



PhDresearch

# Research proposal

## **Research Proposal: Can Nationalism Support Democracy?**

With nationalism gaining traction within modern states, there have been concerns about whether it poses a threat to democracy. In 2018, French President, Emmanuel Macron, called on European leaders to shun nationalism to protect democracy. The speech was clear that the pursuit of nationalism is posing a threat to the development of democracy in Europe. Nationalism can be inclusive or exclusive, and this directly impacts the treatment of different people and the promotion of democracy. Based on such aspects, the research question guiding this proposal is, "Can nationalism play a role in advancing democracy?"

The conflict between nationalism and democracy is traceable to the definition and conception of the term. The concept of nationalism advances the idea that there should be a congruence between national and political units. Further, it involves the existence of a direct relationship with the state as the individual or collective identity forms an affective relationship between the state and the people. The close relationship between people and a state under the ideals of nationalism manifests in different forms. Ethnic nationalism is one such form, and this involves the conception that primordial ethnic ties such as kinship, blood, and beliefs build a nation. Individuals develop a consciousness about such ties, which becomes the conduit for the emergence of affective relationships between the state and its people. Under ethnic nationalism, one's values and interests are upheld without regard for other people from different groups. On its part, civic nationalism emerges from the conception of the modern nations as social constructs emerging from modernization and industrialization and that citizens are subject to equal rights regardless of ethnicity. Ethnic nationalism seeks to create fissures within a nation's populace by attributing affective relations to the existence of ethnic ties. It becomes a challenge to promote democracy within a state characterized by such separations from this perspective.

Democracy within a nation is dependent on the ability to maintain the structures of power within the people while also ensuring equality for the citizens. The people retain political sovereignty under democracy, and the exercise of power is either directly or through the representatives. More so, equal opportunity, especially in legislation, is one of the pivotal elements of democracy. In this regard, democracy does not provide a leeway for separating people based on ethnic lines. Beyond this, nationalist ideologies jeopardize certain rights, such as the freedom of speech, assembly, and self-determination, that are part of human rights. Through such aspects, nationalism

becomes a clear challenge to the tenets of a democratic nation.

Much as nationalism may promote discord and ethnic affiliations over unity, it can be a tool to advance democracy from the perspective of inclusiveness. Inclusivity from the perspective of civic nationalism subscribes to the political creed regardless of race, religion, and ethnicity. The nation becomes a community of equal citizens united by shared political values and practices from this perspective. Supplementing the values of democracy within the concept of nationalism can create a conducive society that functions between the extremes of neoliberalism and nationalism. The notion of inclusivity in nationalism avoids centralizing on fixed identities and relies on shared aspirations or ideals to define nation imagining. From such a view, the hypothesis adopted for this proposal is; that inclusive nationalism based on shared principles rather than identities can help support vibrant democracies.

The methodological approach adopted to answer the research question is the use of a qualitative literature review. A qualitative approach will allow the researcher to delve into non-numeric data and interpret meanings that help understand the different elements of the targeted population. The choice of this method is because it will allow critical insight into the problem under study through an interpretive approach. The researcher will focus on using high-quality evidence sources retrieved from academic databases for the literature review. The critical analysis of the literature will culminate in presenting the data through a thematic approach that will help derive a concise conclusion.

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