TERM PAPER: IMPACT OF NATIONALISM ON EUROPE

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Introduction

Ideology can be defined as the set of beliefs or ideals of a particular individual or a group that forms the basis of a political theory. In the understanding of the several ideologies it has been realized that one of the most dominant ideologies that has dominated and decided the political course of life in Europe beginning from the 18th century has been nationalism. In this context, this paper aims to highlight the concept of nationalism and while doing so makes an attempt to elucidate the impact that nationalism has managed to have on Europe.

Thesis Statement

To highlight the concept of nationalism and assess the impact that nationalism has had on Europe.

Concept of Nationalism

To put it simplistically, nationalism is a school of ideology that underpins the notion of supporting the interests of a particular nation, especially with the intention to secure and maintain its sovereignty. In addition, nationalism also highlights an individual's sense of loyalty and allegiance towards its nation state and how it should surpass or outweigh the interests of the other individuals or groups (Kohn, 2020).

Impact of Nationalism on Europe

The impact of nationalism on the history of Europe could be well exemplified citing the several movements and uprisings that have determined Europe's political state. In the European context, the French Revolution of the 18th century could be regarded as the first powerful manifestation of the ideology of nationalism (Kohn, 2020). The French Revolution was a period of major social turmoil and upheaval in France, one that began in 1789 and had its climax in 1799 and therefore marked the end of the ancient France regime. The bourgeoisie resentment from being excluded from the power hierarchy, refusal of the peasantry to support the feudal system, the bankruptcy of the French Government owing to its decision to support the American Revolution, massive crop failures coupled with economic distress and the incapacity of the French monarchy to adapt to these societal pressures served as the basis for this upheaval. The fierce attack on the French government by the local people in the form of storming of the Bastille on the 14th of July 1789 marked the beginning of this revolution and it subsequently led to the foundation of a constitutional monarchy in France by abolishing the noble privilege power hierarchies. The sense of nationalism that the French citizenry exhibited not only provided impetus to their struggle for self expression but also played a key role in the birth of nationalistic

ideas across Europe for it perpetrated the idea of a modern nation state. The idea of nationalism triggered a sense of national identity with the natives beginning to feel a sense of pride and belonging to their respective states and the society. It was this sense of collective identity that played a significant role in determining the progress of Europe.

Moving ahead, the rise of Nazism in Europe in the 1930s was also characterized by an intense sense of nationalism being realized by the will of a charismatic dictator who believed in the policy of annihilation of all the enemies of the nation state. The drafting of the Treaty of Versailles (1919) without seeking German participation and the subsequent imposition of monetary and territorial compensations made the Germans feel alienated which played a massive role in helping Hitler to gain impetus. The fact that perhaps Germany's defeat was brought about by the diplomats in the Versailles meeting and the feeling of Germany being backstabbed, helped Hitler gain the centre stage in German nationalism for he was willing to avenge the traitorous act. In this context what also must be stated is that Nazism finds relevance and context in Adolf Hitler's ferocious nationalistic will, his hatred for the Slavs and contempt of the Jews (Britannica, 2020). One of the political consequences of the Nazi dominance has been the subsequent establishment of political alliances which subsequently came to be known as the European Union and the establishment of NATO, an international military alliance of the European nations. Hussain, Aqiel & Farooq (2017) highlight how Hitler's nationalist policies outraged the world and had negative implications on almost all the societies in Europe. The authors also opine that the massive number of people in the displaced people camps and the violence as witnessed in post war Europe could be termed as a blot on European history.

The third event that could be used to assess the impact of nationalism in the European context is the Yugoslavian wars fought in the 1990s. It has been evidenced that the what

contributed to the violence and terror in the former Yugoslavia, leading up to its split is its inherent nationalist ideology, manifested by a fierce politicization of its national sentiment and ethnicity, thereby helping to provide a political and military basis to engage in activities that aimed to ethnically cleanse the contested and disputed areas. A consequence of these wars was the breaking up of Yugoslavia into a federation of six republics, with borders drawn along the ethnical lines and therefore is reflective of how the nationalist sentiment acted as the driving force in the segregation of several unified territories in Europe. In this context, a finding by Dumbrava (2019) highlights how after the 1990s most countries and Central and Eastern Europe acted as 'nationalist states', in an attempt to promote and strengthen a core ethnic group to the disadvantage of others.

Conclusion

This essay therefore succinctly highlights the impacts of three nationalistic movements on European history and therefore helps to provide an insight into the better understanding of the ideology of nationalism.

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