

Process Essay

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Topic: The rise and spread of Nationalism

Research question: How did the weakening of the influence of religion on people, affect the ideology of nationalism in terms of emergence and internalization?

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Religion is a mysterious concept due to its obscurity. While some claimed that humans gave birth to god, some announced the death of god but the funeral of god didn't seem to be enough to exterminate religions. Even today religion's influence cannot be underestimated. While some fast for their god, some feast for them. While some relieve hunger as their religion told so, some kill for the same religion. But this influence is still weak compared to not so long ago. Even approximately hundred years ago from today, empires which are based on religions exist. On the other hand, Nationalism is a relatively new and modern ideology which aims to form a pragmatic unity around the people from same nation. Nationalism, in terms of its present notion, emerged during the French Revolution and rapidly spread throughout the world of monarchs of holy empires. Nationalism naturally emerged and internalized due to the weakening of religion because people formed around their nations to meet oppression and tyranny of divine empires and people felt the necessity of a new identity and belongness, instead of religion.

While the emergence of religions is a mystery, the reason why some of them lasted considerably longer than the others is another question. It is believed that the Abrahamic Religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) were formed from Mesopotamian Religions.¹ There are plenty of differences between Mesopotamian Religions and latest versions of Abrahamic Religions like one being polytheistic and others monotheistic. Also, the attitude towards the human is an important difference. In a story which takes place in a Sumerian city called Nippur, a person called Ziusudra builds a boat in order to rescue himself from gods' decision; destroying the world by using a flood.² This story of Ziusudra managed to be Noah's Ark

¹ Stephen Bertman, *Handbook to life in ancient Mesopotamia*, (New York: Oxford university Press, 2005), 312.

² Eric H. Cline, *From Eden to exile: Unraveling the mysteries of the Bible*, (Washington: National Geographic, 2007)

after 8 other known versions and found a place for itself in Christian biblical canon.³ These stories are appended to the bible as Old Testament. The difference between Old and New Testament is one doesn't contain angry gods against humans. Half millennium later, after the Christ, things became a lot less violent in order to form a group of believers. Oppressed ones like slaves and women were in need of a savior. It's believed that Muhammad sent Abu-Bakr and he bought an African slave named Bilal ibn Rabah and gave him the freedom. This kind of attitudes united the oppressed ones around Muhammad.

Oppressed became oppressor throughout the years, for example empire of the last caliphate Ottoman Empire. It's possible to explain Serbian and Greek uprisings against Ottoman Empire within terms of religion but even an Arab Revolt (1916-1918) took place which resulted with Arab victory. When revolts against Ottoman Empire considered, the nationalism is twice effective since Ottomans also has nationalist attitude. After the Young Turk Revolution in empire led minorities like Arabs to sense a Turkish dominance and nationalism instead of Islam around the empire.⁴

Every person has an identity. This identity starts with a name and expands; family, race, nation, religion... Likewise all people have belongingness needs according to Abraham Maslow in his "Hierarchy of Needs" pyramid.⁵ In minor aspects all people need a certain quantity of regular satisfying social interactions.⁶ When the angle expands; people look for their salvation together in a unity. As mentioned before, oppressed ones of Arab peninsula

³ Ibid., 20-27.

⁴ Zeine N. Zeine, *The emergence of Arab nationalism*, (New York: Caravan, 1973), 79-82.

⁵ Abraham Maslow, "A theory of human motivation", *Psychological Review*, no.50, (August 1943)

⁶ Roy Baumeister, Mark Leary, The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, no.117, (March 1995), 497-529.

looked for their salvation under the roof of Islam. But things have changed throughout the years especially in Europe. French Revolution was not directly against the religion instead it was mainly against Feudalism, but nationalism emerged as the method of the revolution. Nationalism's emergence was natural during the French Revolution, people united around their nations instead of their religions for their salvation. As nationalism being natural, it was different from other ideologies which had emerged during the revolution. Liberty, equality, fraternity. Those ideologies were chosen as the motto of revolution and then dedicated to nation (flag) as colors. One prominent of the revolution, Maximilien Robespierre, states this relation as: "On their uniforms engraved these words: French People and below: Liberty, Equality. Fraternity. The same words are inscribed on flags which bear the three colors of nation.".⁷

Like three colors bearing the France flag, this identification by nation spread towards the countries due to their nationalist individuals forming it. After the revolution Napoleon Bonaparte promoted the ideals of revolution and nationalism then justified expansionism in the name of French Nationalism, this expansionist attitude of him actually spread the ideology of nationalism out of France.⁸ This spread led nationalism to be a purpose like liberty, equality, fraternity instead of a natural formation of unity like it was in French Revolution. Nationalism as a purpose strengthen the identity side of it. Greeks and Serbians uprisings happened against the Ottoman Empire because Balkan nations were not waiting for Russia to unite them under the Orthodox roof but instead, they had the purpose to receive and maintain their own sovereignty within their land's boundaries.

⁷ Maximilien Robespierre, *Ouvres de Maximilien Robespierre*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), 643.

⁸ Alexander Motyl, *Encyclopedia of Nationalism, Volume II*, (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2000)

Throughout the history churches and caliphate became even more powerful than religion itself. With renaissance questioning the religion had started in Europe. Since then Church lost considerably important amount of power to human mind. Old way of forming empires under the religion weakened. A human need of belongness caused human to form a new unity to replace old- fashioned religion. During the French Revolution people united under their flag of three ideologic colors while flag being the nation itself. The method of uniting around the nation instead of religion emerged a new natural ideology called nationalism. Nationalism naturally emerged and internalized due to the weakening of religion because people formed around their nations to meet oppression and tyranny of empires and people felt the necessity of a new identity and belongness, instead of religion. After the revolution expansionist attitude of Napoleon and globalism around the world led nationalism to spread. The nations without their own sovereignty met nationalism and emphasized it as a purpose and a new way of unity. Empires' ideologies which aims to use the religion to suspend revolts did not work. New countries, as legacies from their people, obtained the characteristics and names deriving from the nation. The modernity human reached, already made nationalism to lost importance compared to French Revolution. New bounds that today we are not even aware of their names are ready to be formed to provide unity between people.

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