

Part Six: Dangers of Nationalism

Ego-centrism and prejudice

Among the greatest dangers of nationalism is prejudice: a violent affective state where the individual or the group, become ego-centric, leading them to ignore reality and be harsh and inflexible in their judgments.

Nationalistic sentiments in one country usually leads to prejudice against other nations, and sociologically speaking, it encourages the 'we-group' or 'I-group' feeling and the people to love and praise their own nation and regard all those outside this 'in-group' as contemptible enemies. Self-glorification becomes the rule and no sympathy or tolerance is shown to others.

This ego-centrism, an offshoot of this unbalanced nationalism manifests itself in various ways under different conditions: Ethno-centrism, chauvinism, race-centrism, racism etc.

Superiority complex and misinterpretation of history

Walter Lecquer, well-known sociologist says:

“One of the main peculiarities of nationalism is an over-estimation of one's own nation, and a depreciation of others, a lack of self-criticism, sense of responsibility and observance of fairness. Nationalism abandons realism and allows an idealistic and mythical vision to dominate society¹.”

To glorify itself, nationalism generally resorts to suppositions, exaggerations, fallacious reasonings, scorn and inadmissible self-praise, and worst of all, it engages in the distortion of history, model-making and fable-writing. Historical facts are twisted to imaginary myths as it fears historical and social realism.

Will Durant says:² “The 19th century discovered nationalism and corrupted almost all historians.”

Treilschke, Von Sibel, Michellet, Martin, McCaulay, Green, Banderft and Fetik were patriots first and historians later. Every nationalist considers his country as God's select realm and the whole world full of wickedness and barbarism.

Nationalism has made history so corrupt and tumultuous, that a wise man suggested that for attaining universal peace, it would be better to discard history instead of drawing up pacts of friendship and commerce.

Misinterpretation of history is one of the greatest harms of nationalism. It may be argued that the case is so where an extreme form of nationalism exists. But that is not the case. Any kind of nationalism by essence inclines towards self-pride and scorn of others, for so long as it does not rouse in people a false sense of pride in their nation, how can it turn national prejudice in favor of itself and against others?

Tribal prejudice or fanatical ignorance

As nationalism is based on man's animal instincts, not on belief and intelligence, therefore, tribal prejudice which is called fanatical ignorance by Islam, is its foundation and one of its peculiarities.

The accidental birth of a person in a certain country gives him the wrong baseless idea that he may scorn others and consider them as enemies. Having been born in Europe and having a white skin for example, he gives himself the right to plunder the blacks and refuse to employ towards others criteria he uses towards his own compatriots. Even a genius like Einstein is disliked by a German because he is a Jew. Taking birth in Germany or France, both a matter of accidental birth in a certain land and not one of conscious choice, is no reason to dislike other, be prejudiced and evaluate human beings with two different criteria.

Can anything be more inhuman and unreasonable that to prefer a wicked, corrupt and incompetent compatriot of the same race or language to an honest, benevolent and competent person who is born beyond one's frontiers?

A person is judged on the basis of his race, language, country and considered a compatriot or alien, without the least consideration of his deeds, virtues or views. Human honor and good deeds are disregarded simply because one is born in a certain land. The yardstick for evaluating the individual becomes territory and blood, not action, faith, chastity or obligation.

The more popular nationalism becomes, the more intense will fanatical ignorance and racial prejudice become, and the more limited will be one's vision. A nationalist defends everything related to his country solely through intellect or reflection. He considers everything outside his country as alien and ignominious. Right and wrong become meaningless concepts.

This is fanatical ignorance which is strongly condemned in Islam, it is inherited from the inhuman tribal system, but with a more dangerous dimension.

Nationalism culminates in racism

Nationalism inevitably ends in racism and racial prejudice. In any land where it attempts to base unity on the co-existence of a particular group so as to create fanaticism and make that group an independent, separate unit, it must attribute a certain name to that group like Iranian, Turk or some other name; it must brainwash those in that group into believing that they are superior to other on the basis of their race, blood etc. Without attention to the criteria of virtue, belief and action. Eventually, other neighboring countries come to manifest similar feelings, leading to perpetual clashes, rivalry and racial hostilities.

History bears witness to the fact that nationalistic sentiments have always ended in racism. The Greeks at the height of their civilization called non-Greeks barbarians.

Aristotle said:

“It is nature's will that barbarians be the slaves of the Greeks.” The Jews who were a national unit before being a religious unit, regarded themselves as God's selected people. The Romans at the height of their civilization believed that there were only three nations on earth, the Romans, their confederates and the barbarians (non-Romans).

\$\$\$SUB[Nationalism results in a desire to dominate]

5- Nationalism results in a desire to dominate and colonize seeking domination and colonization are due to three factors:

- 1- Strong prejudice
- 2- Superiority complex
- 3- Self-interest (and disregard of others interests)

Nationalism relies on all these three factors and that is why it eventually leads to domination and colonization. Nationalism has been the cause of clashes, aggressions, and constant rivalry between nations, causing much riot and bloodshed the world over. When a country thinks only in terms of its own interests and gives itself the right to dominate others, the result will obviously be conflicts, aggressions and colonization. Some think that this is only true of extreme nationalism. But history has taught us that there are no such things as healthy or unhealthy nationalism, since nationalism in whatever form ultimately ends in chauvinism and racism.

It may be argued that if patriotism and racism do cause fanaticism and domination, religion and ideology, too, may do the same. But those who think so are ignoring an obvious reality. It is true that every school and ideology produces fanaticism and encourages one to believe that one's school is superior to others, but as this is not based on the authenticity of territory or blood, and since its foundation is the authenticity of intellect and reflection, its result is a scientific and theoretical contest. A belief is such that when proved in a logical manner or when it is attractive enough, people may agree to it without being forced or pressurized. A society based on belief is an open system, whereas, societies founded on

nationalism and racism are closed systems which elevate some and debase others, looking upon them as inferiors and colonial slaves. But when belief or ideology expands, all its followers become equal brothers. Nationalism in its expansion results in imperialism, and colonization . A religious school of thought prescribes the ideal system for all human beings, whether white or black, eastern or western, all of whom can join the proposed union, whereas nationalism can expand only through subjugating weak nations. An Aryan can never become Semitic, and Turkey cannot become Iran except by becoming a colony. But Egypt, Iraq and Iran accepted Islam without becoming colonies.

Belief based on the intellect, expands without violence and through guidance and propaganda, in the same way that traders and dervishes carried Islam to the farthest parts³ of Asia and Africa. But nationalism, having solely a racial and geographical foundation, can expand only through colonization.

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the savage colonialism of the West in the 19th century which spread over the Third World was caused by nationalistic sentiments. The calamitous World Wars and the Nagasaki and Hiroshima disasters and hundreds of other wars which have tainted man's history with blood, are living proofs of nationalism as a dominating force.

Nationalism is a factor of expansionism and a basis of injustice and aggression. It has been the source of imperialism and it cruelly transgresses over weak nations, imposing its illegitimate ambition on others in the name of national desires and national expediencies.

Narrowing man's mental horizon

Nationalism narrows man's mental horizon in two ways: Firstly, it discourages man to think of the whole of mankind and of ways to help and guide the latter. It encourages him to consider his compatriots only and limit the radius of his vision within the framework of frontiers. Secondly, it encourages man to reject belief, the spirituality, the intellect, and to focus on land, blood, country and race, thereby narrowing down his mental horizon.

Nationalists are the slaves of emotions, and have no regard for the intellect and intelligence. Ideology, on the other hand, relies extensively on reflection and by creating a sense of obligation and responsibility, the intellect comes to dominate over emotions and not the other way round as is the case with nationalism.

¹. Walter Lacquer: Communism and Nationalism in "The Middle East" London, 1950, p. 8.

². Will Durrant: The Mansions of Philosophy, p. 239.

³. Brown: The Spread of Islam.

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