

Management of Social Transformations
MOST

Discussion Paper Series - No. 12

Public policy and ethnic conflict

by

Ralph R. Premdas

The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of the following, among others: Joseph Carens, Ed Andrew, Sev Isajiw, John Simpson, Ron Beiner, Richard Simeon, Richard Iton, Sarah Wayland and John Duggan (University of Toronto); John Rex (University of Warwick); Tedd Gurr (University of Maryland); Michealine Critchlow (University of Iowa); Walker Connor (University of Arizona); Crawford Young (University of Wisconsin); Leo Despres (University of Notre Dame); Ed Dew (Fairfield University); Peter Li (University of Saskatchewan); Jim Fredires (University of Calgary); Anne Keating and Hazel Campaigne (Diocesan Poverty and Race Relations Program of Toronto); Gregory Baum, Charles Taylor, and Dale Thomson (McGill University); the late Lloyd Braithwaite, Gwen Williams, Brinsley Samaroo and Bridget Brereton (University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago).



UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

- About MOST

MOST is a research programme designed by UNESCO to promote international comparative social science research. Its primary emphasis is to support large-scale, long-term autonomous research and to transfer the relevant findings and data to decision-makers. The programme operates in three priority research areas:

1. The management of change in multicultural and multi-ethnic societies
2. Cities as arenas of accelerated social transformation
3. Coping locally and regionally with economic, technological and environmental transformations.

- About the author

Ralph R. Premdas is Reader in Public Policy, Department of Government, at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago. He is the author of several books and monographs on ethnicity and culture conflicts. The most recent titles include: *Ethnicity and Development* with Rodolfo Stavenhagen (University of Warwick and Avebury Press, 1996); *Ethnic Conflicts and the State* (UNRISD, 1996); *Ethnic Identity in the Caribbean: Decentering a Myth* (Yale, 1997); *Comparative Secessionist Movements* (Pinder, 1991); *The Enigma of Ethnicity: the Caribbean and the World* (University of the West Indies School of Continuing Education, 1994).

- MOST discussion papers

The MOST discussion papers series publishes contributions from specialists in the MOST research fields. These papers are prepared as part of the international scientific debate on these questions.

The facts and opinion expressed in this series are those of the authors and do not engage the responsibility of UNESCO.

1. *Multicultural and multi-ethnic societies*. Henri Giordan, 1994. E/F/S
2. *Managing social transformations in cities*. Céline Sachs-Jeantet, 1995. E/F/S
3. *Differentiating between growth regimes and the management of social reproduction*. Pascal Byé, 1994. E/F/S
4. *Urban research in Latin America. Towards a research agenda*. Licia Valladares and Magda Prates Coelho, 1995. E/F/S
5. *Management of multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity in Latin America*. Diego A. Iturralde, 1995. E/F/S
6. *Lo global, lo local, lo híbrido. Aproximaciones a una discusión que comienza* (Spanish only). Heinz R. Sonntag and Nelly Arenas, 1995. S
7. *Reflections on the challenges confronting post-apartheid South Africa*. B. Makhosezwe Magubane, 1995. E
8. *Coping locally and regionally with economic, technological and environmental transformations*. S. Jentoft, N. Aarsaether and A. Hallenstvedt, 1995. F/S/R
9. *City partnerships for urban innovation*. Francis Godard, 1996 (for HABITAT II, Istanbul). E/F
10. *Management and mismanagement of diversity. The case of ethnic conflicts and state-building in the Arab World*. Saad Eddin Ibrahim, 1996. E/F
11. *Urbanization and urban research in the Arab World*. Mostafa Kharoufi, 1996. E/F
12. *Public policy and ethnic conflict*. Ralph R. Premdas, 1997. E

13. *Some thematic and strategic priorities for developing research on multi-ethnic and multicultural societies.* Juan Diez Medrano, 1996. E
14. *The information technology enabled organization: a major social transformation in the USA.* Thomas R. Gullede and Ruth A. Hazsko, 1996. E
15. *Global transformations and coping strategies: a research agenda for the MOST programme.* Carlos R.S. Milani and Ali M.K. Dehlavi, 1996. E
16. *The new social morphology of cities.* Guido Martinotti, 1997. E

• **MOST Policy Papers**

1. *Searching for New Development Strategies - The Challenges of the Social Summit,* by Ignacy Sachs, 1995. E/F
2. *From Social Exclusion to Social Cohesion: A Policy Agenda,* by Sophie Bessis, 1995. E/F/S
3. *Cybernetics of Global Change: Human Dimension and Managing of Complexity,* by M. Mesarovic, D. McGinnis and D. West, 1996. E
4. *Multiculturalism: A Policy Response to Diversity,* by Christine Inglis, 1996. E

Note: E=English; F=French; S=Spanish; R=Russian

MOST publications are also available in electronic form at the
MOST Clearing House Web site at www.unesco.org/most

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
1, rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15, France
email : ssmost@unesco.org
<http://www.unesco.org/most>
(c) UNESCO 1997

Abstract

The state as a carrier of a dominant cultural core and as an exclusive unit of loyalty is challenged and being redefined in the vortex of a massive globalization process in migration and digitally-driven communications. Cultural re-tribalisation is stridently asserted; paradoxically at the same time, split identities are becoming more common, multiple identities are negotiated, dual citizenship proliferates and a global network of shared symbols render cultural exclusivity less tenable. Who is a citizen? What is membership? The contemporary multi-ethnic state is now a site of relentless interrogation of the validity of any sort of cultural consensus or attempts to impose one.

The paper discusses two structural multicultural policies which cover almost all of the one hundred and eighty five states in the world. The structure of this pluralism varies considerably in terms of the number of ethnic communities, their respective sizes, the depth of their differences and similarities, and histories of inter-communal relations. The relations between these ethnic segments have varied from domination and genocide to many forms of accommodation and sharing.

CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION: A CHANGING WORLD.....	2
II.	THE MULTICULTURAL PROBLEMATIC.....	3
III.	ETHNICITY, MIGRATION, GLOBALIZATION AND IDENTITY	4
IV.	THE DIALECTICS OF ETHNICITY, BELONGING, AND IDENTITY.....	5
V.	IDENTITY FORMATION AND THE OTHER: THE ROLE OF COMPARISON.....	7
VI.	MODES OF INTER-COMMUNAL REGULATION.....	10
VII.	THE POLICY OF MULTICULTURALISM: TWO FACES.....	12
	1. TYPE I: THE POWERSHARING VARIANT	12
	2. TYPE II: THE CULTURAL VARIANT	13
	NOTES	16

I. Introduction: a changing world

The state as carrier of a dominant cultural core and as an exclusive unit of loyalty is being challenged and redefined in the vortex of a massive globalization process in migration and digitally-driven communications. In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, a "re-tribalised" world has emerged as identity groups of all types emerge from unsuspected places in a quest for security, status, and resources in virtue of their "cultural difference". Everywhere ethnic identities are rediscovered and re-constructed with new claims catalogued, usually against alleged hegemonic and oppressive groups and communities. It is a zero-sum struggle in which the claims of one group, frequently wrapped in righteous cultural symbols, can only be met by a corresponding loss of face as well as relinquishing of space and privileges by another historic community. "Recognition" and "equity" are perhaps the most widely used slogans employed in this new discourse. "Our identity", as the philosopher Charles Taylor pointed out, "is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or contemptible picture of themselves" (1). In effect, "non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted and reduced mode of being" (2). "Equity" is about "justice" and includes a call for redress. These verbally-tooled weapons cogently interrogate all prior arrangements bringing old dominant cultural elites under a scorching light of scrutiny.

While cultural re-tribalisation is stridently asserted in the face of globalization and massive migration, paradoxically at the same time split identities are becoming more common, multiple identities are negotiated, dual citizenships proliferate and a global network of shared symbols render cultural exclusivity less tenable. Despite rearguard actions for a reclamation of the state as a suitable receptacle of belonging, inexorably new forms of citizenship are crafted around selves who dwell in innumerable multi-cultural milieux around the world. While some seek shelter for their rights under the cultural framework of the old nation-state, more and more people separate their rights from the cultural identity of the nation. As Yasmin Soysal perceptively pointed out, in an increasingly borderless world, national cultural identity and juridical citizen and human rights have been separated (3). Who is a citizen? What is membership? In a world which seems to be in a condition of decomposition at the dissolving mercy of an avalanche of transnational economic exchanges, mass migration, and digital communications, to be a citizen is now only a formal statement of legal rights and obligations separated from a sense of shared cultural identity with a state. New forms of meaning are constructed around a new idiom of interaction suggesting such new identities as an e-mail community. The contemporary multi-ethnic state is now a site of relentless interrogation of the validity of any sort of cultural consensus or attempts to impose one (4). In effect, another sphere of contestation which has been unleashed by the creation of the new polyethnic state pertains to its restructuring as an artefact of

meaningful human association. The modern person in quest of personal identity finds that the modern state increasingly assumes the fissiparous form of a fragmented place of exile lacking a centre of gravity in a sea of cacophonous contestations over shares, equity, redress, rights, wrongs, etc.. While, from the inside, the state is assaulted as a repository of personal meaning, from the outside it is buffeted by globalizing transnational forces that ignore its sphere of governance. The secure self needs new boundaries of belonging, more intimate and reliable than the state, maybe in a non-territorial entity since growing transnational organizations and the comprehensive communication networking of the globe all point to the world as an integrated single site of survival. While it is not clear where all of this will converge, it is clear that the contemporary ethnic resurgence occurs at a moment when it is least functional for global coexistence. Tribalising and de-tribalising currents are at once operating to do and undo what is and will be.

II. The multicultural problematic

The multicultural problematic arises mainly in two societal contexts deriving much of its controversial character from the peculiarities of the pluralist configuration within these states. One of these contexts we shall call the "ethno-national", in which deep institutional divisions exist and can rend the state asunder at its ethnic seams, being potentially capable of creating new sovereign entities. The other, which is labelled "migrant-minority", occurs in host societies with a dominant cultural core embracing a policy of immigration to satisfy several instrumental needs including the recruitment of valuable labour skills. The two structural variants of multicultural heterogeneity describe almost universally all contemporary states. Both variants are themselves being challenged by new forces and transformed so that instead of rigid compartments they can be conceived as existing along a continuum with many among the migrant-minority employing the rhetoric of the ethno-national. For many reasons this breeds a dangerous anarchistic situation pointing to the failure to find appropriate solutions in inter-ethnic coexistence. In place of the material nuclear bomb, the world is threatened by an "ethnic nuclear explosion" as multicultural groups seize the moment to seek redress in uncompromising demands. It will be useful to identify the incendiary nature of this new threat by first describing the dimensions of the ethno-national variant among multi-ethnic states.

Of the one hundred and eighty five states in the world, few are ethnically homogenous; nearly all bear the mark of ethnic and cultural heterogeneity. The structure of this pluralism varies considerably in terms of the number of ethnic communities, their respective sizes, the depth of their differences and similarities, and histories of inter-communal relations. Among the 185 sovereign states, it has been estimated that there are about 4,000 ethno-cultural entities; 40% contain five or more such communities; less than a third have ethnic majorities; some such as India and Nigeria possess over one hundred each; others such as Belgium, Fiji, Guyana, Northern Ireland and Trinidad & Tobago are ethnically bipolar. In many of these

instances, the pluralism was created by colonialism. The relations between these ethnic segments have varied from domination and genocide to many forms of accommodation and sharing. The depth of their differences and extent of their overlaps as well as their pattern of residence and economic endowments also vary. In some cases, each ethnic group contains all the essential institutions which compose an autonomous society even though it may share interdependently an economy of exchange with other ethnic sections. Some ethno-national groups seek accommodation in internal autonomy within a diversified but extensively decentralized state while others in frustration attempt to dismember the state as an authentic vessel of belonging demanding a separate sovereign territorial sanctuary for security and community. In all these manifestations, a veritable kaleidoscope of diversity and complexity is evident that defies easy generalizations in cultural pluralism. In effect, each ethno-national state throws up its own peculiar inter-cultural configuration and suggests the limits of designing a general comprehensive solution for regulating its inter-ethnic relations.

The migrant-minority variant in the multicultural problematic points to the phenomenon of persons of another state and culture residing in the midst of a more numerous dominant group in another state. Most states contain minorities. In some cases, these minorities are derived from social and political disruptions in neighbouring states. In a number of instances, cross border migration occurs because of the attractions of greater economic advantages. In numerous cases especially in the West, an open policy of immigration induces large numbers of different individuals to uproot and reside in the receiving states. Ethnic issues of the migrant-minority variant now seem to suffuse the developed industrial world. Mass migration and mass movements of people, either voluntarily as legal immigrants or involuntarily as refugees, are the forces that are today dramatically transforming the cultural identities of many countries of the West. Refugee flows and asylum seekers add to the multicultural matrix of these countries. Taken together forced and unforced migration - for economic, political, and social reasons - account for the creation of most migrant minority communities.

III. Ethnicity, migration, globalization and identity

The multi-cultural state of both the ethno-national and minority-migrant variant has become alive with new ethnic claimants, manufactured everywhere, and unyielding in their demands. Bursting at its seams, the contemporary state, under pressure from internal ethno-nationalist and minority-migrant assertions, is challenged to jettison old accepted concepts of stability and legitimacy in cultural homogeneity and hegemony. Practically, all major multicultural communities throughout the world have been infected and aroused by this fashionable preoccupation with cultural particularity and identity and their access to power and privileges. It is not that minorities have not existed in the earliest states that were originally formed in Europe or that the poly-ethnic state is an innovation, for cultural heterogeneity within the same jurisdiction has existed as long as the state itself. Unlike the past, as Ernest Gellner points out, when most sub-national

cultures were "led to the dustheap of history by industrial civilization without offering any resistance" (5) thereby assimilating into the larger and more powerful mainstream, in the contemporary world these groups are boisterously vocal and militantly activist, asserting the right to a dignified survival of their own. Identity questions are everywhere with claims for space, attention, resources and rights.

In all these changes, ethnicity has re-asserted itself around a number of controversial issues within the borders of the state attesting to the decay of old forms and the emergence of new identities. First on the agenda is the matter of assimilation versus multiculturalism in the modern state, especially prevalent in the industrial countries. The issue revolves around several axes of contention: the right of a sub-national cultural community, usually a migrant-minority, to practice its beliefs versus the claims of a cultural core calling for uniformity in cultural practices; from this axis of inquiry emanates a number of salient issues: language rights and the insistence by some for multilingual services versus the claims for one official national language; the claim for multicultural representation in school curricula versus a single dominant source of historical meaning. In this latter problematic, the underlying issue of cultural identity is couched in an explosive artillery of questions. Should there be a single all-embracing national cultural identity? If so, whose cultural construct should it be? Is it valid to argue, as Waltzer and Schlesinger did, that newcomers be required to assimilate into the existing order? Is diversity to be feared? Or should it be welcomed as a critical means of national self-renewal? Is it persuasive to argue that the suppression of cultural diversity enhances social stability and political unity and not the opposite view that such an approach lays the seeds for alienation and rebellion? If diversity is to be accommodated under a doctrine of cultural relativism, does such tolerance include all types of cultural claims such as polygamy, child marriage, ritual drug consumption, etc.? Should the question of identity be a personal and private matter with no public attempt to construct an overarching consensus of values and traditions? Is each ethno-cultural identity equal to any other? Should the foreign policy of the state reflect the cultural preferences of the dominant core? Are feminists, homosexuals and the handicapped groups legitimate claimants to an autonomous cultural identity status with all the rights and privileges appended? These questions tend to occur poignantly in minority-migrant contexts but may well arise in various forms in all multicultural contexts in developed as well as underdeveloped countries. It will be useful in continuing this discourse to offer some definitions and analysis of ethnicity pointing to its significance in the multicultural problematic.

IV. The dialectics of ethnicity, belonging, and identity

Ethnicity may be defined as collective group consciousness that imparts a sense of belonging derived from membership in a community bound putatively by common descent and culture. Among many other groups in which one may participate and simultaneously share multiple identities, the ethnic group is distinguished as a special sort of community, comprehensive in scope and compelling in allegiance. It provides gratification by satisfying a deeply internalized need for meaning and belonging. Isaiah Berlin underscored the view that "just as people need to eat and drink, to have security

and freedom of movement, so too they need to belong to a group. Deprived of this, they feel cut off, lonely, diminished, unhappy. To be human means to be able to feel at home somewhere, with your own kind" (6). Berlin rejected the idea of a culturally homeless and uprooted person living in a twilight zone of cosmopolitanism: "I regard cosmopolitanism as empty. People can't develop unless they belong to a culture" (7). "The ethnic group is such a cultural community, an intimately interactive society of shared symbols and meanings resolving the anxiety of being alone: ... loneliness is not just the absence of others but far more a matter of living among people who understand what you are saying; they can truly understand only if they belong to a community where communication is effortless, almost instinctive" (8).

Ethnic membership serves as a badge of identity. "Identity need" is believed to have existed from time immemorial, indeed coextensive with the emergence of the human creature living in community; it tends to be best realized institutionally in an extended kinship network (9). An ethnic group is therefore thought of as a unique solidarity cluster into which one is born and bonded culturally and biologically (10). From this perspective, membership in an ethno-cultural community is a psychological attachment with compelling powers over individual choice quite unlike membership in a class which is socio-economically determined and may incorporate persons who are widely dispersed and from many ethnic communities bearing different values and speaking different languages.

In the claim to membership in an ethnic group, it is not important that the underlying bases of solidarity - language, religion, race, homeland, customs, ancestry, etc.- regarding their uniqueness, "purity", and other lofty claims, be objectively and empirically established as factual. It is enough that members believe these things to be true as the cement of their solidarity. For instance, the member of an ethno-cultural community bound largely by a shared language such as the Quebecers in Canada or the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka feels that his/her tongue confers a special and unique, even superior, life-sustaining link of shared symbols and sounds with their co-linguistic compatriots rendering them into a different social formation from others, prescribed with a destiny of living together, sharing common joys and sufferings. The base, whether it is language, religion or homeland, or a combination of these, even though they may be of relatively recent manufacture, anchors loyalty in a mystic membership of sacrifice. It is fashioned on the crucible of struggle with other communities. Multiple bases of solidarity such as language, region, religion and customs shared by Basques, Jews, Kurds, Malays, Palestinians, Sikhs, Tamils, Yorubas, etc. provide collective solidarity and pivot group identity deeply and uncompromisingly in a mould difficult to dislodge. This does not mean that they do not change but rather that they are mobilised to confirm group commitment and individual identity needs.

Apart from its symbolic role in conferring individual and collective gratification, ethnic identity serves as a security blanket in numbers and a buffer against uncertainty and adversity. In this regard, the so-called "primordial" subjective link becomes a resource that is mobilized to serve instrumental needs in contact and competition with other groups (11). Some analysts argue that this link is not at all inherent but situationally invented as a self-defense mechanism and an interest promotional posture

in quest of resources (12). Lacking any fixed essence, this argument turns collective ethnic behaviour into contrived rational responses removing it from any implied mysticism and obfuscating biologism. As an invented behaviour, ethnicity in this "constructivist" view is envisaged as ambiguous, easily malleable, altering its bases of attachment and displaying many faces in the quest to adapt to new needs and circumstances (13). This social transaction position of ethnicity sees individual ethnic behaviour as being daily crafted and negotiated, defined and redefined (14). Situational, unstable, contingent, fleeting, calculating, self-interested, and opportunistic, ethnic identity is put in this light as lacking deep commitment and cultural content, mainly tied to instrumental goals decorated with feigned customs and false claims of inequity, deprivation, oppression, etc.. Ethnicity may thus be apprehended as a simple strategy for individual and group survival and maximization of gain, neither more nor less. In multicultural milieux, the instrumental role in communal identity serves as an essential and rational link in accessing jobs and opportunities. This view clearly discounts and discredits the claim to intrinsic cultural uniqueness which identity groups assign themselves.

V. Identity formation and the other: the role of comparison

Ethnic identity is not necessarily always evident and may in fact be dormant and seemingly non-existent in normal and peaceful conditions. Its latency attests to its relational character, emerging as a response to the ethnic "other". Along this line of thought, one postulate argues that the human creature is a boundary-bound animal living in society (15). The ethnic group defines itself in a process of differentiation from others and this is asserted through a socially constructed boundary. The cultural content that is enclosed in this boundary is not in itself so much salient to the identity of a group as the separate sphere which is differentiated and demarcated relationally from others. Essentially, it is posited that while the human person lives and finds meaning and belonging within the bounds of ethno-cultural groups, this membership is ineluctably cast in "we-they" antipathetic relationships with other communities. To belong at once entails to be included in a community and to be separated and differentiated from another or several. It seems essential that identity be expressed as a process of differentiated categorization. Empirical findings obtained by Henry Tajfel, Leon Festinger and others, describe this aspect of the theory thus: "Categorization is conceived of as a basic cognitive tool that allows individuals to structure the social environment and define their place in it. The knowledge that he or she belongs to certain groups and the value attached to group membership, in positive and negative terms, represent the individual's social identity. This component (social identity) forms an important part of the self concept" (16). Put differently, the human is defined inherently as a group bounded creature whose deep identity needs for belonging can only be met in a comparative if not appositional relationship of inclusion/exclusion with other groups. Identity formation and sustenance is relational, often appositional and conflictual.

In the boundary hypothesis, ethnic group members may visibly display their distinctive boundary markers in symbolic and physical emblems in contact relations with others. This is not to suggest that these socially constructed boundaries which are usually manifested by cultural symbolic "gatekeepers" are closed systems, for they do permit exchange and interaction which recasts identities. If identity as differentiation is deemed as a constitutive dimension of survival, then it is in part constructed by inventing "the other". The "we-they" dynamic, in this view, is deeply embedded in human psychology. While at times it may be benign in relation to "the other", it can easily, in new circumstances of upheaval, become conflictual even turned into a marauding monster.

The point suggests that inter-communal group conflict may not be artificially contrived as a situational strategy merely in search of pragmatic instrumental needs to satisfy, but a dialectically driven ritual structure riveted into social and human behaviour that is not amenable to erasure or radical modification. This does not require a condition of perpetual war, for evidence abounds of prolonged periods of peaceful inter-communal coexistence and accommodation prior to the outbreak of strife. In Bosnia, Burundi, Fiji, Guyana, Lebanon, Malaysia, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, etc., the testimony from participants in the ethnic struggles abundantly underscores periods of prolonged inter-communal amity marked by intimate friendships and many inter-marriages. What is also clear from these cases is that, peaceful exchanges notwithstanding, inter-group differences are usually maintained in subtle and symbolic ways that suggest the illusion of boundary erasure and non-existence. No doubt some assimilation takes place and perhaps in a number of instances permanent integration takes place. But also in a number of other cases, the boundary markers do not melt away but, resistant to absorption, are silently preserved and re-invented only to erupt in a new instigatory context shocking observers with the outbreak of the intensity of passions which were supposed to have perished long ago.

Rapid change, colonization, conquest, modernization, mass migration and systematic disturbances are the typical triggers that transform a benign state of inter-ethnic group relations into one of overt conflict. In such circumstances, similarities and sharing are submerged and even the scantiest of residual differences to say nothing of the more evident ones assume a magnified form providing the pretext for divisive inter-communal behaviour. There is a respectable body of literature that addresses this magnified role that is often assigned to trivial differences between parties in communal conflict. The evidence suggests that the importance given to small differences is enacted in part to achieve group differentiation and distinctiveness as well as to legitimize a claim to a status hierarchy and resource shares (17).

Once an inter-ethnic and inter-communal struggle commences in either ethno-national or migrant-minority settings, it often finds expression and becomes embroiled in sensitive cultural symbols thereby rendering intransigent the smallest of claims and counterclaims. Similar in some ways to the boundary hypothesis, this explanation posits that comparison carries a special set of internal behavioural structures that border on the irrational. Social psychologist Henry Tajfel pointed to the propensity of group loyalty to be sustained intensely and irrationally not for "greater profit in absolute

terms“, but in order “to achieve relatively higher profit for members of their ingroup as, compared with members of the outgroup” (18). Put differently, it is not important that a group sees that rationally its behaviour in a conflict is inimical to its interests but what is more salient is that its adversary not be advantaged over it. Many of the claims for recognition and equity seem to be elucidated to this dynamic. Often occurring in a context where the conflicting groups shared the same territorial state and in which a particular distribution of status and resources prevailed, the struggle pivots around an unwillingness of one party to permit the other to profit advantageously by its actions. The comparison factor assumes a logic of its own, witnessing and wreaking, as if infused by jealousy, incredible havoc and harm on all parties in a policy of mutual denial. It is this comparison factor which in many ways underlies the claims of ethnic communities for recognition in a policy regime of multiculturalism. Equity and recognition politics is a collective comparison struggle which bears the mark of unending acrimony and competition.

The role of this comparison factor in inter-ethnic relations has been usefully located within what social psychologists call "social identity theory". In this explanation, the theory begins by affirming the need of the human creature and an ethnic community for a distinctive positive social identity in a process of social differentiation and categorization. Society is perceived as a place of conflict rather than cohesion. The theory attempts to explain inter-group behaviour through psychological processes such as identification, social comparison, and the need for distinctiveness. Social psychologists Taylor and Moghaddam strike the significance of this pattern of behaviour for inter-ethnic group relations underscoring the importance of comparison in this process: "Since only through social comparison is social identity meaningful, it is the relative position of groups that is important. Therefore, competition and conflict are seen as essential aspects of the intergroup situation" (19). In this scheme it is postulated that the individuals seek positive evaluations of themselves and “through intergroup comparisons, individuals will come to view their own group as psychologically distinct and, in relation to relevant comparison groups, they will try to make the in-group more favourable” (20). This critical ethno-centrist idea underscores the need for identity to be established and asserted by favourable comparisons leading to discriminatory inter-group behaviour in quest not merely of parity but superiority. Practically all cases of multicultural competition for recognition and resources carry these characteristics rendering reconciliation difficult.

In situations of irrational inter-ethnic conflict, social identity theory goes a fair way in locating the driving motivations in inter-group comparisons as a vital mechanism for the definition of the self and the group. In more normal situations, in a regime of multicultural policy, the incommensurability of cultural values render claims for equitable representation an unending source of acrimonious intercommunal conflict. In its most innocent form, in which only symbolic cultural concessions are involved, a policy of multiculturalism is underlaid with the dynamics of comparison and fraught with its own frustrations.

Multiculturalism is only one of several options available in addressing the problems of identity and comparison which arise in polyethnic states. The next section

examines these options and sets the stage for a discourse on the multicultural option. It needs to be emphasized however that multiculturalism, in the light of the comparison factor found in identity claims, is often less a salutary and satisfactory solution and more an expression of the power equation in the society. The policy of multiculturalism may be conceived as only a stop gap measure aimed at containing the cultural exposition and identity claims of proliferating ethnic communities and their frequent uncompromising rival claims in the state. From this perspective, multiculturalism must be conceived as a contested solution since it conceals the hegemony of certain power groups. It is bound to foster discontent that can return to haunt the dominant power wielders and proponents of assimilation. Multiculturalism is then essentially a new arena for the continuation of the old contest over the distribution of power, recognition, and resources. In this sort of state, identity politics and ethno-national challenges become embedded as a normal part of daily politics in which ethnic mobilization is accentuated and serves as the main means of interest representation. In this context, the state is constantly interrogated as a site of sharing and belonging and demands for its redefinition is a fundamental requirement for a long-term solution. The response may not necessarily be a positive form of accommodation but, as the following section shows may point to attempts at a solution in ethnic homogenization through genocide.

VI. Modes of inter-communal regulation

In most multi-ethnic states, the mode of regulating intercommunal differences and strife varies over time ranging from periods of oppression to moments of accommodation. Cultural pluralism of both ethno-national and minority-migrant types tends to throw up persistent problems in establishing stable inter-sectional coexistence (21). In contexts of deep divisions with ethno-national characteristics, peaceful accommodative practices appear to be rare events and when they do occur they tend to be of relatively short duration. Generally, from the evidence, it is clear that the most prevalent policies and practices that states apply in coping with ethno-nationalist challenges point to domination and repression. Sometimes drastic measures are employed to destroy "once and for all", deep ethno-cultural divisions through assimilation, genocide, population expulsion or partition. As a general rule, these modes of ethnic conflict management tend to be counter-productive. Multi-ethnicity and cultural diversity persist and rarely can they be entirely erased or suppressed. Instability is a chronic characteristic of culturally plural states so that each adaptation in managing inter-communal relations seems to be situated on shifting sands always under challenge.

The history of most deeply divided multi-ethnic states is a veritable repository of varied experiments and experiences in regulating inter-communal living. The solutions span a repertoire ranging from power-sharing and consociation on the conciliatory side of a continuum to communal oppression and exploitation on the domination side (22). There are many modalities in between as Figure 1 shows.

Figure I

NEGATIVE SIDE

| -genocide -- assimilation -- partition -- population transfer -- forced population transfer -- forced domination/repression -- legal hegemonic domination |

POSITIVE SIDE

| -consociation--bargaining--decentralization--balance--arbitration--multiculturalism--democracy- liberal |

It is probably true that the typical polyethnic state has evolved a pattern of inter-sectional coexistence for which it is widely well reputed, constituting what may be called a "national style" such as the Millet system under the Ottoman Empire and the French policy of assimilation. Even so, national styles of interethnic regulation undergo periodic crises and breakdowns. For our purposes, it is important to underscore that in a single case history, various modes of ethnic conflict resolution including a wide range of contradictory and inconsistent modalities on the continuum from left to right can be discovered.

The importance of this point consists of the proposition that very often a multi-ethnic state which searches for a solution to its communal crisis may discover insights from its own experience and history rather than in alien imports. What I am also saying is that in the end whatever policy proposals are recommended to regulate and resolve an inter-ethnic crisis they should not be treated as the transfer of mere technical devices that can be conveniently and neutrally inserted in an ethnic conflict to provide a temporary solution. In migrant-minority contexts, the options of multiculturalism and liberal democracy on the positive side of the continuum of ethnic conflict resolution modalities are pertinent although assimilation and legal hegemonic domination are often openly practiced and even population transfers through incentives are sometimes applied. Whether situated in multiculturalism or territorial decentralization or practically any other mode, ethnic conflict resolution is not only culture specific to a substantial extent but it tends to embody a contest over cultural claims and the distribution of symbolic and material values. This is the fulcrum on which turns issues of equity in claims and counter claims among ethnic communities in conflict. In the end, the issues and the mode of resolution are political, cultural and ethical (23). This should point towards a critical process of formulating policy options that are at once cognizant of and sensitive to cultural contexts (24). Solutions must also be cognizant of and constructed on our understanding of the nature of ethnicity and identity processes derived from available empirical evidence. We turn to this next.

VII. The policy of multiculturalism: two faces

Multiculturalism may be analytically conceived as having two variants, one we shall call Type I or the full-fledged form and the other, Type II, the symbolic form. In turn, these types of multiculturalism tend to be related to three types of societies, namely, homogenous, diversified, and pluralized. The homogenous society is one in which fundamental institutions and values are shared by practically the entire society. Few homogenous states exist. The "pluralized state" is one in which separate groups with their own set of essential institutions exist almost autonomously as a sub-set in the state. They rival the state as entities capable of a sovereign existence. These sub-state units in a pluralized state are ethno-national groupings which may seek self-determination. The "diversified state" as defined here is one where citizens share a common set of integrative institutions and national values but retain collective sub-state cultural practices that do not compromise their loyalty to the unity of the state. The policy of multiculturalism is most frequently practiced in the diversified state under such slogans as "unity in diversity". Multiculturalism in this sense, as John Rex argued, is what the British Home Secretary, in 1968, called "integration" which would involve "not a flattening process of uniformity", but "cultural diversity coupled with equal opportunity in an atmosphere of tolerance" (25). This perspective is frequently referred to as "egalitarian multiculturalism" but in fact fails to address the mechanism by which powersharing, equality, and difference are accommodated. For this reason, I have devised two variants of multiculturalism which are set out below.

1. Type I: The powersharing variant

In this category, multiculturalism (MC hereafter) is more than just concerned with the distribution of recognition in cultural symbols and goes to the more fundamental matter of allocating power, privileges and resources. MC, understood as only cultural concessions for holidays, festivals, and state subsidies granted to ethno-cultural associations, is merely decorative in effect and likely to be counter-productive in the long run instigating anger and alienation from disempowered and minority communities. To be turned into effective policy in meaningfully recognizing and reconciling communal differences, I argue that this aspect of MC be contextualised within a larger scheme of power-sharing. Once so expressed, multicultural expressions assume meaning and not merely mock and parody oppression.

Type I MC is typically found in deeply divided pluralised states with ethno-national groups seeking some sort of territorial autonomy. Type I MC is usually not applied to states which are diversified but integrated. Powersharing in Type I MC may assume many forms but fundamentally it refers to an accepted intersectional arrangement in which leadership, offices, public posts, resources, and space are equitably apportioned. There is no generally accepted *a priori* fixed formula that specifically describes the details of such a package of accommodation (26). It needs to

be negotiated by the rival communities. In the end, it may be institutionalized in the political and administrative order. Once power-sharing has been achieved, in this type of full fledged MC, the symbolic aspect makes sense instead of serving as a mockery that adorns and ritualises minority interests papering over substantive inequality, discrimination and oppression.

Type I MC tends to fit more appropriately in states which are populated by ethno-national communities with their own self-sufficient institutions called "plural societies"(27). In this situation, if a solution cannot be found in power-sharing and decentralization, then an aggrieved community may seek a separate sovereign existence via secession. More often than not this course of action fails and an order based on repression is implemented (28).

2. Type II: The cultural variant

MC in this variant is typically located in diversified states with a formal policy of accommodating the claim of a group to maintain at least some of its distinctive cultural practices while simultaneously participating in the values and belief system of the larger national state. Through mass migration, these states had become culturally plural. Often, in this context, the state is dominated by a large cultural core community while the demands for recognition emanates from recent immigrant descended groups. Typically, in these states immigrant minorities seek equality in juridical rights and access to opportunities as they simultaneously participate in the ethos of the national community (29). To be sure, there is some controversy about this duality in loyalty. The issue arises in contexts where an ethnic community is not being successfully assimilated and suffers from systematic discrimination which in turn may induce the rejected community to retreat into the protective shell of its own institutions and, in disappointment, interrogate the value of their identity and loyalty to the state (30). Over time, if this condition is not corrected, a pluralised radically unintegrated state can be created with ethno-national claims for autonomy.

In the more common situation however in Type II MC, activism and mobilization by a minority are focused around the quest for policy concessions for the recognition of the symbols of identity as well as access to economic and political opportunities. Recent immigrant groups may seek at the same time equality as well as recognition of their cultural particularity. Put differently, these groups demand equality in access to rights and resources as well as recognition of their cultural differences. In this instance, cultural concessions are a form of collective therapy aimed at celebrating their identity publicly and also serve to salve slights from the dominant group. The political dimension of their demand is often not given special attention or concession compared with their cultural claims. It is frequently assimilated and aggregated in the wider political order and party system. With regard to their economic interests, as in the political sphere, the economic quest for equal access to opportunities often becomes subsumed and submerged in the wider grid of economic claims of the community as a whole. It is however in the cultural arena that concessions are likely to be accorded

since on the surface it seems to be the least costly to the state. This is an area that is discussed here as Type II MC.

Inherent in the concessions of cultural claims is a complex set of more nuanced difficulties. The dynamics of identity formation discussed earlier shed some interesting light on Type II MC. In a diversified multicultural society, identity construction and preservation does not escape the depiction of rival communities, "the other", in terms of contrasting differences that can be benign but more often than not tend to be provocative and antagonistic. Deconstruction of some of the celebrations of the peripheral minority communities demonstrates that the cultural particularity of a group is often portrayed in a way that evokes negative stereotypes and memories held of rival, especially dominant communities. This in turn may provoke retaliation instead of fostering intercultural understanding and appreciation. Counter celebratory excesses are often found in both variants of MC but are likely to be more muted in Type II societies. Celebratory rivalry offers a new site of accentuating differences providing a legitimate but destructive outlet for some kind of subliminal wrath expressed through symbols, rituals, and cultural idioms.

As ritualized therapy, official recognition of public celebrations and the allocation of state subsidies deflect from the more substantive sort of political and economic inequalities that may exist in these diversified states. To be sure, rituals and symbols can be powerful in the short run in assuaging cultural slights. However, in the absence of meaningful participation and access to power and in the presence of discrimination and systematic oppression, the cultural concessions can become new sites of ethnic competition and struggle in expressing alienation. In effect, type I MC may potentially keep alight underlying grievances, underscore the condition of ghettoization of peripheralised groups, invoke invidious comparisons, compound them in a new volatile mix, and in the end add fuel to the resentments which divide the society. Type II MC serves to patch up and provide a surrogate myth of the state for sharing a common space as well as recognition and resources. Especially where immigrant groups over several generations are not assimilable as is the case with Blacks many of whom are Caribbean peoples, Type II MC may serve as a trigger that ignites inter-ethnic malaise that may engulf the entire society in communal conflagration.

Type II MC has other problems which require elaboration. By recognizing the cultural symbols and festivals in the official calendar but without attending to the substantive issues of political closure and economic discrimination, this variant of MC tends to freeze minorities in ghettoized compartments and at the same time cripples their mobility and assimilability into the society as a whole (31). MC stigmatizes these groups and "minoritizes" their status setting them apart and rendering them easy targets for discriminatory treatment. Further, the freezing of cultural boundaries with its exclusionary features, permits easy victimization and manipulation of these groups.

All of this runs counter to an old underlying theory of Type II MC, namely, the argument that inter-cultural exchanges will evolve into and spill over into the political arena thereby eliminating alienation and unifying the society. This "cultural functionalism" is an assimilationist ideology which glosses over and trivialises the

forms of systematic oppression which are meted out to minorities. In a real sense, MC in this context can be conceived as a tool of control aimed at the excluded groups. More often than not, the dominant group may have no interest in sharing power and resources with minorities and the policy of MC serves this purpose handsomely by compartmentalizing and ghettoizing these groups. This is not meant to suggest that certain elites within the ghettoized groups may not participate in maintaining the walls of separation for their own interests. "Ethno-cultural entrepreneurs" within the discriminated against communities may become witting or unwitting tools in maintaining a system of cultural apartheid which parades as a positive policy of MC.

Is there a positive case that can be made on behalf of Type II MC? The argument can be advanced that the recognition of cultural particularity in state policy is no mean concession. It allows for the religious and cultural idioms of a community to be expressed freely. It does not outlaw these practices which are essential for the dignity of the individual and community. It invites the rest of the society to learn from and acknowledge the cultural distinctiveness and value of other groups thereby enriching the entire state in the process. When fully articulated as a cultural expression, MC may result in the recognition of the languages of minorities and underscore the need for the creation of multilingual public facilities, including schools, as well as the representation in school curricula of the history and heroes of these groups. All of this assumes the willingness of the dominant communities to alter their own identity and not expect that only minorities must adjust. Some of these changes can be fundamental shifting the founding state away from its ancient moorings that in the past used to define the state.

However, practically all the cultural expressions of minorities are the source of controversy and the everyday response of the dominant community to them point to the limits of tolerance. The erection of mosques and temples has been resisted and subsequently they often become the target of defacement and vandalism. The public use of traditional dress and emblems, such as the *hijab*, has aroused public resentment and fear. More than these examples, however, are signal issues arising from the demand that "collective communal rights" of minorities be officially recognized. Among these claims of minorities is the right of a group to practice polygamy, child marriages, violence against women, etc.. These collective claims run counter to the claims of individual rights in the liberal democratic state.

Clearly, the positive features of cultural diversity and the policy of MC come in a mixed bag with some practices more easily digestible than others. Serious questions arise regarding the cohesion and unity of the state, about its defining and founding principles, about the obligations of guests and hosts, etc. A "soft" form of MC can be conceived as one which permits inoffensive cultural practices to be freely expressed. For many, this provides a wide enough ambit within which to find cultural autonomy and dignity. A "hard" form of MC may barely tolerate public expression of cultural differences requiring that overt cultural symbols be comprehensively stifled thereby guaranteeing a "sanitized" and standardized public arena. In effect, cultural particularity is too often consigned to the private domain.

Both "soft" and "hard" MC have their problems of tolerance. They both point to the underlying contestations even in the cultural arena. The struggle for equal political and economic rights was more overt and frank in its aims and methods. The problem with many aspects of MC is that it may conceal and dress up intolerance and domination and parade the state as truly accommodative of cultural diversity. Variant I MC is an open claim for power sharing; variant II is often a pretence.

Notes

1. Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*, Princeton, 1992, p.25.
2. Ibid.
3. Yasmin Soysal, *Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
4. See Crawford Young, *The Rising Tide of Cultural Pluralism: Twilight of the Nation-State?*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994.
5. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.47
6. N. Gardels, "Two Concepts of Nationalism: An Interview with Isaiah Berlin", *New York Review of Books*, 21 November 1991, p.19.
7. Ibid., p.27
8. Ibid., p.19
9. See Pierre van den Berghe, *The Ethnic Phenomenon*, Elsevier Press, 1981; D. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, California, 1985.
10. Manning Nash, *The Cauldron of Ethnicity in the Modern World*, Chicago, 1988; Harold Isaacs, *Idols of the Tribe*, Chicago, 1968; and Ralph Premdas, "The Anatomy of Ethnic Conflict", in *The Enigma of Ethnicity*, op.cit., pp.1-22.
11. D. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, p.131.
12. See Abner Cohen, *Two-Dimensional Man*, Tavistock, 1974; L. Despres, "Ethnicity and Resource Competition in Guyanese Society" in *Ethnicity and Resource Competition in Plural Societies* edited by L. Despres, Mouton, 1975; and Ralph Premdas, "The Political Economy of Ethnic Strife", *Ethnic Studies Report*, Fall, 1989.

13. Crawford Young, "The Dialectics of Cultural Pluralism: Concept and Reality", in *The Rise of Cultural Pluralism: The Nation-State at Bay?*, Wisconsin, 1993; and Benedict Anderson, *The Imagined Community*, Verso, 1983.
14. See E. Roosens, *Creating Ethnicity; The Process of Ethnogenesis*, Sage, 1989; D. Kondo, *Crafting Selves*, Chicago, 1990; L. Vail, ed., *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, Berkeley, California, 1989; and Peter Berger and T. Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Penguin, 1967.
15. Fredrick Barth, "Introduction" in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* edited by F. Barth, Scandinavian Press, 1969.
16. Taylor and Moghaddam, *Theories of Intergroup Behavior*, op.cit.; see also, Taylor, P.83.
17. S. LeVine and J.Campbell, *Ethnocentrism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972, pp.81-113.
18. H. Tajfel, "Social Identity and Intergroup Behavior", *Social Science Information*, Vol.13, No. 2, April 1974.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. See R. Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethno-Political Conflicts*, Washington: US Institute of Peace Press, 1994; Crawford Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976; Harold Isaacs, *Idols of the Tribe*, New York: Harper and Row, 1975; Clifford Geertz, ed., *Old Societies and New States*, Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1963; Ralph Premdas, ed., *The Enigma of Ethnicity*, Trinidad: University of the West Indies Extra-Mural Center, 1993.
22. For attempts at constructing modes of ethnic conflict resolution, see J. McGarry and B.O'Leary, eds., *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation*, London: Routledge, 1993, Chapter I; and Ralph Premdas "Secessionist Politics in Comparative Perspective: Theoretical Perspectives" in R. Premdas, A. Anderson and S.W.R. de Samarasinghe, eds., *Secessionist Movements in Comparative Perspective*, London: Pinter Publishers, 1990.
23. See E. Walster, E. Berschied and G. Walster, *Equity: Theory and Research*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1978; D.M. Taylor and F.M. Moghaddam, *Theories of Intergroup Relations*, Praeger, 1994, 2nd edition, pp. 95-118.

24. See Crawford Young, "Ethnic Diversity and Public Policy: An Overview", paper presented to UNRISD Conference on Ethnic Diversity and Public Policy, 15-19 August 1994 (mimeo); also, Rodolfo Stavenhagen, "Diversity and Public Policy", paper presented to UNRISD Conference on 15-19 August 1993 (mimeo).
25. John Rex, "Multiculturalism in Europe and America", *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol.I, No.1, July 1995, p.248.
26. An attempt has been made by Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.
27. See J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, Cambridge University Press, 1948; M.G. Smith and L. Kuper, eds., *Pluralism in Africa*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965.
28. See Ralph Premdas, "Comparative Secessionist Movements: Some Theoretical Perspectives" in *Comparative Secessionist Movements* edited by R. Premdas, A. Anderson, and S. Samarasinghe, London: Pinder Publishers, 1991.
29. See John Rex, "Multiculturalism in Europe and America", *Nations and Nationalism*, July 1995, pp.243-26.
30. See A. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Disuniting of America*, Norton, 1992; N. Glaser, *The Limits of Social Policy*, Harvard, 1988; A. Hacker, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Unequal and Hostile*, Scribners, 1992.
31. See Rex, op.cit.; F.O. Radthke, "The Formation of Ethnic Minorities and the Transformation of Social into Ethnic Conflicts", in *Ethnic Mobilization in Multicultural Europe* edited by J. Rex and B. Drury, Avebury, 1994.