

Multicultural citizenship within multination states

Author(s): Will Kymlicka

Source: *Ethnicities*, September 2011, Vol. 11, No. 3 (September 2011), pp. 281-302

Published by: Sage Publications, Ltd.

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/23890689

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at https://about.jstor.org/terms



Sage Publications, Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Ethnicities*

This content downloaded from 161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Article

Ethnicities
11(3) 281–302
© The Author(s) 2011
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1468796811407813
etn.sagepub.com

Multicultural citizenship within multination states

Will Kymlicka
Queen's University, Canada

Abstract

In many western democracies today, there are calls to strengthen a sense of common citizenship as a way of building 'social cohesion' in increasingly diverse societies. Citizenship is to be promoted by, amongst other things, adding or strengthening citizenship education in schools, providing citizenship classes to immigrants, imposing new citizenship tests for naturalization, and holding citizenship ceremonies. In this article, I will examine this new citizenship agenda in the specific case of 'multination' states – that is, in states that have restructured themselves to accommodate significant sub-state nationalist movements, usually through some form of territorial devolution, consociational power-sharing, and/or official language status. What does it mean to promote a sense of common citizenship in multination states, and how does the new immigration-focused citizenship agenda relate to older debates on multinationalism? I will argue that in the particular context of multination states, these new citizenship agendas must promote a distinctly multinational conception of citizenship if they are to be fair and effective. But equally, we need to adapt familiar models of multinational citizenship to be more inclusive of immigrants. In short, if the citizenship agenda is to be effective, and to be fairly inclusive of both sub-state national groups and of immigrants, we need a more multinational conception of citizenship, and a more multicultural conception of multinationalism.

Keywords

citizenship, citizenship education, federalism, immigration, integration, multicultural, multination, national minorities, postnational, western democracies

Introduction

In many western democracies today, there are calls to strengthen a sense of common citizenship as a way of building social cohesion in increasingly diverse societies. Citizenship is to be promoted by, amongst other things, adding or strengthening citizenship education in schools, providing citizenship classes to immigrants,

Corresponding author:
Will Kymlicka, Philosophy Dept., Watson Hall 313, Kingston, K7L 3N6, Canada
Email: kymlicka@queensu.ca

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

imposing new citizenship tests for naturalization and holding citizenship ceremonies. As this list makes clear, the focus of much of this anxiety is immigrants, and their perceived lack of integration.[1] This renewed emphasis on citizenship is sometimes offered as an alternative to older ideas of multiculturalism – David Blunkett in the UK repeatedly contrasted a citizenship agenda with a multiculturalism agenda (McGhee, 2009: 48). But it is also found in countries that retain a commitment to multiculturalism, as in Canada or Sweden (Milani, 2008).

Accounts of the motives for, and effects of, this new 'citizenship agenda' vary. Critics argue that it panders to xenophobic sentiments (Wright, 2008), and/or reproduces ideological assumptions about the essential national homogeneity of existing citizens and of the alien otherness of newcomers (Blackledge, 2004; Stevenson, 2006; Milani, 2008). Defenders argue that it is based on a good-faith commitment to enabling integration, reflected in proactive campaigns to encourage naturalization, and a commitment to providing resources to enable immigrants to meet the new tests (Kiwan, 2008a; Etzioni, 2007).[2]

I will not directly address this general debate, but want instead to focus on the challenges involved in promoting citizenship in the specific case of 'multination' states – that is, in states that have restructured themselves to accommodate significant sub-state nationalist movements, usually through some form of territorial devolution, consociational power-sharing, and/or official language status (e.g. UK, Spain, Belgium, Canada, Switzerland). In such multination states, older ideas of homogenous national citizenship have already been contested and transformed as a result of mobilization by historic regional minorities, resulting in models of what we can call multinational citizenship. These multination states are just as likely as other western states to have significant immigrant populations, and to have witnessed anxieties about the impact of immigration on social cohesion and integration. And so, not surprisingly, these states have also witnessed calls for a renewed emphasis on citizenship.

However, if calls to promote a sense of common citizenship are controversial in traditional nation states, they are even more so in multination states where citizenship has already been pluralized to accommodate sub-state national groups. What does it mean to promote a sense of common citizenship in multination states, and how does this new immigration-focused citizenship agenda relate to older debates on multinationalism?

Promoting a sense of citizenship amongst their long-term residents, native-born or foreign-born, is a legitimate task of all democratic states. In that sense, some sort of 'citizenship agenda' is appropriate. However, I will argue that in the context of multination states, these new citizenship agendas must promote a distinctly multinational conception of citizenship if they are to be fair and effective. It is important that immigrants be socialized into the ethos of multinationalism and the practices of 'negotiating nationalism' (Norman, 2006).[3] But equally, we need to adapt familiar models of multinational citizenship to be more inclusive of immigrants. In short, if the citizenship agenda is to be effective, we need a more multinational conception of citizenship, and a more multicultural conception of multinationalism.

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

That may sound vague, but I will argue that it has important and surprising implications. To give one example, consider a pair of recent votes. In the 2003 regional election, 47 per cent of ethnic Pakistanis in Scotland voted for the separatist Scottish National Party (SNP) – that is, they voted for a party committed to breaking up Britain. This was partly due to the SNP's opposition to the Iraq War, but opinion polls show that about a third of Pakistanis in Scotland do in fact endorse Scottish independence. By contrast, in the 1995 referendum on independence in Quebec, immigrant groups voted almost unanimously against secession, and opinion polls confirm that this vote reflects a very high level of identification with Canada amongst immigrants in Quebec.

How are we to evaluate these cases in terms of citizenship? On most accounts of the goals of citizenship-promotion, the conclusion is obvious. According to Blunkett, the goal of the new citizenship agenda is to encourage immigrants' 'identifying with Britain' (Home Office, 2001, quoted in McGhee, 2009: 45) and their 'commitment to Britain' (Home Office, 2002: 32). If so, then the high level of Pakistani support for the SNP is evidence of a failure of the citizenship agenda. Conversely, the very high level of immigrant support for Canadian unity in Quebec is evidence of the successful inculcation of 'identifying with Canada' and 'commitment to Canada'.

And yet I would argue that we could draw the opposite conclusion. Pakistani support for the SNP may be evidence of successful integration into the ethos and practice of multinational citizenship, whereas the almost total absence of immigrant support for secession in Quebec may be evidence of failed integration into multinational citizenship. Successful integration into an ethos of multinational citizenship involves, at least in part, integration into ambivalent identifications and contested commitments.

I will return to these cases below, but let me first say more about the nature of substate nationalism, and the sort of multinational citizenship it generates. I will then discuss why the norms of multinational citizenship are relevant to citizenship promotion in the context of growing immigration.[4]

Multinational citizenship

For all of the anxiety about the impact of immigration on social cohesion, it is important to remember that the deepest challenge to social cohesion in many countries comes from their historic national minorities, not their immigrants. This is true, for example, of Spain, Belgium, Canada or indeed the UK. Politicians and pundits endlessly speculate about whether immigrants have a sufficiently strong sense of 'being Canadian' or 'being British', but if there is a problem with national identity in these countries, it is not in the first instance with immigrants. For example, when the 2003 UK Home Office Citizenship Survey asked 'how strongly you belong to Britain', 85.95 per cent of Indians, 86.38 per cent of Pakistanis, and 86.85 per cent of Bangladeshis said that they belong either 'fairly' or 'very' strongly to Britain – numbers that are essentially identical to the 86.7 per cent of whites who said they

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

either fairly or very strongly belong. As Maxwell says, these results 'encourage skepticism towards the notion of a national identification crisis among Muslims and South Asians in Britain' (Maxwell, 2006). By contrast, only 8.5 per cent of Catholics in Northern Ireland identify as British (Coakley, 2007). That may be an exceptional case, but Scots too are less likely than immigrants to identify as British – a seemingly stable 33 per cent of Scots reject even a partial British identity (Bond and Rosie, 2002).

Nor is this unique to Britain. In Canada, identification with Canada amongst first- and second-generation immigrants, whatever their race or ethnicity, is as high as amongst the majority native-born white English-speaking population. The only two groups that exhibit significant ambivalence about identifying with Canada are the two national minorities – the Québécois and Aboriginals. As a recent study notes:

> On the field of identity, the fundamental divisions are not 'new' Canadians versus 'old' ones but within the ranks of the old. Quebec francophones and Aboriginal Canadians have a weaker sense of pride and belonging in Canada as a whole. These divisions are clearly not fading with time. They are as old as the country and deeply embedded in who we are as a people. It is not surprising that these founding peoples, who have come to see themselves as distinct peoples or nations within a multination state, do not exhibit as unqualified an identification or sense of belonging as others do. Indeed, it would be remarkable if Quebec francophones and Aboriginal people ever came to exhibit the degree of these orientations that new Canadians are likely to, for the latter have an affinity with Canada that is essentially elective. So far, at least, the country seems to be successfully facing the challenges of postmodernity. The bigger challenges stem from its premodern phase. (Soroka et al., 2007: 586)

And these cleavages in identity have real political consequences. It is within national minorities, not immigrants, that we find organized political movements and political parties contesting the legitimacy of the state. So if, with Blunkett, we take 'identifying with' and 'commitment to' Britain or Canada as markers of a sense of common citizenship then it is historic sub-state national groups not immigrants who raise the deeper challenge.

While relations between national groups in multination western democracies today are generally peaceful, and while secession is not imminent, these cleavages are unresolved. We have at best provisional settlements of these long-standing cleavages, not permanent resolutions, and these provisional settlements require delicate handling. It is important, therefore, to consider how new policy initiatives around issues of citizenship for immigrants will affect the principles and practices of multinationalism.

What are these norms of multinationalism? While all countries contain a plurality of identities, the phenomenon of territorially concentrated minority nationalism is a distinctive challenge, and we need to understand its specificity. In these cases, the members of a regionally concentrated group exhibit a nationalist consciousness – that is, they conceive of themselves as forming a 'nation' within a larger state, and

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

mobilize behind nationalist political movements to achieve recognition of their nationhood, either in the form of an independent state or through territorial autonomy within the larger state. To be sure, the depth of nationalist consciousness varies from member to member and over time, and the leaders of nationalist movements often exaggerate the level of support they have amongst group members. Yet when these nationalist parties compete in free and fair elections, they often gain the support of the plurality or majority of the group on a consistent basis (e.g. in Flanders, Quebec, Catalonia, South Tyrol). So we should neither exaggerate nor underestimate the depth of nationalist consciousness.

In such cases, we can say that the state is, sociologically speaking, a 'multi-nation' state, although states themselves have often been reluctant to acknowledge this. The presence of minority nationalist movements has traditionally been seen as a threat to the state, putting into question its legitimate right to rule all of its territory and population. In a world of 'nation-states' where states legitimate themselves by reference to norms of the self-determination of peoples, to have a group that claims that it forms a distinct 'people', with its own rights to self-determination, is often perceived as a threat. Indeed, many commentators have argued that democratic stability is impossible in such cases. Democracy is rule by 'the people', but this requires an agreement that the citizens of a state do indeed form a single 'people' who exercise their popular sovereignty through a common state within agreed borders. Without agreement on the unit of self-determination, democracy becomes unstable (Offe, 2001).

As a result, many states in the past have sought to erode any sense of distinct nationhood amongst their territorially concentrated minorities, for example by restricting minority language rights, abolishing traditional forms of regional self-government and encouraging members of the dominant group to settle in the minority group's homeland in an effort to outnumber the minority even in its traditional territory. Where these assimilationist policies failed, as they often have, more radical solutions have been considered, such as partition and/or population transfer, as more realistic alternatives to naïve hopes of stabilizing multination states.

Given this background, it is important to identify ways of accommodating minority nationalism that are consistent with democratic stability, and that replace earlier uncivil relations of animosity and intolerance with relations of democratic citizenship. In my view, we have growing evidence for the success, at least under favourable conditions, of one model of accommodation, which I will call 'multination federalism'. This model has two key features: (1) it involves creating a federal or quasi-federal sub-unit in which the minority group forms a local majority, and can thereby exercise meaningful forms of self-government; and (2) where the minority has a distinct language, its language is typically recognized as an official state language within their sub-unit, if not state-wide.[5]

At the beginning of the 20th century, only Switzerland and Canada had adopted this combination of territorial autonomy and official language status for sub-state national groups. Since then, virtually all western democracies that contain sizeable sub-state nationalist movements have moved in this direction,

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

including the adoption of autonomy for the Swedish-speaking Aland Islands in Finland after the First World War, autonomy for South Tyrol and Puerto Rico after the Second World War, autonomy for Catalonia and the Basque Country in the 1970s, for Flanders in the 1980s, and devolution for Scotland and Wales in the 1990s.

In each case, the adoption of territorial autonomy for nationalist groups was initially controversial. But we now have sufficient experience to say that this model can indeed be a vehicle for 'citizenization', as Tully calls it (Tully, 2001: 25). Where it has been adopted in the West, the historic relations of animosity between states and national minorities have been reduced and replaced with relations of democratic citizenship.

To prove this would require hard data on the quality or resilience of relations of democratic citizenship, which we lack, but consider four relevant indicators of 'citizenization':

1. *Peace and individual security*: the multination federations referred to above are managing to deal with their competing national identities and nationalist projects with an almost complete absence of violence or terrorism by either the state or the minority.[6]
2. *Democracy*: ethnic politics is now a matter of 'ballots not bullets', operating under normal democratic procedures, with no threat of military coups or authoritarian regimes that take power in the name of national security.
3. *Individual freedom*: these reforms have been achieved within the framework of liberal constitutionalism, with firm respect for individual civil and political rights, including freedom of speech, conscience, political dissent, and, increasingly, gay rights, gender equality and so on. Since sub-state governments are subject to the same constitutional constraints as the central government, they have no capacity to restrict these individual freedoms in the name of maintaining cultural authenticity or cultural purity, and in any event the evidence suggests they have no wish to do so.[7]
4. *Inter-group equality*: multination federalism has promoted equality between majority and minority national groups, understood here as non-domination, such that one group is not systematically vulnerable to the domination of another group. Equality in this sense is multidimensional, and can be assessed along economic, political and cultural lines. Multination federalism has helped create (i) greater economic equality between majority and minority; (ii) greater equality of political participation and influence, so that minorities are not continually outvoted on all issues; and (iii) greater equality of cultural respect and recognition, reflected for example in more equitable recognition of the minority's language and culture in public space, and in reduced levels of prejudice and discrimination between groups. In short, the historic patterns of economic disadvantage, political subordination and cultural marginalization that have characterized national minorities have been reduced.

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Measured by these criteria, the model of multination federalism emerging in the West seems successful in accommodating minority nationalism in a way that deepens relations of liberal-democratic citizenship, reducing inter-group hierarchies while protecting individual freedom.[8]

And yet this is a distinctive form of citizenization, which requires us to rethink standard ideas of political community, including the ideas of citizenship that have informed the new citizenship agendas. As I noted earlier, traditional conceptions of democracy presuppose that the state is the embodiment of a single 'nation' or 'people' that is the bearer of rights of self-determination exercised through popular sovereignty. Democracy requires a consensus that citizens form a singular sovereign people. This presupposition has been implicit even in 'multicultural' models of citizenship. While these models emphasize that the British people are diverse and multicultural, and that these differences need to be publicly acknowledged, they nonetheless presuppose that rights of self-determination rest with the British people as a singular whole, not with any ethnic groups inside the state. Indeed, we could say that one aim of citizenship promotion, as standardly conceived, is precisely to resolve and foreclose debates about the legitimate right of the state to rule over all of the citizens and territory of the state – to ensure that there is a 'commitment to Britain'. The success of citizenship promotion can be measured, in part, by whether this legitimacy is no longer disputed.

Multination federations, however, require a different model. Minority nationalist movements are characterized precisely by their claims to nationhood, and the adoption of multination federalism reflects an acknowledgement of the need to accommodate this nationalist identity.[9] Territorial autonomy both acknowledges this sense of minority nationhood, and provides the institutional means to reproduce it (e.g. by enhancing regional control over education, public symbols, public media). The result is to open up, rather than foreclose, the question of the larger state's legitimacy. Once a sub-state group is (implicitly or explicitly) recognized as a distinct nation or people, the question arises as to how the state's assertion of authority over the group's members and historic territory is to be justified. Nationalist leaders within the minority may argue that the larger state never acquired legitimate authority, since the incorporation of the minority into a larger state was the result of conquest or coercion rather than voluntary consent. Or even if there had been an initial agreement at some earlier point of history, the larger state may have violated the terms of that agreement, stripping the minority of its historically agreed upon rights. Or even in the (null?) case of incorporation based on voluntary agreements that have been scrupulously respected, nationalist leaders can still claim that the right to self-determination is not a one-shot affair in which one generation's decisions bind all future generations in perpetuity, but rather is an ongoing right of each people to 'freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development' (Anaya, 2004).[10]

On the basis of such arguments, minority nationalist leaders can contest the larger state's claim to legitimate authority. Multination federalism provides the conceptual

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

vocabulary and political space for this sort of contestation. Indeed, it creates the possibility that the sub-state government will include avowed secessionists, as has happened in Quebec, Scotland and Catalonia.

In short, multination federalism opens up and suspends, rather than resolves or forecloses, questions about the bases of legitimate authority. It creates the institutional framework in which conflicting claims to legitimate authority, popular sovereignty and national self-determination are debated. Political actors disagree about which political authority is inherent or delegated (e.g. whether the central state gains its authority by delegation from the consent of the sovereign constituent national groups, or conversely whether regional autonomies gain their authority by delegation from the consent of the sovereign central state), and about the nature of the agreements that have founded the state (e.g. whether it is a 'union' state, a devolved state, a federation, a confederation, etc.). For some minority nationalists, the larger state is a usurper of the inherent sovereignty of the sub-state nation; for others, the larger state is a 'union' or 'confederal' state that arose from the voluntary pooling of the sovereignty of its constituent units; for yet others, regional autonomy is simply one form of decentralization that a sovereign state can pursue. These sorts of disagreements are the backdrop of everyday politics in many multination states.

This indeterminacy regarding the nature of sovereign peoplehood may puzzle theorists who think that agreement on peoplehood is a precondition of democracy. However, most citizens seem to take this indeterminacy in their stride. As we have seen, the phenomenon of conflicting nationalist projects is not inherently unstable. It appears that citizens of multination federations in the West are capable of managing whatever conceptual ambiguities and political controversies arise from overlapping claims to self-determination. Opinion polls reveal a stable pattern of what Miller calls 'nested nationalities' (Miller, 2000). For some purposes, in some contexts, most Scots view themselves as a distinct people with self-originating claims to sovereignty that the British state must respect; but for other purposes, in other contexts, they view themselves as members of a British nation that also possesses self-originating claims to self-determination. And we can see the emergence of a third possible layer, such as the European Union comes to be seen as the bearer of rights of popular sovereignty on certain issues. Each is an appropriate locus of loyalty and of self-determination, and each can legitimately adopt policies aimed at consolidating a sense of 'we, the people' amongst its members. These identity-building projects can sometimes be contradictory: British politicians may promote a common British identity in a way that downplays the significance of regional identities; Scottish politicians may promote a sense of Scottish nationhood that views British authority as usurped or derivative; and EU politicians may imply that both British and Scottish national identities are anachronisms in an increasingly post-national European demos. And yet citizens themselves seem able to reconcile these loyalties, and get on with the business of building multi-level political orders that are democratic and free.

In short, citizenization within western multination federations is not about resolving disputes over legitimacy, but about learning to live with their contested

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

character, and building democratic forums for continuing that conversation. This is a significant political achievement, but to see this we need to change our measures of 'success'. If we measure success in terms of identity or commitment – 'identifying with Britain' or 'commitment to Britain' – then we are likely to draw the wrong conclusions. In many multination states, feelings of identification with the larger state are ambivalent, and there is a sizeable minority who favour independence. This looks like failure on standard models of citizenship promotion, but on a multinational conception, ambivalent feelings and contested commitments are not evidence of a failure of citizenship, but rather define the challenge to which citizenship must respond. And a successful response is one that acknowledges these ambivalences and contestations in a way that respects fundamental values of peace, freedom, democracy, social justice and human rights.

New citizenship agendas in multinational states

This then is my interpretation of the ethos of multinational citizenship. But multination states are now facing a new set of challenges around immigration, which, as in other Western countries, has generated anxieties about social cohesion, and subsequent calls for citizenship promotion. So, to return to the original question, how does this new citizenship agenda in relation to immigration relate to pre-existing models of multinational citizenship? How can we ensure that citizenship agendas adopted to deal with immigration do not undermine the delicate achievements of multinational citizenship? Conversely, how can we ensure that the inherited structures of multinational citizenship do not impede the successful inclusion of immigrants?

Schematically, we can imagine four ideal-type responses, described below.

1. At one extreme, the inherited structures of multinational citizenship may be unable to adapt to the claims of immigrants, who therefore remain excluded. Switzerland is an approximation of this approach. The Swiss have developed a remarkable set of institutions to accommodate their historic linguistic and regional groups, combining multilingualism with strong local autonomy and complex power-sharing at the centre. And these institutional mechanisms are backed up by an impressive ethos of mutual accommodation amongst the German-, French- and Italian-speaking groups. Yet Switzerland is one of the most exclusionary countries in Europe in relation to immigrants, and this exclusion is in part related to the structures of multinational citizenship. Swiss citizens do not see how immigrants fit into their inherited political structures, and are unwilling to change those structures to enable their inclusion. (This shows, parenthetically, that countries with an inherited ethos of accommodation in relation to old minorities are not predestined to be inclusive of new minorities – there is no inherent tendency for the former to spill over to the latter). So at this extreme, inherited practices of multinational citizenship are privileged over, and preclude, the fair inclusion of immigrants. This approach is unlikely to be sustainable where there are large

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

numbers of immigrants, and in any event is normatively unacceptable. However admirable these inherited relations of multinational citizenship, their preservation cannot be used as a justification for excluding immigrants from citizenship.

2. At another extreme, the dominant group in a multination state may use immigration as a deliberate tool to weaken the claims of historic minorities. This was arguably the case in Canada and Belgium until the 1970s, or in Israel today. The central state encourages immigrants to identify with, and integrate into, the hegemonic national group – to ally themselves with English Canada, Francophone Belgium, or Jewish Israel – and thereby strengthen the hand of these dominant groups in contestations against their French, Flemish or Arab sub-state nationalist movements. (This may simply involve using immigration to increase the dominant group's numbers, but it may also involve encouraging immigrants to settle in the sub-state minority's historic territory, and thereby weaken their claims to autonomy.) Here again, this approach is unlikely to be sustainable. Where immigration is being used as a tool of majority nationalism, sub-state nationalist groups are likely to mobilize to demand reforms – for example, to gain the power to select their own immigrants, or at least to gain control over integration policy within their territory (as we see in Quebec, Flanders, Catalonia), so that immigration can no longer be used as a tool to erode multinational commitments. In any event, this approach is also normatively unacceptable. For Israel to encourage as many Jews as possible to immigrate to Israel, while forbidding the immigration (or even return) of Arabs, violates any plausible conception of justice in a multination state. It may not be unjust to the immigrants, who have generally not complained about this policy, but it is unjust to national minorities.

What would a normatively acceptable approach look like – one that enables the fair inclusion of immigrants while honouring the fair claims of sub-state national groups? I will consider two possibilities. If we take the UK as our example, the first approach would seek to encourage immigrants to identify with Britain as a whole but not any of its constituent national groups – to become British without becoming English, Scots, Welsh or Irish. I will call this the 'post-national' approach. The second would encourage immigrants to become British through integration into one of its national groups – e.g. to become British by becoming Scottish. I will call this the 'multinational' approach. Let me consider each in turn.

3. On the postnational approach, governments would seek to socialize immigrants into a state-level civic identity that stands above the inherited national divisions within a multination state. Immigrants would be encouraged to identify themselves as British, without expecting or encouraging them to identify with any of the constituent 'home nations' of Britain. In this way, they would be neutral bystanders in the ongoing praxis of 'negotiating nationalisms'.

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

This is the preferred option of many commentators, and is attractive in many ways. It may be preferable from the point of view of immigrants, who see 'Britishness' as a more open and civic identity compared to the more ethnic categories of English, Welsh, Scots or Irish. They can imagine themselves becoming British in a way that they have trouble seeing themselves as English or Welsh. Moreover, immigrants often have no desire to be dragged into these old battles. Many of them left countries with destabilizing ethnic/sectarian conflicts, and they did not come to Britain to become foot soldiers in someone else's identity conflicts.

This approach is also attractive in its transformative potential. In the short term, immigrants may be neutral bystanders in relation to inherited nationality issues, but in the longer term, the growth of immigrant-origin ethnic communities may help to diminish these very cleavages. As more and more citizens have origins outside of the inherited national categories, and are integrated politically outside of these categories, the salience of these old conflicts will diminish.

Moreover, these new British citizens may provide a model of 'postnational' citizenship that will come to be attractive even to those raised within older national categories. They may provide a model of how one can be an active citizen without being trapped by old identity conflicts. This is a recurrent theme in Canada, where it is often said that immigrants will show a new way to be Canadian that transcends the French–English dualism that has defined Canadian history. Rather than the 'two scorpions in a bottle' (as Lord Durham famously described Canada) or the 'two solitudes', immigrants will forge a new form of civic Canadianness that is postnational. We see similar speculations in Northern Ireland, where the (tiny) immigrant populations (along with children of mixed marriages) are often seen as harbingers of a new 'post-sectarian' Northern Irishness. They will show new ways to be Northern Irish without being Catholic or Protestant; new ways of being Canadian without being English or French; new ways of being British without being English, Welsh or Scots, and so on.

Despite these attractions, I believe the postnational approach suffers from three key limitations. First, in many contexts, it is impossible to integrate in ways that are neutral amongst the historic national projects. This is clearest where the cleavage is defined along linguistic lines. Immigrants to Barcelona have to decide whether they and their children will learn Castilian or Catalan, whether they will read Castilian or Catalan newspapers, TV and radio, whether they will go to Castilian or Catalan-language schools, decisions that are often driven by whether they live in predominantly Castilian or Catalan-speaking neighbourhoods, and so on. There is no way to become 'Spanish' without learning and using one of the national languages and participating in public institutions that operate in that language. If a Moroccan immigrant said that in order to be neutral in the national cleavages, she had decided not to learn either language, and would instead speak only Esperanto, few people would view this as a successful way of becoming a Spanish citizen. There is no neutral 'Spanish' society that stands above the Catalan- and Castilian-speaking societies into which immigrants can integrate.

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Of course, immigrants who learn Castilian or Catalan need not identify with the nationalist project associated with these historic language groups. But that does not change the fact that their decisions affect those national projects. Given that Barcelona is divided fairly evenly between Catalan and Castilian speakers, immigrants' decisions are determining whether Barcelona is predominantly a Catalan or Castilian city, whether Catalan-language institutions (schools, media, cultural institutions, public services) are growing stronger (through the inclusion of immigrants) or weaker, whether Catalan-language businesses will be profitable or not, and so on.[11] Similar situations apply to immigrants in Quebec, who must choose English or French, or immigrants to Brussels, who must choose French or Flemish.

And even where the cleavages are not linguistic, as in Northern Ireland, there are still limits to the possibility of 'postnational' integration. Immigrants to Northern Ireland have to live in particular neighbourhoods, attend particular schools, play at particular public parks, and all of these are nationally marked. It is not surprising, therefore, that long-term immigrants tend to become associated with a national group (e.g. Poles moving into Catholic neighbourhoods; Estonians into Protestant neighbourhoods).

So it is not clear what it means to say that immigrants should become Canadian without becoming English or English, or become British without becoming English, Welsh, Scottish or Irish. If we examine what this postnational approach really means in practice, it typically means that immigrants are integrating into the dominant society, but simply not accepting the national label. Immigrants in Canada who describe themselves as neither English nor French but 'Canadians' are overwhelmingly likely to be English-speaking, and to have integrated through anglophone social and political institutions. And, as a result, they are likely to share interests and perspectives with the dominant English national group. For example, they are likely to have a shared interest in the quality and availability of English-language institutions and services, and an indifference to the quality and availability of French-language institutions and services. And this in turn generates a shared commitment to the central state as the guarantor of English-language institutions and services, and an indifference to the status of Quebec as the guarantor of French-language services and institutions, and so on. So too, I suspect, with immigrants who say that they are neither Catalan or Castilian but simply 'Spanish' – they are de facto integrating into the language, institutions and expectations of the dominant group.

This tendency amongst immigrants to invoke a postnational state identity in place of the dominant group label should not be surprising, since this is precisely what members of the dominant group themselves often do. English-Canadians often prefer to describe themselves as simply Canadians rather than as English-Canadians; Castilians often prefer to describe themselves as simply Spanish rather than as Castilian; the English in Britain often prefer to describe themselves as simply British rather than as English. This gives members of dominant groups the comforting sensation that they have progressed beyond 'ethnic nationalism', whereas substate minorities cling to archaic tribal national identities.

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

This self-serving trope is a predictable move within an old game of national rivalry, a new way for the dominant group to assert its moral superiority, and to turn its particular interests into seemingly universal interests. This preference for postnational civic identities rarely reflects any real change in the underlying political dynamics by which dominant groups instinctively assume that sovereign power should be exercised in forums where they form a majority (and which operate in their language), against which sub-state national groups must fight to secure greater autonomy (and language rights). Encouraging immigrants to become 'British', 'Spanish' or 'Canadian' too often is simply socializing immigrants to participate in this power play by which dominant group identities and interests are disguised as postnational civic identities.

In my view, this is not just mythical, but politically dangerous. As I noted earlier, insofar as successful forms of multinational citizenship have developed, they have done so precisely by addressing rather than disguising the underlying national dynamics.

A second limitation of the postnational approach is that it leaves untouched the ethnic definitions of the constituent national groups. If immigrants are encouraged to become British without becoming English, Welsh, Scottish or Irish, there is no pressure on these national groups to redefine their sense of nationhood to be more ethnically inclusive. I noted earlier that many immigrants find it difficult to identify with sub-state national identities since they are seen as ethnic. But is the best response to accept the inevitability of ethnic definitions of nationhood, and to give immigrants an alternate postnational route to citizenship? After all, as I noted earlier, issues of 'negotiating nationalisms' shape the everyday politics in multination states. The resulting decisions are likely to be unjust and exclusionary if they are based on ethnic definitions of nationhood. For example, devolution to accommodate Welsh or Scottish nationalism may be oppressive to immigrants unless there is pressure to redefine Welshness and Scottishness to be ethnically inclusive. But this requires accepting that the route to citizenship for immigrants is not just through Britishness, but also potentially through Scottishness or Welshness, and hence that these nationalisms must be reformed to become more inclusive.

In my view, this is one of the central tasks facing all multination states – namely, making their inherited national identities more inclusive. Whether it is Flemish or French in Belgium; Castilian or Catalan in Spain; English or French in Canada, they must all learn how to fairly accommodate immigrants in their projects of nationhood. But this task is diverted if we assume that immigrants can and should become Belgian without entering into conceptions of Flemish or Walloon nationhood; or should become British without entering into projects of English, Welsh, Scottish or Irish nationhood. By contrast, if we assume that immigrants can and should become citizens through inclusion within sub-state national groups, they will exert pressure for more multicultural conceptions of nationhood.

We can see evidence for this in Britain today. Surveys suggest that conceptions of English nationhood remain deeply ethnic, even racist – an attitude that can persist in

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

part because state policy assumes that immigrants in England will become British without becoming English. By contrast, conceptions of Scottish nationhood are becoming increasingly multicultural – and this is due, at least in part, to the fact that the Scottish government has committed itself to including immigrants within its conception of Scottishness, not just as British citizens living alongside members of the Scottish nation. For example, whereas a strong sense of English identity is associated with greater Islamophobia, a strong sense of Scottish identity is not (Hussain and Miller, 2006: 49, 79).[12] As Hussain and Miller put it, 'multiculturalism and substate nationalism have not merely coexisted but actually interacted positively within Scotland', and immigrants perceive that 'the ethos of devolution has been determinedly inclusive and multicultural' (Hussain and Miller, 2006: 199, 37).

This raises my third and final concern about the postnational model – namely, that it is simply inappropriate for sub-state national minorities. They have a strong incentive to adopt the alternative 'multinational' model that integrates immigrants into multinational citizenship through integration into a constituent national group. Minority nationalists are aware that encouraging immigrants to become 'British' without becoming a member of any constituent national group is likely to disguise the reality that immigrants are integrating into the dominant group. For dominant groups, this is a useful myth: they gain the benefits of having immigrants integrate into their language and institutions without having to take responsibility for pluralizing their conception of nationhood. But for minority nations, the sustainability of their national projects in the context of growing immigration depends on immigrants making a conscious choice to affiliate themselves with that national project. Since projects of national autonomy are often criticized by outsiders as illiberal forms of 'ethnic nationalism', and since they are also contested internally, substate nationalists have a powerful incentive to recruit immigrants to their national projects, both to disprove charges of ethnic exclusion and to build internal consensus.

So while the postnational model may be popular amongst the dominant national group, it will be contested by sub-state national groups. They will seek to adopt citizenship promotion policies that encourage immigrants to conceive of their citizenship in more multinational terms. And this is precisely what we see in Quebec, Catalonia, Scotland and Flanders. In these cases, sub-state regional governments, often in the hands of nationalist parties, have adopted immigrant integration policies that encourage immigrants to think of themselves, not as postnational Canadians, Spaniards, Britons or Belgians, but as members of a Québécois, Catalan, Scottish or Flemish nation, and as participants in projects of sub-state nation-building.

The result is a potential asymmetry or even contradiction in citizenship-promotion policies: the central government promotes a postnational form of citizenship, which tells immigrants they can become British without becoming English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish, while sub-state regional governments promote a multinational form of citizenship, telling immigrants that they become citizens precisely by becoming Scottish or Welsh.

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Promoting multicultural citizenship in multination states?

In short, it seems to me that the postnational model, despite its attractions, is unlikely to be sustainable, at least in its pure form. So that leaves us with the final model: can we envisage a citizenship agenda in multination states in which (1) the integration of immigrants is reconceptualized along multinational rather than postnational lines, operating through integration into one of the constituent national groups; and (2) where these component national identities are themselves reconceptualized along more multicultural lines? Can we, in short, have genuinely multicultural citizenship in multination states?

Obviously, this model has its own risks. The usual objection is that minority nationalisms are ethnic nationalisms that are inherently exclusionary of immigrants. That certainly is a possibility, but I think we now have evidence from places such as Catalonia, Scotland and Quebec that minority nationalisms need not be defined by race or descent, and need not be more exclusionary than state nationalisms. Hussain and Miller's (2006) study, for example, shows that Pakistani immigrants strongly identify as Scottish, feel more welcome in Scotland than in England, and feel that the Scottish national project has helped rather than hindered their integration. Similarly, surveys show that those who express a Catalan national identity are less xenophobic than those who express a Spanish national identity, and that support for immigration is higher amongst those with Québécois national identity than amongst most majority groups in western states.

This is not to say that minority nationalisms are inherently open and inclusive – the struggle for multiculturalism in these contexts is difficult, and subject to periods of retreat. But there is no evidence that the multinational strategy is doomed to fail, or that it has less chance for success than the postnational strategy.

However, 'success' in this context will have some surprising features. Integrating into a sub-state national identity typically involves absorbing its ambivalent feelings and contested commitments to the larger state. And here we return to the two cases mentioned in the introduction. The fact that many Pakistanis voted for the SNP can be seen, on a multinational approach, not as evidence of failure, but as evidence of successful integration. All else being equal, we would expect Pakistanis living in Scotland to develop over time the same range of complex/ambivalent attitudes towards Britain as their native-born Scottish neighbours, ranging from unionist sentiments to devolved/federalist sentiments to secessionist sentiments. Understanding those options, and taking part in collective deliberations about which option is best for 'we Scots', is a crucial part of political integration on a multinational conception.

By contrast, the fact that virtually no immigrants voted for secession in the 1995 referendum in Quebec, while the clear majority of native-born francophones voted for it, suggests a problem in the integration of immigrants in that province. Immigrants expressed a profound identification with Canada, but in the very process they revealed how little they had integrated into Quebec's collective life. And indeed Quebec nationalists recognized this as a crisis, and so embarked on efforts to reach

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

out to immigrant groups, with the result that support amongst immigrants and their children for secession has grown since 1995. In my view, this growing support for secession amongst immigrant groups is (paradoxically) a good thing. It shows on the one hand that Quebec nationalism is becoming more open and inclusive, as Quebec nationalists become more sensitive to the needs of immigrants; and on the other hand it shows that immigrants are becoming more sensitive to the importance of negotiating nationalisms in Canada, and more understanding of the ambivalent commitments it involves. In short, the Québécois are learning to practice a more multicultural form of citizenship, and immigrants are learning to practice a more multinational form of citizenship. And that is the central goal of citizenship promotion on this fourth approach, even if the paradoxical result is that some immigrants express lower identification with or commitment to the larger state.

If we can live with this paradox, this fourth approach may work well, at least for minority nations. It is doubtful, however, that dominant national groups will want to switch from the postnational to the multinational approach, for both ideological and institutions reasons. As we have seen, many dominant group members no longer think of themselves as 'Castilian', 'English' or 'English-Canadian', and instead just think of themselves as Spanish, British or Canadian. To insist that they re-appropriate a sub-state national label would be, on their view, a step backwards – a retribalization of their postnational selves. Also, elites in the dominant group may worry that if ideas of Castilianness or Englishness are incorporated into our citizenship agenda, they would quickly be captured by racist or populist forces, and become a rallying point for xenophobia.

A related problem is that in most multination states, there is no public institution that can serve as the vehicle for developing new models of dominant group national identity. The regional governments in Scotland, Quebec and Catalonia can take on the responsibility for formulating a citizenship agenda that involves integrating immigrants into a new multicultural conception of Scottish, Québécois or Catalan nationhood. That indeed is what these governments have done. But there is no Castilian parliament, no English parliament, no English-Canadian parliament – no legislative body that can plausibly claim to speak for these national groups, or that can claim the mandate to formulate ideas of Castilian or English nationhood. Substate minority nations in the West now typically have their own parliaments, but dominant groups do not. They may de facto dominate the larger Spanish, British and Canadian parliaments, but these parliaments represent and speak on behalf of all citizens, and it would be odd for them to formally become the vehicles or champions of Castilian, English or English-Canadian nationhood.

In theory, one could imagine creating new regional parliaments to represent Castilians, English or English-Canadians, so as to create formal symmetry amongst all the national groups. But this is not going to happen, and indeed the success of multination states has often depended precisely on the refusal to insist on this sort of symmetry.[13]

So a fully symmetrical model of multinationalism, in which each national group has its own parliament that is used to articulate its own citizenship agenda of

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

multicultural nationhood, is not feasible. The fourth model, like the other three, is unlikely to be adopted in its ideal form. Just as sub-state minority groups will contest the third postnational model, at least in their regions, so dominant groups will resist the fourth multinational model, at least in relation to their context.

For the foreseeable future, therefore, we are likely to see hybrid models of citizenship promotion, as indeed are already emerging. In these models, the central state promotes a postnational model of citizenship, while sub-state national groups promote a multinational model. Can this sort of hybrid model work? The fact that it is asymmetric should not worry us. Multination states are full of asymmetries, and the willingness to accept this is part of the ethos of multination citizenship. But even if asymmetry in general is a familiar feature of multination states, this particular form of asymmetry may be problematic. One potential problem is that residents in the devolved regions receive mixed messages: the central government encourages a postnational conception of Britishness (e.g. in citizenship classes and naturalization ceremonies that fall under central jurisdiction) while the devolved government pushes a multinational conception (e.g. in citizenship education in the public schools, which fall under devolved jurisdiction). I do not view this as a decisive problem – indeed, exposing people to mixed messages is a way of socializing them into the ethos of multinational citizenship. Receiving mixed messages about the nature of the state is one of the things that citizens in multination states need to be able to work through.

A more serious problem arises when the messages people receive in different parts of the country increasingly diverge. In England, for example, people may only be exposed to the postnational message, since Westminster controls both citizenship courses for adults and citizenship education for children. Within England, therefore, there may be little opportunity to learn the multinational side of the story. And conversely, governments in Scotland or Wales may be so focused on their own internal nation-building projects that they do not provide residents with a link to a larger Britishness.

This could lead to problems even if both models are working well in terms of the inclusion of immigrants. Let us imagine that (notwithstanding my earlier reservations) the central government successfully promotes an inclusive postnational Britishness within England, while Scotland and Wales successfully promote a multicultural Scottish and Welsh nationalism within their borders. Even in this optimistic scenario, there may be strains arising from the interaction between the two models. On the one hand, the central state, in its promotion of a postnational identity, may unintentionally encourage hostility to minority nationalism, in ways that jeopardize inherited multinational settlements. If more and more citizens in England, both native-born and foreign-born, come to think of themselves as postnational Britons who have transcended English ethnic nationalism, they may start to question why Britain should continue to pander to minority nationalisms. On the other hand, sub-state regions, in their promotion of a sub-state multicultural nationalism, may fail to explain how or why this links to a larger sense of Britishness.

In either scenario, people may become more and more comfortable with multiculturalism internally, but less and less adept at negotiating nationalisms at the

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

multinational level. And the two scenarios are potentially connected: the more the central state defines Britishness as a postnational rather than multinational identity, the more difficult it will be for sub-state minority nations to explain how being Scottish, Welsh or Irish is a way of being British. If so, we might see growing divergence between understandings of citizenship in different parts of the country.

These are just possible scenarios, and are far from inevitable. To date, the survey evidence suggests that people in England who identify as postnational Britons have not grown antagonistic to minority nationalist aspirations (Curtice, 2005); and minority nationalists in the devolved regions (apart from the Catholics in Northern Ireland) have not grown antagonistic to Britain. As I said earlier, citizens of multination states seem able to live with the apparent contradictions of multinational citizenship.

But some researchers suggest that these diverging conceptions of citizenship promotion need to speak to each other. In their study of citizenship education across the UK, Andrews and Mycock (2007) note that 'the devolved education systems are shaping divergent approaches to citizenship education that emphasize different notions of citizenship to those found in England', and yet 'there has been little systematic attention to how divergent approaches to citizenship education in each Home Nation might influence the political identities of future generations of British citizens'. The guidelines operating in England do not discuss how devolution is affecting minority national identities, and Welsh and Scottish guidelines focus on building support for devolved institutions while avoiding issues of the role or value of Britishness. And in Northern Ireland, citizenship education 'emphasizes global citizenship and human rights at the expense of questions of national identity altogether' (Andrews and Mycock, 2007: 78).[14] In short, the promotion of British citizenship within England is not teaching people about citizenship in the devolved regions, and the promotion of sub-state citizenship in the devolved regions is not teaching people about British citizenship. So neither side is teaching people the ethos of negotiating nationalisms as a dimension of multinational citizenship.

Andrews and Mycock conclude: 'The need to clearly elucidate a coherent multinational conception of citizenship and national identity thus represents a significant challenge for theorists and practitioners of citizenship education across the UK.' And they pin the blame primarily on Westminster:

> The Westminster-centric viewpoint of most UK politicians means that the bare fact of devolution and the potential for alternative patterns of civic loyalty and identity within the devolved multinational state is myopically underestimated ... Unless the question of 'Britishness' is treated in a more sophisticated and inclusive manner across and within the devolved nations, the provision of citizenship education could become increasingly linked to exclusionary or secessionist agendas. (Andrews and Mycock, 2007: 80, 84)

This is a central challenge for the new citizenship agenda, not only in relation to citizenship education in the schools (which is their focus), but in relation to all its

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

aspects, including citizenship classes and ceremonies for immigrants. The goal should not be to develop a state-wide consensus on a single narrative of citizenship – that is precisely what multination states cannot achieve. Rather, the goal should be to educate citizens in these different approaches, so that (for example) proponents of postnational Britishness would understand why minority nations prefer the multinational approach, and proponents of the multinational model would understand the attractions of the postnational approach. And all citizens would understand that such disagreements inhere in a multination state, and cannot be foreclosed, but must be continually negotiated in a peaceful and democratic way.

This sort of practice of multinational citizenship is an impressive achievement, and while there is no evidence that this achievement is at imminent risk in the UK or other western multination states, nor should we simply take it for granted. We need to think carefully about how new citizenship agendas can build upon, rather than erode, older models of multinationalism.

Notes

1. See McGhee (2009) for a genealogy of how concerns about 'community cohesion' in Britain became focused on immigrants. As Kiwan notes, the original rationale for strengthening citizenship education in the 1998 Crick Report was perceptions of growing apathy amongst youth, rather than immigration, but by the mid-2000s, issues of immigration were the focus (Kiwan, 2008a: 62; cf. Andrews and Mycock, 2007: 75).
2. See Kiwan (2008b) on how the 'journey' through citizenship courses, language training and citizenship testing in the UK can be seen as an 'entitlement' of immigrants, not a burden or barrier. Cooke responds that even if intended to serve as a 'liberal entitlement', this new citizenship agenda is experienced as a burden by immigrants. Immigrants, she argues, 'are keen to learn English and enjoy the content of the citizenship classes' but are nonetheless 'indignant' at linking these language classes/tests to naturalization (Cooke, 2009: 73, 75).
3. Norman (2006) describes 'negotiating nationalism' as the defining attribute of multination states.
4. In this article, I will focus on multinational citizenship within consolidated western democracies. The phenomenon of minority nationalism is of course a global one, affecting many post-communist and post-colonial states, and a few such states have adopted forms of multination federalism in response (e.g. India, Iraq, Sudan). But with the partial exception of India, the adoption of multination federalism outside the West has typically been the result of violence and civil war, not peaceful mobilization and democratic consensus. As a result, the construction of multination citizenship in such cases confronts a whole series of additional challenges and complications relating to legitimacy and transitional justice. I discuss some of these additional challenges elsewhere (Kymlicka, 2011). Here, however, I focus on the challenges to constructing multination citizenship even in the more propitious case where the accommodation of minority nationalism is peaceful and democratically endorsed.
5. In Spain, Belgium, Canada and Switzerland, territorial autonomy was achieved through federalizing the state, so as to create a federal sub-unit that was dominated by the national minority. The UK, by contrast, did not federalize, but created devolved forms of territorial autonomy for Scotland and Wales. Similar quasi-federal autonomy regimes exist for the Swedish minority in Finland, the German minority in South Tyrol, and for Puerto

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Rico in the USA. I use the term 'multination federalism' to cover both federal and quasi-federal forms of autonomy. It is important to distinguish multination federations from other federal systems where internal subunits are not designed to enable minority self-government, such as Germany, Australia and Brazil. In these countries, none of the sub-units was designed to enable a national minority to exercise self-government over its traditional territory.

6. The Basque Country is the main exception, although the ETA campaign of violence began in the 1960s as a response to the highly centralized Fascist regime, and is unlikely to have emerged had Spain been a democratic multination federation. Similarly, in Cyprus violence arose in response to attempts by the state to subvert the multination federal arrangements adopted at independence. It was the abrogation, not the adoption, of multination federalism that generated violence.
7. Indeed, minority sub-units are sometimes more liberal than the central government. Policies on gender equality or gay rights, for example, are more progressive in Scotland than the rest of Britain; more progressive in Quebec than in other parts of Canada; and more progressive in Catalonia than other parts of Spain.
8. For evaluations of these models of multination federal states, and the sort of democratic citizenship they support, see Gagnon and Tully (2001); Harty and Murphy (2005); Norman (2006); Requejo (2005); Tierney (2004).
9. This acknowledgement as a 'nation within' can be either implicit or explicit – compare the Spanish constitution's distinction between the Spanish 'nation' and regional 'nationalities' with the Canadian parliamentary recognition of Quebec nationhood. But even if there is no formal recognition, the adoption of multination federalism rests on an acknowledgement that this is how the minority perceives itself, and that it must be able to act upon this self-identity.
10. See Anaya (2004) on the idea of self-determination as an ongoing, not one-shot, right.
11. Since national minorities in the West have below-replacement birth rates, the alternative to gaining new members through immigration is gradual erosion of minority-language institutions. See Arel (2001) for the dynamics of immigrant linguistic integration in Barcelona.
12. 'In Scotland it appears that nationalism has a more benign, inclusive character. English separatism in contrast has worrying features and has parallels with the far right' (Heath and Smith, 2005: 151).
13. See Hale (2004) on why multination federations tend to break up if dominant groups have their own parliament.
14. Northern Ireland is the limiting case of seeking a neutral postnational approach to citizenship education. While 'Britishness' can be offered as a neutral postnational identity in England, standing above the constituent national groups, it clearly cannot play this role in Northern Ireland. The only neutral approach is to sidestep the very question of the legitimacy of the state, and to appeal instead to topics of global citizenship and international human rights, which are indeed the heart of the Northern Ireland citizenship curriculum (Smith, 2003). Donnelly (2004) argues that this quest to avoid controversy simply leaves the underlying issues unaddressed.

References

Anaya J (2004) *Indigenous Peoples in International Law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Andrews R and Mycock A (2007) Citizenship education in the UK: Divergence within a multinational state. *Citizenship Teaching and Learning* 3(1): 73–88.

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Arel D (2001) Political stability in multinational democracies: Comparing language dynamics in Brussels, Montreal and Barcelona. In: Gagnon AG, Tully J (eds) *Multinational Democracies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 64–89.

Blackledge A (2004) Constructions of identity in political discourse in multilingual Britain. In: Pavlenko A, Blackledge A (eds) *Negotiation of Identity in Multilingual Contexts*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 68–92.

Bond R and Rosie M (2002) National identities in post devolution Scotland. *Working Paper*. Institute of Governance, University of Edinburgh. Available at: www.institute-of-governance.org/publications/working_papers/national_identities_in_post_devolution_scotland.

Coakley J (2007) National identity in Northern Ireland: Stability or change? *Nations and Nationalism* 13(4): 573–597.

Cooke M (2009) Barrier or entitlement? The language and citizenship agenda in the United Kingdom. *Language Assessment Quarterly* 6(1): 71–77.

Curtice J (2005) Brought together or driven apart. *Proceedings of the British Academy* 128: 153–170.

Donnelly C (2004) What price harmony? Teachers' methods of delivering an ethos of tolerance and respect for diversity in an integrated school in Northern Ireland. *Educational Research* 46(1): 3–16.

Etzioni A (2007) Citizenship tests: A comparative, communitarian perspective. *Political Quarterly* 78(3): 353–363.

Gagnon A, Tully J (eds) (2001) *Multinational Democracies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hale H (2004) Divided we stand: Institutional sources of ethnofederal state survival and collapse. *World Politics* 56(2): 165–193.

Harty S and Michael M (2005) *In Defense of Multinational Citizenship*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Heath A and Smith S (2005) Varieties of nationalism in Scotland and England. *Proceedings of the British Academy* 128: 133–152.

Home Office (2001) Blunkett calls for honest and open debate on citizenship and community, Press release, 11 December 2001, Home Office, London.

Home Office (2002) *Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain*, Cm 5387. London: HMSO.

Hussain A and Miller W (2006) *Multicultural Nationalism: Islamophobia, Anglophobia, and Devolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kiwan D (2008a) A journey to citizenship in the United Kingdom. *International Journal on Multicultural Societies* 10(1): 60–75.

Kiwan D (2008b) Becoming a British citizen: A learning journey. *Lord Goldsmith Review of Citizenship*. London: Ministry of Justice.

Kymlicka W (2011) Transitional justice, federalism and the accommodation of minority nationalism. In: Arthur P (ed.) *Identities in Transition: Challenges for Transitional Justice in Divided Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 303–333.

Maxwell R (2006) Muslims, South Asians, and the British mainstream: A national identity crisis? *West European Politics* 29(4): 736–756.

McGhee D (2009) The paths to citizenship: A critical examination of immigration policy in Britain since 2001. *Patterns of Prejudice* 43(1): 41–64.

Milani T (2008) Language testing and citizenship:A language ideological debate in Sweden. *Language in Society* 37: 27–59.

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Miller D (2000) *Citizenship and National Identity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Norman W (2006) *Negotiating NationalismNation-Building, Federalism, and Secession in the Multinational State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Offe C (2001) Political liberalism, group rights and the politics of fear and trust. *Studies in East European Thought* 53: 167–182.
Requejo F (2005) *Multinational Federalism and Value Pluralism*. London: Routledge.
Smith A (2003) Citizenship education in Northern Ireland: Beyond national identity? *Cambridge Journal of Education* 33(1): 15–31.
Soroka S, Johnston R and Banting K (2007) In: Banting K, Courchene TJ, Seidle FL (eds), *Belonging? Diversity, Recognition and Shared Citizenship in Canada*. Montreal: Institute for Research in Public Policy, 561–600.
Stevenson P (2006) 'National' languages in transnational contexts: Language, migration and citizenship in Europe. In: Mar-Molinero C, Stevenson P (eds) *Language Ideologies, policies and practices*. London: Palgrave, 147–161.
Tierney S (2004) *Constitutional Law and National Pluralism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Tully J (2001) Introduction. In: Gagnon A, Tully J (eds) *Multinational Democracies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1–33.
Wright S (2008) Citizenship tests in Europe – Editorial introduction. *International Journal on Multicultural Societies* 10(1): 1–9.

This content downloaded from
161.248.69.158 on Fri, 06 Nov 2026 08:48:28 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms