

# Roth: Is there a price for nationalism?

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## Is there a price for nationalism?

This year we have seen perhaps the best of nationalism and perhaps the worst of it. From the 2016 Olympic Games and the American pride and patriotic togetherness they created, to the political rhetoric at play in this year's presidential election calling for an America First approach to government policy, Americans are being asked to rally to an us-versus-them mentality.

But at what cost? And who is the “us” and who is the “them”?

Nationalism has been defined as: a shared group feeling in the significance of a geographical and sometimes demographic region seeking independence for its culture or ethnicity that holds that group together.

The problem seems to be, unlike cheering for the many diverse faces (culturally, religiously, racially) of these many talented American athletes, as they wear the same red, white and blue, nationalism in the political sphere seems to be more about division than prideful multiplication.

The danger of nationalism in America, the world’s most diverse country ever, is that the underlying nationalistic belief that citizenship should be limited to one religion (Christianity via Muslim ban) or one race (Caucasian via immigrants or “Mexican rapists”) is that it has most always led to the weakening of American interests at home and abroad.

For example, the America First approach to foreign policy, begun in the late 1930s, which encouraged inaction in world conflicts generally, and the appeasement of Adolf Hitler specifically, swept the country, allowing Hitler to sweep across much of Europe. Once America joined the war effort, the severity of the lives lost was much more than it would have been if America and allies had engaged sooner, with over 60 million people killed, including 419,400 dead Americans. It became the deadliest military conflict in world history and included horrific crimes against humanity and war-related famine taking the lives of millions more civilians. Most scholars would suggest that nationalism at home led to worse ultimate results at American expense.

And in economic terms, the idea of nationalism can also cause unintended negative consequences leading to economic isolation and decline. As one or more candidates for high office brag about ripping up trade deals, bringing back jobs and rigged

economics, these slogans ignore the American reality that our economy has benefited from a global market. Yes, we often import more goods and services than we would like, but we also export a huge amount of American products to the world, often worth much more than the cheaper items we import.

Yes, these are complicated issues and yes it's right to do more to strengthen our economy at home, but we must require more from our presidents than empty rhetoric, based in fear and misplaced cries of nationalism. Instead, America has always done better when we claim our place in the world, not shy away from it or withdraw; when we stand strong as a beacon of inclusive hope, freedom and liberty for a diverse culture, which in turn attracts the best of the world to America's golden door.

*"Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

Please vote. And please vote for the kind of America, where its diverse people fight for a proud country and earn the gold medal on the world stage, not the type of America where divisive nationalism shrinks our future and removes us further from that more perfect union.

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