Name Date:

10th Grade Period:

What is Nationalism?

**Nationalism and the Nation State**

Nationalism is commonly defined as a love for one's country. Historically, however, nationalism takes on a far greater meaning. Throughout history, large groups of people who share a cultural identity (language, customs, history) have felt the pulling power of nationalistic feeling. The spirit of nationalism also includes the belief that one's nation is better off as an autonomous state. Autonomy is defined as a nation governing itself independently from a centralized point. Still another aspect of nationalism is the willingness to go to extreme measures in achieving autonomous self-rule. Revolutions, wars, ethnic tension, and other conflicts of varying degrees have occurred throughout history because of a love for one's country. The spirit of nationalism has shaped the histories and destinies of many countries. Nationalism can unite people into cohesive, stable nations. Likewise, it can tear nations apart which can result in long periods of social upheaval and political chaos.

**Background**

Nationalism in Europe can be traced back to the decline of feudalism and the beginning of the Renaissance. Feudalistic societies are decentralized; meaning political control is spread out and does not come from one strong, stable place. When feudalism declined, larger areas of land were being controlled by fewer, more powerful individuals. A good example of nationalism supporting the rise of a single person is the case of Elizabeth I and the nation-state of England. England had previously played a role in the Protestant Reformation when Henry VIII broke away from the Roman Catholic Church to form his own Church of England. The Church, during the days of feudalism, was the one unifying factor for European people. When the power of the Church receded during the Renaissance, people became aware of similarities and interests beyond religion. Elizabeth I was seen as a symbol of English pride. England became a nation-state governing itself, not a disjointed group of feudal states paying homage to the Catholic Church centered in far-away Italy. Nation-states with strong individual rulers became predominant in Europe. Rulers such as Louis XIV in France governed large nations with absolute power. European people, in general, no longer saw themselves individually as (for example) Bavarian, Bohemian, or Prussian, they saw themselves as German.

**Task:** Define the idea of Nationalism in your own words:

**Task:** Turn to your partner, tell them your definition of Nationalism, and

then listen to theirs. Write their definition below.

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| --- | --- |
| Germany and Italy | Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire |
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| What will these similarities lead to? Why? | Why is diversity an issue? What will this lead to? Why? |

**Nationalism by Definition.:** .



