

War and Terrorism



Why has there been a resurgence of ethnic conflict and nationalism at a time when the world is becoming more unified and interconnected?

There is a lot of work to do with this question before you are ready to proceed with an essay. There are actually four explicit claims here: 1) that there has been a resurgence of ethnic conflict; 2) that there has been a resurgence of nationalism; 3) that the world is becoming more unified; and 4) that the world is becoming more interconnected. Beyond this, there are some implicit assumptions: first, that ethnic conflict and nationalism are very similar or related phenomena; and second, that an association between the strength of ethnic and national claims and the degree of global integration is counterintuitive. It is being suggested that we ought to expect such sentiments to decline with the onset of globalization. In short, we have a puzzle.

Nationalist movements are discussed in the chapter on pages 1034-9. This section will give you a skeleton, but this is such a wide-ranging question that you will need to draw upon additional material from elsewhere. The treatment of ethnic integration and ethnic conflict in Chapter 15 is indispensable, as it not only looks at potential models for multi-ethnic societies but also introduces instances where such aspirations have fallen short and genocide has resulted. Equally important are the maps and text dealing with global migration, as physical movement is one very obvious manifestation of a more interconnected world. You will also need some broad appreciation of the forces of globalization. A minimum would be the section from chapter 13 on global inequalities, but returning to the introductory discussion in Chapter 4 would be preferable.



Setting out some definitions of ethnicity and nationalism is a useful start, but to get some purchase on the question you have to go much further and address the apparent puzzle alluded to above. This requires some discipline in your writing and intelligent use of examples. The text gives you numerous, albeit brief, examples (such as Sudan, Nigeria). There is also an excellent discussion of three instances of 'nations without states' (pp. 1036-40) which should be helpful.

Tackling the link between globalization and nationalism requires some imaginative thinking. On the one hand, inter-connectedness does not guarantee greater unity. Global communications and greater exposure to the ideas and practices of others may only succeed in drawing our attention to things of which we deeply disapprove or that we find distasteful. The spread of an increasingly homogeneous and overwhelmingly Anglo-American global culture can act as a starting point for renewed pride in 'local' national traditions, not least in terms of language. Thus 'the global' acts as something for 'the local' to kick against.

There are also unexpected ironies. Globalization may not unify us all, but it does widely disseminate information about world political events, allowing remote ethnic nationalisms to become globally supportable causes. What it gives with one hand, however, it can take away with the other. Globalization is widely seen as bringing the gift of modernity to state after state. Many modernization campaigns have been accompanied by attempts at nation-building, for example in multi-ethnic India since the 1940s. Iraq is, of course, the most vivid and recent example of the intractable problems often faced by would-be nation builders.