On Redefining the Nation

1. Introduction

I submit what I believe is a new definition of the nation.[1] This paper is intended in part as a piece of conceptual analysis. Of course, in the attempt to be as clear as possible, I run the risk of becoming fairly abstract, and there are those who feel that abstraction in these matters is inappropriate. But I wish to face this challenge because disagreements over the nature of nationalism very often rest upon misunderstandings which are partly due to different uses of the same words, or to an unclear understanding of the notions involved. I believe that the philosopher may modestly contribute to some clarification even if the hope of reaching "clear and distinct ideas" is most probably not going to be fulfilled. Intolerance and political differences are perhaps sometimes not totally unrelated to the difficulty of conceptualizing complex notions. Our inability in this regard stems from an inability to reflect upon a complex reality. This is why a philosophical account may be useful.

2. Beyond the Ethnic/Civic Dichotomy

The task of developing a new conception of the nation is motivated by the desire to overcome the distinction between the ethnic and the exclusively civic conceptions of the nation. This dichotomy prevails in most contemporary works on nationalism.[2] I wish to develop a conception which departs from both views. Although my own account is also a civic one, I would criticize the traditional exclusively civic approach in many important aspects. In this section, I explain why there is an urgent need to develop a concept that goes beyond the dichotomy.

The exclusively civic definition of the nation is associated with the name of Ernest Renan.[3] According to that view, the nation is a sovereign state founded upon the will of the people. This conception manifested itself during the French Revolution, and it is based on the idea that a

nation is a free association of individuals. It is, as Renan puts it, a daily plebiscite. Individuals give themselves a state and the state makes up the nation. This view emphasizes the subjective component of the nation since it underlines the importance of willing individuals, and it is very often interpreted within the framework of an individualistic political philosophy, because it very often gives an absolute priority to the individuals over the group.[4]

The ethnic definition is (perhaps misleadingly) associated with the name of Johann Herder.[5] It finds its full expression in German nationalism. The nation is, according to that view, founded upon language, history, and culture. Consequently, it appeals to more or less objective features. In order to belong to the same ethnic nation, one must share the same language, history, and culture. But even more importantly, the people must share the same ancestry or believe that they share the same ancestry. According to that view, the nation precedes the state, and it is very often interpreted as some kind of collective entity that transcends each and every individual. It is thus usually associated with a certain form of collectivism.[6]

Why should we want to abandon the ethnic/civic dichotomy? Without engaging in a detailed answer to this question,[7] let us say, first, that both views are usually associated with a certain conceptual monism. According to this approach, the nation must be either civic or ethnic. The two accounts mutually exclude each other and each presupposes that there is only one good account of the nation. But we could very well be forced to accept an irreducible conceptual diversity in these matters. Perhaps we must make use of many different concepts of the nation if we want to have a grasp on such a complex phenomenon. In short, we must endorse a conceptual pluralism.

A second difficulty relates to the dichotomy itself. We wrongly assume that we only have a choice between two options and nothing more. But there are many other concepts of the nation. There is the cultural account that must not be confused with the ethnic account, and there is also the diaspora nation which is similar to other sorts of nations but which has its own specific features. And in addition to all these concepts, I shall want to introduce a sociopolitical concept. So by accepting only two options, we unduly simplify things.

Moreover, the two conceptions lead to nationalist movements which, in different ways, induce a certain form of exclusion. The suggestion that

ethnic nationalism often leads to exclusion is by no means a controversial one. We are all familiar with many tragic examples of this in the twentieth century. But what about a purely civic nationalism? Isn't it an inclusive approach? Civic nationalism indeed initially presents itself as inclusive, but it is generally associated with a refusal to recognize cultural diversity. Even if it offers a way to cope in a non-discriminatory fashion with cultural diversity, it does so by avoiding explicitly recognizing the existence of collective rights to those cultural communities. The main problem here is that civic nationalists adopt this strategy even toward national communities. That is, they choose to ignore cultural diversity within societies which are intuitively multinational. However, there are nowadays many "nations" without a state who want to gain political recognition, and it becomes increasingly illusory to think that they could accept being included in a multinational state without getting in return a minimal recognition of their specificity. And it has now become impossible to discard all these national movements as instances of ethnic nationalism. As movements of population become the norm throughout the world, all societies become more and more pluri-ethnic, and this applies also to nations without a state. It is simply wrong to suggest that they all fit the mold of the ethnic nation.

The political, cultural, and social patterns that can be noticed in the Western world at the end of the twentieth century call for a new approach that would not be caught in the dichotomy between ethnic and civic nationalism. Those who are willing to recognize the existence of nations without a state are not necessarily defending ethnic nationalism, and yet such nations have nothing to do with the traditional purely civic nation. Conversely, by recognizing these nations, we are at the same time recognizing the existence of multi-nation states, and this means that we are moving away from the nationality principle which has very often been promoted by ethnic nationalists, i.e., the principle that each ethnic nation should have its own state.

Actually, the traditional ethnic and civic views of the nation are just like two sides of the same coin, because both give rise to nationalisms which favour the nation-state as the only adequate political arrangement. An unconstrained ethnic nationalism presupposes that each ethnic nation should have its own state, while civic nationalism tends to exclude minorities by maintaining a policy of benevolent state neutrality. By ignoring

all differences that arise within the political community, it favours in the long run a homogeneity within the state. So in that sense, it also promotes, albeit in an indirect way, the political model of the nation-state.

Our call for an account that would go beyond the ethnic/civic dichotomy is thus also motivated in part by a desire to challenge the traditional nation-state. We want to keep our distance from the traditional ethnic approach while recognizing at the same time that there are often many nations within a single sovereign state. And by recognizing them, we simultaneously keep our distance from a purely civic account which usually tends to refuse such a recognition.[8]

If the only available options for a nationalist were the traditional ethnic and civic conceptions of the nation, it would then be very difficult to make a case for nationalism itself, and we should accept the conclusions drawn by all those who are against it. Conversely, I suppose that all of those who are naturally inclined to denounce all forms of nationalism will be satisfied with the dichotomy, because it confirms their prejudice against the nation. But the proliferation of liberal nationalist movements such as those in Scotland, Catalonia and Quebec forces us to reconsider these hasty judgements, and reveals the simplistic character of an anti-nationalistic rhetoric.

These, then, are the fundamental reasons why we wish to go beyond the ethnic/civic dichotomy. It is true that the purely cultural account of the nation already constitutes a third option, but it resembles too much the ethnic conception to be entirely satisfactory. The purely cultural nation is the ethnic nation that has enriched itself by the assimilation of many immigrants.[9] I do not wish to dwell on the difficulties of the cultural account,[10] nor do I want to discard it altogether. But I wish to achieve a more radical departure from the traditional dichotomy. It is on this task that I now concentrate my efforts.

3. An Argument for Tolerance

I defend a certain conceptual pluralism regarding the nation. There is, first, the ethnic nation which involves only individuals having the same ancestry or who believe they have the same ancestry. There is also the exclusively civic account of the nation. In this case, the nation is equated with a sovereign state, a "country." Then there is the purely cultural

account according to which being part of the nation requires sharing only the same language, culture, and attachment to the same history. Individuals who belong to the same cultural nation might have very different ancestral roots, but they are individuals who are assimilated to a definite linguistic, cultural, and historical community, Then there is the *diaspora* nation which supposes the existence of many groups having roughly the same culture, which are spread on many discontinuous territories, and which never constitute a majority on any of those territories.

Finally, there is the sociopolitical concept of the nation. According to that account, a nation is, as in the civic definition, a certain sort of political community. But unlike the civic account, this political community may or may not be a sovereign state. Another difference with the civic definition is that the account is not strictly political. It is also partly sociological. According to that account, the political community must contain at least a *majority* of individuals that share the same language, culture, and history. This majority must also be the marjority of the people who, around the world, are sharing these different features. If it were not for that group, the political community would not be a nation in the sociopolitical sense. Thus, the sociopolitical nation is up to a certain point similar to the cultural nation. But, unlike the purely cultural account, it is not strictly sociological: it is also political. The sociopolitical nation is a political community, and it may even contain, in addition to the national majority, national minorities (i.e., extensions of neighbouring nations) and individuals of other national origins. So, contrary to the purely cultural account, the sociopolitical nation may be pluri-cultural.

This conception of the nation can all at once be civic and capture a certain sociological reality. According to it, the nation is some kind of inclusive political community, but it also involves what I call a national majority, i.e., the largest sample in the world of a group of people sharing a specific language, history and culture. I shall return below to a clarification of that new conception. For the moment, I wish to emphasize the fact that we must accept a conceptual pluralism. The sociopolitical account of the nation is not the only good account. All the above concepts are, in my view, perfectly legitimate and none of them should supersede the others. There are no such things as the essential features of the nation. The concept of the nation may vary from one community to the other, and so there

might be variations from one community to the other on what is to count as a "national feature." Some concepts of the nation are problematic, mainly because those who advocate them do not accept other concepts.

The above concepts are not reducible one to the other, for they are all indispensable in order to account for the complex reality of nationalism. Many authors have admitted that nationalism is a multifarious phenomenon that cannot easily be apprehended, but few have gone so far as to acknowledge that the variety of national movements reflect also a wide variety of concepts of the nation. Even less numerous are those who have defended a conceptual pluralism. Most authors have admitted only one important dichotomy: it is the one that holds between the ethnic and the civic conceptions of the nation. Of course, some are also in a way opposed to the dichotomy, and they hate to have to choose between the ethnic or purely civic accounts, but it is most of the time because they wish to embrace a third account, an hybrid conception which would be a compound of ethnic and civic features. However, if I am right, the mistake is not to argue for this or that conception. It is, more importantly, to engage in a systematic defence of one particular view at the expense of all others. To repeat, the problem is the conceptual monism that accompanies most of the time these different views.

Moreover, the nation should not be understood as an entirely objective fact. There are two consequences that follow from rejecting a metaphysical realism about nations. We have to admit, first, a concept which involves, subjective features such as national consciousness, nationalist sentiments and the will to live together. A population cannot constitute a nation unless it has a certain national consciousness. It must perceive itself as a nation in order to become one.

The second and most important consequence is that our "definition" must be understood as a conception in John Rawls's sense. Rawls talks about a conception of the person, and by this he means a self-representation, as opposed to a description of the essential traits involved in personal identity.[11] Similarly, we should try to develop a conception of the nation which spells out nothing more than the representation that a whole population entertains about itself. It would thus be wrong to think that there is a particular account of the nation, one involving a certain equilibrium between objective and subjective features, which would be the correct account. Saying that nations are to a large extent dependent upon the self-

representations of whole populations has far-reaching consequences that must be acknowledged. It is not enough to underline the subjective components involved in the nation, for this is compatible with a univocal account. Since there are many concepts of the nation, and since a nation is partly dependent upon the self-representation of the population as a whole, we have to admit that there could be within different populations different self-representations involving different concepts.

On the basis of those premises, we could formulate an argument for accepting a principle of tolerance toward different nationalisms. The argument requires that we accept, in addition, and as a matter of principle, the intrinsic or instrumental value of cultural diversity. It is intuitively clear that cultural diversity is something that should be cherished. So I shall not try to justify this additional premise within the confines of the present paper. For the purpose of the present argument, it is interesting to notice that if it were accepted, then it would be possible to formulate an argument whose conclusion is that we must adopt a principle of tolerance between different nationalisms. The argument rests upon the following fundamental principles:

1. There are many different concepts of the nation.

2. We should accept a conceptual pluralism in these matters.

3. Self-representations play a crucial role in the construction of a national identity.

4. It is possible for national communities to have different self-representations involving different concepts of the nation.

5. We should accept the principle of the intrinsic (or instrumental) value of cultural diversity.

6. *Ergo*, we should adopt a principle of tolerance regarding the different self-representations of different national communities.

If I am right, nationalist tensions are often generated by an intolerance which is in part to be explained by a failure to accept a conceptual pluralism regarding the nation. If it appears important to reject the simplistic and dangerous ethnic conception of the nation, it is because, in general, this concept generates exclusion, racism, and xenophobia. But

xenophobia begins as soon as one is unwilling to accept a different self-representation held by a different national community. Most of those who promote an ethnic concept reject ways of thinking about the nation which are different from their own.

Of course, this is not always clearly the case. An ethnic nation could also become intolerant toward a different ethnic nation, and thus not directed against a different sort of self-representation. In this case, the clash is not clearly to be explained by the inability to recognize a conceptual pluralism. So I am not claiming that intolerance is always to be explained by a violation of the above principles. There might be all sorts of causes for nationalist tensions, and my claim is only that I have captured one of these causes. If I'm right, the ethnic conception is not to be condemned in itself. Ethnic nations may be peaceful as long as they remain tolerant toward other groups. Tolerance is the key notion for the development of an ethics of nationalism.

It is also important to criticize a purely civic account which would simply identify nations with sovereign countries, if such an account were to go hand in hand with an intolerance toward different conceptions. As we saw, this account also very often generates a certain form of exclusion. Paradoxically, it achieves this exclusion by being too inclusive, i.e., by ignoring differences among citizens of the same country, even if these differences include those that relate to language, culture, history, and political community. Intuitively, if you have, for instance, two political communities within the same sovereign state, each one composed of different linguistic, cultural and historical groups, then chances are that the individuals belonging to those two groups will represent themselves as different national communities, even if these communities are situated on the territory of the same sovereign state. But the defenders of an exclusively civic account of the nation are very often unable or unwilling to recognize that. Once again, the problem lies not in the purely civic account of the nation as such but rather in the inability of those who promote such a concept to allow for other concepts.

The principle of tolerance that I have just defended as a central idea in the ethics of nationalism inspires my own account of the nation. Of course, we can and indeed we must apply this principle in the context of the relations between different nations, but we should also use it for developing a new account of the nation. Tolerance is required not only for

the treatment of the external relations between nations but also for the development of a new sort of national identity, one in which tolerance would become an accepted norm in the internal relations between different cultural groups within the nation. I believe that this is what a sociopolitical conception can do. Tolerance is built in such a view of the nation. It is, as it were, constitutive of the sociopolitical national identity.

Before we look at this new conception, we should however spell out a list of different constraints that should be accepted. It is fairly easy to produce a new concept of the nation, but it is much harder to develop one that could satisfy important and intuitive desiderata. This is what I shall now set myself to do.

4. Constraints on a New Definition

There are many constraints that, I believe, should be imposed on any new definition of the word 'nation'. Traditional views do not satisfy many of those requirements. This is perhaps not a reason for rejecting them, but it is a reason for introducing a new conception that would satisfy those constraints.

(i) We should, first, try to avoid as much as possible the traditional dichotomy between the exclusively civic and the ethnic account. These two opposing views describe two extreme positions: particularism and abstract universalism. We should try to avoid having to choose only between these two options. We need not condemn them as such, but we must produce a new conception of the nation that goes beyond them. Contemporary pluralist societies require a government and a constitutional law that can transcend particular views about the good life, and thus one that can transcend particularism. But, on the other hand, within actual multi-nation states there is a need for "cultural protection." So even if a liberal state must follow a certain justificational neutrality, it cannot simply base its policies on abstract universal principles, and governments must do more than promote mere "constitutional patriotism."

(ii) The second constraint is that we should not have any prejudice in favour of or against the nation-state. We should adopt instead a pragmatic approach to the problem of determining whether nations must become states. There are some cases where the only option for the nation is to remain within an encompassing state. Other nations should secede from the encompassing state. And there are still other examples of nations which

could remain within the larger state if their collective rights were recognized. Without such a recognition, however, the rational option for them would be to secede. So we must in a sense depoliticize the definition of the nation. Adopting a particular definition must not be the consequence of adopting a particular political model. Nations can form nation-states or enter in larger political units such as a multinational federations. There are also many other options beside these two options. Nations may enter into an economic and political union with others. In Europe for instance, people talk about creating a "federation of sovereign states." Multi-nation states can also allow for a certain amount of political autonomy, a special status, or an asymmetry in the distribution of powers. Too often, those who discuss nationalism have already made up their mind about a particular model of political authority, but we should perhaps be as flexible as possible in this regard. We have to reach a delicate balance between theory and practice. In many multi-nation states, there is no *a priori* answer to the question whether the component nation must secede or not. It all depends on the capacity of the encompassing state to recognize its multinational character.

In Section 2, I have argued that among the reasons for rejecting the classical dichotomy between the ethnic and the purely civic accounts of the nation, there was the fact that each view presupposes that the best political arrangement is that of the nation-state. Now, I am saying that we should reject any account which has a prejudice for or against any particular political arrangement. Nations may or may not have their own state. This is not something that must be decided at the outset, in the very definition of the nation.

(iii) Let us now consider a third constraint. It concerns the equilibrium between individual and collective rights. Too often we interpret nationalism as involving the primacy of collective rights over individual rights. The right to self-determination, for instance, is often interpreted as superseding all other rights. But our conception must avoid ethical collectivism as well as ethical individualism. The right of self-determination must not become a way to impose the tyranny of the majority over the minorities, and multi-nation states must perhaps find accommodation for an equilibrium between the collective rights of its component nations and the fundamental individual rights and liberties of all the citizens.

This third desideratum is in a way a consequence of the second one. If we are to allow for the possibility of multi-nation states, we must at the same time grant to the component nations a certain recognition in the public space. It makes no sense to argue in favour of multi-nation states while at the same time refusing them a certain amount of recognition. It should be obvious that the viability of multi-nation states rests to a very large extent on their ability to recognize themselves as multinational, and this, in turn, requires a recognition of the collective rights of the component nations. The only way to accommodate pluralism within a contemporary society is to adopt a policy that acknowledges its deep diversity. But at the same time the account must not induce a proliferation of collective rights for all sorts of groups. If we were to do so, we would go against the protection of civil rights and liberties of all citizens. So we must produce an account which will all at once be favourable to the admission of collective rights and which will avoid attributing such rights to all sorts of groups. One reaches in this way a delicate balance between individual and collective rights.

(iv) A fourth important constraint is that we must, in our definition, achieve an equilibrium between the subjective and the objective components of the nation. Nations are not just "imagined communities"[12], i.e., pure abstract constructs or products of our imagination, but they are not entirely objective entities that transcend the self-representations of individuals. Language, culture, and history are to a large extent phenomena that go beyond the self-representations of individuals, but nations do not exist without a certain amount of national consciousness, a sense of shared identity and an explicit will to maintain this shared identity.

Some feel inclined to say that there are as many concepts of the nation as there are individuals. They feel that the nation is entirely a subjective matter. Even worse, some are prepared to say that since nationhood depends very deeply upon a sense of allegiance, it becomes impossible to find within a given population a common sense of belonging to a particular nation. In these matters, we have to look for the individual's sense of belonging in order to determine his or her affiliation. It is thought that we have to take into consideration what they value the most for the pursuit of their own happiness. And since these feelings vary systematically from one individual to the other, we feel inclined to say that nationalities, and

thus nations themselves, are reducible to personal preferences, psychological inclinations, and an undefinable sense of belonging. But this relativism is grossly exaggerated. Even if we are far from having reached a consensus, and even if different individuals rate differently their different allegiances, they could still agree on the fact that they share the same national affiliation. To put it differently, even if nations are to a very large extent subjective, we should not analyse nationhood in terms of the preferences that individuals attach to their different particular affiliations. In order to reach a balance between the subjective and objective features of the nation, we must avoid defining it in terms of the preferences of the individuals. It does not matter whether a national allegiance is a primary good for each and everyone. Of course, we rate our affiliations to different groups very differently, and it might very well be that a large segment of the population does not give much importance to their national affiliation. Nevertheless, most people recognize that they do have a national affiliation, and they share an intuitive sense of nationhood. This is all that we must consider when we talk about the subjective character intrinsically involved in our conception of the nation.

(v) Our concept must have positive moral repercussions. It must not be a purely descriptive concept and must not be normatively inert. It must in some sense be useful as a guiding principle for our actions or useful for our theory of nationalism. No matter how we choose to define the concept, it must be possible for the nation to exercise self-determination. The nation must have certain rights that it can exercise under special circumstances and these induce obligations on the part of other nations. When these obligations are not fulfilled, our definition may play an important role in an argument which leads to a solution of the problem of political recognition. The definition must not entail that the nation is under no circumstances whatsoever going to be able to exercise its moral right of self-determination. But at the same time, our account must not be such that all nations could be entitled to exercise whenever it wants a full right to self-determination. From a moral point of view, there must be conditions under which it could be reasonable for the nation to secede, and our definition must not be such that it allows all sorts of groups to secede.

(vi) The conception must also be developed in accordance with a liberal political philosophy. This is a constraint that I wish to impose upon

my definition because I wish to apply the concept mostly to Western societies. I wish to remain as neutral as possible concerning the possibility of exporting the concept to non-Western societies.

(vii) Our concept of the nation must have many applications within different societies. It must not have been made only to account for a single case. The conception must thus be available for a certain generalization.

(viii) Finally, our definition must meet the intuitions held by a large number of individuals within the population. It must coincide to a large extent with the implicit conception shared by a large number of individuals. This constraint could thus be understood as a material-adequacy condition imposed on the definition.

So we now have eight important constraints that must guide us in our formulation of a new definition of the nation. Such a definition must neither be ethnic nor exclusively civic in order to reach a delicate balance between particularism and abstract universalism. We must also avoid presupposing anything in favour or against the nation-state if we want a harmonious relationship between theory and practice. We must reach an equilibrium between individual and collective rights. We must also try to formulate a balanced account between the subjective and objective components of the nation. The concept must have favourable practical consequences and must be compatible with a liberal political philosophy. The definition should not have applications just for the particular case of a specific political situation with no applications anywhere else in the world. It will not be useful if we are unable to reach a certain generality and a multiple applicability. Finally, it must corroborate as far as possible the intuitive definition shared by the population.

I shall not dwell any further on these issues and will avoid a detailed discussion of the motivations for introducing such a list of constraints. For the purpose of the present paper, I am happy just to state these different requirements without any additional argumentative support. I believe that they should be met by any new definition, but it is first and foremost on such a definition that I wish to concentrate my efforts.

5. A New Definition

There is a vast literature on the theory of nationalism, and we must be very humble when we attempt to be original on this matter.[13] I shall

nevertheless try to define the concept of the nation in a new way. However I do not claim to be able to formulate necessary and sufficient conditions for the existence of a nation. The best that we can do is perhaps to draw some vague boundaries for some of the uses of the term. We are attempting at best to describe a particular stereotype. If a definition provides only a stereotype, it means that the concept is not defined in the absolute. It is not defined once and for all and it is not meant to be exclusive. Saying that we want to produce a stereotype means that our definition is at least in part community-relative, and by this I mean that it is the product of a certain political culture. Definitions can vary from time to time and from one political culture to another. As we saw in the previous sections, the word 'nation' may be used in all sorts of ways, and each of these uses may also be subjected to modifications from time to time.

It is often said that to appeal to the concept of the nation in a political debate is divisive, that it cannot create a consensus, and that we should be pragmatic and avoid it as much as possible. But we must not ignore the fact that we use the concept, and that many take for granted the ethnic/civic dichotomy in political debates. As we saw, this dichotomy is operative in most normative appreciations of national movements. It justifies a certain standard attitude toward nationalism in general, and it serves the political purpose of those who want to denounce all nationalist movements in actual sovereign states. So this already provides a good motivation for producing a new definition. Moreover, the reason why nationalism seems to escape all attempts at a definition is perhaps because we have so far been reluctant to accept many different concepts, and have been fairly unsuccessful in our attempts to create new concepts which would be sophisticated enough to capture complex realities. So perhaps the problem is not of trying to define the nation but rather of being unable to accept a conceptual pluralism and to be creative enough. Those who criticize any attempt at a new definition do not realize that, by so doing, they could very rapidly find themselves siding with those who have a simplistic account of the nation, and thus also a simplistic understanding of nationalism.

So let us look now at the definition. Under that definition, the nation is seen as some particular kind of political community. It is a political community that has certain sociological properties. Therefore, I endorse a sociopolitical conception of the nation. It is only one concept of the nation among many. Another very important one is the nation conceived as a

diaspora. It is important to bear in mind that this other sort of nation also exists. As a matter of fact, my own definition provides indirectly a criterion for the notion of a diaspora nation.

According to the sociopolitical conception, the nation is a political community containing a "national majority," i.e., a group which is a majority on a given territory which also happens to be the majority of a group of individuals sharing the same language, culture and history around the world.[14] The political community also very often contains "national minorities" (i.e., extensions of neighbouring national majorities) and individuals with various other national origins. In addition, a critical mass of individuals within this political community must perceive themselves as part of a nation and must be willing to continue to live as such. Finally, the political community must have its own particular territory.

The political community, as a whole, must be defined in terms of a "common public culture," i.e., a common language and a common structure of culture in a common context of choice.[15] By a "language," I mean essentially a set of social conventions, such as a dictionary and a grammar, which are essentially the product of the community. The notion of a language must not be cast in a holistic account which would inextricably link it to a complete world-view. By the "structure of the culture," I mean a set of basic political, social, and specifically cultural institutions. The features of the common public culture happen to be those of the national majority, and we describe them as "common" because these must be compatible with the existence of specific linguistic and cultural institutions held by minorities within the nation. Finally, by a "context of choice," I mean a network of cultural, moral and political influences. These external influences are mainly caused by countries which are in a certain geographical proximity, or by countries that have historical or linguistic similarities.

This account of the nation is political in the sense that a nation is a political community. According to this view, nationality is understood as citizenship just as in the traditional civic account. But citizenship must be defined as membership in a political community, and there still can be within a single sovereign state many different political communities. This is a first difference with the traditional civic account. It allows the political community to be less than a sovereign state. But there is a second and most important difference. Unlike the exclusively civic approach, it is not

defined only in terms of a political community. It is a political community that contains a national majority and—if there are any—national minorities and individuals of different origins. If we were to define a nation as a political community that can be less than a sovereign state without entering into the sociological fabric of the population involved, we would unfortunately be unable to distinguish between the citizens of a city and those of a nation or a country. We thus would run the risk of allowing for national self-determination to very small populations on very small territories. My own account appeals to the notion of a political community, but it does not appeal to that only. A final and crucial difference with the traditional exclusively civic model is that the sociopolitical nation *recognizes* its pluricultural character. It seeks to harmonize the rights of the majority with the collective and individual rights of its national minorities.

By "national majority," I said that I mean the majority of a group of people sharing the same language, culture, and history. Notice, first, that I am not defining the national majority in terms of language only, but also in terms of culture and history. If we were to consider language only, there would be just one English-speaking nation, namely the United States, and only one French speaking nation, namely France. But two communities sharing the same language can have different cultural influences and different historical roots, and for that reason, can form different nations. Notice also that the national majority is not just a majority on a given territory. It is, world wide, the majority of individuals with such a specific language, culture, and history. Being a majority on a given territory is not by itself sufficient to form a national majority. If we were to see it as sufficient, we would not be able to prevent the proliferation of nations. It is indeed always possible to multiply "majorities" in this way. You only need constantly to reduce the territory. This is why I say that the national majority is located where we find the majority of a population having the above specific features around the world.

This concept of a national majority is also useful for defining the diaspora nation.[16] Let us suppose, first, that a given population sharing the same language, culture, and history is scattered on many distinct discontinuous territories. Let us suppose also that there is no concentration of such individuals which constitutes an absolute majority. Let us suppose, finally, that all the samples of such individuals form minorities on their re-

spective territories. If so, we would then be dealing with a diaspora nation, not with a sociopolitical nation. A diaspora nation is a nation that lacks a national majority.

The concept of a diaspora nation is thus derivable from the one that I am trying to define. But if we are speaking about sociopolitical nations as such and not just about diaspora nations, then the sample is a majority on the territory and it is also the majority of a group of people having the same features.

6. Four Key Notions

The above definition could be expressed in a few words. A sociopolitical nation is a political community composed of a national majority, and very often of national minorities and ethnic communities. All share a certain national consciousness on the same territory. There are at least four key notions involved here: political community, national majority, national consciousness, and territory.

a) Political Communities

According to this definition, countries like Israel, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Bosnia, and Croatia provide examples of political communities which could eventually form sociopolitical nations. Israel contains a Jewish majority and a Palestinian minority. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania contain respectively Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian majorities and Russian minorities. Slovakia contains a majority of Slovaks along with a Hungarian minority. The Czech Republic contains a Czech majority and a German minority of Sudetens. Bosnia contains a Muslim majority with Serbian and Croatian minorities, and Croatia contains a Croatian majority and a Serb minority. Serbia contains an Albanian national minority in the province of Kosovo.

These would all be examples of sociopolitical nations which have their own state. These political communities are always involved in a tension between the classic purely civic account and a more progressive sociopolitical conception. When a country contains national minorities, it is not well suited for a purely civic account of the nation, and most of the above countries will sooner or later have to recognize their irreducible pluralist character. So I am not suggesting that all of them have already

become sociopolitical nations. I am simply suggesting that they are in-escapably leaning in that direction.

Sociopolitical nations are also sometimes political communities which are less than sovereign states. For instance, Catalonia, which has had its own political community since 1979, contains a Catalan majority and a Castillian national minority. In that sense, it has all the ingredients for becoming a true sociopolitical nation. To give a second example, now that Belgium has become a federal state, we can say that if the Flemish majority living in the five provinces of Flanders were formally to recognize the collective rights of the French minority living in Brussels, the Flemish nation would become a true sociopolitical nation. Within Canada, Quebec also forms a sociopolitical nation containing a majority of French Quebecers and a national minority of English Quebecers. Finally, because of the positive result of a referendum on a devolution of powers to a local government, Scotland is transforming itself from a purely cultural nation into a sociopolitical nation. In other words, Spain, Belgium, Canada, and the United Kingdom are all examples of multi-nation states that contain nations which are or could eventually be good candidates for sociopolitical nations.

Of course, the process by which a group becomes a particular sort of nation is a never-ending process, and so our account must be a dynamic one. Within each of those political communities, there are individuals who have different representations of their nation. And even when a group rep-resents itself as a sociopolitical nation, it can as a matter of fact behave more like a purely civic nation. But the above examples are clear cases of groups that are increasingly becoming sociopolitical nations.

b) National Majorities

The originality of the concept lies partly in the requirement that the linguistic majority has to be the majority of a group of people with a specific language, culture, and history. It must always be possible to find on a certain territory a group of people constituting a majority, and this does not turn the group into a national majority. It won't if the majority of the people with the same language, culture, and history is to be found elsewhere.

The originality of the concept lies also in the fact that it is compatible with admitting "national minorities" as integral parts of the nation. As we have seen, national minorities are minority extensions of closely related national majorities existing on different territories, with their members perceiving themselves in that way. According to this concept of a "national minority,"—the Russians in the Baltic states, the Hungarians in Romania or Slovakia, the Palestinians in Israel, the Sudeten Germans in the Czech Republic, the French Belgians of Brussels within the Belgian Flemish territories, and the Anglophones within Quebec—are all examples of national minorities.

c) National Consciousness

I already said that national consciousness, the will to live together and the sense of belonging to a nation, were essential ingredients in the definition. National consciousness relates to the self-representation of the group as a whole. This subjective component not only involves a description of what the nation is, but also an expression of what it wants to be. It is with this self-representation that we are able to determine whether the group sees itself as an ethnic, cultural, civic, or sociopolitical nation.

The will to live together suggests that we can choose to be part of the nation. This is surely an obvious requirement if we are to allow immigrants to be part of the group. However, there is still a crucial difference between a nation and an association. The sociopolitical nation is a certain kind of political community and, as Rawls has emphasized, there are important differences between associations and political societies. We can always freely disengage ourselves from associations, but we have no such option when we choose to settle down on the territory of a particular political society. The only way to remove oneself from the authority of a particular political society is to move outside of the territory.[17]

The sense of belonging relates to the subjective involvement of the individuals in the nation, and it need not be shared equally by everyone. Many individuals may value more some of their other allegiances, whether to their family, their friends, their fellow workers, their city, or those that share the same sexual orientations. Indeed, we have to admit that individuals may give different priorities to their different social affil-

iations, but most individuals also have a sense of belonging to a particular nation. If it is so special, it is not because it is the most important allegiance. It is rather because it is the most common one.

d) Territories

The territory also plays a role in the determination of the population that compose the nation. Less numerous communities that share the same language, culture, and history, but that are outside the territory, do not belong to the nation, while minorities with a different language, culture, and history that we find on the same territory may be part of the nation. Very often the territory will have been determined by legislative regulation. These may coincide in some cases with actual frontiers between countries, but it may also coincide with internal frontiers such as those imposed by cantons, states, republics, provinces or *Länder*. For example, Belgium is a multinational country containing essentially two different nations, the sociopolitical Flemish nation and the purely cultural Walloon nation. I ignore the germanophone community which is more like a national minority. There is of course also a very large number of French Belgians (perhaps a majority?) who still represent themselves only as part of an exclusively civic Belgian nation. Indeed, there is no univocal self-representation within the French Belgian community. And since there is a large number of French Belgians in Flanders, there is perhaps a majority of French Belgians who would be reluctant to approve of a partly territorial characterization of their own nation, within the boundaries of five provinces out of the ten that we find in Belgium. But this is not true of the Flemish nation, since it does indeed represent itself as occupying the five other provinces of the country.

Sometimes, territorial divisions do not determine a unique nation, since there are other nations on the same territory. The territorial boundaries of the Baltic states coincide in each case with a unique nation containing Russian national minorities. But on some other occasions, even if the boundaries serve to determine the location of one nation, it can cohabit with many other nations. This is actually the case with Russia. The Russian population is spread out on many different territories, but it is on the Russian territory that we find the Russian nation. So the territory is an important criterion that determines the extension of that nation. But at the

same time, there are many other nations on the Russian territory, like the Chechens for instance.

The same remarks apply in the case of Quebec. It is in that province that we find a Quebec sociopolitical nation, containing an English national minority and individuals of other national origins. But this does not mean that the territory serves to determine the existence of a single nation. There are also eleven aboriginal peoples living partly or totally on the same territory. So Quebec is a multinational state and it would remain multinational even if it were to become sovereign.

As we have just seen, even if the sociopolitical nation is not strictly defined in territorial terms, the territory plays a role in its determination. But sometimes territories may overlap. There might be different territorial boundaries that conflict with each other, and it is especially the case with aboriginal nations. These nations occupy a piece of land in ways that have nothing to do with the traditional "European" views about the nature, extension, or significance of territorial delimitations. In North America for instance, they have historically occupied territories that have nothing to do with Canada's division into provinces or with the U.S. division into states. Nevertheless, these nations have territories even in the judicial sense. In the 1982 Canadian constitution, for example, their ancestral rights were recognized and these entail at the very least a right of territorial occupation, even if it is not clearly delineated. And as these nations progressively move toward public governments on specific territories, they consolidate their territorial presence. Saying that the territory serves to define the nation does not mean that the same kind of boundaries should be invoked for all nations, nor that boundaries cannot in some sense overlap.

It is true that almost 45% of the aboriginal population living in Canada are in cities and do not clearly occupy distinct territories. These cases are akin to the case of diaspora nations, even if there are important differences between the two. I shall not try to dwell on these difficult problems though. I shall be happy to say simply that the concept of sociopolitical nation makes use of the notion of a territory, but that it is not so for cultural nations, diaspora nations, or those aboriginal nations which are dispersed into cities, as it is so often the case with those who live in North America.

To sum up on the notion of the territory: We often speak about the territorial definition of the nation. This means that any individual living on the territory of a state is part of the nation. This account won't do for the purpose of characterizing sociopolitical nations because, according to my account, there can be many different nations living on the same territory. As such, the purely territorial definition is just a variant of the exclusively civic account. And so, even if we use the notion of a territory as one of the main criteria, we cannot rely exclusively on the territorial criterion in order to determine who are the members of the nation understood in the sociopolitical sense.

So this is the definition that I wish to introduce in addition to the ones that are already available in the literature. In addition to the exclusively civic nation, the ethnic nation, the cultural nation and the diaspora nation, we must accept also the sociopolitical conception of the nation.

7. Meeting the Constraints

In what follows, I consider different motivations for adopting this particular concept. The arguments I will put forward concern the constraints previously mentioned. I shall try to show that the above definition satisfies these different conditions.

1. Our concept can be distinguished from the ethnic and purely civic conceptions. These views very often negate the fundamentally pluralistic character of contemporary societies. Ethnic nationalism very often leads to violence and racism while the purely civic forms of nationalism lead to exclusion and forced assimilation. According to the traditional civic conception, nations are nothing more than sovereign states. But with that concept, we are unfortunately unable to say that Catalans, the Flemish, the Scots, Quebecers, Acadians and Aboriginals have their own nations. My account does not necessarily treat these traditional views as illegitimate, but those who would like to endorse them must apply a principle of tolerance and recognize that there are different sorts of nations. And as soon as we allow for new accounts such as the cultural, the diaspora, and the sociopolitical conceptions of the nation, we begin to see that this variety of concepts is irreducible and that all of them can enhance our understanding of nationalism.

2. The account does not involve any prejudice in favour of or against treating nation-states as the best political arrangements. Nations may enter

into political communities with other nations. Nothing in what I said prevents us from considering this possibility. As a matter of fact, I gave examples of sociopolitical nations which were sovereign states and examples which were not sovereign states. So there is no *a priori* bias involved in the account in favour of or against any particular model. Nothing prevents us from admitting multi-nation states. There is no difficulty in allowing for many ethnic, cultural or sociopolitical nations into the same political community or within a purely civic nation. When the encompassing entity is a purely civic nation, the component nations are nations within a nation, and there is surely nothing wrong with that.

Conversely, we are not committed to the claim that the nation-state is bound to disappear. It is now customary to hear talk about the end of the nation-state. We are being told that we must transcend the old model and adopt instead the idea of multi-nation states. We are told that we should believe in multicultural citizenship. But actually, all forms of cultural pluralism must be implemented and these might begin "at home," i.e., within the nation itself. The very concept of the nation must be understood so that it can become pluricultural. It would be pluricultural if national majorities were to coexist with minorities in the context of a single political community. Now my concept is precisely of that sort. It is one that can accommodate cultural pluralism within a nation-state as such. We should perhaps talk about the end of the traditional nation-state which was understood only in terms of common allegiances and which did not recognize the existence of many different cultures within the nation. But sociopolitical nations are all at once polyethnic and multicultural, and when the concept of the nation is so understood, we should have nothing against nation-states.

3. Another aspect of the proposed definition is that it allows us to reach an appropriate balance between individual and collective rights. Many authors refuse to recognize any collective rights at all, and it is in part because they fear that all sorts of groups would want to be granted such rights. We would have to allow such rights to an endless variety of groups. But this is not a consequence of the present account. It must be remembered, first, that collective rights must not be reduced to the external protections of a minority from a majority, for they must also involve internal restrictions of the community as a whole over its individual members. Now when it is understood in this way, it appears that a collec-

tive right can only be enjoyed by a societal culture, for it is only in that case that the right can irreducibly be interpreted as a restriction imposed by the group and not as an external protection for a collection of individuals. Now this severely limits the number of groups entitled to collective rights. If we correctly understand collective rights as rights that can reasonably constrain the behaviour of individuals within the group, then the only "true" collective rights are those that could be entertained by a societal culture, and the only groups that can meet this condition are pervasive linguistic communities.[18] If collective rights were not understood as imposing internal constraints on the liberties of citizens, they could always be analysed in terms of special individual rights, and we would have then no reason for limiting the number of admissible groups.

Now under my account, the only groups that could be entitled to such rights are nations, national minorities and some lasting immigrant communities that have themselves become societal cultures. These are all pervasive linguistic communities and thus irreducible collective bodies that can be characterized as societal cultures. I am therefore not committed to a proliferation of collective rights. By restricting the recognition of collective rights only to those groups, I am able to avoid a slippery slope that would force us to recognize collective rights to all kinds of groups.

4. My definition also incorporates an appropriate balance between the subjective and objective features of the nation. According to my account, a nation is to a large extent a self-representation. But the main characteristics of a nation are not those that are simply *valuable* for the individuals. We should not consider individual preferences as part of the self-representation. Individuals may assign different values to different features, but these preferences do not serve as criteria for determining among all their features the ones that are to count as "national." It would also be wrong to think of the nation as something entirely reducible to one's sense of belonging. Nations are more than that, as suggested by the different components I have been describing. The concepts of national majority, national minority, and political community involve objective features.

But I have also argued that there is no nation if a critical mass of individuals within this political community do not represent themselves as belonging to a nation. Nations exist only if the individuals within the group tend to describe themselves as being part of a nation. The same kind of remarks apply to the members of national minorities. In order to be part

of a national minority, it is not sufficient to be as a matter of fact an extension of a neighbouring national majority within a political community. One also has to represent oneself as being part of that political community, and represent oneself as part of a national minority.

5. One of the most important motivations for accepting the definition is that it guarantees considerable political stability for those countries or political communities which contain national majorities, national minorities, and immigrant communities, and which would be ready to recognize the collective rights of these minorities. It is a pluricultural conception which, for that reason, intrinsically incorporates a principle of tolerance between cultural groups. It allows the inclusion of national minorities and immigrant communities within the nation. So we are, in effect, developing a conception which prevents a complete reshuffling of international borders. This is something which, I am afraid, cannot be achieved by the purely cultural account of the nation.

Moreover, those sociopolitical nations which are less than politically sovereign can, under special circumstances, be good candidates for the exercise of a full right to self-determination. They are already political communities, they already have a determinate territory and they already form a pluricultural society. So the fact that they would achieve independence would not create as much instability as would, for instance, an ethnic nation. Ethnic nations very often do not have political communities, and thus do not occupy a determinate territory, and they do not allow for cultural diversity. So it is hard to see how they could easily achieve independence without creating an enormous turmoil. I am not suggesting that there are no circumstances under which they could be justified in doing so, but they present additional difficulties. Furthermore, there is a very large number of ethnic nations all over the globe and this creates an additional difficulty for those who would like to grant them an equal moral right to secede. The situation is even worse for diaspora nations. But I want to argue that in the case of sociopolitical nations like Scotland, Catalonia, or Quebec, the situation is different. They could, under very special circumstances, have a moral justification to secede.

Some think that the cultural definition is the one to be favoured, but I doubt it very much. The cultural view can be criticized (assuming that it is understood as the only adequate account) because it tends to make it almost impossible for a nation to exercise its right to self-determination.

Most cultural nations are spread on different territories. It is hard to imagine the conditions under which they could secede without violating the *uti possidetis* principle, i.e., the principle according to which the seceding state retains its original frontiers after secession. Indeed the secession of a cultural nation would also be divisive for its own territory, if a cultural minority occupies the same territory. With a cultural concept of the nation, one is also unable to distinguish between national minorities and nations. One thus multiplies the number of candidates for nationhood and turns the suggestion that each one of them could enjoy a full right to self determination into an absurdity.[19]

Since the constraint that I am now discussing is the most important one, let me dwell on it a little more. There are other positive moral repercussions to be mentioned. The sociopolitical conception may also be useful in distinguishing between secession and partition. The first can only be performed by a nation, while the other is an act that can be performed by a sub-group within the nation, such as a national minority. It is sometimes the result of an ethnic nationalism, if not of plain "ethnic cleansing." It is most of the time illegitimate.[20]

Our definition goes beyond an exclusively civic conception and allows us to recognize subgroups within the state as nations, but we are not forced to treat national minorities as nations. On the contrary, our definition enables us to distinguish national minorities and nations. In so doing, we are able to prevent an escalation in the attribution of a full right to self-determination. With our definition we are able to recognize the existence of many different nations within a sovereign state without granting such a recognition to all the cultural groups within that state. Our definition thus satisfies our fifth requirement for a further reason. We are not in danger of having to recognize a right to secede to all sorts of groups. We could eventually be able to restrict the moral right to secede only to a very small fraction of cultural groups. Many accounts fail to give a plausible justification for exercising such a right. According to many different accounts, it is a right that many groups can claim for themselves, whether they are nations or not. But this kind of disastrous result shows why it is important to propose a sociopolitical definition. It is prescribed for moral reasons. We must arrive at a definition which implies that only some groups can, under special circumstances, be morally justified in making full use of a right of self-determination, and we must also arrive

at a definition which usually prevents sub-groups within a nation from doing so.

There are, under my account, many differences between national minorities and nations. There are, first, sociological differences. A national minority is an extension of a neighbouring national majority, while a sociopolitical nation contains national majorities. But we can also distinguish the ways in which both of them would exercise a full right to self-determination. In the case of national minorities, it would be through partition, while in the case of the sociopolitical nation, it would be through secession. So this is a second difference between the two groups. These to acts, secession and partition, are quite different because they are performed in two different contexts. A secessionist movement takes place when a component nation wants to achieve independence from an encompassing state. But a partitionist movement is one that occurs when a sub-group inside a population involved in a seceding process refuses to be part of that process. It occurs always simultaneously with a seceding process, and it occurs always because of the intervention of a third party. So partition and secession are two very different kinds of processes, and this is a second difference between national minorities and nations. The first exercise their full self-determination through partition, while the second exercise their full self-determination through secession. Finally, national minorities have different sorts of motivations for wanting to violate the territorial integrity of the encompassing state. Their motivations are very often irredentist or loyalist. Their goal is very often to remain part of the old state. This is, for instance, what happened in the cases of Bosnian Serbs or the Protestants in Northern Ireland.

So there are clear differences between national minorities and nations.[21] The two groups are sociologically very different, and when they violate the territorial integrity of an encompassing group, they do it in two different ways: through partition or secession. And finally, they do it for very different reasons. Of course, not all partitions are performed by national minorities. In the cases of Pakistan and Palestine, the groups involved were ethno-religious nations. So for that reason it could be thought that there are no clear difference between partitionist movements and seceding movements. But I want to claim that a huge difference subsists between ethnic groups and national minorities on the one side, and sociopolitical nations on the other. In the latter case, we are confront-

ed with a full societal culture, an encompassing political community which occupies a determinate territory. The exercise of a full right to self-determination, in this case, has nothing much in common with "ethnic cleansing," irredentism or partition. I am not saying that there are no contexts in which a national minority could be justified in partitioning the territory of a nation, but it must be granted that it is most of the time an il-legitimate process. And I am not saying that all sociopolitical nations have the moral legitimacy to secede. I am just saying that the determination of the moral justifications is easier in this case, and that the process is in general much less morally suspect. If I am right, the political legitimacy of secession for sociopolitical nations is in general much less controver-sial than for other kinds of national or ethnic groups.

I have discussed the differences between ethnic or cultural nations and sociopolitical nations. I have argued that secession becomes more and more problematic when the nation ceases to be a sociopolitical nation. One can also make a clear distinction between national minorities and so-ciopolitical nations, and it can be claimed that the political legitimacy for violating the territorial integrity of an encompassing state decreases when the sub-group is a national minority and not a sociopolitical nation, and the reason is that national minorities are just parts of nations. Indeed, it should be clear that if we begin to allow for a complete self-determination even to those groups which are parts of nations, then we shall be unable to prevent an escalation in the process of secession.

By distinguishing ethnic, cultural, and diaspora nations from so-ciopolitical nations, and then distinguishing the latter from national minorities and immigrant communities, I am thus able to move away from a simplistic evaluation of the exercise of a full right to self-determination. These different groups exercise self-determination in different ways and for different reasons. By making all these distinctions, we are able to reflect upon the complex set of moral justifications that should be consid-ered in order to adjudicate different nationalist movements.[22] It is in this sense that our definition has positive moral repercussions.

6. The definition that I am proposing is perfectly compatible with a liberal political philosophy. I said that, according to the account, nations can remain within larger multi-nation states as long as they are in some sense "recognized." But this recognition does not entail endorsing a specific set of illiberal values and it does not mean that the collective

rights of nations have an absolute priority over the individual rights of citizens. Let us look at these two claims successively.

The protection that is required is that of a language, a structure of culture, and a context of choice. These are structural features of the sociopolitical nation. The protection and promotion of these features have nothing to do with the protection and promotion of a particular view about the good life. It should not be interpreted as a communitarian requirement. It is perfectly coherent for a liberal philosopher to require the protection, promotion and recognition of the existence of many distinct national communities within a multi-nation state. By doing so, the state does not violate a justificational benevolent neutrality. As I have characterized them, sociopolitical nations are just political communities understood as involving a *lingua franca*, a common structure of culture and a common context of choice. By protecting these structural features of the nation, we are not advocating some kind of dubious national partiality or going against the preservation of cultural pluralism, for we are, on the contrary, precisely preserving cultural pluralism. Indeed, it could be claimed that, by implementing policies that seek to protect different national political communities, we are, in effect, fighting for cultural pluralism. Different structures of culture have different contexts of choice and each one opens up new possibilities. By protecting them, we preserve different sets of moral, cultural, and political options.

There is a second confusion that can arise and that can partly explain why some mistakenly believe that our account goes against political liberalism. Those who think that the constitutional recognition of national diversity within a multi-nation state is incompatible with liberalism very often make a wrong equation between liberalism and ethical individualism. Liberalism is committed to the protection and promotion of liberal values, and these are to a large extent individual liberties and freedoms, but it is also perfectly compatible with an equal promotion and protection of nations understood in my sense. In order to be a liberal, one need not be an ethical individualist.

Rawls himself acknowledges the existence of collective rights for peoples.[23] Nowhere does he suggest that those rights should always be subordinated to the fundamental rights and liberties of individual citizens. He has elaborated his two principles of justice in the simplified context of a closed society, and his *Law of peoples* is developed in the simplified

context of an international arena in which all peoples would have their own state. So he does not consider the particular case of a multi-nation state in which the two principles of justice would be implemented next to those concerning peoples. This is why we cannot claim that he is committed to the view that fundamental individual rights have an absolute priority over collective rights of peoples. And so it is false to suggest that Rawls endorses an individualistic political philosophy.

There is a third and final consideration to bear in mind when considering whether my view of the nation is incompatible with political liberalism. Some have suggested that liberalism is implicitly linked to nationalism. Liah Greenfeld, for instance, argues that, contrary to what has been taken for granted by modernists who wish to explain nationalism as a byproduct of modernization, it is nationalism that gave rise to modernity.[24] In the same vein, Margaret Canovan has recently claimed that most liberal accounts have been formulated within the framework of the nation-state.[25] They take for granted the existence of nationhood, and presuppose its existence at the very core of their theoretical accounts. This is also true in the case of Rawls, who has argued that the two fundamental principles of justice must, at first, be implemented in the simplified context of what he calls a "closed society." Such a society looks very much like a nation-state. For all these reasons, it is quite problematic to suggest that nationalism is incompatible with liberalism. I could add that it is especially so for any account which is constrained by a principle of tolerance.

7. I believe that the sociopolitical definition has important implications for many countries. I previously mentioned that the definition could account for the multi-national character of Belgium, Spain, Canada, and the United Kingdom. I also suggested that it could justify treating as an integral part of the nation, national minorities such as the Russians in the Baltic States, the Hungarians in Slovakia, or the Arabs in Israel. I can also add that, with such a concept, one can make sense of the existence of a single nation for the whole of Ireland, with one important national minority of British Protestants (whether or not the unification of Ireland is an available option for the present). It can also explain why it would be correct to treat Bosnia as containing a single Bosnian people, understood in terms of a political community between a Bosnian majority of Muslim faith, together with national minorities such as the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Croats. The fact that the territorial integrity of Bosnia was almost

not preserved by the Dayton Treaty is not an argument against my view of the nation as involving a national majority, national minorities, or immigrant communities. If anything, the Bosnian tragedy gives us a further reason for recognizing the moral fruitfulness of the sociopolitical conception.

The sociopolitical definition also has important applications to the Canadian case. Whether Quebec becomes sovereign or not, it is itself already a polyethnic, pluricultural, and multi-national federated state. And if Quebec were to separate, Canada and Quebec would still remain poly-ethnic, pluricultural and multi-national. What is essential is that all of these states be able to acknowledge their deep diversity. My concept is intended as a contribution which is meant to deepen our understanding of this kind of diversity.

8. Finally, the sociopolitical definition coincides with an intuitive concept of the nation. Considering the case of Quebec, those citizens who are part of the Quebec political community are all members of the Quebec nation, while the aboriginal population constitute eleven distinct nations on the same territory. My definition also conforms with formulations that have now become customary within the Quebec community. I think of such expressions as the 'national assembly', the 'national library' or the 'national holiday' that are now part of our vocabulary, in either French or English. These expressions reveal the existence of a certain national con-sciousness, but they also reveal the existence of an inclusive account of the nation. These expressions describe institutions enjoyed by all the people of Quebec, and not only by a sub-group within the political community. At the same time, Quebecers are perfectly aware of the needs of the francophone majority and the rights of its anglophone national minority. They believe that there would not be a Quebec nation if it were not for the existence of a majority of French Quebecers, but they are also aware that they must protect the acquired rights of English Quebecers. All of this confirms that the definition satisfies the material constraint of capturing a concept intuitively accepted by a critical mass of the popula-tion within the community.

8. Conclusion

The previous discussion provides an argument for the rehabilitation of a certain form of nationalism. The word 'nationalism' should no longer be condemned, since it no longer involves a defence of the principle of na-

tionality according to which each nation should have its own state. The word now refers only to the defence of the collective rights of nations, whether the word 'nation' is understood in the ethnic, civic, cultural, diaspora, or sociopolitical sense. As long as we endorse a fundamental principle of tolerance toward the self-representations of different populations, we can and should protect and promote the collective rights of nations. Many reject the word 'nationalism' and suggest instead replacing it with some other expression, e.g., 'constitutional patriotism'. But by doing so, they show that they are, in effect, still under the spell of the dichotomy between the ethnic and civic conceptions of the nation. They see nationalism as some kind of xenophobic and resentful exaltation of race and ethnicity, and believe that the only acceptable attachments are to a civic state and to its constitution. But we have seen that there were many different concepts of the nation, and that the dichotomy was by itself not a satisfactory one. The ethnic/civic dichotomy cannot adequately account for many national-ist movements. Those movements which are constrained by the principle of tolerance cannot be described as racist or xenophobic, nor can they be reduced to a mere form of constitutional patriotism. For we have seen that even constitutional patriotism could be morally problematic if it were promoted in a manner which fails to apply a principle of tolerance.

This reassessment of nationalism can be made even more forcefully in the case of sociopolitical nations. Indeed, the defence and promotion of the collective rights of sociopolitical nations appear to be perfectly legiti-mate, because the principle of tolerance is constitutive of that kind of nation. A sociopolitical nation is much more than simply a multi-ethnic and pluricultural nation. It is one which acknowledges its deep diversity. In short, the principle of tolerance is built into the very concept of the so-ciopolitical nation. When nationalism is so understood, not only can it be tolerated, it can and indeed it must be described as perfectly legitimate.

Michel Seymour

Université de Montréal

NOTES

1. I do not wish to make a radical distinction between 'people' and 'nation'. For many authors, the notion of a people refers to a sociological entity, while the nation is essential-ly described as political. This partly explains why I am reluctant to endorse such a

distinction. As we shall see, I will try to develop a sociopolitical concept of the nation. Consequently, I do not wish to draw a sharp line between a sociological entity (the people) and a political entity (the nation). Moreover, those who make such a distinction usually subscribe to a univocal concept of the nation. Now, since I wish to defend a conceptual pluralism in these matters, this gives me another reason for not accepting a fixed dichotomy between the two concepts. In what follows, I shall indifferently use the terms 'people' or 'nation'. That being said, we could accept a minimal distinction between these two notions. Under any account, the concept of a people could refer to the sociological dimension of a nation, and thus to a certain kind of population, while the concept of the nation could be used to refer to the same group understood as the subject of certain rights. It is the people endowed with a certain political and juridical recognition. It is thus only when we talk about "peoples" which do not (or almost do not) have a judicial or political status (such as, for instance, the purely cultural the diaspora "nations") that we feel strongly inclined to endorse the distinction and say that these are peoples and not nations. But if one is, like myself, willing to give a political recognition even to these sorts of nations and afford them a juridical status, this provides a further reason for not wanting to draw a radical distinction between the two notions. In any case, most conceptual distinctions can be made with the use of the word 'nation'. We are able to talk about the ethnic nation, the exclusively civic (or political) nation, the purely cultural nation, the diaspora nation, and the sociopolitical nation.

2. For a survey of the recent literature on the subject, see John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.), *Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Gopal Balakrishnan (ed.), *Mapping the Nation* (New York: Verso, 1996); Omar Dahbour and Micheline R. Ishay (eds.), *The Nationalism Reader* (New Jersey: Humanities Press 1995); Gil Delannoi and Pierre-André Taguieff (eds.), *Théories du nationalisme* (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1991).

3. Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1882).

4. The exclusively civic conception is still nowadays defended by a large number of thinkers. For example, Jürgen Habermas, "Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections on the Future of Europe" *Praxis International* 12, no. 1. 1992, 1–19; Alain Finkielkraut, *The Defeat of the Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Pierre-André Taguieff, "Nationalisme et anti-nationalisme. Le débat sur l'identité française," in Coll., *Nations et nationalismes, Les dossiers de l'état du monde*, Paris, La découverte, 1995 127–35; Dominique Schnapper, *La communauté des citoyens* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994); Claude Bariteau, "Pour une conception civique du Québec," *L'Action nationale*, vol. LXXXVI, 7, 1996 105–68.

5. Johann G. Herder , *Sämtliche Werke*, Berlin (1877–1913).

6. Even if only very few thinkers subscribe to a purely ethnic conception of the nation, many believe that there is an irreducible ethnic component in any nation. For example, Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1986); see also his *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991); Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States" in Clifford Geertz (ed.), *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa* (New York: Free Press, 1963); Pierre Van Den Berghe, "Race and Ethnicity: A Sociobiological Perspective," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1978; and *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (New York, Elsevier, 1979); Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994). For a survey of the literature

on this question, see John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.), *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

7. See my "Introduction: Questioning the Ethnic/Civic Dichotomy" in Jocelyne Couture, Kai Nielsen and Michel Seymour (eds.), *Rethinking Nationalism* (Calgary Alberta: University of Calgary Press, 1998), 1–61.

8. For a passionate defence of multi-nation states, see, for instance, Stéphane Pierré-Caps, *La multination*, (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1995).

9. Good examples of cultural nationalism are to be found in Charles Taylor, *Reconciling Two Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); Fernand Dumont, *Raisons communes* (Montréal: Boréal, 1995); Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987); Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

10. See my Introduction, *ibid.*, Section V, pp. 30–44.

11. See Rawls, "Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory", *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 77, no. 9, 1980 515–72; See also *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993 p. 31, n. 34.

12. For an account of the nation as an "imagined community," see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983).

13. There are many recent and important contributions to the study of nationalism. See the Bibliography at the end of *Rethinking Nationalism.*

14. The national majority is called a "majority" mainly because it is the majority of individuals in the world having the same features, and not only because it is a majority on its own territory. Of course, we must require it to form at least a majority on its own territory. But it could trivially fail to do so if there are no national minorities and no immigrants on the territory (e.g., Iceland). The "essential" feature of a sociopolitical nation is that it *may* be pluricultural, but it need not actually contain any minorities on its territory.

15. The notions of "structure of culture" and "context of choice" are borrowed from Will Kymlicka. See his *Liberalism, Community and Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

16. For a recent study on the notion of a diaspora, see Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas* (London: University College of London Press, 1995).

17. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 41.

18. Of course, this view of the linguistic community as an irreducible collective body presupposes a community view of language. For a definition of the societal culture, see Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1995) 76–79.

19. David Miller, for instance, is almost unable to grant a right to secede to any of the nations that he characterizes as cultural. See the criticisms raised by Margaret Moore in "Miller's Ode to National Homogeneity," *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 2, Part 3, 1996 423–29; see also my "Introduction," 30–44.

20. For a critical evaluation of partition in the twentieth century, see Radha Kumar, "The Troubled History of Partition." *Foreign Affairs*, 76, no. 1, 1994 22–34.

21. Most authors fail to distinguish between national minorities and nations. In general, national minorities are described as a sub-class of nations. They are defined as nations which happen to be outnumbered on the territory of a multi-nation state. In other words,

many authors tend to confuse national minorities and minority nations. See my Introduction to *Rethinking Nationalism*, pp. 45–55.

22. For an examination of issues related to the morality of nationalism and seceding movements, see Allen Buchanan, *Secession, The Morality of Political Divorce: From Fort Sumter to Lithuania and Quebec* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991); Simon Caney, David George and Peter Jones (eds.), *National Rights, International Obligations* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); Robert McKim and Jeff McMahan (eds.), *The Morality of Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Percy B. Lehning (ed.), *Theories of Secession* (London: Routledge, 1998).

23. See his "The Law of Peoples," in Stephen Shute and Susan Hurley (eds.), *On Human Rights, The Oxford Amnesty Lectures, 1993* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

24. Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

25. Margaret Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory* (Cheltenham, U.K.: Edward Elgar, 1996).