

Patriotism, Ultrationalism, and World Peace

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Abstract: Some sort of nationalism might be a source of unsolvable hatred and conflicts among nations, countries or religions. Therefore, it could be threatening world peace. To avoid such a problem, we need to distinguish between an acceptable version of nationalism and an unacceptable version of nationalism from an ethical point of view. This speech is trying to defend that patriotism is acceptable and ultrationalism is not.

Key words: nationalism, patriotism, ultrationalism, world peace.

We need world peace, since justifiably, compared with the world without peace, a peaceful world is ultimately in accordance with the interests of all the nations and the peoples in the world. Currently we might not be able to exclude all the conflicts and all the wars, but that should not be an excuse for us to encourage or instigate wars as a means to solve the conflicts. We should keep looking for the peaceful means to solve the conflicts between us. We must control the conflicts and the scale of wars as much as we can, and try to avoid a world war. In the long run, we are looking for the eternal world peace as our ultimate goal.

However, world peace is threatened by the vast conflicts among states, nations, ethnic groups, ideologies, and religions. If those conflicts cannot be controlled appropriately, the consequences would be disastrous—a world war would break out, weapons of mass destruction would be used on the large scale, human race would possibly disappear on the earth.

One of the sources of such conflicts is a variety of nationalism. According to *Wikipedia*, nationalism “is a political ideology oriented towards gaining and maintaining self-governance, or full sovereignty, over a territory of historical significance to the group (such as its homeland). Nationalism therefore holds that a nation should govern itself, free from unwanted outside interference, and is linked to the concept of self-determination. Nationalism is further oriented towards developing and maintaining a national identity based on shared characteristics such as culture, language, race, religion, political goals or a belief in a common ancestry. Nationalism therefore seeks to preserve the nation’s culture. It often also involves a sense of pride in the nation’s achievements, and is closely linked to the concept of patriotism.” According to this explanation, “nationalism” is a descriptive concept, a value-free term. It could be used positively or negatively. When it is used positively, it could imply something like one ought to love her ethnic group, nation, country, or culture, more than the other ethnic groups, nations, countries, or cultures. Intuitively, this is acceptable and seems to be justified by our common sense. It seems to be

appropriate for someone to love her children more than the ones of her neighbors, her family members more than the ones of the other families, her compatriots more than the ones from different countries. It seems to be appropriate for someone to be more of duty to her children, family members, compatriots, than the children of the other families, the other family members, the people from the other countries. If there were no conflicts between her family or country and the other families or countries, there would be no problem for such a differentiation of love and duty. However, when dealing with the conflicts between one family with the other, one village with the other, one country with the other, it seems that such a differentiation of love and duty might fail to solve the conflicts, and what is worse it might intensify the conflicts. If we cannot control it appropriately, it could become a source of the chaos in the world.

What can we do about it? We don't need to deny such nationalism completely, since it is acceptable and justified in certain cases or certain extent, for instance, when one country is unjustifiably invaded by another, some version of nationalism (for instance, patriotism) would be an important spiritual power for the people of the former to defend their country against the latter. What we need to do is to draw a line between an appropriate version of nationalism (we would call it "patriotism") and an inappropriate version of nationalism (we would call it "ultranationalism") from an ethical point of view.

Both patriotism and ultranationalism claim that we ought to love our own country more than the other ones, we ought to give priority to our own interests, other things being equal, and we ought to be proud of our own nation, country and culture, etc. However, according to ultranationalism, no matter whatever is right or wrong, as long as it is in whatever we desire for our group, whatever we think is in our group interests, whatever happen in our group or country, it is right; whatever happen in the other group or country, no matter whatever it is right or wrong, it is wrong if we think it is wrong; we ought to hate whatever the other group or country loves, and love whatever the other group or country hates, when we conflict with it. In other words, ultranationalists take whatever they think in the interests of their own group or country as the only standard or ultimate standard of judging what is right and what is wrong. For them, what is right in their group or country is right, what is wrong in their group or country is still right no matter what; what is right in the other group or country is wrong, and what is right is still wrong as long as we think it is wrong. They cannot allow any criticism on their own group or country, especially if such a criticism from outside. They regard themselves only as members of their own group, nation, country, or religion, but not members of human race. Patriots would be different. They accept something could be right or wrong independently of the interests of their own group or country or any group or country, even though they would give priority to the interests of their own group or country, other things being equal. They do not take their interests as the only standard of judging whatever is right or wrong. They would welcome any criticism on themselves as long as it would help improve their country and culture, discover truth, beauty, and goodness, and advance human well-being. In other words, they regard themselves not only as members of their own

group, nation, country, but also as members of human kind.

Ultrationalism is unacceptable, because it would lead to populism, chauvinism, Jingoism, fascism, Nazism, etc., and it would lead to unsolvable hatred among peoples and nations. When concerned with religions, it could lead to religious fundamentalism, and terrorism. For ultrationalists, the last resort to solve the conflicts between different peoples, groups, nations and countries is always the military force. Ultrationalists would take whatever means to their ends no matter what—as long as it helps realize their goals. There is no right or wrong outside their nation, country, or religion. If every people in the world acted as ultrationalists, there would be no peace in the world and there would be no hope for eternal world peace.

Ultrationalism is dangerous, because it is easy to be confused with patriotism and thus it is psychologically appealing to many people. Enthusiastic ultrationalists usually take themselves as patriots and thus think what they are doing is right. When people do what they think is right would be more motivated to do what they are doing, but if what they are doing is actually wrong, the consequences would be very destructive and horrible, thinking about what has happened in Nazi Germany and militarist Japan during World War II.

Patriotism is a natural product of the development of the people's natural feelings in any nation or country. It is reasonable and acceptable as long as it does not develop into ultrationalism. Patriots love their own nation, culture and country and even give priority to their own nation, culture and country when it conflicts with the other nation, culture and country. However, patriots are rational and capable of empathizing with the people in the other nation, culture and country, and thus able to deal with the conflicts of interests or ideas, more fairly or impartially. They would try to avoid advancing mutual hatred among the conflicting nations and find out mutual beneficial or reciprocal ways to solve the conflicts, since mutual hatred and zero-sum game are not in the interests of any party of the conflicts.

We are in the world with weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, bio-weapons, etc. We cannot afford making a mistake to start a world war with using those weapons, because it is impossible for us to learn from such a mistake, since it cannot be made up for, or avoided next time. What we have learnt from a history—two world wars in the last century, nationalism could lead to mutual hatred among nations and countries and could be a source of unsolvable conflicts and a world war. If we want a peaceful world, we have to distinguish between an appropriate nationalism (patriotism) and an inappropriate nationalism (ultrationalism), and try to prevent the latter from taking place or being prevalent.

(The end)