

Nationalism and patriotism



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In order to comprehend the topic logically, it is mandatory to elucidate the key concepts like Nationalism. Since the scope and nature of Nationalism has been changing through different periods of time, it is differently approached in the contemporary world. In a modern sense Anthony D. Smith defines Nationalism of twentieth century as "... the ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, cohesion, and individuality for a social group, some of whose members conceive it to be an actual or potential nation (LeBouthillier).

According to the same author, the concept of nationalism can be best understood after elucidating the idea of a ' nation'. A nation does not primarily refer to the people of a particular country but to any group of individuals that share commonalities. These commonalities range from the cultural aspects to geographical locations. But the most integral force joining the people of a nation is the sense of solidarity. There are different steps that are taken to ensure nationalism on the part of a nation and government.

These strategies are collective rather than individualistic and occur with the consensus and efforts of the whole nation. For instance, the promotion of a positive global image of a nation on the part of its individuals is done for the spirit of nationalism. Similar is the case with the promotion of a particular national culture on the behalf of its individuals. Stated differently, nationalism is what we perceive today as patriotism. The philosophy behind the practice of nationalism is deeply rooted in the principle of ethnocentricity and individuality of the nation.

It is the idea of distinction attached with any particular nation that makes its individuals not only accept that diversified individuality but also prefer it to that of any other nation. Because of the preference of the national individuality, the national interests are given preference over one's personal gains or the gains of any other nation. Such scenarios lead to patriotic sacrifices. Another important feature attached with nationalism is the right of the state to govern its people and the resistance to international forces that intrude into the country's affairs.

This is also known as the protection of nation's sovereignty (ibid.). A Brief History of Nationalism: Nationalism has gone through variant shades of statuses. Although underlined as one of the key fundamentals for the survival of any nation, nationalism was considered to have failed as a nation's policy in the late 1980s that was the onset of the time of vanishing borders and the world was gradually being turned into a global village.

However, today nationalism is seen to be reviving its lost spirit even among the liberal nations like Canada (Walkom, 2008). The major reasons behind this progress and trend towards nationalism include the fear of losing the stately power on the part of the nations. Nationalism in the Contemporary World: Although nationalism has never remained a debilitating power, there have been times when the over all importance and popularity of nationalism sharply moved upward.

According to Craig Calhoun in his article ' Nationalism and ethnicity', one such time was the year 1990 in which nationalism gained attention globally by the program of ' Ethnic Cleansing' having taken place in Serbia thereby

resulting in a civil war between different ethnic groups (1993). Thinkers often consider the concept of nationalism so inveterate to the existence of nation that they reckon it to be an inevitable part of a state. As Dmitriy Badovskiy comments, “ Nationalism is practically impossible to stop without replacing the regime or losing the country (BBC, 2006).

The understanding of Nationalism in the contemporary world stands distinctive in the times of rapid globalization. It is because the sweeping force of globalization has been working to fade away the previously celebrated unilateral role of the state in tackling with the matters of the country. For instance, today the economy of countries depends less and less on the state because of the global government of World Trade Organization. Similarly, the international media has been inculcating the youth of a rather western approach towards life.

Such tools of globalization have posed a threat to the sovereignty of the states which have been driven out of economic affairs slowly and gradually and the same trend follows through other phases of life too. In such a scenario, the importance of nationalism and the concept of state are ever increasing. It is for the increasing trend of nationalism in the times of globalization that a number of states are adopting nationalistic policies and taking steps to aggrandize the spirit of nationalism in order to overcome the sweeping effects of internationalism.

For instance, Kim Tae-jong in his article ‘ Local Movies Thrive on Nationalism’ believes that most of the Korean movies made in the year 2006 dealt with the theme of nationalism (2006). Major Implications of Nationalism: Just like

any other ideology, the philosophy of nationalism or patriotism cannot be treated objectively since it always possesses a nexus with the subjective elements of human society. The Negative side of Nationalism: While talking of a war in history Edward Mead Earle said, " the underlying causes of the war were nationalism, imperialism, and militarism (1950)"

Nationalism when exceeded from the moderate limits often shapes up into a brutal force that results in either the catastrophe of the nation itself or the destruction of the other nations as a result of the hatred of the nationalists against the non nationalist thereby resulting into wars. Sheila Miyoshi Jager in the paper ' The Politics of Identity: History, Nationalism and the prospect for peace in Post Cold War East Asia' believes that one of the major reasons of regional conflicts in the eastern regions of Asia is Nationalism.

In the word of Jose S. Arcilla S. J. " Nationalism, emphasizes the group, the society or nation, sometime to the detriment of the individual citizen. It means generally subjection to a common program of action everybody must join to carry out (2006)". Jose S. is of the view that when nationalism reaches its extreme cases, it rejects the rights of the individuals in the favor of the state and often takes a form of totalitarianism. The Positive side of Nationalism: Often misinterpreted in an extremist frame of thought, nationalism (when approached in a moderate way) can result in the over all amelioration of the country's stability.

This role of nationalism in favour of states becomes ever increasing in the times of internationalism where the role of states has been in a constant process of decline due to the rise of global organizations. In such a scenario,

what is most suffered is the national identity and the concept of sovereignty. Nationalism when approached moderately can help the nations cope with the sweeping corollaries of globalization thereby resulting in the permanence of nations through the integrity of their nationalistic policies.

For instance, India is one of the active members of international trade with a great part of her earning through the export of agricultural products.

Currently, analyzing the price hike of food commodities across the globe, India has taken a nationalist initiative of ceasing the export of rice in order to help the lower class of the country in getting the staple food at comparatively reasonable rates. Such examples across the world bring in notice the positive image of an otherwise contemptible force in the eyes of the liberals. Russia and Nationalism:

Though nationalism exhibits a great level of significance in the lives of all the nations but for Russia the stance of nationalism has remained crucial throughout the history of the nation. Nationalism is said to have played a vital role in determining the fate of this nation, first resulting in its collapse due to the divergence of leaders from traditionally patriotic strategies and then resulting in the rise of the very nation in the times of leaders whose major source of enigmatic power remained the increased attention to the spirit of neglected nationalism.

Role of Russian Nationalism in political ascendance: " Russian nationalism has remained a potentially potent force, which (is) skillfully exploited (Knight, 2007). " Ever since the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, nationalism has played an important role for the successors in maintaining

their political influence through the use of nationalist slogans and ideologies for campaigning. The same fact has been discussed by Yitzhak Brudny in his book 'Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953-1991'.

The author is of the view that for the leaders of Russia after its disintegration, the ideology of nationalism has worked as a legitimizing force in setting their political grounds by inspiring people through their sentimental attitude to nationalism (because of the nostalgia of Soviet's collapse) that had been debilitated in the times of Gorbachev whose reformative policies were highly incompatible with the nationalist ideology that has been shown by Putin (Knight, 2007) in the modern Russia.

In order to understand the reasons behind the power of nationalism to be used as a political tool, some acquaintance with the changing rules and policies in Russia (in the last few decades) are needed to be analyzed.

Phases of Nationalism in Russia: Various political measures taken within a nation depend considerably on the ruling power and the head of the ruling party. It is according to the head's frame of thought that the policies are emphasized or undermined.

Same is the case with nationalism in Russia. The rise and fall of nationalism more than any other factor depends on the rulers of the country in different periods of time. Russian Nationalism in the times of Mikhail Gorbachev: The reason of underlining the progress of Nationalism in the times of Gorbachev is because of the criticality of his ruling period. It was in the ruling times of

Gorbachev that the Former Soviet Union was collapsed and disintegrated into smaller states.

Being the last General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the last head of state of the USSR, Gorbachev is often reckoned to stand culpable for the collapse of USSR because of his stance towards nationalism in Russia. Right after the attainment of a leadership role in March 11, 1985, Gorbachev had gradually begun introducing a set of reforms that invited rapid censure from a great part of the Russian population. It was because the variations Gorbachev brought were far too liberal for the conservative and adamant Russian citizens.

By the democratic moves, there started debilitation of the former nationalism in Soviet Union. It was because of the repercussions of his reforms inside and outside the country. Inside the country, his reforms called for a multiparty system to facilitate democracy and disentangle the nation from the single oppressing power of Communist Party. As a result Russia ceased to be a communist bloc by 1980. Economically, his reforms included a step to lessen down the dependency of economic bodies on the state thereby making them comparatively more independent.

On an international scale, Gorbachev was remained an active member in ending the cold war by the process of liberal negotiations and joining treaties of arms reduction. These were few of the many steps that were considered by many staunch conservatives and nationalists as the forces meant to imperil the nationalism of the Soviet Union (Cohen, 2005). One such nationalist body was Russian nationalist organization Pamyat. The procession

of four hundred Pamyat members in the fifth month of the year 1987 is remembered as one of the most memorable nationalist opposition stance in Russia (Felicity Barringer, 1987).

Revolts by nationalist bodies were driven by a single fear of states debilitation that turned out to be true in 1991 when the Firmer Soviet Union was finally disintegrated. Russian Nationalism in the times of Boris N. Yeltsin: As for the time of Boris N. Yeltsin, Nicholas Riasanovsky writes, “[T]heir first task -- admirably academic -- was to gather everything that has been written and said on their subject. Even individual journals and newspapers offered prizes for the best definition of Russianness (Payne, 2007). ”

Having gone through a process of weakening nationalism in the favour of democracy and internationalism during Gorbachev’s time, the remnant states of Russia after its disintegration went through a process of re-emergence of nationalism that had been thought of having lost its place since the year 1985. Yeltsin’s rule started with immediate steps to define the Russian identity. The scorn against the policies of Gorbachev was strong enough to make his successor, Boris N. Yeltsin, introduce a contrary set of policies. Focussed on the traditional spirit of patriotism and nationalism, Yeltsin rejected all the reforms introduced by his predecessor.

However, the policies and initiatives taken by Yeltsin never reached the stage of realization because of the inability of the leader to practically implement his thoughts through various measures. In such a scenario, Putin’s presidency which was based n the same nationalist stance came out to be distinctive from that of his predecessor for the element of practicality

associated with it. Russian Nationalism in the times of Vladimir V. Putin: In accordance with the words of Stephen F. Cohen in ' The Political Tragedy of Russia: Reforms that Gorbachev set in motion have been derailed by the Kremlin and Washington', " Vladimir V. Putin, may be further undoing Gorbachev's democratic achievements, but the process began when Yeltsin abandoned perestroika (2005). "

Although many efforts had been done in the times of Yeltsin to fill the hiatus created in terms of the national ideology, the results never came out to be satisfactory thereby leading to the redoing of the similar strategies by his successor President Vladimir V. Putin. According to Marissa Payne in ' Putin's Criticisms of Extreme Russian Nationalism are Politically Motivated', Putin reiterated the same 1994 strategy (for defining national identity) of Yeltsin in the year 2007 (2007).

Peter Rutland in his paper ' Putin's Path to Power' expresses similar views. In his observation, Putin came as a continuity of Yeltsin to complete the modernization of Russia that his predecessor had started. In fact, the policies of Putin were not innovative rather they were constituted on the legacy of Yeltsin's strategies. It was Putin's same frame of thought reckoned by Yeltsin that made him step down from power and appoint Putin as the acting president of Russia. Anti-Immigrant Activities in the time of Vladimir V. Putin:

According to the analysis of Owen Matthews and Anna Nemtsova in the article ' State of Hate; The country goes on a neonationalist binge, apparently with the Kremlin's blessing. The question is, why? ', the later part of Putin's rule marks a sharp augmentation in the cases of anti-immigrant

attacks. The authors substantiate their point by quoting examples of a Georgian artist whose gallery was wrecked by some masked militants and an art historian and curator who was publicly victimized for condemning the anti immigrant attacks in the region.

The scenario of 2006 suggests that the nationalist stance of Putin has resulted in a rather negative circumstance as “ Racism is hardly new in Russia. But never in modern times has it been sanctioned at such a high level of government (2006). ” Some of these high level policies include the step of Putin to convene the natives and grant them a fixed quota in the open-air produce markets. These markets were previously occupied by the immigrants from the caucuses. To conclude with the words of Svetlana Ganushkina, “ Putin's words inspire nationalist movements growing across Russia (ibid). ”