

Sheikh Russell
M.S. Global Affairs Candidate
Concentration: Transnational Security
Regional Study: The Middle East
GLOB 2010 Ethnic Conflicts
Professor Colette Mazzucelli
June 14, 2018

Reflective Essay

Nationalism is one of the most enduring concepts in global affairs. Nationalism can be described the actions and attitudes of members of a nation towards their national identity. National identity can be based on common origin, ethnicity, language, and cultural ties. The fall of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia led to a rise in nationalism that created several nation-states along ethnocentric lines. Since then, nationalism has witnessed a sharp decline in the last few decades due to globalization. The tenets of globalization through promotion of open borders, free trade and liberal values that have eroded the sense of national, cultural and ethnic identities. This has reduced the rise of nationalism for a few decades.

However, there has been a resurgence of nationalism and populism as globalism failed to fulfil all of its promises. This formed the pretext of Ian Bremmer's book "*Us Vs. Them: The Failure of Globalism.*"¹ Bremmer acknowledges that globalist principles have created a lot of winners and losers. Those who did not gain from the spread of globalism have turned to blaming their plight on the elites in the government, media and corporations. The author claims that the evidence of this taking place was Brexit and the election of Donald J. Trump to the presidency of the United States of America. The author warns that populism and nationalism will continue to grow if there are no steps taken the check their rise. The growth of nationalism is spurred by economic inequality, rapid immigration, virtual echo-chambers, job losses to automation and

¹ Bremmer, Ian. *Us. Vs. Them. The Failure of Globalism.* New York: Portfolio Penguin, 2018.

security fears from terrorism. Bremmer warns that there is a ‘wave’ of nationalism that threatens to spread from Europe to the developing world where there is high inequality especially in countries such as China, India, Turkey, Indonesia and Brazil.²

While authors like Bremmer refer to inequality as one of the key reasons behind the rise of nationalism, Appadurai has pointed out that the cultural dimension of globalization as another important factor. Culturalism can be understood to be the use of cultural identity by groups to distinguish themselves at the national level. As globalization eroded the differences in cultures, there were breakouts of ethnic violence in places where there was virulent culturalism to protect certain cultures from becoming lost through globalism. Thus, there were several incidents of ethnic violence that have taken place in many countries as globalization failed to prevent the spread of ethno-centric nationalism.³ Appadurai argues that since most nation-states are created on the lines of a common ‘natural ethos’, the ethnic majority may engage in ethnic violence against the minorities to achieve the goal of a pure natural ethnos. The ethnic persecution of Muslims in India in 1990s and 2002s were an example of the same.⁴ The overall population in the state of Gujarat (India) for Hindus and Muslims were 89% and 9% respectively at the time.⁵ The larger Hindu majority had a ‘fear of small numbers’ against the minority Muslims and this anxiety of incompleteness could provide some basis for taking up communal violence by the far-

² Bremmer, Ian. “The Wave to Come”, TIME Magazine, 2017. Retrieved from: <http://time.com/4775441/the-wave-to-come/>

³ Appadurai, Arjun. "Dead Certainty: Ethnic Violence in the Era of Globalization." *Development & Change* 29, no. 4 (October 1998): 905. *Environment Complete*, EBSCOhost

⁴ Appadurai, Arjun. *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006.

⁵ Graff, Violette and Galonnier, Juliette. “Hindu-Muslim Communal Riots in India II (1986 -2011)”, Sciences Po, 2013. Retrieved from: <http://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/hindu-muslim-communal-riots-india-ii-1986-2011>

right Hindu nationalist. The strong anti-Muslim ideology of these Hindu-nationalist group helped foster feelings of nationalism as they embarked on a joint path to undertake the violence.

Appadurai further argues that the differences between ethnicities and their cultures are reduced due to globalization and this has led to the adoption of excessive tactics such as suicide bombings and broadcasted executions by non-state political actors for instance, Al-Qaeda. These excessive and asymmetric warfare can be understood of a rising anti-Americanism in the Middle East due to the moral outrage of the torture committed by the United States on Muslim detainees in Iraq and Afghanistan. Therefore, the introduction of religion as common ethno-cultural identity represents a moral attempt to fight globalization. The solution toward stemming the rise of nationalism on moral grounds maybe through “conscious endeavor”; in the tradition of Henry David Thoreau in Maxine Greene’s essay “Toward Wide-Awakeness: An Argument for the Arts and Humanities in Education.”⁶ Greene and Appadurai advocate for “conscious endeavor” to overcome the feelings of powerlessness in the face of the receding ethno-cultural identity due to globalization. Conscious endeavor represents being awake and aware of one’s autonomy in the face of forces that appear to be dominating them. This represents the best way to counter the influence of moral duty that can drive people towards ethnic violence in the name of nationalism.

Nationalism is going to remain as one of the most enduring concept in global affairs and as Bremmer puts it, the ‘next wave’ of nationalism is upon us.⁷

⁶ Greene, Maxine. "Toward Wide-Awakeness: An Argument for the Arts and Humanities in Education." *Teachers College Press*, pp. 161-167 (September 1977). Retrieved from: https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C33&q=Toward+Wide-Awakeness%3A+An+Argument+for+the+Arts+and+Humanities+in+Education.&btnG=

⁷ Bremmer, Ian. "The Wave to Come", *TIME Magazine*, 2017. Retrieved from: <http://time.com/4775441/the-wave-to-come/>

Bibliography

Appadurai, Arjun. "Dead Certainty: Ethnic Violence in the Era of Globalization." *Development & Change* 29, no. 4 (October 1998): 905. *Environment Complete*, EBSCOhost

_____. *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006.

Bremmer, Ian. *Us. Vs. Them. The Failure of Globalism*. New York: Portfolio Penguin, 2018.

_____. "The Wave to Come", TIME Magazine, 2017. Retrieved from:
<http://time.com/4775441/the-wave-to-come/>

Greene, Maxine. "Toward Wide-Awakeness: An Argument for the Arts and Humanities in Education." *Teachers College Press*, pp. 161-167 (September 1977). Retrieved from:
https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C33&q=Toward+Wide-Awakeness%3A+An+Argument+for+the+Arts+and+Humanities+in+Education.&btnG=

Graff, Violette and Galonnier, Juliette. "Hindu-Muslim Communal Riots in India II (1986-2011)", Sciences Po, 2013. Retrieved from: <http://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/en/document/hindu-muslim-communal-riots-india-ii-1986-2011>