

KEY CONCEPTS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

NATIONALISM

Richard A. Savers, Ph.D.

General Editor: Jennifer L. Weber, Ph.D.



***Key Concepts
in
American History***

Nationalism

Set Contents

Key Concepts in American History

Abolitionism

Colonialism

Expansionism

Federalism

Industrialism

Internationalism

Isolationism

Nationalism

Progressivism

Terrorism



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Key Concepts in American History: Nationalism

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Reader's Guide to Nationalism

The list that follows is provided as an aid to readers in locating articles on the big topics or themes in American history. The Reader's Guide arranges all of the A to Z entries in *Key Concepts in American History: Nationalism* according to these **6 key concepts** of the social studies

curriculum: **Economics, Trade, and Transportation; Government and Law; International Relations; People and Society; Policies and Programs; and Political Parties and Elections.** Some articles appear in more than one category, helping readers see the links between topics.

Economics, Trade, and Transportation

Bank of the United States
Canals
Nullification Crisis
Protective Tariffs
Railroads
Secession, Right of
Sectionalism
States' Rights
Steamboats
War of 1812

Government and Law

Adams–Onís Treaty (1819)
Cherokee Nation v. Georgia (1831)
Compromise of 1820
Compromise of 1850
Era of Good Feelings
Indian Removal Act (1830)
Nullification Crisis
Protective Tariffs
Secession, Right of
States' Rights
Voting and Nationalism
Webster–Ashburton Treaty (1842)
Worcester v. Georgia (1832)

International Relations

Adams–Onís Treaty (1819)
Secession, Right of
War of 1812
Webster–Ashburton Treaty (1842)

People and Society

Adams, John Quincy (1767–1848)
Biddle, Nicholas (See Bank of the United States)
Calhoun, John C. (1782–1850)
Clay, Henry (1777–1851)
Fillmore, Millard (See Compromise of 1850)
Indian Removal Act (1830)
Jackson, Andrew (1767–1845)
Monroe, James (See Election of 1820)
Polk, James K. (1795–1849)
Secession, Right of
Sectionalism
Slavery
States' Rights
Taylor, Zachary (1784–1850)
Time Zones (See Railroads)
Trail of Tears
Tyler, John (1790–1862)

Van Buren, Martin (1782–1862)
Voting and Nationalism
Webster, Daniel (1782–1852)

Policies and Programs

American System
Indian Removal Act (1830)
Protective Tariffs
States' Rights
Voting and Nationalism

Political Parties and Elections

Democratic Party
Democratic–Republican Party
Election of 1820
Election of 1824
Election of 1828
Election of 1832
Era of Good Feelings
Federalist Party (1792–1816)
National Republican Party
Secession, Right of
Sectionalism
States' Rights
Voting and Nationalism
Whig Party



Milestones in

Although the writers of the U.S. Constitution created a central, or national, government, most Americans still felt a strong loyalty to their home state or region. Slowly, through the early 1800s, the nation expanded westward. At the same time, voting rights expanded, and more people began to participate in the nation's democratic form of government. In spite of regional differences, especially over the issue of slavery, common interests and better means of transportation worked to strengthen the country. Although the slavery issue further split the nation during the Civil War (1861–1865), the country did not dissolve.

- 1788** U.S. Constitution ratified.
- 1789** George Washington is inaugurated as the first president.
- 1803** United States purchases the Louisiana Territory from France.
- 1807** First successful steamboat sails up the Hudson River.
- 1812** War of 1812 begins.
- 1814** Treaty of Ghent ends the War of 1812.
- 1815** Battle of New Orleans makes Andrew Jackson a national hero.
- 1817** James Monroe inaugurated as president; Era of Good Feelings begins.
- 1819** Adams–Onís Treaty with Spain.
- 1820** Missouri Compromise allows Missouri to enter the Union as a slave state and Maine to enter as a free state.
- 1824** John Quincy Adams is elected president by the House of Representatives; *Gibbons v. Ogden* finds steamboat monopolies unconstitutional.
- 1825** Erie Canal opens, connecting Buffalo and Albany, New York.
- 1828** Andrew Jackson is elected president.
- 1830** Indian Removal Act becomes law; Baltimore and Ohio Railroad begins service.
- 1831** *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* determines status of Native American tribes as “domestic dependent nations.”
- 1832** South Carolina nullifies tariff law; President Jackson threatens to use force to ensure compliance with the law; Jackson vetoes bank bill that would renew the Bank of the United States.
- 1836** Martin Van Buren is elected president; Charter of the Second Bank of the United States expires.
- 1837** Trail of Tears begins.
- 1840** William Henry Harrison is elected president.
- 1841** President Harrison dies; John Tyler becomes first vice president to assume office on the death of his predecessor.
- 1845** Texas is annexed by the United States.

Nationalism (1788–1869)

- 1846** Mexican–American War begins.
- 1848** Mexican–American War ends; Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo gives vast Western lands to the United States.
- 1849** Zachary Taylor inaugurated as president.
- 1850** President Taylor dies; Millard Fillmore becomes president; Compromise of 1850 allows California to enter the Union as a free state and opens New Mexico and Utah territories to slavery; South Carolina statesman and states’ rights advocate John C. Calhoun dies.
- 1852** Henry Clay, the “Great Compromiser,” dies.
- 1854** Kansas–Nebraska Act overturns Missouri Compromise; Kansas and Nebraska Territories open to slavery; Republican Party founded, partly in response to Kansas-Nebraska Act.
- 1857** *Dred Scott* decision determines that blacks are not U.S. citizens.
- 1860** Abraham Lincoln is elected president; South Carolina secedes from the Union.
- 1861** Civil War begins.
- 1863** Lincoln issues Emancipation Proclamation.
- 1865** Civil War ends; Lincoln assassinated; Thirteenth Amendment abolishes slavery.
- 1869** Transcontinental Railroad completed at Promontory Point, Utah, further uniting the nation.



Preface

The United States was founded on ideas. Those who wrote the U.S. Constitution were influenced by ideas that began in Europe: reason over religion, human rights over the rights of kings, and self-governance over tyranny. Ideas, and the arguments over them, have continued to shape the nation. Of all the ideas that influenced the nation's founding and its growth, 10 are perhaps the most important and are singled out here in an original series—KEY CONCEPTS IN AMERICAN HISTORY. The volumes bring these concepts to life, *Abolitionism*, *Colonialism*, *Expansionism*, *Federalism*, *Industrialism*, *Internationalism*, *Isolationism*, *Nationalism*, *Progressivism*, and *Terrorism*.

These books examine the big ideas, major events, and influential individuals that have helped define American history. Each book features three sections. The first is an overview of the concept, its historical context, the debates over the concept, and how it changed the history and growth of the United States. The second is an encyclopedic, A-to-Z treatment of the people, events, issues, and organizations that help to define the “-ism” under review. Here, readers will find detailed facts and vivid histories, along with referrals to other books for more details about the topic.

Interspersed throughout the entries are many high-interest features: “History Speaks” provides excerpts of documents, speeches, and letters from some of the most influential figures in American history. “History Makers” provides brief biographies of key people who dramatically influenced the country. “Then and Now” helps readers connect issues of the nation's past with present-day concerns.

In the third part of each volume, “Viewpoints,” readers will find longer primary documents illustrating ideas that reflect a certain point of view of the time. Also included are important government documents and key Supreme Court decisions.

The KEY CONCEPTS series also features “Milestones in . . .,” time lines that will enable readers to quickly sort out how one event led to another, a glossary, and a bibliography for further reading.

People make decisions that determine history, and Americans have generated and refined the ideas that have determined U.S. history. With an understanding of the most important concepts that have shaped our past, readers can gain a better idea of what has shaped our present.

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General Editor



What Is Nationalism?

Nationalism is defined as a love of one's country, and it shows itself in everyday life. Most citizens of a country feel a sense of nationalism about their homeland. For example, cheering on the U.S. team at the Olympics is an expression of American nationalism. When Canadians stand at a baseball game while a celebrity sings "O, Canada," the Canadian national anthem, they are demonstrating a sense of nationalism. Britons cheering for the Queen during a parade are expressing feelings of nationalism, as are Mexican citizens when cheering for their soccer team.

DEFINITIONS

Nationalism is a relatively "new" concept—one that only developed in the modern world. In order to fully understand what nationalism is, consider the definitions of *nationalism*, *nation*, and *state*.

1. Nationalism is an intense devotion to one's nation.
2. A nation is a group of people who are united by residence in a common land, a common heritage or culture, a common interest in living together for the present and in the future, and a common desire to have their own state.
3. A state is a political organization that claims or exerts a control over a specific



Steamboats revolutionized water transportation in the United States by delivering goods and passengers over long distances much more quickly than any type of land transportation of the time. This united the regions of the country, thereby contributing to the growing sense of nationalism in the young nation.

territory and a certain amount of power over its inhabitants.

Political states have existed since ancient times. Examples of political states include the Roman Empire, the Persian Empire, the Holy Roman Empire, France, Germany, China, Bangladesh, Canada, and the United States. Simply put, every country in today's world can also be considered a state. Each country has a border, or claims a border; governs its inhabitants and resources; and uses some type of political **ideology** to function, whether it be communism, democracy, or socialism.

A nation is a more complex idea to consider. A nation is often not a state, and a state is often not a nation. Examples of modern nations are Israel, Poland, Japan, France, and Belgium. There are also some peoples who are known as stateless nations, such as the Kurds, Palestinians, and Basques. Jewish people did not have a nation until the state of Israel was formed in 1948.

The United States is a complex example of the growth of a people into nationhood. The British colonies in North America, for example, did not share the qualities expressed in the second definition above. Indeed, the thirteen colonies were by no means united in their desire to become independent from Great Britain. Perhaps one-third of the residents in the thirteen colonies were rebels. Another third were **loyalists**, while the rest of the population remained neutral.

REVOLUTIONARY AMERICA

The various people of the thirteen colonies were not a uniform group that would easily band together to form a nation. Many colonists belonged to religious groups that were **persecuted** in Europe. These people came to America to find religious freedom. Quakers in Pennsylvania, Puritans in New England, and Catholics in Maryland all came to the colonies to worship as they pleased. There were Swedish settlers in the lower Delaware River valley near present-day Philadelphia, Dutch settlers in New Amsterdam (renamed New York after the British took over), and also a number of African-

American slaves who were considered property rather than people.

Thus, the American Revolution (1775–1783) waged against Great Britain was based on the ideology of freedom from taxation without representation as well as similar complaints against the British king. When the war was over, the colonies were an independent group of “states” without much of a similar background. In other words, the colonists did not share what was necessary to develop into a unified nation.

A NEW COUNTRY

The people who eventually made up the new United States of America had to create a common heritage and culture to succeed as an independent state. Symbols had to be invented so people could identify easily with their new country. These symbols included the new flag; the office of the president; a **bicameral**, or two-part, Congress; documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution; and heroes such as George Washington and John Paul Jones. Many early Americans, especially religious leaders, believed that the United States was a unique country that was carrying out God’s destiny by being a beacon of light to the rest of the world. This idea of a religious mission appears throughout American historical writing going back to the colonial era.

TRANSPORTATION AND NATIONALISM

A sense of nationalism does not develop overnight, or even in a few short years. It takes time to instill nationalistic pride in a country’s people, especially in people as diverse as those who made up the young United States.

In a new country located in what amounted to a wilderness, nationalism was slow in developing—partly because of the lack of a national transportation system that would facilitate movement among people. The new nation contained few good roads; most roads were merely dirt tracks. People walked, rode a horse, or rode in horse-drawn wagons and carts from place to place. Water transportation centered on either sail power in deep water or by

manpower with rafts, canoes, and similar small wooden vessels in shallow water. This primitive transportation network meant that travel was slow.

The completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 sparked a canal-building craze in the United States that lasted into the 1850s, by which time railroads were beginning to make their economic impact. Steam-powered boats were introduced to America in 1807. By the late 1840s, steamships carried passengers and cargo on the Mississippi River and other large rivers in the country and were beginning to cross the Atlantic Ocean. An improved transportation system helped link the country and its people and was a source of nationalistic pride.

ECONOMIC NATIONALISM

Kentuckian Henry Clay was the early champion of economic nationalism. Calling his monetary plan the “American System,” Clay envisioned a federally funded network of roads and canals, a protective **tariff** to shield new and growing industries in the United States from foreign competition, and a national bank to supervise the nation’s monetary needs. Clay thought that his system would propel the United States into a self-sufficient, powerful country that would not have to depend on **imported** goods from foreign countries.

Many people thought Clay’s plan would be eagerly adopted, but that was not the case. The new country began with two divergent views on how the nation’s governing document, the Constitution, should be interpreted. One group read the document and interpreted its words strictly. These people argued for a weaker role for the national government and a more active role for state governments. This group grew into a **political party** called the Democratic-Republicans and included such men as Thomas Jefferson (1801–1809). The opposing view, held by Clay and his followers, led to the creation of the Whig Party. Whigs argued for a strong central government that would take the lead in developing the country. Jefferson and his supporters believed that agriculture was the future of the country, while the Whigs thought that the

United States should develop an industrial base. Throughout the years leading to the Civil War (1861–1865), these opposing groups argued back and forth over which path was correct.

POLITICS AND NATIONALISM

The sluggish progress of expanding voting rights in the new country also slowed the early growth of nationalism. The country's founders did not think common people were intelligent enough to vote directly for president, so they designed the **Electoral College** to select the president. As more states shed their old ways of restricting voting in favor of a more democratic approach, people took a more active interest in politics, and during the age of President Andrew Jackson (1829–1837), a truly national democratic movement took place. A two-party political system formed during the later 1820s and is still active today, although only the present-day Democratic Party has survived since that era.

Beginning with the 1828 presidential election, voter participation remained above 55 percent until 1920, when it began to decline. The evolution of mass media—in particular, newspapers—also helped fuel voter interest in national, state, and local elections. The number of newspapers grew rapidly. By the 1850s, most large population centers had at least two newspapers, each devoted to a political party and acting as the unofficial mouthpiece for that party.

FIGHTING THE ENEMY

At the conclusion of the American Revolution in 1783, the United States was a weak country, with a small army and navy. Almost immediately, the young nation had to use part of its navy to fight a series of battles with pirates along the coast of North Africa who were preying on foreign ships passing through the Mediterranean Sea.

Shortly after the U.S. defeated the pirates, French ships began stopping American vessels during the Napoleonic Wars in Europe, trying to prevent American ships from trading with the British. The British Royal Navy also interfered with American shipping,

taking sailors off American ships by force and occasionally firing upon American merchant ships. An undeclared naval war developed between the young United States and France and Great Britain. At the same time, in the Western territories of the United States, hostile Native American tribes were given British weapons from Canada, which were then used against settlers pushing into the Northwest Territory—the present-day states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and part of Minnesota.

As a result of the rising tension between the United States and Great Britain, war broke out. This conflict, the War of 1812 (1812–1814), has been described by many historians as a Second American Revolution. In spite of a strong British navy and poor American army commanders, the United States fought well during this war. New national heroes emerged, including Winfield Scott and Andrew Jackson. The **frigate** USS *Constitution* (“Old Ironsides”) became a national legend because of its successful naval actions against British warships. The American people emerged from the War of 1812 with a strong sense of nationalism and destiny.

TERRITORIAL EXPANSION

A steady increase in U.S. territory took place during the first half of the nineteenth century. Thomas Jefferson, in spite of being a **strict constructionist**, readily accepted the French offer to sell the Louisiana Territory to the United States in 1803, effectively doubling the size of the country. In 1819, Spain **ceded** Florida to the United States and established a western boundary of the Louisiana Territory. Other treaties established the northern boundary of Maine and the boundary line between Canada and the United States west of the Great Lakes.

U.S. settlers crossed into Texas, then a province of Mexico, in the 1820s. Angry at what they considered oppression by the Mexican government, the settlers revolted in the 1830s and established the Republic of Texas. The United States officially **annexed** Texas in 1845, an act that eventually led to

war with Mexico in 1846. The Mexican–American War (1846–1848) resulted in a victory for the United States, which acquired more than 500,000 square miles (129,499,405 sq hectares) of land in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the war. This land included the future states of California, Nevada, Utah, and part of New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Wyoming.

NATIVE AMERICANS

A serious issue arose during this post-1812 period of expansion and the stabilization of the country's borders. There was growing friction between white settlers and the Native American tribes who resided within the borders of the United States. Ever since the arrival of European colonists in the 1600s, Native American tribes had often fought against the steady encroachment of white settlers onto their ancestral lands. Overpowered by an increasing white population and better technology, the native tribes were pushed farther and farther westward. Even those tribes who had sided with the United States during the American Revolution lost their lands to white settlement.

The major problems during the 1820s and 1830s were with the “Five Civilized Tribes,” a group that occupied land in the southern part of the country. Many people and families in these tribes had settled down, started farming or engaging in various businesses, and become much like their white neighbors. State governments, however, wanted Native American land for whites, especially after gold was discovered in Cherokee Territory in Georgia. In spite of a Supreme Court decision in their favor, the tribes were forcibly evicted by President Andrew Jackson and his successors and sent to live west of the Mississippi River.

SECTIONALISM AND SLAVERY

Even as the United States grew and nationalism began to manifest itself, the issue of slavery always simmered just below the surface as a divisive issue. African-American slave labor was an essential part of the young country's economy. By the late 1820s, however, Northern states had freed their slaves in

favor of a growing industrial and market economy. Agriculture in the North resulted in small farms tended by their owners and a few hired men, while factory owners used immigrant labor.

In the South, however, slaves remained a vital part of the local economy. The major crops of the South—cotton, tobacco, and rice—were especially labor intensive. Slavery expanded as the South's economy pushed westward across the Mississippi River. In 1820, Missouri's request to be admitted to the Union brought the issue of slavery to the forefront of national debate. In the North, on the other hand, **abolitionists** called for the end of slavery and fought against its expansion. In spite of political compromises in 1820 and then again in 1850, the country began to split over the slavery issue.

Indeed, many historians argue that North and South were developing as two separate countries because their economies, politics, and social systems were so different. The North was more industrial, had a wider variety of people and more immigrants, had more railroads and canals, and had more money. The South was a slave-based agricultural society, in which its white inhabitants held very similar cultural views and religious beliefs. Its cotton crop was becoming more and more valuable as an **export** to both the growing Northern textile mills and similar mills in England and France.

Northern attacks on slavery included moral and religious arguments, which were also used by defenders of the institution. The slavery issue was an extension of what is known as the states' rights argument. Those people in favor of a weaker federal government argued that the Constitution gave certain rights to states, which were denied to the federal government. The battle over states' rights was a recurrent argument throughout the first half of the nineteenth century and was only decided by the Civil War. States' rights supporters went so far as to endorse the doctrine of **nullification**, or of states rendering a federal law ineffective. Later, they supported the right of **secession**, or breaking away, from the United States.

The effects of slavery were far-reaching. The issue split churches into Northern and Southern wings, impeded legislation such as the **transcontinental railroad**, led to violence in the Kansas Territory, and eventually caused a new political party, the Republican Party, to be founded. The issue became even more divisive in the 1850s. Newspapers and magazines created false impressions of the other section of the country, a process that further heightened sectional, or regional, antagonisms.

THE CIVIL WAR AND NATIONALISM

The 1860 election of a Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, caused the Southern states to leave the Union and form the Confederate States of America, an act that led to four years of bloody Civil War. Ultimately, the war resulted in the death of more than 600,000 Americans. The war ended slavery, neutralized any sectional issues for decades, and ensured the presence of a strong central government.

Nationalistic sentiment was heightened during the Civil War and remained so long after the conflict was over. This increased national pride, had a powerful impact on the country's progress, and helped propel the United States toward rapid development. Even though there had been bursts of nationalism before the war, patriotic fervor grew even stronger throughout the rest of the nineteenth century.

The concept of nationalism, of being devoted to one's country, obviously exists today. The pride and patriotism people feel about their countries helps create strong, unified nations.

FURTHER READING

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