NATIONALISM

The term refers to an ideology which emphasizes the formation and assertion of a nation by making it the main objective of political action. Furthermore, just as there are many different kinds of nation - modern, pre-modern and postmodern, rationalistic, romantic and positivist - there are also many different forms of nationalism.

It can be said that nationalism entered the European political scene with the French Revolution in 1789. During this period, the myth of the *Grande Nation* fuelled the many - first defensive and then offensive - warlike initiatives of the `armed population'.

This myth soon extended like a great revolutionary force to other countries of the European continent ranging from Spain to the nations of Central Eastern Europe, where the great multinational empires (Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman) existed, and passed through Italy and Germany which were still divided into a large number of small pre-modern states. At first (1789-1871), the prevailing objective was the construction of national states (independent from foreign domination with all units being politically united and conceived as belonging to one nation often romantically understood as having the same cultural background), such as Greece, Italy, Germany and Poland. Later (1871-1945), the main objective became the extension of the power of national states - be they of ancient or recent constitution - through colonial conquest (France, Great Britain and Italy) and imperialist domination (United States of America, Germany, Japan) (colonialism). As a result of this connection, the term `nationalism' acquired new and negative connotations and became increasingly differentiated from the term `patriotism', which, for many, still embodied positive values. Even recently, the `Republican' version of patriotism, re-proposed in Italy, has a positive connotation, and is clearly differentiated from nationalism, which has a negative meaning that is very close to chauvinism. During the first period of history mentioned above, nationalism was often associated with liberalism and the first democratic processes, while during the second period it fuelled irrationalist and warlike movements of reactionary orientation and even entered into an ill-fated synergy with the racist ideologies of authoritarian regimes between the two wars (Italy, Germany, Japan).

According to Giuseppe Mazzini, the great apostle of the `principle of nationality', the nation should never become the ultimate purpose of political action, but rather should be an instrument - and one of extra-ordinary importance - of such action which serves as an intermediary between individuals and humanity. This principle became the guiding purpose of the Giovine Italia Society. Later, however, the nation became for many the ultimate value to which all political and ethical actions were subordinate (according to the principle of `Right or wrong, this is my country' or the still more sinister German formula `*Deutschland über alles*', now rejected even in Germany).

Very distinct from the type of nationalism described above is *ethnonationalism*, the ideology behind locally based movements inspired by a real or presumed ethnicity and which claims, in various forms (autonomy, separation, and secession), the recovery or achievement of the independence of certain territorial units with real or presumed ethno-cultural characteristics from the national state. This phenomenon saw a revival following the Second World War. In Western Europe, cases of ethno-nationalist activity include the movements in Catalonia and the Basque provinces in Spain, Corsica and Brittany in France and the movement politically expressed by the supporters of the Northern League (Lega Nord) in Italy, which, for a few years in the 1990s, boasted of its intent to gain the independence of the northern regions and bring them together in the new national state of Padania. In Eastern Europe, ethno-nationalism exploded - with occasionally tragic consequences - after the collapse of the system of collective bureaucracy (in particular in the areas of the ex-Soviet Union and ex-Yugoslavia).

The situation of many non-European countries subjected to colonial domination stands in marked contrast to the European experience. In such countries nationalism inspired clearly progressive and even revolutionary independence movements (India, Algeria, Cuba, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Eritrea). However, in some cases, these movements eventually degenerated and led to the strengthening of authoritarian and illiberal regimes, often inclined towards internal repression, military activities and long-lasting and devastating wars.

Another form of nationalism which has also seen two distinct stages - although such stages significantly lag behind the aforementioned European experiences - is *zionism*, the ideology which has shaped the construction of Israel as a Jewish state.

Due to the complexity of the issue, it is not really possible to summarize all the issues connected to the idea of nation conceived as a natural entity or entity entitled to protect human beings. Nevertheless, mention should be made of the right of every individual or group of individuals to their own place in the world as a result of birth or shared values as well as the faculty of individuals or groups to impede the settling of others on the same piece of land.

Interpreted in this way, nationalism may easily lead to a narrow-minded practice which sees countries close their doors to all foreigners or migrants (foreigner, migrant) yet this ideology obviously enters into conflict with universalistic ideas. Often the effort to find the right balance between the need to protect national identity and national community and the need to recognize such universal rights as freedom of movement and the human right to a safe place and reasonable living conditions is extremely difficult. An attempt to strike a reasonable balance can be seen in most European democracies which, despite tough legislation on migration in some cases, are committed to recognizing the right of asylum (political asylum) of all persons whose lives are endangered by persecution.

Source: Bolaffi, Bracalenti, Braham & Gindro (2003): *Dictionary of Race, Ethnicity and Culture*, London: Sage Publications, pp. 200-202.

CHAUVINISM

In relation to nations the term describes a fanatical form of extreme nationalism which denies the value of any other population or nation. It is also used to indicate the exclusive and arrogant self-favouring fanaticism of any faction or group.

It derives from the French *chauvinisme*, from N. Chauvin, a soldier who fought in the Napoleonic wars and whose allegiance to the Emperor never wavered. His allegiance is depicted in caricatures, songs and plays about fanatical patriots. The current meaning of the word was introduced to the humanities by W. G. Sumner in 1906 in order to describe how patriotism can degenerate to the point where it blemishes and perverts both thought and judgment. In his analysis of chauvinism, Sumner (1974) draws attention to the way in which a chauvinist ideology uses a few, simplified formulas to influence and even control the behaviour of people and thus overrides their ability to behave on a rational and logical basis.

Source: Bolaffi, Bracalenti, Braham & Gindro (2003): *Dictionary of Race, Ethnicity and Culture*, London: Sage Publications, pp. 35-36.