EVALUATING NATIONALISM IN THE LIBERAL FRAMEWORK

by

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Abstract

This essay is an attempt to explain and assess the liberal nationalists’ view on the problems of the legitimacy of nationalism and cultural rights. I want to look at some theories over the past fifteen years that normatively evaluate ‘nationalism’ according to the liberal principles. The main focus of the first part will be on three questions, which are: the question of legitimacy (is nationalism permissible?), the question of justice (is nationalism required?), and the question of appropriate format (what forms of nationalism and nationalistic policies are considered as legitimate and just?).

In the second part, by considering the alleged conflict between the ‘minority nation-building’ and the ‘majority nation-building’ in multination countries, I will examine two models for resolving this conflict: ‘Multinational Federalism’ and ‘Transnational Federalism’. I will argue that, though most liberal nationalists support the former model, they fail to provide a convincing normative ground for justifying Multinational Federalism and stopping national minorities from secession. The liberal nationalists’ arguments for necessity of nationalism, ironically, undermine their own claim about normative importance of Multinational Federalism in comparison to Transnational Federalism. This is what I call ‘the paradox of liberal nationalism’.
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

1. Overview

Over the past two centuries, there has been a great change, started in the western countries, in political trend and basic unit of power, namely, the emergence of ‘Nationalism’. During this period, the nation-based state model has been the default political unit to replace all the previous forms of political systems-- empires, colonies, theocracies, city states-- throughout the world. This powerful trend has had enormous effect on many aspects of modern civilization, from politics and economy to language and culture.

The notion of nationality develops (or perhaps ‘fabricates’) an identical and shared identity among all members of society, i.e. ‘the people’ of ‘the country’. This development was important because national identity provides an equal dignity and respect to all citizens regardless of their social class, as well as fostering a sense of solidarity among citizens, which was required for the survival of the country. Moreover, nationalism necessitates ‘modern’ education and economy through the standardization of public education in a common standardized language as a requirement for a mass economy and industry. At the same time, the process of national standardization made it easier for all social classes to participate in the public policies and political activities. Therefore, most of non-democratic and autocratic forms of political systems were replaced by more liberal and democratic forms of governments. It was the result of this
trend that made the twentieth century ‘the age of nationalism’ in which liberal democratic nation states became dominant throughout the West.

Prior to 1990s, however, ‘nationalism’ was not a major subject for philosophical scrutiny. This is evident from the fact that there is surprisingly little political literature before the 90s on nationalism and its normative problems. The dominance of the nation-state in modern political theories was so evident (or perhaps transparent) that almost all political theories have assumed the nation-state as the default political unit. Most political writings of the 70s and 80s were focused on theories of justice, democracy and citizenship while implicitly taking for granted that nation-state is the legitimate context in which those theories should be applied. When political theorists were discussing equality or democracy in ‘society’, they simply assumed society in terms of ‘nation-state society’.

However, the need for the justification of this assumption was recognized by a few philosophical works in the early 90s, attempting to normatively evaluate the legitimacy of nationalism. Tamir’s *Liberal Nationalism* (1993), Miller’s *On Nationality* (1995), and Kymlicka’s *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995) are works in which the foundations of ‘liberal nationalism’ get shaped. According to liberal nationalism, nationalism is a legitimate form of political unit that provides and even promotes liberal principles of equality and freedom. With the publication of these seminal works, ‘liberal nationalism’ became the dominant paradigm in the contemporary political philosophy or as Kymlicka put it, an ‘emerging consensus’ among political philosophers (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 39).

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1 The major books of the 70s and the 80s do not have an index entry for ‘nationalism’. Both liberal and communitarian textbooks in this period do not contain any separate discussion on ‘nationalism’ (see (Norman, 2006, p. viii). Kymlicka was the first political philosopher who includes a chapter on citizenship theory and multiculturalism in the second edition of his textbook (Kymlicka, Contemporary Political Philosophy, 2002).

The position covers a range of related arguments over the legitimacy of nationalism and nationalistic policies, cultural rights, rights of national minorities, and the issue of citizenship.  

What will follow in this paper is an attempt to explain and assess the liberal nationalists’ view on the problems of the legitimacy of nationalism and cultural rights. In the first chapter, I want to look at some theories over the past fifteen years that normatively evaluate ‘nationalism’ according to the liberal principles. The main focus of chapter one will be on three questions, which are: whether promoting nationalism and national identity are legitimate policies within the liberal framework; if they are, whether they are required by justice or not, and finally, what forms of nationalism, if any, are permissible or perhaps obligatory in liberal democracies. In short, we have three normative questions about nationalism: the question of legitimacy (is it permissible?), the question of justice (is it required?), and the question of appropriate format (what forms of nationalism and nationalistic policies are considered as legitimate and just?). Finally, I will briefly explain how these arguments support a set of right for national minorities.

In the second chapter, I will consider the conflict of minority and majority’s ‘nation-building’ in multination countries and then I will examine two models for resolving this conflict: ‘Multinational federalism’ and ‘transnational federalism’. I will argue that, though most liberal nationalists support the multinational federalism model, they fail to provide a convincing normative ground for justifying their preferred model and stopping national minorities from secession. The liberal nationalists’ arguments for necessity of

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nationalism, ironically, undermine their own claim about normative importance of multinational federalism compared to transnational federalism. This is what I call ‘the paradox of liberal nationalism’. I will argue that it is difficult to justify the liberal nationalists’ claim that the multination state is the normatively required intermediate level between the uni-nation level and the trans-nation level. Then I will support an interpretation of liberal nationalism in which multinational federalism is not a normative medium but it is considered a historical and practical medium for achieving a transnational federation political system. This interpretation could be insightful for narrowing two gaps: the gap between theories in multinational contexts and theories in transnational contexts; and the gap between two schools of liberal nationalism and post-nationalism in contemporary political philosophy.

2. Key terms

Before starting, it is important to briefly focus on key terms and methodology. It is obvious that a complete definition of nation, nationalism, and nationalistic policy prior to a full philosophical discussion is not only unnecessary but also impossible. Indeed, there are some books and articles whose main concern is finding the origin and appropriate definition for nation and nationalism⁴, but this is not the agenda for this paper. Instead, I believe that a more accurate definition of the main concepts would be revealed only at the end of a meticulous philosophical analysis. However, there are some basic ambiguities in the key terms that need to be addressed prior to our discussion.

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⁴ For more discussion on the notions and historical origin of ‘nation’ and ‘nationalism’ see Greenfeld, 2007; Hutchinson, 1994; Gellner, 1983.
The word ‘Nation’ is ambiguous between two senses: cultural and political. In the cultural sense, nations are defined in terms of ethno-cultural community with a homeland and a shared language, without referring to their political status. In the political sense, nations are primarily self-governing political units where members share an ethno-cultural identity. Defining nation only in terms of self-determining ethno-cultural units is misleading, because it is neither necessary nor sufficient. There are only a few nations in the world that satisfy such a definition. There are hundreds of nations in the world which do not have a political state such as Kurds in Iran and Turkey, Palestine, or indigenous people in America and Australia. There are also many self-governing political units that include more than one nation such as Canada, Belgium, and Switzerland.

However, even though the cultural sense of nation has priority over political one, we should not forget its important political implications because among virtually all nations there is a strong sense of self-determination. Some theorists believe that ‘a necessary condition for a community’s qualifying as a nation is a goodly percentage of its members believing it to be a nation deserving self-government and self-determination.’ (Norman, 2006, p. 5) It is exactly because of this political implication that ‘defining nation purely in terms of belonging to a state is a non-starter.’ (Miscevic, 2005) This self-determination could be achieved in different levels: from a limited territorial autonomy within a federal system to greater self-determination which can lead to the secession from the larger state.  

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5 It is very important for our discussion to have in mind that full sovereignty and secession is only two forms, or perhaps the extreme forms, of national self-determination. Federalization is the best example of other models of autonomy.
Another source of ambiguity is confusing nation in an ethnocultural sense with nation in purely ethnic sense. Nation in a purely ethnic sense is similar to ‘ethnic group’ in which membership is defined only in terms of shared descent, so people with different race or blood are excluded from membership. Nation in ethnocultural sense could include people from different ethnic descents and membership and it can be defined in terms of some ‘ethnocultural’ and legal factors such as language and citizen rights. As I will discuss it in the next chapter, I prefer to call it ‘ethnocultural’ factors because in an important sense it is both cultural and ethnic. Although there are some ethnic nations in the world (there were more in the past such as Germany under the Nazis), it would be wrong to define nations only in terms of ‘ethnic group’. Nation in ethnocultural sense is more inclusive because there are many countries like the United States and Canada in which people from different race and ethnicity are considered as members of a single nation.

Moreover, distinguishing the cultural domain from political domain is very important in our discussion partly because it introduces other central concepts, namely, ‘nationalism’, ‘multination state’, ‘unination state’, ‘national identity’, and ‘national minorities’. Here, it might be useful to give a rough definition of our key terms:

1. ‘Nationalism’ is the whole political and social movements for achieving national self-determination in such a way that the nation and the state coincide. There are many different strategies to match the nation borders with state borders and it is normative task to explore which strategies are legitimate and just.

2. ‘National identity’ is what ties people in one nation together and distinguishes them from other nations.
3. ‘Unination states’ are those states that have only one nation, while ‘Multination states’ accommodate two or more nations. Any multination state contains at least one or more ‘national minorities’. As I said earlier, though there are many multination states in the world, one can struggle to find many unination states. Strictly speaking, the concept of ‘unination state’ has more of a theoretical application than a practical one, because it seems impossible to determine the actual border lines of a nation as a cultural community, so it would be extremely difficult to determine if the state borders coincide with the nation borders. Nevertheless, it is important to see it as a simplified model to which some states are closer or further. For example, France and the United States are typically considered as unination states.

4. ‘National minorities’ are ethnocultural groups that have ‘functioning societies who think of themselves as a distinct nation from the majority’s nation.’ (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 349) Either by force, or in rare cases through a voluntary agreement, they share a state with the majority’s nation. It is essential for the following discussion to distinguish national minorities from other minorities such as immigrant, religious or sexual minorities. Unlike immigrants, national minorities have their own homeland within the state’s border. Unlike religious and sexual minorities, its members share a common identity in terms of history and language, and they once held their own social and political institutions before being incorporated into a larger state.  

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6 For more information about different types of minorities and related philosophical discussion see Kymlicka, 2002, p. 348.
Finally, here are some methodological points. Due to the fact that nationalism is a relatively new field for philosophical investigation, it is worth being aware of a methodological confusion in some of the existing theories. One can distinguish four levels of analysis in political theory: the ideal theory (the ideal requirements of norms of justice in a society), the second-best prescription (the best candidate when the application of ideal theory is not possible), the explanatory level (explaining what the causes for an actual fact are) and the empirical description (the actual fact). The first two are prescriptive and the last two are descriptive. Failing to distinguish these levels in the arguments can be very misleading, so in assessing an argument it is important to notice which methodological level the arguments belong to. For example, if A is a fact (e.g. people usually attempt to promote their nationality) we need a theory, say B, to explain the fact A, i.e. to justify why A is a fact (e.g. people usually attempt to promote their nationality because they feel that their identity is deeply connected to their national identity). But from having the explanatory theory B it does not follow that A is required by justice (e.g. people should promote their nationality) -- that is going from the descriptive theory to the prescriptive theory needs a normative bridge.

Distinguishing ideal theory from second best prescription is also significant in preventing confusions. Unlike ideal theory, second-best prescription contains some theoretical factors not because they are normatively favorable but because they are impossible to avoid. Therefore, it is very important to notice and minimize them. They are not virtues to promote; they are vice necessities that should be minimized. For example, if a political theory requires us to see nationalistic policies as a second-best model for achieving liberal principles of equality and justice, in comparison to the ideal model of
cosmopolitanism, it implies that we should minimize these necessary policies to have the most similar model to the ideal model of cosmopolitanism.

I finish the introduction part by noting that this essay is a normative investigation of the legitimacy of nationalism in the liberal framework. So there will be no attempt to justify the liberal principles of equality and justice in the first place. I simply take liberal principles for granted and then try to examine compatibility of nationalism and nationalistic policies with the liberal doctrine. Nevertheless, this evaluation would definitely challenge some of the classic understandings and interpretations of liberal theory and its application in society.
1. Liberal nationalism

I would like to begin by jumping right into the core of the debate and describe the liberal nationalists’ claim. According to liberal nationalism, as Kymlicka describes it,

“It is a legitimate function of the state to protect and promote the national cultures and languages of the nations within its borders. This can be done by creating public institutions which operate in these national languages; using national symbols in public life (e.g. flag, anthem, public holidays); and allowing self government for national groups on issues that are crucial to the reproduction of their language and culture (e.g. schemes of federalism or consocialism to enable national minorities to exercise self-government).” (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 39)

In short, it is a claim of the legitimacy of nationalism which is usually accompanied with another claim about the necessity (or centrality) of nationalism by liberal nationalists:

“liberal democracy works best within national political unit.” (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 223)

This means that the liberal democracy and its principles are viable only against the background of a single nation, when the nation is defined minimally. In what follows, we will evaluate the two claims of liberal nationalism.7

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7 Liberal nationalism, just same as liberal multiculturalism, is a form of ‘liberal culturalism’. According to Kymlicka ‘Liberal culturalism is the view that liberal-democratic states should not only uphold the familiar set of common civil and political rights of citizenship which are protected in all liberal democracies; they must also adopt various group-specific rights or policies which are intended to recognize and accommodate the distinctive identities and needs of ethnocultural groups.’ (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 42)
These two claims briefly reveal liberal nationalists’ position toward the three central questions of the debate: legitimacy, necessity, and the appropriate formats of nationalism. They believe that according to liberalism it is legitimate and necessary for the state to be a nation-state and to promote a particular culture through some nationalistic policies, if the policies comply with a set of constraints. In this chapter, I will examine the arguments that liberal nationalists have presented in support of their claims. But, in order to get a better understanding of the kind of the arguments they have provided, I will contrast liberal nationalism with two major alternatives: “Liberal Republicanism” and “Liberal Cosmopolitanism”. The legitimacy claim will be examined by contrast to the republican claim of “cultural neutrality” and the necessity (or centrality) claim will be discussed against the cosmopolitan idea of post-nationalists. The problem of appropriate forms of nationalism will be examined in each section.

I will try to show that the liberal nationalist arguments for the legitimacy of nationalism are valid, and survive the republican critique. However, their arguments for the necessity of nationalism against cosmopolitan position are weaker. As we will see in chapter II, this weakness results in inability of liberal nationalists to justify superiority of multinational federalism over the post-national alternative, i.e. transnational federalism.

2. Legitimacy of nationalism: Republicanism vs. Liberal nationalism

2.1 Cultural neutrality thesis

According to the Republicans, nationalism has two forms: “civic”, which is liberal, and “ethnic”, which is illiberal. Civic nationalism is based on the liberal regime of common

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8 It can be found in the works of two republican theorists, Pfaff and Ignatieff. See Pfaff, 1993 and Ignatieff, 1993.
citizenship rights and, it is assumed that such a liberal regime is neutral in respect to the ethnicities and culture of its citizens. By contrast, ethnic nationalism is based on the specific ethnicity, race and culture. It is not a liberal political system because it is discriminatory and excludes people from other cultures and ethnicities.

The core idea of such a distinction comes from an analogy between religion and culture in society. Secularism is a well-accepted idea in liberal paradigm. According to secularism, the state should be indifferent, or neutral, with respect to the religion of its citizens. The neutrality idea has also been expanded to other issues such as citizens’ conception of the good and their ethnicity. That means that the state should not establish any official conception of the good or religion. These are open issues for individuals to freely pursue and promote in their private life. Any intervention by the state in these domains will end in discrimination against those citizens who do not share the views of the state. Republicans make the same argument for cultural values. If the state is neutral about religious values it could and should be neutral about cultural values.

In civic nationalism there is no official ethnic culture. It is inclusive, because membership in a civic society is based on the common regime of civil rights which is neutral to cultural diversity. On the contrary, membership in ethnic societies is restrictive to a particular ethnicity and culture. It is an exclusive, discriminatory and illiberal system, which violates the liberal principle of neutrality, because it creates two classes of citizens: people of the ‘official’ ethnicity and culture are first-class and others will be considered second-class citizens.

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9 See Walzer, 1992.
This is the ‘cultural neutrality’ thesis: a liberal state is precluded from establishing an official culture for the same reasons as it is precluded from establishing an official religion; culture is a matter of the private domain in which individual citizens are free to choose. The state should neither help nor hinder it but it is the citizens who determine whether a particular culture should flourish or disappear. In short, republicans believe that it is acceptable for a liberal country to be national as long as the state observes the principle of cultural neutrality and works according to the regime of common citizenship rights in which all the members of society have an identical set of rights.

2.2 Arguments against cultural neutrality

According to the Liberal nationalists the purported distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism is false; and the analogy between culture and religion is misleading. Here, I want to address three arguments through which liberal nationalists reject the republican position. First, according to liberal nationalists, the neutrality of the state is a ‘myth’; liberal states are not and cannot be fully neutral in respect to culture. I will call this argument A1. Second, the shared set of citizenship rights does not explain morally why the people within a national territory have moral and political duties toward their ‘co-citizens’ and why national borders determines the boundaries of moral and political norms and obligations,. I will refer to this argument as A2. Third, it does not explain why in spite of full recognition of citizenship rights in the western countries, there is a growing demand for cultural rights and national minority rights in the West, which is A3.

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10 One of the most important proponents of cultural neutrality is Brian Barry who has developed the famous theory of ‘strategy of privatization’ for cultural issues. See Barry, 2002.
A1: Liberal nationalists argue that liberal democracies are not culturally neutral and they cannot be if we expect them to perform their functions as a state. The distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism is based on a confusion between two senses of nationalism: purely ethnic and cultural. Although most western democracies, or as they call it ‘civic nations’, are indifferent with respect to the ‘ethnic descent’ of their citizens, i.e. they do not define citizenship in terms of shared ethnic background, yet western democracies are not fully neutral in respect to the culture of their citizens. In fact, there are some ethnocultural issues that liberal states have never been neutral about such as the national language, school curriculum, and national symbols and holidays.

Let us take language for instance. Historically, in almost all western countries there was more than one local language and yet only one of them was chosen by the state as ‘the official language’ to regulate the public affairs. As Taylor notes

“If a modern society has an ‘official’ language, in the fullest sense of the term, that is, a state-sponsored, -inculcated, and -defined language and culture, in which both economy and state function, then it is obviously an immense advantage to people if this language and culture are theirs. Speakers of other languages are at a distinct disadvantage.” (Taylor, Nationalism and Modernity, 1997, p. 34)

Almost always it was the language of the majority which was chosen for the task. The same thing is true about school curriculum and national holidays. Consider America or France as the typical examples of ‘civic and neutral’ states. Historically, both governments have imposed a particular language, English and French, on their citizens. It is the official language that is taught to children in school, is mandatory for immigrant to learn, and is required for any legal and political activities. Both governments banned the
languages of minorities through prohibitions of using minority languages in publications and schools.\footnote{For a history of language rights in the United States, see Kloss, 1977.}

Moreover, liberal nationalists argue that analogy between culture and religion is misleading, because, unlike religion, it is \textit{impossible} for a modern state to be neutral about culture. Adopting an official language is necessary for a proper function of modern economy and policy. Mass economy and modern policy require public institutions, national education and media to work under a common standardized language. It provides all citizens an access to all layers of social resources.\footnote{For more discussion about the indispensability of cultural issues (e.g. language) for modern states see argument B1 in this essay and Kymlicka, 2001, Ch. 5.}

\textbf{A2:} the border lines of a national state determine the moral boundaries within which citizens have a sense of ‘unity’ and ‘moral duties’ to each other. It distinguishes ‘us’, who have the set of citizenship rights and some obligations to our fellow-citizens, from ‘them’ who are not ‘one of us’ and are not entitled to these rights even if born just few miles across the borders. The national state ‘operates within bounded communities, and requires that citizens see these boundaries as morally significant.’ (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 255) However, the question that Taylor notes, here, is that what explains and justifies our moral and political duties towards and solidarity with people within the border and not with someone who lives just on the other side (Taylor, 1985, p. 213). If commitment to the regime of civil rights was the sole determinant of the principles of a ‘civic and liberal’ national state, there would be no moral explanation for the existence and the location of
the current borderlines among the western states, because almost all western democracies
shared the same set of civil rights that constitute a free and equal citizenship.¹³

Obviously, there are many historical causes for the present boundaries of nations and
social unity. But here the question does not require a historical explanation, but rather it
demands a moral explanation for the existence of an ‘ethical community’ among citizens.
One could claim that, according to liberal principles, there is no moral justification for
national boundaries and the universal principles of justice and equality requires a single
world-state. This is the cosmopolitan position which we will consider in the next
chapter.¹⁴

A3: If civic states were neutral about culture, in the same way that they are neutral
about religion, what would explain the growing demands for cultural rights and
autonomy of national minorities throughout the Western countries? In the twentieth
century, in spite of universal acceptance of civil rights, we have witnessed strong
nationalist movements all over the world¹⁵. If republicans are right in arguing that the
policy of cultural neutrality will accommodate cultural diversities and provide just
conditions for individuals and groups to pursue their preferred culture, why is there still
an increasing number of national minorities who are gaining self-government powers and
state support in the West? We need an explanation for the dissimilarity of religion and
culture which is responsible for the contemporary cultural and ethnic controversies. The
case of the Quebecois in Canada, Catalan in Spain, and Scots in England are just a few

¹³ For more discussion see (Miller, On Nationality , 1995), (Tamir, 1993) (Kymlicka, 2002, pp. 252-261)
¹⁴ See Chapter I, Part 3.1 and Chapter II, part 2.3 of this essay.
¹⁵ Nationalistic movements in Europe during the World Wars and recently in the Eastern Europe, and
emergence of minority nationalisms within liberal democracies such as Quebec, Catalonia, Flanders,
Scotland, and Puerto Rico are some examples.
examples of such nationalistic movements. Of course, from the fact that national minorities are asking for, and mostly successfully obtaining, autonomy and state support, it does not follow that it is just to do that. Perhaps, these movements are illegitimately asking for more cultural rights and autonomy. However, this is hardly the case knowing the fact that many national minorities are demanding exactly the same rights that the majority has gained historically, such as self-government or language rights. For example, Francophones in Quebec share the same liberal principles with Anglophones: they want to build a liberal, equal and democratic society with the same civil rights, but they want to build their own society just like the majority. In short, minorities want to have the same rights that the majority already has.

Moreover, liberal nationalists have shown that a careful study of the history of nationalism shows that what many assumed as the cultural neutrality of western states is in fact strongly in favor of the majority’s culture. The core idea is that during the 18th and 19th century many western countries tried to forge a common national identity among all the residents of their territory. They call it the process of ‘nation-building’ that mainly consisted of diffusing a common language, which was used in legal, economic and educational institutions, forging national history, symbols and sometimes adopting a national religion, ethnicity and dress codes. But what makes the nation-building process unfair for national minorities is the fact that it was always the language of majority that was adopted as the national language which was required in public and private life. It was always the history and symbols of majority that was imposed on all citizens including national minorities who had their distinct language, history and culture. Modern states were usually successful in building a national identity, but their success was dependent
on destroying the already existing national identity of minorities living within the national borders.\textsuperscript{16}

Therefore, what national minorities demand today are rights that they were unjustly denied through the history. The theory of cultural neutrality cannot be sustained as a solution for the problem of minority rights, because it is unable to detect the historically unjust cultural situation against national minorities. We will return to the problem of national minorities in regard to the nation-building process of majority by the end of this chapter.

\textit{2.3 Minimal Nationalism}

A1, A2, and A3 are three arguments to show that the Republican alternative is not defensible. Adopting a common language is an actual and indispensable \textit{cultural} element of the modern liberal states (A1). The regime of civil rights is insufficient to be considered the basis for social unity and moral boundaries of a nation (A2). Finally, the increasing demands for autonomy and cultural rights by national minorities cannot be accommodated through the theory of cultural neutrality (A3). Consequently, according to liberal nationalists nationalism has two forms, namely ‘liberal’ and ‘illiberal’, in contrast to understanding it as civic and ethnic (Kymlicka, 2001, pp. 39-42). Unlike the illiberal form, the liberal form of nationalism promotes a ‘thin’ or ‘minimal’ conception of national identity. It is liberal because national identity is not based on a common ethnic descent, a religious faith, or even on a specific conception of the good, and citizens are free to revise and critique their ends and even their national identity. It is thin or minimal

\textsuperscript{16} For more discussion about nation building and its normative implications see Norman, 2006, p. Part 2 and 3.
because, instead of the universal regime of civil rights, the shared national identity and social unity are defined in terms of three basic factors: a common language, common institutions, and a shared historical territory.

The three factors of liberal national identity constitute what Will Kymlicka calls ‘Societal Culture’ which means: ‘a territorially-concentrated culture, centered on a shared language which is used in a wide range of societal institutions, in both public and private life (schools, media, law, economy, government, etc.)’ (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 25) It is a liberal and pluralistic base for national unity, because it is inclusive, ‘containing Christians as well as Muslims, Jews, and atheists; heterosexuals as well as gays; urban professionals as well as rural farmers; conservatives as well as socialists.’ ‘Freedom within groups’ and ‘equality between groups’ are guaranteed as citizens have the fundamental right to revise their current national identity or maintain and promote a distinct national identity.

Kymlicka provides a set of constraints that distinguishes liberal and thin nationalism from illiberal and thick nationalism (Kymlicka, 2001, pp. 39-41):

1- ‘A liberal form of nationalism does not attempt to coercively impose a national identity on those who do not share it.’ And it ‘allows political activities aimed at giving public space a different national character.’

2- ‘Liberal nationalisms typically have a more open definition of the national community. Membership in the national group is not restricted to those of a particular race, ethnicity, or religion.’ Therefore, it ‘exhibits a much thinner conception of national identity, in order to make it possible for people from
different ethnocultural backgrounds to become full and equal members of the nation.

3- ‘Liberal nationalism is non-aggressive, and does not seek to dismantle the self-governing institutions of other national groups within the same state or in other states. Liberal nationalism is therefore willing to accord public recognition to, and share public space with, those national minorities within a state which consistently and democratically insist upon their national distinctiveness.’

These constraints show the legitimate forms of nationalism and nationalistic policies according to the liberal principles of freedom and equality. The first two exhibit the commitment of liberal nationalism to ‘freedom within groups’ and the last one exhibits its commitment to ‘equality between groups’ which defines the core idea of national minority rights. As Kymlicka notes, ‘this requires accepting some forms of ‘external protections’ that reduce the vulnerability of minority groups to majority economic and political power, while rejecting ‘internal restrictions’ that involve attempts by groups to restrict the basic civil and political liberties of their own members.’ (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 22)

3. The necessity of nationalism: Post-nationalism vs. Liberal nationalism

As I noticed earlier, in this part I will try to show that while the liberal nationalist arguments for the legitimacy of nationalism are valid, and survive the republican critique,

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17 It is important to notice that being liberal or illiberal is a matter of degree. As Kymlicka points, we cannot ‘divide real-world nationalist movements into two categories: ‘liberal’ and ‘illiberal’. Rather, nationalist movements will turn out to be more liberal on some scales, and less liberal on others’. (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 41)
the liberal nationalist arguments for the necessity of nationalism are weaker, and are subject to serious objections from the cosmopolitan position. And, as we will see in chapter II, this weakness has implications for the liberal nationalist defense of multinational federalism.

a. The cosmopolitan ideal

Let us go back to the problem of the moral significance of national borders. It is generally assumed that citizens in a country have some moral and political obligation to their fellow-citizens but not to people across the borders. However, the regime of civil rights and the principles of liberal justice, as the normative base for defining political obligations, are not enough to convince us why we should see national borders as morally significant, mainly because many believe that liberal principles of freedom and equality by themselves are not limited to national borders. They seem to be universal principles. They are also mainly reflected in principles of human rights: freedom and equality of people. However, it is freedom and equality of citizens that is required within the national borders. On what normative grounds is the domain of liberal principles of freedom and equality narrowed from ‘people’ to ‘citizens’? Moreover, while the liberal principles are shared among the people across the borders (at least among liberal countries), what kind of normative principles characterize the moral obligations of a national state within the borders?

One famous answer to these questions is liberal cosmopolitanism. According to liberal cosmopolitanism, the national borders, in fact, do not have any moral significance. The existence and location of borders between liberal democracies is only the result of arbitrary factors like historical accidents, wars and international disputes. The principles
of liberal freedom, equality and individual autonomy are universal (or at least transnational) principles and therefore, setting any national limit on the principles is morally unjustified. So it is imaginable that in the near or far future, little by little nations will merge together until there is a single world-state.

As Kymlicka describes it, cosmopolitan aspiration has its root in the Enlightenment period when cosmopolitanism was ‘a reaction against the privileging of the local city, class, or religious sect.’ (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 204) Enlightenment theorists like Condorcet and Voltaire held that the modern ideal of autonomous individuality ‘liberates people from fixed social roles and traditional identities’ and helps them to reevaluate what they received from their inherited culture and traditions ‘to choose for themselves what sort of life they want to lead.’ (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 203) They believed that modern rationality requires ethnocultural and national identity to become gradually weaker and weaker, until they are replaced by a more cosmopolitan identity. Smaller nations, sooner or later, would join the larger ones. Finally a universal language and culture would diffuse all over the single-state world.

However, these dreams did not come true. Enlightenment thinkers were writing before the thriving age of nationalism. What happened in the nineteenth century shows that nationalistic movements are very strong throughout the world. The trend continued throughout twentieth century which was the most significant century for cultural, national and ethnic conflict. It was also the era in which national minorities became very successful in fighting for their distinct cultural identity and achieving self-government.
Nevertheless, the cosmopolitan ideal has its own defenders in contemporary political philosophy. Their ideas are usually labeled as ‘post-nationalism’ mainly because they are offering the cosmopolitan idea in contrast, or sometimes as a complement, to nationalism. The core idea is that even if nationalism is a legitimate system according to liberal principles, it is not enough and can no longer be sustained in the age of globalization; with the rapidly growing global economy and markets, the explosion of international institutions, NGOs and transnational agreements such as World Bank, United Nations, WTO, NATO and ASEAN, the universal diffusion of human rights and international laws, the manipulation of the world-wide communications, the increasing universal recognition of environmental crisis, global justice, and international security, and the emergence of European Union as the new form of transnational institution.

These are some examples of the fact that many aspects of human activities are transcending national boundaries at a rapid pace and this fact reveals our crucial need for instituting democratic transnational institutions and developing underlying normative theories to guarantee fair global relations. However, there is no inclusive political theory about transnational relations. The current institutions ‘have evolved in an ad hoc way, each in response to a particular need, without any underlying theory or model’ (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 312).  

Unlike liberal nationalists who try to develop international theories that fit into existing nation-based theories, post-nationalists believe that nation-based theories and frameworks are no longer adequate for global needs. Thus, any development of transnational institutions and theories is inconsistent with existing systems and requires going beyond

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18 For post-nationalist views see Held, 1995; Habermas, 2001; Waldron, 1995; Abizadeh, 2004; Tan, 2004.
nationalism altogether. They argue that nationalism is losing its capacity to support and maintain individual autonomy and meaningful democratic citizenship in the era of globalization (Held, 1999). Going beyond nationalism can also be seen as a solution to the problem faced by national minorities. In a multicultural and multilingual post-national state, when majorities stop their process of nation-building, there would be no unfair situation for national minorities.

However, there are two difficulties with this approach. One difficulty is that the theories of post-nationalism are undeveloped and, in most cases, they are limited to some theoretical and meta-theoretical projects. There is no well-developed theory and argument to explain what kind of normative structures and principles should be adopted by the post-national institutions, what kind of democratic citizenship they can provide for individuals, and most importantly what it looks like to do all these things beyond the boundaries of nationalism. The second difficulty that any theory of post-nationalism is faced with is the challenging arguments that many liberal nationalists have provided during the past few years, showing that nationalism is necessary, at least in the foreseeable future, for assuring a meaningful democratic citizenship and individual freedom and equality. They believe that the national framework and policies provide the best context for promoting liberal democracy, or to put it another way ‘liberal democracy works best within national political unit.’ (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 223)

b. Arguments for necessity of Nationalism

As Kymlicka notes, liberal democracy is based on three main principles and nationalism is necessary in order to achieve any of them: social justice, deliberative democracy, and individual freedom (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 224). The major arguments for the necessity and
the centrality of nationalism for liberal democracy can be divided into three broad
categories: the arguments from the necessity of the vernacular, the arguments from the
necessity of national trust and solidarity, and the arguments from the necessity of a
cultural context for a meaningful individual autonomy.

**B1- The arguments from the necessity of vernacular:** National language, the
vernacular, has an indispensible *instrumental* role in liberal democracy for two reasons:
it promotes social justice (B1.1) and it makes deliberative democracy possible (B1.2). In
both cases language is considered a key for equal access to social resources and political
deliberation.

**B1.1:** It is generally accepted that one of the most important criteria for assessing social
justice is equal opportunities of citizens to apply for available jobs and equal access to the
required training. Suppose there are two citizens, A and B, whose mother tongues are
different. Imagine that the official language of their state, ‘in the fullest sense of the term,
that is, a state-sponsored, -inculcated, and -defined language and culture, in which both
economy and state function’, is not the language of person A, but the language of person
B (A could be a member of a national minority in a national state or a post-national
citizen whose local language is not one of the official languages of the transnational
state). Then person B has ‘obviously an immense advantage to’ the person A in
competing for job opportunities and accessing to the social resources.

**B1.2:** Deliberative democracy is the fundamental element of liberal democracy. It is
‘deliberative’ because democracy is a process of public deliberation and reasoning. It
enables citizens to engage in public discourse and think collectively about issues that
matter to all of them. It requires citizens to set forth views and arguments that have ‘public reasonableness’, to listen to each other, and to evaluate others’ reasoning. Political parties, news, media and the internet provide the appropriate forums for such collective reasoning. ‘The actual moment of voting (in elections, or within legislatures) is just one component in a larger process of democratic self-government’ (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 226), which reflects the result of public political discourse. This is exactly the element that makes the result of voting legitimate as the reflection of ‘the considered will and common good of the people as a whole, not just the self-interest or arbitrary whims of the majority.’ (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 226)

Therefore, it is obvious that a meaningful deliberative democracy requires citizens to talk to each other, listen to each other and understand each other. This is not feasible without a common language. People who have better access to the language have better ability to participate in public discourse, to offer their reasons and to convince others. Those who are disadvantaged in this sense (e.g. national minorities) will find no opportunities to turn people’s attention to their claims and needs. As a result they will fail to change the opinions of the majority, which makes them more and more marginalized in society. Even in a multilingual state, real political deliberation only takes place within the groups in which ordinary people share a common language and forums for political debates. What happens across groups would be dominated by intellectuals who know more than one language and democracy in this model would be more ‘vote-centric’ rather than ‘talk-centric’. Unlike ‘talk-centric’, in the ‘vote-centric’ democracy voting is ‘a mechanism for determining winners and losers, but not a mechanism developing a
consensus, or shaping public opinion, or even formulating an honorable compromise.’ (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 290) 19

In both cases, social justice and deliberative democracy, one could imagine that live extensive translation would be the best solution. If people can get equipped with a well-developed multilingual translation facility, communication would be less problematic. However, this is an impractical solution. We have no idea how long it takes, if ever, for every citizen to carry a translation facility not as an expensive and luxury gadget, but as a basic and necessary tool. Personal bilingualism could be another solution. That is a world-wide educational system in which children learn a universal language as well as their local language. However, history shows us that the project of a universal language or bilingualism has failed many times in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. But, in any case, personal bilingualism is feasible only after removing some obstacles by answering these questions: what language is the universal language? Is it an artificial language, which is required to fabricate, or a natural language, which is required to have a consensus on? Is it the case that everyone learns the second language as well as the first one? Or perhaps it is only elites but not ordinary people who can manage the second language properly? We have no answer for these questions yet, but what we know is that many multinational countries such as Canada and Belgium got disappointing results in their attempts for encouraging personal bilingualism.

Nationalism, by contrast, has long provided an easy way for diffusion of a common language through national standardization of education. In the national system of

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education all children, regardless of their social class, learn the minimum lingual abilities required for accessing competitive social markets and public political forums. That is why, according to liberal nationalists, the national boundaries are, in an important sense, lingual boundaries and ‘a democratic politics is the politics in the vernacular.’ (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 213) These are also central arguments for the rights of national minorities which show why it is legitimate and just for national minorities to develop their own institution in their language, i.e. the right for promoting their distinct societal culture alongside the majority’s societal culture.

**B2- The arguments from necessity of national trust and solidarity:** According to liberal nationalists, national solidarity is necessary for a liberal state, because it provides a kind of trust among citizens which is an important factor for achieving distributive justice and liberal democracy.

**B2.1:** Almost all liberal theorists accept that social equality requires a just distribution of basic social resources and insuring citizens against basic disadvantages. That means any theory of distributive justice necessitates at least a minimum form of welfare state in which some part of the citizens’ income and wealth is redistributed fairly in society through taxation. Maintaining a welfare state needs citizens ‘to make sacrifices for anonymous others whom we do not know, will probably never meet, and whose ethnic descent, religion and way of life differs from our own. In a democracy, such social programmes will only survive if the majority of citizens continue to vote for them.’ (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 225) That requires a sort of solidarity and trust among members of society to see the others, not just as an anonymous others, but as ‘one of us’. It is very

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easy to see our relatives and friends as ‘one of us’ and make important sacrifices for them; we also feel solidarity, sometimes, with people with whom we share religion or ethnicity. But nationalism’s great success is in providing a kind of solidarity and trust that surpasses family, faith, and ethnicity, which makes a welfare state possible in a plural and multicultural society.

In response, cosmopolitans can argue that people naturally have sympathy for every human as a human being, so this can be the source of the required solidarity for maintaining a welfare world-state. However, for liberal nationalists the natural sympathy of people is limited to their few relatives and friends. They believe that it is nationalism that, exceptionally, is forging a shared identity and ‘artificially extending people’s restricted sympathies to include all co-citizens.’ (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 270) Therefore, rejecting the morality of nationalism does not widen the scope of solidarity, rather, it narrow it back to the limited natural level.21

B2.2- A similar argument is offered to show that mutual trust and solidarity is a requirement of a well-functioning deliberative democracy. Forming public consensus through political deliberation requires a group of people who see each other with the same interests, who are ready to comply with the requirements for democratic decision-making about these mutual-interests; and are ‘willing to moderate own demands in order to reach a compromise.’ (Miller, 1998, p. 48) In short, deliberative democracy requires citizens to trust each other and it seems that ‘trust of this kind is much more likely to exist among people who share a common national identity, speak a common language, and have overlapping cultural values.’ (Miller, 1998, p. 48)

21 For similar arguments see Miller, 1995; Canovan, 1996; Kymlicka, 2001, p. Ch. 11.
In my view, B2.1 and B2.2 are not convincing arguments against cosmopolitan position. They both contain an empirical claim which needs to be justified beforehand: “natural sympathy is limited to few relatives and cannot be extended to the global level” and “the kind of trust we need for democracy cannot exist in global level.” These are very general claims that need empirical evidence. If we are successful in forging solidarity and trust based on an artificial phenomenon like national identity, I do not see any problem with the possibility of making solidarity and trust rooted in what we really have in common, namely humanity. In the era of globalization it is difficult to find any local interest that does not affect interests of other people somewhere in the world. Today, human beings have many important mutual-interests, needs and similarities which seem enough to make them sacrifice or compromise. In any event, I do not think that these arguments can rule out the possibility of a cosmopolitan form of trust and solidarity.  

B3- The arguments from necessity of a cultural context for a meaningful individual autonomy: There are various communitarian arguments showing the importance of culture for meaningful individual freedom. Briefly, in most arguments the core idea is that people choose among options that are available to them. People do not choose in a vacuum; they find themselves in a cultural context. ‘Membership in a culture provides meaningful options.’ (Margalit and Raz, 1990, p. 449) It sets limits on them and it makes individuals able to understand and evaluate their options. In other words ‘familiarity with a culture determines the boundaries of the imaginable.’ (Margalit and Raz, 1990, p. 449) In this sense, culture is an important part of individuals’ identities. Failing to recognize a particular culture is failing to recognize an important part of individuals’ identities.

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22 See also Abizadeh, Summer 2002, pp. 501,502.
However, what liberal nationalists are arguing for is not only the importance of culture to individual autonomy, which is the classic position of communitarians, but also the importance of national culture as a state-sponsored cultural identity. This is a very tricky position because, unlike many communitarians, liberal nationalists try to defend a liberal and pluralistic form of national identity—i.e. to insist upon promoting a national culture while at the same time keeping it limited to a thin and minimal format. The delicacy and trickiness of the position was not acknowledged by all theorists. For example, Tamir argues that it is the cultural context which gives individuals the capability of making meaningful choices, and also that state support and public expression are necessary for the existence and development of a culture (Tamir, 1993, p. 72). Consequently, in his view, it is justified to follow the policies that boost the ‘cultural essence of the state’, because national institutions ‘should reflect the unique character and draw on the history, the culture, the language, and at times the religion of the national group, thereby enabling its members to regard it as their own.’ (Tamir, 1993, p. 74)

The problem with this position is that Tamir has confused two levels of arguments: ideal theory and second-best prescription. The only reason liberal nationalists are justified in straying from the ideal theory of cultural neutrality is the fact that it is impossible for the state to apply it in practice (A1). The whole reasonableness of the liberal nationalist idea is that when the ideal of neutrality is not possible and some cultural elements like language have an indispensable instrumental role in social equality and democracy (B1), the second-best prescription, which provides a more just situation for multicultural and pluralist societies, is to promote a minimal and liberal form of national identity. However, going further than minimal nationalism by privileging a particular culture in its complete
sense seems unjustified because it undermines our primary intuitions and arguments for promoting an equal and plural society. As Kymlicka notes, Tamir is not clear in deciding ‘whether nationalist politics are a necessity to be minimized, or a virtue to be promoted.’ (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 252)

In contrast, Kymlicka argues that nationalism in the minimal sense has successfully promoted the individual autonomy in the West because of its twofold feature: it provides its members with the widest range of options and, at the same time, it prepares an equal access to those options by equipping all citizens with the necessary and required cultural instruments, like language. Its minimal and plural cultural essence allows citizens ‘to choose from “cultural fragments” which come from variety of ethnocultural sources,…, say, Inuit art, Italian opera, Chinese food, German folklore, Judeo-Christian religion’ (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 210). The modern state has open and pluralistic societal culture, ‘which borrows whatever it finds worthwhile in other cultures, integrates it into its own practices, and passes it onto the subsequent generations.’ (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 211) This minimal cultural essence allows citizens to enjoy an equal access to choosing among the options. This is the twofold characteristic that ‘illiberal and thick’ nationalism lacks.

Although it is a very appealing argument for the legitimacy and functionality of liberal form of nationalism, I do not think that it can take us further against the cosmopolitan alternative. At best, it just reformulates the same point that B1 has addressed in a new level i.e. that the cosmopolitan ideal is unable to introduce an appropriate substitution for the vernacular as a necessary tool for achieving individual autonomy, as well as social justice and deliberative democracy.
To sum up, what is discussed in this chapter is a set of arguments that liberal nationalists have offered to show that it is *legitimate* and *just* to coincide the boundaries of the state with the boundaries of the nation. Put another way, it is a legitimate and just function of the liberal state to protect and promote national identity in the minimal sense which includes creating public institutions that operate in the national language and supporting national language and national symbols in public life. Yet it also seems to include the rights of national minorities because the current boundaries of the world’s countries, obviously, do not coincide with boundaries of nations. This is the issue that will be explored in the next part.

### 4. The rights of National Minorities

Looking through the lines of arguments in the first chapter, one could find two kinds of argument in support of national minorities: national minority rights as a response to the majority nation-building and national minority rights as a necessary component of liberal democracies. The first one follows from arguments A1 and A3 which show that national minorities are legitimately entitled to the same rights as the majority in going through their own process of nation building. The second one is built on arguments B1 and B3 which show that the rights of national minorities to build their own societal culture in their own language is a necessary component of any just and healthy liberal democracy.

The main focus of the first argument is the fact that the modern concept of nationalism has emerged from a historical process, which is called the process of nation building.\(^{23}\)

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\(^{23}\) Norman prefers to call it the process of ‘national engineering’. He notes that ‘nation-building’ is misleading because it implies that it is creating a nation out of other forms of communities and it omits the fact that in many cases we only try to shape a national identity which is already exists. (Norman, 2006, p. 33)
during the last three centuries. Throughout this period, many western countries developed a common identity among all the residents of their territory. This process was more or less successful in west and in most parts of the world. The success of nation building was the result of different nationalistic policies: standardization of economy, education, and military service under one language, forming, and some cases forging, a set of nationalistic symbols like flag, anthem, and national history. The success of the process of nation building has also involved tackling the issue of national minorities. Diffusing a national identity, a common language, and a set of nationalistic symbols also require destroying any distinct national identity, language and symbols within the borders. The majorities historically have used different strategies for deconstructing the minorities’ national identity: from peaceful and diplomatic strategies to cruel and militaristic ones such as forcing minorities to integrate or to change their place and banning local languages in school and public institutions. A softer version of these policies still is at work and has support from the governments in many countries in the world.

It is argued that national minority rights should be conceived as a response to the majority’s nation building. National minorities used to have their own societal culture which was working perfectly before being deconstructed by the majority. If the majority has gone through the process of nation building, minorities have also the same right to go through their own process of nation building. Therefore, they should have the right to reconstruct their national identity by creating public institutions which operate in their languages, using their symbols in public life and controlling all factors that are necessary
to the survival of their language and culture. It is unjust to force national minorities to integrate to another societal culture while they used to have their own societal culture.\textsuperscript{24}

The second argument is based on necessity of vernacular in liberalism. According to B1, liberal democracy is feasible only in the vernacular. That means vernacular is an indispensable instrument in providing social equality and deliberative democracy. If the official language of a country is the language of majority, it is an important discrimination against those people whose first language differs from the official language. They would have limited access to the social resources, they are disadvantaged in job opportunities, and they would have less democratic power in public reasoning, and fewer options to choose and therefore less freedom in society. In order to meet the liberal ideal of equality and freedom, it is required to let minorities to build their own liberal societal culture in their own language.

CHAPTER III

Body of Thesis

1. The paradox of liberal nationalism

As it was explained in the B series arguments, liberal nationalists have shown that liberal principles of deliberative democracy, social justice, and individual freedom work best, or perhaps only work, within the nation-based political unit which operates in the vernacular. The theory requires all national minorities to go through the process of nation-building-- i.e. to achieve at least a minimum form of territorial self-determination in order to construct a well-functioning liberal societal culture in their vernacular. The minority nation-building usually competes with, and often conflicts with, state nation-building. This conflict leaves only two options for national minorities in order to achieve territorial self-determination: a complete form of autonomy, through secession, or a limited one, through a form of federal political system. However, it seems that neither is unproblematic option.

Almost all liberal nationalists reject secession as the first or the best option for accommodating the demands of national minorities. It is not difficult to see why it is an unattractive option. As Norman notes, a rough estimate shows that there are around 5000 ethnocultural groups in the world which are settling within only 200 countries (Norman, 2006, p. xi). It seems utterly unrealistic to expect world territories to be broken up into 5000 autonomous political systems. It is practically impossible because many national
minorities are too small to produce politically and economically sustainable states. Some other minorities such as indigenous people in the North America are not territorially concentrated, some have widely scattered lands across national boundaries, and in some other cases the cultural borders between two nations are so intermingled that it is hardly possible to form an agreement on where the border lines are located. Even in the cases with enough population and distinct and continuous border lines, secession is considered a dangerous process for the stability of the separating nations and for regional security. The recent separations in Eastern Europe were sad experiences which show that secessionist movements can be accompanied with serious civil wars, political instability, and intensive violence. Besides, it seems that secession is not a preferred option even among those national minorities who live in countries with a ‘long tradition of democracy’ where the right of minority secession is more or less recognized. In spite of the fact that secession is politically accessible in countries like Canada or Britain and there are strong secessionist movements in those countries, the majority of people in Quebec or Scotland still prefer to be a part of the bigger state. The above considerations made many theorists consider secession as an option or right within multinational countries rather than as a primary option.²⁵

Multinational federations or ethnocultural federalism²⁶ therefore, became the most favorable alternative among liberal nationalists for accommodating the demands of national minorities. Federalism can provide the required autonomy for national minorities

²⁵ For the ‘right of secession’ see Norman, 2006; Buchanan, 1991; Lehning, 1998.
²⁶ There is a distinction between nation-based federalism and territory-based federalism. The former is based on division of power on ethnocultural basis (e.g. the Quebec in Canada) and the latter is based on division of power on territory basis (e.g. the US states). It is the nation-based federalism which intended to accommodate national minorities. In this essay, by federalism I only refer to the nation-based form. For more discussion see (Kymlicka, 2001, pp. 90-100)
in controlling their cultural and lingual distinctiveness and, at the same time, it binds the subunits together both politically and economically. It lets the majority and minorities negotiate their disputes fairly through a democratic mechanism. Finally, it nevertheless provides a kind of solidarity and national identity among all citizens of the country. Liberal nationalists argue that multinational federation is a successful mechanism in ‘managing [national] conflicts in a peaceful and democratic way, while protecting individual [and group] rights and prosperity’ (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 93) and though it does not remove the threat of secession, it can reasonably reduce it or at least turn it to a peaceful and democratic process. The best evidence for the success of multinational federalism in managing the problem of national minorities is the achievements of contemporary multinations such as Canada, Switzerland and Belgium in managing ethnic conflicts. The flexibility of federalism in these countries shows that democratic multinational federalism is ‘surprisingly resilient’ in handling the growing demands of national minorities and ethnic disputes.

However, the practical success of contemporary democratic federalism does not mean that it has removed all ethnocultural problems and conflicts from the agenda. In some cases it has actually produced new problems: what is the best way to decide about boundaries of federal subunits? How are legislative, administrative and legal powers distributed between the central state and subunit states? In what form can citizens of subunit states be represented in the federal state? How should we respond to secessionist demands of subunit states? The most challenging difficulty is that there is no systematic theory of multinational states that provides a normative background or comprehensive guidance in answering such questions. Liberal nationalists are completely aware of the
challenge that the theory of multinational federalism is still at the primitive stages of development. In fact, they have recently started specifying the fundamental problems and taking the primary steps toward providing a thorough multinational theory. Kymlicka and Norman, for example, have insightful considerations about the problems facing contemporary federal systems. One of the important problems is that the regional-based unit and the nationality-based unit in federal system usually seek different levels of power. This desire for asymmetry of power distribution leads to conflicts and disputes over the division of power within federal system. It affects any compromise for subunit representation at the federal level, and it also makes the process of constitutional amendment very difficult\textsuperscript{27}. Moreover, as Norman notes there is a fear that federal system initiates a ‘vicious circle’ to secession: ‘autonomy leads to nation-building, which leads to demands for more autonomy, and so on, until well-mobilized demands for secession are inevitable.’ (Norman, 2006, p. 74) This is because the more successfully a federal system works, the more aspiration appears among minorities to achieve full sovereignty. As Kymlicka puts it ‘the very success of multination federalism sews the seeds of its own break-up.’ (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 113) However, as I said earlier, we have witnessed, recently, new attempts in providing a comprehensive theory for handling these practical and theoretical problems of federalism. Norman, for example, in *Negotiating Nationalism* sets forth a theory of secession in multinational states. He argues that one of the differences between multinational states and uninations is that ‘they are much more likely to host serious secessionist movements’ through some constitutional acts like ‘including a secession clause in the constitution.’ (Norman, 2006, p. 174) This is an instance of

\textsuperscript{27} For more explanation see Norman, 2006, pp. Ch. 4-5; Kymlicka, 2001, pp. 102-12
policies to accommodate secessionist demands in federal multinations which neither hinder session nor reinforce it.

I think liberal nationalists are successfully taking the preliminary steps toward a general theory of multinational state. They were quite successful in showing that in comparison with the classic form of national states or secession, multinational federalism is a more appropriate political level in fair accommodation of national minority rights in an ethno-culturally diverse world.

However, in this chapter, I want to focus on another side of the discussion which is rarely touched. While, liberal nationalists are normatively justified in preferring the multinational over the classic form of nationalism, they do not provide any justification to explain why multinational federations are normatively superior to and in what way they are distinct from a transnational political level. Liberal nationalists implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, take it for granted that the multination level is theoretically and normatively the most appropriate level for dealing with the political demands of other levels of political power: the lower-level national (or uninational) state and the upper-level transnational sate.

In this chapter I explore this assumption. My thesis is that liberal nationalism fails to provide a justification which explains why the multination state is normatively required as the medium level between the national level and the transnational level. I will argue that the multinational level normatively has the same value as the transnational level. This ironically follows from the arguments of the liberal nationalists. Their arguments for the legitimacy and necessity of nationalism undermine the possibility of a normative level
between the national and transnational levels. This is what I call the paradox of liberal nationalism. I will support an interpretation of liberal nationalism which requires us to see the multinational state not as a normatively required medium but as a historically and practically required medium for achieving a balanced distribution of power between national and transnational political levels. I believe that this interpretation can be insightful in two ways. First, it shows that a successful theory for multinational federation can be helpful for developing a theory in transnational context and vice versa. Second, it narrows the gap between liberal nationalism and post-nationalism in contemporary political philosophy.

I have two arguments in support of this thesis. In the first argument I show that all the arguments of liberal nationalists justify the boundaries and centrality of the unination state, rather than the multination. Their own argument against republican justification for the moral significance of national borders (A2) undermines the moral significance of multinational borders as well. The second argument will show that liberal nationalists’ reasons for the necessity of the vernacular in achieving direct and well-functioning liberal democracy (B1) put multination federalism theoretically at the same level as transnational federalism (such as the European Union).

2. National level vs. transnational level

Looking through the A series and B series arguments for legitimacy and necessity of nationalism, one can find at least two normative levels of political power in regard to the
form of democratic participation of citizens: the ‘national’ level and the ‘transnational’ level.  

1- **National level:** in the national state the boundaries of state coincide with the boundaries of nation. The border lines here are linguistic boundaries. National level is the only level for achieving a well-functioning liberal democracy because it is based on the vernacular. Democracy in this level is direct and in a meaningful sense deliberative because citizens have the minimum requirement for equal participation in public policy i.e. the common language. As Kymlicka notes,

“‘national’ linguistic/territorial political communities—whether they are unilingual nation-states or linguistically distinct subunits within multination states—are the primary forums for democratic participation in the modern world. They are primary in two senses. First, democracy within national/linguistic units is more genuinely participatory than at higher levels that cut across language lines…. There is a second sense in which these ‘national’ units are primary—namely, they are the most important forum for assessing the legitimacy of other levels of government.” (Kymlicka, 2001, pp. 213-14)

National level can have two forms: subunit minority nations, and fully autonomous uninations. The difference between these two is that the subunit minority nations are part of a bigger state and have limited autonomy which includes cultural and lingual rights, while autonomous uninations, which rarely exist in the present world, enjoy the full sovereignty over their territory.

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28 One could argue that the ‘global level’ is different from transnational level, in the sense that both national and transnational model are based on the western liberal values. However, in the global level liberalism is just a cultural artifact among many cultural norms. That is why many postmodernist philosophers argue that in a political system in the global level no particular cultural norm should be privileged. For more discussion see Connolly, 1995 and Parekh, 1997.
2- Transnational level: By definition this political level goes beyond national borders. The boundaries of state at this level do not coincide with national boundaries, so it includes more than a nation and a language. Democratic participation at this level can be either direct or indirect through governmental representation. However, the direct democracy in this level is dominated by elites and meaningful public participation and deliberation is hardly expectable. People whose vernacular is different from the official language, need to be either competent speakers of two or more language or have access to extensive multilingual translation in order to be able to participate significantly at the transnational level. Therefore, the real democratic participation at this level is restricted to a limited number of people. Transnational political organizations can have two forms: governmental and nongovernmental. In the first form, the members of the organizations would be consisting of multinational or uninal national governments as in the UN. In this case transnational organizations are directly responsible to the governments and indirectly to the citizens who have elected these governments as their representatives in the first place. In the second form, that is nongovernmental transnational institutions, the members are individuals to whom the institutions are directly responsible; the best examples of this form are many political international NGOs like Greenpeace International Organization. The transnational level can also have both forms together such as the EU, which has two political organizations: the European Parliament, whose members are directly elected by European citizens, and the European Commission and Council of Ministers, whose members are selected by the European governments.29

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29 Here we only consider political transnational institutions.
Let us see where *multinational federation* is located in this democratic diagram and how we can evaluate its normative level according to the arguments of liberal nationalists. It is very important to notice that here we are talking about an ideal theory, that is, the ideal model of multination state which is prescribed by liberal nationalism, rather than, discussing the actual status of multinational states in the world. While in the ideal model the central state recognizes cultural diversity through a federal system which gives national minorities a sort of territorial self-determination, most present multinations in the world do not follow this model. They usually have a central state that does not give its national minorities the right of self-determination, either by explicit suppression of the minority nations through imposing the majority nationality and language or by implicit denial of national minority rights through the policy of ‘cultural neutrality’. In both forms, multinational states unjustly try to get similar to unination states and both forms have been rejected by the liberal nationalists’ arguments A1 and A3. So the question here is about the status of the normative model of ‘multinational federalism’ in regard to the other two democratic levels: national and transnational.

On the one hand, it is obvious that multinational federalism is not located in the national level because it is clearly contains more than one linguistic/territorial political community and societal culture. Theoretically at least, it is a form of transnational state that has both forms of direct and indirect democracy together. On the other hand, in the present world, even the best examples of multination states, which more or less follow the ideal model such as Canada and Belgium, express characteristics that are different from most of transnational organizations and states. In contrast to most of the transnational political systems, in many present multinational federalisms where direct democracy is a wide-
spread form of democracy, there is a strong attempt to form a ‘thick’ shared identity among the members, and the sub-unit members are not easily able to reclaim the power of central state and, therefore, secession is not usually protected in the constitution.30 Of course from the fact that multinational states are following this model we could not infer that this model should be followed. Here we want to evaluate the normative status of multinational federations. So let us examine liberal nationalists’ position in regard to this question: what is the normative status of the multinational federal system in comparison to the transnational federal system like the EU?

3. Multinational Federalism vs. Transnational Federalism

Among liberal nationalists, there has been remarkably few works addressing this question. In some cases, it seems that liberal nationalists believe that the multinational state is normatively the legitimate medium level between sub-unit national and transnational level. At times the argument is about whether multinational level is the most appropriate political level in handling both the demands of national minorities and the international problems. In other cases, the normative differences of the levels of national and multinational are confused when they try to compare them to the transnational level. For example, when talking about the priority of multination states over classic forms of nationalism or separation, Kymlicka seems to agree that the multinational level is normatively categorized as the transnational level and therefore has the same democratic deficits that transnational level has:

30 As Norman notes, what international laws say about secession today is ‘about as ‘liberal’ with respect to secession as the nineteenth-century British legal system was about the divorce of a married couple. It gives central governments extensive rights to prevent wayward minorities from exiting the state (and taking some of its territory with them) in roughly the same way that most legal systems used to allow husbands to maintain loveless, and often violent, marriages.’ (Norman, 2006, p. 117)
“National identities are important, and there are benefits to creating political units within which national groups can exercise self-government. However, the relevant ‘political units’ cannot be states. We need to think of a world, not of nation-states, but of multination states...We could call this new goal that of ‘multination federalism’, and we can see clear movement towards such a model in many Western democracies (e.g. Spain, Belgium, Britain, Canada).” (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 234)

Or,

“Political debates at the federal level in multination states, for example, or at the EU, are almost invariably elite-dominated.” (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 213)

However, when liberal nationalists try to reject the post-nationalist position, the confusion of national and multinational levels appears. This is the case when Kymlicka evaluates Held’s cosmopolitan theory. Held is a post-nationalist theorist who has provided the theory of ‘cosmopolitan governance’ in which he argues that the national unit can no longer sustain by itself the liberal principles of individual autonomy, democracy and political legitimacy, because “globalization is eroding the capacity for meaningful democratic citizenship at the domestic level, as nation states lose some of their historic sovereignty and become ‘decision-takers’ as much as ‘decision-makers’”. He also argues that we need to form a new cosmopolitan citizenship in which international institutions become ‘directly accountable to (or accessible to) individual citizens’.

In response, Kymlicka argues that such a direct democracy is only viable at the national level not the international level. He describes democratic trends in EU institutions as evidence for his proposal. Consider this helpful example:

31 See Kymlicka, 2001, Article 17.
EU has two major centers of decision-making: the European Parliament, whose members are directly elected by citizens in Europe-wide election; and the European Commission and Council of Ministers, whose members are appointed by national governments…there are two broad strategies for trying to remedy the EU’s democratic deficit: one is to increase the power of (directly elected) European Parliament…the alternative is to leave the most of power in the hands of the [nationally nominated] Commission and Council of Ministers…many defenders of cosmopolitan citizenship endorse the first approach…on the contrary, most people, in virtually all European states, show little interest in the affairs of European parliament, and a little enthusiasm in increasing its power… [Because] at the moment, if a Danish citizen dislike an EU decision, she can try to mobilize the other Danes to change their government’s position on the issue. But if the EU is [totally and directly] ‘democratized’…a Danish citizen would have to try to change the opinions of the citizens of every other European country (none of which speak her language)… For Danish citizens to engage in a debate with other Danes, in Danish, about the Danish position vis-à-vis the EU is a familiar and manageable task. But for Danish citizens to engage in a debate with Italians to try to develop a common European position is a daunting prospect. In what language would such a debate occur, and in what forums? Not only do they not speak the same language, or share the same territory, they also do not read the same newspapers, or watch the same television shows, or belong to the same political parties. So what would be the forum for such a trans-European debate?" (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 313)

Accordingly, he concludes that the nation-state is the building-block of any cosmopolitan democracy; cosmopolitanism is not ‘an alternative to outmoded models of nation-centered democracy,’ rather it is ‘a supplement to, and dependent on nation-centered democracy’ (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 313):

“Given the difficulties of establishing a meaningful forms of deliberative democracy and mass participation at the transnational level, we should perhaps try to develop cosmopolitan democracy by building on the achievements of the nation-state.” (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 315)

Elsewhere he proposes the same model as an appropriate model for international democracy:
“[Another] option for democratizing transnational institutions is to rely upon existing national identities, and to find ways to hold international institutions more accountable through nation-states. This is the pattern followed by the United Nations and related international organizations, and one could imagine ways to strengthen the accountability of transnational institutions to nation-states.” (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 239)

Although this is a very strong argument which restates and exemplifies the convincing argument B1 (the necessity of vernacular in deliberative democracy), it seems that Kymlicka does not clearly distinguish national and multinational levels. While his argument completely convinces us that the national level is the best level for achieving genuine democracy, what his example proposes as the best level of democracy is not the national (or uninational) state, but it is the *multinational state*. The transnational institutions like EU or UN are not accountable directly to the *national state*; they are accountable to the *multinational state*. UK rather than Scotland is the member of EU; Canada but not Quebec is the member of UN. The problem is that while liberal nationalists implicitly take it for granted that the multinational political level is the best place to handle transnational institutions, their arguments, surprisingly, have nothing to do with justifying multinational states and it just amplifies the priority of the national level. They do not offer any normative argument for the centrality of the multinational level compared to a transnational federation like the EU.

Moreover, this is not the only problem. The more important problem is that liberal nationalists not only fail to provide a convincing justification for the centrality claim, their own arguments ironically undermine possibility of such centrality. If ‘establishing a meaningful form of democracy’ is not feasible in the transnational institutions due to the presence of multiple nationalities and if this is the reason to reject the centrality of
transnational level, the same reason undermines the meaningfulness of deliberative democracy in multinational federations. Put it another way, liberal nationalists provide a set of arguments to reject centrality of transnational federations, but their own argument refuse with the same power what they have proposed as the best alternative, i.e. multinational federations. This is the paradox of liberal nationalism.

4. Two arguments

Particularly, two arguments of liberal nationalists undermine the normative distinctness of the multinational level from the transnational level: A2 and B1. In the A2 argument, it was shown that a liberal regime of civil rights fails to provide a justification for the moral significance of national borders. However, the only borders that the liberal nationalists’ proposal succeeds to justify as morally significant were national boundaries but not multinational boundaries. They have shown that national borders are the lingual borders in which citizens have the ability to more equally, democratically, and autonomously participate in social, economical, and political institutions. However, one can ask the same question: why are multinational borders morally significant?

We might think that addressing different levels of shared identity could be an answer to this question. Although citizens in a national sub-unit have a level of national identity in common, they also share another level of national identity with citizens of other subunits in a multinational state. Quebecois, for example, enjoy a shared identity with other francophones in Quebec, but they also have a kind of shared identity, in different level, with the rest of Canada as Canadians. The first identity justifies the moral significance of Quebec borders and the second one supports Canadian borders as a multinational political entity. As Miller, for example, notes ‘what we are witnessing is the slow emergence of
new nationalities, such as a European nationality, so that national identities will co-exist at different levels—people will think of themselves as French or German at one level, European at another’. (Miller, 1995, p. 159) He argues the Scots, for example, are a small nation ‘nested’ within a larger nation – i.e., that the average Scot identifies both Scotland and Britain as their "nation".

My reply to this answer is that, unlike vernacular, shared identity is a matter of degree. A citizen of Quebec feels another level of shared identity with a bigger community as a North American; she also has a more general common identity with citizens in western liberal democracies. While vernacular present a more solid limit on the meaning and importance of national borderlines, layers of shared identity do not justify the significance of multinational borders. Although it might be true about Britain in which the "nested nations" speak the same language as the dominant national group, it is rarely the case for the national minorities with different language like Quebec. Many nationalists in Quebec do not identify both Quebec and Canada as their nation. In their view, Canada has the same situation that the EU has for French. Thus, the question still remains unanswered in a new form: in what way are multinational borders morally significant that transnational borders, like the EU, are not?

B1 is the most powerful argument in support of nationalism and against cosmopolitan citizenship, which almost with the same power undermines democratic multinational citizenship. If a meaningful deliberative democracy requires citizens to be able to communicate with each other and to have access to the same political forums through the common vernacular, and if the common vernacular is exactly what the multinations lack, then the multinational federations, in contrast to the national unit, would not be the best
model for achieving real democratic participation. This means that not only the national level has priority over the multinational level as the best model for deliberative democracy; it also has priority in assessing the mere legitimacy of the multinational level in the same way that the legitimacy of transnational institutions is dependent on the national level. As Abizadeh notes, ‘The real site of democratic participation and legitimacy must shift downward, away from the federal political unit. In other words, multination federalism becomes, on this theory, a curtailment – and not an institutional expression – of democratic practice.’ (Abizadeh, 2004, p. 246)

One might say that in the multinational federations, unlike transnational institutions, widespread presence of multilingual media and translation fill the communication gap between citizens who do not speak the same language and, therefore, it provides the required context for a genuine democratic deliberation. In response, I have to say that although it definitely points to an actual difference between the transnational and multinational states, it does not express a normative difference at all. Expansion of multilingual media and frequent use of live translations could happen in the transnational level as it is a continuously growing feature of the European Union for instance.

This confusion may be caused by the fact that we used to mistakenly see multinational countries as the ‘real’ national unit and therefore, we considered ourselves justified in the claim that the so called ‘national’ units have priority over transnational institutions. But when it is recognized that multination states can no longer be considered the ‘real national unit’, we need a new justification for the priority of multinational level over the transnational institutions. In fact, it was liberal nationalists that, for the first time, made the distinction between ‘nations’ and ‘states’ and explained why it is normatively
important to see nations as culturally and lingually distinct communities, and why they are the primary locus for the exercise of democratic citizenship, even if it is a politically unrecognized national minority or a sub-unit national minorities in a multinational federalism or a uninational state. In fact, the distinction is ignored by those who have theorized such a distinction.

5. Conclusion: Two interpretations of liberal nationalism

In one sense, this confusion can be more understandable if we see the issue from another perspective. Liberal nationalists usually start differently. Their starting point is the actual practice of liberal democracies in the world. The political map of the twentieth century consisted of numerous political units that, on the one hand, were consistently following modern nationalistic policies which were very helpful for many aspects of modern civilization (education, health, economy, and democracy), and on the other hand, the boundaries of these political units have covered a few or many ethno-cultural minorities which led to the conflict between majority and minority nationalism. Liberal nationalists, then, are faced with an unattractive dilemma:

“Either split up multination states so as to enable all national groups to form their own nation-state, through secession and the redrawning of boundaries; or enable the largest or most powerful national group within each multination state to use state-nationalism to destroy all competing national identities.” (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 232)

As I explained earlier, the first option is unrealistic and the second one is unjust. So how can we avoid this dilemma in practice? Looking through the history of successful multinational federations like Canada and Britain leads to the answer. Liberal nationalists have successfully shown that the model of multinational federations can generate
healthier and more fair conditions compared to other options discussed above, because the model has the practical ability to maintain both modern achievements of nationalism and minority rights. Most liberal nationalists are perfectly aware of theoretical and practical problems of multination federalism and its normative defects in comparison to a more cosmopolitan system, but they have wisely realized that given the present practice of political units and the distribution of power in the world, there is no feasible alternative to multination federalism. So far, almost nothing has been written about what exactly a well-functioning global or regional transnational state would look like. EU is the first actual instance of such a political system. It is true that there is no systematic political theory about multinational federations either, but perhaps it is a more accessible model, manageable goal, and practical expectation for the foreseeable future. Kymlicka himself accepts that the most plausible explanation for success of the liberal nationalist doctrine is that ‘there is no clear alternative position.’ (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 43)

I believe that there is much truth in this picture of the ability of multinational state for accommodating both nationalism and minority rights. But, does it mean that our discussion about the normative status of multinational federation is not important? I do not think so. I believe that the answer to this question can be very insightful for further development of liberal nationalism. Given the successful normative arguments of liberal nationalism in defense of the national level and the practical success of multinational federalism in the present world, I think there could be two options for liberal nationalism to develop their theory. In the first option, multinational level is considered a distinct and normatively preferred level for accommodating the rights and demands of lower and higher political levels. What I have done in this chapter was an effort to undermine this
option or at least to shift the burden of proof to fall upon those who believe in normative centrality of multinational level. The aim was to show that anyone who chooses this option is expected to provide a normative theory to justify the intermediary role of multimodal federalism between transnational and national levels. In the second option which I prefer and support, multinational federalism is considered a ‘limited and primitive forms’ of transnational states. That is to say the model of multinational federalism is the *historically and practically*, rather than *normatively and theoretically*, required medium step toward having well-functioning regional or global transnational states which are based on the *real* national level. In my view, multinational federations could perfectly serve as the best historical and practical medium in guiding the present international system of political power toward a transnational form of federations. It makes us able to simultaneously keep focusing on two distinct levels of powers, national and transnational, as the fundamental levels of political activity.

The ideal model of the transnational federation which is grounded in a real national level could be a preferable model over other models in important ways. I am not in a place to even identify the building-blocks of a theory about transnational federations, but it can be helpful to mention a list of political issues that a transnational federation could efficiently manage: a federal transnational model is able to maintain the national and lingual boundaries to shift downward the locus of democratic participation and legitimacy, while pushing upward the decision center for resolving the economic and political problems that transcends national boundaries. The global problems such as economic globalization, environmental crisis, and international security can be more effectively handled in the transnational level. It also can protect its members against dangers of political,
economical, and militaristic crisis, so smaller and more vulnerable national minorities would be more willing to acquire subunit autonomy and also more reluctant to secede. In this model, citizens enjoy the benefit of belonging to a more plural and nationally diverse country and at the same time their rights are more securely protected against any internal restrictions of national subunits.\textsuperscript{33} Moreover, a shared transnational identity is a liberal identity in a sense that it could be based on weaker and more inclusive concepts such as European or even the liberal regime of civil rights. Finally and perhaps more importantly, a transnational federations is able to provide a better context for a just and more democratic international and global relations through diffusing more multilingual media and forums among different subunit nations for assuring better direct and indirect democratic participations and also a well-functioning system for achieving distributive justice in transnational domain.

The second interpretation of liberal nationalism as a practical and not normative medium could have some insightful upshots. At the moment, most liberal nationalists assume that further development of liberal nationalism requires following two categorically different projects: one project for providing a theory about multinational federalism and another theory, in a different level, for transnational domain. However, if it is true that multinational level can be seen as a form of transnational level, then a successful theory about multinational federation can be very useful in providing a political theory about transnational domain. The recent efforts in building a systematic theory for multinational

\textsuperscript{33} Liberal nationalists argue that for protecting the rights of national minorities it is required ‘to supplement individual human rights with minority rights’, they also believe that in order to protect these rights we need ‘regional or transnational mechanisms which will hold governments accountable for respecting both human rights and minority rights.’ (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 88) In my view, a transnational federal system is the most suitable mechanism for this job.
federations can be seen as an insightful achievement toward building a theory about regional and global justice. Similarly, the new theoretical development in transnational political unit like the EU and the UN can be helpful in resolving the normative and practical problems of multinational states. Norman’s theory of secession is a good example of using a transnational method as a solution for a problem of multinational state.\(^{34}\)

Secondly, this interpretation of the status of multinational federalism can help to narrow the gap between two schools of political philosophy: liberal nationalism and post-nationalism. If the main point of liberal nationalism is the fact that national/linguistic unit is the most important locus of democracy and legitimacy, it does not conflict with post-national demand for changing the current practice of political units in the world. The demand that we need a more cosmopolitan political system for managing globalization in all economical, environmental and cultural aspects is compatible with the liberal nationalist demand for changing the current political system of multinations to accommodate national minority rights.

From this perspective, they are more complementary rather than competitors. The post-nationalists notice the need for more systematic and democratic transnational and global

\(^{34}\) Norman shows that ‘including a secession clause in the constitutions of multinational federal state’ is a good way to accommodate the demand of national minorities for secession (Norman, 2006, p. 214). This method is more compatible with confederations and transnational states rather than federal states and it shows the new move in using transnational methods as a remedy for the problems of the multinational states. It is not a federal method because, technically, in the classic form of federalism it is not acceptable for subunit states to reclaim the power of central state. In the classic form of federalism ‘both levels of government have certain sovereign powers as a matter of legal right, not simply on a delegated and revocable basis...the subunits cannot reclaim the powers possessed by the central government, because those powers never belonged to the subunits. In short, unlike administrative decentralization and confederation, both levels of government in a federal system have a constitutionally protected existence, and do not just exist on the sufferance of some other body.’ (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 95)
relations, while the liberal nationalists remind us that such a transnational system should
be founded on national/linguistic political units. In this sense, transnational federation
model is the logical consequence of the post-nationalism and liberal nationalism.
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