

Chapter 27: Nationalism, national self-determination, and international relations

- There is no single, dominant form of nationalism. It can be ethnic or civic, elite or popular, and it may support or oppose existing states.
- There is no simple sequence leading from nationalism to nation-state formation to changes in the global political order.
- The political ideology of the leading states matters most because others respond to their power and ideologies. In a first phase, Britain and France set the tone for nationalist developments elsewhere, but by 1900 German and Japanese models also became important, and after 1918, and especially after 1945, US and Soviet models mattered most.
- A combination of imitation and challenge, conflict among the major powers, and nationalist assertion in the peripheries produced a world order of nation-states and turned nationalism into the dominant political idea.
- The cold war era stabilized the new world order, which became one of nation-states with the break-up of European overseas empires.
- The collapse of the Soviet Union and the crises in Western capitalism have been accompanied by the rise of nationalist movements in Europe: 'civic' separatism (Scotland, Catalonia) and 'ethnic' state-supporting nationalism (UK Independence Party, Front Nationale). Beyond Europe, state breakdown occasionally stimulates nationalism (Kurds) but usually is so fundamental as to undermine any kind of nationalism, while non-nationalist movements are often more prominent (Iraq, Syria).
- The sacrosanct principle of state sovereignty was weakened by the end of the cold war, new nation-state formation, and new economic and cultural forms of globalization.
- This provoked a first wave of state-opposing ethnonationalisms, which sometimes led to violence and ethnic cleansing.
- However, international recognition for new states as civic, territorial entities, along with new forms of intervention, put pressure on nationalism to move away from this ethnic and state-opposing character.
- There is a state-supporting nationalism that focuses on the threats globalization poses to the nation-state, and which can paradoxically get stronger the more the nation-state is weakened.
- However, perhaps more important is the shift of nationalism away from a state focus towards concerns with devolution, cultural recognition, and transnational linkages.