Faction Role Sheet: Difference Liberals

You are a member of the difference-liberal faction. You are a proponent of the ideas found in “Equality for Minority Cultures,” by Will Kymlicka, and “Equal Recognition,” by Alan Patten. These chapters are the foundation of your beliefs, your thinking, and your behaviour. Sometimes it may be pretty obvious how Kymlicka and Patten’s principles require you to speak and act. Other times, however, it may be unclear how to apply these principles to current political issues. In such cases, you’ll need to decide for yourself what Kymlicka and Patten’s principles require you to say or do. So long as your speech and actions don’t contradict your difference-liberal principles, you will be living up to your role.

Kymlicka and Patten hold that liberal states should recognize and protect the cultures of “national minorities” that live within their borders. Examples of national minorities in North America include indigenous people (e.g. native Americans, native Hawaiians, Alaskan Inuit), Puerto Ricans and French-speaking Quebecers. These groups share several defining traits: their native language differs from that of their country’s majority; they are concentrated in a particular territory; their cultures pre-date the establishment on the state they now occupy; and they have their own political institutions (such as band councils in the case of indigenous people, or legislative assemblies in Puerto Rico and Quebec). In addition, national minorities became minorities through conquest, colonization or force. This distinguishes them from immigrants who voluntarily chose to move to a new country.

It is a basic tenet of liberal justice that states should be neutral in their treatment of people who hold different conceptions of the good. The classic example of this is the familiar notion that the government should not be involved in matters of religion: hence the separation of church and state. Kymlicka and Patten, however, note that in matters of culture, liberal democratic states have historically not been neutral. They inevitable favour the culture of the majority. Some language or languages function and the language of government. Citizens are encouraged, in public schools and citizenship cerimonies, to identify with the history of the majority culture. And some holidays, such as Christmas, are recognized as official state holidays while others are not. For both Kymlicka and Patten, recognizing and protecting the language and culture of national minorities can be justified as a means of correcting for this inevitable cultural favoritism on the part of governments. Kymlicka offers a second reason for protecting the “societal cultures” of national minorities: human beings require a culture to provide a “context of choice” when it comes to deciding how to live, and national minorities have historically resisted efforts to be forcibly assimilated into different cultures. Hence the context of choice provided by their culture of origin can have special value for them, and warrants protecting on that additional basis.

For both Patten and Kymlicka, restrictions on the freedom of members of a cultural majority can be justified if they are necessary to protect the cultural autonomy and self-government of national minorities. A law preventing non-indigenous people from owning property on indigenous reservations or voting to elect band council members would be an example. An example of a restriction on freedom that Kymlicka and Patten’s arguments would *not* justify would be a band council restricting the religious freedom of band members. This “internal restriction” on the freedom of members of a national minority cannot be justified by an argument designed to protect them from unwanted assimilation. So-called “external restrictions,” limiting the ability of a majority to encroach on the autonomy of a minority, are what difference liberals seek to justify. They are defensible when they are necessary to extend the same cultural security enjoyed by the cultural majority to a national minority. While immigrants deserve equal opportunity to succeed in their new society, they do not have the same right to state recognition of their culture. This is because they freely chose to immigrate and did not become minorities by force, the way national minorities did.

Cultural protections for national minorities is an issue that is sure to come up in the game. Your stance on this issue is crystal clear: you fundamentally oppose any effort to strip national minorities of such protections, and you will seize any opportunity to enhance what protections already exist. The libertarian and uniform liberal factions are sure to oppose you on this, but you know this is because they fail to recognize some central demands of justice. Their own philosophies endorse state neutrality, yet on this matter they fail to follow their own principles. An important task for you to undertake is to try to influence as many indeterminates as possible to support you in preserving, and possibly enhancing, protections for national minority cultures. While you will be open to proposals to assist immigrants, refugees and other minority groups, they do not have the same centrality in your thinking as do national minorities, and do not warrant the same kind of cultural protections.

A vote on national welfare provisions must occur during the first game session. Here again you are likely to take an opposing view to the libertarian faction, but you should otherwise be able to work with the uniform liberals. Your two factions are both forms of modern liberalism and endorse the redistribution of resources. It will be unsurprising if you and the uniform liberals end up voting together on this issue. An important question will be whether the libertarians can convince enough indeterminates to vote with them to win out over the combined votes of the two liberal factions.

A third issue that is likely to come up in the game is a proposal for open borders. You are much cooler toward this idea than you are to increased welfare provisions. National minorities already face challenges due to the fact that they are a small proportion of the national population. There is little benefit in your mind to making them even smaller minorities. In addition open borders would risk the current majority culture becoming a minority, which you would also oppose. While you do not oppose modest increases in immigration the issue is at best a low priority, at worst a recipe for making national minorities even more vulnerable. While the libertarian faction is likely to favour open borders the uniform liberals may be unpredictable. It will therefore be important for you to ensure sufficient numbers of indeterminates vote against open borders. Even better in your mind would be if the issue never came to a vote in the first place, thereby even avoiding even opening the door to the risk of increased pressure on national minority cultures.

A fourth issue of concern to you concerns the role of speaker. The first thing the assembly will do, before even its first session, will be to hold a vote to determine who will occupy this role. As the speaker determines which resolutions are voted on and when, this is a position of power, and it will only benefit your faction if one of you becomes speaker. As soon as you finish reading this role sheet you should consult with your faction about which of you will stand to run for the role of speaker. That person should then prepare a short speech making the case for why he or she would be a fair-minded and benevolent speaker, which they will need to give in the last class before the first game session. Because other factions are likely to nominate their own candidates, the main goal of the speech should be to convince indeterminates of your case.   
  
Note that some roles may not know that the speaker will be elected, and you will be giving up an advantage if you publicize this in advance. You should therefore not discuss the election of the speaker beyond your own faction members before the start of the game.

Other issues may come up in the game. An important element of interacting with indeterminates will be to determine if they have objectives of their own that you could support in exchange for them supporting yours. Here as elsewhere you will need to decide for yourselves which measures your difference-liberalism principles allow you to support. Remember that any resolution before the legislature can be amended or modified, which in some cases may allow you to support a motion that initially appears unacceptable.

**Victory Conditions**

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| **Points** | **Objective** |
| 1/right | The assembly passes a proposal enshrining an additional right consistent with your philosophy, after a member of your faction gives a speech demonstrating why the measure is consistent with your philosophy |
| 1 | The game ends without a vote on open or more open borders: one point. |
| 2 | The assembly adopts strong protections for national minorities |
| 1 | The assembly passes a resolution moderately increasing protections for any minority group (if strong protections for national minorities are not adopted) |
| -1 | The assembly passes a motion reducing existing protections for national minorities |
| -1 | The assembly passes a motion increasing immigration |

**Primary Texts**

Kymlicka, Will. Equality for Minority Cultures. *Liberalism, Community and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

Patten, Alan. Equal Recognition. *Equal Recognition: The Moral Foundations of Minority Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).