



# WATCH & LEARN: POLITICS & HISTORY

## MANUFACTURED CONSENT: NATIONAL IDENTITY

### NATIONAL IDENTITY IS MADE UP (5:33 min)

#### VIDEO Script & Vocabulary (page 1 of 2/v32356)

### ADVANCED LEVEL (C1) AND ABOVE

- ◊ Read the script and note new vocabulary
- ◊ Write three sentences using new vocabulary
- ◊ Prepare for the discussion questions

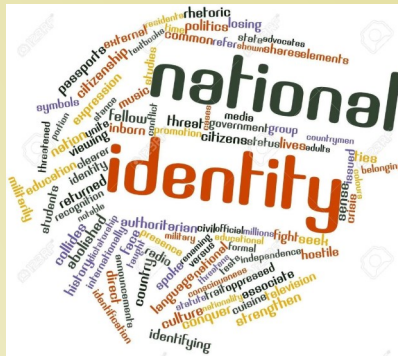
**Starting Off**

*Nationality feels powerful, especially today. But the idea of identifying with millions of strangers just based on borders is relatively new. We explain why it was invented — and how it changed the world.*

- 1 Read the **Video Script** below. The words in **bold** are defined in the **Vocabulary** section. Look up any new words in a dictionary.
- 2 Go to the **Your Turn** section at the end of this document. Practice using new words and expressions from the video script to prepare for your next class.
- 3 Look at the **Discussion Questions** and prepare your responses for the next class.

### Video Script:

**Narrator:** Nationality feels so powerful. We fight for our country. We cheer for it. We **draw** our values from it. It's a big way many of us describe who we are, but it didn't used to be. Up until really recently, our identities came from stuff immediately around us — clans, religion, family. If you think about it, nationality is **weird**, the idea that you identify with millions of **strangers** just based on **borders**. That's because national identity is **made up**.



“U.S.A.! U.S.A.!” “And then [INAUDIBLE] scores!” National identity is the myth that built the modern world, but it also **primes** us for dictatorship, racism, & genocide. And today, we're fighting over whether to keep that kind of national identity. To understand why, you have to see how new this idea is.

#### I. The Truth About National Identity

So you think you know what France is. It's a place united by the French language and the French ethnicity, right? But as of the French Revolution, half of the people there could not speak French. Only one in eight spoke it well. These are the languages that people spoke, just a **patchwork** that didn't **line up** with borders.

We know from modern genetics that ethnicity didn't line up with borders, either. National identity became the idea that language, race, and borders should add up to a country. Nations can't admit they're made up, so they invent a national mythology that says they've been like this forever.

#### II. Where National Identity Comes From

The modern era brought four big changes that led to national identity.

- People moved in big numbers from the country to the city, and they needed a common language.
- New technology, like newspapers and trains, made countries feel smaller and more interconnected.
- War was changing into this **vast**, all-consuming thing. Countries needed people that cared so much about their nation, they'd fight for it in huge numbers.
- Governments were challenging religion for power. Here's Napoleon taking his crown from the Pope to crown himself emperor. It was a **big deal**.

*Video Script continued on next page...*

### Discussion Questions:

- ◊ What are some of the symbols of your country's national identity?
- ◊ Do you think these symbols evolved naturally, deliberately or resulted from some combination of the two?
- ◊ Why are these symbols important and will they persist?

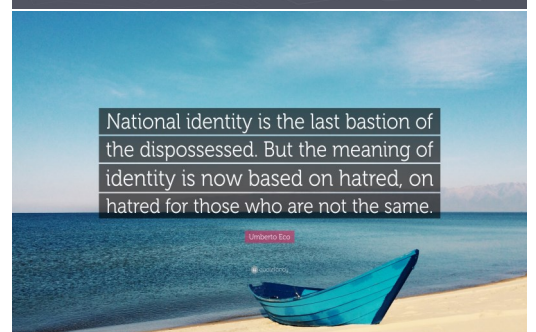
### Vocabulary:

- **draw** - to derive to one's benefit from having gathered information or resources from a specified subject, group or area
- **weird** - strange; bizarre
- **stranger** - a person that is unknown or with whom one is unacquainted
- **border** - boundary between countries or other geographic features
- **made up** - invented; fabricated; ie a "made up" story
- **primes** - prepare or lay the groundwork for; create a receptivity to and idea
- **patchwork** - a thing composed of many different elements so as to appear variegated
- **line up** - correspond to; match up to
- **vast** - very great in size, amount, degree, intensity, or especially in extent or range
- **big deal** - something of special importance

*Vocabulary continued on next page...*

### 4. Symbols of national identity

- ▶ national flags and national anthems are symbols of national identity
- ▶ they can be religious or political
- ▶ deep emotions are aroused





- ◊ Read the script and note new vocabulary
- ◊ Write three sentences using new vocabulary
- ◊ Prepare for the discussion questions

### Video Script continued...

These four things **sparked** an era of revolutions in democracy, but they also **unleashed** ideas of nationalism, militarism, and leader worship. People came to see their countries as extensions of themselves. This new identity meant that a nation got its authority, not from the government, or the King, or God, but from the people. This changed the world, but it also changed how we think.

#### III. How National Identity Destroys the World

National identity changes our reality. We experience whatever happens to our nation as if it happened to us.

“Rocky IV” can tell us a lot about what national identity does to our brains. “The Russian towers above the American.” A 1994 study tested the attitudes of Americans watching the movie. It includes an amazing **footnote**: All 216 participants were women because, quote, “There were no males who had not seen ‘Rocky IV.’”

Anyway — When Rocky **beat** his Russian opponent, participants who strongly identified as American felt a boost in **self-esteem**. When they were shown re-edited footage to make it look like Rocky lost, they felt a drop in self-esteem and they became likelier to hold negative views about Russians. But when they said something bad about Russians, their self-esteem recovered.

When we feel threatened, it makes us want to humiliate and dominate the outsider. That dynamic doesn’t just apply to individuals, it can apply to whole societies. This can drive war, itself.

One study found that any country whose team plays in the World Cup becomes likelier to launch attacks **abroad**. That hostility also **plays out** against minorities and migrants who don’t fit the national myth. It only took a century for these problems of modern nationalism to **culminate** into World War II, something so terrible, it convinced the world to try a new kind of national identity.

#### IV. A New Kind of National Identity

(SINGING) “Great American melting pot.” This model of identity is based on an idea from the United States. Anyone can be American if you share values like freedom and hard work.

**Alicia Silverstone from the movie “Clueless”:** “May I please remind you that it does not say **RSVP** on the Statue of Liberty.”

**Narrator:** It’s a **stirring** idea, but it never completely worked.

**Random Trump Supporters:** “Your race is your nation.” “If you don’t speak English and don’t contribute, get out!”

**Narrator:** The belief that being American is really about race, religion, and language also runs throughout history. So what makes a country? Which identity should matter? That fight defines so much of the world right now and it’s intensified. You see it in the **backlash** to the European Union.

**Nigel Farage, Former UKIP leader:** “We’ve got our country back.”

**Narrator:** You see it in how Donald Trump began his campaign.

**Donald Trump:** “We either have a country or we don’t, and it’s that simple.”

**Narrator:** The national myth is powerful. We fight for a common past and a common future. It isn’t real, but that doesn’t matter. We’ve been taught for so long that this is who we are. Building a world based on shared values really means creating a new myth. But that only works if it feels as powerful as the last one.

### Vocabulary continued...

- **spark** - stir to activity; incite
- **unleash** - free from or as if from a leash : let loose
- **footnote** - one that is a relatively subordinate or minor part (as of an event, work, or field); an often minor, but interesting detail to history
- **beat** - overcome; defeat
- **self-esteem** - a confidence and satisfaction in oneself; self-respect
- **abroad** - beyond the boundaries of one’s country : in or to a foreign country
- **play out** - unfold; unreel; transpire
- **culminate** - reach the highest or a climactic or decisive point
- **RSVP** - respond to an invitation; please reply
- **stirring** - rousing; inspiring
- **backlash** - a strong adverse reaction (as to a recent political or social development)

### Your Turn! Using new vocabulary is the best way to learn and remember it.

1 Choose three words or expressions from the video that are new to you and write a sentence using each one in your notebook.