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*Political Theory*

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**How Successful is Nation-State?**

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NENAD MIŠČEVIĆ

Department of Philosophy  
Central European University, Budapest

Summary

The paper discusses pro-nationalist authors (D. Miller, A. Oldenquist, M. Canovan) who claim that states formed around a particular ethno-cultural nation have been historically successful, in terms of economic success, justice, democracy and solidarity. It is argued that their claims fail: in typical and well-known cases there is an inverse correlation between the strength of nationalism and the satisfaction of demands of justice, democracy and solidarity. Some hypotheses about the causes for this inverse relation are proposed.

*Introduction*

Modern nation-state is sometimes seen as a purely “civic” entity. More often, it is admitted that typical modern states “belong” to a particular ethno-cultural nation. The French state is predominantly French, and the German one German. Theoreticians who defend pro-nationalist views capitalize on this admission. A prominent line of thought stresses various social and moral successes of modern nation-states and attributes them to their ethno-national orientation. In this paper I shall critically discuss this line of thought and argue that it is wrongheaded.

By pro-nationalist authors I shall understand those writers (like e.g. Miller, 1995, MacIntyre, 1994, and Oldenquist 1997) who endorse at least some typical nationalist claims. Here is a very brief summary of the basic claims normally made by nationalists. First, the preservation of a given ethno-national culture--in a relatively pure state--is a good independent from the will of the members of the culture, which ought to be assured by adequate means. Second, the statist thesis: In order that such a community should preserve its own identity it normally has to assume (always or at least in most cases) the political form of a state. It is the state of the particular ethno-nation, which should promote its interests, and fight all the interests that oppose it, including those of its own members who happen not to coincide with the interest of the nation. The state should enjoy full sovereignty and expand if possible. Third, The ethno-national community has the right in respect to any third party and to its own members to have an

ethno-national state. Once a national state has been formed, and the dominant ethnic community has established itself as its “rightful owner”, it has to guard its full sovereignty. It has a duty to promote the ethno-national culture of its owners, in a recognizable form, defending it from spontaneous mixing with foreign influences, preferring a kind of isolationism if the purity of national tradition is threatened. The citizens of the state have the right and obligation to favor their own ethnic culture in relation to any other. Some pro-nationalist theoreticians accept only very moderate and watered down versions of these claims (see papers collected in Couture et. Al., 1998, and in Mišćević 2000).

### *The pro-nationalist argument*

Here is what the pro-nationalist writers typically claim. We have been witnessing more than two hundred years of successful formation and spread of the nation-state. As a historical reminder, let me quote great French historian of the nineteenth century, Jules Michelet; in spite of its somewhat sentimental tone, his view on the unification of France is typical of what any nationalist would like to say about the successful creation of an ethno-national state:

“This unification of France, this destruction of parochial spirit is often considered as the simple result of the conquest of provinces. But a conquest can glue together, chain together the hostile parts, never unite them: the conquest and the war have only opened provinces to each other, and has given to isolated populations an opportunity to meet each other; the quick and lively sympathy of Gallic genius, its social instinct, has done the rest of the work. What a strange event! These provinces, of differing climate, customs and language have understood each other, fallen in love with each other, felt solidarity towards each other...” (Michelet, *Histoire de la France*, t. III; 1844, *Histoire de la France*, Anthologized in Saly et. al. 1996, p. 115) Saly, P., Gerard, A., Gervais, C. and Rey, M. P., *Nations et nationalismes en Europe 1848-1914*, my translation”

Contemporary sociologists and philosophers express similar thoughts in a different rhetorical garb. They stress the advantages of nation-forming along ethno-national lines. By offering to people a culture in language(s) they actually spoke, by encouragement of the formation of more local elites, directly in contact with their electorate, and by promoting capitalist mode of production it has enabled the massive democratization. As many sociologists, prominently Anderson and Gellner, have pointed out, democracy and nationalism go together. Let me paint in more detail the advantages offered by ethnic ties, such as ties of actually spoken common language. Some of the ties can simply serve as convenient signs helping to find the right partner for interaction (for example, if you are an immigrant worker in a far-away country, the cheapest and best thing to do is to look for your compatriots. More importantly, there are substantial advantages offered by national ties, which are nowadays discussed in the literature on the rationality of nationalism. The community of language offers obvious opportunities for communication, and the community of culture and tradition opens routes for exchange. (see Coleman 1995, Hardin 1995 a et b). even at this very general level one can see that such opportunities are not offered by say ties of age, of gender or of profession. Most importantly, no matter how great number of persons is tied to us with such ties, the community based

upon them cannot become a political community, since it is not capable of autonomy and of reproductive sufficiency (obviously, a community of teenagers founded upon the solidarity of age does not survive a few years, a community of philosophy teachers is not economically self-sufficient, and so on.) In contrast, the ethnic network is often endowed with a size and variety which allow the constitution of a durable political community, self-sufficient and capable to reproduce itself.<sup>1</sup>

A unitary language offers opportunities of unified market, and of economic development, which usually result in more democracy and more opportunities. The importance of such links has been noticed by classics in the field like Gellner and Anderson. Not only has nation-state been successful in the past, the pro-nationalist argument continues, it promises to be essential for the moral life of communities in the future; it is the only political form capable of protecting communities from the threats of globalization, both from the cynical and unscrupulous exploitation orchestrated by trans-national and multinational companies, and the elitist cultural cosmopolitanism that leaves to the masses only a bland, McDonald's pseudo culture (see Rorty, 1998).

You might retort that nationalism has also produced a lot of evil. But nationalism should not be judged by excesses of some nationalists. Here is a formulation by Schnapper: "Once a political order is organized by nations, wars become national. This does not mean that the national principle *as such* is responsible for outbursts of conflicts. When political order is organized in nations, the wars are national; while if was grounded in dynastic religious or imperial principles, the wars were dynastic, religious or imperial." (La Communaute, p. 12-13, my translation). Of course, she does not mean ethno-nation, but we can extend her point to ethno nation as well. Indeed, very often, nationalism is innocent, and its excesses are a natural reaction to utmost oppression. Also, as Gellner has pointed out, once a community achieves the status a nation-state, the initial excesses tend to disappear; they are just ugly excrescences, not essential to nationalism. The total track record of nationalism is very successful and promising indeed.

### *Promises, promises*

Let me pass directly to criticism. The most general consideration against the nationalist is in this context the already mentioned Gellner's reminder about overcrowding discussed in chapter on self-determination. It shows that nationalist policies cannot be generalized, and used in the long run, since there is a natural limit to their viability. Remember, our even-handed nationalist is proposing his principles as generally

<sup>1</sup> The point seems obvious. Still, one hears reactions to particular nationalisms, for instance from feminist activist, which implicitly deny it. Here is a typical expression of wonder occasioned by the dissolution of Yugoslavia: "Why were Croatian mothers who lost their children in war still voting for the nationalist government? Why were they not more /solidarizing with Serbian mothers in the same kind of situations, than with the nationalist army officers who were partially guilty for their loss?" The question has a certain psychological plausibility, but the political answer is clear: the solidarity of grief between mothers on the opposing sides of the divide in a nationalist war has no relevance for determining the shape of a political, state-like community to which they can possibly aspire to belong.

valid and obligatory; now if a proposal is impossible to actualize it cannot be morally binding. If it is known to be impossible it should not be seriously proposed and advertised by political thinkers.

Consider now the particular points made by the pro-nationalist. As regards the first one, two hundred years of alleged success, it is not clear that the successful formation of national states has been achieved by the means that are themselves morally in the clear. Some of the most politically successful nation states have been formed by the use of military and police force--including massive massacres, ethnic cleansing, decades of severe oppression--that makes the result a moral failure. In spite of the known facts, nationalist historians have been inventing explanations designed to preserve the appearance of the spontaneous success, as the quotation from Michelet offered above amply shows. Michelet probably knew that provinces have been conquered by force, "opened" to each other not by friendship but by police oppression, that people in the greatest part of France in his own time did not speak French, but various dialects or languages ("patois") that had little to do with the "general, universal spirit of the country", and that most brutal methods had to be applied to vanquish the "fatality of particular places" and replace it with a unitary, centralized will of the Paris government. It is obvious that such nationalist violence in the service of the creation and preservation of nation-states is not a thing of the past; witness the examples of former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. It is the burden of the nationalist to show that such massive violent episodes are not endemic to nationalism, given that nationalist outbursts take exactly such a shape; no proof of innocence has been offered, and we have grave reasons to doubt that it can be offered.. Let me quote as a reminder the beginning of the summary of the results of nationalist conflicts in former Yugoslavia by Timothy Garton Ash, an impartial and knowledgeable observer:

In the last decade of the twentieth century, this European country has been torn apart. At least 150,000, and perhaps as many as 250,000, men, women and children have died in the process. And how they have died: with their eyes gouged out or their throats cut with rusty knives, women after deliberate ethnic rape, men with their own severed genitalia stuffed into their mouths. More than two million former Yugoslavs have been driven from their homes by other former Yugoslavs, many deprived of everything but what they could carry in precipitous flight. (Cry, the Dismembered Country, *The New York Review of Books*, January 14, 1999).

In short, the violence that often accompanies nationalist uprisings, counts heavily against the very idea of nationalism being a moral and political success. To stay for a while with these threatening realities of the actual nationalism-in-the-street (as opposed to sensitive and civilized nationalism of academics), the dream of homogenous ethno-national state trumpeted by usual secessionist propaganda is a tantalizing illusion. Very often, the goal appears very close at hand: one just need a bit of political will and stamina, and the state will be created in all its sublime purity! Nationalists concentrate their propaganda upon the easy tasks and downplay the difficult ones (ethnically homogenous Croatia is a much easier project – although still quite costly – than ethnically homogenous Bosnia, or even ethnically homogenous regions of Bosnia; however, those aspiring to ethnic Croatian state knew they would have to come to grips with the difficult problem sooner or later). The tantalizing quality of the goal might be partly respon-

sible for the passion, brutality and readiness to sacrifice oneself and others in order to achieve it. (The economists would speak of “sunk costs” in this context: given that so much has been already invested into the task, it is hard to give up, even if the odds seem less and less favorable.)

Consider next the Schnapper argument, concerning the permanence of conflicts. It is not valid: from the fact that violence and injustice had been taking non-national forms in a more distant past, for instance imperial or religious ones, it does not follow that nation is innocent when they do take the national form. The Catholic Church is not innocent in relation to crusades and religious wars, and to claim that “church *en tant que telle*” is indeed innocent is to give up dealing with concrete realities in favor of whitewashed abstract ones. Similarly, to claim in relation to nationalistic wars that they have nothing to do with “the national as such” is to postulate an unrealistically abstract item in order to exculpate the existing ones (Analogously, a sociologist might claim that mafia, *en tant que telle* has nothing to do with mob killings; it just does its business, and the killings are accidental to it. When organized criminal had other forms than the one of mafia, the killing was done by them. This does not mean that mafia is not responsible for the massacres.)

What about democracy? In the next chapter we shall raise the principled question about the relation of democratic and nationalistic principles. Here we just review historical facts. Do democracy and nationalism go together sufficiently often to warrant the nationalist’s moral optimism? Has nationalism consistently promoted democracy? The alternative reading of the same history would have it differently: countries which already had conditions for democracy sufficiently developed, that had capitalist or proto-capitalist economies, educated local elites, and other preconditions for democratic public life, were countries in which national liberation has resulted with the democratic form of government. Countries not satisfying these conditions did not profit from nationalism; on the contrary. Take the best known example: the history of the first half of the twentieth century in Central and Eastern Europe is the history of quasi-fascist or fascist governments arising from nationalistic outbursts partly causing and partly following the dissolution of multi-ethnic empires. The newly created states in the same region now do their best to avoid the Western pressure to recognize the minority rights, one of the cornerstones of contemporary democracy. (Take the example of Bulgaria: the ruling party, UDF, and its allies “believe that there are no minorities in Bulgaria and the signing of the Convention for Minorities’ Rights is simply the prerequisite for Bulgaria’s business hopes in Europe” writes a Bulgarian journalist, G. Koritarov in *Warreport*, nov. 1997, No. 56, p.19. The activists of minority parties are being arrested, and the parties themselves are considered illegal. The pattern is of course general, and Bulgaria just follows suit.). It seems thus that there is no intrinsic link between nationalism and democracy.

The point about the fever of nationalism disappearing once the state is created is often made. Take a recent example, describing the democratization of South Caucasus: “As the fanatical nationalism of the early 1990s starts to fade, rights for those ethnic minorities that remain are less vulnerable to political exploitation than they once were” (F. Corley, in *Warreport*, nov. 1997, No. 56, p.28). But is the improvement a *result* of nationalism? Hardly indeed. The appeal to Gellner’s authority in matters of disappear-

ance of the initial nationalist excesses is not really legitimate. Gellner's overarching point is that the social function of nationalist ideology has *little to do with nation, but a lot to do with capitalism and economy, and distribution of power and that therefore the excesses disappear once the nation-state is formed*. It cannot therefore be legitimately used to promote nationalist principles into the cornerstone of durable politics.

There is a further problem for the nationalist appealing to the success of contemporary nation-state (apart from the issue of Gellner's authority). Is it really ethno-national in the sense that interests our nationalist? One could argue that many of the most successful states of the contemporary world are not typically ethno-national: Switzerland and the United States, certainly are not the nationalist's paradise (these are two countries in which it is even not clear what group counts as a nation). Moreover, other successful states that are traditionally more bound to a particular culture, say Germany and France, have become culturally pluralistic to the extent that hardly justifies using their example as paradigm for any kind of nationalist policies.

The further point concerns the world-wide spread of nation-state as the dominant political form. It should offer no ground for pride to the ethno-nationalist, since most states outside Europe and North-America are *not* ethno-national states in his sense, even much less than the Western countries mentioned in the above paragraph. In Africa, and Asia, the territories of most states typically cut across ethnic boundaries, so that local nationalist writers bitterly complain that that the states are a-national or even anti-national (in the relevant sense of ethno-nationality, that we are discussing). In Latin America the particular nations have early and quickly emerged out of artificial territorial divisions, quite in contrast to the usual assumptions of nationalist sociologists about the original and irreducible character of nation.

The thoughtful nationalist should be well-aware of a further difficulty that awaits him if he appeals to socio-economic considerations. The nation-states of average size have perhaps been ideal in the past, given the resources of economy and of communication. Note that the model of the world as consisting of closed sovereign states has been promoted into the dominant legal model as early as 1648, the year of the peace of Westphalia. Since those times, both the world economy and the technology of war, of industry and of communications have changed drastically. Why think that the old form is going to be successful in the millennium to come?

Well, the nationalist appeals to the threats of globalization. Consider first the danger from trans-national and multinational companies. I agree that the danger is real. Now, is the isolationism the only or the only right response? Many authors feel that it is not, that *global dangers require a global democratic control*.

What about the elitist and assimilationist cultural cosmopolitanism? We shall dedicate a whole chapter to the issue, but here is a quick reminder of a nice example of what the cosmopolitanism in arts is like: the Italian conductor Claudio Abado as the new director of the Berliner Philharmoniker makes them play much more French music--not Italian one-- than before; especially Ravel, whose preponderant taste is famously for Spanish music. Now, what is wrong about this? Is such a performance really a part of an assimilationist aggression? Should only Spanish musicians perform Spanish-sounding music? Should Ravel be censured for his love of a "foreign" tradition?. Call it as you

may, the actual high culture is world-bound, and it is downright barbaric to criticize it for this. (I shall expand upon this, and the following point in the last chapter). Consider now the bland, McDonald's pseudo-culture. Compare it with national mass 'culture': say a McDonald's with a Bavarian Bierstube, and soap-operas with the savage hoodlum customs accompanying important football matches in Britain, Italy and in my country. For my part, I prefer soap-opera and Disney over bloody fights of nationalistic football-fans. All in all, the appeal to the alleged success appears to be rather thin on the ground. The moral failures of nationalism in this century seem to have been much more serious than its successes, and its promise does not look much better.

This ends our all to brief discussion of the more narrowly political arguments in favor of the nationalist program. We have started with the line that most often comes to mind when speaking of new nations, i.e. the one appealing to the right of self-determination. The right has been enshrined in important documents of the international community, but only under rather strict conditions. It turns out that it is not of much help to the nationalist in its general form. Next, we have considered its most plausible sub-variant, i.e. the right to collective self-defense in the context of ongoing injustice. There it did sound *justified, but on non-nationalistic grounds, those of liberty and equality*. On the factual side, again, it seems that the members of a given groups are probably going to be ready to struggle for separate a nation-state mostly in situation of general discrimination and of serious threat, where exactly such non-nationalistic considerations justify their struggle. Finally, the justification is in terms of lesser evil: secession is a remedy and nothing more. It cures nationalist evil (on the aggressors side) with a nationalist response (on the side of the victim); a prevention of nationalist excesses would be in general much better solution, if obtainable. We have finally considered the claims of nationalists for the spectacular historical successes of their program, coupled with promises that success will stay with them. It has turned out that these reasons might appear persuasive at a first glance, but they don't really hold water.

### *Does nationalism support liberal-democratic values?*

Let us now pass to the morally most important claims, concerning the liberal-democratic credentials of nationalism. They center around the idea that nationalism is successful in helping to promote basic liberal-democratic values.<sup>2</sup> Here is the main line of argument. The critics of nationalist ties sometimes think that they are a lamentable phenomenon, to be checked and controlled by liberal-democratic institutions. A liberal-nationalist ad hoc compromise is therefore a possibility, maybe an expedient one, but it is certainly not the best option for the liberal democrat to take. In contrast to this picture of nationalism as a danger to be kept under control, I want to suggest a very different metaphor: nationalist sentiment is a source of energy that can be harnessed for liberal-democratic aims, a "battery" to use M.Canovan's metaphor. I want moreover to point that it is perhaps the *only* such source available until the present time, and the liberal-

<sup>2</sup> I rely on Kymlicka's excellent presentation of this cluster of claims, from his lectures at CEU, February 2000.

democrat should do well to use it. Let me then start, by assuming that the central liberal-democratic values are social justice, democracy and freedom.

Start with justice, the pro-nationalist suggests. The liberal justice requires at minimum some equality of opportunity, and is habitually taken also to include a degree of protection of welfare of the worse-off citizens. The implementation of these sub-goals requires several conditions. A foremost one is a degree of solidarity: the better-off members of society are required to accept principles and practice of redistribution that takes away some of their wealth and channels it toward satisfying the needs of the poorer ones. Now, human solidarity is a limited resource, especially a durable solidarity with more distant human beings, not personally known nor in any simple way related to the person exercising solidarity. “We are experiencing these days a weakening of civic ties”, writes Schnapper (*La Communauté*, p.11, my translation). There is an elegant way for the liberal democrat to solve this problem, that has proved well in the recent past: the ethno-national solidarity is a powerful motive for a more egalitarian distribution (The British philosopher David Miller argues that the functioning of welfare state presupposes that its “members recognize such obligations of justice to one another”, and that “national communities are indeed of this kind” (*On Nationality*, OUP, 1995, p. 93). He is joined in these matters by his colleagues N. McCormick, K. Nielsen and to some extent R. Rorty, who in his recent book “Achieving our nation” enjoins the Left to take the path of national(istic) solidarity. In short, nation-states centered around particular communities of language offer a promise of a more just society, and should be appealing for the leftists among liberals, not just to a more conservative and traditionalist liberals.

This liberal-democratic potential of nationalism seems to bear testimony to the existence of close link between love for nation and love for justice. Montesquieu has famously identified the love of one’s country with the love of its just laws; his insight has been prophetic, and is of utmost importance for contemporary politics.

Nationalism serves democracy as well. It is itself democratic, to start with. As J. Couture puts it (in Mišćević, ed. 1999), her liberal nationalism “sees the nation as forming a society committed to the freedoms and rights characteristically granted in liberal constitutional democracies and affording all its members equal democratic rights and freedoms. What is nationalist in liberal nationalism is that it sees such a liberal society as a society whose members are sharing – or wanting to share – in a common culture, language, history, self-perception, institutions, and some collective overall projects for their society, including the project to secure – or to gain – political sovereignty.” Even the minimal effort need for the functioning of democracy, namely the one invested in voting, needs some motivation. The feeling of belonging to a community guarantees such a motivation. Also a minimally successful functioning of democracy demands a measure of trust: when my party loses, I have to trust the new winners they will play by the rules; otherwise it is more reasonable to break the rules first, and just refuse to turn over the power. Trust is, however, a relatively rare commodity (like solidarity).

Now, the trust in co-nationals is a well-documented phenomenon. Trust is equally important for the functioning of a richer sort of democracy, the one based upon the common deliberation of citizens. Again, you have to conduct the deliberation in some language or other: language barriers will be barriers to democratic deliberation as well.

They might not be insurmountable, but they exercise a considerable pressure upon the extent and quality of deliberation.

Finally, national belonging is important for democratic freedom, and indeed for two reasons, first, since it provides the context of choice in the form of a repertory of meaningful options, and second since she secures the vital self-respect. As regards the first, a rich national culture should be offering various traditions and patterns of life, that its members know first hand and understand from within. This palette of possibilities is an essential prerequisite for free choice, since in its absence there are no meaningful, fully understood options a citizen can choose from. As regards the second reason, it has to do with our need for recognition: national belonging is so important for individuals that being recognized as a member of a nation is essential for the self-respect of individuals. Equally, if one is discriminated because of one's national belonging the result is specially dramatic, since national belonging has such a wide range of consequences and ramifications.

In conclusion, let us return to the metaphor of the energy source. The pro-nationalist claims that nationalism has served liberal-democratic purposes well. There might be other sources but why not trust the one that has proved reliable and has functioned well? Don't throw the battery away before you are certain there are alternative energy sources, is the pro-nationalist's recommendation.

### *Equality, democracy and freedom*

How should we assess the energy metaphor? There is an element of truth to it: nationalism does energize its followers. The issue is in what direction or directions. To start with, some of the most energetic nationalisms have been authoritarian, or straightforwardly fascist. Indeed, nationalism has sometimes been *the only source of energy for otherwise completely intolerable regimes and arrangements*: had it not been for nationalism, Milošević would not have an hour of chance to rule Serbia. A more balanced conclusion would then be that nationalism does provide a source of energy, but a very dangerous one. It is more like a nuclear reactor than like a battery, and Chernobils have been many and varied. Worse, by seriously deploying the metaphor the nationalist almost explicitly admits that there is *nothing inherently liberal-democratic about nationalism*: it just supplies the force whereas the direction of the movement is determined by other factors. Now, to stay with the most prominent proponents, neither Miller nor Kymlicka are prepared to do so; in their eyes nationalism is intrinsically liberal-democratic. But then they owe us a serious account of why it is so easy to harness the nationalist energy for authoritarian purposes, that should on their view be contrary to its natural course (not to say the very essence, since Kymlicka refuses to believe that there is an essence to nationalism). The issue can be made even more dramatic. Suppose one argued that harnessing nationalism for liberal purposes has often been a half success only: the liberal ideals have often got lost in the turmoil of nationalist conflicts. (And important victories of democratic liberal solidarity and justice have been won by somewhat leftist, non-nationalist movements, and in situations in which nationalistic agenda did not occupy the center-stage.) One may continue by showing that harnessing them for authoritarian purposes was historically much easier. authoritarian political programs

usually did not lose anything by being aligned with nationalism, on the contrary, only gained in impetus. In short, nationalism mixes better with authoritarianism than with liberal democratic principles. I am not claiming that I can present such an argument in any detail, only that it seems plausible in its general outlines (I find it more plausible than the nationalist one).

Let us not pass to the detail. Does the love of one's people and country lead to social solidarity and encourage a more egalitarian distribution, as Miller, McCormick and Nielsen would have it? Here is a rough test: if nationalism leads to egalitarianism, then the more radically nationalist a political system is, the more egalitarian should it be, and the more solidarity should it produce. Take then the extreme right, and the radically nationalist fascist regimes: where they egalitarian and did they foster genuine social solidarity? Not at all; they offer the disgusting show of rich and all-powerful fuhrer-elites, wallowing in wealth, while millions of people suffer utmost deprivation. Not only this: such regimes have been destroying the very tissue of social solidarity, wherever they have come to power. Next test: in communist countries egalitarianism was preached, if not practiced, so people have been well acquainted with its principles. Now, are the newly formed post-socialist states in which nationalist have gained power, conspicuous for the solidarity, equality and social justice? On the contrary: in these countries nationalism just provides a smoke screen for a very unjust redistribution of wealth. Take again the example of extreme nationalism in ex-Yugoslav countries: it was accompanied by extreme social injustice. As T.G. Ash puts in the article quoted above, "A few people have grown rich, mainly war profiteers, gangsters and politicians – the three being sometimes hard to distinguish" (Ibid.). Almost everybody else was dramatically worse off than before the nationalist outbreaks.

Why is it so? There is no direct link between nationalism and greed for money, so whence the correlation? My modest proposal is that the link is indirect: by over-stressing just one narrow set of goals, having to do with ethno-national independence, and by legitimizing rather extreme means, nationalism, once enthusiastically accepted, makes the general public *dramatically insensitive to most other social issues*. In some post-socialist countries large minorities have been routinely deprived of their citizen's rights in order to secure the space for nationalist policies accepted by the majority. I would expect that such massive injustice on nationalistic ground numbs the sense of justice and of social solidarity: if you can expel all Serbs from a school, or deny all Russians in the town the right to vote, or deny Albanian women in Kosovo the right to health-care, why bother about small-looking infringements of civil rights within the ethnic community?

On the side of elites, as opposed to general public, one might surmise that from the very beginning of the struggle for independence they have been to a large extent motivated by the wish to attain the scarce positional goods. Such a motivation does not prepare one well for the exercise of solidarity. The countries in question have ended up with a combination of numb, de-sensitized general public and cynical elites. Once the social solidarity thus goes over the board, the space is clear for introducing dramatic inequalities and for plundering the country – as has been apparently happening in Albania, Serbia, and some ex-Soviet republics – under the aegis of national unity and pride.

A similar argument can be developed about the trust. Basing trust on ethno-national belonging implies allowing fore, and perhaps even enjoining the distrust for the ones who do not belong to the same ethno-nation.

The pro-nationalist thinker might retreat to a very thin conception of nationality, the way Kymlicka does in his “Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe” MS 1999 (to appear in a book with Oxford University Press). Here is the picture he would propose. Western liberal democracies went for a “thin” nation-building. A typical such democracy is multi-national, with one majoritarian nation. Now, the glue that holds the majoritarian nation together is the unity of language and of institutions, not of origin, customs or religion! (This makes the relevant concept of nationality very thin). The same should be valid, at least in the ideal case, for the minoritarian “nation” within the state. Call nation in this sense “thin-nation”. In this picture, solidarity and trust most strongly bind together members of each thin-nation, both minoritarian and majoritarian, and this is where the actual democratic process takes place. The central, for instance federal politics is conducted by elites and is less actively democratic. The origin of trust and solidarity is the feeling of belonging grounded mainly upon common language and thin-national, not central, say federal institutions.

A minor and theoretical problem for such a view is social-psychological: why would solidarity and trust reside specifically upon this one combination of traits, language and non-central institution, and not upon others, apparently equally attractive? Here is an illustration which I have heard from Kymlicka (at a lecture in Budapest). He described the feeling of active solidarity of an English-speaking middle-class Canadian (himself, in fact) with poor fishermen on the other end of Canada, as contrasted with a lack of solidarity with poor and unemployed ex-steel-factory workers in neighboring US industrial towns. The Canadian fishers are “one of us”, he claimed, the US workers are not. Now, I assume the person might as actively solidarize with his compatriots who happen to be French speaking, Quebecker poor fishermen. In that case, being “one of us” is just being a Canadian citizen, not a member of the Quebecker thin-nation. Equally, since the language is the only trait that remains in the new picture from the ethno-national arsenal, one should on nationalistic grounds expect the person to solidarize with the US workers, who speak the same language. If this does not happen, it is a significant test. In short, it offers a nice and telling example of a situation when language and institution point the opposite way: language and linguistic belonging to the US, institutional belonging to Canada. The solidarity seems to go the institutional way, indeed the way of belonging to federal, non-national institutions, against the prediction of the nationalist.

A major practical problem is the distribution and balance of trust versus mistrust (as well as of solidarity vs. non-solidarity) within the same multicultural state. Remember that in our liberal-democratic nationalist’s picture trust is reserved for the in-group members (i.e. those belonging to the same cultural group, i.e. thin-nation, say Quebeckers) and mistrust for all other groups within the same state (say, English-speaking Canadians). The same goes for solidarity. How is then a liberal democratic state-politics to be conducted? Why do people vote for the central government, and why do they trust it? Would anyone on this picture ever accept a central redistribution needed for a balanced welfare state? In Kymlycka’s official picture the problem is hidden behind the use of the

phrase “nation-building”: since the phrase otherwise commonly refers to nation-state (e.g. UK, Canada, US, Spain) building one is apt to forget that in his use what is here being built are sub-state institutions of sub-state nations, both majoritarian and minoritarian (Scottish, British and Quebec institutions. To switch for a change to the British example, why would for instance, Scots ever participate in the central institutions of the United Kingdom or express solidarity with British workers belonging to a different system of sub-state institutions? This presents a dilemma for the aspiring liberal-democratic nationalist. On the one hand, he can reserve trust and solidarity for one group to the exclusion of others (or at least assume a very unequal distribution of the two across the groups, say a lot of trust for fellow Scots, and very little for the English). In this case, the common state threatens to become ungovernable, at least on liberal-democratic principles. Instead of having a liberal democratic multicultural state, he will have a non-state with fragmented into isolated cultural communities each aspiring ultimately to secede.

This problem lends him then on the other horn of the dilemma. To illustrate it with a prominent example, it seems to be one motivating reason for D. Miller’s variant of the pro-nationalist argument: he proposes to take as the national unit just the state-nation, in his examples the “British nation”, as opposed to English and Scottish communities, which he refuses to dignify with the title of nation. This, however, makes his “nationalism” a very cold and artificial one, at least on the usual nationalist view, since it seems to be based crucially upon the common public institutions. Even worse, it risks to become circular: common institutions are pictured as requiring *antecedent trust and solidarity* in order to function well; now, where does these antecedent goods come from, if trust and solidarity are to be in their turn based upon institutions they are expected to establish and support? To reiterate, this is the advice characterizing the other horn of the dilemma: base trust and solidarity on the commonality of institutions! Then, any institutional arrangement based on general, i.e. non-nationalistic principles of justice, will generate the required trust and solidarity, and the result has nothing nationalistic, not even nation-centered about it. Either one has distrust and lack of solidarity within a state, or one has trust and solidarity that go way beyond boundaries of a narrowly defined nation, and require a redefinition of “nation” in a purely institutional, non-nationalist terms.

Classical nationalism has famously avoided the dilemma by demanding that the boundaries of a state should coincide with the boundaries of a culture: all the Lavinians should live in one state! The soft, multicultural, liberal-democratic new nationalism has no such option. The dialectics of the debate seems to lead its advocates, if they want to remain serious liberal democrats, to embrace the second horn of the dilemma: tie trust and solidarity to institutions and common constitutional arrangements, that have little or nothing to do with nationalist agenda! But then, they should be more clear sighted and view this as the first and important step to a more flexible, perhaps ultimately cosmopolitan notion of citizenship.

The arguments for the importance of national belonging for democratic freedom are hard to judge before embarking upon an extended review of concepts of culture involved in the debate. Still, it can be remarked that all meaningful, well-understood choices of ways of life do not depend on tradition the way the nationalist would have

them do. To give an example, for already thirty years successive generations of young people in various Western and Central European countries follow a way of life that is determined by participation in the pop and rock culture which is not, or at least has not been part of any national tradition of their countries. Now do Beatles and Rolling Stones belong to the national culture of Germany, Hungary or Croatia? If the nationalist says No, I agree with him, but then he must accept that the choice of pop-culture is meaningful for generations of young people, well understood by them and is a way of life that has been offered from outside the national culture (as is the way of life of a computer freak, or a local Buddhist in Berlin or Ljubljana). Alternatively, the nationalist can accept the consequences and agree that in his sense the music of Beatles as well as Buddhism, are part of, say, Croatian national culture. But if the Beatles and Buddhism qualify, everything does.

As far as self-respect goes, the argument is partly question-begging: people resent being despised for their national belonging, because life is in many states being organized around national belonging; their sensitivity might be a reason not to organize it that way. Now, given that many countries are organized around national belonging, one wise policy would be a two pronged one: first, to protect each individual's national belonging from immediate threats, but, second, to lower the level of importance of national belonging on the average. This is the policy that has in the West been applied to races: one makes certain that, say, Asians are not despised for their race, but at the same time refuses to organize life around racial belonging.

Here is a question that has been somewhat neglected by political scientists, and which is directly relevant for the issue of a link between nationalism and democracy. One of the distinctive features which separate nationalism from its universalistic competitors (say liberalism or socialism) are two principles of priority. First, the issue of belonging, i.e. who belongs to a given community is politically more important than the one of the manner in which the community is being governed, i.e. the issue of its political constitution. Second, the non-voluntary belonging is essential in contrast to the chosen, voluntary one. In which situation is it rational to accept this order of business, rather than the reverse one? Well, consider the first principle. Imagine a big mixed community encompassing three ethnic groups A, B et C. concentrate upon so called positional good (for example social and economic status; these are called "positional" since status is defined by one's position in a group). Positional goods are in principle scarce (if James is first, Steve cannot be first as well). Therefore, members of each group can be always tempted to create a situation in which their own ethnic state would offer positional goods for them only, in quantities not available within the larger community (this kind of analysis has been famously proposed by C. Hardin in *One for all*). Now, the temptation for the members of group A will typically increase in following situations: The general decline of the standard of life encourages the individuals to try climbing the social ladder in order to compensate their losses. (This condition has been satisfied in former Yugoslavia after the death of Tito when a general economic crises brought to a halt the economic growth). Next, due to initial better endowments, the members of groups B and C have more chances to succeed in the situation of unlimited competition (It can be argued that this was the situation with Slovenia and Croatia in respect to Serbia in the eighties: they were economically better positioned and poised for victory in economic competition.) Finally, the condition for winning over B and C is to

prevent them access to political mechanism of government. (Again, Serbia had better control of army, police and state administration). In short, a decision in favor of nationalism and of two priorities (of belonging over constitution, and of non-voluntary belonging over the voluntary one) might become rational – at least in short term – in those situations in which the struggle for change in internal constitution promises less benefits to the group in question, than a restructuring (enlargement or narrowing down) of the limits of community. (In the case of Serbia, Milošević has played the card of demographic spread – all Serbs should live in one state – and of the control of the army, and won the hearts of his electorate.) This kind of analysis, if correct, would show that nationalism has intrinsically little to do with democracy, which is more concerned with the (internal) constitution of a community, than the external limits of belonging (although its relevance can be extended to these issues as well; only, it is not the primary topic of democratic concern). I am not claiming that the analysis is correct (although it is personally my favorite), but only that it is rather plausible; unless the nationalist has a better one, he should not assume that his stance is a particularly democratic one, on the contrary.

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