Federalism and Multinationalism

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Even those who accept that a single country can serve as a home for more than one nation are often led astray by the venerable nation-state model of what a country is or should be. Consider what has become a virtual axiom among scholars of nations and nationalism, namely, that nationalists' concern for self-determination invariably leads to a desire for sovereignty, for the complete control over a state. When applied to multinational federations, the axiom supports the assumption that the members of the minority nations will, at the very least, favour decentralization. Here's Will Kymlicka, for example:

> As a general rule, we can expect nationality-based units to seek greater and greater powers ... There seems to be no natural stopping point to the [minority nationalist's] demands for increasing self-government. If limited autonomy is granted, this may simply fuel the ambitions of nationalist leaders who will be satisfied with nothing short of their own nation-state. Any restrictions on self-government – anything short of an independent state – will need justification.[1]

Regarding francophone Quebecers, for example, Kymlicka has concluded that the best that can be hoped for is that they will

> give conditional allegiance to Canada. [For] the only sort of unity that we can hope to achieve ... is one which co-exists with the firm belief amongst national minorities that they have the right to secede, and with ongoing debate about the conditions under which it would be appropriate to exercise that right.[2]

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[1] Will Kymlicka, "Federalism, Nationalism, and Multiculturalism," in Dimitrious Karmis and Wayne Norman, eds., *Theories of Federalism: A Reader* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 277, 288.

[2] Ibid., p. 288.

Indeed, it is not only sovereignists such as the members of the Parti Québécois who desire greater autonomy; even the "soft nationalists" in the Coalition avenir Québec and the Liberal parties do so. For as the now-retired *Globe and Mail* columnist Jeffrey Simpson once wrote,

> once the "fiscal imbalance" has been "solved," there will have to be additional demands for more money and/or the transfer of powers since the Quebec government, within that province's political culture, can never declare itself fully satisfied with the status quo. [Quebec Liberal premier Jean] Charest has already indicated that he wants to take [Canadian prime minister Stephen] Harper's offer of "open federalism" to another international level. So, not content with being given a position at UNESCO, Charest will demand one at the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and will play host to an international conference of sub-national governments that call themselves "nations" such as Quebec, Catalonia, Scotland, etc.[3]

So we can understand why, since the chief instrumental arguments for federation (e.g., economic markets and military security) have become relatively weak, those such as Kymlicka suggest that the most effective way to dissuade minority nationalists from opting for separatism is to highlight the diversity that a multinational federation can provide.[4] But surely, a sovereignist could reply, any future independent Quebec will itself be highly diverse – after all, it already is. Moreover, there is at present only the most minimal cultural exchange between the Québécois and the peoples that make up the rest of Canada (French Canadians excepted, perhaps), and why think that separation need reduce even this minimum? So separation would be no great loss.

Are the prospects for multinational federations such as Canada really this bleak? Must the members of minority nations always desire greater autonomy? I don't believe so. But the alternative will reveal itself only when we stop making two mistakes, both of which have roots in the old nation-state model of a country. First, we need to reject the tendency to equate "self-determination" with "self-government" and appreciate that nationalists are concerned with the

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[3] "Jeffrey Simpson Takes Your Questions on Politics," http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20070220.wthehill_live0221/BNStory/specialComment/home/?&pageRequested=all&print=true.

[4] See Kymlicka, p. 288.

former, but not the latter. And second, we need to accept that self-determination is only one of two nationalist imperatives, since nations, if they are to be truly free, must also be recognized for their specificity – by the world but also, and more importantly, by the state or states under whose sovereignty they live.

I shall argue these two points in the first section below, where my aim is to show that, within a federal regime, nothing *in principle* prevents nationalists from identifying with more than one level of government. And if they do so, the question of how powers should be distributed between these levels can be an open one. But if the choice is denied them, they will naturally call for as much power as possible to go to the one state that recognizes them.

Of course, in Canada, the Québécois have indeed been denied this choice. Attempts have been made to rectify this but, as I shall show in following section, they have all been inadequate. It certainly has not helped that my fellow English Canadians continue, in typical majority-nation fashion, to deny the distinctiveness – and so existence – of our own national community; we simply cannot see that we constitute but one among many within the country. In so doing, however, we have made it that much more difficult to affirm a truly inclusive, multinational conception of Canada. And as I shall conclude in the final section, this difficulty has only been compounded by the many political thinkers who assert highly adversarial conceptions of politics. So that is just one more reason why it has been so difficult for more than one nation to share a single state. But as there will always be far more nations in the world than states (193 at last count), it's not like we have a choice in the matter.

I

Nationalists, it is said, want a state of their own because it would assure their ability to "determine themselves," that is, to decide on the matters crucial to their nation. As Wayne Norman has put it,

> The core idea of self-determination, whether for individuals or communities, involves being able to do what you want; or in the words of J.S. Mill, it is 'pursuing our own good in our own way.' And nations (or nationalists) cannot simply want to have their

> own political space (such as a state) for its own sake; they presumably want that in order to accomplish other things of value.[5]

Notice the implication here: that those other things of value are cultural rather than political, hence practiced, for the most part, within people's homes or throughout civil society. The state is apparently just a tool, something useful for facilitating these cultural activities; otherwise, we would have to say that nationalists desire a political space if not for its own sake, then at least as what I would call an "inherent," as distinct from instrumental, good. But that, I want to claim, is the attitude of those who would be members of a political, as distinct from national, community.

The political community is the community of citizens, the community of persons who, as Aristotle described long ago, share a "civic" form of friendship (*Nichomachean Ethics*, bks. 8–9). They express this friendship when they or (as we recognize today) their representatives participate in politics, which I define as the practice of responding to conflict with dialogue. When that dialogue takes the form of conversation, which aims for reconciliation and shared understanding, then those involved may be said to aim for realizing and developing their common good; when they engage in negotiation instead, whose goal is strictly the accommodation of differences, then we may see them as striving to perform a sort of damage control on the common good.[6] Either way, the results are meant to shape their political community's laws and institutions, and this is the essence of self-government. Long ago, these communities took the form of the ancient Greek *polis*; today, in addition to municipalities, the provinces and Canada as a whole can be said to constitute political communities. It is not that their members consider politics as the sole, or even a highly valued, good in their lives – only "classical republicans" do this, and there are few if any of them around today. Rather, it is that all, or at least most, modern citizens have an the sense that they share a civic common good, one which implies that politics is more than a merely instrumental activity. This is why those who participate directly in it should aim to converse – and not merely negotiate – their conflicts. After all, if they only ever did the latter, then it would make sense to speak of them sharing what economists call a "public" good, perhaps, but not a truly "common"

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[5] Norman, *Negotiating Nationalism: Nation-Building, Federalism, and Secession in the Multinational State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 26.

[6] For more on these two modes of dialogue, as well as on the kind of politics that distinguishes them properly, see my *From Pluralist to Patriotic Politics: Putting Practice First* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

one, which is the basis of a community. As Charles Taylor has pointed out, public goods are merely "for you and for me," whereas common goods are "for us."[7]

Of course, those citizens who are also members of national communities will have an additional concern, as suggested above, with their nations' cultures. In Canada today, this would apply to the English Canadians, the Québécois, the indigenous nations, and perhaps the Acadians.

In distinguishing national and political communities in this way, I'm not suggesting that nations are to be equated with ethnic communities, such as those of, say, Chinese or Italian Canadians. True, ethnic communities are also deeply concerned with their cultures. But there are also important differences. For one thing, the culture of a nation is always carried by a specific language.[8] This explains why one cannot become a Québécois, and indeed will have no interest in doing so, if one does not speak French, yet many Italian or Chinese Canadians speak neither Italian nor Chinese. One reason for this difference is that ethnicity is invariably a matter of kinship,[9] whereas one can join many nations, including that of the Québécois,[10] without having to be born into them. It's enough to learn its language and willingly identify with its culture. Of course, about 5% of Quebec citizens – members of the political community of Quebec – cannot speak French. But this means only that, even if they wished to, these Quebecers cannot be considered part of the province's majority nation, that of the Québécois (or "franco-québécois" had I been writing in French).

Ethnic and national communities also differ as regards territorial attachment. The Italian and Chinese Canadian communities, to continue with these examples, have no fixed address: there are Little Italys and Chinatowns in many major Canadian cities, yet these can and do move. The Québécois nation, by contrast, is not going anywhere, since it has a permanent and sharply demarcated geographical home.

To further bring out the differences between these two types of community, as well as between them and the civic or political community, I want to situate them all on a map of what we

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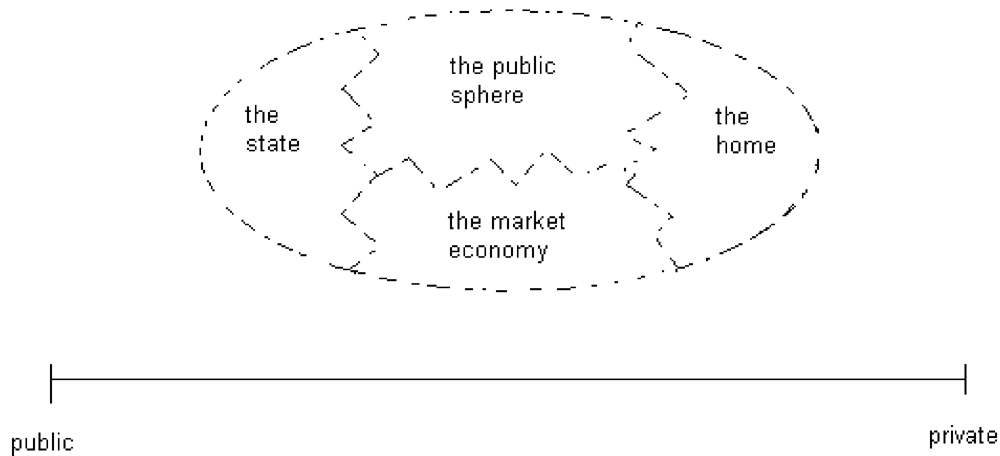
[7] See Taylor, "Irreducibly Social Goods," in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

[8] See my "Secular Nationhood? The Importance of Language in the Life of Nations," in *Patriotic Elaborations*.

[9] As Max Weber put it, to share an ethnicity is to share a belief in "common descent." See his *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, vol. 1, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischoff *et al.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 389.

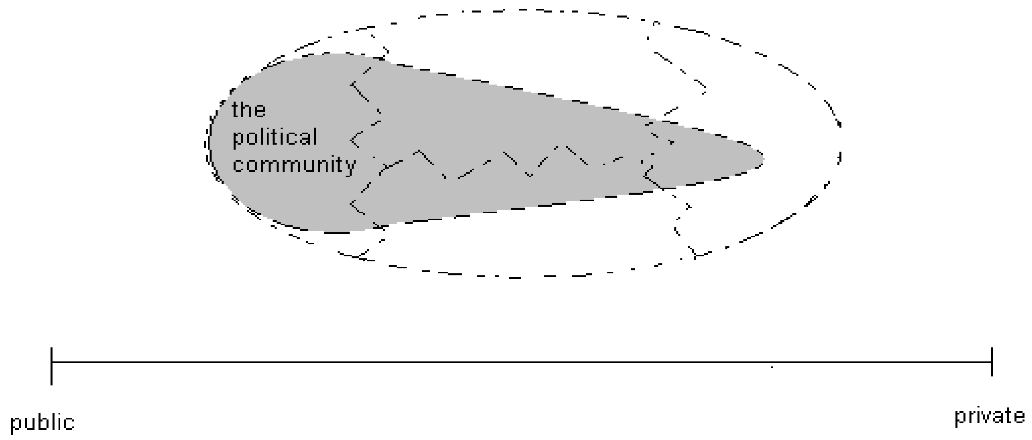
[10] See, for example, Louis Balthazar, "Les nombreux visages du nationalisme au Québec," in Alain-G. Gagnon, ed., *Québec: État et Société* (Montreal: Éditions Québec/Amérique, 1994), p. 38.

might call the "moral topography" of modern society. It's essentially a map of practices, and practices are the expressions of values or goods. So different communities are practiced not only in different ways, as we've already noted, but also in different locations. Here's the map with its major domains identified:

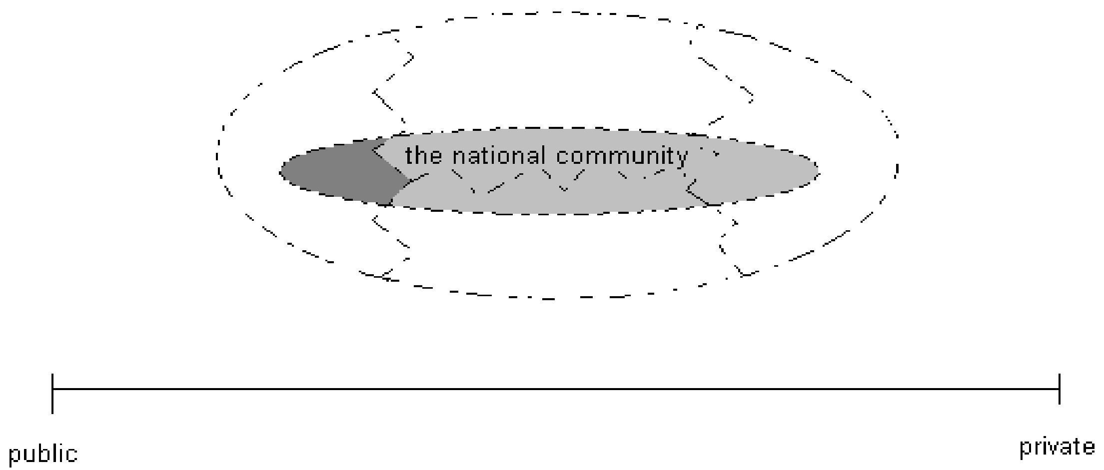


As indicated, the map spans a spectrum whose poles are "public" and "private." Those practices situated towards the left are more public simply because there are more people involved in them, whereas the opposite is true of those situated towards the right. As for the ellipse, which is meant to represent a single society as a whole, it's subdivided into three domains: from left to right we have (1) the state; (2) the public sphere and the market economy – each subdomains of civil society; and (3) the home. And note how the borders between these domains are both porous and jagged: porous to indicate that there are areas in which they are successfully integrated with each other and with other societies, and jagged to represent the compromises that often need to be struck when they are not.

The three kinds of community we have been talking about are differently situated on this map. While the political community can be said to stretch its practices out into civil society and the home, since political dialogues also take place there, its locus remains in and around the state:



The practices of both national and ethnic communities, by contrast, are centred in and around civil society:



Notice the area, indicated with a darker shade of grey, where the national community – unlike the ethnic community – overlaps into the domain of the state. This represents its needs for both self-determination as well as for recognition of the nation by the state. With ethnic communities, by contrast, if they look to the state at all, it's enough for it to respect and perhaps assist with the preservation of their cultures. The state, in other words, may remain a tool largely separate from the ethnicities that sometimes make use of it. This explains why, if one asked Italian or Chinese Canadians whether they would like to see clauses making specific reference to their communities inserted into the Canadian constitution, the answer would surely come back: "No thank you." Not so the Québécois (or at least those who are federalists rather than sovereignists).

The reason for this is that, when it comes to nations, self-determination is not enough. If it were otherwise then nationalists would have no difficulty taking purely instrumental stances towards their states.[11] But their concern for recognition reveals that they require something more, namely, that there be a *unique connection* between nation and state, one that integrates them to some degree. This rules out an instrumental relation because, at least since the High Middle Ages, the very idea of a tool or instrument has implied that there exists a degree of separation between user and used, one reflecting a radically contingent relationship between them: when it comes to mere tools, whatever's at hand that works efficiently will do.[12] Say I used a pen to jot down some notes in preparation for this essay. Any pen would do – if, for whatever reason, I decided to use a different one, what matters is only that it was as effective as the first. Because I'm in only a very limited sense "connected with" or "integrated to" either. But say I had a pen that was bequeathed me by my late father, who himself had received it as a gift from my grandfather. My relationship to *this* pen would be different: it would no longer be merely instrumental, since I would identify with it to some degree, making it irreplaceable.

This is precisely the kind of relation that nationalists require between their nation and the state. It cannot be strictly instrumental because the nation must be able to identify with the state, and this cannot happen if the state doesn't recognize it. This explains why, not long after the rise of Québécois nationalism following the Quiet Revolution of the late 1950s, during which the

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[11] As with Norman's account cited above; see also Avishai Margalit and Joseph Raz, "National Self-Determination," *Journal of Philosophy* 87, no. 9 (Sept. 1990): 439–61.

[12] See Ivan Illich, *The Rivers North of the Future: The Testament of Ivan Illich as Told to David Cayley* (Toronto: Anansi, 2005), 71–7, 225–26.

transforming community shifted its institutional allegiance from the church to the Quebec state,[13] the latter was made to undergo a form of symbolic "nationalization." Think of the 1968 decision by Jean-Jacques Bertrand's government to call the legislature the "National Assembly"; or of the Robert Bourassa government's Official Language Act (1977), which made French the sole official language of the province. Such moves ensure that the nation and the state are integrated rather than separate, which is why the line I've drawn between them in the diagram above is more dotted than solid.

Note, moreover, that integration is the aim of the reconciling form of political dialogue that is conversation. This tells us that, when nationalists call for the recognition of their nation by the state, they're also calling for joining their nation to the community of citizens expressed by that state, that is, to the political community.

Or communit*ies*. Because if the nation finds itself within a federal regime, living under more than one order of government, it will require recognition from each. And that is my main argument here: it's because, in Canada, the government based in Ottawa does not sufficiently recognize the Québécois nation that the members of that nation have, virtually by default, found it necessary to call for the decentralization of powers to the government that does, the one based in Quebec City. They covet Ottawa's powers not because they need them for self-determination, since that, I would say, has already been largely achieved, the Quebec state being quite powerful. No, they want more and more powers for Quebec because Quebec is the only state that recognizes their nation. Kymlicka offers a different reason for their aversion to centralization: "Centralization in Canada is often seen as a threat to the very survival of the Québécois nation, insofar as it makes French-Canadians more vulnerable to being outvoted by anglophones on issues central to the reproduction of their culture, such as education, language, telecommunications, and immigration policy."[14] But Quebec already has significant, sometimes even exclusive, powers over the areas Kymlicka mentions. For example, Section 93 of the Canadian constitution specifies that the provinces have exclusive responsibility for making laws relating to education; Quebec's Charter of the French Language, Bill 101 (1977), has successfully established French as the official language of the province, of its government and law, and of "the normal and everyday language of work,

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[13] See, for example, Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993, 3rd edn.), chs 4–5.

[14] Kymlicka, "Federalism, Nationalism, and Multiculturalism," p. 278.

instruction, communication, commerce and business”; and the Canada-Quebec Accord (1991) gives Quebec sole responsibility for selecting immigrants and refugees destined for the province. Indeed, even so staunch a Québécois nationalist as sovereignist leader and former Parti Québécois provincial premier Bernard Landry has seen fit to emphasize how Quebec

> already posses and controls a powerful nation-state, the very same which Jean Lesage once referred to as “the state of Quebec.” Our nation-state, even without complete sovereignty, is nevertheless in certain real, practical respects more powerful than many formally sovereign nation-states. Our state already controls important judicial and financial powers which support programs crucial for our society in the areas of culture, education, social solidarity, the economy, the environment, justice, international relations, and a number of others.[15]

No one who says things like this can claim that his nation lacks self-determination.

II

So it is the two of these together, self-determination and recognition, that make for national liberation. Whereas indigenous Canadians have more or less achieved the recognition (thanks especially to Section 25 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms) but not the self-determination, the Québécois’ situation is the reverse. So neither can be considered wholly free.

National liberty is a distinct form of freedom, different not only from the liberty of the individual, obviously, but also from political liberty, the liberty of the civic community. Indeed, the self-government that’s so cherished by the latter (in which, again, citizens contribute to shaping their laws and institutions) just is how political liberty is achieved, making it this community’s very *raison d’être*. With the nation, by contrast, priority must always goes to the preservation of

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[15] Bernard Landry, “Une nation? Yes sir!” *La Presse*, October 27, 2006 (my translation). Eugénie Brouillet would certainly disagree. Concluding her densely argued *La Négation de la nation: L’identité culturelle québécoise et le fédéralisme canadien* (Sillery: Sepentrion, 2005), she writes on p. 232 that “the original Canadian constitution has undergone a series of jurisprudential reinterpretations that has had the cumulative affect of a greater centralization of power in the country, and this to the detriment of the legislative powers necessary for the survival and flourishing of [Franco-]Québécois cultural identity” (my translation). However, as a citizen of Quebec since 2000, I’ve been deeply impressed the richness and vibrancy of contemporary Franco-Québécois culture. See, for example, Taras Grescoe, *Sacré Blues: An Unsentimental Journey through Quebec* (Toronto: Macfarlane Walter & Ross, 2000). Could the nation have managed this without self-determination? Perhaps.

its culture, since, as the modern Greeks made powerfully clear, its liberty is a distinct and decidedly secondary concern:

> Athens – 1821. Greeks are fighting for their independence. In Athens, they besiege the Acropolis, a stronghold of the Turkish occupiers. As the siege grinds on, the Turks' ammunition runs short. They begin to dismantle sections of the Parthenon, prying out the 2,300-year-old lead clamps and melting them down for bullets. The Greek fighters, horrified at this defacement of their patrimony, send the Turks a supply of bullets. Better to arm their foes, they decide, than to let the ancient temple come to harm.[16]

Once the nation's cultural heritage has been secured, however, nationalists may indeed turn their attention to its liberty. And for that, again, self-determination is never sufficient: the nation also needs recognition – both internationally as well as by all the other citizens with which it shares a state.

Of course, in Canada, there have been attempts to provide the Québécois with the recognition they require. But all have fallen short. In the case of the Meech Lake (1987), Charlottetown (1992), and Calgary (1997) Accords, the problem is not only that they failed to have any impact on the Constitution but also that they recognized the wrong things: "Quebec" as a "distinct society" by the first two, and "the unique character of Quebec society" by the latter. Yet the nation requiring recognition is, once again, that of the Québécois, the community of French-speaking Quebecers. By recognizing Quebec instead, neither Meech nor Charlottetown would have done anything to establish a direct link between Canada and the Québécois nation, meaning that there would have been no reason for its members to stop calling for the decentralization of powers to Quebec. The Calgary Accord at least had the merit of emphasizing Quebec *society*, though its recognition was too diffuse in that it failed to specify the majority nation within that society. It also managed to refer to no more than the role of "the legislature and Government of Quebec" in protecting and developing its unique character, making no mention of the Government of Canada. So it would

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[16] Jeff Jacoby, "'The Essence of Greekness,' So Far Away from Home," *International Herald Tribune*, April 5, 1999, 7.

have once again failed to give Québécois nationalists any reason to identify with not only Quebec City, but also Ottawa.

In November 1995, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien tabled his own recognition motion in the House of Commons. However, it not only neglected to call for an amendment to the constitution, but its reference to "Quebec's distinct society" meant that it did no more than split the difference between the two formulations above – thereby failing, yet again, to specify the Québécois nation. Yet perhaps most vitiating of all is the circumstances under which Chrétien introduced his motion. He first made the offer on television, five days before the vote in the last Quebec sovereignty referendum and with polls indicating an impending victory for the sovereignists. The offer, in other words, was essentially a concession from a leader whose back was against the wall. The problem with this is that, while concessions are certainly appropriate in the context of negotiations, when parties put pressure on each other to reach an accommodation, they literally defeat the purpose when it comes to conversation. And it is precisely conversation that's required for recognition since, as the root of the French word for it (*reconnaissance*) makes particularly clear, it's a form of knowledge and so not something up for negotiation. Otherwise put, recognition can only be genuine if it comes about wholly voluntarily, which is to say because the person doing the recognizing genuinely believes it to be true. That is why one either freely recognizes that the Québécois form a nation or one does not; doing so because one was forced to serves only to undermine the recognition and so detract from its value.[17]

Happily, there's no reason to think that when prime minister Stephen Harper's surprised everyone by tabling his own recognition motion in the House of Commons in November 2006, he did so because he felt under some degree of duress. Moreover, its affirmation "that this House recognize that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada"[18] is a great improvement over all previous formulations. For it not only uses the word "nation," but it also gets the matter right by implying that the nation in question is specifically that of French-speaking Quebecers. Not everyone reads the motion in this way, of course, but I want to suggest three reasons why they should so: first, it uses the French word "Québécois" rather than "Quebecers" in the English

[17] I first advanced this critique of Chrétien's motion in my *Shall We Dance? A Patriotic Politics for Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), p. 107. For a more philosophical treatment of the issue, see my "*Exiger* la reconnaissance?" trans. Roseline Lemire Cadieux, in Michel Seymour, ed., *La reconnaissance dans tous ses états* (Montreal: Les Éditions Québec Amérique, 2013).

[18] See http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/parliament39/motion-quebecnation.html.

version of the motion; second, the motion's preamble refers to "their language and their culture" in the singular, suggesting, once again, that it is referring strictly to the community of francophone Quebecers; and third, following the motion's passage, Harper voted against the Bloc Québécois opposition party's motion "That this House recognize that Quebecers form a nation" (evidently, the Bloc are among the many who fail to distinguish their nation from the political community constituted by all Quebecers). But perhaps the most compelling reason for this interpretation arises from the impact that Harper's motion seems to have had on the sovereignty movement: in the 2007 Quebec provincial election that followed soon after the motion was passed, the Parti Québécois fell to thirty-six seats and third-party status, making this the first time since 1973 (the party was founded in 1968) that it formed neither the government nor the official opposition.

Of course, I'm quite possibly overestimating the impact of Harper's motion; after all, many factors play a role in any election outcome. I nevertheless want to suggest that, for those who (like me) are Canadian federalists, the motion constitutes a major step in the right direction. Because should it, or one like it,[19] ever find itself included as an amendment to the Constitution, I believe that this would virtually put an end to the already-moribund sovereignty movement. For it would mean that, for the first time in its history, the Québécois nation would be wholly free.

Not that we federalists should be satisfied with defeating the sovereignists. For there's still the challenge of getting the Québécois to feel a real sense of attachment to Canada. Liberating their nation within the country would certainly remove a major obstacle to this, but there are others. One of the most important arises from a tendency on the part of my fellow English Canadians (or "Canucks" as I prefer to call us, so as to avoid confusion with immigrants from England) to equate our nation with Canada as a whole. Of course, this is the very same mistake made by the many Québécois nationalists who consider their nation as equivalent to the province of Quebec as a whole. Not very long ago, the English used to do something very similar as regards Britain, a reflection of their taking their nation's dominance over the union for granted: of 112 Victorian textbooks on Britain's past, for instance, 108 referred to themselves as histories of England.[20] And

[19] Of course, I would exclude clause 159(90Q1) of the current Quebec government's Bill 96, which calls on Section 90 of the Canadian constitution to be amended in order to state that "Quebecers form a nation." See Simon Jolin-Barrette, "An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec (2021)," http://m.assnat.qc.ca/en/travaux-parlementaires/projets-loi/projet-loi-96-42-1.html.

[20] See Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 66–67.

here in Canada, even though the civic/political community expressed by the Canadian state has declared itself officially bilingual, this is not at all the image of the country that one gets when listening to most Canuck voices.

Consider the English service of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). Radio Three is a CBC on-line playlist that promotes home-grown, independent popular music. But even though almost all of the songs played are sung in English, which is also the only language ever spoken on the feed, it sees fit to describe itself as "the best in Canadian independent music." How could this be? Only if the best independent Canadian music really is overwhelmingly Canuck. One might wonder as well about Radio One's popular *50 Tracks* program, which aired in 2004 and 2005 with the declared aim of identifying "the 50 most essential songs in Canadian pop music history."[21] All except one of those songs (Gilles Vigneault's "Mon Pays") are sung in English, however. Or consider the Polaris prize, awarded to "Canadian music albums of distinction" even though the vast majority of its judges are unilingual anglophones (because, apparently, lyrics are irrelevant to songs).[22] Isn't it obvious that, by continually equating the Canuck nation with Canada, this sends a message to all non-anglophone Canadians, namely that they are not "really" Canadian?

The very same message is echoed by the major newspapers the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*. Although both are published solely in English, the former has seen fit to bill itself as "Canada's National Newspaper," while the latter has declared itself "Canada's trusted source" for news. Finally, consider the vast number of books that claim to be about "Canadian literature" but mention nary a work written in a language other than English. Even the exceptions here disconcert, as with the chapter on writings in French in Margaret Atwood's *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, which limits itself to works translated into English.[23] In what surely cannot be considered progress, almost twenty years later Atwood introduced her Oxford University Clarendon Lectures, *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature*, by noting that she was not going to deal with works written in French (the language of the indigenous nations

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[21] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/50_Tracks:_The_Canadian_Version.

[22] See https://polarismusicprize.ca/about/; as well as my "'National' short-listers need to mind their language," *Globe and Mail*, 22 September 2007, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/national-short-listers-need-to-mind-their-language/article725513/.

[23] (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), ch. 11.

were not even mentioned) both because of "the political ambiguities involved" and because it would have made the lectures too long.[24]

III

If there's an "elephant in the room" in the above discussion, it's surely my claim on behalf of the distinctiveness of the civic or political community. Far too many political thinkers today exhibit what seems an almost wilful blindness towards it. They do so for a simple reason: their models of politics simply have no room for it. With some, this is because they conceive of just citizens not as the members of a genuine, particular community and concerned with its common good, but as unified around a theory of justice.[25] With others, it's because they assume that citizens are always divided, being members of separate groups, and that the best we can hope for when they conflict is that they will tolerate each other and so negotiate in good faith.[26] Both approaches, however, encourage a highly adversarial politics, one that undermines – at times it even rules out – the conversational response to conflict that's necessary for a citizenry ever to be able to realize its common good. Because whether citizens are instructed to plead their cases in win-or-lose battles before a supreme court charged with applying a theory of justice, or told to struggle for accommodations, there's just no place in such politics for conversation. And this means we can never even hope for reconciliations.

Of course, sometimes the two approaches are combined and citizens are called on to fight it out both ways. This is the message of those "liberal nationalists" who advocate on behalf of a liberal theory of justice that has room for the national community. No surprise, then, that when they recognize that most countries contain more than one nation, they conceive of their constitutions not as the expressions of their citizenries' common good, but as "the ultimate

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[24] Atwood, *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 11.

[25] As with the vision of a "Just Society" that inspired former Canadian prime minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau to put the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the constitution. See, for example, his "The Values of a Just Society," trans. Patricia Claxton, in Thomas S. Axworthy and Trudeau, eds., *Towards a Just Society: The Trudeau Years* (Markham, ON: Penguin, 1990).

[26] Kenneth McRoberts, *Misconceiving Canada: The Struggle for National Unity* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997), is an example of a work that affirms such a pluralist conception of Canadian politics. There are many others.

battleground for nationalist politics in the multinational state."[27] By ignoring the political common good shared by all of a country's citizens, these liberal multinationalists leave us with nothing more than a zero-sum competition between national communities, and so with "the balancing or 'negotiating' of rival nation-building programmes"[28] – always, of course, within the confines of liberal principles, the rules of the game.

But politics is no game.[29] The rival nationalists within a multinational country are not competing players from different teams, all of whom have agreed to abide by some systematic rulebook, but members of a political community – one that can include, yet must also be distinguished from, their national communities. However, even those who encourage us to contrast "cultural" and "statist" nationalisms fail to help with this task.[30] That's why we should recognize that nationalism is an ideology that gives priority to the needs of a cultural community that is mostly – but not wholly – expressed within civil society. This is a new way of talking, to be sure, but it's also a necessary, just one.

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[27] Norman, *Negotiating Nationalism*, p. 75.

[28] Ibid., p. 99. However, Norman also states that "national identities are not mutually exclusive, and that rival identity-shaping projects are not locked in a zero-sum battle" (pp. 166–67). But this will be so only if the members of those nations recognize that they share a political community and hence that it makes sense for them to respond to their conflicts with conversation and not only negotiation. Norman, however, does not appear to recognize the existence of this community.

[29] See my "Taking Politics Seriously," *Philosophy* 94, no. 2 (Apr. 2019): 271–94.

[30] See, for example, Chaim Gans, *The Limits of Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), ch. 1.