 1973). Arendt's analysis of the dangers of exclusionary nationalism has had a profound impact on subsequent debates about the relationship between nationalism and democracy,

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particularly in the context of the rise of populist and authoritarian movements in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Her work highlights the potential for nationalism to become a tool of oppression and exclusion, rather than a vehicle for democratic participation and inclusion (Canovan 1999). Arendt's emphasis on the importance of pluralism and the protection of minority rights in democratic societies provides a valuable framework for understanding the challenges that nationalism poses to democratic governance, particularly in contexts where national identity is defined in narrow, exclusionary terms.

In conclusion, the intellectual contributions of these key thinkers have significantly shaped the discourse on nationalism and democracy, providing valuable insights into the complex and often contradictory relationship between these two concepts. From Mill's concern with the need for national unity in democratic societies to Arendt's warning about the dangers of exclusionary nationalism, these thinkers have highlighted the ways in which nationalism and democracy can both support and undermine each other. Their work underscores the importance of understanding the historical and social contexts in which nationalism and democracy are mobilized, as well as the need to critically examine the potential for nationalism to become a force for both democratic participation and authoritarian exclusion. As we continue to grapple with the challenges of nationalism and democracy in the 21st century, the insights of these thinkers remain as relevant as ever, providing a foundation for ongoing debates about the role of national identity in democratic governance.

### **Nationalism and Democracy: Complementary and Conflicting Dynamics**

The relationship between nationalism and democracy is characterized by a complex interplay of complementary and conflicting dynamics. While both concepts have historically contributed to the development and consolidation of modern political systems, their interaction is fraught with tensions that can either reinforce or undermine the principles of democratic governance. Understanding the dual nature of this relationship is essential for analyzing the ways in which nationalism and democracy can coexist, support one another, or come into conflict, particularly in the context of contemporary political challenges. According to Greefeld (2017: 8), national consciousness views social reality as sovereign communities of equal members. Nationalism is based on the principles of sovereignty and equality that are the defining characteristic of modern democracy. Democracy is therefore logically immanent to nationalism. As a sovereign community of equal members (Greenfeld 2024: 535), the nation is by definition a democracy. Nationalism and democracy are complementary in several key respects. At its core, nationalism

is concerned with the formation of a collective identity, rooted in a shared sense of belonging, culture, and history. This collective identity provides the basis for political solidarity and social cohesion, which are crucial for the functioning of democratic institutions (Tok 2013: 21). Democracy, in turn, is predicated on the idea of popular sovereignty—the notion that political authority derives from the consent of the governed. For democracy to be effective, there must be a sense of shared purpose and common values among the members of the political community, which nationalism helps to cultivate. In this sense, nationalism can provide the cultural and emotional foundation necessary for the establishment and maintenance of democratic governance.

The complementary relationship between nationalism and democracy is particularly evident in the historical context of nation-building and state formation. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, nationalist movements often played a central role in the struggle for democratic reforms, as they sought to create nation-states that were governed by the will of the people rather than by hereditary monarchs or colonial Powers (Doran 2019; Fine 1989). The unification of Italy and Germany, the independence movements in Latin America, and the decolonization efforts in Asia and Africa all illustrate how nationalism and democracy can work together to achieve political self-determination and the establishment of representative institutions. In these contexts, nationalism provided a rallying point for diverse groups to come together in pursuit of a common goal, while democracy offered a framework for ensuring that political power was exercised in a manner that reflected the will of the nation. Nationalism can also support democracy by fostering a sense of accountability and responsiveness within the political system. In a democratic society, elected officials are expected to represent the interests and values of their constituents. Nationalism, by promoting a strong sense of collective identity and shared purpose, can enhance the legitimacy of democratic institutions and encourage citizens to actively participate in the political process. When citizens feel a strong attachment to their nation and believe that their government represents their interests, they are more likely to engage in civic activities, vote in elections, and hold their leaders accountable. This dynamic helps to strengthen the democratic process by ensuring that political decisions are made in a manner that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of the national community.

However, the relationship between nationalism and democracy is not without its conflicts and contradictions. One of the primary tensions arises from the potential for nationalism to become exclusionary, particularly when it is based on ethnic, religious, or cultural criteria. While democracy is founded on the principles of political equality and

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inclusivity, nationalism can sometimes lead to the marginalization or exclusion of those who do not fit the dominant national identity (Marx 2002; Wimmer 2006). This tension is particularly acute in multiethnic or multicultural societies, where the pursuit of a unified national identity can conflict with the need to accommodate diversity and protect the rights of minority groups. In such cases, nationalism can undermine democratic principles by fostering division and discrimination, rather than promoting social cohesion and political inclusion.

The rise of ethnic nationalism, in particular, poses significant challenges to democratic governance. Ethnic nationalism is characterized by the belief that the nation is defined by a specific ethnic group, and that membership in the nation is determined by shared ancestry, language, or culture. This form of nationalism often leads to the exclusion of those who are perceived as “outsiders”, whether they are immigrants, religious minorities, or other marginalized groups (Kohli 1997; Richmond 1984). In democratic societies, the exclusionary logic of ethnic nationalism can erode the principles of political equality and undermine the legitimacy of democratic institutions (Pamir 1997). When political power is concentrated in the hands of a dominant ethnic group, the rights and interests of minority groups are often disregarded, leading to social tensions and, in some cases, violent conflict (Hakyemez 2003: 73).

Another source of conflict between nationalism and democracy is the tension between majority rule and the protection of minority rights. In a democratic system, political decisions are typically made based on the principle of majority rule, which means that the preferences of the majority of citizens determine the outcome of elections and policy decisions. However, this principle can come into conflict with the need to protect the rights of minority groups, particularly in contexts where nationalism is mobilized to justify the exclusion or marginalization of those who do not belong to the dominant national group. This tension is evident in debates over immigration, citizenship, and cultural integration, where the desire to preserve a cohesive national identity can lead to policies that restrict the rights and freedoms of minority populations. The tension between nationalism and democracy is further exacerbated by the rise of populism, which often combines nationalist rhetoric with an authoritarian approach to governance (McKay et al. 2020). Populist leaders frequently appeal to nationalist sentiments by portraying themselves as the true representatives of the “people” against a corrupt and out-of-touch elite. In doing so, they often undermine democratic norms and institutions by concentrating power in the executive, eroding checks and balances, and restricting the freedom

of the press and civil society. Populist nationalism poses a significant threat to democracy because it exploits the emotional appeal of national identity to justify the erosion of democratic principles and the concentration of power in the hands of a single leader or party (Bang & Marsh 2018; Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017).

Despite these conflicts, nationalism and democracy can also reinforce each other in important ways. When nationalism is inclusive and civic in nature, it can provide a strong foundation for democratic governance by promoting a sense of shared values and common purpose among citizens. Civic nationalism, which defines national identity based on shared political principles and participation in the democratic process, can help to integrate diverse populations into a cohesive political community. In this context, nationalism supports democracy by fostering social cohesion and encouraging active citizenship, while democracy ensures that political power is exercised in a manner that reflects the will of the people. The relationship between nationalism and democracy is also influenced by the broader context of globalization and regional integration. In an increasingly interconnected world, the traditional boundaries of the nation-state are being challenged by transnational flows of people, goods, and ideas. This has led to the emergence of new forms of nationalism, both in support of and in opposition to globalization. On the one hand, some nationalist movements have embraced the idea of a cosmopolitan national identity that is open to diversity and global engagement. On the other hand, there has been a resurgence of exclusionary nationalism that seeks to protect the nation from perceived threats posed by immigration, cultural change, and economic competition. These dynamics have significant implications for the future of democracy, as they shape the ways in which national identity is constructed and contested in the context of global challenges.

In conclusion, the relationship between nationalism and democracy is characterized by a complex interplay of complementary and conflicting dynamics. While nationalism can provide the cultural and emotional foundation necessary for the functioning of democratic institutions, it can also pose significant challenges to democratic principles when it becomes exclusionary or authoritarian. The dual nature of this relationship reflects the broader tensions inherent in modern political systems, where the need for social cohesion and national unity must be balanced against the principles of political equality, inclusivity, and the protection of minority rights. As we continue to navigate the challenges of the 21st century, understanding the complementary and conflicting dynamics of nationalism and democracy will be essential for addressing the political, social, and cultural issues that shape our World.

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### **CONCLUSION**

The intricate and multifaceted relationship between nationalism and democracy has been a central theme in the development of modern political thought and practice. Throughout this essay, we have explored the theoretical foundations of both concepts, examined their historical interplay, analyzed the intellectual contributions that have linked them, and assessed the complementary and conflicting dynamics that characterize their interaction. The conclusion of this study synthesizes these discussions, drawing together the key insights that have emerged and reflecting on the broader implications for contemporary political analysis and practice. One of the central findings of this study is the recognition that nationalism and democracy, despite their distinct origins and ideological bases, are deeply intertwined in the development of modern nation-states. Nationalism has often provided the cultural and emotional foundation necessary for the establishment of democratic institutions, particularly in the context of nation-building and the struggle for self-determination. At the same time, democracy has shaped the way national identities are constructed and expressed, offering a framework for inclusive political participation and the protection of individual rights within a national community. This mutual reinforcement has been evident in various historical contexts, from the revolutionary movements of the 18th and 19th centuries to the decolonization efforts of the 20th century, where the pursuit of national sovereignty was closely linked to the demand for democratic governance.

However, the relationship between nationalism and democracy is not without its tensions and contradictions. As the study has demonstrated, nationalism can take on an exclusionary character, particularly when it is based on ethnic, religious, or cultural criteria. This exclusionary nationalism can undermine the principles of political equality and inclusivity that are central to democratic governance, leading to the marginalization or even persecution of minority groups. The rise of ethnic nationalism in various parts of the world, from the Balkans to Rwanda, has shown how the pursuit of a homogeneous national identity can result in the breakdown of democratic norms and the escalation of conflict. In these cases, nationalism not only fails to support democracy but actively works against it, fostering division and undermining the legitimacy of democratic institutions.

The study also highlights the role of populism as a significant factor in the contemporary relationship between nationalism and democracy. Populist movements, which often draw on nationalist rhetoric, pose a unique challenge to democratic governance by exploiting the



emotional appeal of national identity to justify the erosion of democratic norms and institutions. Populist leaders frequently position themselves as the true representatives of the “people”, using nationalist slogans to rally support while concentrating power in the executive and undermining the independence of the judiciary, the press, and civil society. This populist nationalism is particularly dangerous because it masquerades as a form of democratic participation while systematically dismantling the checks and balances that are essential for the functioning of a healthy democracy. Despite these challenges, the study also underscores the potential for nationalism to play a positive role in democratic governance, particularly when it is framed in inclusive and civic terms. Civic nationalism, which defines national identity based on shared political values and participation in the democratic process, offers a model for integrating diverse populations into a cohesive political community. This form of nationalism supports democracy by promoting social cohesion and encouraging active citizenship, while democracy, in turn, provides the institutional framework for the expression of national identity in a manner that respects the principles of political equality and inclusivity. The relationship between nationalism and democracy is thus highly context-dependent, shaped by the specific historical, social, and political conditions in which these concepts are mobilized.

The broader implications of this study extend beyond the academic analysis of nationalism and democracy to the practical challenges facing contemporary political systems. In an increasingly globalized world, where traditional notions of the nation-state are being challenged by transnational flows of people, goods, and ideas, the relationship between nationalism and democracy is becoming more complex and contested. On the one hand, globalization has led to the emergence of new forms of nationalism that are more open to diversity and global engagement, reflecting a cosmopolitan approach to national identity. On the other hand, there has been a resurgence of exclusionary nationalism, often in reaction to perceived threats posed by immigration, cultural change, and economic competition. These competing dynamics have significant implications for the future of democracy, as they influence the ways in which national identity is constructed and contested in the context of global challenges.

The study also calls attention to the importance of historical context in understanding the relationship between nationalism and democracy. As the historical analysis in this essay has shown, the interaction between these two concepts has evolved over time, influenced by changing social, economic, and political conditions. The same forms of nationalism that supported the establishment of democratic institutions in one historical period may undermine

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them in another, depending on the broader context in which they are mobilized. This historical perspective is crucial for policymakers and scholars alike, as it highlights the need to consider the specific conditions in which nationalism and democracy interact when developing strategies for promoting democratic governance and managing the challenges posed by nationalist movements. Furthermore, the intellectual contributions discussed in this study provide valuable insights into the theoretical underpinnings of nationalism and democracy, as well as the ways in which these concepts have been linked in political thought. From John Stuart Mill's concern with the need for national unity in democratic societies to Hannah Arendt's warning about the dangers of exclusionary nationalism, the ideas of these key thinkers offer important guidance for understanding the potential and the pitfalls of nationalism in democratic governance. Their work underscores the importance of balancing the emotional appeal of national identity with the principles of political equality and inclusivity, a balance that is essential for the sustainability of democratic institutions in diverse and pluralistic societies.

The conclusion of this study also points to the need for ongoing research and analysis of the relationship between nationalism and democracy, particularly in light of the changing global political landscape. The rise of new forms of nationalism, the increasing polarization of political discourse, and the challenges posed by globalization all require a nuanced understanding of how nationalism and democracy interact in different contexts. Future research should continue to explore the conditions under which nationalism supports or undermines democratic governance, as well as the strategies that can be employed to manage the tensions between these two powerful political forces. In sum, the relationship between nationalism and democracy is characterized by a dynamic interplay of complementary and conflicting dynamics. While nationalism has the potential to provide the cultural and emotional foundation necessary for democratic governance, it can also pose significant challenges to democratic principles when it becomes exclusionary or authoritarian. The study of this relationship requires a careful consideration of both the theoretical foundations of nationalism and democracy and the historical and social contexts in which they interact. By understanding the complex dynamics that characterize the relationship between nationalism and democracy, scholars, policymakers, and citizens can better navigate the challenges of contemporary politics and work towards the development of political systems that are both inclusive and responsive to the needs and aspirations of their people.

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