Globalism vs Nationalism  
Resolution Overview by Chris Ostertag



**This is one of FOUR introductory articles** released to Monument Members at the beginning of the year. These are meant to be foundational, informational and helpful to gaining an understanding of the new resolution. Release dates are:

1. Resolution Overview (7/3/17)
2. Wording of the Resolution (7/10/17)
3. Philosophies of the Topic (7/17/17)
4. Applications (7/24/17)

This article isn’t meant to be a one-stop shop, nor is it meant to be a detailed exposition of specific arguments and cases. Instead, consider this your starting point. The next few pages are your organizational nexus, a systematic compendium of *possibilities*. As the season develops, the crucible of competition will reveal that some of these possibilities are more viable than others. My goal here is to help you see the resolution as a complete entity, robust and complex, situated in a vibrant context that affords numerous opportunities for compelling argumentation.

Of course, arguments don’t exist in a vacuum. Ideas have consequences, and they frequently come tethered to broad, cultural narratives laden with the force of centuries of history and philosophy. Your task is to create clarity from an abyss of obscurity.

# Meaning, bias, and algebra

Let’s kick things off by running our resolutional terms through a venerable bastion of philosophical specificity: google.com. The Oxford-sourced definitions:

Nationalism: “patriotic feeling, principles, or efforts.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

Globalism: “the operation or planning of economic and foreign policy on a global basis.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

This is potentially the biggest obstacle to debating the resolution effectively: as they come, nationalism and globalism are at least potentially different *kinds* of things – think of one as an *x* term and the other as a *y* term – that need to be made comparable before they can be compared.

Making them comparable requires two things: 1) interpreting them as a specific kind of thing, and 2) removing definitional biases. Google lists patriotism, xenophobia, and jingoism as synonyms of nationalism; it lists precisely zero synonyms for globalism. Apparently nationalism is about as evil as Voldemort and globalism is an arcane type of trade policy. The more you know.

This 30-second exercise in absurdity reveals a salient difficulty for case-writers. Nationalism and globalism – as terms – can refer to a number of different things: everything from emotional constructs to policy approaches to ideologies. It’s critical that you interpret nationalism and globalism as the same type of thing (either they’re *both* ideologies, or *both* policy priorities, or *both* emotional constructs, or *both* flying spaghetti monsters, etc.) and fight hard to reject definitions that portray *either* as obligatory or evil. Comparing *x* terms to *y* terms when x = x + 10 is never going to end well. Don’t try this at home; this is a proven SAT-score killer. Convert both to the same type of term and start them on unbiased footing, just like your 9th-grade algebra teacher taught you.

Here is a case-writing tip: glancing at dictionary.com or Merriam Webster will reveal globalism’s ideological overtones, and different sources will cast nationalism and globalism as positive or negative. Try to find clear, ideologically-neutral definitions for these terms. DO NOT use generic definitions this year; it’ll bite you every time, because these words hold more meanings, denotative and connotative, than any in recent LD history.

Let’s get you started on this morass by stepping back and looking at a few of the more plausible interpretations of these terms.

# Interpretations and details

## Option One: Ideology and Action

Nationalism may be understood as a set of related beliefs involving the prioritization of *a country’s own* people, interests, and values. Globalism may be understood as a set of related beliefs involving the prioritization of *the world’s* people, interests, and values. These are exceptionally sparse, minimal definitions – that’s necessary, because the ideologies referred to by these terms are extremely broad and vigorously debated.

Some kind of nationalism motivates both soldiers who die for their country and terrorists who slaughter innocents and broadcasts the murder on Youtube. If nationalism means supporting one’s nation, then it could involve propping up a liberal democracy like the United States, a reactionary dictatorship like North Korea, or a savage theocracy like the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. Those differences in location can affect whether we perceive nationalism as a positive good or a negative evil.

Differences in objective are also relevant: nationalism can be peaceful or violent, inclusive or exclusive, broad or narrow. Some nationalists prefer delineating national boundaries on racial or theological bases, living with those who they look like and agree with; others want to build nations characterized by diversity. Nationalism means prioritizing one’s nation and pursuing its good; that understanding requires us to figure out what counts as “good.”

These objectives may be pursued with differing degrees of intensity: a nationalist who wants to preserve a predominantly Islamic nation could choose mild policies like immigration caps and religiously-informed secular law, or the rather more dramatic option of decapitating dissenters. Nationalism means looking out for one’s country; depending on who you ask, looking out could mean a multitude of different things pursued by means ranging from political methods like democratic change, judicial activism, and executive action to apolitical methods like protest, culture war, or physical violence.

For globalism, these distinctions add a necessary component of comparative valuation. This is fancy economics language that just means globalism asks us to create a hierarchy and say some things are worth more than others.

While nationalism at least *can* be construed as making a pretty weak claim – “my nation is valuable” – globalism requires something a little stronger. Globalism entails not only a belief that “my world is valuable” but also the implicit suggestion that – on some level – its interests should be prioritized over specific countries’ interests. Globalism can refer to the valuation of lots of different things: a globalist might value the planet (an ecological claim), its people and their rights (a humanitarian claim), its economic state (a relative financial claim), or even its political or ideological unity (a cultural claim). Globalism can mean all or none of these preferences, but it will always contain a common thread: the idea that – in some ways – individual nations’ interests should be subordinated to the interest of the whole. That can manifest itself in several ways: trade policy, NGOs, foreign aid, or moving portions of sovereignty to supra-national organizations like the EU or UN. Or it might manifest itself as entirely apolitical, instead referring to actions and beliefs on an individual scale.

## Option Two: Emotion, Narrative, and Application

Nationalism and globalism don’t have to be coherent ideologies manifested by large actors like governments; they can be sentiments held and fought for by real people, like patriotism and compassion or xenophobia and hatred. Such an interpretation of the resolution will likely gain traction by discussing individual applications. For nationalism: the peaceful Muslim diplomat or violent KKK terrorist; the stalwart U.S. marine who fought on Iwo Jima or the nefarious CIA interrogator at Guantanamo Bay; the cruel SS guards at Auschwitz, the underground Al Qaeda operative in a Miami sleeper cell, or the courageous Navy Seal team that eliminated Bin Laden. These individuals – for better or worse – held an idea about the nation they served, and those ideas generated strong emotions and actions.

For globalism, individuals like the cosmopolitan socialite, the activist film and music producer, the transatlantic businesswoman, the Norway-based activist fighting hunger in South Sudan, or the megalomaniacal dictator who crushes his nation to fund international ambition come to mind. These can be cast as heroes or villains. International business might provide critical products that improve quality of life, or it might squeeze domestic industry and kill jobs for hardworking Americans. Foreign aid might build stronger nations in critical diplomatic zones, preventing war and creating future trade partners that produce massive returns, or it might be a hefty tax increase that shrinks the beleaguered American middle class, abusing government power and purpose by helping other countries before our own.

These narratives are all plausible and can be presented as the positive or negative results of one or the other side of the resolution. Run applications for emotional appeal, or argue that the resolutional actor is individuals, not governments, and that individual people should value nationalism or globalism because doing so would promote a virtuous citizenry or compassionate action or international peace or domestic tranquility.

# Conclusion

Your judge will have cultural and political influences that will shape her views. Your judge might enter the room thinking nationalism means building a wall, but she also might think it means building America into a haven for diversity by welcoming lots of races, religions, sexual orientations, etc. Your judge might enter the room thinking globalism means the UN is coming for his guns and parental rights, but he might also think it means worldwide free trade.

Be aware of these narratives; run clear definitions and resolutional analyses; be sure that your interpretation is unambiguous and give your judge good reasons to accept it. Good luck, and have fun!

1. “Define nationalism.” Accessed 6/20/17. <https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=define+nationalism&spf=1498420090498> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Define globalism.” Accessed 6/20/17 <https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=define+globalism&spf=1498420071330> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)