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Abstract

Nina S. Johnson, College '09, Philosophy

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Liberalism, as a philosophical doctrine, is based on the idea that individuals matter. Individuals set fundamental ends that they believe to be valuable and then revise and pursue those ends in the real world. Where a person is born can have a profound effect on the ends that a person sets and the means with which they examine and realize them. Given that people do not choose the nation in which they are born, nationality seems arbitrary from the moral point of view. This paper examines nationality and what it means to be a member of a national community, in an effort to show that the experience of being raised in such a community 'marks' individuals in a way that is normatively significant. Ultimately, I argue that the fact that individuals are bounded to particular nations changes the way in which we should look at them from the perspective of justice.

Comments

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Nina Johnson

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The world was much larger when I was born than it is now, and it will be far smaller when I die. As information, goods, and services have become more transferable, people have grown closer and closer, and the ability of a person to impact and be impacted by people in other countries has substantially increased. Given the increasing connectivity, the idea of a closed society has become antiquated. Few nations have closed markets, most people have available means to contact people outside their nation. People are still born into cultures, but those cultures are no longer isolated. My question in this paper is whether and to what extent cultural membership matters to questions of international justice. Put another way, I am asking whether, from the perspective of cosmopolitan justice, we should take people as equally separate, unattached individuals or as distinct individuals that are bound to particular nations. I will argue that nationality, as understood in the specific sense defined below, ought to matter to cosmopolitans because it is a precondition for the idea of liberal choice and because it is fundamental to individual identity. In the first section, I will explore what a nation is. In the second section, I will first look at the right of self determination, and then look at its uses and applications, given the rights of other people. Before I discuss what a nation is, however, I have two quick clarifications.

First, my arguments take liberalism as given. I am assuming that all people are free and equal, and that our most essential interest is in leading a life that is good. Essential to this project are two things: that we lead our life from the inside—that we view our values, goals, and life plans as being our own—and that we are free (in more than a formal sense) to question and examine our beliefs (Kymlicka 1989: 12-13). I am

also committed to the idea that among the fundamental rights and liberties necessary to achieve these two goals are political freedoms that are only possible in a democracy, and that, moreover, the only way to ensure that our fundamental rights and liberties exist in perpetuity is to have democracy. People have the right to take part in the political decisions that affect them, and therefore have the right to take part in governance.

Second, my arguments are intended for the world as it is today. Were the world united under one government or political culture, some of my arguments would not apply. For clarity sake, I offer the following empirical assumptions about the world as I see it today. (1) I assume that “our world is a world of states and a variety of ethnic, national, tribal, and other groups” (Margalit and Raz 1990: 440), and that states rarely consist of one ethnic or cultural group. (2) I assume that we are in the process of globalization—that we are engaged in the process of “increasing integration and interdependency of national economies, the increasing mobility of capital and labor across national boundaries, the creation of new global markets and products . . . , and the creation of international organs and regulations to facilitate and govern these interactions” (Tan 2008: 164). (3) I assume that though these institutions exist, and impact people’s lives, the impact is generally indirect. People are more affected by local conditions than they are by international conditions (Margalit and Raz 1990: 458-59).

1. Nations and States

How we define a nation is important to the answer of my main question. If nations are the same thing as *de facto* states, then we could point to several countries on the map that would suggest a ‘no’ answer. We should certainly not hold the fact that Zimbabwe is controlled by a tyrannical dictator against the people of Zimbabwe when answering

questions of distributive justice. Therefore I will use ‘country’ to refer to *de facto* sovereign territories found on a map, such as Zimbabwe.

I will use ‘state’ to refer to a sovereign political territory, united under one government.¹ ‘Nation’ is much more difficult to define. My definition follows Margalit and Raz’s definition of an ‘encompassing group’ and what Kymlicka calls a ‘societal culture.’ Nations, then, have six important features.

- (1) The group has a *pervasive culture*. It “has a common character and a common culture that encompass many, varied and important aspects of life, a culture that defines or marks a variety of forms or styles of life, types of activities, occupations, pursuits, and relationships” (Margalit and Raz 433).
- (2) Individuals grow up in that culture, and are “marked by its character.” A person that grows up in Botswana will have significantly different tastes and options when it comes to careers, leisure activities, customs, habits, ‘patterns of expectations,’ relationships, friendships, and lifestyle choices than someone who grows up in Pennsylvania (444). This aspect of a pervasive culture has two important features. First, it is almost entirely non-voluntary. No one chooses where they are born, and in the choice between being a mutually recognized, respected member of a community or a perpetual outcast, most people opt for the former. Still there are definite exceptions; some people have successfully switched cultures. Second, this is what gives culture its continuity between generations. Each generation educates the next, and carries traditions and cultural forms through history (444-45).

¹ The difference is subtle. I intend ‘country’ to be more colloquial while ‘state’ is more technical. This can have some important empirical implications. For example, today’s Somalia might be a country because it is on the map, but it is probably not a state, given that even with the assistance of UN Peacekeepers, there are essentially two authorities that claim sovereignty, both of which are ineffective.

(3) Part of membership in that group is a matter of *mutual recognition*. Membership in such groups is “a matter of informal acknowledgement of belonging by others generally, and other members specifically.” Thus, membership in this sort of group is different than being a fan of Botswana’s national soccer team, where I can be a fan without requiring the recognition of other fans (455). Being a member requires that other members see you as one of them. Membership is therefore subjective.

(4) This membership is important for “one’s self-identification.” Margalit and Raz are interested in groups with a ‘high social profile,’ “the membership of which is one of the primary facts by which people are identified, and which form expectations as to what they are like, groups membership of which is one of the primary clues for people generally interpreting the conduct of others” (446). When I tell people that I am a soccer referee, I expect them to form certain perceptions about me, but I would not consider this to be a primary clue to my identity. I would think it odd for someone to see me arguing with my boyfriend and think that I am doing so because, as a referee, order and control are important values to me. However, when I tell people that I am an American, I expect them to use this clue to have a better understanding of who I am, and to use it to interpret my actions. I would not be surprised if a Motswana saw me arguing with my boyfriend and thought that I was doing so because, as an American, I value gender equality in relationships. I think that my being an American explains a lot about the way I view gender.

(5) “Membership is a matter of *belonging*, not of *achievement*” (446, my emphasis).

This means that membership is not based on qualifications that indicate accomplishment, but rather recognition by others that you are a member.

To be a good Irishman, it is true, is an achievement. But to be an Irishman is not. Qualification for membership is usually determined by nonvoluntary criteria. One cannot choose to belong. One belongs because of who one is. One can come to belong to such groups, but only by changing, e.g., by adopting their culture, changing one's tastes and habits accordingly—a very slow process indeed (446-47).

Margalit and Raz point to the involuntary aspects of belonging in order to make the point that they are “suitable for their role as the primary foci of identification” because the focus on belonging makes identity “more secure” and “less liable to be threatened” (447). Accomplishments come and go, but nationality has a far more permanent character. I could stop voting, stop celebrating American independence, and stop taking pleasure in America's accomplishments, and still be an American. Thus, nationalist is a secure place to ground one's identity.

(6) Groups are large and anonymous; “Mutual recognition is secured by the possession of general characteristics,” not secret code words or rituals (447). Though all of the above features might be possible in a large neighborhood or a city, but this does not capture what we think of when we think of a nation. Nations are large, and full of many people. My considering you a member of my nation is not contingent on my knowing you personally.

I find Margalit and Raz's account to be convincing because in addition to giving a way to recognize a nation, they give us an account of why people consider nationality to be of such great importance. Though I am often ashamed of things that the United States does, and though there are many people in the United States that I would rather not be associated with, the fact that I was raised in the United States has had profound impacts on the experiences I have had, the values I hold, and on my expectations. I would probably see the world much differently had I been born and raised in Botswana.

Because of the pervasive way in which culture influences us, Kymlicka says that “the liberal value of freedom of choice has certain cultural preconditions” (1995: 76). He argues that “freedom involves making choices amongst various options, and our societal culture not only provides these options, but also makes them meaningful to us” (83). A Marriage License, as a piece of paper, has no value. What makes it valuable, and what makes homosexual couples fight for the right to have one, is the value that we as a society attach to it. The value is not just in the legal protections afforded by it—it can also be found in the respect afforded to married couples by our culture, the shared understanding of what marriage is by those who participate in or are near the convention, and the lack of judgment passed by those who hold the belief that those who live together unmarried are ‘living in sin.’

So what is a nation, then? I will use ‘nation’ to mean a group of people who mutually recognize each other as members of a deep shared culture, which is pervasive in the sense that it helps shape the identity of its members and serves as their context of choice, and who think of their group as existing in perpetuity. As for the relationship between nations and states, in today’s world, most states have more than one nation. In the United States we have the dominant ‘American’ nation of which I am a member, but we also have many native nations such as the Yupik Eskimos of Alaska, as well as religious nations such as the Amish. In Belgium there is a French nation in the south, a Flemish nation in the north, and a small German nation in the east. In Botswana, there is the dominant Batswana nation, but there are also several smaller nations such as the Kalanga and the San.

My definition has three features that I want to draw attention to. First, though, at first glance, this may appear to be a loose definition that allows in a lot of groups that we would not think of as nations, such as religious groups and elite book clubs, I do not believe that this is the case. Like Margalit and Raz, I do not think that there are *prima facie* reasons for requiring that a nation be confined to a geographical territory (445). But while my definition allows for a lot of variation in the abstract, I do not think that there is as much variation in the world. The reason for this is that having and maintaining a societal culture is difficult, and “given the enormous significance of social institutions in our lives, and in determining our options, any culture which is not a societal culture will be reduced to ever-decreasing marginalization.” Those cultures which survive are most likely to be “culturally distinct, geographically concentrated, and institutionally complete societies” (Kymlicka 1995: 80). To support this point, Kymlicka gives the example of immigrants who come to the United States. Under the system of multiculturalism, “the immigrants’ mother tongue is often spoken at home, and passed on to the children, but by the third generation, English has become the mother tongue, and the original language is increasingly lost” (78). A person who is born to German parents, but raised in the United States where she is forced to speak English in school, with her friends, and in her career is going to have a hard time identifying as German, because her context of choice would be dominated by American culture. Daily interaction impacts the survival of culture. In order for a dominant culture to remain intact, it must generally be practiced in the daily lives of its members.

Second, my definition is rather subjective. Cultural membership has to be subjective because it is “constituted by the shared beliefs of a set of people: a belief that

each belongs together with the rest” (Miller 1988: 236). Though there are often objective considerations such as language, race, dress, culinary traditions, and so on, that point toward the existence of a national culture, these objective elements are neither sufficient nor necessary. What matters most is that people within the cultural mutually recognize each other as members of that culture.

Third, it is not just important that people have access to *a* national culture, it is important that people have access to *their* national culture. As I said before, national culture is a powerful and pervasive force in which we are raised. Not only does it delimit the horizons of our imagination, it also forms a fundamental and generally stable part of our identity. Asking people to change cultures is asking them to abandon a big part of themselves, and asking them to adjust to a whole new context of choice. It is no wonder that so many groups, such as the Native groups of Alaska, have resisted integration into the dominant national culture, even after such drastic measures as isolating Native children at boarding schools so that they fail to learn their national language. This is not to say that switching cultures is impossible; some people have clearly switched cultures, but this does not mean that they did so without high personal cost, and it does not mean that any other people should be reasonably expected to do so.

While it might seem fundamentally illiberal of me to insist that the involuntary fact of to whom a person is born should shape that person’s life-choices, I agree with Kymlicka that it is not. Kymlicka says that, “the freedom which liberals demand for individuals is not primarily the freedom to go beyond one’s language and history, but rather the freedom to move around within one’s societal culture, to distance oneself from particular cultural roles, to choose which features of the culture are most worth

developing, and which are without value” (1995: 90-91). Within the United States, I am free to choose my career, friends, religion, hobbies, social scene, spouse, place of residence, and many other things that will help me pursue my conception of the good life. That I am able to make these choices is a function of the fact that I have a cultural context from which I am able to learn about and evaluate my options. This cultural context is a background condition of my being able to make the choices that the liberal idea of freedom of choice says I should be able to make.

2. Self Government, Self Determination, and National Sovereignty

In this section, I will be talking about three different possible rights, and whether the cosmopolitan should support them. The right to *self government* is the right to be part-author of the laws that apply to you; democracy. The right to *self determination* is the right of a nation to determine what it means to be a member of that nation. The right to *national sovereignty* is the right of a nation to exercise political autonomy over a geographical area; statehood.

I. Self Government

The right to self government is a conceptually independent right, rooted in liberal values. The idea is that since all people are free and equal, laws must respect the liberal principle of legitimacy, that is, they must accord with a constitution “the essentials of which all citizens, as reasonable and rational, can endorse in light of their common human reason” (Rawls 2001, 41). Since I am taking liberal values for granted, I will not here offer an argument to defend them.

The right to self government entails a right to be governed by a democracy. I believe this for three main reasons. First, this is the only way that people can be co-

authors in the laws that apply to them, and ensure that the laws are legitimate. Second, this is the only way that people can exercise their political freedoms, which are an important part of the freedoms to which people are entitled in virtue of their humanity. Third, this is the only way that people can guarantee their freedom and equality. This is an empirical argument, one that has been made for centuries. The idea is that the only way to prevent tyranny by one, a few, or a majority, is to ensure that everyone in the state has a voice.

II. Self Determination

I have established so far that nations have societal cultures which provide for their members a context of choice and help shape their members' identities through institutions and everyday life. This means that societal cultures have a large impact on people's lives. Maragalit and Raz draw two conclusions from this. First, membership in groups is important for people's well-being, and second, "the prosperity of the culture is important to the well-being of its members" (449). The first conclusion seems rather obvious to me. Since it is a fact that individuals live in societal cultures, since most individuals form their conception of the good based on options and values available in their culture, and since individuals identify as members of that culture, it is important to individual well-being that individuals continue to be members of their culture.²

I also agree with the second conclusion. For starters, if a culture is not prospering, then options that were once available to individuals cease to exist. This can happen whether a group is decaying, as alcohol has caused many indigenous groups throughout the world to do, or whether the group faces discrimination, persecuted, or is

² Unless, of course, an individual decides to voluntarily join another culture, at which point being able to join a new culture is of great importance.

forcibly disbanded, as many Native groups were forced to do in the United States. This is especially the case because many of the goods available to individuals involve the cooperation of others. For example, the Pygmy tribes of equatorial Africa are having a very difficult time carrying out group hunts, which require the participation of many tribe members. With Equatorial states putting increasing restrictions on Pygmy lands, such as forcing them out of new National Parks, Pygmies are being forced into a sedentary lifestyle. As more and more members of their community turn to Alcohol, there are less available people to carry out shared institutions (Raffaele, 2008).

I think that the more significant argument for our purposes is what happens to group members whose cultures have decayed or are oppressed. “People’s sense of their own identity is bound up with their sense of belonging to encompassing groups and that their self-respect is affected by the esteem in which these groups are held” which means that “individual dignity and self-respect require that the groups... be generally respected and not be made a subject of ridicule, hatred, discrimination or persecution” (Margalit and Raz 449). In 2001 some teenagers in Anchorage, Alaska drove around in their car and shot Alaska Natives with paint ball guns. On the video tape that they shot, you hear them saying that they are going to go “hunting” for “muktuks” or “drunk Eskimos.” These teenagers bought into racism against Natives, so they decided to have some fun by persecuting them.

Having been raised in Alaska, I have seen first hand what a decaying and oppressed culture can do to people. Many villages have had their populations decline after their members decided to move to the city, and with women more likely to move than men, there has been an increase in single-parent homes (Herald Tribune 2007).

Even more villages have been damaged by alcohol abuse and drugs. Though, thanks to Senator Ted Stevens, there is a federally funded hospital in Anchorage that offers free healthcare to Natives, that is of little help to remote villages. The suicide rates are astonishing. Though Alaska Natives comprise only 16% of Alaska's population, they accounted for 39% of suicides between 1995 and 2006. For youth it was even worse: though Alaska Natives comprise only 19% of the population under the age of 19, they account for 60% of all suicides (AIPC 2006, 12).

The mental illness and alcohol are, in large part, a symptom of the breakdown of a national culture. Young people face a difficult choice between remaining in a dysfunctional village or moving to cities where they have a difficult time competing for jobs and fitting in. This is due to many things such as a lack of educational opportunities in their villages, having to adjust to a different, faster way of doing things, and a lack of a support system; but it is also due in part to the self-esteem problems associated with negative stereotypes of illiterate and drunken Natives, and an expectation of others that they will fail. Young Alaska Natives face a decision of joining a culture that is decaying or a culture that expects them to be less than equals. For many of them, they will lose either way.

This is not to say that all natives are unsuccessful and unhappy; there are many successful Alaska Natives, both in Alaska and in the 'Lower Forty-Eight.' But to measure success in terms of which Native youth 'make it' in the dominant culture would be inappropriate. For Margalit and Raz, "group interests cannot be reduced to individual interests." While they are conceptually connected, they are non-reductive and generally indirect (449-50). Because groups are composed of members, it makes sense that they

would be conceptually connected. However, the fact that groups are comprised of members does not mean that we can reduce the good of the group to the good of individual members. Groups have interests. “It makes sense to talk of a group’s prospering or declining, of actions and policies as serving the group’s interest or of harming it, without having to cash this in terms of individual interests” (449). The idea is that while something such as winning the most metals at the Olympics might increase national prestige and therefore be in interest of the Americans as a group, it probably will not benefit us as individuals. This does not mean that USA should scrap its Olympic training program, and spend the money helping ordinary Americans. Rather, it means that the world should respect Americans and allow us to interpret and pursue our collective interests as we understand them, one of which is athletic success.³

I believe, then, that nations have the right to self determination. They have the right to determine what it means to be a member of a group, and the importance of that right confers on others the obligation to respect that right. The question now becomes to what degree nations may go to ensure their right to self determination.

III. National Sovereignty

To prevent the type of thing that has happened to Alaska Natives from happening to other cultures, and to stop the cycle of oppression and discrimination, non-dominant national groups need political autonomy, or so the instrumentalist argument goes. In defense of the instrumentalist argument, Margalit and Raz say, “sometimes the prosperity of the group and its self-respect are aided by, sometimes they may be impossible to secure without, the group’s enjoying political sovereignty over its own affairs” (450). National

³ This is true provided that the nation not have a ‘pernicious culture’ which exploits or subjugates its members or the members of other nations (Margalit and Raz, 449).

Sovereignty would allow Alaska Natives to pass stricter laws punishing discrimination in Native villages and pass laws protecting their culture, by, for example, banning alcohol. Nevertheless, since this is an instrumental argument, it is also sensitive to counterarguments about the problems with national sovereignty. There would be significant obstacles to Native sovereignty, such as difficulty establishing a successful economy given the enormous distances over which they would have to ship goods, and the high costs of importing goods to remote areas of Alaska. In cases where there are scarce resources, an inaccessible location, underdeveloped political infrastructure, and where there has been a significant brain drain, membership in a larger nation can be beneficial.⁴

I believe that the nation should decide whether or not they should have national sovereignty because I believe that in addition to the instrumental reasons discussed above, there are intrinsic reasons for nations' self determination. National minorities can claim that since there is more than one nation under the current government, and since "democracy is the rule of 'the people,'" the national minority should have the right to rule itself (Kymlicka 1995: 182). "National minorities claim that they are distinct 'peoples', with inherent rights of self government." The fact that they are currently a part of a larger nation does not mean that they chose to renounce that right in full, and therefore they would like to ensure that some or all of their right to self government remains within their own control (181). The 'American people' do not speak for the Yupik Eskimos, so the Yupik Eskimos should have the ability to govern themselves.

⁴ Assuming that the dominant nation is willing to end discrimination and oppression. In the case that they are not, this becomes a very difficult calculation which I believe should be made by the national group in question.

However, this is not an argument for national sovereignty, but rather for democracy in general—it amounts to saying that people should have a say in the governmental decisions that are made on their behalf. It is therefore an argument for the political freedoms that are a part of contemporary liberalism. While there are certainly arguments for why groups should have a say in political decisions that affect their group, “there is nothing here to suggest that this should be done in a political framework exclusive to one’s group or dominated by it” (Margalit and Raz 453). Were it the case that the Yupik people had group rights, the ability to participate in the political process, and that the US government had their interests in mind when making decisions, then their right to self government would be satisfied. So maybe the onus lies with the US to make its governance more inclusive of Native interests.

Then again, the right to self determination has a subjective element. It is not enough to *have* one’s right to self determination satisfied, one must also *believe* that one has a (fair) say in the political process.⁵ Empirically, denying a group that believes it has the right to govern itself as an independent state is costly if not impossible. Imposing common citizenship tends to “increase conflict” in multinational states. “It is no longer possible (if it ever was) to eliminate the sense of identity which underlies these groups’ desire to form their own national societies.” Therefore, we should view these claims as permanent, and treat national minorities accordingly (Kymlicka 1995: 184-85).

⁵ I include the word ‘fair’ in parenthesis because it seems like the correct modifier. It is not enough to have ‘a say’ in the political process, because even if a minority that comprises 10% of the population has a say, that say will constantly be overridden by the other 90%. Moreover, having an ‘equal’ say is also not adequate because the word ‘equal’ is ambiguous in this case. ‘Equal’ can either mean ‘one person, one vote’ which will lead to marginalization as stated above, or it can mean ‘equal’ from the perspective of what each group is due. I use the term ‘fair’ to mean the latter form of equality, but also to emphasize the subjective nature of the right to self governance.

Normatively, since group membership is, itself, subjective because it relies on mutual recognition, and since individuals' identities are fundamental to their wellbeing, and tied to the wellbeing of their national group, group members' "subjective responses [to the way they are treated], justified or not, are the ultimate reality so far as the wellbeing of those who have them is concerned" (Margalit and Raz 454). If my friend Abel, a Kalanga in Botswana, believes that he is being persecuted by the majority Batswana culture, then whether or not this is the case, he will suffer. Therefore, the Kalanga and not the Batswana should make the decision about whether or not they should become independent. This is not to say, however, that if the Kalanga are mistaken, the Batswana should not make an attempt to correct them. Removing a mistaken perception could be another way to address the conflict (454).

So far I have established that (a) people are entrenched in particular nations; (b) cultures are important to a person's context of choice and identity; (c) the wellbeing of each culture is of deep-seated importance to its members; (d) people have the right to self government; (e) nations have the right to self determination;(f) when a nation feels threatened or oppressed, it has the right to national sovereignty. I have said nothing so far to indicate how important this right is. I have the right to retain the money I earn at my job, but that does not stop the government from exercising its right to part of my paycheck every month in taxes. The gravity of this right is going to depend on the rights of others.

IV. The Rights of Others

If nations and states correlated perfectly, this would not be an issue. Indeed, if nations and distinct geographical territories correlated nearly-perfectly, this would not be much of an issue either. Unfortunately, nations can be spread all over a territory, or all over several territories, and rarely is there an area in which only one nation resides.⁶ The rights of others, then, are of concern in two ways. First, they need to be taken into account practically when a nation makes the decision of whether it wants to be self-governing. Second, the inquiring nation must take into account the rights of all individuals who will be affected by the decision.

The practical issues involved are immense and tedious. First, there are territorial considerations: does the nation inhabit a single territory? and does the territory have the resources necessary to sustain an economy? Margalit and Raz suggest that any secessionist group should be a 'substantial majority' in the territory which they wish to claim (458). Second, how is secession to be decided? Given that the decision is essentially irreversible, it is reasonable to expect that an 'overwhelming majority' must be in favor of it (458). Third, what means are permissible in the pursuance of secession? The best answer is 'ethical means,' but what those means turn out to be are dependent on the situation. It is certainly unethical to kill non-members or force them from their homes. Offering non-members just compensation to leave would probably be an option, but only if the fourth condition—that the group is "likely to respect the basic rights of its inhabitants, so that its establishment will do good rather than add to the ills of the world" (459)—is met. Fifth, other nations have a duty to respect the establishment of this new nation, and perhaps to aid it (especially on the part of the past government, if it was

⁶ This assumes that immigrants are members of their former nation. If Kymlicka is correct, and voluntary immigrants are attempting to assimilate into their new culture, then there are more nations in the world, so I might change the word 'rarely' to 'only sometimes.'

oppressing the nation) (460-61). This is not meant to be a full list of the practical considerations involved, nor are the items in the list intended to be full arguments. Rather, this is intended as an overview or a sampling of the types of issues involved.

The second issue listed above is of more interest to my project. As I stated before, I am committed to the idea that all people have the right to self government, by which I mean the right to take part in the making of political decisions that affect them. They also have the right to self determination, by which I mean the right to determine what it means to be a member of a group. As I stated before, having the right to self government and the right to self determination does not necessarily mean having a right to be governed by one's own nation. If a state is willing to accommodate cultural difference, then this is something that a nation thinking about secession should take into consideration, as the decision to secede affects not only the secessionists and non-secessionists within a particular territory, but also all members of the state from which they would like to secede. Secessionist claims aim to "weaken the bonds with the larger political community" and therefore damage the unity which is necessary to ensure cooperation over time (Kymlicka 1995: 181). In cases where a group has decided to secede, "the sense of solidarity needed to promote the public good and to tackle urgent issues of justice is lacking" (186). When unity within the larger state is not possible, secessionist nations have a much stronger claim for secession because the harms incurred which I sketched above are easier to justify, seeing as how there is no acceptable alternative.

So then, the question arises, what is necessary for political unity? Descriptively, citizenship is required. If people are united by common citizenship, then they are by

definition united. Citizenship, however, has to be based on something. It is not as though we could pick a few thousand people at random, put them on an island, tell them they are all ‘citizens’ and expect that they would be united together in a state (though we could probably expect them to unite in an attempt to escape). Society is fundamentally, according to Rawls, “a fair system of social cooperation over time from one generation to the next” (Rawls 2001: 5). Something must provide the “sense of solidarity and unity that is necessary for generating the requisite level of mutual respect and trust among individuals” (Tan 2008: 163). There are three different forces to which we can look: universal values, shared political culture, and national culture. I will address each of these in turn.

A. Universal Values

Martha Nussbaum and others have argued that we should orient ourselves towards becoming ‘world citizens’ in a metaphorical sense. The community of our common humanity “is, fundamentally, the source of our moral obligations” (Cohen: 7), so world citizenship should be the focus of our civic education (11). The idea is that since we are all human, and since the world is getting smaller and smaller, we should focus on universal rights and try to make the world a better place for everyone. There are many problems to this approach. First, universal rights have yet to be clearly defined. Those rights that get the title ‘universal’ are generally Western, and generally espoused by those people that have power, and do not speak for everyone (c.f. Butler in Cohen 1996). Moreover, what those rights turn out to be is going to have a great impact on how we should look at the world. If, for example, being a member of a cultural group is a universal right, as arguments in the first section of this paper suggest that it maybe should

be, then the world should be organized into national cultures so that they can continue to exist.

Second, a world united on the basis of universal values presupposes a world that shares a conception of universal values. Even if a set of tenable universal values exists, the world cannot unite under these values unless the world shares them. I believe that even in such a world, there would be nations that reject these values (because, for example, their idea of universal values is that their members matter most). I am not saying that the existence of such cultures is a good thing; I am not, in theory, opposed to a world where everyone respects a set of universal rights based on the liberal idea of freedom. As a result, I am not, in theory, opposed to engaging in a process that would make all groups liberal. However, it seems to me that such a process would destroy many valuable forms of life, and would hurt many people. The reason that it would hurt people is because the process of cultural change is a difficult one, and many valuable forms get lost in the future. Imagine a hypothetical Alaska Native group that routinely subjugated and oppressed women (in reality, most Alaska Native groups treated women very well). Even if the individuals in this group would be better off in a society where women were treated well, this outcome is by no means guaranteed. Processes of transition can create 'lost generations' who have no national culture at all, and given that I have argued that national culture is of great importance to national identity, transition can seriously harm people and their children. This is not to say that nations should not try to bring other nations under the umbrella of these universal values, and not to say that this problem will not exist under other systems. Rather, my argument here is that getting the world to share values and work together is difficult if not impossible.

Third, it ignores the fact that people identify with specific cultures. In order for that national culture to continue existing, it must pass information about what it means to be a member of that culture to the next generation. Since many cultures are particularistic, and not universalistic, this could change the culture significantly. Many of the things that make cultures valuable derive from this particularism. Part of the value of being a Yupik Eskimo is hunting with other Yupik Eskimos and learning your particular history. It takes a lot of time and resources to inculcate a child in a particular history and national culture. By spending time teaching a child about other ways of life and teaching a child other languages, the parents and elders lose time to inculcate their children in their national culture. Moreover, a strongly universal focus can discredit this type of national culture by telling the youth of each culture that the world matters more than their cultural group, as a result of which they should value the universal culture more.

Universalism can be seen as a feature of particular cultures. The United States has a rather universalistic culture. We believe that we advocate for values that the world should share. But even this universalism is based, in part, on the idea of American exceptionalism. *We* are the great experiment. *We* showed the world that one can revolt against tyranny. It is *our* mission to spread freedom and democracy to the world. “Perhaps the greatest blessing of (mature) nationhood is precisely that it can retreat below the surface of consciousness and allow space for the development of idealistic universalism, very much in the way that successful and sustained military defense can allow space for the development of a civilized distaste of war” (Canovan 1996: 79). Perhaps people must be members of stable nations before any universalization of values can take place.

B. Political Culture

Jürgen Habermas contends that only ‘civic patriotism’ is necessary to unite people. Habermas believes that the idea of citizenship can be separated entirely from a “prepolitical community integrated on the basis of descent, shared tradition, and common language.” For him, “the nation of citizens finds its identity not in ethnic and cultural commonalities but in the practice of citizens who actively exercise their rights to participation and communication” (289). Habermas believes that nationalism is the result of historical process, and that nationalism became strong because of the need to “foster people’s identification with a role that demanded a high degree of personal commitment,” and that this commitment served as the vehicle for republicanism. But now that republicanism is here to stay, nationalism is no longer necessary. The two are not conceptually connected. Rather, we should “cut its umbilical links to the womb” of nationalism (289). In other words, nationalism is an outdated form of unification, one that history has shown can be very dangerous, that can be replaced by the idea of citizenship. Our common citizenship can serve as the ties that bind us together.

Habermas contends that “the legally institutionalized role of citizen must be embedded in the context of a liberal political culture,” by which he means “the *supportive spirit* of a consonant background of legally noncoercible motives and attitudes of a citizenry oriented toward the common good” (293). It does not matter whether citizens share the same language or ethnic background, what matters is that “every citizen be socialized into a common political culture” (193-94). A Motswana and a Kalanga might have very different national cultures, but so long as they are raised in the same political culture, they can be united as fellow Botswana.

Habermas uses the examples of the United States and Switzerland to show how people with very different national cultures have been able to maintain a shared political culture. I am not convinced that the United States has succeeded either at protecting national identities or creating a common political culture. The US has routinely oppressed native groups, and has done little to rectify the historical discrimination. As I said before, Alaska Natives find their cultures in disarray, thanks in large part to the United States of America.

But maybe Habermas is only talking about the dominant American culture. We have, after all, successfully welcomed wave of immigrants after wave of immigrants. Nevertheless, we have not incorporated these immigrants as separate nations but instead integrated them into the universalist-ish American dominant culture. “It has become clear that the overwhelming majority of immigrants want to integrate, and have in fact integrated, even during periods of large-scale influxes” (Kymlicka 1995: 178, referencing Harles 1993). Part of being an American (in the dominant cultural understanding) is believing that *everyone* can be an American. People that voluntarily immigrate to the United States do so with the understanding that they will have to live with people that are different from them. They already buy the premise of our melting-pot/salad-bowl identity. The fact that they believe in our shared political culture can be inferred from their willingness to come to the United States.

The real challenge to the political culture argument are places, such as Quebec, where people share a political culture and yet still are seriously considering secession. Despite the “pronounced convergence in values between English- and French-speaking Canadians over the last thirty years,” there has been a consistent growth in nationalist

sentiments in Quebec (188). Kymlicka says that this is a part of a general trend. The Flemish and French-speaking Belgians are probably more similar now in terms of political values than they have ever been in the past, and yet the past year has seen an upsurge in separatist sentiment. Shared values, it seems, are insufficient for political unity (188).

B. National Culture

“The missing ingredient,” according to Kymlicka, “seems to be the idea of a *shared identity*.” People have to want to identify with people before they want to share a country with them (188). They must recognize those people with whom they interact in political affairs as members in the same political project. This is much easier to do in nation-states where everyone shares the same cultural identity, but it is also possible in multinational states. In the United States, we are able to recognize one another as co-citizens because we identify with our special place in history as a beacon of freedom. In Botswana, people rally around the fact that they are the most stable country in Africa. On the other hand, the existence of such states does little to guide those multinational states who do not have a shared identity.

But now we have a chicken and egg situation. Which comes first: nations that are able to unite together to develop a shared identity, or a shared identity that allows people to come together and unite? Were it not for the shared identity, it seems unlikely that the United States would have been able to remain united, despite the proximity. Were it not for the territorial proximity, it seems unlikely that Botswana would be united in one nation, and been able to create a shared identity.

In some states, it is probably impossible to cultivate a shared identity, even if the groups come together physically. Sometimes histories of oppression can create resentment which national minorities cannot overcome. Sometimes nations have national groups that are diverse not only in culture, but also in their views of how the state should be united. But given that we live in the world, these groups might have to coexist for a long time; prolonged exposure might cause the nations to come to some sort of working consensus on what the state is about. Since we cannot force groups to have a shared identity, and since not every minority can have a state, it is much more likely that the proximity will be a unifying force.

Conclusion: From the Perspective of Global Justice

I have argued so far that nationality matters, and that people are bound to particular nations in fundamental and important ways. I further argued that since all people have the right to self government and nations have the right to self determination, and since nationality is of great consequence to people and nations have collective interests, nations have the right to national sovereignty. So what, if anything, is the significance of this from the perspective of global justice?

Individuals qua members of particular nations are still individuals with an essential interest in living good lives. But that interest is in part dictated by the context of choice provided by a person's nationality. Out of respect for individuals, we must therefore respect nations. Each nation should be left free to pursue its collective interests. The Yupik Eskimos should, so far as possible, have the autonomy necessary to determine what Yupik Eskimo-ness is, and to pursue it.

Alas, we do not live in an ideal world, and there exist groups that lack this autonomy. We cannot expect universal values or common political cultures to unite people. Unity is rather a subjective phenomenon, dependent on mutual respect and identification. Those nations that desire autonomy therefore, and that can create territorial states without infringing too much on the rights of others, should be allowed and enabled to do so.

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