



Perspectives on Nationalism

Introduction

Ever since I entered Parliament in January, people have been asking me: Why have you gone into politics? As in: "Are you nuts?" No, I'm not nuts.

This is my country, after all.

As a child, I played in the barns of my uncle's dairy farm in Richmond, Québec; I swam off the rocks at my aunt's place in Georgian Bay; when I was a young teacher out in British Columbia, I remember sailing up Howe Sound and watching the sun burn the mist off the ocean; as a father, I rocketed down the Kicking Horse River in a raft with my children; as a husband, I stood with my wife among the graves of the Hungarian pioneers—her people—who settled the country near Esterhazy, Saskatchewan. This is my Canada. These are the memories that made me who I am. This is the river that runs through me, as it runs through you. This is the place that defined my political allegiances. This is the place I call home.¹

**—Michael Ignatieff, "Canada in the World,"
30 March 2006 at the University of Ottawa**

Member of Parliament Michael Ignatieff spoke these words shortly after running for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada. Like Ignatieff's words above, *Perspectives on Nationalism* asks readers to reflect on their feelings about their country and how they came to hold them. Quotations expressing similar ideas about nationalism held by dictators, politicians, teachers, students, and writers of many nationalities are explored in this book. Your task will be to distinguish between the different perspectives and points of view, as well as to form your own answers to inquiry questions on the topic of nationalism. The Key Issue under investigation is: ***To what extent should we embrace nationalism?***

¹ From: http://www.michaelignatieff.ca/about/speech/2006_canada_in_the_world.aspx.

So, what are our understandings of *nationalism*, and why should an entire textbook be devoted to its study? You might remember Molson Canada's patriotic ad campaign featuring a rant and an anthem based on the words: "I AM CANADIAN!" This rant sought to dispel various stereotypes of Canadians while promoting aspects about which many Canadians are proud. You have probably also heard stories of people travelling in Europe choosing to sew a small Canadian flag onto their coats because they believe that everyone respects Canadians and treats them well. Both of these examples refer in small ways to nationalism and its symbols. Nationalistic feelings can affect loyalty and identity. To what extent should we embrace nationalism as we enter the complex, globalized world of the 21st century? How does nationalism shape who we are as citizens of Canada? How does it affect your loyalties and your identity?

Nationalism, in both historical and contemporary contexts, can evoke powerful responses. Some abhor the whole concept, suggesting it is responsible for genocide, human rights violations, and dozens of armed conflicts in the world today. Others point to the role of nationalism in shaping nation-states, such as France and the United States, which have provided the foundation for our understanding of

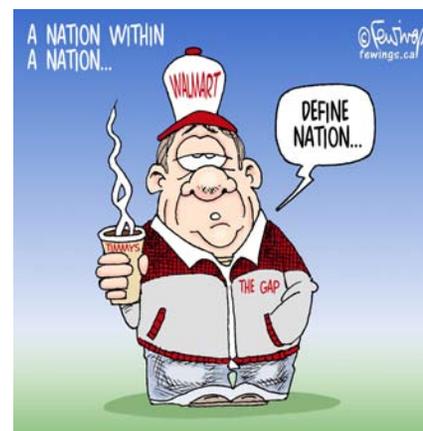


Figure I-1 ▲

What comment does the cartoon make about belonging to a nation? What perspectives are evident in the cartoon? What answer could you give to the figure in the cartoon?



Figure I-2 ◀

You will consider these and other questions about nationalism throughout your study of this textbook.

rights. Still others oppose the concept, saying that the time when the world could benefit from nationalism is over, and our concerns—such as poverty and environmental issues—require a more global and co-operative internationalism. Yet others agree with the pursuit of nationalism, citing benefits such as national security and a sense of belonging as desirable outcomes of nationalism. These different understandings result in a variety of responses to the question: *To what extent should we embrace nationalism?*



◀ **Figure I-3**

She's toured with Canada Council's Sonic Weave. She's been described as "the Jimi Hendrix of throat singing" and as "humble, alluring, terrifying ... possibly the most unique performer of truly traditional, Canadian music in our country."² Tanya Tagaq of Cambridge Bay (Ikaluktutiak), Nunavut, on the south coast of Victoria Island, has become famous for blending traditional Inuit throat singing with electronic beats and melodies. Of her work, she says:

*I am not trying to represent the North. This is a completely selfish expression. I'm from Nunavut, so it's a big part of me ... People ask me if my record sounds like the North. Of course, society and art reflect the land around it. But I still don't think so. I think it's what I sound like.*³

Do you think all Inuit share the same relationship with *place* as Tanya Tagaq? What is your relationship with the place you come from? Your community? Your nation? Is this relationship shared by newcomers and established residents alike?

Points of View and Perspectives

Perspectives on Nationalism follows an inquiry approach to study a variety of *points of view* and *perspectives*. Recall that points of view represent individual opinions and are based on an individual's experiences, while perspectives represent beliefs and values that a group of people holds to be true, based on their collective identity and experiences. In other words, a perspective is broader than a point of view. A perspective represents a worldview and can reflect the outlook of a particular group based on age, culture, economics, faith, or language.

² Tanya Tagaq Gillis Media Kit, p. 5. <http://www.tanyatagaq.com/TagaqPressKit.pdf>

³ Liisa Ladouceur, "Tanya Tagaq: Transforming the past," Winter 2006. http://www.socan.ca/jsp/en/word_music/Winter06_TanyaTagaq.jsp.

Analyzing a number of points of view and perspectives on nationalism will help you develop your own skills for expressing your point of view and recognizing your perspective. You will gain a more comprehensive understanding of nationalism than you would have if you had studied it from a single perspective.

Skill Path

Each chapter of this book includes a Skill Path, which is designed to help you pursue the inquiry questions in the chapter. Broadly speaking, this feature develops the following skills:

- thinking like a researcher
- thinking to make decisions
- thinking critically
- thinking like a historian
- thinking creatively
- thinking like a geographer
- thinking to solve problems
- working as a team
- acting like a citizen

Developing these skills will allow you to have a greater understanding of nationalism. Just as importantly, these skills have cross-disciplinary applications, so you can use them as you study science, math, language arts, and other subjects. And lastly, these skills are intended to help in preparing you to be an active, responsible citizen of Canada.

Issues-Based Study

This book is divided into four parts, each of which addresses a Main Issue in the program of studies. In turn, tackling the four Main Issues will help you address the Key Issue in this course: *To what extent should we embrace nationalism?* Each part is further divided into four or five chapters, each with its own Chapter Issue. Within each chapter, there are sections with focused Questions for Inquiry related to the Chapter Issue. As you work through the text, you will encounter features—such as Voices, Investigations, and Ideas and Opinions—that will help you clarify your own point of view.

Figure I-4

Each of the four Main Issues for this textbook is supported within the chapters by further Chapter Issues and Questions for Inquiry. You will explore larger concepts, such as identity and national interest, understandings of nationalism, national unity, internationalism, ultranationalism, and citizenship through examples set in Canadian, as well as in global and historical, contexts.

