



The CAQ's New Identity-Based Nationalism: Towards Controlling the Imagined Borders of the Quebec Nation

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Équipe de recherche
sur l'immigration
au Québec et ailleurs

Quebec elects CAQ majority government, Liberals see historic losses

Liberals knocked out of power by François Legault's party; Parti Québécois leader resigns

[Benjamin Shingler](#) · CBC News · Posted: Oct 01, 2018 7:14 PM EDT | Last Updated: October 2, 2018



CAQ Leader François Legault speaks to supporters after his party won a majority in Monday's Quebec election. (Paul Chiasson/Canadian Press)

2018

- In the 42nd general election on October 1, **2018**, the Quebec electoral landscape experienced a significant shift with the emergence of a third party, the CAQ.
- Established in **2011**, the CAQ offers an alternative to the status quo and sovereigntist options, positioning itself as a nationalist but non-sovereigntist party.
- The CAQ's ascent to power in 2018 and its re-election in **2022** reshaped the Quebec party system, prompting a reevaluation of how Quebec nationalism is embodied in the party and its governance.
- Scholars ([Boily 2018](#), [Bélanger and Godbout 2022](#), [Rocher 2022](#)) have highlighted the impact of the CAQ's governance on the Quebec political and nationalist landscape.



The Evolving Landscape of Quebec Nationalism

Historical Context:

- Nationalism plays a pivotal role in shaping Quebecois political parties, as observed by Léon Dion's assertion that all Quebecois parties draw significantly from nationalism in their programs, electoral slogans, and justifications for their actions (Dion 1975).

Traditional Divide: PQ vs. PLQ:

- The traditional lens of analyzing Quebecois parties was based on the clear divide between the *Parti Québécois* (PQ) and the *Parti Libéral du Québec* (PLQ), primarily centered on their stance on sovereignty, whether the future of the province lay outside or within Canada.

CAQ's Distinct Nationalism:

- The CAQ disrupts this traditional framework by advocating a **third way** that transcends the sovereignty vs. status quo dichotomy.
- Initially perceived as guided by **economic nationalism**, the CAQ has actively engaged in issues directly linked to the **identity and future of the Quebec nation**: French language, immigration, constitutional status of Quebec, and state secularism were central to its electoral promises and public action.

Analyzing CAQ's "New Identity Nationalism"

While there have been analyses of the CAQ's political trajectory (Boily 2020; 2018), the exploration of its "new identity nationalism" and its operationalization after five years in power requires further scrutiny (Birch et al. 2022).

- **Research Questions:**

- What defines the identity nationalism advocated by the CAQ?
- How has the identity dimension of this nationalism materialized in its discourse and governmental actions, and how can it be interpreted?

- **Methodology:**

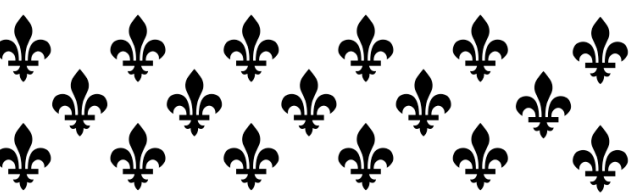
- Qualitative analysis of the entire set of CAQ interventions directly referencing the Quebecois nation in parliamentary debates – *Assemblée nationale du Québec* (2018-2023).
- Comprehensive examination across diverse policy domains, extending beyond the conventional study of immigration-related policies and discourses characterizing identity movements.

- **Significance:**

- Understanding the CAQ's nationalism involves examining the **government's actions and discursive strategies** comprehensively, shedding light on the importance and ubiquity of the identity component in CAQ policies and discourses.

Constructing National Identity: Examining Discourses and Policies [literature]

- 1. Imagined Boundaries of the Nation:** No universally shared concept of national identity; Discourses and public policies reveal "imagined boundaries" around the nation (Simonsen 2016)
- 2. Traditional dichotomy:** civic identity (territory, civic participation) vs. ethnic identity (shared ethnicity or religion). **Inclusion of Cultural Conception** (Gagnon 2023)
- 3. Insecurity in Minority Nations:** Collective insecurity in minority nations often leads to movements protecting the dominant culture; Influences discussions on the political fate of the nation.
- 4. Policy Implications:** Policies of (re)defining the nation and protecting national identity are frequently implemented in response to collective insecurities in minority nations.



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PREMIÈRE SESSION

QUARANTE-DEUXIÈME LÉGISLATURE

Projet de loi n° 9
(2019, chapitre 11)

Loi visant à accroître la prospérité socio-économique du Québec et à répondre adéquatement aux besoins du marché du travail par une intégration réussie des personnes immigrantes

Présenté le 7 février 2019
Principe adopté le 9 avril 2019
Adopté le 16 juin 2019
Sanctionné le 16 juin 2019



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PREMIÈRE SESSION

QUARANTE-DEUXIÈME LÉGISLATURE

Projet de loi n° 21
(2019, chapitre 12)

Loi sur la laïcité de l'État

Présenté le 28 mars 2019
Principe adopté le 4 juin 2019
Adopté le 16 juin 2019
Sanctionné le 16 juin 2019



ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE DU QUÉBEC

PREMIÈRE SESSION

QUARANTE-DEUXIÈME LÉGISLATURE

Projet de loi n° 83
(2021, chapitre 23)

Loi concernant principalement l'admissibilité au régime d'assurance maladie et au régime général d'assurance médicaments de certains enfants dont les parents ont un statut migratoire précaire et modifiant la Loi concernant les soins de fin de vie

Présenté le 10 décembre 2020
Principe adopté le 11 mai 2021
Adopté le 10 juin 2021
Sanctionné le 11 juin 2021

Identification and Sense of Belonging
and Minority Perspectives

Accueil < Nouvelles <
Réforme réglementaire et planification pluriannuelle - La connaissance du français devient obligatoire pour tous les programmes d'immigration économique

Réforme réglementaire et planification pluriannuelle - La connaissance du français devient obligatoire pour tous les programmes d'immigration économique

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, [Cabinet du ministre de la Langue française](#)



ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE DU QUÉBEC

DEUXIÈME SESSION

QUARANTE-DEUXIÈME LÉGISLATURE

Projet de loi n° 96
(2022, chapitre 14)

**Loi sur la langue officielle et
commune du Québec, le français**

Présenté le 13 mai 2021
Principe adopté le 4 novembre 2021
Adopté le 24 mai 2022
Sanctionné le 1^{er} juin 2022

CAQ and the (Re)Affirmation of Quebec Cultural Identity

1. CAQ's Cultural Identity Emphasis: Beyond the pragmatic approach, CAQ's new nationalism emphasizes the affirmation of Quebec cultural identity through **strong state intervention** in immigration, ethnocultural diversity management (especially secularism), protection of Quebec culture and French language, and education.

CAQ's discourse reflects the articulation and defense of a new form of nationalism, moving beyond controlling "geographical borders" to defining the **criteria for belonging to the Quebecois nation = imagined borders**.

2. Central Role of Immigration and Integration: CAQ's government places significant importance on immigration and integration, leading to broad proposed reforms. Discourses in the National Assembly tie immigration/integration reforms to protecting Quebec's language, culture, and values.

Shifts in Discourse and Policies:

1. CAQ breaks the pro-immigration consensus, turning immigration into a significant electoral issue since 2018.
2. CAQ, with a majority position, successfully implements deep reforms in immigration policies.
3. Despite a restrictive discourse, CAQ's actions demonstrate inclusivity, increased funding for francization, expanded services for a broader audience, higher immigration thresholds, and adjustments to programs.

« Discursive gap » (Czaika De Haas 2013)

« Gap Hypothesis » (Lutz 2019)



Discourses/Public debate - Discours sur l'immigration – Débat public

- Partis politiques
- Media



Policies / Les politiques publiques

- Nombre
- Programmes d'immigration: PEQ
- Services d'intégration et de francisation



Implementation / La mise en oeuvre des politiques

- Terrain
- Personnes et services qui mettent en oeuvre les politiques

Conclusion: The “New” Identity Nationalism of CAQ

Strong State Intervention: CAQ's identity nationalism is characterized by robust state intervention in areas such as immigration, ethnocultural diversity management (especially secularism), protection of French language and Quebec culture, and education.

The Third Way of CAQ:

1. CAQ's discourse reflects the articulation and defense of a new form of nationalism, moving beyond controlling "geographical borders" to defining the criteria for belonging to the Quebecois nation.
2. “new”: Our analysis sheds light on the **third way** advocated by CAQ, particularly its conception of Quebec's place within Canada + ways to achieve it.

Contributions:

1. Advances our understanding of contemporary Quebec politics. CAQ is a ‘new’ player –it’s also a coalition.
2. Contributes to scientific research on nationalism within minority nations.
3. Explores how political actors adapt to the social and political context, responding to declining support for sovereignty in Quebec and the absence of Canadian federalism reform.

Thank you

- Questions? Comments?
Suggestions?

