

COMMENTARY

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The Rise of Nationalism on International Relations (Part 1)

Prologue

In the past few years, nationalism has resurfaced in politics across the globe, and is only gaining momentum and power on an international scope. Nationalism is neither a new ideology, nor unique to the contemporary political landscape. However, the current nationalist revival has spread with striking speed and depth, and warrants extensive critical analysis by the political science community. In response to the

nationalist phenomenon, the author will be running a special feature. Each of the four sections will cover “the Rise of Nationalism” from his unique perspective, beginning with Domestic Politics, followed by Economy, Institutions and Global Governance, and International Security. The author hopes to contribute and inspire meaningful discourse to this topic.

The theoretical discourse around the idea of ‘nationalism’ has changed historically according to its proponents. The ideologies of Enlightenment philosophers greatly vary from decolonial revolutionaries to recent globalization phenomena.

Benedict Anderson's [Imagined Communities](#) presented nationalism as a way of imagining and thereby creating community. He defined that nation is imagined because no matter how small it is, citizens will never personally come to know their fellow citizens. Yet, each person entertains the “image of their communion.” Likewise, a nation is a community, insofar as it fosters a “deep, horizontal comradeship” which citizens are willing to make immense sacrifices for. Anderson analyses the rise of nationalism with the print-capitalism. It accelerates the development of the state language which leads to the self-conscious existence. After the language of nation is adopted by the print-capitalism, the print-language comes true and invents nationalism. It does not matter the print-language as mother tongue, English, or new-born language. The most important thing is that it will be adopted by the mass media and the public.

In contrast, Ernest Gellner with [Nations and Nationalism](#) has a different view towards nationalism-the imposition of a high culture on society replacing local, low and multicultural cultures. Politically, Gellner claims agrarian societies organize themselves into local, self-governing communities, large empires, or some hybrid of the two. This changes with the rise of industrialism. In industrial society, the barriers between communities are broken due to a standardized, mass education which allows for economic and social mobility. He believes that nationalism strives for one culture or ethnicity under a state. For Gellner, this is the most important principle of successful states. The worst case is when the state’s leader is not a member of the ethnic majority within the boundaries. He states that nationalism will inevitably occur because members of the nation will demand to strive for advancement by attempting to gain control of the state.

Hence, nationalism should not be thought of as a static term, that can consider, depending different phenomena across time and context. As globalization increases with the support of print-capitalism and mass education, nationalism is shifting again, either as a counter or complementary force. The central tenet of recent

growth of nationalism is a desire for boundedness. In that sense, nationalism should not be understood as sovereignty or self-determination during the Enlightenment, Colonialization or Decolonialization, but rather inherently linked to a “nation-state”.

Domestic Politics

If a room full of people were asked to name a prominent nationalist leader or party, each person could say a different name and all would be right. Nationalism is neither a relic of the past nor a newfound phenomenon. Having existed since the enlightenment, nationalism is experiencing an international resurgence. From Trump’s populism in America to Duterte’s fascism in the Philippines, this rise in nationalism is taking many forms across the world. This section will lie out different types of nationalism from across the world, how it presents itself, and its causes.

In America and the United Kingdom (UK), a type of economically-motivated nationalism is on the rise. The so-called “[Brexit](#)” has shown that many Brits feel as if their own economic prosperity is being sacrificed to help weaker nations who may not deserve their help. These Britons have decided that putting protectionist policies in place would strengthen their own economy while no longer allowing others to take advantage of their economy in a freer market. This same rhetoric also came from Trump and his supporters in their [withdrawal from the TPP](#), the [renegotiating of NAFTA](#), and much stricter immigration policies often based on economic motives. However, economics is not the only driver of these nationalist movements. The [United States’ immigration policies](#) also owe some thanks to xenophobia, Islamophobia, and other such prejudices. These biases were visible in France, where [Marine Le Pen and the National Front](#) came second in the last election, [Germany, where their populist party](#) is fast on the rise and on track to be the biggest opposition party in government, and [Austria, where the first conservative government](#) in a decade is now in power. Domestic resentment and fear of migrants also stems from the refugee crisis in Europe, and the subsequent influx of refugees and immigrants into the States. In response, voters have begun calling for stricter immigration laws and breeding domestic turmoil against many minority populations. This form of nationalism is highly isolationist and nurtures bigotry and discrimination.

In sharp contrast to the economic and xenophobic-driven nationalism of the West, states such as [Turkey](#), [India](#), and [the Philippines](#) are under the rule of authoritarian nationalists. These leaders enjoy popular support at home and criticism from abroad for their policies. Support comes from a certain amount of personal charisma,

sweeping promises to change the status quo, and religious nationalism. International criticism comes from the crackdowns on opposition, the discriminatory treatment of minorities, and the slow descent from democracy to tyranny. This nationalism has been aided by discontent with past governments, hope for a more prosperous future, and a distrust of domestic and international forms of the “other.” Nationalist leaders in these states are slowly reducing civil and political liberties in their societies.

In a different manner, [nationalism in Qatar](#) has developed as a response to threats to sovereignty and self-determination from its neighbors, particularly the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Qatar has been hit with sanctions demands to shut down Al-Jazeera and a calls to distance relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia’s biggest regional rival. As a result of these very strict sanctions, Qatari patriotism has blossomed and support for leader Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani is at an all time high. His face is plastered all over the city, from shirts to the sides of buildings, and all by choice of the citizens. This form of nationalism has unified citizens, without hampering the lives of any Qataris. [Qatar’s relationship with some Arab countries](#) has deteriorated, but so far nationalism has not harmed their foreign relations at large. This extreme difference in the practice of nationalism can be attributed to the events that brought it about. Having its sovereignty threatened, Qatar has chosen to confront that threat with national unity and show its strength as it stands on its own. Qatar has shown that nationalism does not necessarily lead to negative consequences. However, positive outcomes from nationalist movements are not always guaranteed, and one must always be wary of when nationalism might start becoming dangerous.

These are just a few examples of nationalist rhetorics across the world. There are also [nationalist movements in Mexico, Venezuela, Norway, Hungary, Ireland, and Italy](#) amongst many others. While nationalism can arise from a number of situations and present itself in a number of ways, it is often the result of either discontent with past leaders, seen as elites, or discontent with rising globalism in social and economic terms. Many of these nationalist regimes begin as populist movements that in turn lead to a distrust of institutions and a dismantling of those that facilitate democracy in our societies.



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