



# DARE

Depolarisation Activism for  
Resilient Europe

## Modern Challenges: NATIONALISM

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# Modern Challenges: Nationalism

## Background (about the DARE project)

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The 'DARE - Depolarization Activism for Resilient Europe' initiative was created to inspire a critical learning space and youth-led and action-oriented dialogue about various contemporary challenges such as polarisation, radicalisation, mental health, human rights violations. The DARE educational materials seek to strengthen active citizenship and European values and promote and amplify youth voices and civic engagement.

For more information, please visit the project website: [www.depolarisation.eu](http://www.depolarisation.eu)

## Lesson Themes

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- 'Modern Challenges' theme - exploring complex, contemporary issues that are not always addressed in the classroom;
- The issue of nationalism (identification with one's own nation and support for its interests, especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations) and the divisive effect it has in our globalised, interconnected world.

## Context

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Complex, contemporary issues are not always addressed in schools throughout Europe. We wish to inspire civic education, sociology, ethics classes, or headteacher's class with meaningful content exploring relevant problems in society in such a way that youth's resilience and critical thinking about these topics is built in the process.

Nationalism is not only a contemporary issue, but it is one whose cyclical resurgence is a cause of concern. In the past years we have witnessed a rise in nationalist attitudes, often fueled by populist political leaders. What role does nationalism serve and how does it affect individuals, groups and society as a whole?

## Goals

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- To raise awareness about the problem of (resurgence of) nationalism in the world;
- To understand the difference between nationalism and patriotism;
- To foster critical thinking in students in the face of nationalist rhetoric and populism.

## Learning Outcomes

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It is expected that as a result of this class, the students will be able to:

- Have a better understanding of nationalism and its effects;
- Identify and recognise nationalist rhetoric, patterns and instances;
- Analyse and articulate in what way patriotism can be fostered as a positive substitute for nationalism in society.

## Material and Equipment Needed

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Laptop  
Beamer/projector  
Speakers  
Internet/wi-fi

## Duration

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45 minutes (one standard lesson)

## Overview of Lesson Activities (Process)

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### Introduction (10 minutes)

The instructor starts the lesson by exploring students' attitudes, assumptions and opinions on the topic of nationalism. Here are some of the questions that you can ask in this exploratory, mapping phase:

- When you hear the word 'nationalism', what is the first thing that comes to your mind?
- What is a 'nation'? How would you define what a 'nation' is?
- Do you consider yourselves 'nationalists'? (If yes, why? If not, why not?)

It is expected that some students will have a positive connotation with the concept, while some might react negatively to it. It is also possible that some students will already in this introductory discussion differentiate and distinguish between 'nationalism' and 'patriotism'.

### Short Modern Challenge video clip viewing (5 minutes)

Play the video clip for the students: [depolarisation.eu/nationalism](http://depolarisation.eu/nationalism)

### Class discussion about the video clip and the topic (30 minutes)

Useful exploratory and follow-up reflection questions:

- What were the key terms explored in this short video? (Hint: 'nationalism', 'patriotism' and 'humanism'.)
- What is the difference between nationalism and patriotism?
- Why do you think some political leaders resort to using nationalism in order to gain more supporters and followers?
- What are some examples of nationalism in our society? (Which groups or nations 'inspire' us to be nationalistic?)
- What are some examples of patriotism in our society? (Give examples of loving one's country that do not involve negativity towards any other group in society.)
- Why does nationalism surge occasionally, and under what circumstances does it arise?
- You can explore the more recent cases of this resurgence, for e.g. 'Make America Great Again'/'America First' and Donald Trump; UK leaving the EU at a great cost to the country (Brexit), etc. (Why did this happen? How did nationalism affect these two countries?)

## Sources

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- DARE project, documentation and videos can be found on the project website: [www.depolarisation.eu](http://www.depolarisation.eu) or [www.resilienteurope.eu](http://www.resilienteurope.eu)

## Activity Adaption for Online Implementation

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This lesson easily transfers to online education, as it focuses on student critical reflection and conversation. With the initial, exploratory conversation about associations and assumptions, the instructor can facilitate this as a silent reflection by asking everyone to contribute initial thoughts in the group chat. After scanning through all the offered responses, the instructor can invite one or two students to elaborate on their answers in more detail. The remainder of the conversation after watching the video should be conducted in the plenary form (everyone participating in group conversation).

## Assessment and Evaluation Options

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The assessment for this lesson could revolve around evaluating students' ability to distinguish between characteristics associated with nationalism, and those associated with patriotism.

Another assessment option could be to assign students with identifying a case of either historical or contemporary nationalism, and carrying out the following steps:

- a) researching and synthesizing its main characteristics (how does it exhibit itself?)
- b) identifying and describing the underlying problem or cause behind the nationalism
- c) providing an idea of how the nationalist attitudes and rhetoric in this particular instance could be (for the contemporary case) or could have been (for the historical case) addressed and possibly redirected into the domain of either patriotism or humanism.

## Homework Ideas

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### Group or individual assignments:

- Conduct the research and analysis described in the second assessment option, above. Submit a presentation or a write-up of your findings.
- Carry out action research in your immediate environment. Interview your acquaintances, friends, family, neighbors, classmates, teachers, random people on the street about their perceived differences between nationalism and patriotism. You could warm up your interview with an opening question, such as, "Do you love \_\_\_\_\_ (insert country name)?" Ask people follow-up questions like, "What sentiment helps us improve the situation in our country - nationalism or patriotism?", or "If you could change one thing in our country today, what would it be?", etc. You should analyse the responses you received, and prepare a presentation with your findings by comparing different expressed attitudes and opinions.