

PATRIOTISM/NATIONALISM /TRIBALISM

1. Are you proud to be British? Or do you identify more with your social class, gender, place where you live, ethnic group or religion?

2. Karl Marx had the view that working class people who had very little power, and had little in common with the ruling class, should identify themselves with working class people in other countries rather than favouring patriotism.

3. George Orwell famously said that “nationalism is the worst enemy of peace. According to him nationalism is the feeling that one’s country is superior to another in all respects, while patriotism is merely a feeling of admiration for a way of life.

4. Perhaps the most extreme example of nationalism in this country is the English Defence League. Some excerpts from their Mission statement are:-

“We stand for the right of English people to their own country over and above people from elsewhere”, and “we are proud of English culture.... We expect migrants to the UK to live in harmony with English culture”. Is there some sense in this?

5. Research into the supporters of the EDL shows that most are young, male and tend to be unemployed. They appear to share pessimistic concerns about the UK’s future, worries about immigration and poor job prospects, and a strong antipathy towards Islam.

6. Do you feel we need legislation banning far right groups, or are there other ways we can discourage people from joining them, or holding such divisive views?

7. Tribalism is pervasive, and it controls a lot of our behavior, readily overriding reason. Think of the inhuman things we do in the name of tribal unity. Wars are essentially, and often quite specifically, tribalism. Genocides are tribalism - wipe out the other group to keep our group safe – taken to madness. Racism that lets us feel that our tribe is better than *theirs*, parents who end contact with their own children when they dare marry someone of a *different* faith or color, denial of evolution or climate change or other basic scientific truths when they challenge tribal beliefs. What stunning evidence of the power of tribalism! This is a blog rant. What is good about tribalism?

8. People in the USA seem to be very patriotic. This is what Noam Chomski had to say about that in 2002...

“With regard to the US, I think we find a mix. Every effort is made by power and doctrinal systems to stir up the more dangerous and destructive forms of "patriotism"; every effort is made by people committed to peace and justice to organize and encourage the beneficial kinds. It's a constant struggle. When people are frightened, the more dangerous kinds tend to emerge, and people huddle under the wings of power. Whatever the reasons may be, by comparative standards the US has been a very frightened country for a long time, on many dimensions. Quite commonly in history, such fears have been fanned by unscrupulous leaders, seeking to implement their own agendas. These are commonly harmful to the general population, which has to be disciplined in some manner: the classic device is to stimulate fear of awesome enemies concocted for the purpose, usually with some shreds of realism, required even for the most vulgar forms of propaganda. Germany was the pride of Western civilization 70 years ago, but most Germans were whipped to presumably genuine fear of the Czech dagger pointed at the heart of Germany (is that crazier than the Nicaraguan or Grenadan dagger pointed at the heart of the US, conjured up by the people now playing the same game today?), the Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy aimed at destroying the Aryan race and the civilization that Germany had inherited from Greece, etc. “

9. Do we now have a better understanding of patriotism, nationalism and tribalism?