

# 5

## nationalism and patriotic sentiments

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*PRINCE FEISAL: You are an Englishman. Are you not loyal to England?*

*T.E. LAWRENCE: To England, and to other things.<sup>1</sup>*

The last two chapters canvassed arguments for and against global egalitarianism. But there is another powerful consideration against global egalitarianism that we have left out, and this is the argument from nationalism and patriotic concern. (Or, to be precise, this was an argument we looked at only obliquely, and briefly, in our remarks on the self-determination argument we attributed to Rawls.) The challenge is that global egalitarianism lies in tension with the value of national self-determination and the ideal of patriotic sentiment. A self-determining nation has to determine its own collective projects and goals and take responsibility for them. Global egalitarianism seems to contradict national responsibility if nations are also to take responsibility for how some nations are faring relative to others. Moreover, global egalitarianism seems to be at odds with the patriotic sentiment that individuals are entitled, if not even obliged, to show special concern for their conationals or fellow citizens. That is, the moral impartiality underlying the ideal of global egalitarianism appears contradictory to the permissible (if not obligatory) moral partiality implied in nationalism and patriotism.

Yet, surely not all instances of national partiality are permissible. “My country right or wrong” forms of nationalism put paid to any decent notion of global justice and are difficult to defend. So the claim of the nationalists and patriots is not that global egalitarianism leaves no room for xenophobic versions of nationalism. Their claim, more moderately, is that it seems that there must be some scope for justifiable expressions and exercise of national self-determination and patriotic concern, and that it is not clear how a firm commitment to global egalitarianism can accommodate these. For instance, it does not appear immediately unjust that the Canadian government supports a public health-care system that can provide quality care but only for Canadians (and long-term legal residents of Canada). On the contrary, this partiality seems permissible, if not in fact required, as a matter of domestic justice. If so, how is partiality

of this sort compatible with the demands of global egalitarianism? And how can we distinguish permissible forms of national self-determination and patriotic partiality from unjust ones?

The problem of nationalism and patriotism generalizes beyond the specialized problem of global egalitarianism. At its root is the philosophical tension between the moral universalism of global justice on the one hand, and the moral particularism of nationalism on the other hand. Indeed, the problem of global justice and nationalism is an iteration of a deep question in moral philosophy: how should the universalistic and particularistic features of morality be reconciled? Is morality ultimately universalistic and ought particularistic commitments to be reduced to and justified by universal principles or moral objectives? Or is there, ultimately, a fundamental tension within morality itself, between its universalistic and particularistic strains? Examining the debate between nationalism and global justice can provide one entry point into this moral philosophical question.

In this chapter, we focus on the idea of liberal nationalism. Is it an oxymoron? Or can some forms of nationalism be liberal in character, and, if so, what are the conditions for a liberal nationalism? Then we examine whether nationalism is a value. We will finally look at the challenge of patriotism for global egalitarianism, and close with some remarks on nationalism and cosmopolitanism.

## • THE PROBLEM OF NATIONALISM: A LIBERAL NATIONALISM?

What room is there within a conception of global justice for nationalism? We need not belabor the point that historically, and even presently, nationalism has been a source of various domestic and international injustices, including the subjugation of minorities and even genocide within states, and wars of conquests and annexation. Not surprisingly, for some liberals, nationalism is anathema to the moral core of liberalism. Nationalism's focus on individuals' national identity and the collective good of the nation is at odds with the liberal ideal that the individual is the basic subject of moral concern and entitled to equal respect regardless of her background characteristics, such as national membership. Moreover, nationalist sentiments seem irrational and morally arbitrary, and hence no more philosophically defensible than racist expressions and sentiments.

Without denying that nationalism has been the source of great (past and prevailing) injustices and that nationalist demands are often framed in ways that contradict basic liberal values, some liberals, have nevertheless argued that there is nothing inherently illiberal about nationalism. For them, nationalism can be liberal or illiberal in character and it is too hasty, according to these liberal nationalists (as we can call them), to condemn nationalism tout court.

One of the liberal nationalists' rationales for identifying a *permissible* form of nationalism (which liberal nationalism is supposed to be) is that they believe state nationalism to be an inescapable feature of a political life. The basic institutions of the state cannot help but reflect a certain political cultural identity, centered on a sense of shared history, public traditions and practices. A citizenry is not just a gathering of individuals pursuing their private ends, but an association of individuals who see themselves as members of a distinctive society that is committed to certain shared goals. To this end, the state must be in the business of inculcating in its citizens some sense of mutual identification through education, institutional practices and, as Rogers Smith puts it, the creation and telling of "stories of peoplehood" (Smith 2003). If nationalism is an integral part of statehood, then the issue is not whether to allow or condemn nationalism *per se*, but to identify the bounds of its permissibility. Differentiating liberal forms of nationalism from illiberal ones is one way of doing this.

Some liberal nationalists make the distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism (Ignatieff 1993). Ethnic nationalism is a nationalism based on descent and heredity. It is therefore an exclusionary form of nationalism, since individual membership in a nation is ascribed rather than voluntary under this model. It is relatively clear how a form of nationalism that equates "belonging" with "blood" is fundamentally at odds with liberalism, especially if membership status or the lack thereof determines one's basic political rights and social entitlements. In contrast, civic nationalism is a nationalism based on shared commitments to the principles of liberal political morality and is thus inclusive, in that it is inclusive of anyone prepared to embrace a liberal political constitution or culture. The patriotic ties that bind members of a civic national together are not based on ties of descent but on a joint commitment to the political culture and constitution of that nation. Some commentators refer to this as "constitutional patriotism" (Habermas 1992).

Yet other liberal nationalists believe that civic nationalism has erred too far in the opposite spectrum of ethnic nationalism. These liberal nationalists (e.g., Tamir 1995, D. Miller 1995 and Kymlicka 2001) acknowledge that a nationality that is hereditary and ascribed cannot be liberal in character. But they also believe that civic nationalists, by stripping away the notion of ethno-culture entirely from their conception of nationalism, rescue nationalism for liberals at the cost of rendering nationalism sterile, if not unrecognizable. Nationalism involves more than just a shared commitment to principle or values or a common constitution, they argue. Nationalism proper entails individuals sharing a conception of a collective identity centered on a public culture and language, a common history and a collective conception of themselves as a distinctive people. For these liberal nationalists, the notion of civic nationalism is a rather bloodless, and therefore mistaken, concept of nationalism. It misses the essential element of nationalism, namely that sense, among persons of a nation, of shared historical and cultural belonging and distinctiveness.

Moreover, as critics point out, the concept of civic nationalism trades on a mere myth that there can be a culturally neutral conception and practice of nationalism. As Will Kymlicka points out, meaningful forms of nationalism must involve the promotion of certain national cultural characteristics, such as a public language, public institutions, conventions and practices, and shared founding stories and cultural histories. Significantly, it also means that members of a national community consider themselves to constitute a distinctive people or historic community. On this understanding, the United States, for example, which is commonly cited as a real world example of a civic nation, is not ethno-culturally neutral. Although there is no official language, English is the *lingua franca*, required for official positions and civil service; its public institutions and practices reflect an Anglo and Judeo-Christian cultural tradition. The civic versus ethnic nationalism divide, thus, cannot capture the real distinction between liberal and illiberal nationalisms. What makes nationalism a liberal nationalism is not its aspiration to ethno-cultural neutrality, but how it conceives of its shared ethno-culture and how it goes about promoting it.

In short, a nationalism based on notions of racial descent cannot be liberal and, to the extent that ethnicity is sometimes seen to be coterminous with race, we have reasons to be suspicious of ethnic nationalism. But an ethno culture need not be racially defined. It can be defined in terms of language, social practices, rituals, customs, and an understanding of common history that can be adopted by individuals rather than properties which are thrust upon them. If all forms of nationalism must have some ethno-cultural content, then what makes a nationalism liberal or illiberal in practice is not whether it is ethno-culturally neutral or not, but the way it understands its ethno-cultural identity, the content of this identity and the way it goes about promoting that identity. One condition for a liberal nationalism, according to Kymlicka, is that state nationalism must avoid imposing unreasonable demands on minority cultures. One way any potential unreasonableness is alleviated is by granting minority groups certain kinds of minority cultural rights to counteract the effects and implications of state nation building.

## • IS NATIONALISM A VALUE?

Is nationalism merely a potential but unavoidable vice that we should try to make as palatable as possible? Or are there reasons to commend nationalism as well? Liberal nationalists argue that nationalism is not merely compatible with liberalism. They make the stronger claim that nationalism is actually valuable or a virtue from the liberal standpoint.

For instance, they argue, that nationalism makes possible the realization of the liberal ideals of personal autonomy, distributive justice and democracy. First, membership of a cultural community provides individuals with the “context of choice” within which to form, pursue and revise their ideas of the meaning and the good in life; that is, within which to exercise their personal autonomy (Kymlicka 1995). It is within

a cultural framework that individuals see value in their ends and projects. To the extent that nationalism protects this cultural structure of personal autonomy, it is valuable. As Alasdair MacIntyre writes in his defense of the *virtue* of patriotism, outside my cultural community, “I am unlikely to flourish as a moral agent . . . . Without community, there are no standards of judgment. Patriotism gives those standards” (MacIntyre 1984, p. 10).

Second, shared national affinity provides the impetus and rationale for citizens of a society to accept and take on distributive obligations among themselves. Why should persons be convinced and be motivated to share in the fate of their compatriots unless they also see themselves as fellow members in a community of fate? In modern political societies we can’t count on the intimate ties of kinship or tribal affiliations to motivate the commitments of social justice. Instead, nationality provides the ties that bind and motivate. It encourages individuals to see each other as members of an “imagined community” (to borrow Benedict Anderson’s (1993) apt phrase), as a moral community in which persons take themselves to be mutually indebted and obligated to one another.

Third, national affinity and the common language it supports make possible deliberative democracy. Deliberative democracy requires a certain reasonableness on the part of citizens, in how they make demands on each other, in their willingness to concede to better arguments, to compromise for the sake of tolerance and so on. It requires that citizens be willing to forward proposals that are respectful and be willing to meet other deliberators halfway out of a sense of mutual respect and of the common project they are all engaged in. Shared nationality provides the fuel for this. Moreover, deliberative politics, in Kymlicka’s words is “politics in the vernacular”. What Kymlicka means is that democratic deliberation requires a common language in which individuals can engage with each other.

Some critics of nationalism take national affinity to be irrational, as a form of identification based on passion and sentiment rather than reason. But defenders of liberal nationalism would remind these critics that merely because a pursuit or project cannot be fully rationally defended to everyone does not imply that it is valueless or unworthy of consideration. Religious commitments and ideals of the good life aren’t the sort of things that can be rationally defended universally. Yet we don’t immediately condemn religious expressions and practices as meaningless or invaluable or a vice.

But can something that is not rationally defensible be morally justifiable? Again, taking religion as an analogy, the fact that religious commitments cannot be rationally defended does not make it unjust to pursue those commitments. What makes religious practices just or unjust is not their rational basis but whether they conform to background standards of justice. That is, what makes a pursuit just or unjust is not whether it can be rationally defended to every philosopher’s satisfaction, but whether it is pursued and realized in compliance with the requirements of justice. Liberal nationalism is just such an attempt to show that there can be forms of nationalism that are consistent with the requirements of liberal justice.

The reasonable concern of skeptics of liberal nationalism is that, as mentioned, nationalism has been the source of much vice in human history. In this regard, the non-rational basis of nationalism carries a special burden of proof or justification (unlike that of the non-rationality of personal pursuits). Moreover, one element of nationalism is the idea that conationals are entitled to special consideration and are beneficiaries of special obligations that other individuals in general are not. (We will turn to this particular problem next.) Thus, while liberal nationalism has its stalwart advocates, it should by no means be regarded as an uncontroversial position.

## • PATRIOTISM AND PARTIALITY

There is a feature often associated with nationalism that presents a particular difficulty for global egalitarianism. This is the idea that individuals are entitled, if not obliged, to care more for their compatriots. This idea of patriotic concern, as we can call it, need not be tied to nationalism. Some commentators would argue that patriotic sentiment can exist among members of a state quite independently of any underlying nationalist identification among them. But what is relevant for our discussion is that patriotic concern – whether it is nationalistically grounded or not – seems to contradict the global egalitarian ideal that all persons are entitled to equal consideration.

Global egalitarianism is a particularly strong view of what global justice demands. As we saw, global egalitarianism not only holds that all individuals are entitled to equal respect, but claims that, on account of equal respect, all individuals are entitled to some form of global economic equality. The challenge of patriotic concern is thus most pronounced when directed against global egalitarianism, and in investigating how global egalitarians could address this challenge, we should also be able to account for the less difficult cases.

An immediate retort available to the global egalitarian is: “So much the worse for patriotic concern then!”. That is, the global egalitarian could stand firm by her commitments and if there is a *prima facie* tension between these commitments and other values, the latter are to be rejected. There is nothing special about patriotic ties and concerns. To the contrary, they are forms of prejudice and shortsightedness that we should try to overcome. This form of response is analogous to William Godwin’s argument (1793), in his discussion of utilitarianism, that if you ought to rescue the archbishop of Cambay over his chambermaid because that will produce the best outcome, then you ought to do the same even if the chambermaid happened to be your sister or spouse. There is nothing morally significant in the pronoun “my”.

If global egalitarianism requires the wholesale rejection of patriotic concern, we might be inclined to fault global egalitarianism as a mistaken view of global justice. After all, any conception of justice that condemns special or personal concern of other kinds – like friendship and kinship – could be accused of being out of touch

with humanity and human values, and consequently unfit for human beings. This will be the problem many commentators, including utilitarians, find with Godwin's bald-faced rejection of relationship and special concern. Patriotic ties are, of course, unlike ties of friendship and kinship in that the latter are intimate and personal ties. But rejecting patriotic ties as unjust merely because they involve partiality is premature. Indeed, what the case of friendship and kinship suggests is that we look at how conceptions of justice deal with these more familiar forms of partiality, and see if a parallel can be drawn for the case of patriotic concern.

Thus, many global egalitarians would argue "back", in same the way that, for example, utilitarians could try to argue back to account for and accommodate friendship and kinship within the utilitarian framework. For example, utilitarians could hold that although utilitarian morality is fundamentally impartial and impersonal, special concern for friends and family is defensible because special concern of this kind will in fact in the long term produce more utility for society as a whole. Indeed, they can make the even stronger argument that more good will result if individuals in fact fully internalize these special commitments, and take them to be valuable in themselves, even though objectively (from the utilitarian perspective) these are only useful instrumentally. But even if individual actors do internalize these special commitments, these special commitments are objectively only instrumentally valuable. They are justifiable only because they provide a division of labor that allows for the most efficient production of good for all involved.

Accordingly, following a similarly structured argument, some global egalitarians could attempt to argue that special concern for compatriots can be seen as a division of labor in this sense. By permitting individuals and their state institutions to care specially for compatriots, if not further inculcating individuals to in fact endorse these commitments as valuable in themselves, the end of global egalitarianism will be better served or realized. Thus, if we allow Americans to attend specially to the egalitarian needs of other Americans, Canadians to those of other Canadians, and the British to other British, then we have a division of labor that will more effectively realize our goals of global justice, rather than if we were to require all individuals to attend to the needs of everyone at large. The reasons why this division of labor is more efficient can be easily inferred. Through a combination of proximity, shared history, participation under common institutions and laws, compatriots know each other's needs better than outsiders do. They also have clearer information on the specific problems that their compatriots face, and proximity and shared institutions allow for their efficient solution (e.g., Goodin 1988).

One problem with this argument is that it does not follow that patriotic concern will always result in the desired outcome. In the case of America, Canada and Britain, it does seem plausible that leaving each to focus on the needs of their own could provide an effective division of moral labor since each country is relatively capable of providing justice its their own members, each is relatively well resourced and so on.

But dividing our moral obligations along patriotic lines surely cannot be efficient if we throw into the mix countries that are less well off. Would we be able to say that global justice will be best realized if Americans look after their own, and Somalis try to do the same even though their country faces serious economic challenges? The division of labor argument seems to fail as a general justification for patriotic concern in our world.

However, this could be turned into an advantage for the division of labor argument. Its proponents have made a case for why patriotic concern is valuable and what its limits are: it is valuable because it can be an efficient mechanism for discharging or fulfilling general global obligations; and it is impermissible at the point where patriotic concern does not, in fact, service global goals.

A more serious problem for the division of labor argument is that treating patriotic ties as (objectively) only instrumentally valuable, provides a mistaken account of the value of these commitments. Some philosophers hold that, as social beings, we not only find meaning and value in certain forms of social life, but that our actual flourishing ordinarily entails some participation in social relationships like friendship and kinship. The division of labor is incorrectly “reductive” in that it explains the value of special relations and special obligations wholly in terms of some general moral good. This way of accounting for special obligations strips special relations and concern of any intrinsic value they might have for human beings. Nationalist theorists extend these observations about special relationships to patriotic ties, and hence argue that attempts to accommodate and limit patriotic concern by reference to some greater global value mischaracterize and under-appreciate the value of patriotism. For these theorists, just as it is implausible (pace some utilitarians) that the special concern parents have for their own children is justifiable wholly because encouraging this special care is how the welfare of all children in society is best maximized, so too they argue that it seems implausible that patriotic ties are of value only because a general global good is best realized by encouraging this form of partial concern.

The claim that patriotic relations are of intrinsic value will have to show that there are certain relationships that are indeed valuable in this way, and that patriotic ties are one of them. One might be prepared to accept that some special relations, like friendship and kinship, are valuable in themselves, but deny that patriotic relations, being impersonal and large scale, are valuable in the same way. But if there are special relations and concerns that are valuable in themselves, then it is possible that patriotic relations count among these. So, granting the moral significance of patriotism, what follows for global egalitarianism?

Not all defenders of patriotism go on to say that compatriots take priority always in all cases. What they will say is that the ideals of global justice are shown to be more complex than global egalitarians would have us believe. We cannot simply assume, with regard to egalitarian justice, that the world is a single social scheme in which all persons are entitled to equal economic entitlements or rights. Patriotic ties should be taken into consideration and this can muddy the reasoning considerably. What

most commentators hold in the end is that while we do have duties of global justice to help ensure that persons, regardless of nationality or citizenship, have the means of subsistence, there is no duty of economic equality to all persons (D. Miller 2007).

The division of labor argument rescues global egalitarianism but by deflating the significance of patriotism; the moral significance argument restores significance to patriotism but undercuts global egalitarianism. Is it possible to have it both ways? Here, it is helpful to examine how egalitarian justice addresses and accommodates more familiar forms of special concern in the domestic case. For instance, few if any domestic egalitarians deny that friendship and kinship are permissible relations and forms of expression. Moreover, not many will be reductive about these ties by arguing these are permissible or encouraged only because they serve egalitarian goals. For instance, John Rawls does not say that individual conceptions of the good (in which familial and other relational ties surely do play a part) are justifiable only if they promote or help to realize social justice. Instead, the only restriction from the perspective of social justice is that our conceptions of the good do not violate or undermine the requirements of justice. That is, the principles of justice set the parameters that define and limit the space for admissible pursuits (Brock 2009; Tan 2004). But, beyond this, no further justification is required. It is up to individuals to attach whatever moral significance they want to their ideas of the good life. Of course, as rational agents, we would hope that our overall forms of life would be coherent and consistent. But there is no requirement that we justify and see the value of their conceptions of the good in any particular way. That is, there is no requirement that we must see our ends in life as being in the service of the greater goal of social justice.

In other words, we can maintain the primacy of global egalitarian justice without necessarily stripping patriotism of its moral significance. What the primacy of egalitarian justice insists is only that, however these patriotic ties are grounded and conceived, they be expressed and exercised within the parameters defined by global egalitarianism. Just as a show of friendship in domestic society should not violate the terms of egalitarian justice – I cannot withhold paying my taxes in order to benefit a friend – so too patriotic commitments ought not to violate the terms of global egalitarian justice. But, just as this primacy of domestic justice does not mean that the value of friendship is reducible to the ideal of egalitarianism, so limiting patriotism against global egalitarianism in this way does not mean that we must treat patriotism reductively.

Of course, the debate will continue in this way: unlike friendship, patriotism is a special kind of relationship that in some political societies includes taking on obligations of distributive justice towards each other. Thus, unlike friendship, patriotism gives rise to a domain of egalitarian justice that will compete with the domain of global egalitarian justice. But in reply, why should the fact that patriotic relations create justice demands of their own negate justice demands in other context? For instance, we could create a new private association that grants that members have justice

obligations to each other, and then use this as a reason to insist that the domestic justice claims of the larger society no longer apply to us because we now occupy a distinct and competing domain of justice. Rather, most of us would say that this private association is a subset of the larger domain of justice and so it remains bound by the demands of justice applicable in that domain. Whatever obligations we would like to see ourselves as having towards fellow members of our private associations, these obligations are constrained by the requirements of justice in force in society as a whole. Likewise, whatever patriotism requires of persons, these requirements are circumscribed by the requirements of global justice. Thus, if there is an independent case for global justice, patriotic commitments and their moral significance do not, on their own, block off these demands.

The form of the argument above is the following: if there is a case for global egalitarianism, the claim that patriotism is itself morally significant cannot undermine it. It might well be that patriotism makes it impossible to argue for global egalitarianism. For example, one might say, specifically against globalizing Rawls's method, that specific patriotic ties are not the sorts of things that one could assume ignorance of at the (global) original position. But we will need to know why that is, why patriotic ties are unique from other kinds of special relationships. Alternatively, one could argue that patriotism provides the ties and mutual identification that make egalitarianism a commitment in the first place, and hence there is no such thing as global egalitarianism, given the obvious absence of global patriotism. But this argument takes us back to the considerations raised in the previous chapter about the circumstances of egalitarian justice. In this respect, the case might well be made that, absent patriotic relations, there can be no egalitarian justice. What is clear, however, is that this is a different challenge from the one originally raised, which is that patriotic commitments present a limitation to global egalitarianism. If there are independent reasons for embracing global egalitarianism, patriotic ties do not limit its commitments.

## • COSMOPOLITANISM AND NATIONALISM

It is often thought that cosmopolitanism is at odds with nationalism. Cosmopolitanism, after all, affirms the ideal that all persons are entitled to equal respect, so must dismiss, some believe, nationalism as an obstruction to that ideal. To the extent then that global justice is also cosmopolitan justice, global justice must be skeptical of nationalism. It will be appropriate then to close this chapter with some reflections on cosmopolitanism versus nationalism.

The term "cosmopolitanism" has different meanings in the global justice literature, and while some conceptions of cosmopolitanism might well be in tension with nationalism, others need not. So, to assess better the claim that cosmopolitanism and nationalism are at odds, one needs to further specify "cosmopolitanism with respect to what?"

If cosmopolitanism is meant as a conception of individual moral identity, that is, that persons should basically identify themselves as members of humanity rather than of

any sub-group, then it would be in a state of conflict with nationalism, which allows that nationality can be a primary source of identification. Or, if cosmopolitanism is understood as an affirmation of a world government or world state, this might tell against nationalism to some degree.

But if cosmopolitanism is a claim about the scope of egalitarian justice, then there is no necessary tension between that and nationalist demands. In this case, it is possible that, on the one side, we take egalitarianism to be a global ideal while holding, on the other side, that national identity and partiality are important and valuable pursuits. Just as a conception of domestic egalitarianism need not renounce familial partiality or partiality among friends, but only require that these partial pursuits be confined by the demands of egalitarian justice, so too cosmopolitan justice, so understood, can allow and even acknowledge the value of nationalism consistent with the commitment to global egalitarianism.

In short, whether cosmopolitanism and nationalism can be reconciled is hard to answer in the abstract because the term “cosmopolitanism” is not sufficiently fixed as yet in the literature. It has been used to refer to a host of distinct ideals about global justice. Indeed, the general ideal that all persons are entitled to equal respect seems so basic that it might be thought “we are all cosmopolitans now”. For cosmopolitanism to be meaningful, therefore, it has to be further defined. And whether cosmopolitanism and nationalism can go together will depend on what it is that we are supposed to be cosmopolitan about. The above discussion suggests that it is possible to be a cosmopolitan about egalitarian justice while accepting the value of nationalism.

We will have a more comprehensive examination of cosmopolitanism when we discuss cosmopolitan democracy in Chapter 11.

## • SUMMARY

If nationalism is not inherently illiberal, then there is no reason why a defensible account of global justice cannot make room for liberal forms of nationalism. Moreover, if there are good reasons for valuing nationalism, then a defensible account of global justice must provide sufficient room for nationalist expression and self-determination.

In this chapter, we explore the notion of liberal nationalism, and why some of its proponents hold that liberal nationalism must be more than just a form of nationalism around a shared constitution. We also looked at arguments that nationalism is of value because of how it contributes to the objectives of liberal political morality.

A feature of nationalism is the ideal of patriotic partiality. How can this partiality be justified? More importantly, does patriotic partiality undermine global egalitarian arguments and commitments? We looked at arguments suggesting that partiality per se need not be problematic for egalitarian justice, especially if egalitarian justice is

meant to regulate the background conditions under which persons and associations engage in different pursuits, including personally or associationally partial ones.

Finally, we remarked briefly on the relationship between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. While some conceptions of cosmopolitanism stand in conflict with nationalism, cosmopolitanism as an account of the scope of distributive egalitarianism need not be.

## • STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 Why do some liberal nationalists believe that liberal nationalism cannot be merely “civic nationalism”?
- 2 What are some of the ways in which nationalism contributes to liberal political objectives, according to liberal nationalists?
- 3 Is patriotism a virtue or is it a vice to be curbed?
- 4 Is patriotic partiality in tension with global egalitarianism?
- 5 What is the most relevant sense of cosmopolitanism for the purpose of global justice? Is this conception of cosmopolitanism compatible with nationalism and patriotism?

## • NOTE

- 1 *Lawrence of Arabia*, directed by David Lean, screenplay by Robert Bolt. As transcribed by Kenneth Mooney: [http://www.aellea.com/script/lawrence\\_of\\_arabia.txt](http://www.aellea.com/script/lawrence_of_arabia.txt) [8 Sept. 2016].

## • REFERENCES

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Jurgen Habermas, “Citizenship and National Identity” (1992).  
 Will Kymlicka, “Misunderstanding Nationalism”, in *Politics in the Vernacular* (2001).  
 Alasdair MacIntyre, “Is Patriotism a Virtue?” (1984).

### *Conational partiality*

Gillian Brock, “What Do We Owe Conationals and Non-nationals?”, in *Global Justice: A Cosmopolitan Account* (2009).  
 Robert Goodin, “What’s So Special About Our Fellow Countrymen?” (1988).  
 David Miller, “The Ethical Significance of Nationality” (1988).

## • FURTHER READING

Yael Tamir's *Liberal Nationalism* (1995) is one of the first books in defense of nationalism in the contemporary debate. See also David Miller's *On Nationality* (1995) and Margaret Moore's *The Ethics of Nationalism* (2001). For a critique of patriotism and nationalism, see Simon Keller, "Patriotism as Bad Faith" (2005). David Miller's *National Responsibility and Global Justice* (2007) argues for national responsibility as a limitation to global egalitarianism. Lea Ypi's *Global Justice and Avant-Garde Political Agency* (2012) argues that state-level political associations can be a force for global justice and global egalitarianism.

# 11

## • global democracy: cosmopolitan versus international

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It is commonly observed that increasing globalization is accompanied by a global democratic deficit, that is, “a lack of input and participation, and a correlate lack of accountability, concerning decisions by intergovernmental and other transnational organizations that increasingly affect people’s lives” (Gould 2004, p. 201). In a response to this democratic deficit, some theorists have argued that we need to disconnect democracy from its traditional state-centered locus, and to reconceive it as a trans-state and cosmopolitan ideal. Others believe that democracy is inherently a bounded ideal. Specifically, it is an ideal intrinsically confined to the state. In their view, the response to the democratic deficit is not to dislocate democracy from its traditional locus, as the cosmopolitan democrats would have it, but to strengthen the existing state-centric sites and practices of democracy. In this chapter, we outline the main contours of cosmopolitan democracy and one line of objection against it.

The debate between cosmopolitan democracy and its alternative reiterates a fundamental controversy within democratic theory. Democracy is rule by the people. But what constitutes the people, or the *demos*? Which group of individuals is entitled to democratically participate in decision-making? The debate on global democracy is, at bottom, a debate about the plausibility and reality of a *global demos*.

### • THE DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT AND COSMOPOLITAN DEMOCRACY

Cosmopolitan democracy is proposed as a response to the problem of global democratic deficit. The state-centric account of democracy, cosmopolitan democrats point out, is increasingly outmoded in an era of increasing globalization in which state borders and membership are becoming less and less central with respect to where decisions are made, on the one side, and, on the other, how and where they impact

people. Many domestic economic and social decisions and policies have global reach and effect. For example, environmental regulations, or the lack thereof, affect not just the country where these regulations are enacted or not enacted, but also affect neighboring countries, if not the rest of the world. Even when decisions with profound impact on persons are made by international institutions, such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, there is an absence of democratic input by those individuals who will be most affected. As a major proponent of cosmopolitan democracy, David Held, puts it, “the idea of a democratic order can no longer be simply defended as an idea suitable to a particular closed political community or state” (Held 2000, p. 19; also Held 2010).

Thus, Held and others like Daniele Archibugi *et al.* (2000) propose, as an alternative to the traditional state-centric view of democracy, the ideal of cosmopolitan democracy. As transnational and governmental decisions and policies with global consequences become more pervasive, the bounds of individual democratic engagement cannot remain confined to their respective states. The idea that democracy is essentially a state-based practice and concept has to be replaced by an unbounded conception of democracy in order to face the new realities and challenges of a globalized world order. Held thus recommends that

[a]gainst this background [of globalization], democracy must be thought of as a “double-sided process” ... [meaning] not just the deepening of democracy within a national community, but also the extension of democratic processes across territorial borders. Democracy for the new millennium must involve cosmopolitan citizens able to gain access to, and mediate between, and render accountable, the social, economic and political processes and flows which cut across and transform their traditional community boundaries.

2000, p. 30

Instead of continuing to regard democracy as primarily an ideal that must be anchored in the idea of a nation, cosmopolitan democrats propose that democracy be seen as primarily a transnational ideal that is directly applicable to individuals of the world taken as a single social scheme.

Thus, basic to the idea of cosmopolitan democracy is that there ought to be overlapping transnational institutions and associations in which individuals ought to have a participatory or deliberative democratic role. People are not just democratic citizens of their state, but they are also democratic members of the global community through their membership and participation in various different associations and activities within and without their own countries. Some cosmopolitans propose the formation of a world parliament of a sort, in the form of democratically elected People’s Assembly, a world assembly of individuals elected directly by individuals independently of their nationalities, to complement the United Nations General Assembly in which countries rather than individuals as such are represented (Archibugi *et al.* 1998).

Although cosmopolitan democrats need not go all the way and seek to replace nation states with a world state, they advocate the creation of overlapping transnational and regional institutions that cut across national boundaries and in which individuals can have a direct participatory democratic role. Individuals are not merely democratic agents within their own countries, but are democratic agents in the world at large. They are to be empowered to have a voice in global decision-making through their participation in various transnational associations and institutions. In other words, individuals will assume certain democratic citizenship functions at the global level that are traditionally state-confined, such as electing representatives to world-governing bodies. Held thus writes that “Democracy for the new millennium must involve *cosmopolitan citizens* able to gain access to, and mediate between, and render accountable, the social, economic and political processes and flows which cut across and transform their traditional community boundaries” (Held 2000, p. 30; my stress).

Undergirding the ideal of cosmopolitan democracy is the principle of democratic membership called the “all affected principle”. This principle, in its basic form, says that the relevant set of individuals who should have the right of democratic participation in the collective decision-making is anyone who would be affected by these decisions. The advent of new technologies, increased mobility of goods and people, the increasing influence of international institutions and the increasing impact of international practices on persons’ lives, make it the case that individuals are increasingly being affected by decisions made outside their own state. In the face of this new global reality, the all affected principle thus entails the extension of individuals’ democratic rights beyond the confines of the state.

## • COSMOPOLITAN CITIZENSHIP

The concept of cosmopolitan citizenship introduced by cosmopolitan democrats needs some clarification. It could give the impression that what cosmopolitan democrats are yearning for is a world democratic state in which persons are cosmopolitan citizens in the legal-political sense, as subjects of a literal global government.

But, in fact, few cosmopolitan democrats call for an actual world state and an accompanying literal world citizenship. Indeed, they are normally appreciative of the standard concerns with regard to world government. For instance, Immanuel Kant, his cosmopolitan credentials notwithstanding, is skeptical of a world state.<sup>1</sup> He argues in his essay “Perpetual Peace” that a literal world state will be hard to achieve and, even if achievable, hard to maintain given the vast expanse of the globe and the challenges of human diversity (Kant). Moreover, Kant notes that if, contrary to expectations, such a state is realized, it is realizable and sustainable only through some kind of global tyranny. In short, world statism is hard to realize and, even if realizable, morally objectionable.

World statism has some gallant defenders.<sup>2</sup> But this is an outlier position among cosmopolitan democrats. Few cosmopolitans actually defend a literal world state and a

world citizenship conceived as citizenship in the ordinary legal and political sense and defined in terms of a common political relationship. Most of them, like Held, refrain from affirming an actual world state. On the contrary, they quite explicitly state that their understanding of cosmopolitan democracy does not entail a world state as we ordinarily understand “state”. For Held, what cosmopolitan democracy requires primarily are trans-*national* institutions and organizations that transcend and cut across the boundaries of states. To put it simply, Held’s cosmopolitan democracy is a call for more democratic world *governance*, not world government. Its attendant notion of cosmopolitan citizenship, then, is not citizenship in the standard legal-political sense, connoting membership in a political association and lawful subjection to its coercive powers.

In general, when cosmopolitans, like Martha Nussbaum, make the case for world citizenship, they are not arguing for the extension of our ordinary conception of citizenship to a world polity as such. In Nussbaum’s case, she is urging that we strive to “make all human beings part of our community of dialogue and concern, base our political deliberations on interlocking commonality, and give the circle that defines our humanity special attention and respect” (Nussbaum 1996, p. 9). Nussbaum’s cosmopolitan citizenship is a moral aspiration rather than a legal-political one. The “world citizenship” that cosmopolitans aspire to is a moral rather than a legal ideal. Cosmopolitans are not bent on creating a world state as such, but want the creation of a common moral world and the recognition of the membership of all humans in this moral world. Cosmopolitans, in short, intend their call for world citizens to be understood metaphorically, rather than literally.

## • DEMOCRACY AS A STATE-CENTRIC IDEAL

Although the cosmopolitan democrat need not be advocating for world statism and cosmopolitan citizenship in the legal-political sense, she nonetheless imagines the possibility of democratic engagement among individuals outside the context of the state. Some critics object to this unmooring of democracy and individual democratic responsibility from the locale of the state. According to this line of objection, democracy is a necessarily state-bounded concept. Democratic engagement and accountability are possible and realizable only among individuals of the same state. Perhaps the most vivid version of this objection is what I will call, for convenience, the nationalist objection. This is the argument that democratic deliberation is achievable only among members of a common political culture. Unlike the cosmopolitan ideal, which defines the *demos* in terms of affectedness, the nationalist view of democracy understands the *demos* in terms of political membership.

Will Kymlicka writes that “democratic politics is politics in the vernacular” (2001, p. 213). Meaningful democratic deliberation is possible only among individuals who share a common language, he argues. One reason for this is that ordinary people feel “comfortable debating political issues in their own tongue”, and that, as a general rule,

only elites can acquire fluency in more than one language. So to require people to deliberate in a language that is foreign to them is to defend a form of elitism at best, and at worst their exclusion from deliberative politics – a violation of the democratic ideal either way. As well, “political communication has a large ritualistic component” that a mere technical competence in a language may not be sensitive to (ibid., p. 213). For example, Yael Tamir notes how the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, follows after the “Great Knesset”, which was a central religious and political institution during the period of the Second Temple (Tamir 1995, p. 148). The Knesset’s proceedings and procedures thus reflect a particular culture and background history that a merely technical understanding of Hebrew may not suffice to render comprehensible and familiar. Thus, Kymlicka concludes that “the more political debate is conducted in the vernacular, the more participatory it will be” (2001, p. 214).

In addition to the common language that shared nationality provides, another crucial role nationality plays in servicing democratic politics is that it provides a sense of solidarity and unity that is necessary for generating the requisite level of mutual respect and trust among individuals. Democracy requires individuals to respect the reasonable views of their fellow citizens, even if they are in deep disagreement with each other, and conversely that they are to forward arguments and views that each can reasonably expect others to endorse. It also requires a certain degree of trust so that the losers in a given democratic process can be motivated to honor the result, because they are confident that, should results be in their favor next time, their opponents would likewise honor these results (Kymlicka 2001, p. 226; also D. Miller 1999, p. 90).

Fellow nationals are, of course, in general not as intimate with each other as, say, friends or kin are. But fellow feelings, nationalists argue, need not be restricted only to people who are closely related to one another. Conationals see themselves to be part of a collective and common past and with a shared future, and even if they are not actually acquainted with each other, “in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 1993, p. 6). It is for this reason that Benedict Anderson famously refers to the nation as “an imagined community,” meaning by this not that the nation is a fictitious association that is unworthy of people’s allegiances, but that it is a significant allegiance-generating association that is premised on a people’s image or collective consciousness of its historic and communal distinctness.

Thus David Miller writes that democratic politics “are likely to function most effectively when they embrace just a single national community” (1999, p. 90). This is because the virtues of mutual trust and respect, moderation and self-restraint are crucial for a functioning democratic political community; and common nationality provides the “cement” for engendering and nurturing these virtues.

In sum, nationalist theorists point out that nationhood provides the solidarity and common language necessary for democratic politics. Yet, they retort, “the cosmopolitan governance proposed by Held is for the most part silent on” this crucial

point (Kymlicka 2001, p. 239). What would serve as the basis of solidarity and common understanding at the global level among people of diverse nationalities? If individuals are to be directly represented in global decision-making irrespective of nationality, it is not clear if the linguistic diversity can be overcome, and if the diversity in worldviews and affinities can properly support a democratic deliberative order that is based on mutual trust and respect across national lines. If we actually do establish, say, a directly elected world parliament, how likely would it be for, say, a Canadian to seriously consider voting for, and to do so in an informed manner, an Indonesian candidate given the linguistic and cultural barriers between them? Indeed, as some commentators point out, the European experience has shown this to be quite unlikely. In spite of the success of the European Union (EU) in bringing together democratic nations under a single formal/legal organization, the creation of a unified European *demos* remains elusive (p. 211). Indeed, the diversity of national identification remains in spite of economic and monetary integration at the level of Europe.

There is also the problem of fostering and securing a global civil society that can underpin a functioning democracy of individuals in the global arena. Democrats take as one important precondition for a flourishing democracy the presence of a flourishing civil society. Yet it is not clear how a global civil society could be engendered, according to the nationalist democrats. Richard Falk holds out hope, cautiously, that a global civil society may emerge as a result of globalization, in that “as the global village becomes more an experienced, daily reality” (Falk 2000, p. 176), individuals can come to see themselves as members of a shared community of fate. This optimism presupposes that the sense of solidarity and common sympathies and fellow-feelings that are the preconditions of civil society can be engendered globally because of people’s common experiences and realities as a result of increased globalization. Yet shared experience and reality alone may not be sufficient. A prior sense of identity may be necessary before individuals can come to appreciate and perceive certain experiences and realities as *shared*. Why, for example, would Americans attempt to understand the effects of globalization and to share in their worldview? The felt impact of free trade and economic liberalization for Americans and the Chinese workers are quite different; unless there is first a prior sense of affinity and mutual feeling between the two peoples, experiences need not be seen as shared and held in common.

One might propose that shared values and causes could provide the glue to bind individuals from different nations together, thus creating the global civil society needed to ground cosmopolitan democracy. Held points to the “new voices” motivated by shared principles in events such as the Rio Conference and the Beijing Conference on Women’s Rights as hopeful signs of strengthening global ties and the founding of a global civil society. While Held acknowledges that these attempts to create “new forms of public life and new ways of debating regional and global issues” are still very nascent, and so it is too early to say whether these attempts to

foster a global civil society will eventually succeed, he nonetheless thinks that “they point in the direction” of such possibilities (2000, p. 29).

On the other hand, nationalists hesitate to take transnational activism motivated by shared goals and interests as evidence of emerging transnational democratic deliberation. The former kind of coalition is unraveled once goals and interests diverge; democratic associations, on the other hand, ought to be able to withstand such value disagreements. Indeed, democratic associations presuppose divergent goals among their members, and hence the need for democratic deliberation to fairly and reasonably adjudicate divergent claims. The ties that bind a democratic order together cannot be secured by shared interests or principles for these are not robust and permanent enough to generate the kinds of shared sympathies, and mutual respect and trust, necessary for actual deliberative democracy (Kymlicka 2001, p. 325).

The nationalists do not deny that there is a global democratic deficit that needs fixing. They do not oppose the idea of greater global democracy as such. What they are skeptical of is that global democracy can be achieved through the direct democratic participation of individuals dislocated from local and national communities. Instead of supplanting and diluting national and local democratic relations, nationalists would call for the strengthening of the traditional sites of democracy at the local and national levels, and better international democratic institutions wherein representatives of democracies can engage in democratic decision-making with other national representatives. In short, global democracy is to be achieved by improving democratic relations between individuals at the national level and improving democratic relations between national communities at the global level. Global democracy will take the form then literally of an *international* democracy instead of a cosmopolitan democracy.

Indeed, the nationalist democrats would argue that it is better to address the global democratic deficit not by weakening or transplanting local (state-centered) democratic ties but by in fact strengthening and improving these local democratic relations. As Amy Gutmann writes, “Democratic citizens have institutional means at their disposal that solitary individuals, or citizens of the world only, do not” (1996, p. 71). They are in a real position to pressure their representative to address the defects in global policy making and to represent their interests in this way without the need for their actual participation in global forums.

This last point highlights the strategic role of nationalizing democracy for the end of global democracy. Unlike the cosmopolitan democratic approach, which will call for the creation of new forms of governance, the nationalist approach calls on democrats to improve on existing global institutions and structures and, importantly, to strengthen democratic national governments.

Defenders of cosmopolitan democracy have, of course, challenged the claims of the nationalists. They argue that, contra the nationalist thesis, deliberative democratic

associations larger than the nation, and that cut across national and other boundaries, can be formed, fostered and sustained, the lack of shared nationality and language notwithstanding (e.g., Weinstock 2001). Indeed, they may point out that nationalists are guilty of a certain double standard by holding cosmopolitans to a higher standard of deliberative ideal than is expected of deliberative democrats in the national context. After all, the ideal of deliberation *within* multicultural countries faces the same issues of linguistic and cultural diversity that nationalists say cosmopolitans must surmount; also deliberative democracy in modern nation states, which are certainly not intimate associations, does not require direct individual involvement in all matters, but that individuals may be represented indirectly at different levels through different constituencies and other sub-national associations. So cosmopolitans are not alone in being guilty of assuming a higher degree of direct individual involvement than is realistically possible, they would note.

Perhaps the most challenging of the nationalist objections against the cosmopolitan concerns the basis of solidarity and affinity for democratic politics. Yet, as some cosmopolitans have countered, it is important not to underestimate the malleability of people's sense of solidarity and fellow-feeling with others. Indeed, if nationalism is properly seen as a morally expansionist project, that is, a project that seeks to compel people to overcome their parochial ties of kinship and tribalism in order to include strangers (i.e., their conationals) within their arc of moral concern, rather than as a morally limiting project, then there is no immediate reason to think that this expansion of human moral motivation cannot be developed beyond the bounds of the nation. Carol Gould (2014) has argued for the formation of global solidarity that is necessary for interactive global democracy.

## • SUMMARY

Both sides to the debate agree that there is a global democratic deficit. The cosmopolitan democrat's solution is to reconceive democracy and disengage it from its traditional locus, which is the state. By liberating democracy from the state, we can then democratically empower citizens globally. The nationalist holds that democracy is inherently state-bound. In particular, if what we care about is meaningful deliberative democracy, it is not possible to realize democratic ends without situating the practice of democracy among individuals connected by some nationalist solidarity. The response to the global deficit is to improve democratic politics at home in the state and to provide better deliberative democratic forums for representatives of democratic states to negotiate with one another. Here the solution to global democratic deficit is not cosmopolitan democracy but improved *international* democracy.

The problem of global democracy highlights a basic problem in democratic theory. Democracy is self-rule among a set of individuals. But what is this relevant set? How do we determine the *demos*? One principle is the principle of all affected.

On this principle, anyone who would be affected by the decisions of the collective is a member of the *demos*. As we saw, this commitment typifies the cosmopolitan democratic ideal. An alternative principle takes the *demos* to be defined by some criteria of social membership. On the nationalist view, membership in a *demos* is not determined by the all affected principle but by the fact of shared nationality. The dispute between cosmopolitan democracy and its main critics will engage and further unpack this more basic dispute.

## • STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1 Why do some commentators think that there is a global democratic deficit? What are some examples of this deficit?
- 2 Does the idea of cosmopolitan citizenship require a fundamental reconceptualization of what citizenship means?
- 3 What is the difference between democratic global government and global governance?
- 4 Is democratic deliberation necessarily a state-centric ideal, such that there can be no meaningful democratic deliberation among individuals across borders outside the confines of the state?
- 5 Why do some nationalists believe that shared nationality provides the social ties that are necessary for democratic relations? Have they exaggerated the significance of shared nationality?
- 6 What are the prospects for the world as a whole to constitute a single *demos*?
- 7 If there is no possibility of a global *demos* as such, how can we address the global democratic deficit?

## • NOTES

- 1 See Pauline Kleingeld (2016) for a critical overview of Kant's cosmopolitanism.
- 2 See, e.g., Goodin (1988) who argues that the rudiments of world government are already present, and thus the fear and skepticism of world government as a wholly novel idea is unwarranted.

## • REFERENCES

- Carol Gould, "The Global Democratic Deficit and Economic Human Rights" in Gould (2004).
- David Held, "From City-States to a Cosmopolitan Order" (1992).
- Kymlicka "Citizenship in an Era of Globalization: Commentary on Held" in Kymlicka (2001).
- David Miller, "Bounded Citizenship" (1999).

## • FURTHER READING

For an overview of the philosophical problems of democracy, see Robert Talisse, “Democracy” in his *Engaging Political Philosophy* (2015). For a collection of essays on global democracy, including discussions on its different forms, see Barry Holden’s edited volume (2000). See Carol Gould’s *Interactive Democracy* (2014) for a discussion on the prospect of global solidarity and global democracy.