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The Idea of a Swiss Nation

A Critique of Will Kymlicka's Account of Multination States

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Canada

Le nationalisme comporte une politique et une sociologie; l'espèce de patriotisme qui est le mien ne comporte ni l'une, ni l'autre. Patriote est même trop fort : il faudrait pouvoir dire paysan, car il y a pays dans paysan; paysan n'engage que la terre et il y a « pères » dans patrie, il y a histoire dans patrie, il y a passé dans patrie : pays n'engage que présent.

Charles Ferdinand Ramuz, *Besoin de grandeur*, 1937.

Switzerland . . . reminds us how contingent and limited our certainties are. The words we use are terrible oversimplifications. What is a language? What is a state? What is a people? What is an economy? Sometimes we are inclined to the view that we know the answers. When that happens, we ought to think about Switzerland for a moment. . . . It gives us an alternative way of seeing ourselves.

Jonathan Steinberg, *Why Switzerland?*, 1996.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years we have witnessed a considerable increase of interest in the issues of multiculturalism. In the aftermath of the fall of Communist regimes in Europe, multiculturalism has become one of the most discussed issues in liberal political theory. The main question goes: How, if ever, should the state react in front of the demands coming from groups of its citizens who claim differential rights on the grounds of their 'cultural distinctiveness'?

One of the most influential authors of the past decade who has tried to assess a theoretical model of defense of 'cultural rights' from a liberal prospective is Will Kymlicka. His numerous studies have been object of many critiques, appraisals, symposia and conferences, so that taking account of his theory seems unavoidable in any contemporary discussion on multiculturalism. Indeed, Kymlicka appears even to believe that his model of multiculturalism represents the *only* systematic account of minority rights that is yet available within *liberal* theory. He assumes that other liberal thinkers – e.g. Raz, Taylor, Habermas – 'have sketched some concepts or principles which they think should govern liberal approaches to ethnocultural demands' but their views constitute, at the end of the day, 'more outlines than systematic theories' (Kymlicka 1997: 86, n. 1)[1].

This essay stems from my critical reading of Kymlicka's theory. On the one hand, I have found his use of terms like 'culture' and 'nation' (that he considers synonyms) rather ambiguous and misleading from a liberal viewpoint. This is not a minor issue insofar as Kymlicka's very aim has been to provide a liberal theory of defense of cultural rights. On the other hand, I was unsatisfied with the way in which he relied on Switzerland as an example of a 'multination state'. The evidence he provided for justifying that claim seemed neither sufficient nor appropriate to me.

In a response to some of his critics Kymlicka has argued that the 'only way to defend [his] approach . . . is not to pretend that it gives everyone everything they want, but rather to

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[1] Another important attempt to develop a systematic account of multiculturalism is the work of Jeff Spinner (1994). But Kymlicka claims that Spinner's account 'is largely complementary to mine [i.e. Kymlicka's], in that he relies on some of the basic distinctions . . . and on some of the same interpretations of liberal principles' (Ibid.).

show that alternative approaches have even greater costs in terms of our moral ideals' (Ibid. 72). Thus the 'lack of alternatives' is seen as the best way of convincing someone to accept Kymlicka's theory.

It is not my intention here to provide an alternative model of dealing with 'cultural differences'. My aims are much more modest. First, I want to provide a critical assessment of Kymlicka's theory by pointing out some of its conceptual ambiguities. Second, I want to discuss the case of Switzerland by defending the thesis that it does not constitute a multinational state.

Although it is tempting to present Switzerland as a successful 'model' of multiculturalism, I will not follow that route. The circumstances in which Swiss state and nation have arisen may be too peculiar in order to allow for any major attempt of 'exporting' its experience elsewhere. On the other hand, the successes of the Swiss in terms of cultural coexistence have already been object of many studies and most of their authors, if not all, have attempted to see if the Swiss pattern of multiculturalism could be useful in other political and cultural settings. The very title of Karl Deutsch's (1976) study – 'Switzerland as a Paradigmatic Case of Political Integration' – can serve as an example.[2]

So instead of elaborating a distinct model of multiculturalism I shall rather show how Kymlicka's model – in which Switzerland does play a role, and perhaps even in a very crucial way so – draws wrong conclusions from the Swiss case and misinterprets its multicultural experience. Nevertheless, at the end of the essay I will try to summarize some of the findings that, I believe, could serve if not as a model then at least as suggestions of some interesting lessons that we can draw from the Swiss experience.

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[2] For a critique see, for instance, Hug and Sciarini (1995).

Chapter 1. KYMLICKA

Introduction

The works of Will Kymlicka are considered among the most influential within the contemporary theoretical accounts of 'multiculturalism'. Kymlicka's approach is original insofar as he attempts to discuss issues related to cultural plurality from a 'liberal' philosophical standpoint. Thus by placing himself decidedly on the liberal side of the 'liberal-communitarian debate' of the 1980s and 1990s, Kymlicka tries to defend the 'minority rights' of certain societal groups and, in doing so, criticizes 'from within' some major contemporary liberals accused either of paying no attention to cultural differences or of providing inadequate and often counterproductive solutions to multicultural dilemmas.

My aim is to show that Kymlicka's claims are, ultimately, theoretically ambiguous, and that his model of multiculturalism – which aims at being applied in numerous political contexts – rests upon a very questionable empirical basis. Moreover, I am particularly critical of Kymlicka's account of 'multination' states. This will be evident in my discussion of the Swiss example.

In this chapter I will present (1) the liberal theoretical (normative) framework within which Kymlicka operates; (2) the practical political proposals that he draws from his theory (the idea of polyethnic and multination states); (3) a critique of Kymlicka's theoretical and empirical assertions and particularly the way in which his argument shifts from liberalism to nationalism; and (4) a discussion of the flawed contrast between 'single-nation' and 'multination' states, and on the importance of Switzerland in Kymlicka's theory. I hope that, by the time I reach my conclusion, I will have shown the interesting path through which Kymlicka, starting as a defender of liberalism, gradually becomes an advocate of nationalism. In my analysis I will start by examining Kymlicka's first book, *Liberalism, Community and Culture* (1989), and then focus on his subsequent major works, *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995) and *Finding Our Way* (1998), as well as on some other relevant texts.

1.1. Kymlicka's liberalism: the idea of a 'context of choice'

Kymlicka is interested in defending liberalism in two ways: (a) as a 'normative political philosophy' (i.e. 'a set of moral arguments about the justification of political actions and institutions'), and (b) 'in terms of what liberals *can* say' in response to some objections coming from communitarians, socialists and feminists (1989: 9, 10; emphasis in original).

Any liberal theory places great importance on the value of the individual. Kymlicka is no exception, and he states that the 'essential interest' of every individual is in leading a 'good life' for which we necessitate two preconditions: 'to lead our life from the inside, in accordance with our beliefs about what gives value to life', and to 'be free to question those beliefs, to examine them in the light of whatever information and examples and arguments our culture can provide' (Ibid. 12, 13).

I believe that Kymlicka's liberalism is best illustrated in his response to communitarian critiques where he does not rely on what other liberals have said in the past but what they *can* say.[3] So the communitarian critique, that the liberal view of the self is empty ('emptiness argument'), fails because '[f]reedom of choice… isn't pursued for its own sake, but as a precondition for pursuing those projects and tasks that *are* valued for their own sake (Ibid. 48; emphasis in original). He then moves to dismiss Sandel's (1984) critique that the liberal view of the self violates our 'self perception' according to which the self *is not* prior to its ends. But Kymlicka claims that the question of perception is misleading because '[w]hat is central to the liberal view is not that we can *perceive* a self prior to its ends, but that we understand ourselves to be prior to our ends, *in the sense that no end or goal is exempt from possible re-examination*' (1989: 52; emphases in original). Thirdly, communitarians see the moral reasoning as self-discovery embedded in the question 'Who am I?' whereas for liberals the relevant question here is 'What should I be, what sort of life should I lead?' (Ibid. 53). The difference is crucial insofar as, in the first version, the communal aims and values are constitutive of our identity whereas the second gives more liberty to the individual. Fourthly, the communitarians stress the importance of social confirmation of our individual

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[3] The so-called 'communitarian' criticism of liberalism has been advanced by some authors (e.g. MacIntyre 1981, Walzer 1983, Sandel 1984, Taylor 1992, Bell 1993) since the early 1980s and the early 1990s mainly as a response to the new influential 'wave' of liberal theories in the 1970s (e.g. Rawls 1971, Dworkin 1977). It is within that debate that Kymlicka sets his critiques.

judgments: 'we cannot believe in our judgments unless someone else confirms the judgment for us' (Ibid. 61). Kymlicka relies here on Bernard Williams (1985: 170) who said that this is a social or psychological, not philosophical, question 'what forms of socialization and public discourse help foster confidence in moral judgments' (Kymlicka 1989: 62). The problem here, Kymlicka argues, is that 'confidence in moral judgments' is fostered 'behind the backs of people', by giving them 'causes rather than reasons'. But this 'is incompatible with the liberal vision of an undistorted, transparent community' (Ibid. 62-63).

Taking into consideration these assessments we can affirm that, at this point, Kymlicka can be seen as a firm advocate of liberalism. However, he is very attentive to mark himself from traditional liberals. In particular, where he does part from contemporary liberals (e.g. Rawls, Dworkin) is in his discussion of 'liberalism in culturally plural societies'. He thinks that it is extremely important to distinguish between two sorts of communities: political and cultural. In a political community individuals exercise the rights and responsibilities entailed by the framework of justice. Cultural community, on the other hand, is where individuals form and revise their aims and ambitions. (Ibid. 135). The communities may not coincide in 'multicultural' or 'culturally plural' states – that is, in 'the vast majority of the world's states' (Ibid.). Thus one of the challenges for the liberal thought is to reconcile the two intuitions that stem from the existence of these two communities: on the one hand 'people are owed respect as citizens', on the other hand 'people are owed respect as members of cultural communities' (Ibid. 151).

Now liberals have traditionally cherished citizenship but have been opposed to granting special rights to 'cultural minorities'. On the one hand, this opposition stems from the traditional liberal uneasiness to make the ascriptive differences of individuals the basis for any differential rights – an aspect of liberalism already emphasized by John Stuart Mill in *The Subjection of Women* (1988 [1869]) On the other hand, this must be also related to the double commitment of liberals: *individualism* (i.e. the individual is seen as the ultimate unit of moral worth, as 'self-originating sources of valid claims' [Rawls 1980: 543]) and *egalitarianism* (i.e. every individual has equal moral status) (Kymlicka 1989:140).

What Kymlicka tries to show is that these two liberal commitments, far from preventing 'minority rights', are consistent with them. So when Rawls talks of self-respect as

a precondition of a rational plan of life, he should also ask where do the *beliefs about value* (that are said to give meaning and purpose to our lives) come from. Indeed, Rawls does say that we choose among the range of options and that such a range of options cannot be chosen, we examine 'definite ideals and forms of life that have been developed and tested by innumerable individuals, sometimes for generations' (Rawls 1971: 563-564, cited in Kymlicka 1989: 164). Kymlicka concludes that this is important because it shows that 'the range of options is determined by our *cultural heritage* (Ibid. 165). Moreover, the *processes* by which one can understand the significance of options are *linguistic* and *historical* (Ibid.). It is through language and history, through the examination of our 'cultural structure' that we become aware of the options, which is a 'precondition of making intelligent judgments about how to lead our lives' (Ibid.). For all these reasons Kymlicka argues that cultural membership should be included in Rawls's *primary goods*.[4] It belongs to Rawlsian 'social conditions' and, as a consequence, it would be included by the parties in the 'original position' ('the parties in the original position would wish to avoid at almost any cost the social conditions that undermine self-respect' (Rawls 1971: 440, cited in Kymlicka 1989: 166)).

To sum up, the ultimate importance of the 'context of choice' is twofold. On the one hand, it is *meaning-providing*, insofar as it offers a framework in which we internalize the 'beliefs about value' from our culture. On the other hand, it is *option-providing*[5] because it makes available options that correspond to our beliefs about value, it provides 'meaningful options' for us and '[aides] our ability to judge for ourselves the value of our life-plans' (Ibid. 166).

However, Kymlicka is quick to warn us that his idea of culture does not refer to the *character* of historical community but to the cultural community itself that 'continues to exist even when its members are free to modify the character of the culture, should they find its traditional ways of life no longer worth while' (Ibid. 167). For example, the character of French-Canadian culture, once embedded in Catholicism, was very much transformed in the 1960s but the existence of their 'cultural community' was never really in question (Ibid.).

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[4] However, as Carens (1997: 42) carefully notes, it is not so clear whether secure access to one's culture should count, following Rawls's theory, as a 'basic right' that must be equally distributed, or as a right subjected to the 'difference principle'.

[5] I borrow these labels from Patten (1999b: 396).

Some critics have argued that, although cultural membership does provide a meaningful context of choice, it does not necessarily follow that people are bound, in a constitutive way, to any *particular* cultural community.[6] To such critiques Kymlicka responds that there is many evidence that shows that culture is tremendously important for one's sense of identity, it is a 'source of emotional security and personal strength' (Ibid, 175). Thus it cannot be dismissed or 'changed' so easily.[7]

> People are bound, in an important way, to their own cultural community. . . . Someone's upbringing isn't something that can just be erased; it is, and will remain, a constitutive part of *who that person is*. .
>
> . . Cultural membership affects our very sense of personal identity and capacity. (Ibid.; emphasis added)

This passage, especially the part that I have put in italics, does not necessarily fit well into liberalism that Kymlicka defended at the beginning (cf. Ibid. 53), but I shall return to this problem in the third section of this chapter, when I will present a critique of Kymlicka's notion of culture.

Thus, Kymlicka claims, contemporary liberals are mistaken in their refusal of minority rights, at least for two reasons. First, they misrepresent the liberal tradition itself that, before the World War II, assumed that 'human freedom was tied to the existence, and consciousness, of a common cultural membership' (Ibid. 208). J. S. Mill, J. Dewey, T. H. Green and L. T. House are cited here as examples. Second, contemporary liberals have failed to recognize that the concern for 'treating individuals as equals' is not necessarily harmed by specific group protection because '[g]overnment that gives special status to members of a distinct cultural community may still be treating them *as individuals*; the provision of such rights just reflects a different view about how to treat them as individuals and as equals' (Ibid. 211; emphasis in original).

Moreover, Kymlicka's defense of minority rights is also presented as both theoretically and empirically superior to the communitarian one. Walzer (1983), for instance, thinks that liberal recognition of cultural membership is too 'thin' and does not pay sufficient

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[6] Many authors have expressed such critique. See, for instance, Waldron (1992), Festenstein (1998: 369), Patten (1999a).

[7] Parekh (1997: 56) labels this aspect of Kymlicka's view on culture as 'community-building' as opposed to the 'autonomy-building' aspect that I discussed earlier on. The author further argues that for Kymlicka the latter aspect is far more important then the former and that, as a result, Kymlicka unjustifiably holds the culture which encourages autonomy and choice as 'superior' to other (less liberal) forms of culture. On Kymlicka's theoretical flaws related to the imposition of liberalism on other moral views see also Forst (1997).

attention to the 'historical values' of a particular culture as embodied in 'shared meanings and practices' (Kymlicka 1989: 220). He emphasizes the 'social understanding of historical communities' but, at the same time, provides no account of why cultural membership matters to us, or what measures can protect cultural membership in plural societies. Others, like Sandel (1984) and MacIntyre (1981), affirm that people share an identification with a 'form of life' which consists of 'particular roles and projects', not chosen, but simply recognized in one's social context (Ibid. 238-239). Kymlicka thinks that this is wrong because 'people who share cultural membership may share no ends or projects at all' (Ibid. 233). He takes the example of the French-Canadians who moved from an overwhelmingly Catholic conception of life to much less traditional and 'liberal' modes of life, without loosing the sense of belonging to the French-Canadian culture. So, Kymlicka concludes, only *circumstances* are unchosen, not our ends or roles. Finally, Kymlicka focuses on Charles Taylor who wants to include people's 'understanding of the good' in his defense of membership in the historical community (Kymlicka 1989: 241). For Taylor the question is not about individual equality but about equalizing well-being between historical communities. In other words, Taylor wants to defend special measures to protect shared projects of members of a historical community without claiming that such projects are unchosen. Kymlicka's response is equally virulent.

> Groups have no claims to well-being independently of their members – groups just aren't the right sort of beings to have moral status. They don't feel pain or pleasure. It is individual, sentient beings whose lives go better or worse, who suffer or flourish, and so it is their welfare that is the subject-matter of morality. It seems peculiar to suppose that individuals can legitimately be sacrificed to further the 'health' of something that is incapable of ever suffering or flourishing in a sense that raises claims of justice. (Ibid. 241-242)

So, once again, only treating *individuals* as equals can really protect minority rights. This, along with the idea of 'context of choice' that provides 'beliefs about value' and 'meaningful options', as well as a sense of identity to individuals, are the main contributions of Will Kymlicka to the debate over minority rights.

1.2. Kymlicka's multiculturalism: polyethnic and multination states

Liberalism, Community and Culture (1989) set the bases for a more detailed, and empirically more relevant, defense of group rights. This was brought about in Kymlicka's second important book *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995). Here Kymlicka shapes out the kinds of multiculturalism he is interested in: (1) pluralism that results from the presence of *immigrant groups* in a given society; (2) pluralism that stems from the presence of several *distinct nations* within a single state. The first sort of multiculturalism gives rise to 'polyethnic states' and 'polyethnic rights'. The second originates 'multination states' and 'self-government rights'. Of course, states can be both polyethnic and multination, like Canada (Kymlicka 1995: 12).

Kymlicka uses the term 'culture' as synonymous to 'a nation' or 'a people'. It is defined in the following terms:

> [A]n intergenerational community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and history. (Ibid. 18)

So a state is said to be multicultural 'if its members either belong to different nations (a multination state), or have emigrated from different nations (a polyethnic state), and *if this fact is an important aspect of personal identity and political life* ' (Ibid.; emphasis added).

This distinction, Kymlicka notes, has been 'surprisingly neglected amongst political theorists'. As the only exceptions he cites Michael Walzer (1982) and Nathan Glazer (1983) who both made distinctions between 'Old World' and 'New World' diversity. For Kymlicka, however, this is a 'dangerous over-simplification' because national minorities are not present only in the Old World and, on the other hand, immigration is not a phenomenon that has occurred only in the New World (Kymlicka 1995: 20-21).

Now, while keeping these distinctions in mind, such an interpretation of multiculturalism entails at least three distinctive forms of 'group-differentiated rights': self-government rights, polyethnic rights, and special representation rights (Ibid. 26-33).

Self-government rights are usually demanded by national minorities in multination states. The most appropriate way of accommodating such demands is to draw the boundaries of sub-state units in a way that minority nations obtain a majority status in a given sub-state entity. This will enable them to exercise control over important resources needed for the

protection and flourishing of their distinctive culture. Federal arrangements are often seen as the most useful to attain such a goal.

At the same time Kymlicka warns us not to conflate such federal arrangements – that he labels 'multination federalism' – with 'territorial federalism' that exist in countries without national minorities as a form of administrative decentralization (e.g. Germany) or as a result of 'historical accidents of colonization' (e.g. Australia). In other words, '[t]here is no inherent connection between federalism and cultural diversity' (Ibid. 28). Moreover, multination federalism typically embodies some asymmetrical federal arrangements whereas territorial federalism is usually based on symmetrical power-relationship between federal state and sub-state units.

It is important to bear these distinctions in mind because in some contexts territorial federalism was used as a deliberate means for *not* accommodating the self-government rights of national minorities (e.g. the United States' policies towards indigenous populations) and in some other countries, despite certain multination federalist arrangements, people still fail to accept the idea of 'asymmetrical federalism'. Here Kymlicka has in mind Canadian federation, and the discussion of that particular aspect of federalism is central to his *Finding Our Way* (1989).

Polyethnic rights concern primarily immigrant groups who demand some sort of recognition of their 'cultural distinctiveness'. For example, they could consist of school curricula that reflect not only history and values of the main-stream society but that also include some features of immigrant cultures, they could accommodate cultural practices of immigrants (e.g. associations, magazines and festivals) and provide public funding for some distinct religious practices (e.g. animal slaughtering, the wear of the chador, special diet in the military). Kymlicka, however, stresses that 'polyethnic rights are usually intended to promote integration into larger society, not self-government'. In other words, they 'are intended to help ethnic groups and religious minorities express their cultural particularity and pride without it hampering their success in the economic and political institutions of the dominant society' (Kymlicka 1995: 31).

Finally, *special representation rights* – e.g. a form of quota representation in the legislature, government or supreme tribunals – are sometimes invoked as a means of

correcting a 'systematic disadvantage' that prevents members of minority groups (both national and ethnic, but also of other marginalized groups) from acceding in a fair way to state institutions. In other contexts they are seen as a 'corollary of self-government'. Such measures, however, cannot but be seen as temporary and Kymlicka is cautious to defend them because of important theoretical flaws and difficulties encountered in their practical application ('[i]f "no amount of thought or sympathy, no matter how careful or honest, can jump the barriers of experience"[8], then how can anyone represent anyone else?'; Ibid. 140).

1.3. Critique: Kymlicka's path from liberalism to nationalism

In this section I will try to show how Kymlicka's starting point – liberalism – takes him gradually (1) to embrace the importance of 'culture' as the precondition of attaining individual freedom and equality; (2) it then influences his account of 'multiculturalism' seen as a defense of 'minority rights'; (3) from such multiculturalism he particularly draws the idea of a 'multination state'; and this (4) produces, as a result, a defense of nationalism. Although liberalism and nationalism may not necessarily be contradictory per se (cf. Tamir 1995 [1993], Miller 1995) I think that the *particular sort of nationalism* Kymlicka advances creates, indeed, a considerable (and arguably irresolvable) tension with the ideals of liberalism that he claims to defend.

In what follows I will try to show that this particular kind of nationalism is based on *linguistic determinism* that Kymlicka never completely spells out although it seem central to his theory. Having made clear this point, we can more easily recognize important theoretical flaws in Kymlicka's reasoning and point out his shortcomings.

The problem of definition

Most authors who discussed nationhood had to tackle the question of definition (e.g. Gellner 1983, Anderson 1983, Smith 1991, Hobsbawm 1992 [1990], Tamir 1995 [1993], Miller 1995). My purpose here is not to provide a complete account of different definitions but rather to show that Kymlicka is no exception and that his definitions of 'nation', 'people' and 'culture' are full of ambiguities, misleading terms, and conceptual shortcomings. This is not a

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[8] The quote is from Anne Phillips (1992: 85-89).

minor point because the way in which we define social phenomena influences in a crucial way our political and/or institutional proposals that, ultimately, shape people's lives and practices.

In *Liberalism, Community and Culture* Kymlicka affirms that culture should be defined in terms of existence of a

> *viable community* of individuals with a *shared heritage* (language, history, *etc.*). (Kymlicka 1989: 168; emphases added)

Many questions arise from such a definition. If a given community is not 'viable' does people's membership in it cease to be a 'primary good'? What, exactly, does 'shared heritage' mean? What other features, besides 'language' and 'history', belong to this definition, as implied by the 'etc.' hint?

Let me try to respond to the last two questions and I will then move to the first one. At this point we should simply observe that, as it seems, 'shared heritage' is not to be conflated with the *character* of the community because, in that case, 'changes in the norms, values, and their attendant institutions in one's community . . . would amount to loss of one's culture' (Ibid. 166). As a matter of fact, Kymlicka is very attentive to underline that, for his purposes, culture does not refer to the character of a historical community but to the 'cultural community, or cultural structure, itself' (Ibid. 166-167).

> On this view, the cultural community continues to exist even when its members are free to modify the character of the culture, should they find its traditional ways of life no longer worth while. (Ibid. 167)

It is difficult to see, then, what other feature of shared heritage, besides language, would make Kymlicka say that a given cultural community 'continues to exist' even when its members change its character (cf. Tomasi 1995: 592). 'History' seems to me at the same time too wide and too narrow a term that, as such, it is of little help in understanding the definition and meaning of 'culture' in Kymlicka's theory. This is evident in the very example that Kymlicka provides to justify his assertions. French-speaking Canadians do, indeed, share a common language and 'a history'. But they also share 'a history' with other non-francophone Canadians and with immigrants who integrated into French-speaking society. At the same time, it is equally true that the francophones from Manitoba share a *different* history from the francophones from, say, Montreal. Thus 'history' may help us in understanding the meaning

of 'culture' only if we bear in mind that what Kymlicka has really meant here is a *particular kind of history*, namely *history of a given linguistic group*. Kymlicka's 'history' is a derivative element of his idea – which is, however, never clearly spelled out – that *linguistic group* provides a meaningful 'context of choice' to individuals. Therefore, history cannot be placed at the same footing with language in his definition of culture.

In his 1995 work Kymlicka provides a more explicit definition of 'culture':

an intergenerational community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and history. (Kymlicka 1995: 18)

Three new elements arise from this definition: (a) intergenerational; (b) institutional; and (c) territorial. The first element does not seem of great importance to me insofar as no one's intuition, I believe, when reading Kymlicka's arguments for a defense of group-specific rights, was that they concerned communities whose members all belonged to the same generation. The point is, of course, welcome for a better understanding of Kymlicka's definition of culture but, for that sake, he could have also added 'intergender' or 'interclass' or 'without regard to physical condition' etc. without changing our initial intuitions. Of course, it is more likely that Kymlicka wanted to stress here that culture is transmitted from generation to generation – for instance via the family – contrary to some other forms of culture. But, again, the suggestion is not particularly helpful because it would be extremely hard to identify specific features and patterns of intergenerational transmission – apart from language –valid for the *entire* cultural community that Kymlicka has in mind.

The second and third element, however, are much more important. *Institutions* are, indeed, an essential feature of any human community. They provide organizational structure through which the needs and interests of a community can be carried out. Walker (1997: 234), for instance, has even argued that '[o]ne cannot have cultural difference without institutional differentiation'. In the case of linguistic groups, institutions can assure the survival of language if a more powerful majority language threatens it. Nevertheless, 'institutions' is a very vague term. Is the international organization of Francophonie an institution? Are all French-speaking people in the world members of the same 'culture' because an institution, the Francophonie, protects their interests? I do not think that Kymlicka would respond affirmatively to these questions. As a matter of fact, elsewhere he states that by

'institutionally complete' society he means a society that contains 'a full range of social, educational, economic, and political institutions, encompassing both public and private life' (Kymlicka 1995: 78). But this raises another problem. If institutional completeness is seen as an indispensable aspect of culture as a 'context of choice', then it would constitute a *conservative argument* for supporting the already existing, viable and institutionally embedded cultures and not the endangered ones: '[W]here existing institutional strength is imperiled, it should be protected; so Catalans count but not, say, the Cornish' (Festenstein 1998: 370). So I think there is a certain tension and ambiguity in the requirement for institutional embodiment that make things rather confusing and cannot be particularly helpful in identifying the 'culture' Kymlicka wants to defend.

The notion of *territory*, however, adds a crucial momentum to Kymlicka's definition of culture. Culture is really 'a culture' if, and only if, a given linguistic group shares a given 'territory or homeland'. *Within that territory* such a linguistic group must attain a certain degree of 'institutional completeness' in order to be able to exercise a full or limited self-government and, thus, count as 'culture' in Kymlicka's terms. Note, however, that what Kymlicka *does not say*, but what is implicit in his argument, is that on the portion of territory under control of a given linguistic group such a group must form a *majority*, in political and/or economic terms.[9] This point is fundamental. As a matter of fact, *only in that case* can a linguistic group provide the range of 'meaningful options' for its members. This is evident when Kymlicka criticizes 'sea-to-sea bilingualism' promoted by the Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau in the early 1970s. He rightly points out that such a move was noble because it wanted to make the French-speaking Canadians feel at home all over Canada. Hence they would have a 'shared territory or homeland' (i.e. Canada) and would be 'more or less institutionally complete' (i.e. through federal institutions). But Kymlicka rapidly dismisses this idea because such a policy cannot 'reverse the reality that it is only in Quebec and parts of New Brunswick and Ontario that francophones can truly live and work within a francophone societal culture'. In other Canadian provinces 'there is no way for francophones to participate meaningfully in the political, economic, or academic life . . . except in English'

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[9] Notice that the notion of 'majority' usually corresponds to *numerical* majority. But this shall not always be the case. Consider, for example, South Africa under apartheid or 19th century Belgium.

17.

(Kymlicka 1998: 133). He also observes that '[t]he evidence from countries like Belgium and Switzerland suggests a *clear trend towards increased territorialization of language communities'* (Ibid. 134; emphasis added).

The importance of territory in Kymlicka's theory has even led one observer to affirm that Kymlicka 'leans towards supporting the ethnic hegemony of national minorities' and that 'he supports practices and policies which are likely to lead to cultural homogenization and a resulting unfairness to many cultural groups' (Walker 1997: 226). Although I think that Walker's observation is somewhat exaggerated and that it does not necessarily apply to entities like Quebec, Catalonia or Flanders, it does point to some potential shortcomings of Kymlicka's argument.

To sum up, I think that at this point we can, in the light of my previous discussion, present a reframed version of Kymlicka's definition of 'culture'.

Culture is a linguistic group occupying a given territory where it forms a political and/or economic majority capable of providing the context of choice to its members.

Such a reformulated definition of 'culture' bears some similarity with the concept of '*societal* culture' that Kymlicka puts forward in Chapter 5 of *Multicultural Citizenship*.

> The sort of culture that I will focus on . . . is a *societal* culture – that is, a culture which provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres. These cultures tend to be territorially concentrated, and based on a shared language. (Kymlicka 1995: 76; emphasis in original)

Nevertheless, I believe that my reformulation of what Kymlicka means by 'culture' is sharper and more explicit and, as such, can be more useful in discussing his works.

As a matter of fact, one should ask whether the context of choice really depends, first and foremost, on one's linguistic group. I believe that such a view is too simplistic for at least two reasons. First, it underestimates people's ability to learn foreign languages and fully participate in linguistic contexts different from one's own. It may not always be an easy process but, like Laitin (1998: 233), 'I find it hard to believe that people placed outside their cultures will remain mute for a long time, unable to sort options, and make moral choices'. Second, it overestimates the ability of language to provide the main, if not only, context of

meaningful options. Some societies may rely on a shared language but still be deeply divided along 'racial' (e.g. the United States), 'ethnic' (i.e. former Yugoslavia), religious (e.g. Northern Ireland), class (e.g. traditional England) or other lines. In such societies it is simply untrue to assume that people's 'context of choice' derives from their broader linguistic community. Perhaps one could argue that these cases are exceptions rather than the norm but in that case we would need a closer comparative examination that would assess the proportion of societies in which Kymlicka's implicit claim that language constitutes *the* context of choice really holds.

I do not intend to convince the reader with these brief sketches that language does not constitute the main conceptual structure in which we choose our goals[10] but I do believe that a more work needs to be done in order to show that it is really the case.

From culture to nation

Having formulated a new Kymlickanian definition of culture we can now take a further crucial step: replace the term 'culture' with 'nation'. Kymlicka is very clear at this point when he says that we can take 'culture' and 'nation' and 'people' as synonyms.[11] The same can be said of societal cultures that 'are almost invariably national cultures' (Ibid. 80). It is also evident in his definition of nations:

> [C]omplete and functioning societies, with their own historic territories, languages, institutions, and cultures. (Kymlicka 1998: 130)

Here the use of term 'culture' within the definition of nation is, of course, rhetorical and redundant. The same can be said of another one:

> [T]hese groups are nations in the sociological sense. They are historical societies, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and societal culture. (Ibid. 132)

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[10] However, it is possible that the clarification of Kymlicka's idea of culture can also provide ground for a *stronger* defense of rights of national (that is, linguistic) minorities. Patten (1999b: 403-407), for instance, finds that there is 'an important gap in Kymlicka's attempt to reconcile liberal egalitarianism with cultural rights', and he then tries to fill such a gap through a discussion of concepts of 'viable linguistic community' and 'linguistic capability'. See also Pool (1991) who has proposed an elegant mathematical model for choosing an efficient and fair language policy in a plurilingual polity.

[11] For now I should leave aside the term 'people' and discuss it later on.

The passage from 'culture' to 'nation' does not seem so evident and should be carefully examined (cf. Young 1997: 51-53; Walker 1997; Festenstein 1998: 369-373). Why is it so important to Kymlicka? Why does he replace the language of multiculturalism with the one of nationhood? As a matter of fact, I do not think that it is so straightforward to assume that speaking of 'culturally plural' and of 'multination' states means describing the same reality (Kymlicka 1989: 135). What we must bear in mind here is that usage of the term 'nation' has important *practical consequences*, often distinct from the ones related to the language of 'multiculturalism'.

In fact, Kymlicka himself is very eager to explain why the language of nationhood is important to him. We may identify three main reasons: (a) strategic; (b) 'sociological'; (c) designation-based; and (d) identity-based.

First, Kymlicka thinks that there are some very clear *strategic* reasons that justify the use of the language of nationhood by national minorities. In his words:

> The fact is that the language of nationalism serves a number of valuable functions for these groups [i.e. Québécois and Aboriginals]. It provides them with some standing (and, possibly, legal rights) under international law; nations and peoples have claims to self-government under international law that mere political subunits lack. . . . [It] adds a historical dimension to such groups' claims[.] . . . [It] serves to differentiate the claims of national minorities from those of other groups. . . . [It] equalize[s] the bargaining power between a majority and national minorities. (Kymlicka 1998: 131-132)

All of these strategic reasons seem understandable to me and I do not think that they necessitate further comment.

Second, Kymlicka notes that there is a *sociological* reason for adopting the discourse of nationhood.

> The fact is that these groups are nations *in the sociological sense*. They are historical societies, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and societal culture. (Ibid. 132; emphasis added)

Here Kymlicka clearly turns again to his (controversial) definition of culture that I have discussed earlier. Hence I shall not insist again on this point but shall simply observe that, since for Kymlicka 'culture' is a synonym of 'nation', the 'sociological' aspect is useful in *defining* the nation and, as such, is unhelpful in determining the *reasons* why it is important to

adopt the language of nationhood. Therefore, it should be kept apart from the other three motivations for embracing the nationalist discourse.

Third, there is what I would call a *designation-based* argument for adopting the language of nationhood. So Kymlicka draws our attention to the fact that

> it is worth remembering that the *power to name itself* is one of the most significant powers sought by any group in society, and that respecting this power is seen as a crucial test of respect for the group as a whole. (Ibid.; emphasis added)

He rightly observes that, for instance, Aboriginal peoples in Canada have adopted the label 'First Nations' and that we should not make them abandon it 'simply because the term "nation" makes some non-Aboriginals nervous' (1998: 132). The same could be said of Quebecers who call their provincial parliament 'Assemblée nationale' or of 'Padanians' in Italy who have their (unrecognized) 'Parlamento nazionale'.

Finally, the language of nationhood is important because of an *identity-based* argument – that is, nationality is seen as an essential, and possibly *the* most essential, element of individual identity. I think that this aspect is less obvious in Kymlicka's theory and needs further elaboration. In fact, it is not placed in the same section with previous arguments and we must look for it elsewhere.

Kymlicka affirms that 'nationalists *typically* insist that the nation is the *primary locus* of political loyalty and allegiance' (Ibid. 127; emphases added). It is not so clear, however, whether Kymlicka himself shares this opinion.

On the one hand, he restates the arguments of Margalit and Raz (1990) who have claimed that 'national identity is particularly suited to serving as the "primary foci of identification", because it is based on belonging, not accomplishment' (Kymlicka 1995: 89). This also means that 'people's self-respect is bound up with the esteem in which their national group is held' (Ibid.). Authors like Raz (1994), Tamir (1995 [1993]), Taylor (1992) and Walzer (1990) move along similar lines. Finally, Kymlicka suspects that 'the causes of this attachment lie deep in the human condition, tied up with the way humans as cultural creatures need to make sense of their world, and that a full explanation would involve aspects of psychology, sociology, linguistics, the philosophy of mind, and even neurology' (Kymlicka 1995: 90; cf. Laponce 1984).

On the other hand, he criticizes the communitarian account of culture (cf. the section 1.3.) and says that the view he is defending,

> is quite different . . . from the communitarian one. The difference is partly a matter of scope. Communitarians typically talk about our attachment to subnational groups . . . rather than to the larger society which encompasses these subgroups. But this difference in scope reflects an even deeper divergence. Communitarians are looking for groups which are defined by a shared conception of the good. . . . The liberal view I am defending insists that people can stand back and assess moral values and traditional ways of life, and should be given not only the legal right to do so, but also the social conditions which enhance this capacity[.] . . . In short, liberal theorists have generally, if implicitly, accepted that cultures or nations are basic units of liberal political theories. (Kymlicka 1995: 92-93)

Therefore, Kymlicka does not clearly spell out that national identity is the 'primary focus of identification'. Perhaps he does not think that it *should* necessarily be so, for this would cause considerable friction with the liberal view of the self. Rather, he claims that he is only dealing with '*general trends*' because 'most people, most of the time, have a deep bond to their own culture' (Ibid. 90; emphasis added). So he assumes that this bond 'does *seem* to be *a fact*' and he sees 'no reason to regret it' (Ibid.; emphases added). Moreover, a similar view is, arguably, endorsed by Rawls who claims that the bonds to one culture are 'normally too strong to be given up' (cited in Ibid.).

But if one's bonds to one's culture/nation are 'typically' seen by nationalists as primary form of allegiance, if this constitutes a 'general trend' which 'does seem to be a fact', than Kymlicka must provide an empirical proof that justifies such assertions. Otherwise, as Laitin (1998: 234) puts it in his critique of Hardin (1995), he would be simply using here the 'tribal norms of rhetoricians' that would reflect the bias of 'heuristic of availability'[12]. I could detect at least two places in which Kymlicka relies on survey data in order to justify his claims. He cites 'a recent poll' according to which '91 per cent of the residents of Puerto Rico think of themselves as Puerto Ricans first, and Americans second' (Kymlicka 1995: 190).

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[12] 'For example, people biased by this heuristic consider air travel to be more dangerous than automobile travel because they can recall the horrific consequences of just one air disaster more readily than they can recall many scattered and isolated automobile accidents. The antidote [to this] is *statistics*.' Laitin (1998: 224; emphasis added)

This is supposed to show that Puerto Ricans 'do see themselves as Americans, but only because this does not require abandoning their *prior identity* as a distinct Spanish-speaking people with their own separate political community' (Ibid.; emphasis added). He also mentions, albeit in a different context, other 'recent polls' that show that 'over half of Quebecers attach *priority in their self-identify* [*sic*] to their status as Quebec citizens, compared with 15 to 30 per cent who attach priority to Canadian citizenship' (Kymlicka 1998: 171; emphasis added).

To sum up, I believe that there is a considerable tension between normative and empirical reasons for claiming that culture/nation – even if understood in 'thin' terms that leave freedom to individuals to revise their ends – represents the 'primary locus' of people's identity. Kymlicka is somewhat ambiguous about endorsing this claim from a normative point of view but he unquestionably does so on the basis of certain empirical evidence. On the other hand, he never actually refutes the point normatively[13] so that we can reasonably assume that he considers this aspect as valid in providing account of why the language of nationhood is important in his theory.

General critique of Kymlicka's idea of nation

Having shown that for Kymlicka, 'culture' ultimately corresponds to 'language group' and to 'nation', and that there are various reasons for using the language of nationhood, the task of assessing the theoretical and practical consequences of Kymlicka's defense of minority rights becomes less confusing. My aim here is to briefly focus on what I believe constitute the most troubling shortcoming of this finding.

My question is the following: can a liberal convincingly endorse the idea that *one given community* (any kind of community) is the *most* constitutive part of one's identity, that it tells us 'who that person is'?[14] I do not believe so. Let me recall one important element of liberalism that Kymlicka puts forward in *Liberalism, Community and Culture*. As I have

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[13] Of course, as I have mentioned earlier, he does refute the 'thicker' communitarian version of culture and the claim that some of our ends are 'constitutive' ends (Kymlicka 1995: 91).

[14] Cf. the following passage: 'People are bound, in an important way, to their own cultural community. . . . Someone's upbringing isn't something that can just be erased; it is, and will remain, a constitutive part of *who that person is*. . . . Cultural membership affects our very sense of personal identity and capacity' (Kymlicka 1989: 175; emphasis added).

observed in the first section of this chapter Kymlicka has distinguished liberalism from communitarianism by stating, among other things, that for a liberal the question 'Who am I?' is irrelevant and that one should rather ask 'What should I be, what sort of life should I lead?' (Kymlicka 1989: 53). 'No final understanding is attainable of what I am' – this axiom that Bromwich (1995: 99) ascribes to Mill and possibly to Wittgenstein captures well the liberal stand on the issue, namely, the simple recognition that we cannot aspire to gain the final knowledge of what constitutes individual identity. But this is exactly the kind of intuition that Kymlicka violates, albeit not explicitly, in his endorsement of the idea that *culture* (i.e. societal culture, nation, linguistic community) constitutes the *primary* focus of individual identity. This is even more so when we recall that his definition of culture is a very *narrow* one and does not necessarily reflect the variety of people's identifications and cultural needs (cf. Young 1997, Gianni 1998). As Buchanan (1998) observed, there is nothing special about nations *as such* that would allow a liberal to endorse that view. I am well aware that the core claim in Kymlicka's theory is the importance of some kind of context in which liberal individual could choose his or her goals and life orientations but I do not think that he succeeds in conciliating this deep intuition with liberal values once he begins to define the *kind* of context he is interesting in.

What is equally disturbing in the works of a liberal like Kymlicka is that his unit of political analysis ends up being *groups* (that is, nations) rather than *individuals*. According to David Laitin this reveals an 'astonishingly illiberal' approach and shows that,

> Kymlicka is going well beyond even Romantics, who, while insisting that moral thought is based on experience from social life, recognized – and even celebrated – the human capacity for imagination, or for authenticity, allowing us as individuals to stand outside our cultures. The possibility for Romantic irony – seeing one's commitments from the outside, and in a detached manner – also rests upon moral thinking that stands beyond one's societal culture. . . . Because Kymlicka all too often writes about groups as if they had wishes, he elides the extraordinary bitterness that develops within groups as leaders who purport to speak in the name of these groups make claims upon the state. (Laitin 1998: 232, 235)

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Laitin here clearly wants to point out the importance of inter-group dynamics that should make us cautious about endorsing general statements about alleged group's wishes, provided that we desire to remain within the liberal conceptual framework.

In this section, I have tried to formulate a critique of Kymlicka's theory of multiculturalism by pointing out the disconcerting path through which Kymlicka passes from liberalism to nationalism. Problems arise once he starts to define the kind of culture that he wants to defend. The main finding is that he ends up using the terms of 'culture' and 'nation' interchangeably. On the one hand, since the principal feature that defines those terms is language, I do not tend to agree with authors (e.g. Walker 1997, Piper 2000) who have argued that Kymlicka's position is 'ethnocentric' (although I do not exclude that in certain context that might be the case). On the other hand, the fact that he equates the terms 'culture', 'language group' and 'nation' makes me disapprove of his position. It is one thing to claim that individuals need some sort of 'context' that provides them with a range of 'meaningful options'. It is distinct though, to argue that such a context is provided by a linguistically defined 'nation' – a term that bears specific political connotations (which Kymlicka labels 'strategic reasons'). It is even more the case when one argues that such a nation represents the most constitutive part of one's identity. Such an essentialist view of the person is in deep contradiction with the liberal values that Kymlicka had set out to defend.

In the next section, I shall move a step further and discuss Kymlicka's account of 'multination states' that he draws from his theoretical premises. The whole idea of his theoretical model was to provide a kind of model that would help us to defend minority rights in 'plural' countries. Since one source of such 'plurality' is the presence of distinct nations within the same polity, it is just as appropriate to focus on empirical cases where Kymlicka's theory could be applied. I will argue that Kymlicka's contrast between 'single-nation' and 'multination' state is flawed and highly ambiguous and, as such, cannot be particularly helpful in providing the basis for a defense of minority rights. I will show this by focusing on one particular example that bears, I claim, an essential significance in Kymlicka's work – Switzerland. Kymlicka considers this country as 'the most multinational' and it is highly instrumental in his defense of 'multination' states.

In contrast to Kymlicka I will try to defend the following points: (1) the example of Switzerland as 'multination' state is indispensable to Kymlicka's theory; (2) Switzerland forms a single nation from a historical, political and sociological point of view; (3) even according to Kymlicka's own definition it would be very hard to prove that Switzerland is a 'multination' state; (4) if I show that Switzerland is not a 'multination' state then, according to point (1), the theory of Kymlicka can hardly hold together at all; (5) there are important normative reasons for rejecting Kymlicka's theory and, rather, draw appropriate lessons from the Swiss political and cultural experience.

I will discuss the point (1) in the following, last section of my Chapter on Kymlicka. Points (2) to (5) will be elaborated in the Chapter 2 of this essay, wholly dedicated to the Swiss example.

1.4. The flawed contrast between single-nation and multination states. Why is Switzerland crucial to Kymlicka's theory?

Switzerland is mentioned in three different contexts: (a) as an example of *multination state*; (b) as an example of a *successful* multination state, that was able to truly accommodate different linguistic groups (or 'nations', according to Kymlicka) (Kymlicka 1995: 22); and (c) as an example of a *stable* multination state, that was capable of safeguarding unity in diversity. Although these three points often overlap, I think that it is useful to keep them separate for analytic purposes.

First, Switzerland is one of Kymlicka's favorite examples of multination states. But let me first stress once again that the empirical aspect of his work plays an important role in his theory. His work is not simply 'political theory' or 'political philosophy' as it is in the case of the theories of other liberal thinkers such as Rawls or Dworkin. Rather, it is meant to use theoretical and philosophical tools in order to provide a better insight into contemporary political issues and, eventually, help finding the solutions. The very title of Kymlicka's 1998 book ('Finding Our Way'), as well as its content, clearly shows this intention of his. Thus an analysis of uses (and misuses) of empirical examples cannot be omitted from the discussion of Kymlicka's work.

One important aspect of Kymlicka's theory lies in his critique of post-World War II liberals who developed their theories with a tacit assumption that they were to be applied in contexts of 'nation-states', 'where the political community is co-terminous with one and only one cultural community' (Kymlicka 1989: 177). In other words, they wrote with the 'assumption of cultural homogeneity' (Ibid. 178). As I noted in my presentation of Kymlicka's theory, he challenges this assumption and develops a theory that takes into consideration 'culturally plural states' – a term he mostly uses in his 1989 book but that becomes more explicitly 'multination states' in his subsequent works. So the main contrast he wants to draw is between 'nation-state' (i.e., culturally homogenous society) and 'multination state' (i.e., culturally plural society).

Now the ultimate theoretical relevance of such a contrast is not so clear. On the one hand, Kymlicka affirms that '[m]ost countries today are culturally diverse' and that '[i]n very few countries can the citizens be said to share the same language, or belong to the same ethnonational group' (Kymlicka 1995: 1). As a matter of fact, Kymlicka notes, there are *only three countries* that are 'commonly cited as . . . examples of countries which are more or less culturally homogeneous' – Iceland and the Koreas (Ibid. 197 n. 1). Thus one can hardly see why the insistence on this contrast is so central to Kymlicka's theory. He had better say that contemporary liberal theories are all flawed because they all suppose the existence of nation-states while there are practically none on this planet. But, of course, Kymlicka does not think so: he insists on this contrast because he believes that it is highly relevant to his theory. Such a contrast helps him to defend particular theoretical and practical claims.

So when he discusses the two kinds of federalisms (i.e., territorial and asymmetric) he explicitly points out that the first can work in a 'single nation-state like the United States and Germany' but not in a 'multination state like Switzerland or Canada' (Kymlicka 1998: 128). (Note, *en passant*, that when he introduces in his 1995 book the discussion on multination states the United States is the *first* example that jumps upon his mind: 'Many Western states are multinational. For example, there are a number of national minorities in the United States...' [Kymlicka 1995: 11]. This point is also clear when he argues that native Hawaiians and Puerto Ricans have special political status that immigrant groups do not have; [Ibid. 66]).

The ambiguous contrast between nation-states and multination states is useful to Kymlicka in many other occasions as well. For instance, when he discusses the 'sources of social unity' ('[t]he sort of unity that we can achieve [in a multination federation] is very different from the kind of unity that single nation-state often possess'; [Kymlicka 1998: 171]), or when he spells out where does 'shared identity' could come from ('[i]n single-nation states, shared identity typically derives from communality of language, culture, and maybe even religion' [Kymlicka 1995: 173-4]). Not surprisingly, Kymlicka seems somewhat reluctant to provide examples of 'single-nation states'. In fact, if he had done it he would have had major difficulties to prove that such states are truly nation-states in the narrow way in which uses this term (i.e. 'culturally homogeneous' or having a 'communality of language, culture, and maybe even religion'). How can the United States be a nation-state if Kymlicka himself often speaks of its 'national minorities' (e.g. Kymlicka 1995: 28-29)? How can Germany be a nation-state with its Danish-speaking minority, two *culturally* distinct parts (the East and the West)[15], at least four different religions (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim)?

But what is even more interesting is to look at his examples of *multi*nation states. These examples are virtually missing, in an explicit way, in his early work (Kymlicka 1989). He does mention Belgium and Switzerland as 'multicultural countries' but at this point he seems somewhat reluctant to claim that 'multicultural' equates 'multinational'.[16] This would become much more evident in his 1995 book (Kymlicka 1995: 18) where 'culture' and 'nation' are explicitly used as synonyms and it is very much implicit throughout the 1998 book. Belgium and Switzerland are seen there as examples of multination states 'because they were formed by more or less voluntary federation of two or more European cultures [*sic*]'

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[15] Of course, here everything depends on the definition of culture. I have already shown that Kymlicka, after offering us a distinct definition of 'culture' seen as a synonym of 'nation', uses this term again and again in a redundant and mostly rhetorical way. He states, for instance, that '[contemporary liberal theorists] do not recognize or discuss the existence of states that are multinational, with a diversity of societal cultures, languages, and national groups' (Kymlicka 1995: 128). So, if we strictly follow his definition, once that he says 'communality of language' he does not need to add 'and of culture'. Perhaps he has in mind another definition of culture? Thus until it is better clarified, the term 'culture' could also have other meanings, as in mine claim that today's Germany has two distinct cultures, Eastern and Western. Arguably 'someone leaving East Germany for West Germany in 1950 would not be breaking the ties of language and culture' (Ibid. 87) but I doubt that the same can be said of the 1990s. See, for example, Yoder (1999), Westle (1999).

[16] I shall later explain why these two terms should not be conflated and why I believe that Switzerland is, indeed a multicultural country (which, however, does not exclude the existence of a single Swiss culture) but not a multinational one.

(Ibid. 13). Other Western states are multinational 'because they have forcibly incorporated indigenous populations (e.g. Finland; New Zealand)' (Ibid. 13). Elsewhere he states that,

> [o]ther Western states [along with Canada] containing powerful minority nationalisms include Belgium (with the Flemish), Switzerland (with the French [sic] and the Italians [sic]), and Spain (with the Catalans and Basques). (Kymlicka 1998: 127)

To sum up this point, Belgium, Canada and Switzerland are the favorite Kymlicka's examples of multination states together with a much more rare appearance of Spain, Finland, Russia, India, Malaysia, Nigeria and South Africa (cf. Ibid. 135).

Second, Switzerland is used as an example of country that has *successfully* managed to accommodate linguistic and 'cultural' diversity. This is often put in relation to federalism. Thus Switzerland is taken, together with Canada, as the main example of a country that made use of federalist structure in order to accommodate 'national minorities' or, as it is made clearer in the case of Canada, of the '*linguistically distinct* national minority' (Ibid. 2; emphasis added). There are no reasons to think that Kymlicka's view on the *kind* of national minority in Switzerland is any different (cf. the above cited quote, Ibid. 127). Here Belgium falls aside because it is only now 'in the process of adopting federal arrangements' (Ibid. 135).[17]

Third, Switzerland is taken as an example of a *stable* multination state. This is especially evident in some chapters of Kymlicka's 1995 and 1998 books where he discusses the prospects for stability in multination states (Ch. 9 'The Ties that Bind, 1995; Ch. 13 'The Bonds of Social Unity', 1998). He states:

> There are important examples of stable multination states, such as Switzerland, which show that there is no necessary reason why the members of a national minority cannot have both a strong national consciousness and a strong sense of patriotism and commitment to the larger polity. . . . As I noted in Chapter 2 ['The Politics of Multiculturalism'], this sense of patriotism is so strong that the Swiss are, in some ways, a single 'people'[18], as well as being a federation of peoples. (Kymlicka 1995: 187)

Although Kymlicka rhetorically relies on 'important examples of stable multination states' he provides only one additional example: the Unites States. But note that elsewhere (Kymlicka

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[17] For other examples see Kymlicka (1995: 202, 207 n.5; 1998: 128, 135).

[18] Note that Kymlicka refrains here from using the term 'nation', which implies that, after all, 'people' and 'nation' are not really synonymous in his account of multiculturalism.

1998: 128) he referred to the United States as a 'single-nation state' and that, generally speaking, he uses this example to show the strong allegiance of Americans of various *immigrant* origins to their state rather than the allegiance of American 'national minorities'. He makes clear this point when he affirms that 'shared values' and 'inspiring history' cannot be a 'model of belonging' that would 'accommodate national minorities like the Puerto Ricans or Navaho' (Kymlicka 1995: 189-190). He then goes on to refer to a 'recent poll' according to which '91 per cent of the residents of Puerto Rico think of themselves as Puerto Ricans first, and Americans second'. At the end of Chapter 9 (1995) Kymlicka affirms,

> As I noted earlier, some multination states do have this strong sense of mutual identification [that can help a society stay together]. This is obviously true of the Swiss. Canadians also have a reasonably strong sense of solidarity. (Ibid. 191)

Here Kymlicka's reference to 'some multination states' is clearly rhetoric because Switzerland is the *only* multination state that he had mentioned, if we put aside the ambiguous case of the United States. On the other hand, the claim that 'Canadians also have a reasonably strong sense of solidarity' is at odds with what he had affirmed just a couple of pages earlier, namely that '[t]he sense of solidarity needed to promote the public good and to tackle urgent issues is lacking. This seems increasingly true, for example, in Belgium and Canada' (Ibid. 186). Besides, if Canada were not in a situation of 'constitutional impasse' – that is, constitutional instability and ambiguousness – in relation to its national identifications Kymlicka would not have dedicated a whole (1998) book to that issue.

Therefore, I hope to have shown that the *only credible example* Kymlicka was able to come up with in order to assume that even a 'multination state' – where social bonds are, by definition, 'inherently weak' (Kymlicka 1998: 180) – can achieve an indispensable degree of stability, is Switzerland. So if I am able to show that *Switzerland is not a multination state* even in Kymlicka's interpretation of that term, then his theory will lack a crucial empirical corroboration. Moreover, if I am further able to show that Switzerland has achieved stability at least partly because of the fact that it was constructed as nation-state and *not* as a multination state, then Kymlicka's theory will become even weaker.

Conclusion

By emphasizing the importance of membership to cultural, i.e. national, communities, Will Kymlicka consciously parts from the mainstream contemporary liberal theory. Liberalism, according to one of its interpreters (Kukathas 1998), should not be concerned with questions of cultural recognition. This can be an issue of *political* debate but should not be conflated with *philosophy* or with political theory.

Kymlicka's attempt to come to terms, as a liberal, with the very evident fact that individuals can attain the liberal ideal of free choice only if they live in a context that truly provides the possibility to choose, is praiseworthy. However, he is ultimately obliged to *define* the sort of community capable of providing a meaningful 'context of choice'. It is at this point that, I believe, he fails because through endorsement of the discourse of linguistically determined nationhood he can no longer claim with credibility that he still belongs to the liberal matrix.[19] As a matter of fact, if we are concerned with the value of individual liberty and autonomy, no particular community to which one belongs can be placed on a permanently higher footing in respect to the others. If that were the case, than such a community, especially if institutionally recognized, would end up being imposed on individuals as the primary source of one's identity. Rather, the striving for continuous promotion of multiple identities and allegiances should be an issue of major concern for a liberal.

For this reason it is disturbing to see that Kymlicka corroborates his theory in a country like Switzerland whose citizens, like in many other countries – but perhaps more than in other countries –, display a very high degree of distinct political, cultural, social and other identities that rarely overlap. Language differences certainly arise to one of those identities, perhaps even the most visible one nowadays. However, it seems very arbitrary to consider Switzerland as a country of three or four distinct nations, especially if one is aware, as is the case with Kymlicka, that the language of nationhood has important political consequences.

In Chapter 2 of this essay I shall discuss the case of Switzerland and defend the thesis that it is best described as nation-state. I start with (1) *historical* account of nation-building process in Switzerland; I focus then on (2) *sociological* evidence that shall show that even in

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[19] This will especially emphasize this point in my discussion of Switzerland. Cf. pp. 85-85, *infra*.

Kymlicka's vision of the nation the Swiss cannot be said to belong to distinct linguistic nations; finally (3) I provide some arguments that point out some *normative* reasons for regretting a possible transformation of Switzerland into a 'multination' state.

Chapter 2. SWITZERLAND

Introduction

Grasping the sense of collective identity is not an easy task. The interaction between the individual and the group is a complex and malleable phenomenon. Individual identities are shaped in a continuous relationship with other individuals, with groups of individuals and, finally, in a general framework of ideas, behaviors and practices of a given society.

Therefore, it is no wonder that the attempts to define a specific type of collective identity – the *national* identity – have encountered considerable difficulties. National identity is, by definition, the sentiment of belonging to one nation. But what is the nation? This question has been unavoidable for anyone who wanted to come to terms with the national phenomenon.

I shall not engage here in an extensive overview of different definitions.[20] Since my focus is on Kymlicka, I shall rather follow his account of nationhood. Nevertheless, let me briefly state that probably the easiest way to discuss the definitions of nation is through the objective/subjective dichotomy. Thus nation is a group of individuals who share some 'objective' characteristics: e.g. territory, institutions, language, history etc. However, the list of such features cannot be seen as exclusive or as complete (cf. Tamir 1995 [1993]). On the other hand, one easy understands that all these 'objective' elements do not suffice if the individuals lack a 'subjective' feeling of belonging to a given nation. Only in that case a 'nation' gives rise to collective national identity.

For Anthony Smith (1991: 14) the 'fundamental features' of national identity are: (a) an historic territory, or homeland; (b) common myths and historical memories; (c) a common,

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[20] For a concise presentation of various definitions and interpretations of nationhood see, for instance, Hutchinson and Smith (1994).

mass public culture; (d) common legal rights and duties for all members; and (e) a common economy with territorial mobility for members. David Miller (1995: 27), on the other hand, stresses a bit more the 'subjective' part of national identity and list his five elements that 'serve to distinguish nationality from other collective identities'. Hence nation is a community (i) constituted by shared beliefs and mutual commitment; (ii) extended in history; (iii) active in character; (iv) connected to a particular territory; and (v) marked off from other communities by its distinct public culture.

While keeping these distinctions in mind, in my discussion of the Swiss case I shall particularly emphasize the claim that nations are historical constructs. They cannot be discussed apart from the development of the modern state, the idea of popular sovereignty or the industrial revolution. Scholars like Ernest Gellner (1983) or Eric Hobsbawm (1992 [1990]) have made a significant contribution to the study of nations and nationalism through their emphasis that it is state that create nations and not vice versa. The claim that nations have also a 'navel' – that is, ethnic origins (cf. Smith 1986) – is not considered as relevant in their analyses (Gellner and Smith 1996).

Having made these initial considerations in what follows I will defend the thesis that Switzerland does not constitute a multination state but, rather, a nation-state. I start by presenting a historical account of the construction of the Swiss nation and of the creation of specific institutions that provided 'objective' elements for such a nation-building process. If, as I argued above, nations are created categories then it is proper to look at the ways in which a construction took place. Second, I offer a sociological evidence of 'subjective' features of Swiss national identity. Here I will above all try to see if Kymlicka's view that it is a 'general trend' that nations constitute the primary form of identity holds in the case of Switzerland, especially in relation to his claim that Switzerland constitutes a multination state. Finally, in my last section I discuss the normative part of the puzzle. In particular, I shall ask why is it still desirable to consider Switzerland as one nation and not as a multination state and what negative consequences the latter solution might bring about. At the end I hope to show that Kymlicka's model of multiculturalism is inadequate for tackling the issues of 'cultural pluralism' and that a closer and more attentive insight into the Swiss experience could provide better insights into 'multicultural dilemmas' and bear better chances of success.

2.1 Historical evidence

The late 18th century was a turning point in the European and World's history. This assertion is especially true for the realm of politics. The shift of the source of state sovereignty from divine and personal to popular and impersonal radically changed the vision of state and of politics. Hence the two major political upheavals of that time, American (1776) and French (1789) revolutions, placed the 'people' and the 'nation' at the core of the politics. 'We the people of the United States' and 'la nation française' became the *mots d'ordre* of that time.

Therefore, I find it appropriate to begin the discussion of the Swiss nationhood at the end of the 18th century, preceded by a short presentation of the origins of the Swiss Confederacy. My aim here is to provide an account of the first political developments that brought about the rise and implementation of the idea of a Swiss nation. For that reason I shall particularly focus on the events that took place since 1798, when the Helvetic Republic was created, leading up to the creation of the federal Constitution in 1848. In that year the modern, federative Swiss state came about and, since Kymlicka has often argued that 'multinational countries' like Switzerland were formed by the 'more or less voluntary federation of two or three European cultures' (1995: 13), it is of utmost importance to check out if such an assessment really holds in the case of Switzerland.

My second aim is to show that the discussion over the existence of one Swiss nationality is not new and that it was well present in the intellectual circles of the 19th and the early 20th century. Just like Kymlicka today, many intellectuals of that time refuted the existence of the Swiss nation and were criticized by other thinkers who, on the contrary, defended such an idea. Particularly interesting is the reliance of some of the latter intellectuals on the Alpine landscape which was seen as an 'objective' feature of common Swiss nationality. This point will be more illustrative than analytical but I believe that it is important to point out that by many accounts Kymlicka's uninformed and aprioristic view on states like Switzerland represent a true *saut en arrière* insofar as it brings us back to the debates that took place over a century ago.

Every nation-building process consists of some common symbols, discourses and practices meant to provide an 'objective' basis for fostering the 'subjective' national feelings. Thus my third aim is to provide an account of certain features of the Swiss nation-building

that belong to this category. They notably include national holidays, public ceremonies, national songs and anthems and so forth. This shall help us better understand the ways in which the common Swiss nationality has been promoted all over the country.

About the origins

At the time of political and social upheavals in North America and France the states of the Swiss Confederacy were still living under their own *anciens régimes*. The origins of this rather loose union of sovereign states can be traced back to the late 13th-century alliance of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden – three 'Forest Cantons'[21] situated in the (present-day) central Switzerland – who had signed an agreement of mutual defense in order to resist military threats from the Habsburg rulers.[22] The alliance was more and more enlarged as other neighboring cantons gradually joined in: Lucerne (1332), Zurich (1351), Glarus (1352), Zug (1352), Bern (1353), St. Gallen (1451), Appenzell (1452), Schaffhausen (1459) etc.

The Swiss Confederacy was remarkable in safeguarding the independence of its constituent units. This was partially achieved through the *politics of neutrality*, formally recognized by European powers at the Treaty of Westphalia, in 1648. Although they were able to avoid foreign invasion and general warfare, the cantons engaged in four major 'civil' wars (1529, 1531, 1656, 1712) (cf. Linder 1994: 7). All these wars had religious character, reflecting the Catholic/Protestant cleavage in the Confederacy.

Helvetic Republic (1798-1803)

The most significant change in political terms occurred in 1798, with the invasion and eventual occupation of Switzerland by Napoleon's army. The various *anciens régimes* of Swiss cantons were abolished and the Helvetic Republic (*République helvétique*), 'one and indivisible' (*une et indivisible*), was proclaimed. It was to become one of the 'sister

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[21] The term 'canton', however, comes into use only in 1798. Generally speaking, it is not easy to describe the exact political nature of such entities in Medieval Europe. Steinberg (1996: 19) speaks of 'Alpine valley communities'. Perry Anderson (1974; cf. Steinberg 1996: 19) has pointed out that, since feudalism had no clearly articulated legislative or executive functions, 'justice' is perhaps the best way to describe the type of power in such communities. Thus the term 'sovereign states' seems inadequate. In the following pages I shall maintain the label 'cantons'.

[22] On recent historical controversies over what is 'myth' and what 'reality' in the Swiss historiography in relation to the 'founding date' of Confederacy, see Steinberg (1996: 14-26).

republics', or 'cushion states', that Napoleon was setting up east of France. The institutional pattern of the Helvetic Republic was similar to the French Republic – that is, highly centralized. The only concession that the French Emperor-to-be accorded to the Swiss, in recognition of their peculiar political history, was the collegiate system of government (the 'Directorate') and the subdivision in purely administrative units that, nevertheless, mostly corresponded to the pre-existing cantons of the Confederacy.

The importance of the Helvetic Republic in the Swiss history cannot be underestimated. For the first time the inhabitants of Switzerland came to belong to the same institutional setting, were entitled to the same rights and duties, especially the power to vote and participate in the political process. In other words, the existence of a unified state – in the French revolutionary tradition – provided for the first time 'objective' features for creation of a common Swiss identity (cf. Frei 1964).

The significance of the Helvetic Republic in the process of creation of the Swiss national identity is threefold (Guzzi-Heeb 1998: 131): (a) the republican institutional setting offered the basic conditions for the construction of a modern nation, particularly through formation of the modern political space and the modern state; (b) an 'objective' national identity would arose in such a political turmoil out of certain national peculiarities (*nationale Besonderheiten*); and (c) the Helvetic Republic would foster a 'subjective' national identity through an unprecedented mobilization of the people I will consider each of these aspects in turn.

First, the creation of a modern state provided a new political context in Switzerland. This can be seen as a precondition for the formation of national identity. Such conditions did not exist in the previous political system of Swiss Confederacy. According to Guzzi-Heeb,

> No nation could arise in the political system of the Swiss *ancien régime* because no political-legal framework was available, not even at the level of the single cantons. . . . The political, but also economic, social and cultural space was very fragmented. The political unit for the solution of major problems of the population in this mosaic-like structure was primarily the commune.[23] (Ibid. 132; my translation).

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[23] 'Im politischen System des schweizerischen Ancien régime konnte eine Nation schon deshalb nicht einstehen, weil kein einheitlicher politisch-rechtlicher Raum vorhanden war – auch nicht auf der Ebene der einzelnen

So neither does it make sense to claim that in 1798 Switzerland was 'one nation' nor that it was composed of different 'cantonal nations', and even much less so of *linguistic* nations. The segmentation of political allegiances and of identities was so huge that it prevents us from making such a statement. Until 1798 the primary political, social and economic life of ordinary people had been their commune and, to a lesser extent, the canton. From 1798 onwards these two political units would not, of course, cease to be important but they would have to compete with the creation of a broader Swiss (or Helvetic) identity.

Moreover, the Helvetic Republic set the bases not only for the promotion of a common Swiss (or Helvetic) identity but also for the consolidation of identities at the *cantonal level*. The two processes went parallel. Some commentators even describe this as double process of 'nation-building' in Switzerland (cf. Kreis 1995: 77).

Second, the new state provided the basis for the development of certain 'objective' features of national identity. This is especially evident in three fields: economical, religious, and political. Guzzi-Heeb illustrates this point with the example of Southern Switzerland, where a variety of Italophone dialects was spoken. Since the early 16th century that region was under the dominion of various Swiss cantons. It was a 'subject territory' (*Untertanengebiet*). The arrival of Napoleon's troops and the subsequent erase of ancient privileges entailed political emancipation of these territories. The local population was finally 'free' (*liberi*). But what was to be done with that freedom? Two distinct political factions developed. The one was pushing towards annexation into the newly formed Cisalpine Republic (which roughly corresponded to the present-day Northern Italy), a country with which the Italophones from formerly Swiss 'subject territories' shared geographic proximity and a more or less akin dialects. The other faction, however, wanted to remain a part of the new Helvetic Republic. The first faction called itself 'free and Cisalpines' (*liberi e cisalpini*) and the second one 'free and Swiss' (*liberi e svizzeri*). Some members of the 'free and Cisalpines' faction attempted to impose *manu militari* their view through a coup d'état in Lugano, on 15 February 1798, by seizing the representatives of Unterwalden (German-speaking canton in central Switzerland, in that time charged with the administration of the

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Kantone nicht. . . . Der politische, aber auch der wirtschaftliche, soziale wie kulturelle Raum war stark segmentiert. Der politische Rahmen zur Lösung der Wichtigsten Probleme der Bevölkerung in diesem mosaikartigen Gefüge war primär die Gemeinde.'

Lugano district). But a 'huge and surprisingly unfriendly crowd' soon gathered in the main piazza of the town and the 'free and Cisalpines' faction was forced to release the hostages and retreat (Steinberg 1996 [1976]: 11-12. After the defeat,

> two lawyers . . . led a group of armed men to the representatives from Unterwalden . . . and demanded
> 'Swiss liberty': 'We demand our sacred rights; we desire Swiss liberty; finally, after centuries of
> subjection, we are mature to govern ourselves.' . . . In a delirium of popular celebration, the people
> planted a liberty tree with a William Tell hat on it and proclaimed themselves 'Liberi e Svizzeri'.
> During the next few days all other subject territories in the area followed the Lugano example and
> declared themselves 'Free and Swiss'. (Steinberg 1996 [1976]: 12)

From this passage we can realize that language or 'culture' played hardly any role at all in the decision of Italophone populations of the Southern Switzerland to remain within the broader state framework of the Helvetic Republic, most of which was German- and French-speaking. If it had been so, they would have certainly embraced the annexation into the Cisalpine Republic. What were the reasons for such a decision?

From the *economic* point of view, the territory of the present-day Canton Ticino had always played an important role in the commerce exchanges between the Northern and Southern Europe. The notion of 'frontier' did not have the contemporary meaning. But with the creation of the Cisalpine and Helvetic Republics, two strong, modern states came to stand one next to the other. This influenced commercial exchanges and the logic of economic investors: the economy became 'nationalized'. The borderline between the two countries became an economic frontier (Guzzi-Heeb 1998: 136). All this had its influences on the 'helvetisation' of the Italophones in Southern Switzerland and contributed to their distanciation vis-à-vis the Italian-speaking areas on the other side of the border.

Not only economy but also *religion* played an important role in the 'nationalization' of Italian-speaking Switzerland. The new Cisalpine state put a considerable pressure on the Catholic church and in many occasions harassed the patterns of religious life of its inhabitants. The Helvetic Republic did not engage in such policies against the Catholics. Therefore, the establishment of the new frontier permitted the Swiss Catholics to preserve their religious traditions. It also provided, once again, a significant 'factor of demarcation' (*Faktor der Abgrenzung*) that helped to prevent the annexation of Italian-speaking Swiss

territories into the Cisalpine Republic (Ibid. 136-137). Being 'Swiss' meant preserving one's traditions.

Finally, *politically* speaking the Helvetic Republic provided the context for an unprecedented politicization and mobilization of the people (Ibid. 138). This was particularly the case in the anti-republican upsurge in the aftermath of 1798. Interestingly enough, the opponents of the idea of a unified Switzerland adopted a *national* rhetoric in order to defend their positions. So in the course of a 1802 meeting of 'traditionalists' (*Traditionalisten*) in Schwyz, in central Switzerland, one of the speakers emphasized the will to 'rescue of the fatherland' and claimed that the gathering represented the 'Swiss nation' (*Schweizernation*). Even more significant is the fact that the opposition of 'traditionalists' to the new republic, which mainly came from circles that lost consistent political and economic privileges in 1798, made necessary the creation of horizontal links between different opponents all over Switzerland. Hence for the first time did the 'traditionalists' from Southern Switzerland came into contact with the anti-republican movement in central Switzerland (Ibid.).

The opposition of the 'traditionalists' to the Helvetic Republic was so strong as to oblige Napoleon to issue in 1803 an 'Act of Mediation' in order to stabilize the political situation in Switzerland. It consisted mainly in the return to a sort of federal/confederal setting that had existed before 1798. The main difference was that the former 'subject territories' were permitted to maintain their independence. As a result, the Italian-speaking 'Canton Ticino' was created. Moreover, Napoleon conceded much wider range of *popular rights* than he did in any other state under his control. Such decisions point to two extremely important elements of Swiss political culture – federalism and popular (or direct) democracy – that are still today major components of the common Swiss national identity.

Third, the 'objective' features of identity provided during the Helvetic Republic were reflected at the level of *subjective identities*. Guzzi-Heeb (Ibid. 139-140) explains this again on the example of the Canton Ticino. Why did the 'overwhelming majority of the population especially from the countryside' express the will to stay within Switzerland and opposed the annexation into the Cisalpine Republic, despite the fact that they did not share the same language or culture with the former and they did very much so with the latter? Guzzi-Heeb points out three main reasons: (a) the political model of the Cisalpine Republic was perceived

as a 'deadly menace' (*tödliche Bedrohung*) for the local political order based on autonomous communal corporations (*Gemeindekörperschaften*) under a mild confederal rule; (b) the incorporation into the Cisalpine Republic would have meant the loss of important commercial privileges such as the control over the cattle market in Lugano and the control over the commercial traffic on the Southern part of the Gothard-pass; and (c) it would radically change the situation of the sociopolitical elite which would, in the case of entrance of their territories in the Cisapline Republic, loose their privileges under the influence of neighboring cities of Milan, Como and Varese. As a matter of fact, the Italian-speaking elite had traditionally exercised an important function as intermediaries (*Vermittlungsfunktion*) between the German-speaking rulers from the North and the local population.

The interesting conclusion of Guzzi-Heeb is the following: the creation of a common Swiss national identity was, at least to a certain extent, due also to an *anti*national tradition, if by such a label we understand the fierce resistance of certain elites to unifying and centralizing tendencies during and after the Helvetic Republic. As a matter of fact, in the aftermath of the 1803 Act of Mediation, the consolidation of the state in the course of the first half of the 19th century was done mostly at the *cantonal* level (Ibid.145). Only thanks to a certain external pressure would various cantons and regions be obliged to cooperate and make out of Switzerland a 'community of destiny' (*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*). This leads me to the discussion of the political developments in the first half of the 19th century.

But let me first briefly summarize the main findings of this section. The Helvetic Republic played an essential role in the process of nation-building in Switzerland. It did so by creating the institutions of a modern state based on the rule of law and on the protection of basic rights and liberties to which all citizens were equally entitled. The influence of the new state was also reflected in other spheres of life such as economic and religious. All this, in turn, provided the bases for the creation of a distinct Swiss civic identity among the population and differentiated it from neighboring countries often akin in language and/or religion, as the example of the Italophone Switzerland clearly shows. But the road towards a more united Swiss state was still long and not without obstacles – only in 1848, fifty years later, would a truly federal Constitution be enacted.

Towards the 1848 federal constitution

In this section I will point to some major political events and debates that took place in the aftermath of the Napoleonic influence in Switzerland and until the design of the 1848 federal Constitution. In particular, my aim is to stress the instrumental and rhetorical use of the language of Swiss nationhood in the major political disputes of those years, rather than 'prove' the existence of the Swiss nation in that époque.

After the 1803 Act of Mediation Switzerland was no longer 'one and indivisible' but rather a sort of federal state, in the sense that single cantons obtained a certain degree of political autonomy but not the formal sovereignty. Such a situation lasted until the political decline and eventual military defeat of the man – Napoleon Bonaparte – who was to be blamed, or cherished, for the great changes that Switzerland undertook in that time-period. The Congress of Vienna (1815) symbolized the will of return to the pre-revolutionary political order in Europe and marked the beginning of the 'Restoration' era. For the Swiss cantons this meant, generally speaking, the return of ancient privileges to those who had lost them. The attempt to re-establish the *anciens régimes* took place all-over Switzerland. Such endeavors were generally successful with one notable exception. The great powers safeguarded the autonomy and cantonal independence of the former 'subject territories', namely cantons of Aargau, Ticino and Vaud. This went against the will of some cantons (Bern, Lucerne, Fribourg/Freiburg, Solothurn, Uri, Schwyz, Unterwald and Zug), where conservative forces were power. These cantons created in 1814 a 'special assembly' (*Sondertagsatzung*) claiming the return of the formerly subject territories. This almost led to a civil war (Kölz 1992: 178) and only after the pressure and menace by foreign powers was this 'special assembly' dissolved. Finally, on 8 September, 1814, the new agreement (*Bundesvertrag*) was signed (without the consent of Schwyz, Uri and Nidwalden). Hence Switzerland became a confederation made of 22 sovereign cantons. The cantons of Geneva, Neuchâtel and Valais/Wallis – previously allied with Swiss cantons principally for military purposes – became the new members of the Confederacy. The new agreement made clear that the scope of the new Confederacy was to assure 'to the 23 sovereign cantons their freedom, independence, and security against any attacks by foreign powers and to assure peace and order within' (cited in Ibid.184; my translation). So 'external protection' and 'internal order'

were the main objectives of the new Alliance. Note that, contrary to the ideals of the French Revolution, it put aside the principle of *individual* rights and liberties; the Swiss Confederacy clearly aimed at safeguarding the *cantonal* liberty (Ibid.). This can be relied to the classical distinction between the liberty of the moderns and the liberty of the ancients that a 'Swiss' political philosopher, Benjamin Constant, drew in those very years.

The first half of the 19th century was a time of important political upheavals in Europe like the 'liberal' revolutions of the 1820s and 1830s, Greek independence, and so forth. I shall not present a detailed overview of those events here. However, I would like to emphasize that the political situation within Switzerland was largely influenced by the affairs in the rest of the continent. For the purposes of this essay it is especially important to point out the opposing political forces in Switzerland because it might shed important light on the process of creation of national identity.

The main political conflict in Switzerland up to the creation of the federal state in 1848 was between the conservative and progressive forces. The conservative camp consisted mainly of anti-revolutionary power-holders who had lost their privileges in 1798 but regained them with the Restoration. They were particularly strong in Catholic cantons although we should by no means make a complete equation between the two. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that the conservatives were principal defenders of cantonal sovereignty. This is, of course, closely related to their attachment to ancient privileges which were mainly enjoyed within single cantons. They feared a unifying and centralized state. As a result, the conservatives were mainly against the national rhetoric based on the idea of existence of a single Swiss nation. At the same time, as I noted earlier in this essay, they were obliged to engage in horizontal alliances throughout different cantons and regions of Switzerland in order to better defend their interests. This, paradoxically, had a considerable impact on 'nationalization' of the country, as I have already underlined in the section devoted to the Helvetic Republic.

The progressive forces can be divided in two main factions: radical and liberal. They demanded the reestablishment of the principle of individual rights as proclaimed in the French Revolution. Their influence was particularly evident in the 1830s, which is also labeled in the Swiss history books as the liberal phase of 'Regeneration'. In many cantons

liberals took power, changed cantonal constitutions and renewed cantonal rules of law in the sense of individualism and rational natural right (Ibid. 210). Generally speaking, the chances of reform were higher in Protestant and/or more industrialized cantons (Ibid. 225).

But liberals and radicals were not satisfied with cantonal constitutions: they aimed at a new federal setting (Ibid. 374). Many politicians and intellectuals, who pleaded for a more centralized and unified Switzerland, were using the national rhetoric in order to defend their view. It is difficult to discern in what cases the invocation of the 'Swiss nation' was meant to express the profound feeling of the writer and when it had purely instrumental function.[24] Thus, Ludwig Snell, a liberal, pleaded in his 'appeal' (*Zuruf*) for a 'prospective and closer federal association, for a stronger centralization' because this is where 'the desires of all Swiss [were] directed'. The weak union of the cantons in that time, Snell claimed, permitted 'no common creation, no national project enterprise . . . the industry is restricted to the narrow playfields, the commerce is everywhere hindered, and to the spiritual forces lack the greatest and noblest incentive: the conscience of working for one nation'. Only through the creation of a more unified federal state could arise a 'more real and stronger national spirit [*Nationalgeist*], a more genuine and encompassing love of the fatherland [*Vaterlandsliebe*]' (cited in Ibid. 374-376; my translation).

The intermingling of the plead for a 'national spirit' and the 'conscience of working for a nation' with the needs of 'industry' and 'commerce' would, to a certain extent, go along Gellner's (1983) thesis that the functional needs of industrial revolution fostered the nation-building process. As I will show later on, the only difference is that in Switzerland such a necessity, contrary to Gellner's thesis, did not transform into linguistic or 'cultural' homogenization.

Did the Swiss 'nation' exist in the first half of the 19th century? The question is undoubtedly badly formulated because the nation-building process was still in progress. Nevertheless, if by 'nation' we understand the sense of belonging to the same group of people

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[24] In his discussion of the 'republican question' in Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries Meadwell (1999: 26) notes: 'It was difficult . . . to argue for republican institutions without referring to the nation in order to specify for whom these institutions were to be designed, and the group of individuals over which these institutions would range.'

the answer would probably be negative (except, of course, for the elites). The majority of ordinary Swiss never moved far away from their commune or canton. If, by chance, they met another 'Swiss' from a different canton they would probably not have been even able to communicate. But this bears nothing of exceptional because the same could be said of almost any country in that time-period.[25]

In fact, the mistake is to see this as a decisive factor for determining whether one nation really existed or not. We should rather observe things from the appropriate historical perspective. The main point here is that in the first half of the 19th century, when first theories of nations (e.g. Herder, Fichte) were certainly circulating in intellectual circles, the rhetoric of nationhood was often used in order to *justify political goals*. Those who were proclaiming the existence of a given 'nation' would typically demand administrative centralization and territorial unification. In this light, what was happening in Switzerland was not very much different from, for instance, political developments in the Italian *Risorgimento*. The ordinary 'Swiss' of the time were probably not able to communicate between each other but neither were so the ordinary 'Italians'. As De Mauro (1963: 41; cf. Hobsbawm 1992: 38) has pointed out, in the year of Italian 'unification' (1861) barely 2,5% of the people could actually speak Italian. The variety of local dialects was so strong that 'when the Visconti-Venesta brothers walked down the streets of Naples speaking Italian they were thought to be Englishmen' (Steinberg 1996: 129). Of course, Italian elites, especially those involved in the process of 'unification', could and did communicate between each other, but so did the Swiss elites. The main difference is that the Italian standard language was imposed from the political center throughout Italy. In Switzerland there was no such imposition. Every canton maintained the complete autonomy in linguistic matters. They did eventually adopted, for practical reasons, the standardized versions of German, French and Italian languages but the central state was mostly silent about it. Therefore, the rhetorical use of nationhood was certainly no less prevalent in Switzerland than in other European countries.

What *did* count were the *political consequences* of such national rhetoric. In the case of Switzerland it meant the elaboration of the Federal constitution in 1848 and the creation of a more united, stronger Swiss state.

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[25] For France, for example, see the classical study by Weber (1979).

1848: The establishment of the federal Swiss state

The tumultuous years leading up to 1848 ended up in a short civil war, that took place from 4 to 29 November 1847. The war originated when the radical-led faction of the Confederal Assembly (*Tagsatzung*) decided to dissolve by force the *Sonderbund* ('special alliance'). The *Sonderbund* had been created in 1845 by seven conservative (and at the same time Catholic) cantons (Lucerne, Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden, Zug, Fribourg/Freiburg and Valais/Wallis) with the aim to assure mutual protection in the case of aggressions by the radicals.

Anti-*Sonderbund* forces won the war. It was a fortunate circumstance that conservative foreign powers (Austria, Prussia, France, Russia), believing that the conflict would last longer, did not intervene. Only on 18 January 1848 did they send to the Swiss an 'intervention note' (*Interventionsnote*) warning that they would intervene if the situation would not calm down (Kölz 1992: 546).

Although the Swiss response was unambiguous – foreign powers had no right to intervene in internal matters of Switzerland since at the Congress of Vienna they had only engaged in the guarantees of the Swiss territory and not of its internal order – the very possibility of a foreign intervention obliged the Swiss political elites to work fast on the elaboration of a new Constitution. It also had a certain influence in convincing the victors of the *Sonderbund* war of the necessity to make compromises. The commissions involved in writing down the new constitution were, not surprisingly, divided into two main factions: the first, mainly radical and liberal, wanted a more centralized state, the second one sought to maintain, as far as possible, cantonal sovereignties.

I shall present here some of these debates. My main aim is to show that during the discussions over the new Constitution the nation was used exclusively as a political concept, designing the entire body of citizens, a fact that bears some resemblance with the US model . The focus on the elaboration of the 1848 Constitution is important since it represents the founding year of the modern, federal Swiss state which basic structures have remained unchanged until the present day. If in 1848 Switzerland consisted of distinct linguistic nations who decided to join and form a federation – as Kymlicka (1995: 13) has hinted – then we should certainly expect to find traces of such a distinctiveness of the Swiss society in the

debates that took place over the new Constitution. Alas, as I will show, the evidence does not support such a claim.

Once the balance of power was clearly set on the side of the radicals, the idea of a Swiss nation quickly reemerged. For instance, the influential radical from the Canton Vaud, Henry Druey, demanded the direct election of federal representatives because the source of sovereignty was 'the people'. Moreover, he claimed that the idea of a 'Swiss nationality [*schweizerische Nationalität*] has gained on diffusion and strength from year to year' which was 'without any doubt' manifest through the existence of national festivities and associations[26] (Kölz 1992: 554-555; my translation). Of course, not everybody saw the invocation of the 'Swiss nationality' positively. The conservative forces actually opposed it, not out of any 'cultural' conception of the nation, but because they considered that the notion of 'nation' had a too 'unitary character' [*unitarische Charakter*] (cf. Ibid. 557). For these reasons, a proposal for the first article of the Constitution – which expressively mentioned the 'Swiss nation' ('... the cantons unite as Swiss nation'[27], cited in Ibid. 556-557; my translation) – was refused. Nevertheless, it was included in the legally unbinding preamble of the Constitution (Ibid. 575).

The compromise between the defenders of national and, on the other side, cantonal sovereignties is most evident in the establishment of a bi-cameral parliament shaped on the US model.[28] The Swiss nation would be represented in the 'National Council' (*Nationalrat*; *Conseil national*; *Consiglio nazionale*), whereas the cantons would find their sovereignty expressed in the 'Council of States' (*Ständerat*; *Conseil des Etats*; *Consiglio degli Stati*). The two branches of parliament were given the same powers and competences, except in certain circumstances (such as the election of the members of government or of federal judges) where the two chambers would vote together. Such a bi-cameral system is still in use today.

There was some discussion on whether the National Council should be elected in one pan-Swiss electoral circumscription or through cantonal circumscriptions. The first proposal

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[26] I shall return to the issue of national festivities and associations later on.

[27] 'D]ie Kantone vereinigen sich als schweizerische Nation.'

[28] Such a model had already been proposed by James Fazy, a radical from Geneva, in his 1837 'Projet de constitution fédérale'.

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was defended by the radicals because it was considered good 'to strengthen the national sentiment [*Nationalgefühl*]'. The second one sounded better in the ears of the more federally oriented politicians who claimed that a similar territorial division in different electoral units already existed in France and in England and that in any case 'that would not kill the nationality [*Nationalität*]' (Ibid. 567; my translation).

What is particularly worth mentioning is that there was no big debate over the composition of the government. The seven-member 'Federal Council' (*Bundesrat*; *Conseil fédéral*; *Consiglio federale*) was constituted according to the model of some cantonal governments. The proposal to have it elected through direct popular vote was rejected by 10 to 9 in the relevant commission. Hence the government was to be elected directly by the Parliament. The only important limitation that was imposed was the requirement that the seven federal councilors be from different cantons. This was justified as a measure aiming to protect smaller cantons despite some fears that this could potentially undermine the elections of the most skilled politicians (Ibid. 572).[29]

Now if Switzerland had been really considered 'multinational' at the time, with different language groups forming distinct nations, then one would expect to see at least some discussion on whether such 'nations' needed to have their representatives in the highest executive branch of the country. In fact, I shall stress that Kymlicka is very reluctant to defend 'special group-representation rights' except in two particular circumstances: where a given group has witnessed a 'systematic discrimination' and where the state is composed of different nationalities. Indeed, it does 'make sense' to expect that a government of a multinational country includes members of different nations. Such is the case, for instance, of the fifteen-member European Commission. This is not to say that personal characteristics of the candidate bear no importance in the composition of the Swiss Government. Indeed, the very first Swiss federal government was composed of five German-speaking, one French-

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[29] This provision was eliminated in a 1999 February referendum and replaced by a less binding article that states : 'Les diverses régions et les communautés linguistiques doivent être équitablement représentées au Conseil fédéral' (Art. 96, al. 1 et 1 bis). The 'less binding' character of this article is proved by a subsequent decision of the Federal Tribunal to reject the recourse of an Italian-speaking Swiss lawyer who claimed that the failure of the Parliament to elect a new Italian-speaking Federal Councilor, in March 1999, was 'anti-constitutional'.

speaking and one Italian-speaking Swiss. But what must be stressed is that language was never seen as the only, or even the most important, characteristic worth of attention. Religion, political party, gender, canton have also been important in assigning, or not assigning, the governmental post.

In conclusion, an interesting parallel can be drawn between the debates over the creation of the 1848 Swiss Constitution and the 1787 American Constitution. In both countries the opposition of two main factions characterized the debates: defenders of the cantonal or state rights on the one side against the proponents of a more unified federal state on the other. Both parties claimed to act in the name of 'liberty' but could not agree which of the two levels – cantonal or federal – was best suitable to it. The similarities are especially evident in the use of the *concept of nation*. So James Madison argued in *The Federalist Papers* that,

> [e]ach State, in ratifying the Constitution, is considered as a sovereign body independent of all others, and only to be bound by its own voluntary act. In this relation, then, the new Constitution will, if established, be a *federal* and not a *national* constitution. The next relation is to the sources from which the ordinary powers of government are to be derived. The House of Representatives will derive its powers from the people of America; and the people will be represented in the same proportion and on the same principle as they are in the legislature of a particular State. So far the government is *national*, not *federal*. The Senate, on the other hand, will derive its powers from the States as political and coequal societies; and these will be represented on the principle of equality in the Senate, as they now are in the existing Congress. So far the government is *federal*, not *national*. (Madison er al. 1987 [1788]: 257; emphasis in original)

Madison then argues along similar lines that the Government will be 'national with regard to the *operation* of its powers', but will be federal 'in relation to the extent of its powers' (Ibid. 258; emphasis in original). To sum up:

> The proposed Constitution . . . is, in its strictness, neither a national nor a federal Constitution, but a composition of both. In its foundation it is federal, not national; in the sources from which the ordinary powers of the government are drawn, it is partly federal and partly national; in the operation of these powers, it is national, not federal; in the extent of them, again, it is federal, not national; and, finally, in

the authoritative mode of introducing amendments, it is neither wholly federal nor wholly national. (Ibid. 259)

The mixed 'national-federal' character of the Constitution is also evident in the Swiss case.[30] I have already mentioned the debates over the bi-cameral parliament. As far as the Constitution itself is concerned, the Swiss have maintained the traditional term 'Confederation' so that the Constitution is officially labeled, in an apparently paradoxical way (especially in French and Italian versions) 'The Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation' (*Die Bundesverfassung der schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft*; *La Constitution fédérale de la Confédération suisse*; *La Costituzione federale della Confederazione svizzera*).

I have also briefly mentioned the debate over whether the term 'Swiss nation' should be included into the articles of the Constitution. At the end it was agreed that 'nation' and 'confederation' could not stand side by side because it would be a pleonasm, so that the 'Swiss nation' is evoked in the preamble of the Constitution but in the articles only 'Confederation' is mentioned. Note that the preamble of the US Constitution begins with 'We the people of the United States...' and that one of the main critics of the Constitution, Patrick Henry, attacked it with the following words:

> What right had they to say, We, the people? My political curiosity, exclusive of my anxious solicitude for the public welfare, leads me to ask, who authorized them to speak the language of We, the people, instead of We, the States? (cited in Kramnick 1987: 32)

Indeed, in this respect the Swiss Constitution shows more attention towards cantonal sovereignty. Thus the Article 1 reads: 'Les peuples des vingt-deux cantons souverains de la Suisse, unis par la présente alliance . . . forment dans leur ensemble la Confédération suisse' (cited in de Rougemont 1965: 88). The Article 3 defines the limits of cantonal sovereignty: 'Les cantons sont souverains en tant que leur souveraineté n'est pas limitée par la constitution

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[30] The influence of the United States' Constitution on the Swiss one has been object of many studies (e.g. Rappard 1941; Troxler 1848). However, as Kölz (1992: 613) rightly notes, one should not overestimate the link between the two. The Swiss advocates of a more centralized state often referred to the American model out of political pragmatism and were careful not to mention other sources of inspiration (for instance, the name of Jean-Jacques Rousseau was mentioned only once in the 1830s discussions). In fact, apart from the general concept of a bi-cameral parliament, Switzerland did not follow the US institutional model.

fédérale, et comme tels ils exercent tous les droits qui ne sont pas délégués au pouvoir fédéral' (Ibid.).

What is interesting in drawing the Swiss-USA comparison is the extent to which the term 'nation' had strictly political connotations. 'We the people', as sanctified in the US Constitution of 1787, would become, only two years later, one of the main contributions of the French Revolution to the change of the concept of political power in Europe: 'nation' was a body of citizens seen as the main (if not only) possessor of 'sovereignty'.

Therefore, it is incorrect to claim, as Kymlicka does, that the multinational states – if, for the sake of the argument, by 'multinational' we understand 'multilingual' – 'typically' rise through accommodation of 'minority [linguistically defined] nations'. At least such was not the case in Switzerland. This country was *neither* created as a federation of distinct linguistic nations *nor* as a federation that sought to accommodate such groups. Language was only mentioned when Henry Druey proposed to declare German, French and Italian the 'national languages' of Switzerland. The proposition was unanimously accepted in the relevant commission (Weilenmann 1925: 219).

Nevertheless, even though the Swiss ruling elite implemented a *political* concept of the nation, the idea of a Swiss nation would soon come under attack by intellectuals who considered nation in *cultural* terms. For such thinkers the very idea that a plurilingual nation could exist was simply unimaginable. In that regard, the present-day Kymlickanian discussions on nationhood are not substantially different. In what follows I will present an illustration of the kind of the debate that was centered on the questions: What is the nation? Is Switzerland a nation?

Switzerland as a counter-example in the debates on nationality

The creation of the federal state in 1848 gave a new impetus to the nation-building process in Switzerland. At the same time, the Swiss national discourse had to adapt to the change in patterns of nationhood in other parts of Europe. As a matter of fact, the year 1848 appears as a symbolic dividing line between the political relevance of the political and cultural definition of 'nation'. As I have shown, the conception of nation used in Switzerland in the years

leading up to 1848 as well as during the elaboration of the federal Constitution was very similar, if not the same, to the one that had been evoked in *Federalist Papers* in order to justify the new American Constitution. Now in 1848, a series of revolutions sprang across Europe and some of them were based on a sort of nationalism that put emphasis on *cultural* and *linguistic* peculiarities. Such was, for instance, the case of uprisings in Milan and Venice, in Prague and Budapest, against the Habsburg Empire. The representatives of various 'German' states also met in Frankfurt to discuss the 'German unification'. In this regard, it is even more striking to notice that the 1848 debate over the new Constitution in Switzerland hardly mentioned at all linguistic issues.

But it is not surprising that in the second half of the 19th century *the Swiss political and intellectual elite was progressively obliged to cope with a concept of nation based on an alleged linguistic/cultural unity* that was alien to its political culture and its historical tradition. It was well understood that such a concept of nationhood would soon endanger the very idea of a single Swiss nation-state because of the linguistic heterogeneity of the country. My aim here is to provide a short account of such a debate and show that by many accounts Kymlicka's claim that Switzerland constitutes a multinational state is not new and that it was already powerfully combated in the 19th century.

To be sure, in the mid-19th century the idea of a culturally defined nation was not completely new and its intellectual development could be traced back at least to Cuoco, Herder, Fichte or Michelet (cf. Viroli 1995, Ch. 4). So even in the years leading up to 1848 some intellectuals had contested the idea of a Swiss nation. Especially fierce critiques came from German intellectual circles who claimed that 'Swiss nationality was . . . without real foundation, a mere invention by Johannes Müller and Friedrich von Schiller' (cited in Kohn 1956: 90). But they immediately encountered even harsher opposition from Swiss authors. Gottfried Keller, one of the most famous Swiss poets, was especially keen on refuting the critiques.[31] In one of his earliest poems, Keller rejected the efforts to determine a nation by its 'racial' or 'ethnic' elements. He argued that such a theory, then propagated from Germany, would reduce all nationalities to a primitive tribal stage.

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[31] For other examples see Hilty (1875), Bluntschli (1915 [1875]), Spitteler (1915).

> Germans believe that they bring us at silence when they claim that the Swiss people, because of its origins, does not belong to itself but that the German Switzerland belongs to Germany, the French Switzerland to France . . . that is a *deliberate disrespect* [Nichtbeachtung] *of our national character*.[32] (Keller 1936 [1841]: 101 f; cited in Kohn 90-91; emphasis added; my translation).

So Keller criticized the fact that some foreigners (Germans in this case) applied their own conceptual categories on Switzerland and so unjustifiably put into question the existence of the Swiss nation. Keller qualifies this as a serious and prejudicial 'disrespect' (*Nichtbeachtung*) of the Swiss national character (*Nationalcharakter*). In another memorable passage, Keller tried to define the *nature* of such Swiss national character that was object of misinterpretation.

> Swiss national character does not rest on ancestors nor on patriotic sagas of the country's past nor on anything material; it rests on the Swiss people's love of freedom, on their unique attachment to their small but beautiful and dear fatherland, on the home-sickness which seizes them even in the loveliest foreign lands. When an alien loves the Swiss constitution, when he feels happier among us then in a monarchical State, when he gladly accepts our habits and customs and assimilates himself, then he is as good a Swiss as someone whose fathers fought at Sempach . . . The Swiss has found out that his soul requires the independence of the whole fatherland, the freedom of thought and expression, the complete equality of rights and non-recognition of class and caste. The Swiss likes to speak of his liberty, but he does not try to force it upon anybody else, and why shouldn't he talk of it lovingly? Every good subject likes to talk of his king, and our king is liberty; we have none other. (cited in Kohn 1956: 93)

So freedom, love of the country, love of the constitution, equality of rights, were presented as the main features of the Swiss national character. Keller's vision of Switzerland is undoubtedly romantic and idealized but it nonetheless corresponds to some elements of the Swiss nationhood that are still praised today.[33]

And elsewhere he defended the peculiarity of the Swiss nationalism:

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[32] 'Die Deutschen glauben uns dadurch hauptsächlich zu Schweigen zu bringen, dass sie behaupten, das schweizerische Volk gehöre seiner Abstammung nach gar nicht zusammen, sondern die deutsche Schweiz gehöre eigentlich zu Deutschland, die französische zu Frankreich . . . das ist vorsätzliche Nichtbeachtung unseres Nationalcharakters.'

[33] The best example is Habermas' (1992) concept of 'constitutional patriotism'. According to this author Switzerland and the United States would be the best examples of such a patriotism. I shall return to this point in the section 2.3.

> We believe we recognize the dreamy character of the nationalism around us which bases itself on hoary memories of the past, on linguistic and racial traditions. Therefore we cling to our own Swiss kind of nationalism. We can say that it is not our nationality which creates and influences our ideas, but an *invisible idea existing in these mountains* has created the *distinct Swiss nationality* as its embodiment. (Keller 1919 [1854-1855]: 43; cited in Kohn 1956: 95; emphasis added)

Here we can observe how Keller tries to invert the conceptual relationship between nation and nationalism. He claims that in Switzerland nationalism as an expression of ideas does not stem from the 'nationality' understood in terms of past memories, 'race' or language but, rather, that a distinct Swiss nationality stems from an 'invisible idea existing in these mountains', from an idea that does not depend on any ascriptive kinship. Such an interpretation of nationalism is fully respectful of differences and Keller, indeed, cherished that diversity in a 1860 novella 'The Little Flag of the Seven Upright Men' where we find the following passage:

> How diverting it is that there is not just one kind of Swiss, but that there are people of Zurich and of Bern, of Unterwalden and of Neuchâtel, of Graubünden and . . . even two kinds of people of Basel; that there is an Appenzell history and a history of Geneva! May God preserve such variety within unity, for it brings the right education for friendship, and only where political togetherness turns to personal friendship of a whole people has the highest goal been achieved! (1954 [1850]: 198-9; cited in Bendix 774; my adaptation)

What is interesting in this passage is that Keller points out the extreme diversity of the Swiss that does not rest (only) on language or on religion but also on different historical traditions of various cantons and even on differences within single cantons (the 'two kinds of people of Basel' refer to semi-cantons of Basel-City and Basel-Land). The idea that different linguistic groups form distinct nations seemed not to be important for him.

Keller's emphasis on the 'invisible idea existing in these mountains' needs also to be related to the role that *Alpine landscape* played in the defense of the Swiss nationality. In their comparative study of Canada and Switzerland Kaufmann and Zimmer (1998) have shown how in these two countries, partly as a consequence of their linguistic diversity, the promoters of common national identity relied on geography in order to justify the idea that

these were 'authentic' nations. The authors distinguish two kinds of dialectics of landscape and nation.

First, there is a process of 'nationalization of nature' that portrays particular landscapes as expression of national identity. Here 'popular historical myths, memories and supposed national virtues are projected onto a significant landscape in an attempt to lend more continuity and distinctiveness to it' (Ibid. 486). The authors claim that this pattern of use of the landscape dominated in Switzerland until the second half of the 19th century. The Alpine motive can be found already in the writings of some 16th century Swiss humanists but the major examples of this development are to be traced to the early Romantics in the late 18th/early 19th century. Thus one of the fathers of the Helvetic Society, Franz Urs Balthasar, claimed that 'the character of the Swiss nation found its complete expression in its untamed, Alpine landscape' (Ibid. 490; cf. Marchal 1992: 45). But the 'popularisation of the Alpine landscape in Swiss national mythology [was] largely the result of the publication of [Friedrich] Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* in 1804' (Kaufmann and Zimmer 1998: 490). In this play the Alps were presented as a 'natural habitat' that fostered the emergence of a 'pure, simple, honest and liberty-loving character'; Ibid. 491). The play had a huge popular success and was frequently read and performed in the 19th century and 'became part of the literary canon of Swiss primary schools'. On the other hand, at the end of the 19th century the Swiss Alpine landscape was the main object in the paintings of Ferdinand Hodler, one of the most famous Swiss artists. His great popularity 'had much to do with the fact that his paintings were widely perceived as a powerful expression of what made Switzerland distinct as a nation' (Ibid. 491).

Second, and to some extent rather disquietingly, there was the process of 'naturalization of nation'. Faced with the increasing challenge of ethnically and/or linguistically based nationalism that was prevailing in Europe in the second half of the 19th century some Swiss intellectuals engaged in a process of defending a 'naturalized' version of Swiss nationality. Thus Johann-Kaspar Bluntschli argued:

> If the Swiss posses a particular nationality, then this feeling derives above all from the existence of
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> their beautiful homeland . . . There may well be Alps, mountains, seas and rivers outside Switzerland;
>
> and yet, the Swiss homeland constitutes such a coherent and richly structured natural whole, one that

> enables a peculiar feeling of a common homeland to evolve on its soil which unites its inhabitants as
>
> sons of the same fatherland even though they live in different valleys and speak different languages.
>
> (Bluntschli 1915: 11; cited in Kaufmann and Zimmer 499-500)

Along similar lines went the argument of Ernest Bovet, professor of French literature at the University of Zurich:

> A mysterious force has kept us together for 600 years and has given us our democratic institutions . . .
>
> A spirit that fills our souls, directs our actions and creates a hymn on the ideal one out of our different
>
> languages. It is the spirit that blows from the summits, the genius of the Alps and glaciers. (Bovet 1909:
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> 441; cited in Kaufmann and Zimmer: 500)

At the same time it is important to stress that Alpine myth was not only evoked in intellectual discourses but was also used in school books, at national festivals and in other occasions of popular interest and so constitutes a considerable part of Swiss national identity.

The intellectual debates on the concept of nation prior to 1848 did not have a lot of impact on Swiss political developments because they did not (yet) bear a proper political credibility. In fact, only when theoretical and moral reasoning becomes *political program*, does a theory really have an impact on the reality. And the cultural theory of nation would gain political credibility only in the years to follow, after the Italian (1861) and German (1871) 'unifications'.

In the post-1848 intellectual debates on nationhood Switzerland would be often invoked either as a *counter-example*[34] – that is, as forming one nation despite linguistic differences – or as an example of a *successful 'multinational' state*.[35]

So one of the first English-speaking political philosophers who discussed the concept of nationhood, John Stuart Mill, wrote the following lines in his 1861 *Considerations on Representative Government*.

> A portion of mankind may be said to constitute a Nationality if they are united among themselves by
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> common sympathies which do not exist between themselves and any others – which make them co-
>
> operate with each other more willingly than with other people, desire to be under the same government,

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[34] Altermatt (1996: 140-155) uses the term 'anti-thesis' in order to describe the Swiss experience.

[35] In this respect, the present essay takes part in a similar debate.

and desire that it should be government by themselves or a portion of themselves exclusively. The feeling of nationality may have been generated by various causes. Sometimes it is the effect of identity of race and descent. Community of language, and community of religion, greatly contribute to it. Geographical limits are one of its causes. But *the strongest of all is the identity of political antecedents*; the possession of a national history, and a consequent community of recollections; collective pride and humiliation, pleasure and regret, connected with the same incidents in the past. None of these circumstances, however, are either indispensable, or necessarily sufficient by themselves. *Switzerland has a strong sentiment of nationality, though the cantons are of different races, different languages, and different religions.* (Mill 1993 [1861]: 391; emphasis added)

We can observe that Mill, despite his well-known claim that representative government necessitates the 'united public opinion' which can hardly exist in a country where people 'read and speak different languages' and do not have the 'fellow-feeling' (Ibid. 392), had a very open and flexible vision of the nation to the point that he rightly recognized, as soon as 1861, that 'Switzerland ha[d] a strong sentiment of nationality' despite all its internal differences.

Another important and often quoted author who tried to define the nation, Ernest Renan, noted in his 1882 essay *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*:

Comment la Suisse, qui a trois langues, deux religions, trois ou quatre races, est-elle une nation, quand la Toscane, par exemple, qui est si homogène, n'en est pas une ? . . . La langue invite à se réunir ; elle n'y force pas. Les Etats-Unis et l'Angleterre, l'Amérique espagnole et l'Espagne parlent la même langue et ne forment pas une seule nation. Au contraire, la Suisse, si bien faite, puisqu'elle a été faite par l'assentiment de ses différentes parties, compte trois ou quatre langues. *Il y a dans l'homme quelque chose de supérieur à la langue : c'est la volonté.* La volonté de la Suisse d'être unie, malgré la variété de ses idiomes, est un fait bien plus important qu'une similitude souvent obtenue par des vexations. (Renan 1996 [1882]: 16, 24-5; emphasis added)

The voluntaristic vision of the nation – '[l]'existence d'une nation est . . . un plébiscite de tous les jours' (Ibid. 32) – that we can find in Renan's essay, has been analyzed and, often, criticized in most of the writings on nations and nationalism (e.g. Hobsbawm 1992 [1990]: 43-44; Kriesi 1999a: 17; Miller 1995: 22-23; Tamir 1995 [1993]: 66-67; Viroli 1995: 159-160) and I shall not develop it any further here. What must be retained, though, is that the

writers like Mill and Renan rapidly realized that the concept of nation is much more complex and diversified than some 'culturalist' thinkers would have supposed. For Mill and Renan Switzerland constituted a nation and not a multination state and had to be placed at the same footing with any other nation.

Among the authors who took the example of Switzerland as *successful multinational state* one could mention Karl Renner, one of the so-called Austro-Marxists intellectuals who at the turn of the 19th/20th century wrote numerous books and articles on multinational countries. His main objective was to solve the 'national question' of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His solution consisted in a form of 'personal' and not 'territorial' federalism that would make each citizen of the Empire 'at home' in any part of the country (cf. Renner 1918). For Renner, there was no doubt that Switzerland was composed of three nations: German, French and Italian. Thus a German-speaking Swiss was thought to share the same nationality with Germans from Germany, Austria or any other country.

> We should just mention the old, well-established example of Switzerland. In such a political system it is understood by itself that all two or three nations take part equally in the common polity.[36] (Renner 1964 [1937]: 89).(NMW: 89; my translation)

So Renner, similarly to Kymlicka, takes Switzerland as an example of successful multinational state and at the same time misinterprets it when he affirms that the Swiss 'nations' take an equal part in the common polity. In fact, that might be the case of different cantons but certainly not of Swiss language communities.

In sum, before and, especially, after 1848, many thinkers felt the necessity to defend the idea of a Swiss nation against 'culturalist' conceptions of nationhood. In this section I have focused on some of these defenses. This curiously shows that the kind of discussion central to this essay is not new in *form*, although I believe that it is rather peculiar in *content*, since my arguments are mainly formed as a critique of Kymlicka's view on 'culture' and 'nation'.

Did the 19th century intellectuals who defended the Swiss idea of nation do so on the basis of an excessively romantic and idealized vision of this 'country on the Alps', or did they

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[36] 'Das alte, bewährte Beispiel der Schweiz braucht nur erwähnt zu werden. In solchen Staatswesen versteht sich die gleiche Anteilnahme beider oder aller drei Nationen am staatlichen Wesen von selbst.'

perhaps rely on some specific and 'objective' elements that could prove the existence of a Swiss nation? The answer to this question will be attempted in the following section of this essay in which I present an account of the specific elements of the nation-building process in Switzerland.

National holidays, public and commemorative ceremonies

According to Smith (1991: 14) one of the essential features of national identity are 'common myths and historical memories'. Now such myths and memories do not arise by themselves but are promoted by social agents capable of diffusing them throughout the entire 'national' community. One of the most powerful agents is, of course, the state and this is the main reason why thinkers like Gellner and Hobsbawm affirmed that '[n]ations do not make states and nationalism but the other way round' (Hobsbawm 1992 [1990]: 10). But the state is not necessarily the only agent involved in this process and often associations of the civil society, for a variety of reasons, participate in it as well. In this section I look particularly into one aspect – the National Holiday – that was meant to foster the creation of a common Swiss national identity, as well as into some other elements related to the national discourse.

Only at the end of the 19th century did Switzerland begin to celebrate the foundation of the first Swiss Confederacy (allegedly occurred in 1291) by three 'forest cantons' (*Urkantone*) of Schwyz, Uri and Unterwalden. The first major celebration took place in the occasion of the 600th anniversary, on 1 August 1891, and only in 1899 was August First institutionalized as 'National Holiday' (*Bundesfeier*; *Fête nationale*; *Festa nazionale*) (Kreis 1991). Such a late institutionalization of the founding date of the Swiss Confederacy made Benedict Anderson (1991) include Switzerland in the 'last wave' of nationalism. 'Such a decision, waiting 600 years to be made, . . . suggests that modernity rather than antiquity characterizes Swiss nationalism' (Anderson 1991: 135-136). Of course, I hope that it is clear at this point that it is incorrect to think – as Anderson (Ibid. 139) does, following and citing Hughes (1975: 107) – that the year of birth of Swiss nationalism is 1891. We should rather think that 1891 is the most manifest outcome of the process of nation-building that can be historically traced at least to 1798 and the creation of the Helvetic Republic (although the idea

of a Swiss nation had been developed in some intellectual circles even earlier, as proven by the foundation of the 'Helvetic Society' [*Helvetische Gesellschaft*] in 1761).

Nevertheless, Anderson does point out, through the Swiss example, an interesting feature of nationalism in general. The promoters of nationalism would often pick up, more or less deliberately, certain historical 'facts' in order to justify their proper political or social ideals. Georg Kreis, for instance, speak of the 'myth of 1291' (1991). As a matter of fact, some people argued that the foundation of the Confederacy had been 1307 and not 1291.

On the other hand, as Regina Bendix (1992) has claimed in her study, we should not overestimate the force of Swiss nationalism (she prefers to call it 'mild' or 'moderate' patriotism). The very example of the national holiday shows this insofar as '[n]either the federal government nor the cantonal organizing committee intended [the 600th anniversary celebration of Swiss nationhood on 1 August 1891] more than one-time event' (Ibid. 777). In fact, the plea to make August First a national holiday came from the Swiss consul in Uruguay, in 1892, who regretted that, contrary to other consuls, he was not able to invite the fellow diplomats to the Swiss national celebration because of the lack thereof. The federal Justice Department responded that it had no legal powers to declare any day a holiday because such a decision resided, ironically enough for a 'national' holiday, within the competence of the cantons. Finally, in 1891 the federal legislature asked the governments of 25 cantons and semi-cantons to adopt August First as national holiday and only two of them (Zug and St. Gallen) turned that proposition down (Ibid. 776).

The discussion over the Swiss national holiday should not, however, inhibit us from acknowledging that many pan-Swiss public celebrations had existed well before 1891. Among the most influential were certainly Swiss *marksmen's festivals* (*Schützenfeste*), first of which was held in 1824 (see, e.g. Henzirohs 1976). The first Swiss sports festival took place in 1832 and the first Swiss singers' festival in 1842 (cf. Bendix 1992: 774-775). The first marksmen's festival, according to the president of the organizing committee, had as a goal to 'pull the hearts of confederates closer together, to help the small-mindedness of cantonal spirit vanish in the elevated spirit of the Swiss nation' (cited in Ibid. 775). Such festivities, which were usually organized by private, benevolent societies rather than by the Swiss state (basically lacking between 1815 and 1848), were occasions in which the citizens of different

cantons would meet, participate in common activities and develop *some* kind of collective sentiment. Even though, as Bendix (Ibid. 776) notes, 'the emotion is ephemeral' and 'once this goal was reached . . . local and cantonal identities had regained prominence and the desire for patriotic community had been increasingly overshadowed by the desire to assert individual, local, or regional difference and autonomy', the impact of these festivities should not be underestimated for the development of the national identity. As De Capitani, Kaiser and Marcacci (1991) have pointed out in their study on national festivities and on the importance of such rituals 'the pattern of patriotic and moral themes, well known to all the participants, took place in every occasion and was able to transmit a strong collective experience from which no one could escape'[37] (cited in Kreis 1995: 47; my translation).[38]

Through what other practices, myths and institutions did the Swiss state and/or voluntary associations foster the creation of a common national identity? Following the report on the Research Project 'National Identity and Cultural Pluralism', commissioned by the Swiss government in 1985,[39] I present here some further elements of the nation-building process.

Brühlmeier's (1991) thesis is that the *constitutional bases* represent an important element of national identity and favor its development. He based his analysis on some texts of literature where he retrieved the cardinal place of 'republicanism' – a political ideology the Swiss constitution is based upon. This is illustrated through the passage from an ideology based on 'natural rights' and a rigid share of roles to the republican ideology based on free interchange between governors and the governed. These topics were often dealt with in the works of some widely read Swiss authors such as Vattel and Iselin (18th century), Gotthelf, Keller and Hilty (19th century) and Spitteler (20th century).

This leads me to consider the role of *national literature in the school books*. The Swiss authors often wrote about emblematic figures of the Swiss history and, on the other hand, frequently evoked the alpine landscape. So in a 1911 school book of the Canton Geneva

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[37] 'Il canone dei temi patriottici e morali – ampiamente noto a tutti i presenti – ricorreva in ogni occasione ed era in grado di trasmettere una forte esperienza collettiva a cui nessuno poteva sottrarsi.'
[38] The same study, however, has shown that national festivities were also a source social polarization. The working class, in particular, could not identify itself with the rhetoric of 'equality and fraternity' and developed their alternative festivities (cf. Kreis 1995: 47). The shooting (or marksmen's) festivals also imposed 'unanimous consensus' and did not tolerate conservative attitudes (see Henzirohs 1976, cited in Kreis 1995: 47).
[39] Various researches have been summarized by Kreis (1995).

we can read : 'A force de vivre la même vie, la vie des montagnes, ces gens d'origines diverses en sont arrives à se ressembler par bien des côtés : ils sont montagnards, et c'est ce qu'il fait les Suisses' (cited in Kreis 1995 : 63). This is not to say that all over Switzerland the people would read the same things. As a matter of fact, the studies of Schmid (1981) and Tschirky (1991) have pointed out regional and, especially, confessional divergences that caused differential treatment of historical facts and personalities. Nonetheless, all of them provided *some kind* of account of the common Swiss history.

The importance of *museums* is seen as a product rather than promoter of the process of nation-building (cf. Kreis 1995: 66). This is especially evident in the fact that the first Swiss National Museum was founded only in 1898. However, many smaller and local museums, not necessarily funded by the central state, also played a significant role in the nation-building process.

Within a similar framework we should place *national expositions* that took place on different occasions (Zurich 1883, Geneva 1896, Bern 1914, Zurich 1939, Lausanne 1964) (Pauchard and Pavillon 1991). The next one will be held in 2002. Its goals are clearly stated in the presentation:

> Comme toutes les nations nées d'une volonté commune, la Suisse, 'Willensnation' [nation by will], doit périodiquement effectuer un retour sur elle-même pour se redéfinir et se fixer de nouveaux objectifs. C'est d'autant plus nécessaire qu'à l'aube du troisième millénaire, notre pays pluriculturel traverse une crise d'identité A cet égard, les expositions nationales contribuent depuis toujours à forger l'identité collective et à réorienter la société. L'Expo.02 mettra en lumière les opportunités qu'offre l'avenir mais aussi les difficultés qu'il promet. Bref, elle incarnera l'esprit de l'avenir de notre pays. (www.expo02.ch)

National holidays, various festivities, associations, army and the school constituted occasions for display of *national songs and anthems*. What is interesting here is the way in which songs in one language gave birth to versions in other languages. Swiss of various linguistic communities were so able to sing together songs like 'Rütlilied' ('De loin, salut!, calme prairie') or Gottfried Keller's 'O mein Heimatland' ('O mon beau pays'). At the same time, the multitude of songs and various anthems caused the fact that the Federal Council decided

only in 1981 the definite version of the national anthem although the 1811 song 'Rufst Du, mein Vaterland?' served as semi-official anthem for over a century (cf. Kreis 1995: 67-69).

The list of some elements that have historically fostered the national identity in Switzerland and that I have presented in this section should not be seen as exhaustive or definite. Many other features (e.g. military service, universities, external threat etc.) have been omitted. My aim was simply to briefly illustrate the kind of practices that contributed to the creation of 'common myths and memories' in Switzerland and that promoted the sense of 'Swissness' among the inhabitants of this country. But what still remains to be seen is to what extent the Swiss feel 'Swiss' and to what extent, following Kymlicka's argument, they feel like members of separate linguistically defined 'nations'. This will constitute the main object of discussion of the second part of this Chapter, dedicated to the sociological analysis of the Swiss case. But let me first summarize the findings of the historical part.

In the historical presentation of the Swiss nationality my aim was to make clear three points:

(1)   that Switzerland was politically constructed as one nation in a process that lasted from the creation of the Helvetic Republic until the foundation of the federal Constitution in 1848 (political nationalism)

(2)   that the idea of the Swiss nation was promoted and defended in intellectual circles as a response to those who criticized it from a 'culturalist' perspective (intellectual nationalism)

(3)   that both political and intellectual ideas penetrated the collective consciousness of the population and created the sense of a collective national identity; this was partly achieved through various practices akin to the nation-building process

I believe that this has shown that Kymlicka is wrong, from an historical point of view, to consider Switzerland as a country composed of three or four distinct, linguistically defined, nations.

2.2 Sociological evidence

Up to this point, my aim was to show that Kymlicka is wrong, from an historical point of view, to consider Switzerland as a state composed of three or four distinct, linguistically defined, nations. But can we say that Switzerland is *at the present time* a multinational state? Again, the answer depends largely on the definition of nation that we adopt. If one insists on a simple equation 'language group = nation', without any further contextualization, then there is probably little to be done to convince him or her on the necessity of paying attention to peculiar circumstances of different countries.

However, as my main subject of critique is Kymlicka, in the defense of my thesis that Switzerland is not a multinational state I shall try to rely as much as possible on *Kymlicka's own account of nationhood* and show that it does not support his thesis that Switzerland is composed of different nations.

As a matter of fact, Kymlicka does not simply support the equation 'language group = nation'. He enumerates many reasons why the language of nationhood is important. In the section 1.3 I have labeled these reasons as (a) strategic; (b) 'sociological'; (c) designation-based; and (d) identity-based. The first reason points out the kind of political gains that a group that describe itself as 'nation' can obtain. But what I am really interested in is, in the first place, to see whether in Switzerland there are groups who consider themselves as nations.

The second reason relies directly on Kymlicka's definition of culture/nation with all its flaws and ambiguities that I have already discussed in Chapter 1 and that, as such, cannot be of a great help in identifying a 'naiton'. Nevertheless, from a sociological point of view, it is still worth looking upon a possible segmentation of the 'civil society' along distinct linguistic lines. In other words, if the Swiss participate in forms of civil society (e.g. trade-unions, scouts, literary circles, Rotary clubs, religious associations etc.) according to their linguistic background and if such associations are themselves linguistically segmented (e.g. Belgium), then one could make the case that Switzerland constitutes a multination state. The question is difficult. According to a specialist of Switzerland from the University of Lausanne, Prof. Yannis Papadopoulos, there is no particular evidence of such a segmentation

of civil society.[40] The fact that no studies have been realized on this subject also confirms this hypothesis.[41] For instance, the study of Kriesi et al., wholly dedicated to the question of 'linguistic cleavage' in Switzerland, does not mention whatsoever this aspect among the elements that reinforce such a cleavage from an organizational point of view (Kriesi et al. 1996: 12-13).[42] The things are further complicated by the fact that many associations are local or cantonal and do not extend to the entire linguistic community to which a given local community or canton belong.

But let us suppose for the sake of the argument that according to that definition Swiss language groups constitute distinct nations. There still remain two other reasons that make Kymlicka defend the use of the language of nationhood. What is their relevance for our discussion on Switzerland?

In fact, the last two reasons offer me a double path through which I can demonstrate the lack of national-like discourse by Swiss linguistic groups and point to the shortcomings of Kymlicka's vision of Switzerland. On the one hand, the Swiss use the language of nationhood in order to describe their *common* institutions and practices. On the other hand, the foci of identity of Swiss citizens are multiple and do not necessarily go first and foremost to the linguistic community.

Designation-based argument

As I have observed, Kymlicka gives a lot of importance to the 'power to name itself'; a power that is seen as a 'crucial test of respect for the group as a whole' (1998: 132). He also brings examples showing that national minorities have 'adopted the language of "nationhood"' (e.g. in Canada the Quebec provincial legislature is called the 'National Assembly' and the main organization of Aboriginals is called the 'Assembly of First Nations') (Ibid. 127). This, for Kymlicka, is thought to be a proof of the will of these populations to call themselves 'nations'.

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[40] Personal communication.
[41] Contrary to the language segmentation, the segmentation of the civic society along religious lines is much easier to show and various studies have been written on this issue. See, for instance, Altermatt (1972).
[42] The study, in fact, mentions only direct democracy and the segmentation of the public space (mass media) as elements of the organizational dimension of linguistic cleavage. I shall return to this point in my sub-section 'Is Switzerland *becoming* a multination state?'.

Now, as far as Switzerland is concerned, it must be emphasized that the adjective 'national' is always used to describe pan-Swiss institutions and practices. The lower chamber of the Parliament (itself called 'Federal Assembly' – *Bundesversammlung*; *Assemblée fédérale*; *Assemblea federale*) is called 'National Council' (*Nationalrat*; *Conseil national*; *Consiglio nazionale*). I shall recall that it was expressively labeled in this way because the 'founders of the Constitution' wanted it to represent the whole 'Swiss nation'. On the other hand, most of the cantonal parliaments are called 'Big Council' (*Grossrat*; *Grand conseil*; *Granconsiglio*). Needless to say, no linguistic group possess its distinct legislature *qua* linguistic group. The four languages of Switzerland are defined in the Constitution as 'national languages' (*nationale Sprachen*; *langues nationales*; *lingue nazionali*). Three of them (German, French and Italian) are also defined as 'official languages' and Romansch is on its way to become one as well (cf. Grin 2000). One could also mention the 'National Park' (*Nationalpark*; *Parc national*; *Parco nazionale*).

In the every-day situations the Swiss refer to what happens at the pan-Swiss level most of the time by using the adjective 'national' or 'federal' (e.g. national or federal politics). When referring to Switzerland as a state the term 'Confederation' is also used. In international settings, Switzerland is often compared 'to other nations'. Hence in a preface to the Italian translation of the 1576 historical treatise *De Republica Helvetorium*, Flavio Cotti, the former Italian-speaking Federal Councilor and President of the Confederation at that time, speaks of a book that 'links us to the most antique part of our nation . . . it fastens the identity of Switzerland within Europe . . . it identifies our role in the concert of nations'[43] (Cotti 1998; my translation). During the August First celebrations of 2000 the president of the socialist group in the federal Parliament declared to its audience in a small village of the Italian-speaking Canton Ticino: 'A nation based upon the common decision to live together made by various entities – linguistic, cultural, religious, regional and economic – necessitates, if it wants to avoid dangerous tensions between its component parts, more sure and more solid ethical values than other nations . . .a nation like Switzerland can continue to exist only if it

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[43] '. . . ci collega . . . alla parte più antica della nostra nazione . . . fissa l'identità della Svizzera nell'Europa . . . identifica la nostra vocazione nel concerto delle nazioni.'

will be based on conspicuous values of tolerance, morality and solidarity'[44] (my translation). While it is true that it is not surprising that the president of Switzerland or a parliamentary official engage in such discourses, it suffices to open the reader's section of any Swiss daily newspaper in order to find out that also the 'ordinary citizens' use the term 'nation' in order to describe the entire body of Swiss citizens. Although it still might be that the word 'nation' or the adjective 'national' are less frequent in Switzerland than, say, in France, they are almost never used to describe linguistic communities.[45]

What is even more worth our attention is the differential use of the word 'nation' in different parts of the country. It seems, in fact, that German-speaking Swiss use it less frequently from the Francophones or Italophones. Thus the August First is called 'National Holiday' in French (*Fête nationale*) and in Italian (*Festa nazionale*) but 'Federal Holiday' (*Bundesfeier*) in German.[46] There is a similar usage in the case of 'National Museum' (*Musée national*; *Museo nazionale*), which is called 'Country Museum' (*Landesmuseum*) in German, or in the cases of 'National Library' (*Landesbibliothek*; *Bibliothèque nationale*; *Biblioteca nazionale*) and 'National Exposition' (*Landesausstellung*; *Exposition nationale*; *Esposizione nazionale*) (cf. Altermatt 1996: 25). Although I cannot develop this point any further here I believe that certain reluctance in using the term 'nation' in German-speaking Switzerland

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[44] 'Una nazione basata sulla comune decisione di diverse entità linguistiche, culturali, religiose, regionali ed economiche di voler vivere insieme richiede, se vuole evitare tensioni pericolose tra le sue componenti, valori etici sicuri e probabilmente più ferrei di quelli delle altre nazioni . . . una nazione come la Svizzera può continuare a esistere solo se si baserà sempre di più su spiccati valori di tolleranza, moralità e solidarietà', Franco Cavalli cited in *Giornale del Popolo*, 2 August 2000.

[45] I have only noticed once, in a Swiss-Italophone daily newspaper, an article in which the author at the end wrote: 'Because Ticino is, after all, a small nation' (*Perché in fondo il Ticino è una piccola nazione*) (Massimo De Lorenzi, 'Storia senza monumenti', *La Regione*, 4 May 2000). The author regrets the lack of monuments that would reflect the 'authentic history of Ticino' instead of the 'ready-made history' (*storia-montaggio*) of Switzerland. As my thesis was in progress at the time I wrote a rather ironic response arguing that the Swiss identity was, indeed, constructed but so was the identity of Ticino; I furthermore downplayed the claim that Ticino constitutes a 'nation' (Nenad Stojanovic, 'Storie autentiche o costruite?', *Giornale del Popolo*, 26 May 2000). Although the response was published on the page 2 of another major Swiss-Italophone newspaper neither the chief redactors of that newspaper, nor myself, have ever received letters of complaint or of protest. I assume that it would have been the case if there were really a 'minority nationalism' (cf. Kymlicka 1998: 127) in that part of Switzerland. Note, moreover, that the author only spoke of Italian-speaking Canton Ticino without taking into consideration the Italophones from the Canton Grisons. On the absence of a strong common identity in *Svizzera italiana* and on incomprehension between Italophones from the Canton Ticino and Canton Grisons see also Claudio Lardi, 'Gibt es die italienische Schweiz?', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 7 August 2000.

[46] Although 'Bundesfeier' (Federal Holiday) is the official term for August First in German-speaking Switzerland, I have recently discovered that sometimes the term 'Nationalfeier' (National Holiday) is also used (cf. 'Für eine weltoffene Schweiz', *Tages-Anzeiger*, 2 August 2000).

might stem from the fact that the conception of nation in neighboring Germany and Austria has had traditionally very 'ethnic' connotations.

Nonetheless, this point is interesting because Kymlicka, probably influenced by Canadian experience, claims that the language of nationhood is often adopted by 'minority nations' in order to describe *their own* institutions and practices and that they are reluctant to use such a language at the *pan*-state level and sometimes see it even as an 'insult' or a 'denigration' (Kymlicka 1998: 132). Now the example of Switzerland shows the very opposite, namely (a) that the language of nationhood is used by *all* language groups to describe their *common* institutions, practices and collective citizenship; (b) that the language groups in numerical minority do not only accept the practice of such a discourse at the pan-state level but use it even *more frequently* than the most numerous language group.

Therefore, if this evidence is sufficient to show that the Swiss use their 'power to name [themselves]' in such a way as to see themselves as forming one nation and if 'respecting this power is seen as a crucial test of respect for the group as a whole' (Ibid.), then it must be clearly stated that Kymlicka has failed such a test when he constantly speaks of Switzerland as of 'multination' state, and even more so when he describes it as 'the most multinational country' (Kymlicka 1995: 18).

Identity-based argument

In the section 1.3. I have examined in detail the tension between Kymlicka's liberal credo and his implicit, albeit not overt, endorsement of the idea that nation represents the 'primary focus of identification' of individuals. Since Kymlicka claims that Switzerland constitutes a multination state, then it is appropriate that we look for some evidence that would mach such a claim with the belief that nations make up our primary identities. To be more specific, if Kymlicka believes that it is a 'general trend' that people's primary identification go their nation, then one should logically expect that the primary identity of the inhabitants of Switzerland ('the most multinational country') should go to their respective linguistic communities.

Thus it is important to point out the *kind* of attachment that the citizens of Switzerland show toward their communities. Here I rely on a recent study of Kriesi et al.

(1996) which aim was to assess the salience of the 'linguistic cleavage' in Switzerland.[47] The authors refer to two Swiss surveys, carried out in 1990 and in 1994. The interviewees were asked to indicate their primary attachment among the range of six choices: local municipality, canton, linguistic region, Switzerland, Europe or the World.[48] Because of the very object of that study, the surveys were conducted in different linguistic regions of the country.[49] Figures 1 and 2 show the results of the survey in French- and German-speaking Switzerland. We can observe that in French-speaking part of the country there is a *great dispersion of primary attachments* insofar as 25 to 30% declared 'Switzerland' as their main identity whereas other five forms of identification score around 15% each (slightly less so in the case of affection to 'Europe'). In the light of the topic of this essay I shall stress that *the attachment to the linguistic community is barely 15% (in 1990) or 14% (in 1994)*. This is, indeed, a rather paradoxical outcome for defenders of a linguistically determined 'multinational' Switzerland. The results in German-speaking Switzerland, on the other hand, are less balanced because the main attachment goes to Switzerland (43 and 44%) and to local municipality (21 and 25%) whereas other four identities range between 6 and 11%. *The attachment to the German-speaking Switzerland varies between 11% in 1990 and 6% in 1994* (the difference is mostly due to the increase in the identification to one's local municipality). The Italian-speaking Swiss were not taken into consideration in the 1990 survey and the tiny Romansch-speaking group not at all. However, the authors observe, with some reserves due to the statistical errors, that in 1994 the attachment to Switzerland as primary identity in the Italian-speaking Canton Ticino was of 34%.

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[47] For a critical review, see Grin (1997).

[48] I acknowledge that there are many potential flaws in this type of surveys which look into the issues of personal identity. For instance, the respondent's answers may vary upon context and within a given period of time. But I would also like to recall that I am simply using the type of survey that Kymlicka himself relies on in order to prove that it is a 'general trend' that the members of national minorities designate their national groups as 'primary foci of identification' (cf. Kymlicka 1995: 89-90).
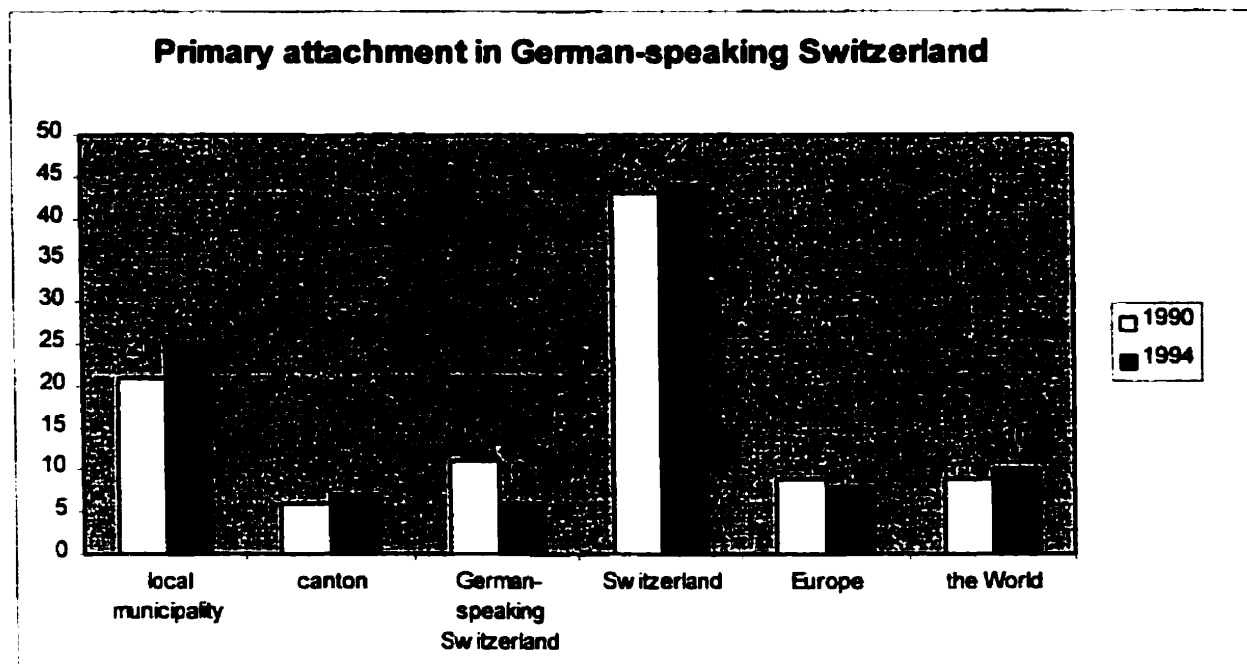
[49] The margins of error have not been presented.

Figure 1. Primary attachment in French-speaking Switzerland (1990 and 1994)

Primary attachment in French-speaking Switzerland
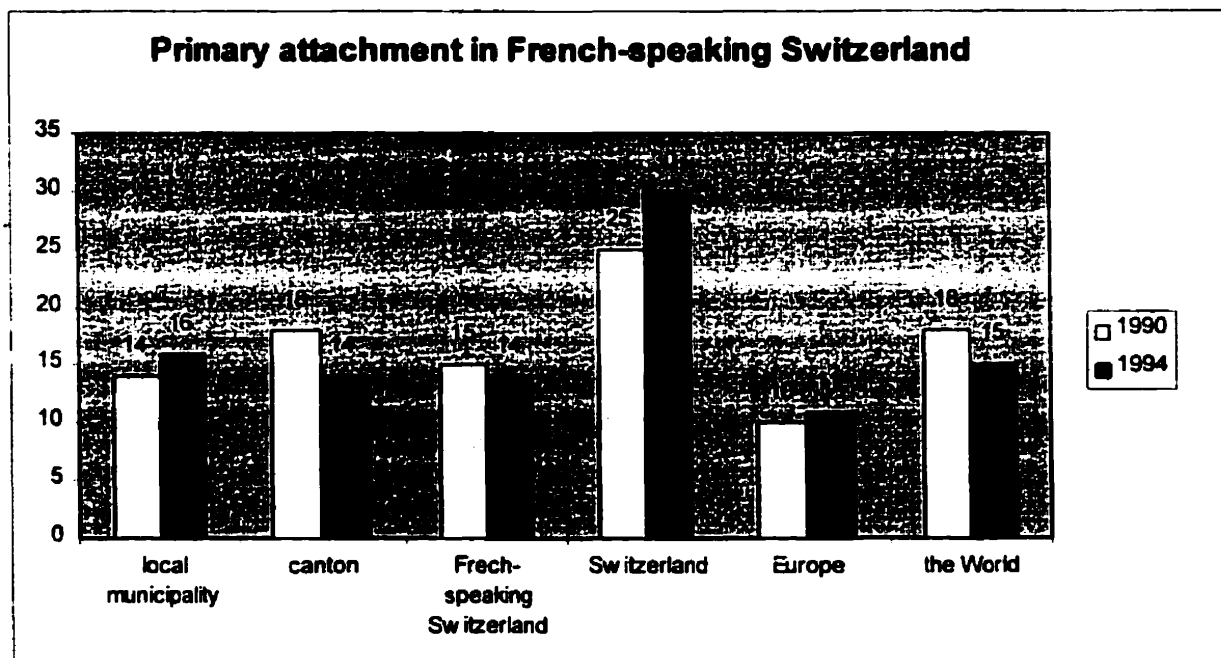
Source: Kriesi et al. (1996: 55)

Figure 2. Primary attachment in German-speaking Switzerland (1990 and 1994)

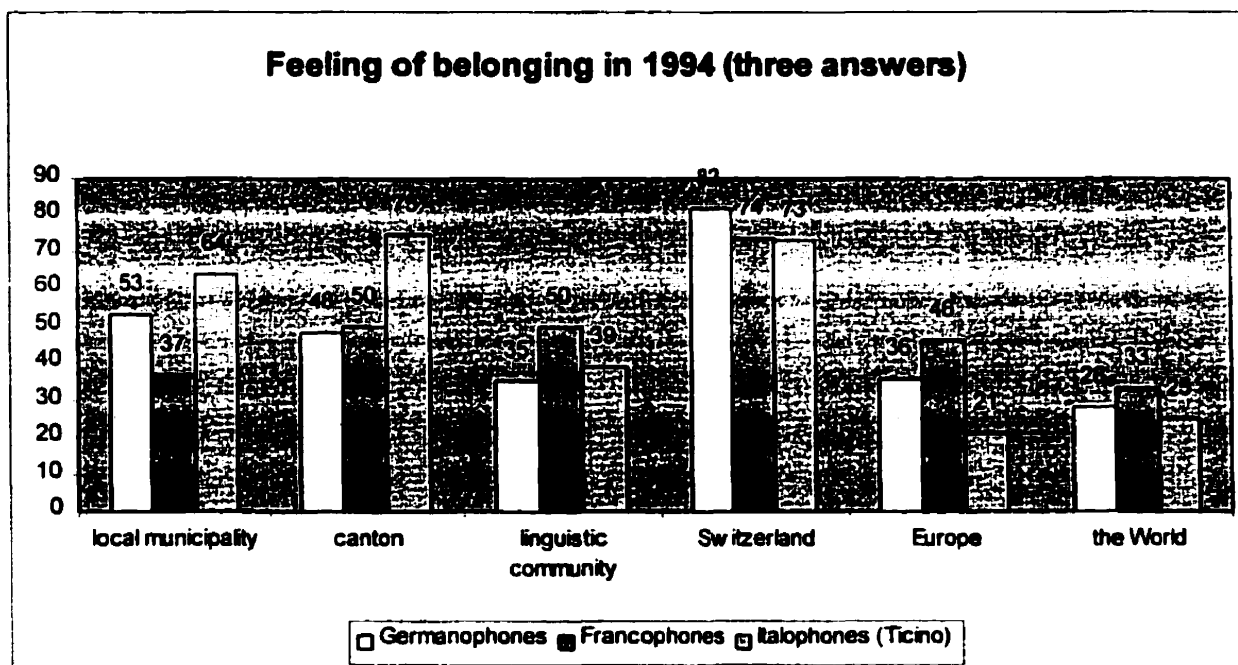**Primary attachment in German-speaking Switzerland**

Source: Kriesi et al. (1996: 55)

It is also interesting to display the results of the same survey but this time through accumulation of *first three preferences* of the interviewees (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Feeling of belonging in 1994 (three answers)

Feeling of belonging in 1994 (three answers)

Legend: Germanophones, Francophones, Italophones (Ticino)

Categories: local municipality, canton, linguistic community, Switzerland, Europe, the World

Source: Kriesi et al. (1996: 56)

Again, we can observe a great degree of dispersion of identities among Swiss citizens. The attachment to one's linguistic community is important, and slightly more so among the Francophones, but it is by no means a 'primary focus of identification' and it is well counter-balanced by other identities.

Moreover, it is especially relevant for this essay to point out a *high degree of attachment to Switzerland* among *all three* linguistic groups. The differences between Germanophones, Francophones and Italophones from Ticino are here minimal. Such an outcome is also confirmed by another question asked in the same survey. The interviewees were invited to qualify their attachment to Switzerland on a scale ranging from 1 ('not attached at all') to 6 ('very attached'). The average outcomes were 4,9 (Germanophones), 4,9 (Francophones) and 5,1 (Italophones). This 'belle unanimité' (Kriesi et al. 1996: 56) in the attachment to Switzerland among all language groups has also been found in the study of Melich (1991) in which 28% of the interviewees declared themselves as 'very proud' (*très fiers*) of being Swiss, 43% as 'proud enough' (*assez fiers*); only 13% felt 'not very proud' (*pas très fiers*) and 5% 'not proud at all' (*pas fiers du tout*) (cited in Kriesi et al. 1996:57). These proportions were generally valid for all linguistic regions.

All these results put Kymlicka's argument on a very shaky ground. Contrary to his idea on the importance of the language of nationhood the Swiss language communities neither describe themselves as 'nations' nor do they appear primarily attached to such communities.

Now Kymlicka does not seem to ignore this strong attachment to Switzerland among its linguistic groups. However, he claims that we deal here with 'patriotism' and not with 'national identity'.

> To say that these countries are 'multination' states is not to deny that the citizens view themselves for some purposes as a single people. For example, the Swiss have a strong sense of common loyalty, despite their cultural and linguistic divisions. . . . Some commentators describe this common loyalty as a form of national identity, and so consider Switzerland a nation-state. I think this is misleading. We should distinguish 'patriotism', the feeling of allegiance to a state, from national identity, the sense of membership in a national group. . . . [T]his sense of patriotism is so strong that the Swiss are, in some ways, a single 'people', as well as being a federation of peoples. (Kymlicka 1995: 13; 187)

My aim here is not to engage in a sterile debate about terminology. After all, everything depends on definitions that one assigns to terms like 'patriotism', 'nationalism', 'nation' or 'national identity' (cf. Viroli 1995). Therefore, the above-cited passages from Kymlicka, if taken on their own, are not misleading per se.

Where Kymlicka must be challenged is, rather, in his elaboration of the concept of 'multination' state as applied to Switzerland. As a matter of fact, he seems to have a deep misunderstanding of the Swiss case. First, Switzerland *is not* a 'federation of two or more European cultures' or a 'federation of [linguistically defined] distinct peoples' (1998: 13). Second, it is inaccurate to say that the members of its 'minority nations [i.e. linguistic groups]' have a 'strong *national* consciousness' (1998: 187; emphasis added) or that Switzerland contains 'powerful minority nationalisms . . . with [its] French and Italians' (1998: 127). There are no 'French' or 'Italians' in Switzerland. The French- and Italian-*speaking* inhabitants of Switzerland were members of the Swiss Confederacy well before the establishment of France or Italy as nation-states and much more before the creation of French and Italian nationhood. To consider them as 'French' or as 'Italians' is simply prejudicial and

anachronistic. Third, when discussing Switzerland he rightly affirms that 'there are all too many examples of countries where the institutionalization of national identities and rights has not prevented civil strife (e.g. Lebanon; Yugoslavia) (Ibid.). Although it is not very clear whether he thinks that this is the case of Switzerland (the location of the passage, however, suggests so), it must be clearly recalled that there is no institutionalization of linguistic groups in Switzerland. Fourth, the kind of federalism that exists in Switzerland is not 'asymmetrical'. In fact, Kymlicka is very attentive to draw the distinction between 'symmetrical' and 'asymmetrical' federal arrangements. The former are more suitable, he claims, to nation-states like Germany or the United States, whereas the latter are a much more appropriate solution to 'multination' states.

I suspect that much of these and other misperceptions of Switzerland stem from the fact that Kymlicka seems very much influenced by Canadian contest. The desire to provide fresh insights and alternative solution to the 'Canadian impasse' is certainly welcome but it shall not be arbitrarily projected on other countries and on other social contexts. Switzerland has its own specific historical development, a unique political culture and a very particular pattern of resolving its internal (by no means only linguistic) conflicts (cf. Schmid 1981, McRae 1983, Linder 1994). Reducing it to the status of 'multination' state does not render justice to its political experience.

Is Switzerland _becoming_ a multination state?

Until now I have shown that Kymlicka is wrong in his assessment of the Swiss case. Switzerland is not a multinational country from both historical and sociological point of view. Historically it was created through a federation of 25 cantons and semi-cantons and eventually followed rather typical phases of nation-building. Sociologically, different Swiss linguistic groups consider themselves as members of one Swiss nation and have not adopted the language of nationhood on their own. The degree of their allegiance to Switzerland and to Swiss national identity is still very high today.

However, it is still worth discussing whether Switzerland is in a process of _becoming_ a 'multinational' country, linguistically defined. I will proceed here in the following manner. I discuss (1) the impact of external circumstances upon Swiss identity; (2) increasing influence

of the mass media on the linguistic segmentation of public opinion; (3) the potential of division through mechanisms of direct democracy; and (4) decrease of non-linguistic cleavages.

The 'special case' (*Sonderfall*) of Switzerland in the European and, possibly, global arena has incited many authors to provide an evaluation of the Swiss experience. Interesting enough, most of the 'negative' critiques came from Swiss authors, whereas foreign commentators have been more keen on positive appraisals (e.g. Siegrfried 1948, McRae 1964, Kohn 1956, Deutsch 1976, Steinberg (1996 [1976]), Habermas 1992). The former, for instance, concern the consociational nature of Swiss institutions (Steiner and Obler 1977), its direct democracy (Germann 1975), or even the Swiss tradition of neutrality (Favez 1988). For the purposes of this essay, however, it is especially interesting to mention some critiques that discuss the notion of Swiss identity. Kriesi, for instance, argues that 'Swissness' can be considered as 'negative identity'.[50] By this the author wants to say that the Swiss common identity, 'if such identity exists', has principally been a product of foreign menace. Throughout the history the Swiss managed to escape the wars conducted by their neighbors and this, in turn, provided a good basis for the creation of a sense of common destiny. It is no wonder that many commentators (e.g. Im Hof 1991) see in the Second World War the highlight of the Swiss nationhood.[51] The relevance of the foreign menace for the Swiss identity partly explains the challenge that, after the disappearance of the last menace – the 'red' menace –, a peaceful supranational structure like European Union (EU) puts on Switzerland. This is also one of the keys of understanding the reluctance of one part of the population to join the EU. For these reasons it has been argued that the very idea of Swiss neutrality had a very specific internal function – to avoid internal divisions and foster, as far as possible, internal cohesion.

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[50] '[L]'identité commune des Suisses, si identité commune il y a, est surtout une identité négative' (Kriesi 1995 : 16).

[51] The importance of the World War II on the Swiss sense of identity has been very manifest since the mid 1990s when the historical role of Switzerland and its attitude towards Germany have been severely questioned and criticized. The Swiss government has set up a special commission of Swiss and foreign historians – the Berger Commission – charged to shed a light on this period of the Swiss history. The final report of the Commission is due for 2001.

Moreover, Kriesi claims that within Switzerland the peace of different groups was assured through 'mutual ignorance'. 'Live and let others live' (*leben und leben lassen*) was the Swiss way of dealing with differences since the religious wars in 15th century. To sum up:

> Mutual ignorance within and reluctance [*Enthaltung*] towards the outside world – that was the price of the multicultural coexistence in the Swiss nation.[52] (Kriesi 1999b: 151; my translation)

Nonetheless, the mistake would be to interpret the idea of 'mutual ignorance' only in terms of linguistic differences. What the author means here is, rather, the *cloisonnement* of many sorts of communities. For example, Steinberg (1996 [1976]) has pointed out how up to the 1960s in the French-speaking Switzerland the people would read different newspapers which corresponded to cantonal, local and religious divisions. Thus the formation of public opinion would not go hand-in-hand with linguistic differences but rather cut across them. It should be no surprise to note that the Catholic newspaper in all linguistic communities would discuss some political issues in a similar way and produce one 'catholic' public opinion (cf. Lijphart (1977). In his important study on the 'path into ghetto' of Swiss Catholics Urs Altermatt affirmed:

> A Catholic might be born in a Catholic hospital, attend Catholic schools from kindergarten to university, read Catholic newspapers and magazines, vote for the Catholic party and take part in Catholic clubs or associations. It was not unusual for a Catholic to insure himself against sickness or accident with a Catholic company and put his savings in a Catholic saving bank. (Altermatt 1972: 2; cited in Steinberg 1996 [1976]: 3)

The change, however, came with the progressive emancipation of traditional communities, with the development of new forms of life and, especially, with the increasing importance of the media of mass communication (radio and TV). The traditional 'opinion-makers', the newspapers, began to struggle and many of them either merged or disappeared (Steinberg 1996 [1976] 153-154). The ordinary German- French- and Italian-speaking Swiss listen primarily to the radio stations in their own language (first Swiss and then foreign-based) and the proportion of those who listen Swiss radio channels of another linguistic region hardly reaches 10% (Kriesi et al. 1996: 16-17). As far as the TV is concerned, the situation is even

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[52] 'Gegenseitiges Ignorieren im Inneren und Enthaltung gegen aussen, dies war der Preis für multikulturelle Koexistenz in der Schweizer Nation.'

more relevant because over 60% of the people watch foreign TV stations in their own language (including the news) and less than 5% turn to TV channels from other Swiss linguistic regions (Ibid. 17-18). Thus Kriesi et al. (1996: 18) ask 'comment se comprendre sans dialoguer, en utilisant des informations circonscrites à sa région linguistique?'. The famous Mill's claim that '[a]mong a people without fellow-feeling, especially if they read and speak different languages, the united public opinion, necessary to the working of representative government, cannot exist' may eventually become reality in Switzerland (1993 [1861]: 392).

The authors observe that this 'segmentation of public space' in Switzerland certainly does not help *political deliberation* which rests on dialogue, persuasion, exchange of opinions and making of compromise. On the other hand, political deliberation in Switzerland is, much more than in other Western democracies, a matter of daily life. I refer here, of course, to the frequent use of *direct democracy* that is nowhere as practiced as in Switzerland and that requires constant public debates, discussions and deliberations.[53] In his discussion on 'consociational democracies' Lijphart has rightly noted that,

> Switzerland . . . exhibits a curios mixture of proportional delegation of decision to the level of the
> national executive with occasional lapses into the *polar opposite*, direct democracy and majority rule –
> only slightly tempered by the fact that on constitutional questions both popular and cantonal majorities
> are required for passage. (Lijphart 1977: 40; emphasis added)

As a matter of fact, it sounds very odd that a state with such a deep societal differences would adopt a system according to which a majority of 50%+1 rules.[54] It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that in some occasions, on some issues, one or another linguistic region (if one is concerned with this specific societal difference) has been placed in minority – that is, the result at the national level was contrary to the one obtained within a given linguistic region.[55] What must not be taken for granted is the 'minorization' of the French- and Italian-

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[53] The number of nationwide referenda in Switzerland was 382 compared to 243 *in all other world countries taken together* (1978 data) (Linder 1994: 138).

[54] Neidhart (1970), however, argues that Switzerland has adopted consociational structures mainly *because of* direct democracy. To put it shortly, political parties, trade-unions and patronal associations have been under pressure to reach consociational agreements knowing that in the case of a failure to reach an agreement on a given issue the loosing side could easily gather necessary signatures and organize a popular referendum.

[55] For instance, on 6 December 1992 the Swiss voters refused to ratify the entrance of their country into the European Economic Area (EEA). But the refusal was primary due to the votes from the German- and Italian-speaking cantons whereas the French-speaking ones accepted to adhere to the EEA overwhelmingly. Although

speaking only. The detailed study of Kriesi et al. shows in fact that all linguistic regions have been 'minorized, although the two 'latin' language groups have been slightly more so than the German-speaking one. Moreover, since 1848 the percentage of general minorizations has steadily decreased from approximately 40% in the period between 1848 and 1874 to some 15% in the post-war period (1949-1987). If we concentrate only on, say, French-speaking Switzerland the approximate figures are, respectively, 45% and 20% (Ibid. 20).

Even though the evidence shows the decrease in minorizations in relative numbers, there is a certain increase in absolute numbers, due to the tremendous increase of use of direct democracy in Switzerland (from 8 in 1880 to 50 in 1980) (Ibid. 22). All this, mixed with the increasing importance of the mass media in dividing the Swiss public space along linguistic lines, can give the *impression* of increasing salience of linguistic cleavage in Switzerland. The authors rightly conclude

> [S]i le clivage linguistique a *globalement* et *objectivement* la tendance a *perdre de son importance* en ce qui concerne les conséquences dans le résultat des votations fédérales, cette augmentation en termes absolus *peut donner l'impression* que le fameux fosse s'agrandit, puisque les occasions de le mettre en évidence deviennent plus fréquentes. A ce phénomène s'ajoute depuis la même période une plus forte *médiatisation*, une publicité plus grande faite autour de ces résultats de votations, autant dans les journaux que dans les supports audiovisuels, qui, ajoutés à la demande d'analyses instantanées des médias, sont en mesure de *déformer la perception* de certaines tranches de la population en matière, ce dernier phénomène faisant référence à la dimension organisationnelle du clivage opéré par les médias.
>
> (Kriesi et al. 1996 : 28; emphases added)

Hence, although the impact of the linguistic cleavage during the national referenda has relatively decreased in recent years, the people nevertheless *perceive* it as being more salient. The mass media, in particular, favor the diffusion of such a perception and, thus, nourish the very cleavage in question.

To these considerations we must add the decrease of other cleavages in the Swiss society. If in the 1970s Lijphart (1977) could still observe that the religious cleavage was the

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language was not the only factor of divergence in that particular referendum (a study has shown that divisions ran as sharply between city and country voters and between higher and lower-income groups as between language groups, cf Steinberg 1996 [1976]: 108) the event has considerably shaken the political scene in Switzerland.

most important dividing line and that, together with the cleavage among social class, it produced a situation of 'cross-cutting cleavages' (contrary to Dutch *verzuiling* or segmental cleavages) a similar study conducted in the 1990s has shown that, in Switzerland, after only 20 years the linguistic cleavage is still there and that it has slightly gained on importance, whereas the religious and other cleavages have diminished (Trechsler 1994).

To sum up, the recent developments in Switzerland show that there is a *potential* for the development of a 'multinational Switzerland'. The fact that the Swiss identity has partly been a product of foreign menace, that the rapid development of the radio and TV influence the segmentation of the public space, that direct democracy provide structural basis for possible 'minorizations' of language communities and that other societal cleavages are in decline – all this suggests that Switzerland might one day become a multination state. In that case, Gellner's claim that Switzerland represent an anomaly and that usually the cultural and political nation show a tendency to become the same thing, would prove true (O'Leary 1997: 216).

A question arises: if Switzerland were to become a multinational country some day, should we regret it? I think that there will be something to be regretted and this will make up my next section where I provide some final normative remarks on the Swiss nation.

2.3. Normative considerations

There are many normative reasons for putting forward the idea of a single Swiss nation: (1) it is a 'thin' nation of citizens; (2) it provides stability; (3) it exemplifies constitutional patriotism; (4) it prevents the politicization of identities; (5) it safeguards individual freedom and multiple identities.

As we have seen the official discourse in Switzerland, both at the level of institutions and at the one of intellectuals, describes Switzerland as 'nation by will' (*Willensnation*) or as 'political nation' (*politische Nation*) (see e.g. Hanna Muralt-Müller 1999). In a recent allocation the Swiss president Adolf Ogi affirmed that 'Switzerland does exist!' as an indirect response to the 1992 title of the Swiss pavilion at the World Exhibition at Seville ('La Suiza no existe!').[56] In other words, there has always been an acknowledgment within Switzerland

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[56] Cited in *La Regione*, 2 August 2000.

that the extremely decentralized and diversified character of the Swiss state is often perceived in the 'foreign' eyes as 'artificial'. In order to prove the contrary and defend the very existence of the Confederacy and of the Swiss nation there has always been the push towards taking advantage of Switzerland's (supposed) weaknesses and making it the source of strength and national pride. No wonder, then, that 'plurilinguism' as such has been constantly cherished both at home and abroad as one of the most 'characteristic' Swiss traits.

Aside from such self-appraisals, it is worth asking whether there are really features of the Swiss nation that ought to be defended.

First, Switzerland constitutes a 'thin' nation. Its historical (cantonal), regional, linguistic, religious and other diversities have always prevented a strong or 'thick' sense of nationhood. It is, what Habermas (1992) would term a 'nation of citizens'. Being 'Swiss' can never be as 'thick' as being 'French' or 'German'. Concepts of 'liberty' and 'diversity' have always been at the center of the Swiss identity. For these reasons being Swiss cannot be but, first and foremost, a *political* identity. This does not mean to negate that over the centuries a truly Swiss culture has been created[57] but, if such culture exists, it will always have to be open to discussion and possibly negation. I have already mentioned the 1992 World Exhibition at Seville where the Swiss pavilion bore the title *La Suiza no existe!* ('Switzerland doesn't exist!'). Most of the people found this *mise en question* of existence of Switzerland rather amusing, a sort of self-irony. I doubt that the reaction would be the same in, say, France or Germany.

Why is common political identity to be preferred to a cultural one? In multicultural settings (and all countries are, to some extent, multicultural), a certain allegiance to a common political community is needed (Kymlicka 1995, Ch. 9). Habermas (1992) qualifies this as 'constitutional patriotism'. To be sure, Kymlicka also argues that the Swiss are patriotic but that this is not expression of common *national* identity (1995: 13).[58] As I said

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[57] Steinberg (1996: 257-258) powerfully illustrates this culture in his recount of border-crossing at the Swiss-Italian frontier in the Canton Ticino. Only a river divides two small villages both called 'Ponte Tresa'. But the one is in Italy and the other in Switzerland. People behave differently, read different newspapers, watch soccer games with different passion, their buildings have different architectural traits.
[58] In a recent co-edited volume Kymlicka and Norman (2000: 19) write: '. . . the Swiss share a common national identity despite speaking four different "national" languages.' I cannot say at this point whether this phrase represent a substantial change in Kymlicka's perception of Switzerland, or, indeed, whether it can be really taken as his personal statement.

earlier, my aim is not to engage in a fruitless discussion about the terminology. What is important is to deny that '[i]n Switzerland . . . national groups feel allegiance to the larger state only because the larger state recognizes and respects their distinct national existence'. The Swiss state has never recognized its linguistic groups as 'nations' (nor have these groups ever demanded it). It did recognize, however, the four languages as national languages, it promoted and protected the one endangered language (Romansch), it cherished within and without its plurilinguism. But it also protected its religious peace, it supported the less wealthy Alpine cantons, it provided free heroin to drug addicts etc. Moreover, the Swiss linguistic groups do not consider themselves as nations. The phrase should thus follow: in Switzerland citizens feel allegiance to the larger state only because the state *does not hinder their individual development*. One can live all one's life in one's village on the top of the mountain and speak only dialect on every-day basis and never see other parts of Switzerland or learn other languages. But this makes one no less Swiss than a cosmopolitan, urban person who speaks fluently all national languages and travels all around Switzerland.

Second, there is the issue of *stability*. We can only speculate whether Switzerland as a state would loose its stability if the Swiss linguistic groups were to become nations. Kymlicka, however, seems to share such a view:

> The sense of being a distinct nation within a larger country is potentially destabilizing. On the other hand, the denial of self-government is also destabilizing, since it encourages resentment and even secession. Concerns about social unity will arise however we respond to self-government claims. A *fundamental challenge* facing *liberal* theorists, therefore, is *to identify the sources of unity* in a democratic multination state. The nineteenth-century English theorist A. V. Dicey once said that a stable multination federation requires 'a very peculiar state of sentiment' among its citizens, since 'they must desire union, and must not desire unity'. Henri Bourassa made a similar point when he said that 'special development' of the French-Canadian nation 'must come about in conjunction with the development of a more general patriotism that *unifies* us, without *fusing* us' (Cook 1969: 149). Liberal theory has not yet succeeded in clarifying the nature of this 'peculiar sentiment'. (Kymlicka 1995: 192; emphasis added)

I believe that Switzerland offers an interesting example of such 'peculiar sentiment' that 'unifies without fusing'. Kymlicka's failure to recognize that such a sentiment is truly

national makes him misunderstand the Swiss case and draw flawed conclusions from it. I believe that one of the 'secrets' of Switzerland lies in the fact that it was never conceived of as a state composed of distinct nations. This assertion would make *some* sense only if we see each canton as forming a 'nation'. But the cantons were (and are) not even homogenous within themselves. Most of them have been deeply divided along political lines as the example of political struggles between radicals and conservatives in the 19th century show. Such political divisions are still evident today, which is also demonstrated through an outstanding stability of the electorate (Steinberg 1996: 116-117).

The cantons are also divided along regional lines. In the politics of the Italian-speaking canton Ticino the divisions between the *Sopraceneri* (North) and *Sottoceneri* (South) still matters a lot (cf. Arigoni and Urio 1986). Such regional differences were so important that they even caused the break-up of some cantons. So the Canton Unterwalden split in two semi-cantons (Obwalden and Nidwalden) in the 15th century because of the problems in communication between the two parts of the canton. The Canton Appenzell also split in two semi-cantons (Appenzell-Inner Rhoden and -Outer Rhoden) in 1597 because of the Catholic/Protestant cleavage. In other cases the relevant cleavage was urban/rural. So the Canton Basel split in two semi-cantons (Basel-City and Basel-Land) in 1833 out of these differences (Lijphart 1977: 96-97). Some of the cantons have been traditionally divided along religious lines. Many other cantons have had religious conflicts. For instance, the Catholics in the Canton Geneva struggled for years in order to have access to cantonal institutions. Of course, in some cases the linguistic divide was also important as the separation of Jura from Canton Bern show (the new Canton Jura was created in 1979). But at the same time this very example shows that the linguistic cleavage was not the only one because at the end of the day the majority of the people in the Southern Jura, French-speaking, decided to remain within the German-speaking Canton Bern with whom they shared religion (Protestantism) and political traditions (mostly Socialist and Peasant, unlike Northern Jura which is predominantly Demo-Christian and Radical) (Dunn 1972: 22; McRae 1983: 185-213). On the other hand, the other two bilingual Cantons (Fribourg/Freiburg and Valais/Wallis) as well as the trilingual one (Graubünden/Grischun/Grigioni) have remained united. Some

commentators have even called the splitting of a canton in two as one of the 'oldest conflict resolution techniques' in Switzerland (Dunn 1972: 32, cf. Lijphart 1977: 97).

All this proves that the Swiss state provided a political arena in which different social factions could create cross-cantonal (and cross-linguistic) alliances. As McRae notes:

> The handling of the Jura question represents the continuation of a longstanding Swiss practice of recognizing and accommodating new cleavages in the Confederation by incorporating new subcultural groups as independent territorial units in the political system. (McRae 1983: 213)

When discussing the question of stability Kymlicka at one point asks: 'Should the state then try to modify that national consciousness, so as to reduce or remove the minority's desire to form a distinct national society?' (1995: 184). David Miller endorses such a solution because, he believes, we should not 'regard cultural identities as given' but rather should have 'a stronger sense of the malleability of such identities, that is, the extent to which they can be created or modified consciously' (cited in Ibid. 184). I do not know whether the Swiss state should prevent a given group from adopting the language of nationalism in the future but it did not have to do so in the past because the historical divisions provided the bases for putting into question any form of identity that had pretended to be too overwhelming. While the direct state action in 'breaking the cultures' that have become too oppressive for individual autonomy by overshadowing other forms of identity, would probably produce counter-effects, one can still argue that it is desirable, from a normative point of view, to achieve an equilibrium of cultural identifications.

Third, as I noted earlier, the 'peculiar sentiment' that holds together the Swiss is *national* one. At the same time, however, the bulk of Swiss common national identity lies in their common *political culture*. Perhaps those who look for 'the ties that bind' should look closer into the political nature of Swiss identity. The concept of *constitutional patriotism* jumps again onto mind here.

According to Armingeon (1999: 238) the notion of constitutional patriotism (i.e. the feeling of solidarity based on the attachment to legitimized democratic institutions) was first proposed by Sternberger (1990) in an attempt to reflect on the bases of a common European identity, that to many seem as indispensable for stability of a future European federal state. In order to find out if there are any actual examples of such patriotism today, Armingeon tried to

operationalize such a concept for international comparison. He first focused on 'the trust in those core institutions of democracy, which are somewhat detached from political conflict and societal cleavages' – that is, the legislative body, public administration and the legal system (Armingeon 1999: 239). As these are only minimal requirements meeting the criteria of Sternberger, the author added the feeling of pride of belonging to the country that possesses these institutions. The findings have been based on a secondary analysis of the European Value Survey 1990 and the Swiss Value Survey 1988/89 and they are presented in Table 1. They are also compared with a subsequent Habermas' (1992) notion of constitutional patriotism according to which individuals need to be attached to the democratic institutions and *practice* democracy (i.e. be active participants in the democratic process). So a citizen is coded as constitutional patriot 'if he or she trusts in two or three core institutions, discusses politics sometimes or frequently with friends and does not refuse, in principle, to participate in legal demonstrations' (Armingeon 1999: 239).

Table 1: Constitutional patriots (% of respondents)

Country	Constitutional patriots (Sternberger)	Constitutional patriots with national pride (Sternberger)	Constitutional patriots (Habermas)
Belgium	42	34	14
Canada	45	42	22
Denmark	56	48	30
France	47	39	22
Germany	50	35	26
Great Britain	45	41	27
Iceland	55	52	34
Ireland	51	50	20
Italy	26	24	10
Netherlands	54	40	31
Norway	60	50	42
Portugal	36	34	14
Spain	38	35	12
Sweden	44	36	30
Switzerland	*71*	*59*	*17*
United States	52	50	22
Mean	48	42	23

Source: Armingeon 1999: 240; European Value Study 1990; Les valeurs des Suisses (Enquête Valeurs) 1988/89. Highest and lowest scores on all scales are in italics.

For the author the main finding is that Habermas' constitutional patriotism cannot be seen as suitable for the future source of common identity in European Union and that

Sternberger's vision seems more adequate for it. This is especially the case with Switzerland, which scores best on both scales based on Sternberger.[59] 'Switzerland, having no common culture, language or idea of common origins, is a case in point' (Armingeon 1999: 239).

The fact that a country like Italy, which I assume Kymlicka would label 'a nation-state', scores lowest on all three scales indicates that Kymlicka is probably pointing in the wrong direction when he takes national allegiances in linguistically defined states (such as Italy) for given and tries to find out 'the ties that bind' in 'multination' states. Is it just a coincidence that Italy, despite its (supposed) cultural and national unity has known a powerful autonomist-secessionist movement in Sicily until the late 1940s as well as in its Northern regions in the 1990s in its Northern regions? On the other hand its neighboring 'most multinational country', Switzerland, has never known secessionist movements.

Fourth, there are arguments against making Switzerland a multination state that refer to some fears expressed in the concept of *politicization of identity*. Public recognition of a given identity may be divisive for the society as a whole as well as oppressive for single individuals. This critique has been developed, for instance, by Glazer (1983). Over time such policies might well create 'a spiral of competition, mistrust, and antagonism between ethnic groups' (Kymlicka and Norman 2000: 10). While this must not necessarily lead to an open conflict or civil war, 'they will erode the ability of citizens to fulfill their responsibilities as democratic citizen – e.g. by weakening citizens' ability to communicate, trust, and feel solidarity across group differences'. As Kymlicka and Norman (Ibid. 10) rightly note, many defenders of minority rights have dismissed such worries and manifested their skepticism about appeals to citizenship. 'This is understandable since in many multi-ethnic and multinational states the rhetoric of citizenship has been used historically as a way of advancing the interests of the dominant national group' (Ibid. 10-11). In other words the discourse of citizenship has not provided a 'neutral framework' and has rather served as a 'cover by which the majority group extends its language, institutions, mobility rights, and political power at the expense of the minority'.

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[59] My intuition is that the poorer score of Switzerland on the scale of Habermas has to do with the notoriously law participation of the Swiss in public protests. Although I cannot develop the issue any further here, the reason of such situation is to be linked, once again, to direct democracy and its balancing effects. For instance, since the 1937 accord between trade-unions and patronal associations (also known as 'La paix du travail') strikes and public protests are very rare in Swiss society. See, for example, Kriesi (1995).

Now the Swiss experience does not bear these critiques. In Switzerland the 'rhetoric of citizenship' *was not* used to foster the interests of a dominant group. This is, at least partly, due to the fact that there was not a stable, rigid, 'dominant group'. German-speaking Swiss, although they make up for 63,6% (1990 data) of the Swiss population (citizens and foreigners alike), do not form a homogeneous linguistic bloc. It is certainly a fortunate historical and social circumstance that they actually *do not* speak 'German' (*Hochdeutsch*, or literary German) on every-day basis (cf. Altermatt 1997). Instead, they speak a variety of cantonal and local dialects quite distinct one from another. It is certainly no coincidence that in 1994 only 6% of them declared 'German-speaking Switzerland' as their primary identity. In other words, majorities and minorities in Switzerland are interchangeable and they by no means follow only linguistic lines.

Therefore, if some of the fears of 'politicization of identity' are justified and if the historical evidence of Switzerland show that citizenship has not been used as a means of advancing the interests of one specific group, then to engage in such policies of recognition would represent an unnecessary risk and, in that specific case, they would not be justifiable.

Fifth, there is the issue of *individual liberty*. Let us imagine that the Swiss state recognizes its four linguistic communities as distinct 'nations'. What consequences would this have on individual liberty? One of the major aspects of liberalism is its emphasis on the value of freedom of individuals to choose how to pursue their idea of 'good life'. This includes the freedom of defining one's own identity. Kymlicka claims that the question 'Who am I?', central in the works of come 'communitarian' authors, does not belong to the liberal discourse. A liberal should rather ask 'What kind of good life do I want to pursue?'.

Now why would the recognition of distinct nations in Switzerland represent a violation of this liberal principle? The risk, in my opinion, is that the people's primary identity would supposedly go to their national (i.e. linguistic) community. For instance, the jobs in administration would be almost certainly divided according to a 'national key'. A person would be primarily seen as, say, a Romand (that is, French-speaking Swiss) and only after as man or women, Catholic, Protestant or atheist, citizen of a given canton, etc. This, it seems to me, would constitute a severe prejudice on one's freedom to define his or her identity.

Moreover, the question would arise how to *define* the nationality of an individual. On the one hand, the fact that the Swiss nations would be based on language implies that the acquisition of nationality would correspond to the acquisition of a given language. For this reason I do not believe that there would be the risk of 'ethnically' defined nations. But, on the other hand, the fact is that in Switzerland the languages are territorially defined. This 'principle of territoriality', contrary to the 'personal principle', implies that an individual adopts the language of territory in which he or she decides to settle. Today a German-speaking Swiss cannot expect to correspond in German, either in oral or written form, with cantonal authorities in a French- or Italian-speaking canton; and vice versa. There are here some questions that we one should ask. If I decide to settle in a canton of another language would my nationality immediately change, according to the principle of territoriality? Or would I maintain my original nationality 'for ever' (as Karl Renner, one of the first defenders of 'personal principle', argued)? Or would I maintain my original nationality only until the point I become fully fluent in the language of my new canton of residence?

To be sure, a certain 'key of repartition' has always existed in Switzerland. It is certainly no coincidence that since its establishment in 1848 the Swiss government, the Federal Council, has never been 100% German-speaking. But, at the same time, the language has *never* been the *only* criterion. The party, religion, canton and, in the recent years, gender, have also played a role. So when in March 1999 the Parliament had to replace two resigning members of government (one Italian- and other German-speaking) the pressure from the left and from the feminists made that the Parliament was 'obliged' to elect at least one women. Some argued that, in order to respect the Swiss diversity, another Italian-speaking member of government should have been elected. However, although an Italophone candidate was presented, he did not get elected. What is even more interesting is the failure of the cantonal parliament of the Italian-speaking Canton Ticino to pass the resolution of sustain for this Italophone candidate. Once again, intra-cantonal regional and, especially, partisan divisions played their role (cf. Lijphart 1977 and the notion of 'cross-cutting cleavages'). The federal Parliament eventually elected a German-speaking woman and a bilingual French-/German-speaking male candidate. So the present Swiss government, if we were to look into linguistic criteria, is composed of four German-speaking, one French-speaking and two bilingual

(French/German). The main point is the following: if Switzerland were to become a country composed of four linguistic nations then the question of who belongs to which nationality would become crucial in repartition of government posts and, for instance, individuals with a bilingual identity would be obliged to 'choose sides'. The members of government would feel obliged to respond first to their linguistic nation and only after to the country as a whole. This is in contrast with the present-day situation. As the former Italian-speaking Federal Councilor Flavio Cotti once declared, a member of government cannot be said to represent a canton or linguistic community (Steinberg 1996: 120). There are fair chances that this would change if Switzerland were to become a multination state. Of course, the example of government is simply emblematic and a similar case could be made for many other contexts where the national qua linguistic identity would undermine one's individual liberty and autonomy.

I have tried to show that there are various normative reasons for preferring the idea of a single Swiss nation. It is a 'thin' nation of citizens that has been able to provide institutional stability through a political allegiance of its members while permitting the flourishing of multiple, sometimes competitive, identities. In this way the individuals/citizens have been granted a higher degree of personal freedom, which is the quintessence of liberal thought. By making Switzerland a 'multination' state many advantages of such a political pattern would be potentially endangered.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to defend the thesis that Switzerland is not a multination state. I first provided a historical account that shows how the idea of a Swiss nation developed since the late 18th century and helped the creation of the federal state in 1848. The nation-building process used traditional means in order to create the sense of a common national identity among the Swiss citizens.

Second, I emphasized some sociological evidence that does not support the idea that Switzerland is composed of distinct member nations. The Swiss linguistic group do not perceive themselves as distinct nations nor do they indicate their respective language

communities as 'primary foci of identification'. Rather, there is a great dispersion of identities and an important degree of allegiance to the common state perceived as forming one nation.

Third, faced with the prospect that Switzerland might become a multination state, I have tried to present some normative reasons that speak in favor of maintaining, both theoretically and politically, the concept of one Swiss nation.

These considerations should be sufficient to prove that Kymlicka's view that Switzerland constitutes a multination state is mistaken. The author should turn to other examples in order to empirically corroborate his theory.

CONCLUSION

In this essay my aim was twofold. In Chapter 1 wanted to provide a critical assessment of Kymlicka's theory on multiculturalism, and especially on his idea of 'multination' state, by pointing out some of its flaws and conceptual shortcomings. I do not believe that he succeeded in reconciling liberal premises with the language of nationalism. As a matter of fact, it is one thing to argue that individuals need a 'context of choice' in order to exercise their right to choose the 'good life'; it is a different thing to claim that such a context of choice is provided only and foremost by 'societal cultures' or 'nations' defined almost exclusively in linguistic terms.[60] If a liberal, as Kymlicka maintains, should agree with the idea that the question 'Who am I?' is irrelevant to his or her liberal credo, and thus no given community of individuals can be seen as constitutive of one's personal identity, then it is not comprehensible why Kymlicka implicitly endorses the idea that 'nation' is, might or should be the 'primary focus of identification'.

On the other hand, the passage from 'culture' to 'nation' in Kymlicka's theory is problematic also because the language of nationhood bears its specific political meanings. Kymlicka seems aware of this when he states that '[t]he sense of being a distinct nation within a larger country is potentially destabilizing', while acknowledging that he has not yet been capable of identifying the sources of unity in a 'democratic multination state' (1995:

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[60] Even though I cannot develop the point any further here, let me stress that the example of Switzerland indicates that the 'context of choice' was not necessarily provided by linguistic community. One could think here, for instance, of the context of 'ghetto' in which Swiss Catholics lived (Altermatt 1972).

192). In fact, this is even said to constitute the 'fundamental challenge' to which liberal theorists still have to provide an answer (Ibid.).

Moreover, Kymlicka's fundamental distinction between 'single nation-states' and 'multination states' is rather muddy. On the one hand, since he claims that '[i]n very few countries the citizens can be said to share the same language, or belong to the same ethnonational group', one would expect that all the countries in the world, except perhaps for 'Iceland and the Koreas' are multinational (1995: 1, 196 n. 1). In that case, most of the world's countries should wary today about their stability. On the other hand, Kymlicka continuously draws his conclusions from such a contrast by pointing on specific and relatively restricted examples of multination states. Such examples progressively narrow down until the author is left with only one credible country that he can pick out in order to show that a multination state can be viable – that country is Switzerland.

In Chapter 2 I have extensively dealt with the case of Switzerland. I have argued that Kymlicka misinterpreted the experience of that country in terms of multiculturalism when he labeled it the 'most multinational country' (1995: 18). My thesis, instead, has been that Switzerland constitutes a true nation-state. In order to illustrate this, I have first relied on some historical evidence showing that the Swiss nation has been progressively constructed since the late 18th century and especially since the 1848 federal Constitution. It is a result of a rather typical process of nation-building. I have then passed onto sociological evidence by examining the two features that Kymlicka himself sees as essential in adopting the language of nationhood: the power of a nation to name itself (designation-based argument) and the 'general trend' according to which nations represent people's 'primary identities' (identity-based argument). I have shown that the Swiss linguistic groups neither consider themselves as distinct 'nations' nor see their respective linguistic communities as their 'primary foci of identification'.

Nevertheless, it is still possible that, some day, Switzerland might become a multination state. Some evidence related to the increasing impact of the mass media in segmentation of the Swiss public space and the potentially dividing impact of direct democracy suggest that Switzerland might end up being divided into distinct linguistic blocs as it is the case with the contemporary Belgium. Faced with such an alternative I have

distinguished a couple of normative arguments that speak in favor of maintaining the concept of a single Swiss nation. So the Swiss nation is to be preferred because it cannot but constitute a 'nation of citizens'. Although its character is 'thin' it nevertheless provides a sufficient basis for stability of the liberal state. The kind of allegiance that the Swiss citizens show towards the common state can be partly described through Habermas' concept of 'constitutional patriotism', even though in the course of history a truly Swiss set of common memory and a specific political culture have also been developed. And, last but not least, such a nation permits to single individuals a greater degree of liberty through a constant relativization of identities and thus provide a better basis for the development of the liberal self. By making Switzerland a multination state and by politicizing the identities the issue of defining the sub-state nations would likely prove painful to many individuals and would represent a significant shift from the liberal ideal.

As indicated in Introduction my aim has not been to present an alternative 'Swiss model' of multiculturalism to the one developed by Kymlicka. This is partly due to the fact that Switzerland appears to me as a nation risen in rather peculiar historical, political and social circumstances, which prevents its direct export into other multicultural contexts. On the other hand, many authors have already dealt, directly or indirectly, with the idea that Switzerland might constitute a model for resolving 'multicultural dilemmas'.[61] As a matter of fact, this dual observation is a very commonplace in the Switzerland itself since the Swiss often speak both of a *Sonderfall* ('special case') and of a *Modell Schweiz* ('Switzerland as a model') in order to describe their country.[62]

Nevertheless, I would like to point out several interesting lessons that we have drawn from the Swiss experience, in the light of this essay.

- *Identity-pluralism*. Every individual and, as a result, every country have multiple identities. If a community based on a given characteristic (e.g. religion, 'race', language, social class) becomes predominant and/or

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[61] See, for instance, Weilenmann (1925), Siegfried (1948), Kohn (1956), McRae (1964), de Rougemont (1965), Deutsch (1976), Lijphart (1977), Watts (1991), Gillett (1989), Linder (1994). It suffices to read the titles of some of these works in order to notice the extent to which they are concerned with discussing the 'Swiss model'.

[62] Although these terms are in German there are widely used, in this form, in non-Germanophone parts of Switzerland as well.

overwhelming for determining one's identity, then the individual freedom of choosing one's own way of life will be seriously compromised. If I am primarily and continuously seen as, say, a person with the green eyes, then my sense of autonomy and self-esteem will be endangered because I possess other significant identities as well. Thus the societies that never give predominance to one given identity at the expense of the others are more respectful of individual freedom. Even though the imposition of one identity over the others may be, and often is, a social and not necessarily a political fact, we should at least strive for political non-recognition of only one kind of identity. In Switzerland, historical circumstances have provided the context of a very high degree of 'identity-pluralism'. At the same time, the Swiss state has never officially recognized only one specific identity but has, rather, underlined its general 'multicultural' character (linguistic, religious, social, cantonal, regional, urban/rural etc.).

- *Common political/national identity as a condition* since qua non *of a liberal polity*. It has been argued that for the purposes of a liberal state (i.e. need for trust, social justice and deliberative democracy) citizens of a given polity need to have some kind of attachment the country they live in (see, e.g. Miller 1995). This goal is, arguably, best achieved if the kind of attachment we need is *national*. Although one may list many reasons why Switzerland has had a long history of stable and just institutions, there is no doubt that the fact that its citizens perceive themselves as members of one nation has greatly contributed to this goal.

- *Relativization of the link between nation and culture*. It is a commonplace argument among contemporary liberal defenders of rights of minority cultures to claim that 'states' cannot be 'culturally neutral'. Although such an assertion can be accepted in general terms we should make distinction in terms of *degree* of such a recognition. A state might be obliged to recognize a given language as 'official' but it need not recognize only one. Switzerland has recognized its four languages as 'national languages' and three of them

as 'official'. But what is even more relevant here is that the choice of public language resides within single cantons, and that is where the every-day life of a common citizen is based in. Thus in a sense the Swiss state has remained 'neutral' in its linguistic policy. The Swiss nation, rather than being unilingual, is quadrilingual. This relativizes the link between nation. and culture and permits a more appropriate development of the ideal of a 'nation of citizens'.

- *Principle of territoriality.* Principle of territoriality assumes that a territory provides the basis for a political community which, within its limits, possesses its own sphere of jurisdiction. Some argue that borders can be drawn in such a way as to make a specific group self-governing on a given territory. This is often seen as a form of official recognition of such a group. However, I believe that this is misleading in the case of a liberal polity. In fact, once set up, a new territorial unit belonging to a broader democratic and liberal state ceases to be simply an entity in the possess of a given cultural group. Membership to it must be regulated in terms of *citizenship* and not in terms of culture. Thus it is possible to change the cultural preferences of such an entity if its citizens desire it. In other words, by drawing borders in a certain way we do not recognize a given group as *moral person* but, rather, make it full political participant within a common liberal state. In Switzerland splitting up of territories has been a common practice at least since the 16th century. The case of Jura shows how a political conflict based on alleged cultural differences has been appeased through political means. The new Canton Jura is, of course, French-speaking, but that is all that is left from once much more narrowly (and often ethnically) defined Jurassien identity. Being Jurassien today simply means being a *citizen* of the Canton Jura.

I have tried here to focus on some features of the Swiss experience that might be useful in resolving some contemporary multicultural dilemmas. These are only general suggestions that can be found, in a less explicit way, in different sections of the essay. They

are not meant to constitute any specific 'model' of multiculturalism but, rather, a general overview of what I find being the most interesting lessons that we can draw from Switzerland.

Switzerland is far from being a 'paradise in the Alps'.[63] It is presently struggling with some unpleasant memories from its not-so-old past (e.g. Nazi gold); it still has very restrictive naturalization laws based on 'ethnic' rather than 'civic' grounds (Froidevaux 1997, Kriesi 1999a: 17); it has witnessed serious displays of xenophobia and anti-Semitism in the recent years; it remains rather conservative and closed towards the 'external World'. Despite all that, in this essay I wanted to argue that the idea of a Swiss nation still bears normative importance and is still worth being preserved. In an increasingly pluralistic world the Swiss experience, while not immediately available as a ready-for-export product, might still indicate interesting ways for dealing with 'multicultural dilemmas'. As Karl Deutsch (1976: 64) once put it:

> The Swiss diversity is not an exception. Hundred years ago people used to think that linguistic and cultural uniformity of France was normal and that the diversity of Switzerland constituted an exception, something out of ordinary. Today the very opposite has come about. . . . *Untypical* is only the Swiss *success* in arriving at and in consolidating its political integration. And the experiences of the Swiss – how to motivate people to work together, how people learn together and maintain what they have learnt – have the greatest significance for the future of the World.[64] (emphases in original; my translation)

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[63] This is the title under which appeared, in the early 1990s, an article in *The Economist* in which Switzerland was declared the best country to live in.

[64] '[D]ie Verschiedenartigkeit der Schweiz ist keine Ausnahme. Man dachte vor 100 Jahren, die sprachliche und kulturelle Uniformität Frankreichs sei normal und die Verschiedenartigkeit der Schweiz bilde eine Ausnahme, etwas Ausserordentliches. Heute hat sich das Gegenteil herausgestellt. . . .*Untypisch* ist nur ihr *Erfolg* in der Erreichung und Behauptung der politischen Integration. Und die Erfahrungen der Schweizer, wie man die

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Menschen zur Zusammenarbeit motiviert, wie man zusammenarbeiten lernt und das Gelernte festhält, das scheint heute von grösster Bedeutung für die Zukunft der Welt.'

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