Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) Chapter 7: Nationalism - Notes, Important Questions and MCQs (2026-27)

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These Class 11 Political Theory Chapter 7 notes cover “Nationalism” from the NCERT textbook Political Theory (2026-27): what nations and nationalism are, the elements that make a nation – shared beliefs, history, territory, political ideals and common identity – national self-determination, the relationship between nationalism and pluralism, and Rabindranath Tagore’s view – with tables, Q&A, 10 MCQs and a free PDF.

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Chapter Overview

Nationalism is one of the most powerful forces of the modern world. It has inspired independence movements and unified people, but it has also been linked with conflict and the suppression of minorities. A nation is an “imagined community” held together by shared beliefs, history, territory and political ideals.

Many nations claim the right to self-determination – to govern themselves. Since most states contain many cultural groups, democracies must combine national unity with respect for diversity (pluralism), recognising group rights and identities within a shared constitutional framework.

Important Topics and Concepts

Nations and Nationalism

- Nationalism has led to the unification of countries (Germany, Italy) and to break-ups of empires.
- It inspired anti-colonial struggles in Asia and Africa, including India's freedom struggle.
- It can also create conflict when groups demand separate states.
- A nation is different from a family or tribe – members may never meet but feel a bond.

What Makes a Nation?

- Shared beliefs: a nation exists when members believe they belong together.
- History: a sense of continuing historical identity.
- Territory: a homeland associated with the people.
- Shared political ideals: commitment to values such as democracy, liberty and rights.
- Common political identity: rather than shared religion or language, a civic identity based on shared values works better in diverse societies.

National Self-Determination

- Nations claim the right to govern themselves and decide their future.
- Earlier this meant demands for separate states; after World War I, states were redrawn on "one culture–one state" lines, causing displacement.
- Most states have minorities; creating states for every group is impossible.
- The solution lies in democratic rights and recognition within existing states.
- Example: the Basque region of Spain has demanded more autonomy, citing a distinct language and culture.

Nationalism and Pluralism

- Pluralism: recognising and respecting cultural diversity.
- Democracies can grant group rights – language, culture, religion – and regional autonomy.
- Indian Constitution protects minorities and accommodates linguistic and regional identities.
- Inclusive nationalism strengthens unity.

Tagore's View

- Rabindranath Tagore opposed colonial rule and supported India's independence.
- He criticised narrow, aggressive nationalism and valued humanity above the nation.
- He believed Indian nationalism should draw on universal values, not hatred of others.

Elements of a Nation

Most-asked table.

Element	Meaning
Shared beliefs	Members believe they belong together
History	Common historical memory
Territory	Homeland of the people
Political ideals	Shared commitment to values like democracy

Element	Meaning
Political identity	Civic identity rather than religion or language

Nationalism: Positive and Negative Sides

Positive	Negative
Unifies people	Can exclude minorities
Inspired anti-colonial movements	Can lead to conflict and violence
Builds solidarity and sacrifice	May become aggressive or chauvinistic
Supports self-government	Breaks up states into small units

Important Definitions and Terms

Term	Meaning
Nation	Community bound by shared beliefs, history and ideals
Nationalism	Sense of belonging to a nation
Self-determination	Right of a nation to govern itself
Pluralism	Recognition of diversity
Imagined community	Members feel bonded without meeting
Homeland	Territory associated with a nation
Civic identity	Identity based on shared political values
Minority	Smaller group within a state
Group rights	Rights given to cultural groups
Chauvinism	Aggressive, excessive nationalism

Short Answer Questions

Q1. What is a nation?

A community held together by shared beliefs, history, territory and political ideals.

Q2. Give one positive effect of nationalism.

It inspired anti-colonial movements like India’s freedom struggle.

Q3. What is national self-determination?

The right of a nation to govern itself.

Q4. Why is “one culture–one state” impractical?

Most states contain many cultural groups, and redrawing borders causes conflict and displacement.

Q5. What is pluralism?

Recognising and respecting cultural diversity within a state.

He opposed narrow nationalism and placed humanity above the nation.

Q7. Which European region has sought more autonomy on cultural grounds?

The Basque region of Spain.

Q8. Why is a shared political identity important?

It unites diverse people around common values rather than one religion or language.

Long Answer Questions

Q1. Explain the elements that make a nation.

Shared beliefs of belonging.

Common history.

Territory or homeland.

Shared political ideals.

Common political identity.

Q2. Discuss national self-determination and its problems.

Right of nations to self-government.

Led to new states after wars.

Most states have minorities.

Endless partition causes conflict.

Better solution: democratic rights and autonomy within states.

Q3. How can nationalism be reconciled with pluralism?

Recognise group identities and rights.

Grant regional autonomy where needed.

Protect minorities constitutionally.

Build civic identity around shared values.

India’s Constitution offers such a model.

MCQs with Answers

1. A nation is mainly bound by(a) shared beliefs and ideals (b) one religion only (c) one language only (d) militaryAnswer: (a) shared beliefs and ideals

2. Right of a nation to govern itself(a) pluralism (b) self-determination (c) colonialism (d) federalismAnswer: (b) self-determination

3. Tagore criticised(a) humanity (b) narrow nationalism (c) independence (d) educationAnswer: (b) narrow nationalism

4. Recognising diversity is(a) pluralism (b) chauvinism (c) imperialism (d) unitarismAnswer: (a) pluralism

6. Nationalism inspired(a) colonialism (b) anti-colonial struggles (c) feudalism (d) slaveryAnswer: (b) anti-colonial struggles

7. Aggressive nationalism is called(a) pluralism (b) chauvinism (c) liberalism (d) socialismAnswer: (b) chauvinism

8. A homeland refers to(a) territory (b) religion (c) language (d) economyAnswer: (a) territory

9. Civic identity is based on(a) race (b) shared political values (c) caste (d) wealthAnswer: (b) shared political values

10. Most states today are(a) culturally uniform (b) multicultural (c) empty (d) monarchiesAnswer: (b) multicultural

Quick Revision Points

- Nationalism: unifying and dividing force.
- Elements: beliefs, history, territory, ideals, identity.
- Self-determination; limits of one culture–one state.
- Basque example.
- Pluralism and group rights.
- Tagore: humanity above nation.

Chapter Summary

Nationalism has both unified people and divided them. A nation rests on shared beliefs, history, territory, political ideals and a common political identity rather than on a single religion or language.

Claims of national self-determination cannot be met by creating a state for every group, so democracies must combine national unity with pluralism through group rights and autonomy. Thinkers like Tagore warned against narrow nationalism and valued humanity.

Exam Tips and PYQ Pattern

- Learn the five elements of a nation.
- Discuss both sides of nationalism.
- Explain self-determination with examples.
- Quote Tagore’s view briefly.
- Link pluralism to India’s Constitution.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is this chapter in the 2026-27 CBSE syllabus?

Yes. It is part of the NCERT Class 11 Political Science textbook “Political Theory”, prescribed in the CBSE 2026-27 syllabus.

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Yes. Use the free PDF link at the top of this page – no signup needed.

Shared beliefs, history, territory, political ideals and a common political identity.

What did Tagore say about nationalism?

He opposed narrow, aggressive nationalism and believed humanity was more important than the nation.

Conclusion

Nationalism explains how nations form and how they can respect diversity. Learn the elements table, practise the Q&A here and save the free PDF for revision.

More Notes: Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) Chapter 6: Citizenship notes | Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) Chapter 8: Secularism notes | All Class 11 Political Science notes

Author Bio: Written and reviewed by the Nextoper Editorial Team, a group of CBSE political science educators who build chapter notes directly from the NCERT textbook and past board paper patterns.

Freshness Note: These notes follow the NCERT Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) textbook, Political Theory (NCERT reprint 2026-27, rationalised syllabus), and the CBSE syllabus for the 2026-27 session. Last checked on 25 November 2026.