§1. The right to national self-determination

Do nations have a right to their own state and territory…? Do nations have a right to \textit{secede} from multi-nation states…? Do nations have a right to some more \textit{limited} form of self-government…?

T1 ‘…why [is it] valuable for the boundaries of political units (paradigmatically, states) to coincide with national boundaries…[?]’

(\textit{David Miller, On Nationality}, p.82)

Do nations have a right to secede from multi-nation states if this state inflicts/has inflicted upon them serious injustices…?

§2. What is a nation?

T2 ‘…nations exist when their members recognize one another as compatriots, and believe that they share characteristics of the relevant kind…’

(\textit{David Miller, On Nationality}, p.22)

‘…the test of mutual recognition…’

Nations have a common public culture… this might involve shared beliefs or preferences or values… it might involve a shared language and literary culture… it might be a matter of having \textit{enough} of some bundle of these things…

T3 ‘Membership is a matter of belonging, not of achievement… to be a good Irishman… is an achievement… to be an Irishman is not.’

(\textit{Avishai Margalit and Joseph Raz, National Self-Determination}, p.446-447)

Must a nation be a large group of people who are not personally familiar to one another…? Must a nation have a special attachment to a particular portion of the Earth’s surface…?
§3. Are nation states good for us?

T4 ‘…individual dignity and self-respect that the groups, membership of which contributes to one’s sense of identity, be generally respected and not be made a subject of ridicule, hatred, discrimination, or persecution…’

(Avishai Margalit and Joseph Raz, National Self-Determination, p.449)

T5 ‘…membership of such groups is of great importance to individual well-being… for it greatly affects one’s opportunities, one’s ability to engage in the relationships and pursuits marked by the culture.’

(Avishai Margalit and Joseph Raz, National Self-Determination, p.449)

P1 Individuals have a strong interest in the nations to which they belong prospering and being respected by others and by themselves.

P2 Nations can prosper and ensure that they are respected by others and by themselves only if they have their own state.

C Individuals have a strong interest in the nations to which they belong having their own state.

Is it true of the Scottish nation – or the Catalan nation – that it cannot prosper or ensure that it is respected as long as it doesn’t have a state…? Are these considerations more weighty against the background of a history of persecution…?

T6 ‘A common culture… not only gives its bearers a sense of where they belong… but also provides them with a background against which more individual choices about how to live can be made… if it is destroyed those who had shared it either are left in a cultural vacuum or else have to undergo a difficult process of cultural adaptation.’

(David Miller, On Nationality, p.85-86)

P1 Individuals have a strong interest in their national culture not being destroyed.

P2 National cultures are secure against destruction only if the associated nations have their own state.

C Individuals have a strong interest in the nations to which they belong having their own state.

An analogous argument…

P1 Individuals have a strong interest in their religious culture not being destroyed.

P2 Religious cultures are secure against destruction only if the religions have their own theocratic state.

C Individuals have a strong interest in the religions to which they belong having their own state.
§4. Nations, justice and democracy

T7 'Free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities… Among a people without fellow-feeling, especially if they read and speak different languages… the united public opinion necessary to the working of representative government can not exist.’

(John Stuart Mill, *Representative Government*, p.428)

P1 A multi-nation state cannot be a liberal democratic state.
P2 We should do what we can to ensure that states are liberal democratic states.
C We should do what we can to ensure that states are nation states.

Why can’t multi-nation states be liberal democracies…? Because instead of making political decisions based on the general interest… people will make decisions based on the interest of one part of the population… namely their nation.

But aren’t there some perfectly good examples of multi-national liberal democratic states…?

P1 A state is well-ordered only if everyone accepts – and knows that everyone accepts – the same conception of justice.
P2 If a state is multi-national, its people will accept very different comprehensive moral doctrines.
P3 If people accept very different comprehensive moral doctrines, they cannot accept the same conception of justice.
C1 If a state is multi-national, its people cannot accept the same conception of justice.
C2 A state is well-ordered only if it is not multi-national.

T8 'Nations are communities of obligation… in the sense that their members recognize duties to meet the basic needs and protect the basic interests of other members… However, they are also large and impersonal communities… so in order for these duties to be effectively discharged, they must be assigned and enforced.’

(David Miller, *On Nationality*, p.83)

Is the idea just that securing social justice requires people to be sufficiently motivated that they are prepared to e.g. transfer some of their resources to the less well off… and that they are more likely to be sufficiently motivated if the less well off are co-nationals…?
P1 People have special duties towards people belonging to the same nation.
P2 People cannot effectively discharge any special duties they have towards people belonging to the same nation unless their state is a nation state.
C People cannot discharge their duties unless their state is a nation state.

References