
Nationalism in Theodore Roosevelt's Speech National Duties

Theodore Roosevelt's speech "National Duties" calls for nationalism and unity, as it says that each individual must work hard and that individuals must work together. Furthermore, it works to motivate our nation by using two ideas – what a nation may leave behind and how a nation should conduct itself. The speech itself, although given while he was Vice President, accurately describes what his actions as president were, whether it be regarding nationalism, personal matters, or foreign diplomacy. His ideology of how a nation should act, seen in the phrase "speaking softly and carrying a big stick" works to motivate many, including our current military, because it focuses on civility backed with power. This idea of leadership style, combined with looking at what Theodore Roosevelt did during his presidency, is very similar to Trump's way of leading our nation, although they came into office with different political experience.

The speech aforementioned is very much focused on nationalism and on foreign diplomacy, which foreshadows such focus throughout Theodore Roosevelt's presidency. His clear nationalist emphasis is seen when he mentions that all citizens have a duty and all must work hard, which works to his advantage in getting the attention of the middle, working class and placing himself as a populist, since he says "our first duty is to our own people" (Roosevelt, 1905). By doing so, he quickly gained the attention of the media and the love of the public, which is what allowed him to win another term after becoming President following McKinley's death. After going over nationalist ideals in his speech, he quickly moves on to his most important focal point: foreign affairs and how a nation should conduct itself. One of his most important ideologies regarding foreign politics that can motivate a nation towards greatness is the idea of what one leaves behind, seen when he mentions "whereas the nation that had done nothing leaves nothing behind it, the nation that has done great work really continues, though in changed form, to live forevermore" (Roosevelt, 1905). This idea of eternally living by leaving something behind not only motivates listeners and readers to want our nation to improve and to do something great, but it also leads them to think about what they, themselves, will leave behind and how they can impact others. By adding such a thought into the population, citizens are more likely to want to positively impact their own communities, adding to nationalism, and are likely to want the United States to get involved with foreign affairs to create such a lasting impression. Lastly, and perhaps more importantly, he begins to talk about the "big stick" ideology, which is known as "speak softly and carry a big stick - you will go far" (Roosevelt, 1905). This philosophy behind this is that if a man lacks civility and the ability to be polite, having power or forces would be useless, just like if a man is civil and speaks softly, but has no power or strength, he will likely not be respected. When translating this regarding a nation, the

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“big stick” ideology is that one should be civil and negotiate when possible, but be backed by military forces if necessary. The reasoning behind the idea that this ideology would bring a nation to greatness is that it combines the perfect balance of negotiating and military powers. It says that one should not go straight to war or to using power, but that a nation should still have the ability to do so if civility does not work. If one has any doubts regarding the possibility of such an ideology working to better a nation, one simply has to look at Roosevelt’s accomplishments to see what he was able to achieve using the “big stick” idea.

Theodore Roosevelt’s leadership focus on foreign policy and nationalism strongly resembled Donald Trump’s current leadership style. However, there are some fundamental differences, including their political experiences. Although both men came from wealthy families, Trump came into office with no political experience whatsoever, while Roosevelt had been in the military, was a Governor, and had been Vice President to McKinley. Both gained the people’s support by following a populist approach and being followed in the media. Both presidents believed in the idea of nationalism as a founding aspect of leadership, and throughout their populist view, said that they wanted to help minorities. They both valued hard work and labor, which is why their campaigns focused on the idea of improving the working class’ lives and on putting the citizens first. Both Roosevelt and Trump also strongly focused on foreign affairs. Roosevelt made sure that the Panama Canal was built, secured a treaty to end the Russo-Japanese war, pressured Germany to respect the Monroe Doctrine, intervened when Venezuela had a debt crisis, reached the Gentleman’s Agreement with Japan regarding immigration, and sent the Great White Fleet around the world on a goodwill tour. Meanwhile, Trump has been able to continue the war against ISIS, has started more sanctions on North Korea’s export and import business, pressured China to reduce any banking ties to North Korea, called for Pakistan to combat terrorism within its own borders, and is working on rebuilding the military. This similarity in their focus on the importance of the United States being involved with foreign affairs shows their common leadership attributes. When it comes to their personalities, Roosevelt could often be loud and publicly mock his adversaries, something that Trump is known for doing, which is why both men got so much attention from the media. However, behind the idea of foreign policy, nationalism, and media-usage, Roosevelt and Trump had different ideas when it came to running a country. Roosevelt was a big fan of environmental conservation, which is why he added national forests and land for public use, while Trump refuses to believe in global warming. Although Trump’s campaign said he wanted to help the working class, he refuses to raise the minimum wage, while Roosevelt wanted to create a high minimum, living wage for all.

Although Roosevelt and Trump had similar campaign attitudes, thoughts regarding nationalism, and wants for foreign affairs, there are some crucial differences that show that their leadership styles are similar, but are not the same. Roosevelt’s “big stick” ideology, which can lead a nation to greatness if handled correctly, can be seen throughout his foreign diplomacy, and although Trump has used a very similar approach, he speaks a bit louder and is more willing to

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