CHAPTER 29

NATIONALISM

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1 Introduction

Articles of this kind often begin with a short and snappy definition of the concept to be discussed, but, desirable as this might seem, in the case of nationalism any attempt at such a definition would inevitably exclude some part of this large and complex idea. There are many forms of nationalism to be found in political theory, just as there are many varieties of nationalism in practical politics. In lieu of a precise definition, we can perhaps characterize nationalism as having three core elements.

The first of these is simply the idea that nations are real: that there is something that differentiates people who belong to one nation from those who belong to its neighbors. Poles are different from Germans, Canadians from Americans. There are different views about what that something is—the criteria we use to identify nations—but all nationalists believe that it is more than just the fact of membership in a particular state. Germans are not simply people who happen to be citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany. Nationalists need not deny that political boundaries have, over the course of history, helped to form the nations that now exist, but the key point is that, whatever story we tell about their historical origins, nations today are real, and people who identify with them are not simply deluded.

The second element is that membership in a nation has practical implications: it confers rights and imposes obligations. Nations are communities in the sense that by virtue of belonging we recognize special ties to our compatriots, and we owe them certain things that we do not owe to outsiders. They are also valuable communities that we have a duty to preserve, which may involve a greater or lesser personal sacrifice. The extent of these obligations can be questioned, as we shall see shortly, but all nationalists recognize that a person's nationality is ethically significant, even though in normal cases it is unchosen.

The third element is that nationhood is politically significant. Nationalists argue for political institutions that will allow the nation to be self-determining—to decide on its own future course, free from outside coercion. In most cases this means political independence, the nation having a state of its own, although for practical reasons nationalists will sometimes settle for more limited forms of autonomy, such as devolved government. The key idea is that because each nation has its own character, it cannot flourish unless given the political freedom to develop in its own way; it cannot be made subject to laws designed for another people. So political boundaries must be drawn in a way that respects the national identities of the peoples in question, whether these are the harder boundaries between states, or the softer boundaries that divide, for example, the members of a confederation.

Although these three elements are common ground among nationalists, they can be interpreted in quite different ways. Taking each in turn, national identity can be understood *objectively*, in terms of physical or other characteristics that fellow-nationals share, or *subjectively*, in terms of a common *belief* in membership or *will* to belong (see, further, Gilbert 1998). Thus, some nationalists have pointed to features such as language, religion, or even race as a way of defining "national character" and drawing lines between different nations, whereas others have argued that what makes a nation distinct are not any objective features common to its members—which may in any case not discriminate adequately between one nation and others who may share its language or religion, say—but simply their wish to associate together. This was the view expressed by Ernest Renan in a famous lecture when he described a nation as "un plébiscite de tous les jours" to underline the point that national identity always depended upon members' recognition of one another as having memories, traditions, etc. in common (Renan 1882, 27).

Moving to the second element, the ethical significance of nationality, we have a spectrum of views running between those who see the nation as the

highest form of ethical life—in other words, who see obligations to compatriots as being the most demanding moral commitments that we have—and those who deny that nationality has any significance at the fundamental level. On this second view, our basic duties are owed equally to human beings everywhere, and we should only recognize special obligations to compatriots insofar as this proves to be the most effective way in practice to perform such duties. In between are those who want to hold national and cosmopolitan ethical demands in some kind of balance.

Coming finally to the political implications of nationalism, we again find a spectrum of views. At one extreme we find cultural nationalists—nationalists who believe that the cultural life of the nation must be allowed to flourish and develop, but whose only political demand is for an environment that provides enough freedom for this to happen. At the other extreme stand nationalists for whom political self-determination is central: a nation is a body with a general will (often understood as an historic purpose) that must be allowed to govern itself, to control the national homeland, and if necessary to assert its rights against other nations. Nationalism of the first kind is liberal and pacific; nationalism of the second kind may, depending on the circumstances, be authoritarian and aggressive. Politically, therefore, much depends on how national self-determination is understood, and why it is valued. I shall return to these contrasts later in the chapter.

2 A Brief History

Nationalism as I have identified it is a modern ideology. It appeared first in the late eighteenth century, and is associated in complex ways with other features of modern society: industrialization and social mobility, democracy, the sovereign state (for one influential interpretation, see Gellner 1983). However, it borrows certain features from the much older idea of patriotism, and it is important to be clear about how the two concepts differ. To be a patriot is first of all to love one's country, and then to be committed to advancing its interests in various ways, by defending it against attack or working to help it prosper. A country here means a physical place, but it may also include a political system—thus a Roman patriot might be

committed not only to the city of Rome, but also to the Roman Republic or Empire (see Dietz 1989; Viroli 1995). Nationalism goes beyond patriotism in two respects. First, culture plays a much larger part in defining national identity: A nation certainly has a territorial homeland, and its political system may be one of its distinguishing features, but over and above that it has, or is believed to have, distinctive cultural traits—a language, a religion, a national style of art or literature, forms of music or dance, perhaps a national cuisine, and so forth. And these are seen as forming an integral whole, so that a particular type of injustice is perpetrated when one nation is forced to live under laws or institutions designed for another nation. Second, nations are understood as collective agents with their own distinctive aims and purposes, which are therefore entitled to self-determination, often in the form of political self-rule. Although not all nationalists have been democrats, there is an implicit connection between the two ideas: Nations are the units within which democratic institutions should operate, and since each member of the nation has something to contribute to its cultural development, political democracy becomes the natural vehicle for national self-determination. Patriotism has no such specific political entailments.

These two elements are weighted differently in Herder and Rousseau, the earliest political philosophers to put forward recognizably nationalist ideas. In Herder the cultural element dominates. Reacting against the Enlightenment idea of the uniformity of humankind, Herder emphasized the profound differences between national communities. Nations, he thought, were like plants: each needed different conditions to blossom most abundantly. And each had its own excellences and faults, so it was ludicrous to try to rank nations on a single scale of achievement. In consequence, for one nation to be made subject to the laws of another was profoundly wrong. Herder abhorred empires and multinational states. "Nothing, therefore, is more manifestly contrary to the purpose of political government than the unnatural enlargement of states, the wild mixing of various races and nationalities under one sceptre" (Herder 1969, 324). But his idea of rightful government was vague; enlightened leaders should devise laws that reflected the traditions and culture of each people.

Rousseau's nationalism, by contrast, was driven by political considerations. In his *Social Contract* he spoke of people forming a union that is "as perfect as it can be" in which "each of us puts his person and his full power in common under the supreme direction of the general will; and in a body we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole" (Rousseau 1997, 50), but he did

not specify the conditions under which this might be achieved, except to say that the state should be small and the society simple. Later, however, when advising the Corsicans and the Poles on the best means to preserve their independence against internal corruption and foreign oppression, he emphasized the cultivation of distinct national cultures and the rejection of foreign elements. "It is national institutions," he wrote in *The Government of Poland*, "which form the genius, the character, the tastes, and the morals of a people, which make it be itself and not another, which inspire in it that ardent love of fatherland founded on habits impossible to uproot" (Rousseau 1997, 183). Accordingly, he recommended that the Poles should stage ceremonies to commemorate historical events, preserve their national dress, institute national sports festivals, and adopt a system of public education that would give every child a thorough knowledge of Polish history, law, economy, etc. Although Rousseau cherished national diversity and lamented that "there are no more Frenchmen, Germans, Spaniards, even Englishmen, nowadays ... there are only Europeans" (Rousseau 1997, 184), his nationalism was ultimately instrumental. National unity was the only guarantee of political freedom, especially for states like Poland with large and despotic neighbors.

Both streams of thought came together in the post-Enlightenment nationalism of the early nineteenth century, when German philosophers especially—including Fichte, Adam Müller, von Humboldt, and (with some qualifications) Hegel—combined the idea that each nation formed a culturally distinct community with the idea that such nations could only fulfill their destiny when politically organized as independent states. (These thinkers at first envisaged Germany as a confederation of smaller states, but later nationalists called for the creation of an encompassing German state.) Two further ideas followed: the idea that each individual could only find ethical fulfillment through participating in the life of the nation state—Fichte spoke of "the devouring flame of higher patriotism, which embraces the nation as the vesture of the eternal, for which the noble-minded man joyfully sacrifices himself" (Fichte 1922, 141)—and that states, in their pursuit of national destiny, might be justified in using force against other states. Indeed war was positively valued: War, Müller wrote, "gives states their outlines, their firmness, their individuality and personality" (cited in Meinecke 1970, 110). For Hegel, war preserved "the ethical health of peoples," bringing home to them "the vanity of temporal goods and concerns" (Hegel 1952, 210). Nationalists in this tradition could recognize social pluralism, and often advocated that the internal constitution of the state should take a liberal

form. Nevertheless, their views about the ethical subordination of the individual to the nation, and their rejection of cosmopolitan constraints on the external behaviour of states, opened a gulf between liberalism and nationalism that, as we shall see, persists to this day.

The gulf was bridged in the mid-nineteenth century by liberal thinkers who forged links between individual freedom, national independence, and representative government in opposing the imperial powers of Europe. Typical figures here were Mazzini, who argued passionately for Italian unity and independence while defending individual rights and republican government (Mazzini 1907), and J. S. Mill who supported the independence movements in Poland, Hungary, and Italy, and argued in his *Considerations on Representative Government* that free institutions could only be sustained within a national community with a "united public opinion" that could keep government in check (Mill 1972, 359–66). For these thinkers, national loyalties had to be counterbalanced with duties to humanity; indeed these latter duties were fundamental, according to Mazzini: "You are citizens, you have a country, in order that in a limited sphere, with the concourse of people linked to you already by speech, by tendencies, and by habits, you may labour for the benefit of all *men* whatever they are" (Mazzini 1907, 41). Mill likewise distinguished his conception of nationality as a basis for political union from vulgar meanings: "a senseless antipathy to foreigners," "a cherishing of absurd peculiarities because they are national," etc. (Mill 1963, 138–9).

This early flowering of liberal nationalism was, however, submerged during most of the twentieth century by authoritarian doctrines that in many respects mirrored the writings of the German philosophers a century before. Charles Maurras, for example, argued that France could only preserve its unity and flourish as a nation by abandoning democracy in favor of a royalist restoration; he called this "integral nationalism" (Maurras 1968). For Carl Schmitt, states had to be internally homogenous and sharply separated from the outside world. National differences served, therefore, to demarcate "friend" from "enemy," whose antagonism defined the political relationship (Schmitt 1996). When the authoritarian nationalism of thinkers such as these was combined with political activism, fascism was born. Liberal political philosophers were either openly hostile to nationalism (see, for instance, Hayek 1944 or Popper 1992), or at most embraced its mildest forms while cautioning against the excesses to which it was seen to be prone (see Berlin 1991). Only in the last decades of the century did nationalist ideas again receive a sympathetic treatment from political thinkers in the liberal tradition. How

has the gulf between liberalism and nationalism been bridged, and with what success?

3 Liberal Nationalism and its Critics

Liberal nationalists claim not only that national self-determination can be pursued consistently with liberal principles, but also that liberal values themselves can only be realized in a political community whose members share a common national identity. For this reason nationalism, properly understood, should be seen by liberals as an ally, not an enemy. How is this claim defended? There are three main arguments.

The first is an argument about the conditions for personal autonomy. At the heart of liberalism stands the idea that each individual must choose his or her own path in life after reflection on alternatives. But no one chooses in a vacuum. The alternatives themselves are contained within the culture that the person in question belongs to, and only national cultures are comprehensive enough to provide the full range of choice (see Kymlicka 1995, ch. 5; Margalit and Raz 1994). So it is important for autonomy that the national culture should be sustained, and that those who participate in it should be respected rather than disparaged. This requires, in practice, that the community in question should enjoy political self-determination. In theory one might imagine a multinational state or empire in which each national culture enjoyed adequate protection and respect, but in reality, liberal nationalists claim, such states always privilege one particular culture at the expense of the others. To be free you must live in a society whose culture you share and where the choices you make within that culture are recognized as valuable.

The second argument connects democracy and nationality, and builds on J. S. Mill's claim that "free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities" (Mill 1972, 361). To work successfully, democratic institutions require a body of citizens imbued with a certain level of civic spirit. For example, elections must be conducted fairly, and the results accepted by the losing side; governments must be scrutinized to ensure that they are keeping their electoral promises; and minorities' rights to free speech

and political association must be respected. This, in turn, requires citizens to trust one another to behave in accordance with democratic norms: Why accept electoral defeat unless I know that the winning party and its supporters will relinquish office when they are defeated in turn? Trust springs from what Mill called the "common sympathies" that shared nationality creates. In multinational states, each group considers its own interests first, distrusts the other groups, and tends to regard politics as a zero-sum game. In these conditions civic spirit disappears and democracy is difficult if not impossible to maintain.

The third argument presents nationhood as a precondition for social justice (see Miller 1995, ch. 4; Canovan 1996, ch. 4). The welfare state and the other institutions of social justice represent an agreement to pool resources to provide every citizen with a certain level of protection against the contingencies of life. If you fall ill, you have access to medical care; if you are thrown out of work, you receive income support. Built into the system is some degree of redistribution from the talented and the resilient to the more vulnerable members of society. We agree to share our fate in this way because of a sense of solidarity with fellow-citizens, but this again stems from a common identity, and a resulting confidence in our compatriots that they will reciprocate when it is our turn to need protection. Thus contemporary liberals such as John Rawls, without overtly defending nationalist ideas, nevertheless present their principles of justice as holding within a self-contained political community whose "members enter it only by birth and leave it only by death" (Rawls 1971, 90)—in practice, a nation state.

Many liberals, however, reject these arguments, and argue that liberal principles can be divorced completely from nationality. The ethical issues will be addressed in the next section: Here I focus on three political arguments against liberal nationalism.

The first of these challenges the claim that autonomy requires the secure cultural background that nationality provides. Observing that most contemporary societies are multicultural, liberals in this camp argue that autonomy is often a matter of picking and choosing elements from different cultures—the more cultures one has access to, the greater one's independence from the traditions of any culture in particular. Thus Jeremy Waldron has celebrated what he calls cultural "*mélange*"—"the chaotic coexistence of projects, pursuits, ideas, images, and snatches of culture *within* an individual"—as a way

of life that is at least as autonomous as a life lived within the framework of a single community (Waldron 1995).

The second anti-nationalist argument again begins from the premise that contemporary societies are multicultural, and that as a result individuals typically have multiple identities—they see themselves as members of families, local communities, ethnic groups, religious congregations, work or professional associations, and so forth, with no single identity overriding the others. A liberal state ought, as far as possible, to treat such identities even-handedly, creating institutions that give equal recognition to each of them (see Buchanan 1998). Nationalism, however, involves the arbitrary privileging of one identity in particular: National culture is given public recognition and state support, often to the detriment of minority cultures. Some citizens, therefore, find their main identity affirmed by the state while others do not, and this violates the liberal principle of equal citizenship.

Finally, the claim that democracy and social justice presuppose a shared sense of nationality can be challenged. All that is necessary, liberal critics have argued, is that citizens should identify with and feel loyal towards their political community, and this can be a strictly *political* identification without the cultural baggage that comes with nationhood (see Mason 1999; Abizadeh 2002). And this makes it easier for minority groups—for instance immigrant groups who may not share the language or other cultural characteristics of the natives—to feel that they belong, and can be respected as equal citizens. An idea that has often been used in this context is the idea of *constitutional patriotism*—the idea that the focus of loyalty should not be the cultural nation but a set of political principles laid down in a constitution (Habermas 1996; 1999, chs. 4, 8). Such loyalty, it is claimed, is a sufficient basis for democratic institutions and policies of social justice; no thicker social cement is needed.

These disputes between liberal nationalists and their critics are hard to settle: We do not know, for example, whether cultural coherence or cultural mélange is more likely to foster personal autonomy; nor can we say, conclusively, how much cultural commonality is required for the successful working of democratic institutions. But at the very least liberal nationalists have focused attention on an important issue: Under what circumstances can liberalism itself be a workable political creed and not just a distant aspiration?

4 Is Nationalism Irrational?

A charge frequently leveled by critics of nationalism is that it represents the triumph of our primitive instincts over our capacity to reason. This charge breaks down into two others: that when we identify with a nation, we inevitably embrace false beliefs, for instance about the nation's history and the special characteristics that allegedly set it apart from other nations; and that by allowing our compatriots' interests to count for more with us than those of foreigners, we breach the elementary moral precept that tells us that every human being is worth as much as every other. How do nationalists try to deflect these charges?

The first step is to concede that national identities are imaginative constructs: they are selective interpretations both of the history of the nation in question, and of the characteristics of its present-day members. Certain events and ways of behaving are treated as emblematic; other occurrences are regarded as aberrations or ignored completely. A nation may celebrate its military victories or the achievements of its writers and painters, while overlooking shameful defeats, or the fact that a large part of its population now spends its time watching reality TV and Australian soap operas. In this respect, however, national communities are much like individual people, who construct narratives to make sense of their lives that leave out or downplay much that has happened. They do this because a secure sense of personal identity requires a coherent narrative, and because acting well in the future depends on a sense of self-worth. Likewise with nations: To identify with a nation is to align yourself with a community that has persisted over generations and that has a coherent, albeit evolving, character. It is also to give yourself something to live up to. When national histories recount the glorious deeds of our ancestors, they have a moralizing purpose. In both respects, nationality responds to well-known facts about human nature: Our need to place our lives in the framework of a supra-personal narrative (a need often met in earlier centuries by religious belief) and our need to be morally inspired by more than just the cold precepts of reason.

National identities involve selective interpretation, but need they rest on beliefs that are literally false? Where they do, these identities should be treated as morally or politically suspect. For instance, all nations make territorial claims that involve the identification of a national homeland, and that in some cases confront the rival claims of neighboring nations. Outright denial

of historical fact—for example the claim that a certain territory was voluntarily ceded, whereas in fact it was taken by force—may suggest that present-day national claims are not legitimate. Or a ruling elite may promulgate falsehoods designed to consolidate its rule, and these may be accepted as fact by an ignorant population. Where national identities are secure, and openly debated by the public and through the media, simple falsehoods are unlikely to survive. Instead, a much more open recognition of shameful deeds perpetrated by compatriots in the past may occur—witness the recent spate of apologies delivered by democratic nations for historic injustices inflicted on indigenous peoples and other minority groups. This is sometimes regarded as a sign that we are moving into a postnational era, but paradoxically an ongoing national identity is required to make sense of the practice: How can we apologise for what our predecessors have done unless we see ourselves as linked to them by something more than the accident of living in the same place?

Even if outright falsehood can be avoided, there is still likely to be some tension between a nation's self-understanding and what (to borrow a phrase from Nagel 1986) we can call "the view from nowhere"—the account that a detached observer might provide. At least half-aware of this, citizens in contemporary liberal societies often embrace the national story in their hearts while their heads tell them that it contains elements of fiction. If the needs that national identities meet are real ones, however, this seems no more irrational than, for example, believing at one level that your child is the cutest baby ever born while at the same time recognizing that all parents think the same.

What, now, of the claim that it is irrational to recognize special obligations to compatriots—irrational in the sense that a morally arbitrary fact (whether a person is born into this nation or that) is being used to determine our moral responsibilities towards them (see, for instance, Caney 2001; Pogge 2002). Cosmopolitans argue that every human being should be counted as having equal worth, so restricted obligations can be justified only where this proves to be the most effective way of discharging duties that, at bottom, are universal in scope (Goodin 1988). Given the extent of global inequality, and the dire conditions under which many of the world's inhabitants are currently living, institutions and practices of mutual aid among compatriots—for example the extensive welfare states found in developed societies—cannot be justified unless accompanied by extensive programs of international redistribution.

In reply, nationalists have pointed to the logical gap between the claim that every human is of equal worth and the claim that every agent, individual or collective, has equal responsibilities to every other (Miller 1998). We owe something to every person—respect for their human rights, for instance—but we also owe more to some than to others, by virtue of our past histories, the practices we are involved in, our communal relations, and so forth. And these special ties are integral to the relationships in question, in the same way as friendship, for instance, would be impossible to sustain without giving special weight to the needs and interests of our friends (Scheffler 2001). The nationalist vision is of a world in which each national community has adequate means to support its own members, so in the short term nationalists and cosmopolitans can agree about the need for international redistribution to support nations that fall below this threshold. However, the underlying principle is different: Cosmopolitans base their demands on a global principle of equality, whereas nationalists argue that partiality towards compatriots can be reasonable if it is accompanied by global duties of a more limited nature. And they also argue that an ethics that recognizes the motivational importance of national attachments as well as other forms of community is more realistic than one founded on abstract reason alone.

In short, the answer to the question that heads this section depends on how one understands rationality. Nationalists argue that both identifying with a nation and acknowledging special obligations to fellow-nationals can be reasonable, on a view of reason that takes proper account of the psychological needs and limits of human beings.

5 National Self-determination and Secession

For real-world nationalists, achieving political independence for the people you represent is often the primary objective, and this is reflected in the importance nationalist ideology attaches to self-determination. We need nonetheless to draw some distinctions. For cultural nationalists in the tradition of Herder, political self-determination matters only insofar as it allows the cultural life of the nation to develop spontaneously, secure from outside

interference. A nation cannot flourish when it is dominated by another and made subject to its laws. A stronger view is that cultural flourishing requires positive political support. Especially in a world of global communication, native languages and other cultural features will be swamped unless they are protected by a state that provides cultural subsidies, supports the national media, creates barriers to the import of foreign films, TV, etc.—and only a state staffed by fellow-nationals is likely to do this. So far national self-determination is being valued for instrumental reasons. But some nationalists find intrinsic value in political autonomy. Nations are seen as collective actors with a common will that can only be expressed in political action, whether this is directed at other states or at their own members. National autonomy is valuable in the same way that personal autonomy is: Just as an individual who cannot act freely in the world cannot express her personality, so a nation deprived of political independence cannot make its distinctive mark in the world.

This last justification is open to the objection that it assumes that nations have common wills whereas in reality they do not—political decisions at best express the will of the majority, at worst the will of an elite that claims to speak for the people. However, there are also more practical objections to national self-determination. One is that nations attempting to make policy are in fact severely constrained by outside economic forces and the decisions of other nations, so self-determination can be a myth that disguises, for example, neocolonial relations of domination between rich and poor nations. Another is that the geographical distribution of populations means that state boundaries can never be drawn in such a way as to correspond to national boundaries, except in a few special cases (Iceland, for instance). Nearly all existing states contain national minorities, so self-determination cannot mean that the members of each nation have an equal chance to decide on their future—there are favored nations whose members dominate a particular state, and disfavored nations, like the Kurds and the Tamils, who form minorities in one or more of the national states of other peoples.

Under what circumstances are such minorities justified in breaking away to form a state of their own? This is the far-from-academic question of secession, an issue that has fueled violent conflicts in many parts of the world—the Soviet Union, the Balkans, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere. In political theory, broadly three positions have been taken on the issue. The most restrictive is that secession is justifiable only in the case of minorities whose rights are being violated by the state that they now belong to, or whose

territory has been illegitimately seized (Buchanan 1991). Secession, in others words, can be defended only as a remedy for injustice, where the absence of national self-determination per se does not count as an injustice. In contrast, the most permissive position is that any territorial majority is entitled to secede from the state it now belongs to, so long as it is prepared to grant minorities on its own territory an equivalent right (thus if a majority of those living in Quebec vote in favor of independence, they should be allowed to secede from Canada, provided they respect the right of the inhabitants of Montreal to decide by majority vote to become a city-state or to rejoin Canada). This view treats secession as an individual right with no intrinsic connection to nationality, even if in practice it is most likely to be exercised by majorities who are also compatriots (Beran 1984).

The nationalist view of secession occupies the middle ground between these two positions. Secessionist claims are justified only insofar as they promote national self-determination, taking into account not only the would-be secessionists, but also the claims of those who would be left in the remainder state after the secession had occurred, and the claims of minority groups within the secessionist territory (Miller 2000). These claims must be treated even-handedly. By losing part of their territory, the national majority may find its opportunities for self-determination are reduced, as well as being robbed of places, monuments, etc. of national significance. The minority groups in the new state may find that their culture is treated with less respect than previously, if the original, larger, state had an active multicultural policy. Secession nearly always creates winners and losers, culturally as well as economically, and from a nationalist perspective the optimal solution is one that comes closest to giving each nation an equal opportunity to be self-determining.

The charge often made, that nationalism encourages a secessionist free-for-all whereby each state will break into smaller and smaller pieces, is therefore erroneous. It is important to keep in mind that there are two strategies nationalists can pursue in nationally diverse territories. One is to redraw political boundaries so that they are more closely aligned with national boundaries, whether this means secession or less radical ways of achieving self-determination, for instance federal arrangements that give minority nations partial control over their own affairs (see Kymlicka 1995, chs. 2, 6, 7). The other strategy is nation-building: encouraging all the groups within the borders of the state to participate in creating a common national identity that they can share, using cultural materials contributed by each

group (see Moore 2001, ch. 5). Nation-building practices have a long history in most of today's nation states, but in the past this usually meant the more or less coercive imposition of the majority's culture on the minority groups. Today national identities must be reshaped by democratic means, through dialogue between the component nationalities as well as ethnic and other minorities who lack a territorial base.

These two strategies are not mutually exclusive: achieving self-determination may mean developing new and more inclusive forms of national identity while, at the same time, recognizing the distinctness of national minorities through devolved government or federal arrangements. But nor can they be applied in all cases of national conflict. Where two or more nations have a long history of mutual antagonism, building a common identity may be impossible, in the short to medium term anyway, while separation via secession may simply create further conflicts and leave minorities on the wrong side of the new border vulnerable to ethnic cleansing or worse. It is important to recognize that not all national conflicts are soluble by nationalist means. In these cases, self-determination may have to take second place to creating a political regime—some form of externally-guaranteed power-sharing, for example—that can dampen down conflict and ensure that basic human rights, at least, are protected.

6 Conclusion

In a world of many distinct cultures, nationalism of some kind is unavoidable. We can now better appreciate its strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, it serves to bind people to the place that they regard as their national homeland; it encourages them to cooperate and to protect their more vulnerable compatriots; and it gives them a sense of controling their own destiny. On the other hand, it is liable to generate indifference or even hostility towards outsiders; incoming groups who do not already share the national identity may have difficulty in integrating; and it has destablizing effects when political borders and national borders fail to coincide. As a guide to political practice, liberal nationalism tries to retain these strengths while circumventing the weaknesses. But it may only be possible to achieve this in favorable political circumstances.

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