9 *Why Every Nation Should Nurture (a Thick and Inclusive) Nationalism*

MAYA TUDOR

Any essay interrogating conflicts over identity, culture, and rights – and the peaceful resolution of such conflicts within a democracy – must start by underscoring that the need to belong and seek group status is a definitive attribute of human societies. Essays herein cite Isaiah Berlin's elegant formulation of this need – "the great cry for recognition on the part of both individuals and groups" – as one of the, if not the most important force moving human history. Humans ability to cooperate in large, wholly imagined groupings is perhaps most responsible for the success of human societies. Our distinct ability to imagine group belonging through elaborate and cogent systems of beliefs has served an important evolutionary function and is written into our very psychological makeup: "The cooperative imperatives produced by rudimentary culturally transmitted institutions may well have shaped our innate social psychology." (Richerson et al. 2016: 16). Preference for and prioritization of "people like us" is a core psychological attribute that evolutionary pressures have selected for over tens of thousands of years. Consequently, it is unlikely to be overcome. It should instead be effectively harnessed.

Any successful account of how to manage group conflict must thus start by recognizing the universal human desire to seek group belonging and its centrality to politics. This is the starting point of my response to Yuli Tamir's wide-ranging essay tracing evolving understandings of multiculturalism and their compatibility with liberalism. If a hard-wired preference for group belonging is part of our genetic code, then any account of distribution between bigger groups (majorities) and smaller groups (minorities) must take seriously the power and worth of such identities as part of a thriving society that meets the needs of its members. If our social communities create our very sense of self and in doing so, form our values, meanings, and purpose, then our individual identities are both deeply embedded within and in substantial part achieved through our social groupings.

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A Fine Balance: Prioritizing Both Individual Autonomy and Group Belonging

Tamir writes that liberal societies can accommodate a "thin multiculturalism" that respects individual autonomy but will struggle to accommodate "thick multiculturalism" in which communities possess fundamentally conflicting beliefs about the source of political legitimacy (typically religion versus the state). Under thick multiculturalism, not all parties to the debate share liberal values which they can invoke to resolve conflict. Different "thick multicultural" perspectives thus pose serious problems for liberalism.

If the centrality of group identity poses problems for theories of liberalism, then perhaps liberalism should not be the North Star by which we judge multiculturalism debates. We should remember that liberalism is itself a normatively compelling principle *because* of its presumption of respect for individual autonomy. But if group identities importantly define individual identities, then we should not approach all questions, all ethical-political dilemmas, by asking: "What would a liberal [focused foremost on individual autonomy] do here?" Modood instead suggests that we should ask "what would a multiculturalist who is part of this society (not just an abstract individual or an unembedded universalist, which Tamir too wants to go beyond) do here?" (Modood: 6). I would similarly ask, what would someone do who takes seriously the centrality of group identities and the moral equality of individuals, with its practical manifestation in equal citizenship laws? In other words, what would someone do to simultaneously promote equal citizenship *and* the dignity of group belonging in the context of a democracy? This is a key question to ask when considering the inclusion of majorities and minorities in the nation. And I argue that the celebration of thick, multiple, and inclusive national narratives must be part of the answer.

Majority Revolts in the Global South Too

Tamir sketches how a "revolt of the majority" in many Western societies arises from myriad structural causes, including unemployment or unstable employment, greater economic competition in a globalized world, the hollowing out of traditional social structures and accompanying social isolation. Worsening economic circumstances importantly combine with an erosion of historical cultural privileges leaving

"members of majorities anxious about their ability to cash their cultural capital into a set of securities and opportunities." Greater economic precarity for majorities is combined with greater perceived social precarity as the cultural centrality of majorities in the national imagination is challenged by the assertion of rights that, from the perspective of the majority, favors both subordinate social groups and immigrants.

Majorities in pluralizing countries experience this more critical examination of their historical centrality in the national narrative as a psychological loss. Ground-breaking work in the Behavioral science has shown that most humans possess a consistent bias toward the status quo and experience pronounced psychological costs associated with and that losses loom psychologically larger relative to gains (Kahneman and Tversky 1979, Samuelson and Zeckhauser 1988). These biases have direct political implications, with empirical studies showing that the combined loss of social status *and* loss in economic status together form an especially potent predictor of support for far-right parties that electorally instantiate majority revolt (Gidron and Hall 2017).

A sense of social precarity fuelling majority revolts is not unique to Europe and the United States however. Similar forces are driving the revolt of the Indian majority that has significantly weakened the world's unlikeliest democracy – India. By the standards of any postcolonial country in the world, India's national movement articulated a highly inclusive national narrative with respect to its major social cleavages – caste and religion. India's inclusive founding national narrative visibly incorporated the political equality of castes and religions in the decades before the country's independence in 1947. Notably, the Indian national flag featured a Buddhist wheel and its most celebrated monument was the Islamic Taj Mahal. This inclusive and plural national identity was, when compared to other postcolonial neighbors of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar, the single most important factor setting India on the unusual path of democracy amidst bewildering diversity after independence (Tudor 2013).

Yet this narrative is being changed under the Modi government through a kind of majority revolt. Modi's emphasis on the centrality of Hinduism in defining the nation has been disseminated through its control of state levers, combined with its rich party coffers and the effective grassroots reach and resources of Modi's BJP party and the affiliated Hindu organizations known as the *Sangh Parivar*. By projecting a majoritarian national narrative that situates religious minorities

as second-class citizens, Modi has enabled such a substantive decline in that country's pluralism that democracy watchdog institutes such as Freedom House no longer designate India a democracy. The anvil of India's democratic decline has been a marked rise in violence and targeting of minorities.

India's contemporary democratic decline is also caused by a majority revolt that stems from status loss, albeit led more by aspirational (rather than deindustrializing) classes. India's liberalizing economic reforms delivered decades of strong growth during the 1990s and 2000s at the same time that state protections were growing, poverty was declining, and employment was accelerating. The broader growth of the economy and decline in poverty gave rise to what many called a rising expectations revolution. After four decades of slow growth, rapid improvements in economic circumstances were not only possible but realized for substantial portions of the population. Beginning in 2010 however, economic growth stagnated while inequality and inflation rose. Heightened *economic* precarity relative to previous decades, especially set against growing expectations of prosperity, was accompanied by greater *social* precarity for the higher castes. Expanded affirmative action – called reservations in the Indian context – provided for lower caste quotas in both government jobs and India's elite educational institutions.

In India as in Europe and the United States then, the combination of social and economic loss has driven the rise of an ethno-religious nationalism among the ethnic majority – in this case Hindus who form over three-quarters of India's population. Modi's championing of Hindu nationalism is broadly popular, with his BJP party forming the first single-party majority in 2014 and 2019 after almost three decades of coalition governments, on the basis of 31 percent and 37 percent vote shares respectively (which translate into majorities through first-past-the-post electoral systems). Class patterns (albeit different patterns from the West) are apparent, with the well-to-do generally voting for the conservative nationalist movement in larger numbers. In a class pyramid that is approximately 1/3 poor, 1/3 lower class, and 1/3 middle-class/rich, the middle class and rich vote for the BJP in higher numbers (38 percent and 44 percent, respectively) than do the poor or lower classes (each at 36 percent).

But status matters more, with vote share spreads between castes being significantly greater than between classes. In a religiously

sanctioned caste structure that traditionally accords the greatest status to upper castes, followed by other backward classes (OBCs), Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Muslims, 52 percent of the upper castes voted for the BJP while only 8 percent of Muslims did so. Combining class and status categories creates yawning gaps in Modi's support, even among Hindus. For example, the upper-caste rich voted for the BJP at an average of 58 percent while the middle-class Scheduled Castes voted for the BJP at an average of 30 percent.[1] Modi's support was thus drawn disproportionately from upper castes who were angered by both the rise of lower castes–or the "undeserving men and women who have risen above their station because of reservations rather than talent and merit" (Hansen 2015) – as well as a broad sense that secularism in India has become a byword for the prioritization of minority interests over the interests of the majority. Status anxiety on the part of the middle class/rich and upper castes – who have experienced the twin assaults of economic stagnation and a relative decline in cultural status following the expansion of reservations to lower castes – has fuelled Modi's rise to power and the decline of India's historically remarkable democracy, specifically in the form of sanctioning significantly disproportionate violence against minorities and a range of discriminatory citizenship practices (Human Rights Watch 2019).

Status anxiety similarly contributed to the rise of a conservative Brazilian nationalism under Bolsonaro. Like India's nationalism under Modi, the threatened loss of a newfound economic prosperity that had been hard won in previous decades drove the embrace of an outsider touting conservative nationalist credentials. "The inclusion of the poor into the market economy brought about individual empowerment and a sense of self-worth in the PT era – a process that was threatened by economic recession and unleashed an existential crisis, especially among men. Bolsonaro, as a male figure and his campaign gave order to a changing world, resulting in a reconciliation of personhood and political belonging" (Pinheiro-Machado and Mury Salco 2020: 21).

Grappling with the anxiety of majority groups feeling the twin losses of status and the stagnation of expected prosperity is thus a central matter for stabilizing diversifying democracies around the world, and not just in Europe and the United States. Allaying majority concerns over a loss of social and economic status is difficult amidst the growing recognition that majority cultural identities have

in many ways privileged cultural majorities. This is why Tamir's "tortellini of hospitality" is indeed a metaphor for our times – when attempts to enable cross-religious participation was met with protests positioned by some politicians as protecting national tradition. As almost every society is diversifying through immigration as well as religious, ethnic, and racial intermarriage, almost every society is also facing debates over how to create inclusive public narratives and rituals that reflect multicultural societies without alienating majorities.

The Impossibility of Neutral Narratives

Promoting the diversification of public culture is difficult, and not just because minority cultural gains are often perceived as majority cultural losses. It is also because majority cultural privileges are often simultaneously invisible to majorities – whose members feel aggrieved at what appear to be handouts to or appeasements of minorities. Tamir's assertion that a neutral public sphere is impossible is an important baseline for those reflecting upon how to pluralize national culture in ways that make both majorities and minorities secure. "To attain [equal concern and equal respect], the public sphere had to change and become equally accessible to all. In an imperfect, neutral public space, everybody was supposed to feel at home. 'Home', however, is never neutral .... The liberal version of a neutral public sphere turned out to be an illusion." Historians and sociologists have long recognized that public spheres as well as stories of national belonging are not neutral. *Geschichtspolitik,* the German word combining politics and history, reflects that country's pervasive understanding that all collective memory is intimately tied to the legitimation of state power (Halbwachs 1992).

Yet the impossibility of a neutral public sphere should not lead us to conclude that a thinning of national narratives to a lowest common denominator of belonging is desirable. This is another problem arising from using liberalism as a first principle for adjudicating multiculturalism's debates. Liberalism in a multicultural society only allows a "very thin form of culture" that contributes to individual autonomy (Kymlicka 2001: 55–56). For example, Jurgen Habermas argues that the link between the majority culture and the general political culture

must be uncoupled and encourages allegiance only to the constitution and its laws (Habermas: 118).

Yet, such an uncoupling of majority culture from the national culture poses its own distinct problems because the strength of group attachment is typically strongest when it invokes emotional salience. This is why statues celebrating *national* heroes, music and myths celebrating *national* moments of significance, literature celebrating the glory of *national* languages, and festivals celebrating *national* foods (such as the tortellini festival of Bologna) assume such importance to public conceptions of who "we" are. Sites, places, and stories of national commemoration often form critical spaces for attachment to a national collective consciousness. And, since individuals with more salient group identities are more likely to participate in collective action on behalf of that group (Ellemers 1993, Kelly 1993, and Klandermans 1997), the salience of attachment to the national identity translates directly into the ability of the state to address collective action problems and provide public goods.

Addressing the most urgent policy challenges of our time – whether these be rising inequality in over two-thirds of the world's countries, the coronavirus pandemic or climate change – necessitates harnessing a society's trust in government and citizens' attachment to each other in order to motivate individual sacrifices in pursuit of the common good. Every successful society must actively invest in a sense of belonging that can power collective action to solve these immense challenges. Allegiance to a set of legal principles such as the constitution, important though it may be on its own terms, may not be sufficiently robust to withstand the onslaught of new forces undermining social solidarities, particularly when these pressures include social media's polarizing algorithms, the rise of China – a global superpower whose own political legitimation is tied to challenging democratic norms, and the growing gaps between skilled and unskilled labor across the global economy. In such times, the ideational glue holding together societies is a threatened resource. Citizens may disagree upon policies or even principles, but they do need shared values and attachments which can be called upon to both mitigate polarizing debates and spur on needed political action on urgent challenges such as climate change and global inequality.

State-sponsored investment in a shared and inclusive but evolving national identity is one of the most important ways of creating this

shared public culture. Most human cooperation happens within the context of the nation-state, the most widely accepted political institution of our time. Though addressing policy challenges also requires the global cooperation states remain the single most influential site of policymaking. And these states are legitimated by the nations they represent – which is why the hybrid term nation-state is often invoked in a single word. Nations are, in turn, imagined communities (Anderson 1991) – *imagined* because we will never meet most of our conationals. But they are also *communities* because the national ties are celebrated and frequently invoked to compel social sacrifice – ranging from paying taxes to wearing covid masks and occasionally, giving one's life in the protection of national borders or principles.

The Ahistorical Objections to Nationalism

Two objections are routinely made to calls for the celebration of national communities, or nationalism. The first, a typically Eurocentric historical view paints all nationalisms as equally problematic – xenophobic, discriminatory, and aggressive. This dim view of nationalism is a legacy of the catastrophic twentieth-century world wars of Europe, when nationalism was invoked to initiate one of deadliest wars of modern history. Little wonder that many Western progressives arrived at the consensus that nationalism was the "starkest political shame of the twentieth century" (Dunn 1979: 57).

Yet, this historical view is biased by the salience of World War II rather than a clear-headed assessment of nationalism's effects across space and time. Nationalism has been a force for the creation of democracy at least as often as it has been a force for its destruction. When mass nationalism first diffused across Europe, it was invoked to grasp power from monarchs in the name of self-rule by "the people." Nationalism spurred on the American and French revolutions which directly led to the establishment of nation-states that were, at least in principle, responsible for mandating governments that represented "we the people." Germany emerged when the interests of elites aligned with grassroots movements celebrating an ethno-linguistic German nation that repudiated the power of local princely states. And across former colonial countries as diverse as Morocco, India, Indonesia, and Ghana, nationalism was marshalled by indigenous elite during the twentieth century to found nation-states which freed these societies

from deeply exploitative economic and social relations (Lawrence 2013, Kohli 2020).

The invocation of nationalism has *sometimes* contributed to the creation of democratically accountable regimes, as well as a range of other normatively desirable outcomes such as the prevention of genocide, egalitarian economic growth, and the provision of greater public goods (for an overview, see Mylonas and Tudor 2021). One of nationalism's most celebrated scholars, studying nationalism across a range of contexts, understood its potential to promote the public good when he wrote: "In an age when it is so common for progressive, cosmopolitan intellectuals to insist on the near-pathological character of nationalism, its roots in fear and hatred of the Other, and its affinities with racism, it is useful to remind ourselves that nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love. The cultural products of nationalism – poetry, prose fiction, music, plastic arts – show this love very clearly in thousands of different forms and styles. On the other hand, how truly rare it is to find *analogous* nationalist products expressing fear and loathing?" (Anderson 1991: 141–142, emphasis in original). To be sure, all nationalisms, like all meaningful social categories, harness the potential for exclusion, since all groups define themselves, at least in part, relative to "out-groups." Michael Walzer writes that "admission and exclusion are at the core of communal independence. They suggest the deepest meaning of self-determination. Without them, there could not be communities of character, historically stable, ongoing associations of men and women with some special commitment to one another and some special sense of their common life" (Walzer 1983: 62).

But while all nations possess the ability to denigrate other nations, social psychologists have long argued that in-group love does not always imply out-group hate (Allport 1954, Brewer 2007). This important point bears repeating. Social psychology research has consistently found that even in situations when groups are in conflict with one another, individuals *strongly prefer* to engage in in-group cooperation rather than out-group competition (Halevy et al. 2012, Amira, Wright, and Goya-Tocchetto 2021). Moreover, it is worth remembering that a love of nation is a "symbolic public good" that is central to understanding the ability of societies to act collectively to create public goods (Miguel 2005, Straus 2015).

History also demonstrates that nationalism can *sometimes* fuel discrimination, war, and genocide. Beyond Germany's national socialism,

Serbian nationalism was used to incite systematic killings of Bosnian Muslims and the disintegration of Yugoslavia while a historically racialized Rwandan nationalism underlay the 1994 genocide that witnessed ethnic Hutus murdering their Tutsi conationals. If nationalism can lead to democracy and the creation of progressive policy reforms but also aggression and war, the question becomes how to distinguish morally progressive forms of nationalism. In other words, how to separate good from bad nationalism? Or how best to create a world in which citizens are deeply attached to their own particular homelands and still celebrate the importance of other citizens belonging to their own distinctive homelands?

A second, related objection is that nationalism is always xenophobic but can be meaningfully distinguished from its politer cousin, patriotism. Publics and academics alike are prone to make this distinction. But the proposed normative distinction between nationalism and patriotism is empirically elusive, often defined by the perspective (and nationality) of the evaluator. Patriotism and nationalism both share high degrees of positive group affect and are highly conceptually and empirically correlated (Kosterman and Feshbach 1989). Political psychology further suggests that the empirical distinction between nationalism and patriotism can be situationally primed away, especially under circumstances of threat (Li and Brewer 2004). If patriotism today can be nationalism tomorrow, or nationalism when a political entrepreneur comes to power highlighting threats, then this distinction is not empirically stable. One is left to conclude that nationalism and patriotism are two sides of the same coin – a Janus-faced phenomenon.

Nationalism is not meaningfully distinct from patriotism. And it is here to stay. This is not only because groupness is built into our human psychology. It is also because nation-states lie at the very heart of our global political order. As long as this is the case, the legitimating principles of nationalism will continue to be a usable political resource and political entrepreneurs will possess incentives to invoke nationalism. As the global revitalization of nationalism makes clear, a world without nations and nationalism is not just far from reality, it cuts against the very evolutionary need to feel part of distinct communities of worth and meaning.

Taking seriously the value of human attachment to particular communities, including nations, should lead us to nurture the positive aspects of those relations rather than rejecting those bonds outright because they

may lead to violence and aggression. An analogy may be drawn to how we value our own nuclear families. We love our own children particularly and uniquely. Filial love can also veer into violence and aggression, as Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet teaches us. This danger does not mean that we should not devote thick and particular love to our own children – the world would indeed be a poor place if we each tried to love all children equally. This is what is missing from a line of thought that suggests that if everyone matters equally, then we must therefore have identical moral obligations to everyone. What this reasoning misses, argues Kwame Anthony Appiah, is that "the fact of everybody's mattering equally from the perspective of universal morality does *not* mean that each one of us has the same obligations to everyone …. [I]t would be morally wrong *not* to favor my relatives when it comes to distributing my limited attention and time" (Appiah 2019: 25, emphasis added). This same line of thought can be applied to nations – it is not that my country is better or matters more than yours – it is that my country matters more to *me* and that I may allowed to have a particular love of it. Or in the case of the growing numbers of individuals such as myself who are immigrants or born with multiple citizenships, my multiple countries matter more to me. As one of the greatest thinkers of cosmopolitanism, Martha Nussbaum suggests paying special attention to one's own family is the only sensible way to do good.

Given the enduring nature of groupness in the human psyche, the firm dominance of the nation-state in geopolitics, we need to find ways to positively shape rather than wholly abandon national narratives. A state without a shared identity is more likely to look like modern-day Yemen than a peaceful political unit inhabited by undifferentiated global citizens. At a time when identity politics can challenge the very basis for national belonging, we urgently need to forge bridging identities that can bind citizens together. For without a clear conception of the "we," there can be no conception of the common good, much less the collective action needed to work toward that vision.

Challenges to Shaping New National Narratives

National narratives should thus be made *inclusive* of major social groups *and multiple* so as to both accommodate but still bind citizens in multicultural societies to one another. To be sure, achieving this is difficult in practice because the very thickness of national narratives

has historically come at the expense of inclusivity. The first key challenge is thus to forge national identities that help bind majorities and minorities in a manner that allows majorities to celebrate their cultural identities but avoids hierarchy. Koopmans and Orgad's argument that majorities should have normative cultural rights beyond the natural policymaking rights accorded to democratic electoral majorities is a helpful move beyond what has been a historically and normatively compelling focus on minority cultural rights (this volume). At a time when many cultural majorities may start to feel like strangers in their own country, they rightly ask multiculturalists to be more sensitive to the status anxieties of cultural majorities, particularly those whose cultural boundaries seem threatened.

But at the same time, majorities need to be careful that the normative recognition of their cultural rights avoids veering into cultural hierarchy that can be used to politically marginalize. This is particularly true because majorities are by definition armed with the political power to turn a *normative* recognition of majority rights into political hierarchy. The challenge of forging inclusive national narratives is by definition contextually specific and must therefore account not just for the indigenous versus migratory nature of majorities and minorities, but for the extent to which majority culture has historically subjugated minorities. The entirely right normative move toward a recognition of majority rights, and the right to protect majority culture, should be attentive to the fact that majority–minority differentiation, when accompanied by political power, is inherently in danger of becoming hierarchical. And in some cases, that majority–minority difference is so historically suffused with hierarchy that it would be difficult to accommodate majority culture. As Nussbaum points out that "[s]ome forms of difference have been historically inseparable from hierarchical orderings: for example, racial differences in America, gender differences almost everywhere, differences of dialect or of literary and musical taste in many parts of the world" (Nussbaum and Cohen 1996: 138).

The clearest way in which a national identity can be made inclusive is by eschewing ascriptive categories as the basis of the national narrative. This is easier to achieve for what Koopmans and Orgad this volume call migratory majorities because most countries with homeland majorities naturally smuggled in ethnic, racial or religious building blocks during moments of national founding (this volume). Indeed,

doing so often made strategic sense: as elites and publics copied and adapted narratives of national belonging to their local contexts, they found it easier to use preexisting communities of belonging as the basis of creating nations, often building what nationalism scholars have historically termed ethnic nationalisms. For this reason, more civic (principled or creedal) national narratives have been the exception rather the rule. Though empirical work has shown that these distinctions are rarely clean and that even civic forms of nationalism can smuggle in ethnic characteristics (witness America's dual racialized and creedal national narrative), the distinction remains important because ethnic national narratives are more likely to legitimate minority targeting. This is because when founding national narratives centrally celebrate such fixed identities as race, religion, and ethnicity, citizens not possessing the central fixed identity are never able to become full-fledged participants in national imaginations. Minorities and immigrants then definitionally become second-class citizens. And when political entrepreneurs can effectively harness these divisions to win elections, they will do so.

While historically, thicker narratives of a national "we" have built on linguistic, racial, and ethnic foundations, this has not always been the case. The case of India shows clearly that when political elites are strategically invested in doing so, it is eminently *possible* to forge an inclusive, nonethnic national narrative – even in cases of what Koopmans and Orgad call homeland majorities, where majorities are historically rooted in and have a special tie to a particular territory (this volume). At the same time, the case of India also underscores how the ideological glue of these inclusive narratives remain perpetually politically *fragile* and subject to fracture by politicians who can gain political currency by trumpeting an alternative, ethnic-majority-based form of nationalism.

A second way in which national narratives can be inclusive is by celebrating ordinary heroes rather than traditional elites. When national narratives centralize what Max Weber would call traditional forms of authority – be they upper castes, sultans, lords, or monarchs – deference to hierarchy is built into the fabric of the national narrative. This vertical hierarchy works at cross-purposes with the horizontal political equality promised to all citizens in a democracy. But, when instead, everyday people are the central protagonists in the national narrative, such hierarchy is more firmly repudiated. Countries like Indonesia and

India that have historically articulated nationalisms primarily based on creeds as well as the stories of everyday heroes are more resistant to an important form of democratic breakdown (Slater and Tudor 2019, Tudor and Slater 2021) than their structurally similar neighboring countries.

And inclusive national narratives can also accommodate *multiple* identities, allowing and even encouraging the hybridity of the national community that enables migratory and indigenous communities alike to see their identities as nested with nation. The ideational basis for Canadian citizenship is an important model here. As many scholars of multiculturalism are wont to do, Tamir highlights the success of Canada's multiculturalism model in her essay. She focuses on Canada's *policy* underpinnings, such as the selection of a diversity of immigrants and a controlled, skills-based immigration process. But the *ideational* underpinnings of the Canadian model are just as crucial, as Canada also actively celebrates a hyphenated-national identity that does not force immigrants to choose between multiple salient identities, especially ethnic and racial cleavages. Unlike the neighboring United States – a country with a similarly migratory majority and minorities – American national belonging is associated with race for a substantial proportion of the population, while Canadian national identity is much more cognitively disassociated from racial and ethnic identities. A comparison of Chinese immigrants in Canada and the Netherlands for example showed that the most salient out-group for Chinese-Canadians were "real Chinese" while the most salient out-group for Chinese-Dutch were the "real Dutch," indicating an implicit ethnic basis for Dutch belonging: that is keenly felt by immigrants. "In contrast to Canada, however, the hyphenated position in the Netherlands was also constructed in opposition to the 'real' Dutch, involving a claim to shared ancestry with the Dutch as *a* people. Being Dutch, unlike feeling and doing Dutch, is all but inaccessible to individuals of Chinese descent if it involves a claim to Dutch blood and ancestry." (Belanger and Verkuyten 2010).

Nation-states whose national narrative has, explicitly or implicitly, absorbed racial, religious, and ethnic identities (which is to say most nations with indigenous majorities) must thus make a particular effort to pluralize the historical underpinnings of national belonging so as to celebrate the contributions of minorities to the national story as well as develop creedal expressions of national belonging. This parallels

Modood's call for a pluralistic thickening of national narratives calling for minorities' collective identities to be added to the national collective identity "by way of an exemption, a parallel provision, inclusion of hybridity, noncoercive assimilation or by broadening, pluralising and synthesising the shared culture." Though hardly homogenous to start with, modern nation-states are increasingly heterogenous through immigration, which challenges the boundary of the national community, as well as organized indigenous movements arguing for their symbolic inclusion in the national imagination.

How Myths, Museums, Monuments and Marvel Can Thicken Inclusive National Narratives

Practically, how is this to be done? How do nation-states, especially those with long-standing indigenous majorities, forge a thick, inclusive, multiple national narrative in practice in a contemporary context? One precondition for forging an inclusive national identity is active state engagement in a thick national storytelling of *some* kind. As the psychologically defining feature of any in-group is an out-group, national narratives will always define themselves in part by who the nations are not – the Scots are not English, the Canadians are not Americans, and the Pakistanis are not Indians. But thick national narratives will move beyond the out-group to fashion identities of belonging that are particular and tractable. Just as successful political parties do not define themselves solely in opposition to governing parties but have particular policy agendas to advance when in power, successful nations will have particular narratives that represent who the nation is – and not just who the nation is not.

Multicultural states can start to pluralize the national identity in a non-zero-sum fashion, by *adding* forms of public commemoration that recognize and celebrate minority contributions to the national story. Pluralizing the national story without taking away symbolically important figures or celebrations for majorities is an excellent starting point because it need not involve a reconsideration of majorities' cultural centrality. Four domains stand out as particularly successful ways to pluralize: national myths, museums, monuments, and a Marvel-like popular culture.

National *myths*, especially as told in national school curricula, can seek to highlight the contributions of minorities. As one of the

earliest thinkers on the modern nation, Ernest Renan, argued in his 1882 essay, "Forgetfulness and I would even say historical error, are essential in the creation of a nation" (Renan 1882). This does not mean creating an inaccurate history, but rather involves the careful curation of inclusive figures that encourages the recognition of historical plurality. For example, Amartya Sen's history of India, *The Argumentative Indian*, contends that democratic thinking has distinctively Indian roots by highlighting how an inclusive India's Vedic philosophy was also practiced under India's centuries-long Islamic rule. He posited that the sixteenth century Mughal emperor Akbar created the "foundations of a non-denominational, secular state which was yet to be born in India or for that matter anywhere else" (Sen 2006). His celebration of a Muslim figure helps to authentically ground India's practice of religious tolerance, even though Sen could just as easily have chosen Akbar's grandson and eventual successor Aurangzeb, another Mughal emperor who is renowned for his lack of religious pluralism. This is how to tell an inclusive, syncretic and authentically Indian national myth.

Any modern nation-state embracing universal rights for its citizens will always struggle against the political pull of particularism, especially when founding national narratives legitimated those particularities. This is exactly why actively expanding national identities in history is an important tool for resolving conflicts between majorities and minorities – because it creates a shared basis for belonging. Family feuds between majorities and minorities over national histories does not mean that this history is meaningless. On the contrary, it is because it is so meaningful that capacious states have traditionally spent significant energy ideationally elaborating citizenship and standardizing language to enable communication between members of the imagined national community. Turning Bretons into Frenchman did not happen by accident. It required the kind of active investment in national myth-making that is carried out by all capacious states, from the French Third Republic to the Japanese Meiji restoration.

Pluralizing sites of commemoration for the nation – such as national museums – is another practical way to thicken our conception of the national story in an additive fashion. This has concretely happened in the United States, with the 2016 creation of the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the 2021 creation of a new federal holiday to celebrate the legal emancipation of former slaves.

These new sites and holidays help America's historically subjugated Black community attain greater recognition in the national imagination. The government of Singapore, a country created in 1965 out of severe ethnic and racial animosity, has taken a similarly active role through cultivating a national narrative that recognizes and accommodates its various ethnic communities in its National Museum as well as through a range of policymaking arms such as housing policy. In doing so, Indians, Malays, and Chinese ethnic communities are encouraged to avoid experiencing a tension between their ethnic and overarching national identity.

To be sure, pluralizing the national community is easier when it involves adding celebration and commemoration. It is harder when acknowledging problematic historical chapters in a country's past, which sometimes does require modifying majority symbols. Yet, the difficulties involved in evolving national identities in an inclusive direction are not always insurmountable. Doing so requires cultivating a growth mindset that acknowledges the problematic historical chapters of a country's past while not being wholly defined by such a past. Creating inclusive national identities necessitates an open-ended engagement to sites and subjects of national commemoration which acknowledges that the national story is not uniformly worth celebrating, such as Germany's ubiquitous Stolpersteine, or stumbling blocks which call attention to the last freely chosen place of work/residence of Nazi victims.

Yet as recent public discussions over public monuments – a third domain of pluralization – in Europe and the United States has illustrated, when historic national heroes *primarily* represent the forces of hierarchy or minority mistreatment, it will at least mean contextualizing and sometimes even mean removing majority symbols in the form of historical names and statues. This is as it should be, for sites of public commemoration are not endless: public squares and streets, and statues represent spaces of *celebration*. Who or what is given pride of place in such spaces matters for how nations become symbolically defined. Sites of national commemoration and public spheres are never neutral. Our reaction to them hinges on who is commemorated by whom and for what reason – and they are anyway always being reevaluated by the standards of a new era.

Acknowledging that majorities have cultural rights does not mean majorities can wholly reject minority movements to alter public

monuments if they can mount a reasonable public case that these monuments inherently marginalize their communities. But this charge simply misunderstands the always-political role of history and commemoration. Britain's public face changed appreciably during the English Reformation, when many shrines and statues associated with Catholicism were destroyed. The same was true for celebrations of monarchs after the French Revolution, communist leaders after the fall of the Soviet Union, and Saddam Hussein after the US-led invasion of Iraq.

To be sure, these were all violent revolutions which created major ruptures with the past. But any look at the recent historical past within democracies suggests that yesterday's radicals can be absorbed into changing national stories in countries with both migratory and indigenous majorities. The movement to remove statues of slave traders from British public squares, once a fringe movement, now enjoys support of a popular majority, including a plurality of Conservative voters.[2] Whereas an electoral majority did not support the removal of Confederate statues from public spaces in the United States in 2017, an electoral majority in 2020 does support this change.[3] The Confederate flag, a symbol of a system of government that denigrated Black Americans, flew over state capitols until recently, when broad majority support developed for removing it. Martin Luther King Jr was regarded as an utter radical in his time, yet today has been embraced by every major political movement in the United States.

Discussions over why national monuments symbolizing majorities may need to change will always be controversial and critics will argue that changing national monuments erases history. Responding to the social movements that seek to alter the pride of place given to newly controversial figures in the public squares of Britain's cities, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson tweeted in June 2020: "We cannot now try to edit or censor our past. We cannot pretend to have a different history. The statues in our cities and towns were put up by previous generations. They had different perspectives, different understandings of the past. To tear them down would be to lie about our history, and impoverish the education of generations to come" (Johnson 2020).

But statues in public squares inherently venerate. History books could teach the British slave trade and pivotal figures in it without honoring slave traders with prominent statues in public squares. And

they could teach the towering leadership of Winston Churchill while acknowledging that his wartime cabinet's policies directly contributed to the Bengal famine of 1943 that killed three million people. Teaching these less savory aspects of British history is an important element of ideationally grounding equal citizenship in increasingly multiethnic societies. Through democratic discussions after independence, India pulled down statues of Queen Victoria, relegating them to dusty corners of colleges or little-used parks with the understanding that such figures no longer deserved to be celebrated in the central spaces of a nation that did not wish to define itself as an imperial subject. As Maya Jasanoff says, "taking down a statue isn't erasing history; it's revising cultural priorities" (Jasanoff 2020).

And finally, at a time when museums and monuments are less salient in the public imagination, state attention as to how to pluralize an inclusive national narrative must move beyond the high culture of museums and monuments to popular forms of nationalism. State sponsored public art is an important form for engaging in this narrative. Ta-Nehisi Coates, a Black American intellectual, has done this through his writing of the first Black-centered comic book and then Marvel superhero movie, Black Panther. His engagement in popular culture helped to elevate the role of Black Americans to a position of admiration and esteem. As Coates said in a recent podcast, "[When] I think about the 2018 movie Black Panther and I think about seeing white kids dress up as the Black Panther. This sounds small. This sounds really, really small …. The symbols actually matter because they communicate something about the imagination, and in the imagination is where all of the policies happen. All the policy happens within there" (Coates 2021).

Squaring the realities of a human need for group belonging, the dominance of the modern nation-state, and the impossibility of a neutral public space requires above all the fashioning of an inclusive, multiple and thick national narrative with space for and celebration of minorities. How we best adapt national history, along with statues, museums, festivals, public spaces, and spaces of public commemoration as the very fabric of the nation changes will be an ongoing struggle, as Tamir's tortellini-of-hospitality example aptly illustrates. Yet as American historian Jill Lepore notes, "Writing national history creates plenty of problems. But not writing national history creates more problems, and these problems are worse" (Lepore 2019).

Notes

1 All data has been taken from Centre for the Study of Developing Societies 2019 National Election Survey.
2 https://redfieldandwiltonstrategies.com/majority-of-brits-support-removal-of-statues-of-slave-traders-through-legal-means/
3 https://thehill.com/homenews/news/503226-poll-majority-supports-removing-confederate-statues-from-public-places

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