

LZ provides some helpful clarificatory discussion. I agree that it is possible for a state to be both multinational and a nation-state. However, there are five points I want to make in reply. One of them has already been made by LZ: there are some purely (or close-to-purely) multinational states that get by just fine, at least with regard to what LZ calls the **basic tasks** of statecraft. LZ mentions Switzerland; I think an even weaker shared identity might be Belgium. More importantly, though, to reiterate a point I've made earlier, even in the cases of those purely multinational states that are *not* at present succeeding at performing the basic tasks, it is not at all clear that the break up of these states along national lines would allow the resulting states to better execute them. LZ lists Iraq and Syria as examples of purely multinational states that do not currently perform the basic tasks very well; I have already argued (in the previous supplementary document) that independence for Iraqi Kurdistan is a doomed endeavor, and similar considerations apply to the Syrian Kurds. Splitting Syria and Iraq up into separate Shia/Alawi and Sunni Arab states also poses problems, in addition to the obvious ones like the fact that Shia and Sunnis are mixed together: the Shia states are likely to become satellites of Iran, and the Sunni states are likely to become satellites of Turkey or Saudi Arabia (and thus, in both cases, not fully able to exercise self-determination). The Sunni Arab states might also become safe havens for Salafi-jihadist terrorists, and might be economically unviable (at least in the case of Iraq, since the Sunni Arab regions of that country mostly lack oil).

One ongoing example of a case where independent statehood has not, so far, turned out well, in a state where multinationalism was also clearly failing, is South Sudan. South Sudanese, who are mostly Christians and animists and speakers of Nilotic languages, fought a decades-long struggle for independence against the Muslim, Arabic-speaking north, with many atrocities committed by the government of Sudan against the Christians and animists of the south (though the armed groups in the south were also guilty of human rights abuses, child conscription, etc.). Finally, in 2011, after a referendum in which almost 99% of south Sudanese voted for independence, the country of South Sudan was created, breaking off from the government of Sudan in Khartoum, in a process strongly supported by the United States and other Western countries. Unfortunately, since 2013, South Sudan has been embroiled in a brutal civil war of its own, involving combat between the new country's two main ethnic groups, the Dinka and Nuer, as well as political conflict within these ethnic groups, and a famine in 2017.

The case of South Sudan brings me to my next point. This case demonstrates that when a state is failing because its people lack a sense of shared identity, it can turn out that the various subgroups involved in conflict *also* lack a sense of shared identity, which is only masked by the ongoing conflict. When southern Sudanese had the common enemy of the Khartoum government to fight, they may have appeared, even to themselves, to have a shared identity. When independence was achieved, this shared identity collapsed. The lesson here is that among the many reasons why breaking up multinational states into smaller national units is a fraught enterprise is that it is very difficult to tell ahead of time *what those smaller nations are*. Which subgroups (ethnic, tribal, religious, political) share in a deeply rooted national identity that is likely to persist after independence, and which groups are only apparently participating in the common national identity so long as they still share the common enemy of the hostile multinational state? There is no ready formula for answering this question.

Thirdly, the processes by which people come to form a strong sense of shared identity with one another are not always voluntary. In fact, they may rarely be. Instead, people(s) frequently come to find themselves *forced* into political unity with other groups, through economic necessity, or simply by conquest. Over time, they make virtues out of necessity, coming to identify with those to whom they find themselves bound. To take the case of Switzerland, whatever strong sense of identity the Swiss people(s) share is largely a product of the defeat of the Catholic conservative separatist cantons by the Protestant liberal federalist cantons in the *Sonderbund* war of 1847. This marks the beginning of Switzerland as a federal state rather than a loose military alliance of separate sovereign cantons. To take another example with which readers might be more familiar, Southerners in the United States are one of the most “patriotic” subgroups in America, to judge by measures like per capita enlistment in the U.S. military and combat deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan. But there would be far fewer Southerners in the U.S. military had the U.S. military been defeated in the Civil War. Southerners did not come to identify so strongly with the United States through the spontaneous motions of their hearts and souls. Nor did they do so because they agreed with the principles articulated in the Declaration of Independence. In large measure, white Southerners did not, certainly with regards to African-Americans, in practice or even in theory, before or after the Civil War.¹ They did so because their ancestors (at least those of them who fought for the Confederacy) were defeated on the field of battle. This left them no choice but to remain in the American Union, and they eventually made a virtue out of this necessity, becoming strong patriots. Similarly, Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews in Israel, who today tend to be more “nationalistic” than Israeli Ashkenazim, showed little interest in political Zionism before 1948. They came to identify so strongly with the State of Israel because it was the only place where they could take refuge after they were driven from their homes in Arab countries by governments and mobs. This is all to say that the way in which national identities come into (and out of) being is not simply or primarily a matter of “clever politicians and intellectuals” convincing people to adopt common identities. Nations come and go mostly because they must.

Fourthly, a point of clarification. The variety of internationalism to which I subscribe does not seek to “cultivate more inclusive identities,” as LZ puts it, or does not primarily seek to do this, anyway. As I’ve said, I believe national identities typically become more or less inclusive according to logics of their own, regardless of what I or others seek to cultivate. The fundamental tenet of *proletarian* internationalism is that the interests of the working classes of the several nations have more in common than the interests of any country’s working class have in common with the interests of “its own” country’s ruling class, and that the working classes’ political activity should be primarily oriented around these common, international proletarian interests. This is not to say that the working classes should form some sort of all-inclusive identity, because we are not talking something that is all-inclusive, nor are we talking about an *identity*. The sort of international working class politics I advocate very emphatically *excludes* the capitalist

¹ See the “cornerstone speech” by Confederate Vice-President Alexander Stephens for an example of explicit repudiation of the principles of the Declaration and the American Revolution just before the assault on Fort Sumter: <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1861stephens.asp>

class.² To be in the working class is also not a matter of *identity*; it is an objective matter of one's structural relationship to the means of production (do you own enough capital not to have to work, or do you have to work for someone who owns capital?). Socialist politics is not another form of identity politics based on class rather than nationality, race, religion, sexuality, gender, etc.; socialism is the antithesis of identity politics. Socialists seek to *reorient* politics *away* from ascriptive identity categories (no matter how "inclusive"), and unite people of *different* ascriptive identity categories, but similar structural relationships to the means of production, in a common political project. In fact, socialists believe that politics often *already* (in part) revolves around these structural class relations. As Adolph Reed, Jr. has observed, "race [as well as nationalist, gender, sexual, religious, etc.] politics is not an alternative to class politics; it is a class politics..."³: typically those of the ruling class, or some relatively privileged stratum that seeks to become or integrate into the ruling class. Socialists seek to get workers of *different* identities to realize this and act accordingly.

Finally, one more objection. It would appear as though some identities, though they could be used as the basis of national unity, are morally objectionable. On LZ's criteria, do Americans regarded as "white" have enough of a unified identity to enjoy national self-determination rights? I suspect not, but there are some who would like them to. Suppose white Americans (however we delimit this category) acquire such a sense of national self-identity, and seek a state of their own. I would strongly oppose such a political project, and I have no doubt that LZ would as well. But on what grounds would she/he object, given that she/he "is willing to allow that the identity [undergirding national self-determination] could be based on pretty much anything"? LZ does suggest they'd like to "cultivate more inclusive identities", but what happens when more exclusionary identities are established? LZ and I might object to a "white" identity and do what we can to prevent its formation, but once it has been formed, do white Americans suddenly acquire a right to statehood? Perhaps LZ would say that this would still be only a defeasible right, and that other considerations would defeat it, but I suspect that she/he would want to say something stronger, like I do.

Liberal Zionist: I don't see why international organizations, unions, or purely multi-national states would be less vulnerable to this problem [of states serving the interests of foreign investors more than their own lower-class citizens] than nation-states are.

Reply: I'd like to thank our host for pressing me on this point. It is not that multinational states are less vulnerable to the structural tendency of states to favor the interests of capital *because* they are multinational. Rather, *larger* states are less vulnerable to this tendency, other things being equal, because larger states have larger populations and larger internal markets. A large country like the United States is less vulnerable to capital flight than a small country like Belgium. This is because investors fear getting shut out of the US market (through, for example, tariffs imposed on manufacturers who offshore production abroad) much more than they fear getting shut out of the Belgian market,

² When Marx and Engels took over an obscure revolutionary organization called "The League of the Just," they changed its name to "The Communist League," and its slogan from "All Men [including, presumably, capitalists] are Brothers" to "Workingmen of All Countries, Unite".

³ <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2015/06/15/jenner-dolezal-one-trans-good-other-not-so-much>

because the US market is much larger than the Belgian market. But if a multinational state breaks up along national (or any other) lines, the new states will have, by definition, smaller populations and markets. If Puerto Rico were to become independent of the United States it would be much more vulnerable to capital flight and similar phenomena. It would be forced to into a race to the bottom with other Caribbean and Latin American countries, competing for investment capital by offering low wages, unsafe labor standards, lax environmental regulations and so on. It may well offer itself as a haven for wealthy tax evaders the way that the Cayman Islands and other Caribbean countries do. Similarly, if Belgium splits into Flanders and Wallonia, these new states would have to supplicate to international capital even more than does Belgium currently (look at the way small European countries like Ireland, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, Malta, and Switzerland look the other way regarding tax evasion and other financial crimes).

Liberal Zionist: But all this shows is that the current state system is, like all other systems of governance, imperfect. What we need is an argument that the state system is worse than the alternative when it comes to respecting the will of those it governs. And here it is significant that, if one asked working class Germans whether they'd be willing to give up the existence of a German state in exchange for fixing the problems that Internationalist describes, most would probably refuse.

Reply: Actually, defending the **State Principle**, which is (in part) what LZ wishes to do, requires more than just defending the status quo, because the status quo does not perfectly realize the right to independent nation-statehood. A large part of my argument has been conservative (in the sense of pro-status quo bias): given the risks involved in creating new states along national lines, we should be wary of recognizing the existence of a general “right” to create such states, since the right to statehood implies the right of creation as well as preservation. Indeed, the original impetus for our discussion was my objection to LZ’s argument for Palestinian statehood (a position, I should stress again, that I agree with on other grounds) on the basis of Palestinians’ “right”, as a national entity, to a state of their own. This argument was about the *creation* of a new state, *not* the preservation of an existing one like the Federal Republic of Germany.

As for whether working class (and other) Germans would at present be willing to give up substantial formal sovereignty to deal with the economic problems I have identified, I share LZ’s skepticism. But these economic issues are especially tricky subjects. The connection between Germany’s fiscal and labor market policies and the peripheral European debt crisis is not obvious even to highly educated people, so it is not surprising that most Germans don’t see things this way either. Instead, the prevailing view, probably among people of all social classes, is that southern Europeans are lazy spendthrifts who are taking advantage of German industriousness. I think this view is wrong, but I don’t think ordinary Germans are particularly blameworthy for holding it, given its hegemonic “common sense” appeal and the complexity of alternative explanations. But ordinary Germans also don’t like (what are in my view) the consequences of the status quo. If I am right, they will have to choose at some point. For example, a large majority of Germans think the Euro is a good thing for their country. But as I and plenty of others have argued, monetary union is extremely difficult to manage without fiscal union. Germans and others may not support full-blown fiscal union yet, but eventually, in my view, something will have to give, and I can’t see the Euro being abandoned.

Theoretically, I can imagine Germans and other national groups, out of national pride, indefinitely refusing to trade away any greater degree of sovereignty, no matter how bad the economic pain gets. I don't think this is likely (at some point, the stomach overrules the heart), but I can imagine it. But would even this scenario imply an overall retention of sovereignty and self-determination for all national groups? After all, the austerity regime imposed by the European Union on Greece in the wake of the debt crisis was a bigger constraint on the economic-policy self-determination of Greeks than anything I am proposing with respect to Germany. It was admittedly more temporary than my recommendations, but it if I am correct about the economic trends, such constraints will need to be reimposed periodically on countries like Greece in the future, unless the European Union imposes other kinds of restraints on policy (toward, e.g., less fiscal austerity and more wage growth) on countries like Germany.

This raises a further point. LZ has tried to frame the alternatives before us as more self-determination/sovereignty or less self-determination/sovereignty. But I am increasingly convinced that self-determination and sovereignty will weaken no matter what institutional set-up we create, and I am not even sure that my preferred set-up will erode self-determination/sovereignty more quickly than the status quo. It will probably erode *formal* sovereignty (e.g., the ability of national legislatures to pass laws concerning certain policy domains), but the status quo is eroding *substantive* sovereignty at an incredibly rapid pace, and one major reason is because it grants existing states a great deal of formal sovereign power. The sorts of interventions in what are traditionally regarded as the “internal affairs” of other states are meant precisely to prevent those states from undermining the effectiveness of other states’ “internal” policies.

For example, the Irish *Oireachtas* has the formal power to pass (for the most part) whatever sort of tax laws it wants, and it has used this power to greatly undermine the substantive effectiveness of the tax policies passed by the national legislatures of other countries.⁴ Currently, the European Commission is attempting to punish Ireland for granting certain tax benefits to Apple Inc., on the grounds that these privileges deprive other EU members of revenue to which they are entitled (the case is currently undergoing appeal).⁵ Is the EU infringing upon the formal sovereignty of Ireland here, or is it (belatedly and inadequately) defending the substantive sovereignty of other states? Or is it doing both? As Peter Dietsch argues in a recent book on precisely this issue of tax competition:

“[I]n an interdependent world, Westphalian sovereignty is no longer adequate, or even logically possible. If the policies of state A affect other states in ways that, though not directly exercising authority over their policies, nevertheless indirectly undermine the effectiveness of these policies, then Westphalian sovereignty is compromised.... [A]n effective protection of the right to sovereignty will call for more substantive correlative duties on the part of other states. This is an argument about the *content* of sovereignty rather than about its *form*.”⁶

This is in many ways an extension my point, made earlier, that the exercise of self-determination by one group, at least insofar as it involves the exercise of the coercive power of a state, in practice undermines the self-determination of other groups.

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ireland_as_a_tax_haven

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/EU_illegal_State_aid_case_against_Apple_in_Ireland#Further_controversy

⁶ Peter Dietsch, *Catching Capital: The Ethics of Tax Competition*, Oxford University Press 2015, pp. 173, 174-175.

Liberal Zionist: And the same is even more plausible in the case of most citizens of PIIGS countries, simply because since World War II the political culture and education in Germany has been comparatively very cautious about cultivating nationalist sentiments. (Disclaimer: I have not conducted these polls, so I am willing to stand corrected.)

Reply: If I recall correctly, Germans are more likely than PIIGS citizens to agree with the idea of greater integration in the abstract (e.g., when you ask them outright, “Do you support the eventual creation of a United States of Europe?”), but (unsurprisingly) far less likely when you ask them about specific integrative policies that would impose obvious short term cost on Germany and short term benefit to the PIIGS. For example, one obvious step toward fiscal union would be the creation of “Eurobonds”, sovereign bonds issued jointly by the Eurozone countries (not to be confused with external bonds, also called “Eurobonds”). But this would mean Germany guaranteeing the debt of more debt-prone countries like Greece and Italy, which is presumably why Germans oppose them by more than 5-to-1 (<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-poll-germans-strongly-against-eurobonds-2011nov25-story.html>).

Liberal Zionist: Indeed, compare in this connection the Palestinians. Quite recently, they adamantly rejected a peace plan that in all likelihood would offer them something short of an independent state in exchange for dramatically improved economic conditions. One might doubt whether those offering this deal would actually have made good on what was promised; but it is highly plausible that the Palestinians would also have rejected more believable offers. And, in my view, reasonably so, as long as those offers were meant to establish a final arrangement. As many Palestinian politicians took pains to emphasize, to them, no easing of economic conditions, however substantial, could be an adequate substitute for political sovereignty.

Reply: The Palestinian Authority did indeed reject the proposal Liberal Zionist mentions, almost certainly because the Palestinian public prefers, for the time being at least, what they understandably regard as national dignity to economic relief. But how long can this be expected to go on? There are innumerable examples in history of nations submitting to foreign conquerors in exchange for improved material conditions. Often this surrender only happens after heroic resistance, but it happens nonetheless. Indeed, many Palestinians and sympathetic foreign observers believe that the Palestinian Authority and Palestine Liberation Organization surrendered to Israel long ago. Edward Said, for example, called the Oslo Accords, the first of which was signed in 1993, a “Palestinian Versailles”.⁷ According to this analysis (which I endorse in broad measure), at Oslo, the PLO under Yasser Arafat abandoned its national liberation struggle and agreed to become a subcontractor for the Israeli occupation in certain designated areas of the West Bank, providing, among other things, “security services” (including arbitrary imprisonment and often torture of Palestinian dissidents) for Israel rather than continuing the struggle for national independence. What’s more, Israel made minimal concessions in response, refusing even to halt settlement

⁷ <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v15/n20/edward-said/the-morning-after>. See also Noam Chomsky, “A Painful Peace”, <https://chomsky.info/199601/>; and Norman Finkelstein, “Whither the ‘Peace Process’?”, <https://newleftreview.org/issues/I218/articles/norman-finkelstein-whither-the-peace-process>. Note that all of these commentators are supporters of a two-state solution, including Said at the time he wrote the cited piece, so their objections to Oslo do not hinge on a commitment to Israel’s dissolution.

expansion (settlements continued to be built all through the Oslo process, and indeed at a more rapid pace than previous decades).

It is true that the Palestinian leadership still refuses to formally ratify its surrender by agreeing to various annexationist proposals put forth by Israel and the US, but all this means is that it has surrendered in substantive rather than formal terms. Since Oslo, the PLO has resigned itself to more or less permanent Israeli occupation, even if it refuses to admit this to the Palestinian people or to the world. The status quo is one of Israeli state control over virtually the entire territory of the Holy Land, and nothing the Palestinian leadership does challenges the status quo in any important way. Perhaps at some point the PA will formally agree to accept a pseudo-state in exchange for material relief, but even if it does not, a continuance of the status quo would be hardly less of a surrender of the national self-determination of the Palestinian people.

(Nor is this merely a case of a “comprador” leadership betraying the authentically nationalist Palestinian masses. Israel, like all military occupiers throughout history, relies on an extensive network of collaborators, the bulk of whom are “ordinary people” enticed to collaborate through material incentives, such as bribes, or the threat of imprisonment or torture. The decision to collaborate is no doubt in many cases eminently understandable, but the fact that so many make this choice belies the notion that Palestinian nationalism, of either the leadership or the “people”, is immune to material incentives.)

Liberal Zionist: Now, one might try to explain away these attitudes (on the part of working class Germans, PIIGS citizens, and Palestinians) as merely effects of nationalist propaganda. But I think this interpretation is uncharitable and inaccurate. It ignores the fact that, for many peoples, having a state of their own tends to be deeply meaningful and a matter of national pride. At any rate, surely anyone who wants to explain these reactions away bears the burden of proof.

Reply: I don't deny that national pride is a real and immensely consequential sentiment in human affairs, and that it often if not mostly manifests itself as a desire for an independent and (formally and substantively) sovereign nation-state. Of course it is often exploited by ruling elites for their own interests, but the reason it is so easily exploited is because so many are genuinely committed to it.

All I deny is that most peoples will continue to prioritize this desire in the face of indefinitely intensifying material disincentives to do so. At some point, the material advantages of surrendering formal sovereignty (or the material pain necessary to maintain it) will become too great to ignore. Even if they do not, however, I believe that substantive sovereignty will become increasingly impossible in any case.

