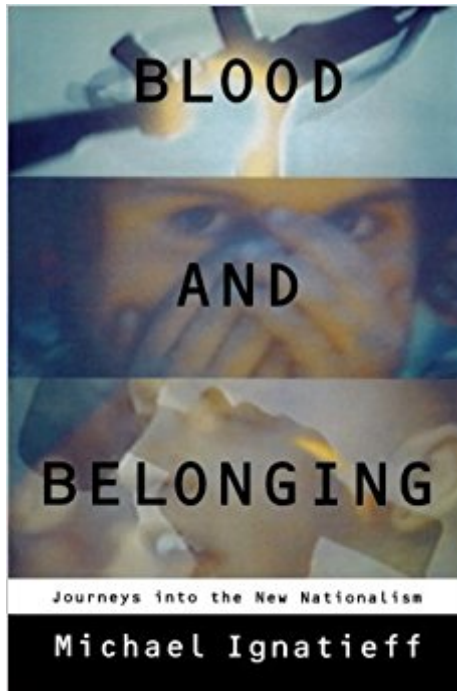




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Blood And Belonging: Journeys Into The New Nationalism



Synopsis

Until the end of the Cold War, the politics of national identity was confined to isolated incidents of ethnic strife and civil war in distant countries. Now, with the collapse of Communist regimes across Europe and the loosening of the Cold War's clamp on East-West relations, a surge of nationalism has swept the world stage. In *Blood and Belonging*, Ignatieff makes a thorough examination of why blood ties--in places as diverse as Yugoslavia, Kurdistan, Northern Ireland, Quebec, Germany, and the former Soviet republics--may be the definitive factor in international relations today. He asks how ethnic pride turned into ethnic cleansing, whether modern citizens can lay the ghosts of a warring past, why--and whether--a people need a state of their own, and why armed struggle might be justified. *Blood and Belonging* is a profound and searching look at one of the most complex issues of our time.

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Customer Reviews

To understand the current upsurge of nationalist tensions, Ignatieff (*The Needs of Strangers*) traveled through war-torn former Yugoslavia, then to reunited Germany, Ukraine, Quebec, Kurdistan and Northern Ireland. In a compelling mix of interviews, history, vivid impressions and sharp reportage, he argues that nationalism can be a constructive, welding force, but that, in its extreme, authoritarian form, it serves as a collective escape from reality, whose adherents, inhabiting a delusional realm of noble causes and tragic sacrifice, strait jacket themselves and other groups in the fiction of an irreducible ethnic identity. Ignatieff includes a firsthand look inside a Kurdish guerrilla camp in northern Iraq, a meeting with a neo-Nazi skinhead in Leipzig, an interview with

octogenarian Yugoslav dissident Milovan Djilas (author of *Conversations With Stalin*) and encounters with Cree Indians of northern Canada who, adding their voices to the separatist chorus of French-speaking Quebecois, are demanding self-determination in an effort to stave off encroaching hydroelectric development. Photos. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is an immensely impressive meditation on nationalism in the post-Cold War era. Ignatieff, a journalist and author of both fiction and nonfiction works, demonstrates a sublime understanding of the histories and politics of Croatia and Serbia, Germany, Ukraine, Quebec, Kurdistan, and Northern Ireland as he probes the origins and manifestations of nationalism in these disparate settings. In moving prose that is both powerful and subtle, Ignatieff introduces readers to the intellectual origins of modern nationalism as well as the often brutal results. While this book may lack some of the conceptual dimensions of Daniel Patrick Moynihan's *Pandaemonium* (LJ 5/1/93) or William Pfaff's *The Wrath of Nations: Civilization and the Fury of Nationalism* (LJ 11/15/93), it is nonetheless a remarkable work.- Joseph P. Parsons, Columbia Coll., ChicagoCopyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Even it was written in early 90's, his observation and information in the book still pertains problems at the moment. It is written well, information, and educational particularly in the rise of the different hate groups in the USA. I recommend everybody, particularly for the extremist for racist, religion etc., to read and reread this book.

Detailed, moving, and truly eye opening. There are many "isms". This is a compelling telling of the story, thoughtful and thought provoking.

There is nothing but good that can be said about a theorist who takes arguably the six worse cases in modern statecraft and weaves a theory around them that is so convincing that even the breathe of those seasoned in both international relations theory, and international affairs, is simply taken away.No wonder this book is an international best seller. Mr. Michael Ignatieff is not just an intrepid virtuoso journalist, but he is also a "theorogician:" that is, a theorist and a magician all rolled into one, who lives and writes with the passion and the skills of a poet. He is a "theorogician of nationhood" who turns reality into theories like a magician pulls rabbits out of hats; only this book is no sleight of hand trick: It is the real deal. Never before in a book on international relations has so

much theory been packed in such a neat and economical package. For that alone the book gets ten stars. Here he dissects and deconstructs, the concept of nationalism (the essence of statehood and so much that is seen as modern statecraft) down to its bare essences. Not surprisingly, at root what he finds is mirrored in the bicameral Freudian brain: a two-part psychological structure with a reptilian more primitive brain riding herd over (but calling the shots from well below the moral water line) the more sensible idealistic brain in the neocortex. In international affairs, this author tells us that this piggy-back two-part mental architecture is a generalizable affair best expressed in the form of a concept called nationalism. Nationalism is primarily about identity and belonging. At the bottom level of the national brain there is the ethnic strain of nationalism, one that relies on the primitive instincts of man as he roams about trying to make sense of the Hobbesian world; and as he tries to make that world safe for himself and his tribal concerns. Man desperately needs the protection that belonging affords. The currency of ethnic nationalism is the already familiar list of "Freudian instincts and drivers:" fear, hatred, terror, racism, economic resentments, vengeance, demagoguery, ethnic paranoia and chauvinism, violence, and power arranged as hierarchy-based colonial or racial control. Then there is the upper level of the national brain: the civic strain of nationalism that imagines its higher self as being above its own primitive fears of ethnic chauvinism and disorder. The currency of civic nationalism even in the best cases is more often than not just a cover for what is going on in the deeper more primitive brain. Yet, within its own self-delusion, the civic or cultural brain creates a false consciousness that is shared culturally and then it tells itself that its main concern is with all of the more noble of man's philosophical concepts: the equality of man, human rights, democracy, economic and racial fairness, and the advancement of humankind and civilization in all situations (but of course not at all costs). Yet, if we had any doubt that there is indeed a deeper logic driving this whole affair, then the author's explication of how his theoretical framework gets played out in the six worse case examples of modern statehood will disabuse us of all such doubts: As a moral ideal, nationalism is an ethic of heroic sacrifice, justifying the use of violence in defense of one's own sense of ethnic belonging (i.e., in defense of the existence of the nation itself). Narcissism dictates that small differences will always loom larger in the imagination than they are in reality. And thus the hatred, envy and personal insecurities that demagogues exploit, always has a deeper logic to it: If you can't trust your neighbor (who always looks like he is doing better than you), and if the state won't protect you, then you must trust your own kind and (if necessary) kill your neighbor (and take his stuff or at the very least degrade him). So you see, security, defense, envy, violence, sublimated hatred and vengeance are all part of the same witches brew: they all get stirred up together at the cultural level and get served up as the reality of patriotic

concerns. The demagogue's power thus derives from his skill at reading the undercurrents of the reptilian brain of the nation state and then manipulating popular cultural emotions that lie just beneath the surface. He is always ready to serve up the moral vocabulary of self-exoneration needed to justify any extra-legal action, including genocide. In the end no matter what, the victim is always going to be responsible for whatever happens (i.e., we do) to him. In short, the state is never more than "once removed" from ethnic and cultural vigilantism. The author's six disparate cases do nothing so much as prove that this theory is dead on: that it is the rule rather than the exception in international relations -- (if indeed there are any exceptions at all?) And rather than further rehearse the six examples he uses here, I believe it is more instructive to see how the author's theory also applies to an advance morally self-conscious state like our own, the U.S., just as it does to the author's examples of Yugoslavia, Germany, The Ukraine, Canada, Kurdistan and Ireland. It is no secret that "U.S. nationalism" is primarily ethnic, that is to say, has a very definite racial or color fault line that bisects it morally, politically, economically and even ideologically, ensuring that our nation also suffers (in spades) the same bifurcated brain disease (and architecture) that all other modern states suffer. The U.S. too has a well-documented history of living out of its "false moral consciousness" one with a morality IQ well above what the nation is capable of attaining in its everyday practice. Said differently, the U.S. like Yugoslavia, Germany, Canada, Ukraine, Kurdistan, or Ireland, also has a healthy and very active reptilian brain which drives its ethnic nationalism; one that imagines itself to have a fine moral pedigree of founding fathers and founding documents to keep it more honest than most other nations. But is this a fact, or just another level of U.S. self-delusion? Although I do not care to further belabor the point, however, suffice it to say that with the theoretical machinery this author has provided, it is an elementary exercise to prove that our nation sits comfortably near the top of anyone's list of nations ready to play to its darker reptilian side. Fifty stars.

First published in 1993, Michael Ignatieff's work focuses on nationalism in the post-Cold War world and identifies a crucial trend that is still encompassing every continent: where new nation-states are being forged and born, nationalism is the driving force, the backbone of this trend. It is far from being outdated or irrelevant in any way, and although nationalism brings identity and belonging, Ignatieff argues, it also is a harbinger of bloodshed. To demonstrate, he has taken a personal journey throughout the world and homed in on six separate nations in which nationalism is an issue, perhaps a rampant one. Each of these six case studies is a detailed chapter, a portrait of nationalism in practice. To use Ignatieff's own definition: "As a political doctrine, nationalism is the

belief that the world's peoples are divided into nations, and that each of these nations has the right of self-determination, either as self-governing units within existing nation states or as nation states of their own" (p. 3). Culturally, nationalism provides men and women "with their primary form of belonging" (Ibid.). Morally, it can serve to be an "ethic of heroic sacrifice, justifying the use of violence in the defense of one's nation against enemies, internal or external" (Ibid.). In his Introduction, Ignatieff identifies two types of nationalism: (1) Civic nationalism, in which the predominant belief is that all those within a nation who subscribe to the nation's political creed should be its citizens; and (2) Ethnic nationalism, in contrast, holds to the idea that belonging and attachment to a nation is inherited, not chosen; "It is the national community which defines the individual, not the individuals who define the national community" (p. 5). As the book is from Ignatieff's personal perspective, it becomes all the more interesting; part-memoir, part-journalism. His journey in examining and chronicling instances of nationalism in practice begins in the former Yugoslavia, where Croat and Serb nationalism is the backbone behind the creation of two new Balkan states, and a host of highly-destructive and de-stabilizing warfare, committed in the name of preservation and righteousness of Serbia and Croatia. From there he moves on to a newly-reunified Germany, and shows the reactions of a reunified East and West, two peoples that share a common blood and identity, yet were separated for nearly fifty years as two separate countries. In that time, separate growth of identity, outlook (and nationalism) entrenched itself on both sides...so what is the reaction of the two, who overnight, are back together again, after fifty dark years? Germany is confronted with either turning toward a civic nationalist future, or returning to its ethnic nationalist past while trying to contain a virulent nationalism known to many as Neo-Nazism. A similar scenario can be found in the Ukraine, Ignatieff's third destination, where for the majority of the 20th Century, its people lived under Soviet rule. What happens when autonomy comes, and there remain traces of the old order (ethnic Russian citizens) and the new nation (ethnic Ukrainians)? In the fourth case study, Ignatieff leaves Europe and comes to Canada, where he examines the ongoing issue of separatism in the predominantly French province of Quebec. This example is more outstanding and noteworthy because it is different: Quebec is already part of a vast, highly industrialized nation and practices a great deal of autonomy within the Canadian framework. Why do the Quebecois, obsessed with cultural and linguistic self-determination and distinction, still press for outright autonomy from Canada, even though they face grave prospects, not to mention an existing Aboriginal national voice from within? For the reviewer, a Canadian, this case is all the more relevant because it is close to home. Ignatieff turns to Kurdistan, an illegitimate nation-state where its ethnic group, the Kurds, fight constantly with neighbors and even themselves to create their own

nation; what do they want, and what kind of nationalism is driving this desire? Ending off in Northern Ireland, a land infamous among newsgroups for pipe bombs and terrorists and constantly-rivaling nationalism (Republican and Loyalist), Ignatieff looks at these long-standing and fighting nationalists, Protestant Loyalists who want to remain British versus the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the most violent terrorist group in Western Europe today. Ignatieff ends off with these words: "What's wrong with the world is not nationalism itself...What's wrong is the kind of a nation, the kind of home that nationalists want to create and the means they use to seek their ends" (p. 189). A revealing and rewarding book for everyone, it remains as relevant in this global village as it was almost ten years ago when first written. Once again, Michael Ignatieff has hit gold, and has created a masterpiece in the process.

It has been awhile since I have read this book so I will be unable to give too many details. The one thing I remember is the clarity with which Ignatieff writes and the myths he is able to dispel about some of these troubled countries. Despite the depth of the topic I believe that the book is accessible to the researcher and lay reader alike. His easy writing style makes this an easy book to sit down and enjoy. It was the first one that I had read by Ignatieff but I enjoyed it so much that I went on to read both his other ones. (The Needs of Strangers and The Warriors Code) This one is indeed a rare find. A book that has depth of topic yet easily understandable. An important read for anyone who is even remotely interested in these countries or the impact of modern day nationalism.

While this book was written in 1993 these issues are still relevant in more than an abstract sense. President Putin just left the G-20 meeting early and some suspect it was because of tension over Ukraine. These are Hobbesian environments says Ignatieff. Security is a driving factor.

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