

The Trends of Russian Nationalism: from Imperialist to Putinist



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ABSTRACT: Russian history from the Tsarist period, through the Soviet regime and down to the post-Soviet time has been inundated with Russia's determined nationalistic moves that seek to control a vast territory of diverse peoples or reconstruct sovereign entities under its influence. The Russian nationalistic traits have popularly been treated as an affront to sovereignty integrity and disruption of the world order. The models of Russian nationalism have drawn interests of many researchers among whom have suggested that Russian nationalistic principle, particularly, in the contemporary time is archaic and irrational. This paper was undertaken to examine Russia's nationalism principle with a view to understanding its course of movements and the reasons for the incurable nationalistic actions. The paper is qualitative, adopted irredentist perspective as its theoretical framework, and employed historical approach as a method of analysis. This paper suggested that what determines the trends of Russian nationalism goes beyond ethnic concerns, Russian anxiety for territorial security is also a prime factor.

KEYWORDS: Nationalism, Imperial Russia, Soviet era, Putinist, statehood

Unlike some of its European counterparts such as, the United Kingdom and France who had a great antecedent of colonialism, Russia, on its part, has always exhibited nationalistic syndrome from the Tsarist Russia down to the post-Soviet period. Kolsto (2016) associated Russia with two major types of Russian nationalism - imperial and ethno-nationalism. Traditionally, Russian nationalism has been characterized by imperialism, that is, the belief and act of authoritarianism, hegemony and /or domination over non-Russian ethnic territories informed by its ideology nay the ambition to control a large spread of a territory and strong state viable enough to challenge any external vices. Russian Empire and Soviet Russia was characterized with this form of nationalism. The Imperial Russia all through the Soviet dispensation was dominated with imperial tendencies, that is, "a pride in large, strong and multi-ethnic state able to project its influence abroad" (Kolsto and Blakkisrud, 2016, p.1). It is the kind of nationalism which exemplifies Russian state's hegemony over all other ethnic groups, which have been traditionally identified as Russians. This ideology was seamlessly described by Wesseling (1997) in *Imperialism: political aspects* where he suggested that, imperialism is an international hierarchy, which allows one political unit to dominate or control another (p.7232). He, however, supposed that ethno-nationalism (ethnic nationalism) was a new form of nationalism, which Russians were not traditionally identified with but only became a Russian agenda in the post-Soviet period and characterized by ethnic interest, racial purity, self-identification and people's consciousness concerning their national peculiarities. This idea speaks of a group's origin, language, culture, tradition, standards of behavior and custom.

Russia's history of nationalism from the imperial period through the Soviet era was inundated with imperialistic elements. A shift from imperialism to ethnic interest and racial purity by Russian nationalists has been associated with Putin's government era. The ilk of the nationalists with the imperial consciousness are usually referred to as imperialists or statics (Kolsto and Blakkisrud, 2016, p.1). Russian imperial nationalism had no interest in ethnic peculiarity that forms the foundation of the new Russian state; its preference was the control of vast and strong Russian integrated territory. However, it should be acknowledged that Russia's nationalism is underscored by an interplay between two major elements namely, the national and foreign interest (Simao, 2016, p.492). Odunuga (1998), in *East European Revolution and Nigeria's Diplomacy* affirmed the proposition that, what determines the foreign policy of any country is engendered by its domestic policy (p.15), otherwise described as its national interest. Nationalists do not unnecessarily undermine the interest of other peoples, but primacy is given to their national interest in particular while the values and interest of other people become secondary options as far as their national interest is concerned (Kozhemiakin & Kanet, 1998, 46). Hence, this paper gave insights into understanding the irredentism of Russian nationalism as a way of protecting its national interest and how this principle influences architecture of its foreign affairs policies.

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METHODOLOGY

The paper is qualitative, employing historical analytical method. It employs irredentist perspective as its theoretical framework. The theory describes the tendency of a nation-state to control the national boundary of another country on the bases of close affinity viz. historical, cultural, ethnic or geographical link (Hale & Siroky, 2022, p.1: Baird, 2015, p. 1). Irredentism is associated with nationalism that is mostly obsessed with ethnicity identity, political geography and international politics to assert or maintain influence. The majority ethnic population of a nation-state most often have the tendency to unify with their minority spreads in the cross political borders. So, a typical nationalist state will seek to achieve the unification either by soft or crooked means nay annexation or war against the neighbouring countries where such minority kin are occupants (Hale & Siroky, p.1). So, the Russian nationalism trends is here explained in line with this viewpoint.

Survey on Russian Imperial and Soviet Nationalism

Russian imperial nationalism

Imperial nationalism has been suggested to be a product of enduring combination of nationalism and imperial consciousness (Kolsto and Blakkisrud, 2016, p. 8). Imperial nationalism positions the ruler as the ultimate ruler who is personified as a supreme head (Kolsto and Blakkisrud, 2016, p. 48). While it is observed that, Russian politics has been overwhelmed by imperial principle, Emil Pain in *The new Russian nationalism*, proposed three features of imperial syndrome namely, Imperial Order, Imperial body and Imperial consciousness (p.59).

He described *Imperial Order* as a political regime of the empire which exercises power and control over others with no concern for their consents (Kolsto and Blakkisrud, 2016, p.59). Relationship between such empire and the subject community often appear illegitimate. Though their control over others may not be exclusively by force, the interests of the associate communities are less important for the functioning of the political regime.

Furtherance in his viewpoint, Pain explicates that what *Imperial Body* represents is the territory of an imperial state that is composed of regions that are not culturally contiguous or integrated. In the reality of course, the populations of these regions are deprived of the senses of political belongingness because of their subjection to administrative compulsion as opposed to popular consent and conscious interest in their integrations. This is the power vertical as described by Pain in *The new Russian nationalism* (p.60), and is noted to preserve historic traces of colonial conquest.

Imperial Consciousness, according to him, emphasizes a traditional popular consciousness of voluntary concession to the Tsar as a people's condition to preserve their imperial values. Pain identified an elitist brand of imperial consciousness which he associated with the geopolitical "essentialism"; a reaction to two interconnected ideas that, Russian civilization is perpetually sealed in the heart of Russian people and secondly, that western civilizations constitute a continual threat to Russian civilizations. (Kolsto and Blakkisrud, 2016, p. 60). Thus, this mythology of Russia's national uniqueness had a sway on Nikolai I and Alexandr III, (the Tsars from the Romanov dynasty) to develop personal nausea against westerner inclined values such that the two personalities introduced and enforced an ideology known as "official nationality".

Official nationality, suggestive of Russia's commitment to its traditions and original part as opposed to Western model was expressed in three principles namely, Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality.

Orthodoxy

The scramble for supremacy brought the Russian government and religious institutions among whom more than half of the Russian population are orthodox faithful, into interaction as noted by Liparteliani (2020). The orthodox became a strong institution that influence the society on certain government policies that the institution shared in all spheres including politics. In order to instill the orthodox values into the Russian society, the study of theology and classic was incorporated into the educational system, western philosophies were removed from their school curriculum in order to eradicate Western values from the Russian people (p. 1-2).

Autocracy

This slogan underscores the total allegiance of the masses to the Russian rulers who were assumed to be God-ordained, and idolized as autocratic oracle that held the scepter to control the destiny of the whole empire and its people. It depicts an unreserved loyalty to the ruler whose paternalist responsibility is to compensate the masses with protection of all social estates.

Nationality

The basis of the *official nationality as expressed in* "Nationality" was in the opposition to western doctrine of popular sovereignty, which is 'liberal democracy. It was a system that undermined popular opinions, repressed the exercise of civil liberties and ethnic consciousness. Nicolai I attempted to use the doctrine to separate the Russian world from the Western Europe ideologies. Thus, the nationalists in Russia preferred being slaves in their own mother land to being associated with the western world. Vortman expounded on the doctrine of official nationality while he made comparison between two terms of Russian words- Narodnost and Natsiia. The two terms in translation to English literally mean 'nation' but in the Russian concept, they have different meanings. Russian concept of nation "Narodnost" has no any democratic connotations or connection with national representation. But, "Natsiia" to the Russians is a foreign term attributed especially to western idea of democracy, which to them is an aberration from

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God-ordained path of ruling and a manifestation of societal decadence. Within the framework of 'official nationality', Vortman (1999) considered the concept of 'nation' Natsiia as an indicator for 'free thinking' and 'trouble-making' (Kolsto and Blakkisrud, 2016, p.49).

His proposition in this context undoubtedly typified "Natsiia" as a people without devoted pastoral leadership which in his view, the Westerners represented. Vortman in furtherance has suggested that the official nationality reflects the paternalistic idea that enforces allegiance to the ruler on people under any circumstances (Kolsto and Blakkisrud, 2016, p. 49). So, the nationalists appropriated *Narodnost* to political parlance intended towards Russification policy to score nationalist goals. The nationalist began suppression of non-Russian nationalist groups, pressuring of non-Orthodox religious to convert to Orthodoxy, and promoting the attainment of the national autonomy of the Slavic people- Russians being the majority (Liparteliani, 2020, p.2).

Soviet nationalism

Putinist Model of Nationalism

Every new Russian regime has been a reincarnation of the previous ones. Russian history from the empire regime to Soviet era and to Russian Federation time has been expressive of imperial tendencies. Emil Pain noted that Russian nationalism combined with imperial consciousness was what developed to Imperial nationalism (Kolsto and Blakkisrud, 2016, p.46).

Imperialism has been associated with Russia in all phases of Russian government from the imperial times to the contemporary period of the Russian Federation but in different forms. The Russian imperialist traits have survived through centuries firstly noticeable during Muscovy, in the regime of Nicholas I, popular with the idea of *official nationality*. The Putin's Russia has been characterized by the resurgence of nationalistic behaviors that is archetypal of the 'Russian past' (the Russian imperialist traits), with the nationalist idea and nationalist movement quickly spreading under the Russian Federation regime. Regardless of the new dimension and a shift from state nationalism to ethnic consciousness which became the tenet under Putin's presidency, Russian nationalists are still hoisting the idea of reunifying the already disintegrated once-a-time Soviet borders under its control. That is, the Russian Federation, supposedly built on democratic principle, is still nostalgic about the Soviet disintegration but conserving the idea of restoring Russian imperialism, now in a new strategic manner. Emil Pain has observed that the leaders of Russian nationalism are filling out their resurrection of the empire as the geographic expression of the Russian nation (Kolsto and Blakkisrud, 2016, p. 6).

With the level of civilizations and liberalism characterizing democratic globalization, it would be difficult for Russia to straightly establish a utopian type of imperial nationalism project especially when its sense of ethnic nationalism codified as "Russia for the Russians" seems incompatible with attempts to bring other ethnic groups together under a unified government or a single sovereign. But then, cognizance must be taken that Russia's shrewdness in its nationalistic push is the need for the preservation of the heterogeneous Russian populations against further disintegration, and the feeling of extreme obligation to protecting the interest of many millions of ethnic Russians populating the former Soviet cross-borders.

The new Russia has only about half of the Soviet population. Many of the ethnic Russian population now live outside Russia becoming minorities in the former Soviet republics. Fediunun (2023) indexed the population of the Russian Federation after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 as 50% of the Soviet population in 1989, and that they represented 80% of the post-Soviet population (p.437). From the other point of view, Walter Laqueur (1992) noted that, the feeling of humiliation following the Soviet breakup, the need for economic reforms, Furthermore, Russia's charade democratic institution, and the traditional psychological requisite to contain breakdown of law and order, and particularly, feeling of historical mission nay imperial ambition cannot be ruled out as thrusts for the nationalistic aggression.

While the ethnic nationalism interplays with the effort to preserve peoples under a unified government, the new nationalism has not been able to clear path of establishing a stable and functioning empire.

A goal is set however. The idea of the new Russian nationalists is to take power and ultimately establish an entity in which the Russian people can dominate. In the contemporary Russian setting, a resonance of imperial nationalism that reflects imperial ambition is loud and clear. Russian resuscitation of the imperial idea has debunked the western belief of nationalism as a challenge to imperialism and a strong weapon to destroy imperial system. Imperial nationalism has been thought to disappear from Russian politics with the dissolution of the Soviet unionism which accorded the independent republics the right to pursue their own national affairs without external dictate or interference. The activities of Russian Federation in Ukraine in 2014 defeated this hope, and confirming the return of imperial component, reproduction and preservation of imperial nature inherent in Russian politics.

In today's Russia, the principle of massive territory control has become conspicuous. This assertion can be confirmed by the Russian President Vladimir Putin, in one of his annual speeches to the Federal assembly of Russian Federation in March 16, 2013. Putin recounted that preservation of the state over a past space is Russia's thousand-year-old spiritual achievement. Russia today has resumed the old tradition of Russian imperialism now manifesting in various forms replicating or reproducing the old systems.

To start with, Russia has been indoctrinated in what they call 'Special Path'. This emerged as the replication of the official nationality of the imperial Russia, the doctrine which portends the special national character of Russians for their virtues which entails patience, truthfulness, spontaneity, sincerity, generosity and disposition to collective decision-making. This supposition was reverberated by Blackburn (2021, p. 92), that Russia is endowed with unique civilized tradition that preserves and harmonize ethno-cultural

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diversities. According to Miller (2012), the doctrine of Russia's *special path* was an extension of the first Slavophiles' belief that Russians have everlasting preordained distinction from the West (Kolsto and Blakkisrud, 2016, p. 50). The doctrine contrasts them with the generic image of the western mentality for greed, inherent self-interest, deceit, and unsympathetic stinginess. The nationalist indoctrination has always portended that they are people who are either endowed with genetic unique value or constructed value system that cannot be compromised. Related to this stance is the dire Russia's commitment to protecting its people [Russians] on the territories that were once controlled by Russian Empire is ostensibly responsible for the renaissance of its imperial notion that replicate "Official Nationality" under Nicholas I Tsarist regime.

Relationship between Russia and the West has historically been characterized with suspicions. This situation was fueled by public prejudices about unending antipathy of the West towards Russia. With Russia's fear of isolation, Vladimir Putin have become more popular for the perceived messianic virtues he exhibits which make Russians see him as their new monarch who can be trusted. Russians' confidence and allegiance to Putin's rule was reflected in the result of survey of 'Gallup' world poll 2016 wherein the approval of Putin's administrations as a president and at a time as prime minister was rated above 80%. Putin expressed the fear that Russia cannot stand the threat of nuclear proliferation and foreign influence if Russian society is splintered into little groups. He sometime asserted that Russia is historically obsessed with the consciousness of controlling a vast territory and preserving its subjects which however must not be compromised if Russia must continue to emerge as a strong nation (Putin, 2003). From the Pew Research Center, it has been observed that many Russians of about forty-four percentage against thirty-one percentage have expressed opinions that it is natural for Russians to have an empire. This, however, was parallel with the urge for ethnic nationalism where fifty-three percentage of Russians opined that Russian Federation as a state should be exclusive for ethnic Russians.

According to the Pew Research center 2012, a majority of Russians of about fifty-seven percent against thirty-two percent felt that Russians deserve leader with autocratic tendencies to solve the state's problems than a democratic leader. In terms of public support, the result from the research clearly reflected that Vladimir Putin stands out to be the most favorable figure on Russia's political stage favored with seventy-two percent versus twenty-four percent.

Putin's government has logically been extemporizing the Russian imperial model of vast territorial maintenance where diverse peoples of different culture such as, Polish, Ukraine, Belarus, new Baltic, Finland, Bessarabia, and new Asian territories were forcibly incorporated into Russian Empire to be ruled over by the Tsars. (Brian, 1974, p. 25). Russian Federation has reproduced the imperial traits though in diplomatic ways. One would suppose that the dissolution of the Soviet Union (SU) would guarantee independence of all the Soviet republics that made up the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) in a utopian manner. But, the reality of the situation has been that the cultural ties between the Slavic nations including Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, and the ideological relation between Russia and some Eurasian former countries of the S.U have been logically reestablished firstly under the post-Soviet newly formed international organization known as Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Although, in a diplomatic sense, the CIS is not a Union State like S.U, but the organization was intended to be a key tool in the hand of President Vladimir Putin to strengthening Russia's geopolitical zone position with a tendency to retain its once-a-time influence in the former Soviet neighboring countries. It should be noted that though the CIS member countries are independent states with equal rights, Putin's policy was to create a new integration project- Eurasian Union within CIS regions as a supranational union that would maintain a power balance with other major regional organizations like the European Union (EU) and NATO (Halbach, 2012, pp. 1-4).

While it has been difficult for Russia to resume the Imperial Russia old model of expansionist agenda (annexation) to expand its Federation geographical occupation, it has embarked on what can be described as security expansion scheme. For example, Russian has a military base in Armenia on a lease contract that was to last for 25 years. Prompted by its security expansion plan, the contract has been prolonged to 49 years and which is to last until 2044¹. In the same manner, its leasehold of the Black Sea fleet in Ukraine has been extended from the initial expiry date of 2017 to 2042², all in the bid to make its presence visible in those neighbouring countries that once were Soviet republics.

There was a Monroeski Doctrine, which recognized Russia's *Special Rights* over the post-Soviet territories. The Monroe Doctrine suggests the right of a new world to consider any political influence from another world as dangerous to their peace and safety, suggesting their right to protect their region against such influences. Euromaidan protest of 2014 which seemed to be a replication of the Decembrist revolution that took place in 1825 during the tsarist era was considered by Russia as an attempt by Ukrainian revolutionists to expose Russian State to risks of dangers from external enemies.

The Crimean annexation by Russia in 2014 which was precipitated by the Euromaidan revolution against the pro-Russian Ukrainian President, Viktor Yanukovich was a repetition of history of what happened during the Nicholas I. The Decembrists had found Russian imperialism as oppressive and so organised to advocate the idea of 'nation' in line with the Western concept. The idea of the Decembrists was to replace the absolutism with constitutional government that would respect civil right and individual freedom.

¹ Hasmik Smbatian 2010. Armenia, Russia sign extended defense pact. <https://azatutyun.am/a/2132965-html>.

² The Guardian: Ukraine extends lease for Russia's Black Sea fleet, 21 Apr. 2010 by Luke Harding. <https://theguardian.com/world/2010/apr/21/ukraine-black-sea-fleet-russia>.

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However, the Decembrists revolt was harshly and immediately crushed by military action to protect the official nationality doctrine of Nicolai 1. Putin's Russia replicated the principle of "Official Nationality" in 2014 in a new model known as 'Russian World' to support the narratives for Russian annexation of Crimea.

Russian world

Though, "Russian World" (Rossiyskiy Mir) has been historically used to identify the Slavic community, the notion became popular after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Following the disintegration of the Union which saw the component republics formed separate independent, and some components dispersed into different geopolitical enclaves, Russia sought to find a new identity propped by a new national idea (Loughlin et al, p. 747), and geopolitical ideology that would self-define Russians. So, the ideology of Russian World was mooted by Russian intellectuals, academics, and journalists around 1995-2000 and was publicly introduced into political discourse towards their efforts to legitimize domestic and foreign policy (Jilge).

The "Russian World" is not concrete in definition, it is vague and polysemous. It has linguistic, biopolitical and civilization implications (Loughlin et al, p. 749). But then, the idea expresses the strong aspiration of the Russian Federation to reconstruct the scattered ethnic, historical and cultural Russian into a Russian community. The "Russian World" that the concept portrays goes beyond an ethnic configuration. It is one that stresses the idea of an imagined community that identifies itself along national and ethnic terms (Jilge). The "Russian World" is conceived as place with diversity of traditions which rests on common societal assumption that does not necessarily mean homogeneity (Bremer, p. 5). The idea takes the interest of both the ethnic Russians and the Russian-speaking compatriot in diaspora into account. According to Jilge, the "*Russian World*" ... *is not primarily based on ethnicity, but rather on an essentialist, mythical idea of Russian language and culture*. Impliedly, the Russian Federation equates to Russian any Russian compatriot who by assumption, culture, language, mentality, ideology etc. recognizes itself as a Russian.

The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in connection with the State has really influenced in promoting the "Russian World" ideology by resonating the narratives that describes the Slavic communities- Russians, Ukrainians and Belarussians as sacred orthodox community in order to arouse the idea of Holy Russia to convey the impression that they are basically one inseparable nation (Jilge). Bremer consolidated this assertion by describing the "Russian World" *as a predetermined community from which the constituent nations cannot secede, even if they would like to form other political entities* (p.1).

Many Russians, either in majority or minority, have been spread on the shores beyond the Russian Federation territory after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Some in majority occupy some regions in the territories of the former Soviet Republics such as in Crimea and Donbas region of Ukraine, while some in minority are in the Baltic area contending discriminatory laws of citizenship rights in some of those territories. By the idea of the "Russian World", the Russian Federation justifies its paternalistic duty of playing a protective role towards the geographical spaces where Russians occupy (Bremer 2015, p.1).

The Euromaidan nationalists had come together to protest the need to defend Ukraine against Russian dictates and influences by replacing the pro-Russian President of Ukraine, Victor Yanukovich, with a pro-Western prospective Ukraine's president that was to establish relationship with Western Europe. The Ukrainian desire for EU's integration increased Russian's feeling of seclusion from the rest of the European world. Ukraine government could lace its attempt of tilting towards the West on domestic or economic reasons because it has prerogative right as a sovereign country to guarantee their survival. Nevertheless, foreign policy goes beyond economic or any physical security guarantees as could be justified by any country bordering with Russia to align with its sworn enemies that the West personified. Even then, that Ukraine means much more to Russia than an ordinary former republic. Being one out of the three Slavic states that constituted the Soviet Union, it takes a position as a cradle of Russian culture and statehood, and having a strong affinal relationships and consanguinity with Russia which is difficult to erode.

It is worth noting that, an integrated and all-encompassing assurance of territorial safety beyond physical impression, inner feelings of safety and guarantee of the domestic protection totally void of any suspicion of threats are prime in importance to Russia (Krasnodebska, 2021). This concern could not have better been expressed and addressed in decisive measures other than stalling any suspicious endeavor or hostile policy by Ukraine, not minding the risk that could be involved. Hence, the political unrest in Crimea, being a region historically believed to be Russia's, became a justifiable excuse for Russia to repress Ukraine's national plan of the E.U.'s integration using an annexation formula.

Difficulty in separating sovereign nationality from historical affinity, as regards the Republic of Ukraine and Russian Federation's relationship, is obvious. In spite of the fact that Russia recognized the sovereignty of the Republic of Ukraine from the dissolution of the S.U, in its (Russia) feeling, Ukraine remains an inseparable and inalienable component whose cultural ties with Russia remains unalterable. Ukrainians and Russians are Slavic tribes making them historically bonded as one family. Probably based on parameter of Russian overwhelming majority and as the 'first people' of Muscovy, that is, Russian empire, Ukrainian were tagged 'Little Russia'. Russia's sense of Russian nationality was made firm by the inclusion of Crimea as a component part of Republic of Soviet Ukraine. Crimea, after the first Russian annexation (1783), had been proclaimed forever belonging to Russians by Catherine the Great. Although the control of Crimea was transferred to Soviet Ukraine in 1954, the transfer of the region did not mean anything than a relocation of a Russian nationality within the Soviet territory.

It is to be noted that the constitution that granted the independence of Ukraine applied only to Soviet national republics. Crimea only existed as one of the provinces, which had no national status to be granted independence under the Soviet regime. The in-

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borders transfer was an internal arrangement by the Soviet presidium and suggesting that the agreement of the transfer has no case or precedent in the mode of territorial acquisition that can be defended by international law. Moreover, Ukrainian retention of Crimea (a Russian legacy populated with ethnic Russian majority) as its constituent region solidified Russian perception that Ukraine still remained its territorial extension. Russian idea of 'Russia World' or 'Russian Nationality' did not exclude either of Ukraine or Crimea. So, any anti-Russian policy by either of them was to be perceived as a rebellion to their authority. While it could not be disputed that Russia admitted its obligation to respect Ukraine's sovereign status, it as well has employed stratagem to determine the level of Ukraine's supposed sovereignty.

CONCLUSION

By ideology, Russia is at large sees itself as a people with paths that not only distinguish them from the western culture but make the superior to it.

Down the history, Russia and nationalism are replica of Siamese twins that cannot be separated. Its principle of nationalism is, however, perceived by the Western world as a confrontational non-belligerence to its much admired democratic and human right campaigns, and which resultantly spurred the hostile perpetual communications that polarized the western and Russian enclaves.

There is a standpoint that justifies the Russian nationalistic trend. Being unable to prevent the disintegration of the Soviet, Russia had a firm notion that its great power status could only be saved by keeping a firm grip on its new federative state to prevent the tendency of its further disintegration into several smaller independent units insofar that separate groups inside Russia such as Tatars, Chechen and some others, are agitating for autonomy or full independence.

There was a thrust for Russia to preserve the unity of the diverse nationalities against further disintegration. The feeling of nationalist duty to protect the interest of many millions of ethnic Russian nationals that form the minorities within the territories of the former Soviet republics are worth noting. From the other point of view, Walter Laqueur (1992) noted that, the feeling of humiliation following the Soviet breakup, the need for economic reforms, Russia's charade democratic institution, and the traditional psychological requisite to contain breakdown of law and order, and particularly, feeling of historical mission nay imperial ambition constitute strong elements of the nationalistic aggression.

Judging from popular views, Russia's idea of nationalism could be regarded as outrageous and a sheer violation of the principle of sovereign right but then, making a conclusion on the excesses of the Russia's ideology will be a superficial unbalanced judgment. Unbiased scrutiny into elements that warranted its pursuit will show that its doctrine was justifiably imperative because, the interplay between the national and foreign interests of the country determines its foreign policy.

The Russian domestic interest is underscored by their concern for establishing national identity as an ethnic-state, and the need to ensure national securities vis-a vis the guarantee of the unification of its multinational state which forms the basis of Russia's existence (Blackburn, 2020). However, it would be more prudent for Russia to not employ despotic means in unifying the several diverse nationalities as every ethnic unit has a spiritually inherent perception of uniqueness which could not be cooperated, but instead to project astute leadership that embrace diversity guided by mutual respect.

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