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## **Nationalism: The Opium of Confused Conservatives**

No doubt but that the title of this article will initially be rather infuriating to many conservatives. This is because too many Americans today equate nationalism with patriotism. These words do not carry the same meaning and when applied to national politics they produce very different results as it relates to the preservation of personal liberty, limited government, and respect for the constitution.

The inability of conservatives to distinguish between nationalism and patriotism was driven home recently when a local DJ on WWL (“Rush Radio” New Orleans) morning program made a vicious attack on Representative Ron Paul. The DJ accused a Ron Paul supporter of being “lead around by the nose” by CNN! The insulting manner in which Ron Paul’s supporter was handled would be understandable if the DJ was a liberal/progressive/socialist but the DJ claims to be a true blue conservative whose main interest is to find a Republican presidential candidate who will be able to defeat Obama.

The DJ’s main complaint against Ron Paul is that he was an isolationist who wants America to retreat back within our borders and leave the rest of the world alone, thereby allowing extremists to ultimately destroy ancient cities and civilizations in the mid-east—without America’s footprint all over the world, according to this logic, evil will triumph and be free to do horrible things to lands, cities, and people far away. This DJ views America as a force for “good,” ready to compel others to abide by our dictates or else suffer the military consequences.

While it might be relatively easy to define “force” it becomes more problematic to define “good.” The DJ’s definition of “good” would most likely be radically different from Obama’s definition, whose definition would be different from John McCain’s definition, whose definition would be different from Sarah Palin’s definition etc, etc., etc. Using the DJ’s standard America would be a force for good all over the world but the definition of good would have to change every time America changed presidents or the control of Congress or maybe even every time the Federal Supreme Court changed!

Nationalism celebrates force; it frolics in force; international status is nurtured and grows with force. Force expands the nation’s control over its own people every time it is successfully applied to an enemy; therefore pure nationalists seek enemies to destroy. Nationalism looks beyond the nation’s borders for opportunities to expand the nation’s influence—be it economic, ideological, commercial and/or military influence or, when the opportunity allows, not just influence but absolute control. Notice that this new “nation of force” will ultimately look and act more like an empire than a simple nation.

Patriotism, on the other hand, is local; it looks inward to a community with local traditions. Patriots see the nation as a means to protect local communities that compose the nation. Patriots are members of local communities and their primary desire is simply to be “let alone.” Patriots view people residing outside of the nation’s borders as possible trading partners in which they can engage in voluntary exchange—an exchange in which both sides gain. Patriots rally to the flag to defend the nation because the nation is necessary to preserve and defend local communities. Whereas

nationalists need and ardently seek to create and expand a strong centralized supreme and ultimately oppressive national government. Patriots, on the other hand, seek to create and maintain local self-government that allows for maximum liberty (i.e. minimum taxation, regulation, etc.) for we the people at home in our local communities.

This sense of “minding our own business” or being “let alone” can be seen in John Adam’s warning that America should “... not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy.”; or Thomas Jefferson’s admonishment that America seeks to be “... friends with all nations—entangling alliances with none.”; or George Washington’s advice to avoid “foreign entanglements”. Nationalists, DJs and others, seek to paint this traditional American view as somehow being un-American.

The truth is that personal liberty, limited government, and a constitutional republic cannot exist when nationalists make up the nation’s ruling elite. Nationalists will use any means that will allow them to consolidate power—thereby taking power/control away from “we the people” at the local level and transferring it to the centralized, nationalist, (big) government.

At this point one can almost hear the nationalists howling, “How would you isolationists deal with the 9/11 attack on America?” First, we are not isolationists—we want to engage in voluntary exchange/commerce with people all over the world. We have no desire to build a wall around America in order to shut ourselves off from the world. Nationalists use the term “isolationists” the same way PC liberals use the word “racists”—they both use their magic words to shut down civil discourse because they have no logical argument. Secondly, we knew who attacked us on 9/11, we knew where their headquarters were and we knew what country was providing them aid and comfort. An ultimatum should have been given—“Hand over the leaders and all of their followers in your country within 48 hours or else.” The “or else” would consist of a mushroom cloud over the training camps and every military and terrorist instillation in the country. Nationalists would argue that we could not afford to do such a thing but according to nationalists we could afford thousands of American soldiers dead and wounded (soldiers drawn primarily from mid to lower income families) and costing a trillion dollars at a time when families in our local communities are suffering from a failing economy. All it would take is one example and no other country would allow such organizations to operate in their country! But one quick and overwhelming strike would not serve the primary purpose of nationalists—to increase the national footprint around the world while restricting liberty at home—all in the name of national security!

This is a warning to all conservatives who believe in the primacy of personal liberty, limited government and constitutionalism. Nationalists of both political parties never allow a crisis to pass—they know how to rattle the saber in order to rally patriots around the flag and then convince limited government conservatives to “violate the free market in order to save it” or to surrender just a little privacy in order to be more secure. Yet each year the free market is less free, more regulated and less able to grow a productive, jobs producing, economy; government has its hand deeper in our pockets (and now even in other private personal places); and the only thing that is secure is the system of supreme federalism that provides nationalists ruling elites of both political parties with almost unlimited perks, privileges, and power—all paid for by an increasingly oppressed and once free people.

After the unfortunate close of the War for Southern Independence, General Robert E. Lee predicted that if a system of federal supremacy eventually governed America, the country would become “aggressive abroad and oppressive at home.” Is the current system of supreme federalism and the domestic and international policies it enforces conducive of personal liberty, limited government, and a constitutional republic? Or have we rejected traditional patriotism and converted to nationalism and in the name of national security become aggressive abroad and oppressive at home? Do we have a right to be the world’s international policeman in order to force the world to be “good” according to our temporary definition of “good”? And when nationalists answer yes—the next question is: “Can we afford it?”