Forum: General Assembly First Committee

Issue: The question of the use of national identity as a political tool

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Introduction

On Tuesday, September 11, 2001, nineteen Al-Qaeda terrorists hijacked multiple planes and crashed them against several buildings in the United States, including the New York World Trade Center complex and the Pentagon. The attacks were carried out as a result of the increasing influence of Islamic fundamentalist leaders, like Osama Bin Laden, who declared the “holy war” against multiple Western countries. The rise of religious fundamentalism in Islamic countries at the beginning of the XXI Century was an effect of multiple Arab nationalist movements whose origin revolved around conflicts like the Israeli-Palestinian land dispute and the “oppression of Muslims” around the globe.

It can be said that Al-Qaeda was the output of the rise of Arab nationalism. However, the use of national identity as an argument to promote sectarism has not only been observed recently in Islamic countries. In fact, the aftermath of the September 11 attacks was defined by several nationalist incidents against Muslims residing in the United States. The reaction of many American citizens to such attacks was to discriminate the Muslim community.

Later on, both Arab and American nationalist movements developed into the creation of more solid political structures. An example of this is the Arab Spring, a pro-Islamic rebellion that took place in multiple Arab countries in 2011. Throughout this decade, the terrorist group ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) also gained progressive power. On the other hand, nationalism in the United States has developed gradually, although it has never been near the level of extremism reached in the Islamic world.

Moreover, in Europe, the arrival of globalism with the uprising political power of public institutions like the European Union, or with the increasing social influence of magnates like George Soros have resulted in an aggressive response by a part of the population. Movements like the Greek Golden Dawn and other ultra-nationalist and, in some cases, fascist movements are evidence of this. Also, around the world, nationalist movements have arisen in places like Hong Kong, Brazil, and Turkey.
Overall, it is said that the effects that this ideological trend can pose a threat to global peace, diplomatic stability, and social order. Some of the most evident outcomes of nationalism are populism, street violence, terrorism, human rights violations, and racial discrimination. In recent years, as well as in modern history, it has been observed how these movements can eventually lead to armed conflict.

**Definition of Key Terms**

**Nationalism**

Nationalism refers to the ideology that places the concerns of a certain nation over the concerns of any other one. This usually leads to the extolling of national values and identity. When nationalism is taken to an extreme point, it can have dangerous consequences like xenophobia or violent secessionist movements. A common misconception is to confuse nationalism with patriotism. The main difference is that patriotism does not imply the collectivization and exclusion of individuals.

**Xenophobia**

Xenophobia includes any sort of discrimination, from a microaggression to the violent exclusion of any individual due to their nationality. This form of rejection is usually a consequence of the rise of extremist, nationalist ideologies, which promote hatred.

**Secessionism**

In territorial terms, secessionism is the segregation of a portion of the land of a country from a larger political State. Secessionist movements are usually identified as nationalist in nature.

**Globalization**

Phenomenon that consists in the interplay of businesses or governments from different parts of the globe. In some occasions, groups have claimed that the process of globalization infringes upon the sovereignty of nations and that it degrades one's national identity.

**National identity**

The matter of an individual feeling as part of a common group of people who share, within established territorial borders, constant traditions, history, and culture.

**Arab Spring**
The anti-system movement that took place in numerous countries of the Arab League during 2010 and 2011 with the objective of attaining cultural freedom and fair democratic standards.

**Populism**

Political trend that consists in the appealing of a particular political Party to large, popular collective by the use of arguments that superimpose the interests of that group over others. Populism is usually based on radical ideas.

**Sectarianism**

The confrontation in any way of two collectives due to their divergence in ethnicity, gender, ideology, etc. Sectarianism is one of the consequences of nationalism since nationalist politicians usually promote hate towards a particular group for the prejudices made about them.

**Background Information**

**Early nationalism**

Historical knowledge on the issue of nationalism is fundamental for a deep understanding of the effects of this phenomenon on the world of the XXI Century. The first signals of nationalism are found in the XVIII Century, particularly in the French Revolution. Later on, in the XIX Century, the early forms of nationalism developed.

*The French Revolution*

The series of revolts and accelerated political evolvements that took place in the Kingdom of France at the end of the XVIII Century are known as the French Revolution. The social movement meant the end of the Middle Ages, an era where European Monarchies had progressively lost popular support due to their authoritarian rule. The French Revolution promoted national unity, and is considered the origin of liberalism. Although the political progressions this event triggered are highlightable, it is important to note that the French Revolution did present nationalist conventions as it eventually led to the sectarian and violent exclusion of particular groups and to the rise of popular ideas in France.

*Fall of the Spanish Empire*

The Fall of the Spanish Empire was a long-term historical event that consisted in the decline of the overseas rule of the Hispanic Monarchy. The rise of nationalist feelings
in Spain’s colonies lead to secessionist movements which caused the segregation of numerous territories from the Kingdom. In 1898, the United States of America declared war on the Kingdom of Spain, which resulted in the loss of Cuba, Spain’s last colony. The island became a protectorate of the US.

**Nationalism in the XX Century**

The XX Century can be considered the first time in history when the impact of nationalism had effects that still have sequels in contemporary times. After World War I, intercontinental nationalist movements took place. These campaigns later led to tragic events like World War II and the Holocaust.

**European Fascism**

The rise of Pan-Germanic, revengeful, and nationalist ideologies in post-World War I Germany led to Adolf Hitler’s rise to power. His thoughts were similar to Benito Mussolini’s political discourse. The Italian Fascist Party and the German National Socialist Party established their nationalist rule in several European territories and were later defeated by the Allies in World War II.

**American and Soviet nationalism in the Cold War**

During the Cold War, both international powers, the United States and the USSR, competed against each other in many fields such as the *Space Race* and the military build-up. Foreign affairs were, therefore, crucial for both countries. This is the reason why the two governments avoided having to face any internal issues by attempting to win popular support. In order to do this, both governments utilized propaganda that fostered nationalism, especially in the form of hate towards the enemy. In the United States, nationalism was considered civic while in the Soviet Union, for being a communist dictatorship, nationalism was considered more extreme.

**Decline of the Ottoman Empire**

The revolts that took place in the Ottoman Empire in the XX Century consisted in several reaction movements to Turkish nationalism. Pan-Arabism and the conflicts between Christians and Muslims arose within the Empire. The decline of the Turkish Empire led to XX Century Zionism and the Jewish movement for the creation of the Israeli State.
Nationalism in the XXI Century

The process of globalization

According to many historians, globalization is a concept that has been developing since the era of Imperialism. However, in order to relate it to modern nationalism, it is necessary to examine the latest phases of this process. Some historians affirm that globalization is, in essence, a new, non-aggressive, civic form of colonization. Several areas of globalization can be identified: economic globalization, governmental globalization, cultural globalization, and demographic globalization.

Moreover, there have recently been two different responses to nationalism in the XXI Century. A social-democrat view considers globalization positive while a more conservative view considers globalization negative. This does not mean that the public opinion on globalization is necessarily polarized as it is true that multiple views can be generated over this modern phenomenon.

Rise of neo-nationalism in Europe

The rise of nationalist ideologies in Europe in the XXI Century is usually referred to as neo-nationalism. The globalized dimension of the European Union and the Great Recession are considered the origin of these movements, which have led to the rise of ultra-conservative or “far-right” political parties in the continent. Some of these parties declare themselves as neo-fascist while others are more moderate. However, all these parties share a common trend: the use of national pride and patriotic feelings as a political tool.

Islamic fundamentalism

Modern Arab nationalism has its origin in the fall of the Ottoman Empire. From its start, it has gradually radicalized and incorporated traits like Islamic Fundamentalism, which is an alternative interpretation of the Islamic Sacred Texts that claims that the job of exemplary Muslim is to declare the Holy War to Western Countries. The Holy War, however, is not a new occurrence; it has existed since the foundation of Islam. Fundamentalism and Nationalism have combined in many countries of the Arab League, creating terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda and ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria).

Nationalism in America
In South America, there is a great political polarization due to the coexistence in one continent of governments with completely diverging ideologies. On one side, there are communist countries like Venezuela; on the other hand, there are ultra-conservative countries like Brazil. In Brazil, particularly, Jair Bolsonaro has caused a great controversy in the media for his nationalist measures. In Mexico, President López Obrador has also been considered a nationalist.

Regarding North America, the Republican Party has always been considered to be to the right of the Democrat Party. However, it had never been considered nationalist until the arrival of Donald Trump, who has been criticised for his measures as the President of the United States. Popular groups have accused Trump of discriminating certain groups and even instigating sectarianism. In general terms, all governments promote to an extent their interests over the interests of other nations as this is part of, amongst other phenomena, competition in international trade. One may argue that Trump, by making these intentions explicit and verbally aggressive has been considered a nationalist when, in reality, his methods and actions have not differed much from those of past American Presidents.

**Consequences of nationalist political movements**

**Xenophobia**

Nationalism always tends to exclude collectives. Generally, people that lack the national identity promoted by the nationalist movement are excluded. Xenophobia can have different levels. The minimum effect of xenophobic exclusion would be microaggressions. The following level would be social exclusion. Then, civil discrimination and violence would be an effect of a much more radical form of xenophobia.

**Populism**

Populist politicians usually take advantage of the general ignorance of their electorate. National pride becomes, therefore, a tool that serves the purpose of manipulating voters into believing in arguments that can be evaluated as insubstantial. On the other hand, the traditional meaning of populism does not relate at all to the practical applications of it observed in recent history. In abstract, populism is an ideology that advocates for the interests of the ordinary, which are undervalued and threatened by the elite.
Religious extremism

Religious institutions are usually more conservative. The merging of these particular conservative views, an alternative interpretation of religious doctrines, and political systems results in fundamentalism. The universal objective of fundamentalists of any religion is imposing the values and laws that derive from their interpretation of the Sacred Texts.

Violence

Nationalism can lead to many types of violence. Although the philosophy of the United Nations is to avoid labeling violence as brute force is almost never considered to be the adequate mechanism to attain any objective, it is necessary to understand the context in which violent acts are taking place. On one hand, there is religiously-motivated violence, which derives from fundamentalism. In addition, violent situations can take place as the outcome of the clash of opposing political extremes. Finally, street violence such as riots and rumbles are the most common form of violence due to nationalist ideas seen in Europe.

Secessionism

Nationalist ideas arising in a certain region usually lead to independence movements. The secessionist movements of the Ottoman and Spanish Empire are examples of this. Moreover, modern independence movements also exist, such as the Catalonia secessionist process. These movements usually lead to the manipulation of the population, violence, xenophobia, and hate towards the citizens of the current State.

Difference between conservative, patriotic and nationalist movements

Conservatism and patriotism

In general terms, conservative parties are parties that claim themselves as patriotic, amongst other features. They make overall civil claims that revolve around a humane form of exaltation of national values. In theory, these movements do not entail the exclusion of collectives. Patriotic groups do not see a nation as mere language, territory, or race. Patriotism sees a nation as a unity of destiny and a way of uniting the population in its universal objectives.

Nationalism
Nationalism is an alternative interpretation of what a nation is and what it means to defend the interests of a country. This interpretation entails the collectivization and exclusion of individuals, especially for their race. Nationalists claim the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic superiority of the country.

**Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

**UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)**

There have been multiple cases in which refugees were harassed for their nationality. These cases of xenophobia have mainly took place in Europe and in the United States. The UNHCR has been addressing these issues in various ways. For instance, this organization has emitted reports on xenophobia to raise awareness of the issue and it has also been aiding refugees residing in Western countries in order to adapt.

**Israeli-Palestinian territories**

Historically, there has been an ongoing conflict in the territories around Jerusalem, in the Middle East, between the Muslim population and the Jewish population. Both groups claim the territories, which are considered to be sacrosanct. Religious fundamentalism and national identity have played relevant roles in the conflict. In the past few years, violence has escalated. For multiple decades, the United Nations has been attempting to resolve the issue. Currently, there is a two-state solution that divides the territories into an area controlled by Palestine, which is considered an Islamic State, and Israel, the Jewish State.

**The United States of America**

Since the 9/11 attacks, nationalism has been on the rise in the US. The Trump Administration has recently created controversy in regards of nationalism and its consequences, which are becoming increasingly evident in the United States, according to the Democrats. On the other hand, the United States has fought and is currently fighting against Arab Nationalism by making the most outstanding military moves against ISIS in its *War on Terrorism*, which takes place the Middle East.

**The European Union**

The European Union has been an institution that has been related to globalization in many cases. The public opinion of the EU is divided. Some believe that the EU is helpful and that it has a great importance in uniting the member states in some areas like the economy. Others believe
that the EU deducts the sovereignty of its member states. This idea has become very popular in some countries, leading to the rise of secessionist movements like BREXIT or FREXIT, which have been considered nationalist.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain

Since 2013, the UK is by no means negligible in the study of nationalism. Its movement against the European Union, known as BREXIT, has become controversial at a worldwide scale. BREXIT has led to the radicalization of the ideology of many members of the British Conservative Party and polarization of the English population.

Identity Evropa (American Identity Movement)

Identity Evropa is a neo-nazi movement in North America. It claims white supremacism and ultra-nationalism. Although its influence is minor, it is famous for being considered a sequel organization of the Ku Klux Klan. Also, its ideology has inspired other neo-fascist movements in other places of the world such as Greece, where the Golden Dawn political party came to mean a real threat to democratic integrity.

The Arab League

The Arab League is a territorial, governmental organization that encompasses most Islamic countries from the North of Africa and the Middle East. The entity promotes Pan Arabism and the religious unity of the Arab population.

Timeline of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description of event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 11, 1918</td>
<td>End of World War I.</td>
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<td>October 28, 1922</td>
<td>Mussolini’s March on Rome sets the arrival of fascism to the world.</td>
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<td>March 5, 1933</td>
<td>Hitler wins federal elections in Germany.</td>
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<td>November 29, 1947</td>
<td>The UN passes UN GA Resolution 181, which states that the western territories of Palestine shall be an independent state: Israel.</td>
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<td>April 9, 1971</td>
<td>People” as an ethnic group with one sole language: Russian, generating therefore a position favorable to the nationalist process of Russification.</td>
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<td>April 4, 1973</td>
<td>World Trade Center inauguration in New York, USA.</td>
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<td>August 11, 1988</td>
<td>Formation of Al-Qaeda.</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<td>January 1, 1985</td>
<td>Foundation of the Golden Dawn (Greek neo-fascist political party)</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 1, 1993</td>
<td>Foundation of the European Union.</td>
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<td>January 1, 1999</td>
<td>The Euro is adopted as the currency by the first member states of the European Union.</td>
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<td>September 11, 2001</td>
<td>Al-Qaeda performs several simultaneous, coordinated terrorist attacks in the United States, causing 2,996 fatalities.</td>
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<td>September, 2002</td>
<td>Implementation of NSEERS by the Bush administration. The purpose of this system was performing registrations in the houses on numerous citizens residing in the United States. The NSEERS was not backed up by the public opinion since many considered that the registers were performed according to criteria like nationality and religious beliefs.</td>
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<td>January 23, 2013</td>
<td>The United Kingdom votes in favor of leaving the EU through the process of BREXIT.</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 13, 2015</td>
<td>The Islamic State (ISIS) performs coordinated terrorist attacks in Paris.</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 15, 2016</td>
<td>Failed military coup against Turkish President Tayyip Erdoğan. Many claim that Erdoğan faked the coup in order to justify the repression against his opposition. Donald Trump wins the Presidential Election of the United States of America, implementing measures that have been considered radical and nationalist by many. An example is Executive Order 13769, which bans the entry in the US of citizens from most Muslim countries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 20, 2017</td>
<td>60,000 anti-Muslim, ultra-nationalists march in Poland in the “White Europe” protests.</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 12, 2017</td>
<td>Nationalist fanatic performs mass shootings at a Mosque in New Zealand.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 15, 2019</td>
<td>Relevant UN Treaties and Events</td>
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**Violence against women migrant workers, 18 December, 2007** *(A/RES/62/132)*

UN Resolution that strives for the protection of women who have been displaced to another country voluntarily or forcefully. It is a fact that women and migrants have been collectivized in many countries. This has led to their exclusion or even to violent situations.

**Globalization and interdependence, 19 December, 2007** *(A/RES/62/199)*

UN Resolution that strives for the sustainable development of countries in the context of a globalized world.

UN Resolution that strives for the eradication of the acts of exclusion due to race that have been observed in multiple countries recently. These acts are usually an effect of the nationalist movements that take place around the globe.

- Glorification of Nazism: inadmissibility of certain practices that contribute to fuelling contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, 20 December 2012 (A/RES/67/154)

UN Resolution that strives for the eradication of the sociopolitical phenomena known as reivindicacion of totalitarianism, particularly focusing on any attempts to justify Nazi ideological conventions such as racism and xenophobia.

**Previous Attempts to solve the Issue**

**Global markets**

Some markets like the oil market bring intercontinental power together. These markets are usually controlled by governments instead of simply private firms as the sector is strategic to most economies. The temporary situation of these markets has a direct impact, therefore, on international relations, which are crucial for the development of nationalist movements. For instance, the Yellow Vests Movement, which is a nationalist movement in France, was a direct consequence of the rise of fuel prices.

**Global War on Terror**

The *War on Terror* was an initiative of the United States that started right after the 9/11 attacks. Several global powers have united since then to combat Jihadism in the Middle East. So far, the results have not been favorable for Islamic, extremist, armed groups. Arab nationalism has lost gradually lost strength in the Middle East, but reaffirmed itself in Europe through multiple terrorist attacks.

**Possible Solutions**

The finding of solutions for the issue is complex since nationalism is manifested in different forms and with different outcomes in various places worldwide.

In Europe, some believe that nationalism is combated with it's complete opposite: globalism. In this sense, the application of liberal or social-democrat ideas would, in theory, neutralize the rise of nationalism. These liberal ideas and measures may include: more refugees, promoting a global market, hindering national pride, etc. Others believe that nationalist Parties...
are just another democratically-elected group and that it is possible to negotiate with them. Others believe that nationalism is simply a misinterpretation of what patriotism really means. Therefore, true patriotism, which implies believing in a nation's universal destiny and unison, would be the solution to nationalism. In this sense, more conservative but non-nationalist (non-excluding, non-racist, libertarian…) measures should be adopted. Also, in Europe, solutions for BREXIT and similar movements must also be also considered (e.g. economic sanctions from the EU, unfavourable exit agreement for the UK, etc.)

Alternatively, the Middle East has the peculiarity that nationalism is mixed with armed confrontation and fundamentalism. Therefore, possible solutions must always be related to these two elements: The Global War on Terror and fundamentalism. Some consider that military action is the only way to combat fundamentalism. This view is shared by most Western countries, especially the United States. However, due to UN philosophy, military intervention (Peacekeeping troops) should only be considered in extreme cases. In regards of fundamentalism, the basic cause of religious extremism is the indoctrination of the Islamic youth. Measures to prevent this would help to stop fundamentalism on the long term. When considering the Middle East, Palestinian and Israeli nationalisms must also be took into consideration.

Conclusively, the solutions adopted in a resolution that attempts to solve or prevent the negative effects of nationalism must not respond to specific cases were nationalism has had an effect, like BREXIT or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Solutions must be universal and pursue the solving of the issue at a general scale, due to the nature of the topic.

Bibliography


https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/12/white-europe-60000-nationalists-march-on-polands-independence-day.


Phillips, David L. “Was Turkey’s Coup For Real?” HuffPost, HuffPost, 18 July 2017, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/was-turkeys-coup-for-real_b_596cbbc9ee4b06a2c8edcb4815.


Appendix or Appendices

I. ACLU Report: Racial Profiling Since 9/11
   https://www.aclu.org/report/racial-profiling-911-report

II. Video explaining the difference between patriotism and nationalism
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bligZZehUQA