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Ethnic diversity and public policy: An overview

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and public policy:
an overview*

by crawford young



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geneva, november 1994

preface

The World Summit for Social Development, to be held in Copenhagen in March 1995, provides an important opportunity for the world community to focus attention on current social problems and to analyse the dimensions, roots and directions of social trends. In particular, the agenda of the Summit specifies three areas of concern: the reduction of poverty, the generation of productive employment, and the enhancement of social integration. UNRISD work in preparation for the Summit focuses on the last of these: as countries confront the seemingly intractable problems of social conflict, institutional breakdown and mass alienation, the topic of **social integration** has assumed increasing importance in public debate.

The UNRISD Occasional Paper series brought out as part of the Social Summit preparatory process takes up a range of issues relating to social integration. This paper synthesizes the findings of an UNRISD research project on Ethnic Diversity and Public Policies, which has focused on policies to resolve ethnic conflicts and contribute to successful accommodation in ethnically diverse societies.

The author argues that cultural pluralism is an enduring attribute of contemporary societies — ethnicity will not disappear with modernization, as it was once believed. In addition, ethnic identification should be considered a normal and healthy response to the pressures of the globalizing marketplace. Ethnicity acts as a trigger for violent conflict only when it is mobilized and manipulated to create a sense that one's interests are threatened because of one's ethnicity, or because of the activities of other ethnic groups.

The most important policy question for accommodation in ethnically diverse societies, therefore, becomes how to promote an inclusive sense of ethnicity and a loyalty to the larger society as well as to one's own ethnic group. When such a civic identity is successfully established, it makes hate-based mobilization of ethnic groups very difficult.

The paper reviews constitutional formulas that have been used in ethnically diverse societies, and examines in particular the strengths and weaknesses of federalism and consociationalism. Different types of electoral systems are also discussed. It is argued that there is a wide range of such systems, and that innovative variations of the one-person-one-vote system have proven successful in a number of settings.

The impacts of cultural policies and economic policies on ethnic accommodation are also explored. It is important to foster a sense of national identity through the formal educational system to the extent possible; support for multilingualism can be important in this regard. For national minorities and indigenous peoples, guarantees of cultural autonomy and security, regional self-rule, adequate representation in the central institutions and assurance of language preservation are important for ethnic accommodation.

Although, in general, policies that contribute to economic growth help ethnic accommodation because intergroup conflicts over resources become less salient, policies that help the national economy at the expense of one ethnic group have had disastrous consequences. In some situations, policies of ethnic preference have proven successful in alleviating tensions, although such policies have a mixed record. They tend to be more successful where the target groups are clearly defined and do not comprise the majority of the population.

The paper concludes with the argument that experience has shown that attempts at “nation building” through ethnic homogenization cannot succeed. Nor can domination on the part of one ethnic group provide long-term stability in a society. The most durable way to accommodate diversity is to create a sense of the nation being a civic community, rooted in values that can be shared by all ethnic components of the national society. Such a sense of community is best achieved when the concept of “nation” is shorn of any connotations of ethnic exclusivity.

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November 1994

Dharam Ghai
Director

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introduction

The horrifying tragedies of Bosnia and Rwanda alone suffice to command attention to the policy challenges posed by ethnic diversity, which is far more ubiquitous in the contemporary world than was formerly recognized. In South Africa, the stunning triumph of policy reason in designing an initially successful transition from apartheid to democracy in a deeply divided society suggests the possibility of carefully reflected and bargained choice in transcending communal cleavage — although of course only the preamble of the saga of a democratic South Africa has so far been inscribed on the tablets of history. Between these polar examples lies a diversity of instances where identity conflicts interrogate statecraft: Canada, Ethiopia, India, Lebanon, Northern Ireland, the former Soviet republics, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, the United States.

The list could readily be extended; depending on the threshold of intensity required to secure notice, it could swell to include a substantial fraction of the world's polities. One recent study offers a roster of 233 “minorities at risk”.¹ In recent months, other widely read publications by influential authors have offered a spectre of ethnic Armageddon: pandemonium, the coming anarchy, the clash of civilizations.²

Ethnic diversity first became a recognized dimension of the world order in the political settlement following the First World War. The doctrine of self-determination, applied initially to the defunct empire states of Austria-Hungary, Ottoman Turkey, Imperial Germany and Czarist Russia (the latter soon reconstituted in new form), won ambiguous standing as the international norm of state constitution. The issue of “national minorities” and their rights to protection appeared on the global agenda, primarily in Europe. At the same time, an implicit assumption of homogeneity as an ultimately normal condition of political society widely prevailed. The dimensions of the diversity question were occluded by the colonial thralldom of most of the peoples of Asia, Africa and the Caribbean.

The reconfiguration of global political geography after the Second World War produced a radically altered environment for ethnic diversity. The aftermath of the war produced a large degree of “ethnic cleansing” (in Eastern Europe, India and the former Palestine mandate); from Berlin eastwards, ethnic nationalism was contained by centralized autocratic polities (the erstwhile “camp of socialism”). Normative discourse on rights of national minorities largely evaporated; the doctrine of self-determination was redefined as

applying essentially to colonized peoples, and was overridden by the higher value of territorial integrity of states.³

The newly globalized community of sovereign political units, normatively perceived as nation states, rapidly grew in numbers as decolonization ran its course. A vocation of nationhood was implicit in statehood; national unity was universally believed to be indispensable to modernity, which imposed upon all states, especially newly independent ones, an imperative of “nation building”. In spite of recurrent conflicts punctuating the post-war decades, the bipolar world order which the Cold War produced, offered a certain stability to the existing state units. The dominant value framework for conceiving the challenge of ethnic diversity was “national integration”. Particularly in the early phases of this epoch, the tensions born of communal difference were believed to be difficulties of transition, destined to diminish and even ultimately disappear with the progressive achievement of modernity.

The growing number of ethnic conflicts in the 1970s and 1980s eroded earlier assumptions of a unilineal integrative path to history. The shattering of the (retrospectively) comfortable certitudes of the bipolar world order with the collapse of Soviet-type systems in 1989-1991, and the sudden emergence of 20 new states out of their wreckage, dramatically raised the stakes of ethnic conflict. Two other portentous patterns, likewise illuminating the scope and saliency of identity politics, altered our basic understandings of world politics. Powerful currents of democratization surged through many parts of the world, sweeping away authoritarian régimes whose claim to legitimacy partly rested on their ability to contain ethnicity by repression while “nation building” went forward. And the range of possible political outcomes expanded to encompass a frightening new condition: the dissolution of central state authority, supplanted by warring armed ethnic factions — as in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Liberia and Somalia, whose conflicts remained irresolvable for extended periods.

the research project and premises

This novel and in many respects disturbing world environment is the context for the UNRISD research project on Ethnic Diversity and Public Policies. Studies were undertaken to explore the lessons from a number of countries or regions with particularly instructive diversity experiences (Fiji, Guyana, Kerala in India, Malaysia, Mauritius, Northern Ireland, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago,

and the United States,). A second set of comparative studies sought to synthesize the instruction of policy history in particular spheres (decentralization and federalism, proportionality and ethnic preference, electoral systems, education and immigration). The goal of this overview paper is to extract from these contributions, and to draw upon the comparative knowledge concerning the politics of cultural pluralism, in order to take stock of the policy options available to accommodate ethnic diversity.⁴

Some fundamental postulates which shape this analysis require statement. The most basic premise — which few believed in 1950 but most would concede today — is that cultural pluralism is an enduring attribute of contemporary political societies. When closely inspected, the overwhelming majority of the nation states in our global community reveal significant internal cleavages based upon ethnicity, race or religion. The significance of these differences in the social and political process varies widely, as does the degree of saliency, intensity and politization of communal segments, both within and between states. But there is no longer any justification for clinging to the belief that the array of processes commonly labelled “modernization” (expanding networks and media of communication, urbanization, rising educational and literacy levels, increasing complexity of economic activity and social structuration) lead ineluctably to deepening levels of attachment to the “nation” defined by the state of residence, or the erosion of cultural solidarities of ethnos, race or religion separate from the nation state unit. Rather the reverse seems the normal pattern; social change tends to produce stronger communal identities. In addition, the cultural segments themselves are subject to evolution and change in the crucible of social process and political competition. At the same time, identities are usually multiple and layered; subnational affective ties are not necessarily in conflict with the state-defined nation (though they may be). Thus, “nation building” may partly succeed while communal cleavages deepen.

A normative premise of this paper is that cultural diversity requires acknowledgement rather than judgement; the presumption that the healthy end-state equilibrium for the nation state is homogeneity must be dethroned. The spectacles of ethnic cleansing in the contemporary world suggest the deep moral flaw to the premise of homogenization. But no endorsement is intended for the contrary proposition that states have an obligation to promote and enforce difference. Rather the presumption is that cultural pluralism is a natural attribute of a political society. Over time, an integrated national culture may take form; Eugen Weber brilliantly delineates this process in the case of France.⁵ States naturally seek to earn the loyalty of their citizenry. But this need not — and in the contemporary world cannot — be done by coercive fiat.

We further assume that the value attached to ethnic affiliation by many human communities is a natural condition and not a social pathology. Such solidarities can provide a sense of community in the face of a relentlessly globalizing marketplace. Ethnicity becomes a challenge to broader societal harmony when it becomes mobilized in hostile confrontation with the “other”. In such

moments of ethnic crisis, the collective psyche is prone to demonize and dehumanize “the other” in ways that can produce singular conflict intensities and brutalities. The bestial excesses which then occur reflect, above all, profound failures of statecraft — they do not validate a theory of ethnicity as pathology. Preventative therapy in the form of effective policies of accommodation rather than curative medicine by the extirpation of identity is, we believe, the appropriate prescription.

In comparing the lessons of policies concerning diversity, there is a rich array of experience to survey. Coping with cultural pluralism takes on a new urgency at the present conjuncture, but policy learning in this sphere has a long history. The scope of the topic is so vast, and the range of potentially pertinent information so great, that this paper can make no claim to either definitive conclusion or comprehensive coverage.

Broadly framed policies inevitably have complex impacts and outcomes. Their consequences will often vary over time. Society is in constant flux and change, and the circumstances which shaped initial policy design will alter in the flow of events. A given formula — affirmative action or federalism, for example — may appear effective in one setting and much less so in another. These stubborn facts militate against categorical judgements.

So also do the multiple measures of policy impact. One is initially drawn to search for “success”, the certain prescription for dissolving ethnic conflict. But, to a fatally large degree, “success” is in the eye of the beholder, and there are many different spectators. Policies viewed as beneficial by some communal segments may be seen as discriminatory by others. Outcomes which appear positive to state managers may seem less benign from the cultural or social margins of society. Our evaluative standard is more modest: effective accommodation of ethnic diversity. Conflict — class, interest and ethnic — is a natural aspect of social existence; the heart of the matter is that it be conducted by civil process, by equitable rules, through dialogue and bargaining, in a framework of governance facilitating co-operation and reconciliation.

Only the most incurably visionary analyst would claim that fool-proof, universally applicable formulas for accommodation of ethnic diversity exist. Policy experiences resemble balance sheets rather than triumphant lists of accomplishments; in all the spheres we investigate, there are liabilities as well as assets. The cultural circumstances of given polities vary widely; the many small, localized ethnic identities of Papua New Guinea bear little resemblance to the intensely mobilized ethnonational collectivities in former Yugoslavia.

Further, even if the holy grail of universally applicable policy design were discovered, in the real life of polities it would be only partially applicable. Only rarely is there a moment of covenant, when the fundamental political dispensations of a country experience complete transformation, as in South

Africa in 1994 or Russia in 1917 or 1991. The realm of policy choice is normally subject only to incremental adjustment.

In the design of policy to conciliate cultural diversity, a given state is constrained by its own circumstances — always unique. The course of history creates a powerful path dependency; the range of outcomes and menu of choices is shaped by parameters set by the past. The configuration of cultural pluralism is particular to a given polity: the number, size, geographic distribution and degree of mobilization of communal segments; the relationship of ethnic diversity to other forms of social differentiation and hierarchy. The cultural definition of the state itself, and the content of its text of legitimation as “nation”, shape the roster of conceivable options. One need only ponder the contrasts between Indonesia and Japan, between France and Switzerland, between Canada and Germany to recognize the central importance of this factor. Here, one encounters the contrast between “ethnic” and “civic” concepts of nationhood stressed in recent debates about nationalism.⁶ Over time, the content of state-as-nation is itself open to contestation and change, as witnessed in the recent debates over identity in Canada (from “two founding peoples” to the distinctiveness of Quebec and multiplicity of diversity), the United States (from “melting pot” to multiculturalism) or Russia (Russian state versus Russian federation).

The agenda of statecraft naturally includes much more than the accommodation of ethnic diversity. The material well-being of society as a whole and the assurance of basic human needs of all sectors of the populace are primary state goals. The maintenance of public safety and order, and protection of society and environment are collective responsibilities. Respect for human rights and the rule of law are the hallmark of a civil state (*état de droit*). Effective governance of the national economy is a measure of the competence of the state. These objectives — and others that might be added to the list — may partially conflict with effective accommodation of ethnic diversity. In our present focus upon the latter aim, we do not intend to argue that coping with cultural pluralism automatically overrides all other policy goals.

The vision informing policy reason in this domain requires a realistic grasp of the nature and dynamics of diversity. Recent debate about ethnicity suggests that it involves three interactive dimensions: primordial, instrumental and socially constructed.⁷ Ethnic identity often involves deep emotional attachments to group, supplies an internal gyroscope and cognitive map through which the social world is perceived, and historicizes selfhood in a web of primordial cultural meanings. In everyday political and social interaction, ethnicity often appears in instrumental guise, as a group weapon in the pursuit of material advantage; thus its activation is contingent, situational and circumstantial. Ultimately, all identities are socially constructed, a collective product of the human imagination.⁸ Often this occurred long ago, and is perceived as a primordial property; in many instances, the construction of the group is very recent or even contemporary (as for the Muhajirs in Pakistan),

and thus the dynamics are clearly visible.⁹ Social identities are invoked, used and rewoven in the myriad encounters of everyday life at both individual and group level. Combining these three perspectives, we may conclude that ethnicity rests upon a singularly potent set of symbolic resources and affective ties, but operates in a fluid and changing way in the political arena. The units of identity are not themselves timeless, but evolve in social praxis.

With this in mind, we may safely assert that “ethnic problems” are not “solved” in any permanent way. Through the instrumental use of ethnicity in political competition, the structural relations between groups, and issues which define them, change over time. The unceasing process of construction of identity is continuously altering the contours of the ethnic landscape. Thus, the social circumstances to which public policy responds are changing, usually gradually, sometimes swiftly. Statecraft must accordingly avoid the comfortable illusion of permanence of policy formulas. Rather, over time, policy choice will face the necessity of periodic readaptations.

Policy options vary in function of the type of cultural pluralism encountered, and its varying configurations. Ethnicity — narrowly construed as shared culture, often language and attendant mythology of common descent — tends particularly to involve issues of distribution and domination. Race, defined by the social meanings attached to phenotypical difference, primarily originated in historical forms of colonial conquest and unfree labour recruitment; it was thus hierarchical in its genesis, and leaves as its legacy singularly persistent patterns of inequality.¹⁰ Religious diversity is a distinct sphere, involving for the faithful a comprehensive *weltanschauung*, which can invest difference with sacred meanings.

Patterns of diversity vary widely as well. A dominant, bipolar division, where the politization of difference is strong, produces singularly difficult challenges, as research on the Caribbean and Oceania documents.¹¹ Many states in Asia and Europe have a dominant, majority group, whose identity defines the state, and minority ethnic groupings (China, Myanmar, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Thailand, among others); here the issue is cast in the familiar “national minority” form. Most African states have a multiplicity of ethnic groups, with the state seeking only a territorial and civic meaning. In the Western hemisphere and Oceania, there are indigenous populations, usually small in number, which advance a special set of claims. In Europe, North America and some of the Middle Eastern states, new patterns of diversity arise from large populations of recent immigrants. Policy formulation encounters, accordingly, a large variation in configurations of diversity, and attendant issues and claims.

the state and policy formulation

A final set of postulates shaping our analysis relates to the global historically shaped context of identity politics. We start from the premise that, in most of the world, democratic processes — either existing or waiting in the antechambers of the near future — will predominate. Here, changes in the last two decades are dramatic. In the early 1970s democracy was rare in Latin America; today it is the norm. A Haitian régime which two decades ago would seem regrettable but “normal” now stands constructed in the public mind as a pathological deviation, whose removal by United States-led international action can win United Nations Security Council endorsement. With the fall of the Greek colonels and the conservative autocracies of Portugal and Spain, Western Europe was uniformly democratic for the first time in history. Electoral democracy (at least formal) swept over the former state socialist world from 1989 on. Africa experienced only one unambiguous democratic succession from 1960 to 1989; since that time, there have been a dozen. Many of the democratic transitions are incomplete, and the successor régimes often fragile (as in Burundi). A regression to more frequent military intervention or other authoritarian forms is certainly possible. But the international environment is far more hostile to autocratic régimes than has been the case previously; respectable status in the community of states, at least for the near future, necessitates at least a semblance of democracy. Poorer and weaker countries may find themselves facing political conditionalities on the part of donor countries if there is a deficit of democracy or egregious human rights violations.

Various definitions of democracy are on offer, and this paper has no ambition to improve the supply. We simply take as our point of departure the assumption that ethnic diversity policies will be formulated and debated in a context of open political competition in many countries. Constitutional democracy profoundly shifts the balance between state and civil society, to the advantage of the latter. Accommodation policies thus require reasonable public support. The inescapable link between representative democracy and notions of majority rule often poses cruel dilemmas. Policy outcomes are the product of political bargaining within civil society and its communal segments, and not simply the calculus of state managers.

But the state is more than a passive register of citizen preferences, and in policy deliberation state leadership and initiative are critical. Also, the state apparatus, administrative and judicial, will necessarily be charged with the implementation of whatever policies may be chosen. Here we encounter another paradox: the state is the arbiter and broker of cultural difference, yet

the state is unlikely to be wholly neutral in ethnic terms. In the distribution of power within their structures, states inevitably reflect the dominant groups within civil society (by class and interest, as well as ethnic derivation). As noted earlier, many states invest their national personality with the cultural attributes of the leading ethnic community. Even in countries with predominantly civic forms of nationalism, such as the United States, the argument that different communal segments (racial in this instance) were neutrally treated would be impossible to sustain historically. States are thus asked — figuratively speaking — to leap out of their own skins, to transcend their own cultural nature. Notwithstanding the intrinsic difficulties of this task, and the improbabilities of complete success, we contend that the larger requirements of statecraft — the imperative necessities of stability and comity within the polity — make partial realization possible. As we will see, many policies for ethnic accommodation appear inconsistent with the narrowly defined interests of dominant cultural groups (preference for scheduled castes in India, for example).

The capacity of the state to act autonomously in many policy spheres finds new limits in the phenomenal pace of internationalization of capital movements. The world state system has yet to devise regulatory mechanisms which keep pace with transnationalization of critical economic processes. The new tyranny of the global marketplace, the international sovereignty of the bond-holder, imposes limits and constraints of novel dimensions upon policy choice.

The nation state finds itself challenged from within as well. The 1980s were a painful decade for states, with high-profile leaders such as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan devoting their considerable political talents to reducing their scope. In developing countries, “structural adjustment” programmes shrank the public sector. Economic liberalization enjoyed unprecedented doctrinal hegemony. Around the globe, a new mood of scepticism was palpable towards the state and dominant political parties. In many lands one encounters a diffuse malaise, writes Charles Maier, “rooted in a civil society (actually in structures that are less developed than civil society) that has become deeply distrustful of the state”.¹²

Thus beset by powerful forces of internationalization, especially economic, from above, and by disenchanting civil societies and frequently fragmenting communal tensions from below, the nation state appears far less ascendant than in the very recent past. When the victorious sweep of Third World nationalism crumbled the colonial empires, the nation state system achieved universality for the first time. In the early 1970s, the New International Economic Order, fervently demanded by the newly independent countries, seemed an almost possible vision, rooted in a profoundly state-centred world where global inequalities were perceived through the prism of nations. Such notions seem a vague anachronism today; the nation state system seems far less impregnable than in the recent past.

Yet, even acknowledging a relative decline in its standing, the state remains the ineluctable locus of policy response in terms of ethnic accommodation. The bounded arena of interaction constituted by the state defines the field of encounter and interaction between communal segments. At the international system level, some capacity exists for articulation of norms concerning ethnic relations which have some impact and thus value: for example, in the spheres of human rights, indigenous peoples, perhaps democratic governance. But the severe limits of international action in specific crises are well demonstrated by the tragedies of Bosnia, Rwanda and Somalia. There is even less reason to believe that ethnic tensions can be regulated by responses within civil societies. Even if diminished and embattled, the state remains the critical agency for policy response.

In considering the state as policy fulcrum, two new kinds of outcomes must be borne in mind: the breakdown, and the break-up, of polities. The underlying fragility of many states was long concealed by the potent role played by the international system in sustaining them.¹³ Power seizure at the centre by military or other coup is a familiar enough phenomenon, especially in Africa and Latin America. But the collapse of states in the face of armed insurgents attacking from the periphery is a new pattern of instability; in recent years, four African régimes have succumbed to such forces (Chad, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda). More disconcerting still is the simple dissolution of a state, most notably in Liberia and Somalia. Even sustained diplomacy and military action by international forces (ECOWAS and the Organization of African Unity in the former, the United Nations in the latter) face overwhelming difficulties in restoring a fabric of governance. In the meanwhile, the armed factions wreak havoc upon the infrastructure of the country and shred the fabric of civil society.

During the post-war era, the stability of the state units of the world system seemed an established principle, save for the dismantling of colonial empires. Only Bangladesh was an exception, with the Indian army being an indispensable midwife to its birth.¹⁴ The international system appeared to have trumped self-determination with the right of territorial integrity. The 1991 break-up of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia into 15 and 5 states respectively, the separation of Eritrea from Ethiopia, and the “velvet divorce” of the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993 gave new moral force to claims for self-determination, illustrated by the cascade of declarations of “sovereignty” by the 19 non-Russian nationality units of the Russian Federation. Inevitably, the creation of new sovereign units, while perhaps removing old sources of ethnic tension, simultaneously ignited other conflicts and produced new minority issues (Hungarian minority in Slovakia, Albanians in Macedonia, Russians in most of the former Soviet Republics).¹⁵ With separation a more plausible goal for the ethnically disaffected, the potential for infinite regress in a dialectic of fragmentation enters the field of vision.¹⁶

A final parameter shaping policy dilemmas is the vast flow of populations across territorial boundaries. Over 200 million persons live in countries in

which they were not born.¹⁷ In one week of July 1994, over one million Rwandans fled their country. Many migrants are refugees, driven from their homes by political or economic catastrophe. Others are voluntary migrants, attracted by a lure of greater economic opportunity. Despite the growing efforts of the more prosperous countries to curb immigration, boundaries will remain permeable to varying degrees. The possibility, perhaps the illusion of migration as an option now occurs to the restless and dissatisfied on a virtually global scale; in earlier times it was a choice available in only limited parts of the world.

ethnic diversity and public policies

These reflections upon the contemporary world context serve as point of departure for our review of major designs and experiences. We will consider four major policy spheres: constitutional formulas, particularly federal or decentralized alternatives to the centralized unitary state; cultural policies, especially in the fields of education and language; remedies for marginalized population categories (indigenous peoples, immigrants, peripheral minorities); and resource distribution issues (including “affirmative action” questions). By way of conclusion, we will return to broader issues of state legitimacy, national identity and self-determination.

constitutional formulas

Constitutional engineering undoubtedly offers major opportunities for creating structural frameworks facilitative of ethnic accommodation. Yet, precisely because it proposes durable structures embedded in fundamental public law defining relations among communal groups, it is contentious and difficult. By concentrating power and authority, the centralized, unitary state is susceptible to capture by dominant communal segments. Major formulas for averting such outcomes include territorial dispersion of power through federalism or decentralization, corporate distribution of power in some consociational arrangement, or various forms of legal pluralism. Overall, constitutional accommodation of ethnic diversity should foster sharing of power among major communal segments, provide incentives for intergroup co-operation, and assure voice through reasonable representation.¹⁸

Federalism was not originally designed with ethnicity in mind; rather it was a formula for the unification of territorial units of separate antecedents.¹⁹ In its pure form, a federal system has power and function divided between national and federated units, with each deriving its authority directly from the electorate; there is co-ordination rather than a strictly hierarchical relationship between centre and region. The most visible and influential models came into being by aggregation of related but administratively distinct colonial entities (Australia, Canada, the United States), or as an adaptation of loosely united zones of colonial administration too large or ethnically complex for self-rule as a unitary state (India, Malaysia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea). In a smaller number of instances (notably Belgium, or the quasi-federal Spanish case), once-unitary states sought to overcome intense pressures for ethnic autonomy by abandoning centralist constitutions. The unusual Swiss case both reflected the slow emergence of this multinational polity by cantonal agglutination, and the utter failure of a Napoleonic experiment in imposing a Jacobin state.²⁰ Another strain of federalist thought emerged with the appropriation of the concept by Lenin and his heirs as a device for “solving the national question”. In the Soviet case, and subsequently the Yugoslav and Czech instances modelled upon it, territorial subdivisions based upon “titular nationalities” were created, while the steel grid imposed by the political monopoly of the centralized Communist Party, command central planning and the pervasive security agencies emptied federalism of most of its content until state socialism itself began to lose its legitimacy. It is striking that, in all three communist federations, the loss of ideological and political legitimacy by the régime resulted at once in the fragmentation of these states along the often gerrymandered lines of nationality divisions, which originally reflected the strategic ethnopolitical calculus of the centre.

Meaningful federalism presupposes a democratic framework. Autocracy inevitably centralizes power and necessarily denatures regional autonomy. The speedy collapse of the Marxist-Leninist federations with the introduction of competitive politics is instructive; the constitutional system had never acquired the experience of managing and adjusting the tensions of national federated units and ethnic frictions through the representative and judicial institutions, so essential to managing such a system of divided and shared power. Nigeria, 25 of whose 34 federated years have been under military rule, is one apparent exception; however, even in this seemingly deviant case the military has never been able to claim a right to permanent rule, and has invariably asserted (since the end of the 1967-1970 civil war) that a transition to democratic civilian rule was in process.

Most contemporary federations are not explicitly constructed on an ethnic basis, though they may reflect cultural pluralism. In Switzerland, though most cantons are unilingual, the operative units are territorial rather than linguistic; for many purposes, religion is a more consequential divider than language, and the Protestant-Catholic divide cuts across language zones.²¹ In the Indian case, the colonial provincial lines reflecting the sequential history of conquest and the convenience of the Raj quickly gave way to primarily linguistic provinces,

which most believe have greatly assisted in buffering the tensions of diversity. In Nigeria, the three colonial regions were shaped around the three most numerous ethnic groups, with each containing about one third “minority” populations. The progressive redrawing of federated boundaries (4, then 12, then 19, then 21, now 30 states) were motivated by the dual ethnic engineering purpose of breaking up the large ethnic groups into multiple state units and responding to vociferous claims from smaller groups to have “their” state. Where aggregation of political units having some historical personality is proposed (excluding instances of annexation by force, like east Timor), whether or not ethnic, only federal provisions are likely to win agreement. Sabah and Sarawak could never have been persuaded to join Malaysia by the withdrawing colonizer save for the assurance of insulation from Malay (or Chinese) domination the federal relationship provided their mainly non-Malay populations.

Belgium and Spain are the clearest examples of federalization by delegation in response to explicitly ethnonational claims. In both cases the unitary state would have been impossible to maintain. The frictions of federalization are more visible in Belgium than in Spain, perhaps in part due to the absence of any sustaining historical charter and mythology undergirding the Belgian state, or the perennially vexing question of greater Brussels. Spain in this sphere offers a relatively rare example of an almost unambiguous “success”.²²

Perhaps the most fundamental argument for the federal system is that, for large and culturally complex countries, no other formula could work. For states of continental scale, such as Australia, Canada or the United States, or societies of extraordinary diversity, such as India or Nigeria, only some form of federal arrangement is feasible. The Russian Federation can only survive as a single entity through federal governance with much more real substance than in its Soviet predecessor. Since its independence in 1956, the Sudan has known only a single decade of civil peace: from 1972 till 1983, when a semi-federated system was in place, giving some cultural security to the three southern provinces which do not share the arabophone and Islamic culture of the north (much less the integralist version now dominant). The abolition of southern autonomy in 1983 led at once to the resumption of civil war. Only a level of terror and brutality that Khartoum lacks the capacity to sustain will ever end the war without some new autonomy framework (or, failing that, independence).

By dispersing power territorially, federal régimes create and empower multiple arenas for representation and participation. Even where communal groups are not territorially segmented, as in Malaysia or the United States, the possibility of voice is increased by the many places it can find expression. Federalism tends to carry with it an ethos of decentralization which applies to echelons of governance beyond the federated units; thus numerical preponderance of racial minorities in the United States is reflected in urban institutions, whereas their numbers would not suffice for leadership at higher levels.

The diffusion of ethnic interaction in the political sphere over many arenas averts the kind of polarization possible if there is a single, zero-sum struggle for power at the centre. Where cultural segments are territorial, they can enjoy a large measure of internal self-rule, reducing the number of spheres in which they are in direct conflict or competition with others. Political movements, whether or not culturally rooted, can have access to power at a regional level which they would have no possibility of obtaining nationally. The largely separate political processes that take shape in the federated units may inhibit some form of alliance of disaffected regions against the centre; this has clearly operated to help preserve an Indian state. Zones of regional conflict and tension — frequently intense — do not aggregate, but remain encapsulated (as in Assam, Kashmir, Punjab and Tamil Nadu, for example).

There are some significant disadvantages to federal régimes. Conflicts of jurisdiction are frequent, and require a strong and independent judiciary to resolve. A supportive political culture and leadership skill in bargaining over the distributive issues between centre and region are requisites. The regions need a secure fiscal base; if their revenues come simply by federal attribution, their capacity for effective autonomy is inevitably circumscribed. A major limitation of everyday federal practice in Nigeria is the near-total fiscal dependence on oil revenues (almost 90 per cent) collected at the federal level. The vitality of politics as ongoing public choice is also vitiated when authorities have no dialogue with local civil society over what kind of governance citizens are willing to pay for: representation without taxation, writes one student of Nigerian politics.²³

Federalism may result in measures taken at the regional level which inhibit free movement of citizens across the territory. At the state level in India and Nigeria, preferential policies in public employment and other resource access spheres tend to appear. In Ethiopia, now painfully (and precariously) redefining itself as an ethnic federation, complaints are also heard of discrimination against persons from other provinces. “Sons of the soil” arguments are quite likely to emerge wherever federated units reflect cultural diversity.

An abiding fear in many lands where federalism is at times proposed is that such constitutional decentralizing is but a step to secession. The break-ups of the Marxist-Leninist federations give new life to such arguments. The territorial base and administrative infrastructure that federalism may supply an ethnonational group if it can claim “titular nationality” status certainly create the potential; in Canada, if the Parti Québécois did succeed in winning clear-cut approval in a secession referendum, separation of at least the overwhelmingly francophone areas of the historic Quebec of the St. Lawrence valley would be difficult to avoid (though perhaps the status of the anglophone zones of south-western Quebec, or the indigenous Cree areas of northern Quebec, would be open to question). Serious secessionist movements in recent times are invariably rooted in defined territorial units, and not simply cultural groupings. In the Oromo and Somali zones of present Ethiopia, separatist

voices are heard; an ethnic federation with the right to self-determination as promised in the proposed constitution will be a delicate enterprise, if really implemented.

But the same argument can be inverted. Eritrea launched a 30-year war of liberation because its federated status was abolished in 1962. If the current Ethiopian régime attempts a furtive recentralization by force, it will be perceived as a Tigrean autocracy, and secessionist currents in Oromia and elsewhere can only swell and intensify. In Spain, powerful separatist currents in both the Basque country and Catalonia have been largely dissipated by the autonomy formulas devised.

Many forms of decentralization short of full federalism are possible. States have a strong predilection for constitutional symmetry, but perhaps more instances will emerge where an array of differentiated statuses is available. Ghai lists a number of such arrangements;²⁴ doubtless they will multiply.

A somewhat different approach to the institutionalized dispersion of state power is proposed by Arend Lijphart, in the theory of consociationalism which he has developed with skill and tenacity.²⁵ The essence of the scheme is to govern an ethnically divided society through a grand coalition, based upon proportionality, a mutual veto and high autonomy of the communal segments. Its vertebral concept is accommodating cultural pluralism by power-sharing governance. The model is most applicable, Lijphart suggests, for relatively small polities dominated by communal cleavage with a limited number of cultural segments (three to five). The consociational model does not require a federal system; its most critical *locus operandi* is at the centre, where summit diplomacy among segment delegates takes place.

The model is fully applicable only in a very small number of cases, where political society is entirely defined by self-conscious, long-standing cultural units with relatively homogeneous internal structures. In making cultural difference the central organizing principle of political life, consociationalism produces a complete ethnic corporatizing of society. In the many areas where ethnicity is particularly fluid and in flux, consociation would require arresting the construction dynamic and fixing the units of identity.

If one extracts the critical ethos of power sharing from the totality of the model, a much more widely applicable orientation towards the management of ethnic conflict comes into view. This brings us to the issue of balanced representation in national institutions. Here the nature of the electoral system is crucial, and the sizeable menu of choice available needs exploring. Where cultural pluralism is salient, identity politics are very likely to influence electoral choice. The device through which citizen vote translates into representation can facilitate or inhibit power sharing. Horowitz's injunction comes into play as well: preference should be given to electoral systems which provide incentives to contenders to adopt accommodative practices rather than to outbid one another in ethnic extremism, and to those which encourage such

accommodation at the stage of political competition, rather than through summit bargaining after representation has been communally defined.

Because choice of electoral system does have significant consequences in structuring representation in a diverse society, and also because adjustments in electoral systems are easier to accomplish incrementally than more fundamental reconfigurations of constitutional state structures, experimentation in this domain is a tempting policy pathway.²⁶ Electoral systems are “the most easily manipulable feature of a political system”, write two leading specialists.²⁷

The unfolding history of electoral formulas roughly parallels the “three waves” of democratization.²⁸ In the first phase, corresponding to the gradual consolidation of constitutional democracy in Western Europe, parts of North America and the old British dominions, strategic calculus in representational design pivoted around the progressive extension of the franchise to lower social classes (and later to women, although female suffrage appears to have had less impact on evolving electoral systems). Broadly speaking, social class issues far eclipsed cultural pluralism in shaping these debates, although the notion of communal electorates emerged in New Zealand on behalf of the indigenous Maori, and, in the post-reconstruction American south, diverse stratagems were manufactured to exclude African-Americans from the electorate. The potential impact of identity politics on broader constitutional premises were also apparent by the 1880s in Ireland, when it became clear that elimination of class and religious voting restrictions would lead to Irish nationalist dominance in much of the island, which in turn led to the “home rule” issue. The rise of proportional representation formulas, in contrast to single-member districts with plurality voting, occurred in this period, with most of continental Europe opting for proportional representation, while systems modelled upon Anglo-American practice employed variants of the first-past-the-post plurality formulas.

In a second stage, the introduction of representative institutions in colonial empires, beginning in South Asia, triggered disputes about communal electorates (introduced in 1909 in India) and minority representation (especially for European residents and immigrant communities, generally Chinese or Indian). The dominant tendency was to replicate the electoral system in force in the occupying power, but extended debate about representational formulas took place in the most evidently divided colonial societies (Fiji, India, Lebanon and Mauritius, for example).²⁹ Delicately constructed designs for communal electoral balance were most frequently encountered in countries formerly under British rule; the more centralized political traditions of the Franco-Prussian state model were much less prone to embed communal diversity in electoral structures. In many areas, especially Africa, dominant nationalist forces were deeply suspicious of communal voting arrangements, perceived as a barely concealed design to weaken the new state and thus deny liberation forces their birthright.

Another major factor in the second wave was the political reconstruction of the defeated Axis powers and the territories they occupied after the Second World War. Cultural pluralism was distinctly secondary in these debates, which hinged on entrenching constitutionalism, assuring stability and curbing extremist ideological parties. Electoral reflection at this juncture was powerfully influenced by the Maurice Duverger classic, initially published in 1954, which argued that plurality voting and single party districts favoured two-party systems with stable and alternating majorities.³⁰

The third and present phase coincides with the global democratization surge of the late 1980s, sweeping much of what we once termed the Second and Third Worlds. With a far greater awareness of the political force of communal identities, the contemporary debates over electoral system choice give tangibly more weight to calculations about impacts upon diversity and its accommodation than in the earlier stages. For countries experiencing a fundamental régime change, such as those of the former Soviet bloc or much of Africa, a historically infrequent moment of covenant is at hand. For a number of long-established constitutional democracies, important adjustments are in progress (more race-conscious districting in the United States based on the 1982 Civil Rights Act amendments, proportional representation in New Zealand and Sri Lanka, for example).

The new patterns and electoral system experiments of the “third wave” are too recent for their impacts to be fully apparent. They do make evident the large menu of options available. The reawakened interest in constitutional engineering also underscores Lijphart’s conclusion that “the study of electoral systems is undoubtedly the most underdeveloped subject in political science.”³¹ “Democracy” means something more than a mechanical notion of majority rule, which can be realized through an appropriate electoral system. The reality of cultural groups, as well as the sanctity of the individual citizen, needs to be captured in a system of representation.

The “Westminster model” plurality system has undoubtedly lost standing in the third wave. There are certainly many cultural circumstances where its impact is perverse; Northern Ireland (where it has been abandoned) is an obvious case. If communal voting patterns are preponderant, and the party system is rooted in cultural segments, its tendency to overrepresent pluralities and to underrepresent minorities is a major shortcoming.

However, the evidence is by no means conclusive that plurality electoral systems are invariably damaging in culturally plural polities. Much depends on circumstances, the content of political culture and embedded political tradition. There are also some adjustments possible within the system to mitigate negative impacts for given communal segments.

In the Canadian case, the plurality system is not normally incriminated as a cause of the strains in the confederation, especially those over the status of Quebec. With the francophone minority rather territorially concentrated, within

Quebec and nationally, it is assured of dominance within its provincial base (divided between pro- and anti-federalist parties) and a strong voice at the federal level (francophone prime ministers for all but two years since 1968, when the Quebec crisis emerged clearly);³² paradoxically, the 1993 elections catapulted the Bloc Quebecois into the status of largest opposition party in Ottawa. In Malaysia, the semi-consociational management of racial division has probably been facilitated by the operation of the plurality electoral system, which in this setting has provided incentives for co-operation within the Malay-dominated ruling alliance, whose electoral majority is magnified by the Westminster model.³³

Corrective measures are available to limit the risk of electoral marginalization of some communities. In India, although communal seats were abandoned at independence, reserved seats were provided for scheduled castes and tribes. In Mauritius, plurality elections are conducted with three-member districts (two for Rodrigues), with communal distributions considered in district mapping. A communal representation balance is then restored after the elections by adding to the 62 elected members eight “best losers”, by communal proportionality (while maintaining party balances). The Mauritius case study concludes that this formula has performed better in fostering accommodation than the proportional representation alternative, “which would probably have polarized the divisions along communal, and linguistic lines ... rendering the process of nation building more difficult”.³⁴

In the United States, the 1990 redistricting of congressional and state legislative seats took place under legal mandate to assure reasonable representation of racial minorities (particularly African-American and Hispanic). As a consequence, the Congressional Black Caucus increased from 25 to 40 and itself became more internally diverse. The bizarre district shapes used to generate racially “safe” seats have generated sharp controversy and a wave of court challenges. However, some degree of race-consciousness in districting is likely to persist (and, as its advocates point out, has been widely used historically to minimize or even exclude black representation).

The major alternative to plurality systems is proportional representation (PR). This system can utilize either a national constituency, or a number of multi-member districts. Seats are attributed according to the proportion of votes received, with diverse formulas of calculation available.³⁵ There are various options in the minimal threshold required for a share in parliamentary seats (as low as 1 per cent in Israel, 5 per cent in Germany, 12.5 per cent in Sri Lanka) in national list voting. Particularly in a number of European countries, PR systems have acquired the familiarity of long usage, and in plural societies such as Switzerland are cited among the factors facilitating harmony. In the remarkably successful 1994 democratic transition elections in South Africa, a PR system created an effective balance of forces which, at least in the short run, holds great promise in facilitating the extraordinary transition from *herrenvolk* rule to non-racial democracy.

PR has the obvious merit of mirroring political demographics in elected institutions, including ethnicity if this shapes voting behaviour and party nomination strategy. If the threshold for parliamentary representation is very low, this system fragments representation, and can give destabilizing leverage to very small electoral formations (as with the tiny religious parties in Israel). It also greatly enhances the weight of the party apparatus in the candidate selection process, thus weakening any link of accountability between the individual representative and a constituency. The system has persuasive advocates, such as Lijphart, but it is difficult to gainsay the conclusion by de Silva that, particularly outside continental Europe, “whether a PR system would improve the situation in ethnically divided societies remains very much a matter of debate”.³⁶

A number of less widely known variants of these two major systems are reviewed by Jenkins.³⁷ In a limited vote system, used notably in Spain for senate seats, the voter has fewer votes than the number of seats in a multi-member constituency. A variant of the system, used in Japan and Taiwan, is the single non-transferable vote, where each voter has a single vote in a multi-member constituency. The system has clearly advantaged the Kuomintang and Liberal Democratic Party, while simultaneously factionalizing them; it is being abandoned in Japan.³⁸ Cumulative voting in multi-member districts gives the voter as many votes as seats, but permits them to be cast as multiple votes for one or more candidates. In theory, self-identified ethnic or racial minorities could assure themselves representation by block voting in such a system, which achieved notoriety in the United States through the part it played in the aborted nomination of Lani Guinier as Attorney General.³⁹ It was used in Illinois from 1870 to 1960, but was abandoned because, in practice, the two major parties often nominated together only the number of candidates equalling the district size, meaning that many seats were uncontested.⁴⁰

Preferential voting systems offer interesting possibilities, though they have been little used. There are two variants: the alternative vote, in single-member districts, or the single transferable vote, in multi-member districts. In each case, the voter rank orders candidates. In tallying the votes, if the requisite majority is not attained, the bottom candidate is dropped with these votes redistributed according to the voter’s preference ranking. In his brief for this system, Horowitz argues that the alternative vote system induces parties to “bid across ethnic lines for the second preferences of voters whose first choice stands no real chance of election”.⁴¹ The alternative vote system has been used in Sri Lankan presidential elections since 1978, and in a scattering of other places (Ireland, for example, though cultural pluralism is not at issue).

At bottom, what is probably most important in the choice of electoral system, in terms of accommodating ethnic diversity, is the nature of the process of political competition that it induces rather than the precise ethnic proportions that result from the election itself. The cautionary conclusions of both de Silva and Jenkins bear reflection. A systematic tracking of the outcome and

consequences of the wide variety of formulas for electing representative institutions is necessary before firmer judgements can be made.

cultural policies

In the field of cultural policy, there are both important opportunities and great hazards. Here one most directly confronts the tendency of states to regard homogeneity as the essence of achieved nationhood. In one way or another, historical practice in such spheres as education and language tend to reflect this unarticulated major premise. If the present world historical conditions invite most states to acknowledge their multicultural nature as a long-term condition rather than merely a transitional stage, then difficult adjustments and painful reappraisals may be needed in a number of domains.

And yet a delicate balance needs to be struck. In some of its more extreme discourse, multiculturalism decants into an assertion of difference as supreme social value. Acknowledgement of diversity is indispensable in many settings. Yet equally vital is recognition of the shared civic values which make of the citizenry a corporate personality with a common interest in the well-being of the polity as a whole. If a political society, to borrow Marx's oft-cited metaphor of the peasantry, is nothing more than a sack of ethnic potatoes, there can be no incentive for the stronger communities to share resources with the weaker. Such concessions are unlikely to be extractable simply by force, nor can bargaining succeed without a sense of shared community. The conclusion of the paper on Mauritius is apposite here: "huge efforts are made to promote the culture of different groups but the same amount of effort goes into ensuring that this is not being achieved at the detriment of national unity".⁴²

Policies assuring cultural space to diverse components of the population need not be seen as threatening the integrity of the state. An ethos of toleration, if it can suffuse the quotidian practices of public institutions, in itself makes a large contribution. The issue plays out in the psychological realm; cultural security for the ethnic and religious communities within the polity predisposes them towards harmony. Security is threatened by a perception that a state project exists to strip groups of their identity. At the same time, tolerance for cultural choice is important at the individual level. Whether or not a group persists, the individuals who compose it in a multicultural environment engage in daily transactions involving their identity, in the process adapting, responding, perhaps choosing to amend or alter their identity — through marriage, residence, occupation or political preference. Efforts to freeze identities or impose official classifications — one recollects the apartheid system in South Africa — are condemned to fail and likely to evoke resistance. Equally problematic is any claim of ethnic group élites to impose a single viewpoint upon their communities.

The field of education is particularly sensitive, because of both the cultural policy choices it poses and the intimate link between educational opportunity and life chances.⁴³ States throughout the modern world assert the right to at least monitor, if not define, the curricular content, to supervise the operation of the educational system, and to set the conditions for the credentialing role of schools. They thereby assume responsibility for the cultural role of the school system.

Educational systems have long faced diversity in the form of religious difference and sensitivities. In the secular domain, the mission of the public school has included socializing the young into a loyal commitment to the nation. The treatment of history, in particular, may involve highly selective and nationalist interpretations. As well, delicate issues arise as to the portrayal of the diverse segments of the population: their inclusion, to begin with, but also the narrative of their past and culture.

Phrased in these general terms, the challenge appears much too simple. However important recognition of multiculturalism in rethinking educational systems may be, the merits of particular claims made in its name require careful examination. Gundara and Jones cite the example of gender equality; discrimination against girls in educational opportunity cannot be tolerated on the claim that it is a religious or ethnic cultural preference.⁴⁴ In the United States, defining the role of “Afrocentric” education in some urban school districts is another illustration of the dilemmas.

Nonetheless, the importance of the educational system in promoting ethnic accommodation needs to be underlined. “National” educational curricula have indisputably played a powerful role in turning “peasants into Frenchmen”, and fostering a sense of national identification in many lands. There is undoubtedly a large — perhaps vast — potential for a redirected pedagogy to nurture an understanding of diversity in future generations. If didactic creativity and energies comparable to those historically deployed to instil patriotism to the “nation” were committed to inculcating the values of toleration and empathy towards “the other” and an understanding of the positive aspects of diversity, the citizenry of the future would be better equipped to respond to the challenges of cultural pluralism.

Language is another critical domain, closely tied to education. As a singularly salient boundary marker, language supplies immediate recognition of difference. Intense emotions can be catalysed by language when it becomes a core element to ideologies of identity. Reason of state beckons to the choice of a single medium for the conduct of public business; thus language becomes tied to hierarchies of power and privilege. If access and exclusion are measured by mastery of the language of the state, then the stage is set for conflict.

The policy choices available are contingent upon both the language demographics and the degree to which language choice and identity are politicized. Doubtless, public convenience does dictate a preference for one

language for state transactions. In a number of countries, equal status must be accorded to two languages (rarely more). In bilingual states such as Canada and Belgium, language rights have been contentious, and frictions continue. The option of making the entire society bilingual is not open; for the historically dominant linguistic community, the acquisition of the other language seems unnecessary, while for the language which struggled for national recognition and equality, the other language retains negative connotations of past domination. In some others, official multi-lingualism poses few problems: Switzerland, for example (though most everyday public affairs are at the usually monolingual canton level).

In many countries, the primacy of a given language for official purposes is not disputed, but rights are sought for other languages in given spheres. The national minorities in Europe insist on the right to employ their languages in their own regions, and to preserve them through the educational system and other media; Catalonia has been the most successful region in rehabilitating a language that the Franco régime tried to repress, and restoring it to a dominant role in its region.

For countries with significant immigrant populations, language rights are posed in different fashion. Acquisition of the dominant language of the host country is usually not resisted; the powerful incentives of the marketplace normally suffice to ensure that this occurs. (One may note here the unique situation of the 25 million Russians who suddenly became minorities in the non-Russian former Soviet republics; very few knew the local language, and adjustment to the notion of a necessity to learn it comes only slowly.) Rights of language preservation within the community are in question, as are the ways in which the educational system meets the special instructional needs of their children. The appropriate implementation of bilingual education programmes, and the balance between facilitating transition to the dominant language and nurturing retention of and skill in one's own language remains a matter of debate.⁴⁵

In the multi-ethnic states of Africa and Asia, complex issues of language policy arise. In Asia, politically dominant groups preferred to displace the European colonial languages with indigenous ones. Indonesia was able to transform trade Malay into Bahasa Indonesia, and eliminate Dutch without controversy. In former Indochina, Myanmar and even Malaysia, the language of the dominant core ethnic group was an evident choice. But in India and Sri Lanka, Hindi and Sinhala were bitterly controversial. In India, English was finally retained as a link language along with Hindi, with the states promoting the regional languages. Abandonment of the effort to impose a single Indian language as sole official medium has greatly reduced the tensions surrounding this issue.

In sub-Saharan Africa, a pattern seems to be emerging in many countries of gradually extending multilingualism: what Laitin terms a "3 +/- 1" pattern.⁴⁶ The language of the colonial legacy remains the language of the state. One, or

more than one, *lingua franca* holds sway as the everyday language of urban, interregional and intergroup communication, with or without formal state recognition and promotion. Mother tongues, especially of larger groups, hold their own within the ethnic community for informal communication. The political costs of elevating an African *lingua franca* into exclusive standing as state language are perceived as too high in many countries; thus it remains as official link language. Citizens seeking upward mobility will thus need mastery of three languages (their own vernacular, the *lingua franca* and the official European language). If the *lingua franca* is mother tongue, two will suffice; if they move to another *lingua franca* zone, they may need a fourth (thus 3 +/- 1). Society collectively internalizes a sense of natural functional demarcations of language roles, and thus a multilingual repertoire appears a normal human attribute, rather than an unstable pathology requiring state intervention to impose a language rationalization (unification) policy. Although some language specialists claim that “unilingualism is the norm in industrial, urban, literate civilizations”,⁴⁷ and that only unusual persons can sustain sophisticated, full command of more than one speech code, the African pattern shows every sign of achieving long-term stability.

Language unification and rationalization strategies in some instances have been remarkably effective. At the time of Italian unification in 1860, only 3 per cent of the population spoke the north Italian version elevated to official status, and no more than 10 per cent understood it; universal command of standard Italian is today taken for granted. In Tanzania, a vigorously implemented language rationalization policy based upon Swahili has had undoubted integrative effects. Tripp notes, however, a little-remarked victim of the Swahili success story: the rapid decline of local vernaculars, which may be en route to disappearance.⁴⁸ Elsewhere, with levels of ethnic consciousness and mobilization much higher than they were a century ago, policies of linguistic homogenization which could be effective in the past are more likely to foment strong opposition today. Without entering the debate as to whether the preservation of the world’s existing stock of languages should be a conscious policy, one may conclude that there are more opportunities than once recognized for states to adjust to a multilingual reality rather than to seek by coercive means to end it.

national minorities and public policies

An important category of policy challenges comes from the presence in many lands of national minorities, indigenous peoples, peripheral tribal communities or culturally distinctive immigrant populations. The national minority issue arises in those polities where the state personality — the discourse of nationhood — is tied to a dominant ethnonational group. In such a setting, the minority may appear suspect in its commitment to the state “nationality”. The recent upsurge in ethnic cleansing practices is a dramatic reminder of the

potentially precarious situation of such communities. This issue is particularly acute in Europe from the Volga basin to the Atlantic. The twentieth century redrawings of the political map have been rooted in the postulate of “titular nationalities”, to borrow from the Soviet lexicon. Belgium and Switzerland are increasingly the odd exception to “normal” state-as-nation definitions.

Basic principles for accommodation are simple to enumerate: guarantees of cultural autonomy and security, regional self-rule, adequate representation in the central institutions, assurance of language preservation. Such notions were initially codified as international norms in the League of Nations framework; they are included in the values enshrined by the European Council on Security and Co-operation (ECSC) in the 1975 Helsinki accords. There are some genuine success stories in this respect (the Swedish minority in Finland, or — as Jáuregui demonstrates — Basques and Catalans in Spain⁴⁹). But extremely volatile situations exist in rump Yugoslavia and Macedonia, and only somewhat less explosive national minority questions are found in Romania, Slovakia and the debris of the former Soviet empire. By imperceptible degrees, the international normative order, is achieving more influence, but the prospects for effective enforcement machinery in support of national minority rights are nil. Perhaps more important for the promotion of minority rights is the moral pressure to achieve sufficient “respectability” to earn organic linkages with the slowly enlarging European Union.

Among the more striking developments in the international politics of cultural pluralism is the emergence in recent years of a vocal and increasingly effective inter-communicating “indigenous peoples” movement. Such groups are found throughout the Americas, along the Arctic rim of Asia and Europe, in Australasia, and in scattered “hill tribe” communities of South and South-East Asia. Their shared condition is a history of being conquered and overrun by incoming populations of sharply different cultural orientation. They have been driven to the geographic and economic margins of the dominant society, in regions isolated by mountainous terrain or aridity little coveted by the incoming populations. Although in South and South-East Asia these settlement patterns occurred much longer ago than in the Americas or the Arctic, there are points of similarity in the contemporary policy dilemmas.

In Canada, New Zealand and the United States, indigenous populations were subordinated by treaty relationships, confining their communities to very circumscribed areas, usually undesirable to the settling populations. These provided for some limited autonomy, under the firm overall political control of the dominant society. In the Iberian tradition, indigenous communities were considered as conquered wards of the crown, legal minors often placed under the evangelizing tutelage of the church (in the “republics of the Indians”). Everywhere they were subject to assimilative pressures, particularly in the religious sphere. The common assumption long shared by the dominant societies was that they would eventually disappear as distinctive communities (Hinduization through absorption into the caste system in the Srinivas model in India, *mestizaje* in Spanish America, individualization in the ethos of the 1887

Dawes Act allotting reservation land as alienable property to individual Indians in the United States).⁵⁰

Particularly in the last two decades, there has been a remarkable rise of self-assertion of many indigenous communities. In striking ways, they have become an inter-communicating international group, drawn together by the “information highway” of electronic mail and fax communication. Although in the great majority of cases they constitute only very small minorities in the states under whose jurisdiction they find themselves, the broadly similar circumstances they encounter and a new awareness of shared cultural orientation (shamanism, for example) are providing the basis for common action at the international level. In recent years, dramatic illustrations of a reconstructed consciousness and self-assertiveness have been found in such widely scattered areas as Australia, Brazil (Amazon), Canada, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico (Chiapas), Russia (Yakutia) and the United States.

The discourse of sovereignty and self-determination permeates the claims put forward, although few really expect that full independent nation state status is achievable (though doubtless many would desire it were it possible). Common themes include demands for full recognition as autonomous communities, an end to assimilative pressures, rights to cultural autonomy, security of community title to their remaining lands, as well as the entitlements of citizenship within the state jurisdictions in which they find themselves. These claims are in part promoted at the international level, through efforts to codify the rights of indigenous peoples. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) adopted such a convention in 1989, although its provisions were considered inadequate by the leadership of indigenous peoples movements. Efforts at formulating a United Nations declaration on this issue continue, made tortuous by the reluctance of states to acknowledge formal restrictions on their own sovereignty.

Important changes have nonetheless occurred. Fuchs remarks that, “as a marked example of how dramatically policies have changed, President Bill Clinton, on April 29, 1994, invited the leaders of 537 federally recognized American Indian and native Alaskan tribes to the White House and issued a directive calling on his administration to treat them with the same deference given to state governments”.⁵¹ In Canada, a large zone of the Northwest Territories was recently recognized as an autonomous, self-governing unit of native peoples. In Australia, recent judicial decisions and federal actions have acknowledged Aboriginal rights over land; this would have been unimaginable two decades ago. None of these changes give complete satisfaction to the indigenous peoples concerned, but they do open space for a continuing policy dialogue which was previously all but non-existent.

The large and continuing human flows across state boundaries were noted earlier. Such migrations encounter the universal distinctions made by states between full membership in civil society as “citizens”, and a much more precarious classification as “immigrants” (or refugees). Migration streams are

partly governed by prospects of greater opportunity (those into Australasia, Europe, North America or the oil states of West Asia), and partly by grim necessity (ethnic cleansing, drought, famine). In crisis movements, such as the 1994 Rwanda exodus, only neighbouring territories are accessible; African states have generally been hospitable to refugees, though they are normally (if swift return is not feasible) held in encampments, with an expectation that their status is temporary. All too often, the displacement is long term, and refugees can neither return safely, nor fully integrate into the host community, nor find a third country willing to accept them. Through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and a large number of humanitarian relief organizations, the global capacity for crisis intervention with respect to refugees is impressive. Much more difficult is the task of permanently resolving the plight of refugee communities. In conditions of involuntary flight, creating the conditions for safe return is undoubtedly nearly always the preferred solution.

Migrants who relocate for reasons of economic opportunity raise different issues. Although such movement occurs throughout the world, questions of accommodating diversity have been most visible in Europe, because of the substantial labour recruitment in the peak prosperity years of the 1950s and 1960s, and the extra-European origin of a significant fraction of the migrants. Transborder movement is pervasive in Africa, because of the porous and artificial nature of frontiers. For the most part, long-term migrants are readily incorporated (Voltaics in Côte d'Ivoire, previous generations of Rwandans in Uganda). Occasional crises have arisen (the expulsion of two million Ghanaians by Nigeria, for example), but the adaptability of migrants and the absence of sharp cultural distinctions facilitate acceptance.

In countries such as Australia, Canada or the United States, where immigration is a familiar historic process, incorporation and extension of citizenship have been relatively swift (although racial exclusion long prevailed in the last two instances). Migration was chosen, and most believed that their life circumstances were improved. There were moments of friction during peak periods of immigration, but these soon subsided.

In Western Europe, wholly new immigrant streams from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean after the Second World War interrogated the identity of national societies in new ways.⁵² Initially, the expectation was that these "guest workers" required only temporary hospitality; indeed, for some time policy measures other than those dictated by immediate circumstances were avoided for fear of encouraging the enrooting of these populations. The concept of nationhood in Europe was culturally bounded in important respects; though there has been historical incorporation of diverse migrants from other parts of Europe (large numbers in the case of France), the notion of citizenship carried important overtones of the state-defining ethnic community. Legal requirements for citizenship varied, but genealogical dimensions were usually present. In the extreme cases, such as Germany, *jus sanguinis* was rigorously

applied, including a “right of return” to those of German ancestry, and virtual exclusion of residents lacking the genealogical requisite.⁵³

In the last two decades, gradual efforts have been made to accommodate the reality of permanent settlement of non-European immigrants (and, increasingly, the second generation). The key terms have been “integration” and “multiculturalism”, though both have diverse and ambiguous meanings. Barriers to further immigration have been raised; the early post-war employment markets hungry for unskilled labour have long vanished, and several European countries have unemployment rates of 10 per cent or more. Nevertheless, the existing immigration is accepted as permanent; relatively few of the immigrants will return to their country or origin, and even fewer of the second generation will do so. Also now acknowledged is that difference of a new sort, for European states, will reproduce itself across generations: religious identity for Turks and Maghrebis; a perception of “racial” distinctiveness in the larger society.

Thus “integration” does not equal assimilation, whatever subliminal preferences for such an outcome might exist for the host society. A conscious sense of cultural distinctiveness of these non-European immigrant communities will persist: thus societies become “multicultural”. However, they do so only in a limited sense, in the form of recognition of a subset of population groupings whose cultural personality differs from the modal national culture. The latter retains its standing as the defining core, with some differentiated segments.

Disadvantage, sometimes discrimination, is most evident in the fields of employment and housing. Here the life conditions of the immigrant communities overlap those of the bottom rungs of the host society. One tempting policy approach is to address the needs of non-European immigrants as a class rather than a race issue; this avoids the resentments caused by perceptions that immigrants are treated as a special beneficiary category.

Nonetheless, the status differential faced by immigrants limits the possibilities in this approach. The social and economic benefits of the welfare state have usually been accorded; most have security of residence rights, with deportation occurring only in extreme circumstances. However, effective political voice depends on citizenship; here practices vary, with Germany the most restrictive. In most countries, non-European immigrants also encounter some degree of animosity, harassment and even violent attack from fringe elements of the dominant society: neo-Nazi skinheads and their counterparts. On the extreme right, political movements such as the National Front in France play on anti-immigrant prejudices and create an environment of racism. Cultural practices — particularly for Muslims — may also come into conflict with the highly unified jurisprudence of the European state: for example, the “headscarf” dispute in France in 1989, involving the right of Muslim girls to contravene school dress codes by wearing head coverings.

These difficulties notwithstanding, since the immigrant issue was recognized, European states have made important steps towards defining viable policies. Collinson cites an emerging official consensus on policy principles for sound community relations as embodied in recommendations of the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on Community Relations, whose key elements are acceptance of immigrant permanence and recognition of the valuable contribution they can make. These recommendations assume state responsibility for the incorporation of immigrants into the national society, legislative enforcement of equal opportunity and non-discrimination and encouragement of an immigrant sense of membership in the national society, in partnership with immigrant leadership.⁵⁴ With the door to further legal immigration all but closed, and the non-European immigrant proportion of the population well under 10 per cent, such general policy principles applied consistently over time should have an accommodative effect.⁵⁵ In one way or another, these immigrants, or at least their offspring, will eventually undoubtedly become citizens, impacting on political balances to some extent. For example, by some estimates the Brussels population by the first decade of the next century will be more than one-third immigrant, with significant implications for the delicately poised and endlessly frictional Flemish-Walloon balances.

In contrast, immigration to the United States from Asia and Latin America gained dramatic new momentum at about the time Western Europe was closing its doors, as an unanticipated consequence of the 1965 immigration act which deracialized entry prerequisites. By the turn of the century, close to 30 per cent of the population will be composed of racial minorities; by some projections, by mid-century Euroamericans will be a minority. Multicultural issues of a wholly different order from those on the European agenda are in prospect, barring a return to sharply restrictive immigration legislation. Among other questions to ponder, one may anticipate a growing racial imbalance in the age pyramid, with disproportionate numbers of white senior citizens, and racial minorities predominant in the younger age categories. If one reflects upon the number of social policy areas where benefits are distributed unequally in generational terms, one glimpses the necessity for ongoing policy adjustment.

resource distribution

In societies where communal difference is salient, the prospect that ethnic groups will evaluate their perceived well-being in comparison with others is well-nigh certain. In popular perceptions, such measurements are highly subjective; one may cite innumerable examples where both sides believe they are relative losers. Canada is an obvious example. Anglophone Canada, especially the western provinces, believes Quebec gets far more than its fair share. Those promoting secession of Quebec argue the contrary, claiming Quebec would benefit economically by separation.

Although the relationship between economic conditions and communal tensions is impossible to define precisely, few would dispute that it exists.⁵⁶ One clear example is Malaysia; the viability of the quasi-consociational Malay-dominant political formula is clearly contingent on an economic expansion which provides the Chinese community with offsetting compensation for its relative political marginalization.⁵⁷ The disintegration of Brazzaville in 1993-1994 into warring ethno-adolescent armed gangs of “Ninjas”, “Cobras” and “Zulus” was partly attributable to political divisions grafted on urban ethnic divisions, but was also a product of the deep discontents resulting from the virtual cessation of payments to the bloated state service from 1991, a consequence in turn of a steadily deteriorating economy.⁵⁸ The isomorphism is far from complete, and mediated by complex intervening variables. As a broad proposition, however, one may safely assert that sustained economic decline will intensify ethnic conflict. So also will perceptions of gross disparities in ethnic distributions resultant from state policies.

These assertions point towards one of the most intractable challenges to ethnic accommodation policy. Few if any state policies will be absolutely neutral in their distributive effects among ethnic groups. What matters, then, is whether the ethnic distributive effect is widely perceived as a product of deliberate bias towards those groups with favoured access to the state, and whether offsetting or compensating policies are undertaken to redress imbalance created by a given policy (the location of a major infrastructure project, for example).

Managing the national economy to foster economic growth is a universal maxim of statecraft. Yet there has often been insufficient recognition of the potential conflict between ethnic harmony and maximization of aggregate growth.⁵⁹ Innumerable examples of the tension between the policy claims of economic development and ethnic accommodation may be cited. In the Sudan, renewal of civil war was partly triggered by disputes between the north and south over two huge development projects: the Jonglei Canal, begun but not completed to enhance the flow of White Nile water through the *sudd*, essentially benefiting the north at the expense of pastoral communities in the south; and the control of revenues and siting of an oil refinery arising from large petroleum deposits in the south, in whose development Chevron invested nearly a billion dollars at a dead loss. Diversion of river flow to giant cotton irrigation projects in the former Soviet Union led to a catastrophic shrinkage of the Aral Sea, and ruinous impacts on the environment of the Karalkapak near its former shores.

Large dam projects have been particularly contentious in this respect, not infrequently requiring displacement of ethnic minorities. Such schemes have lost part of their allure in recent years, as the social costs of overriding the intensely held attachments of ethnic minorities to their historical lands, as well as the disruption in livelihoods inherent in forced relocation, have become more apparent. Where the ethnic community concerned falls into the “indigenous people” category (as in a recent hotly disputed dam project in

India, or proposed extensions of the James Bay scheme in northern Quebec), the conflict between “development” and indigenous peoples’ rights has been especially acute.

The conflict between national macro-economic goals and ethnic claims also arises when local communities conclude that they absorb all the environmental costs and receive few of the benefits of economic growth. The Nigerian oil industry is a case in point. The Niger delta minorities find that oil development has polluted the tidal estuaries along which their villages are located, but oil revenues accrue entirely to the federal government, and are redistributed on a national basis. The anger of these groups is now intense, and their deepening disaffection from the Nigerian federation has become one of the flashpoints of the current impasse of transition to civilian rule.

The strong trend since the 1980s towards economic liberalization and market-based reforms has intensified the dilemmas between optimizing growth and ethnic accommodation. In some regions, such as East Africa, economic liberalization appears disproportionately to benefit relatively prosperous racial minorities (Asians) whose commercial skills position them to seize newly opened opportunities.⁶⁰ In other instances, the stress on market principles leads to pressures upon communal land rights; Amazon regions of Brazil and Ecuador are examples.

While, at the present conjuncture, market-friendly development policies are unlikely to be dethroned, a clear recognition of a need to balance liberal economic principles with an acknowledgement of the political costs of deepening ethnic inequality is critical. No one can dispute the importance of overall economic growth as one key policy objective; there is some truth in the adage that a rising tide lifts all boats. But metaphorical reasoning has its limits; some ethnic vessels may be stranded as the tide of prosperity rises, and compensatory measures are indispensable to sustain ethnic accommodation.

The cost of failure in the policy trade-offs can be high indeed. If the breakdown in ethnic relationships leads to serious violence, the destruction of the economic fabric of the state can be calamitous. Many years will pass before the levels of well-being attained in Bosnia, Rwanda or the Sudan prior to the civil wars can be restored.

The range of policies in the economic field is vast, and comprehensive treatment beyond the scope of this essay. Particular attention is warranted for one policy sphere where important experimentation has occurred with an explicit ethnic accommodation focus: ethnic preference measures designed to remedy disadvantage attributable to past state policy or societal prejudice. Many states have historically pursued discriminatory policies in favour of relatively well-situated categories: veterans in the United States, whites in South Africa, men nearly everywhere. At issue here are only very recent policies designed to remedy historically established patterns of ethnic inequality.

Affirmative action policies are designed to remedy past inequality by guaranteeing opportunities in the fields of education, employment and state contracts to individuals from groups identified as objects of historical inequality.⁶¹ Because they violate the principle of equality of all citizens of the liberal state to some degree, such policies invariably run into several difficulties: defining the beneficiary group and its boundaries, establishing the extent of the preference accorded, justifying the advantage in historical terms, and stipulating means for determining when the remedy will have succeeded. In the framework of a democratic society, ethnic preference policies must be justified to the dominant society; thus they are always vulnerable and usually contentious.

Although, depending on the definition, one may identify a fairly long list of countries where one or another aspect of such a policy has been pursued, major examples helpful in evaluating their effect may be found in India, Malaysia, Northern Ireland, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the United States. The results are quite mixed.⁶² In Sri Lanka, the policy was designed to favour the Sinhalese ethnic majority; in its own terms it succeeded, but at the price of deepening the disaffection of the Tamil community and igniting an ethnic civil war whose end is not yet in sight. In the case of Pakistan as well, an overall negative verdict seems dictated by the evidence.⁶³ Ethnic preference, originally to help Bengalis in former east Pakistan, resulted in an increasingly comprehensive quota system for public employment and educational access that particularly disadvantaged the newly “imagined” Muhajir community (Urdu-speakers from Gujarati and north central India who migrated to Pakistan after the partition of India). An intense sense of deprivation and discrimination has fuelled potent ethnic mobilization, which in turn provokes counter-mobilization by others in the social field. The fatal flaw of the Pakistani system was that it expanded to cover most categories, and ceased to be directed toward clearly targeted disadvantaged minorities.

In the other cases, the balance of evidence is significantly more positive. In Malaysia, the notion of Malay special rights dates from the colonial period, but originally pivoted around the preservation of Malay traditions and social structures. After independence, propelled by “sons of the soil” (*bumiputra*) arguments, these particular entitlements became transformed into public policy aimed at Malay economic upliftment. After the serious 1969 ethnic disorders, the policy was reinforced in the direction of comprehensive Malay preference in education, state employment and economic ownership (the 1971 New Economic Plan). There is little doubt that the Malay middle class has substantially benefited from these measures; in their absence, the Chinese and to a lesser extent Indian economic élites would have held a more commanding position. These advantages come at a cost; the alienation of the younger generation of Chinese is palpable, incompletely assuaged by the private sector domains in which Chinese enterprise predominates. The Malaysian version of ethnic preference involves a more pronounced tilting of the scales towards Malay candidates than is generally the case.

In India, the deeply entrenched social hierarchies created by the caste system produce strong arguments for compensatory policies.⁶⁴ From the time of independence, some preferential measures in the fields of education and public employment have been in place for the scheduled castes (“untouchables”) and tribes (hill peoples) which constitute about 20 per cent of the population. Reservation of places in the educational system and of employment for these categories alone does not encounter strong opposition. Much more controversial is the inclusion of “Other Backward Classes” on the roster. While many in this broad category are among the most hopelessly impoverished rural populations of India, the boundaries of the category are nonetheless difficult to define and potentially very large. By some proposals, over half the population becomes a beneficiary class, including a significant section of the politically dominant middle classes. Drawing the boundaries of entitlement this broadly generates intense anger and violent opposition among youth of higher castes. Broad definition of “Other Backward Classes,” argues Galanter, undermines the legitimacy of all preferences to non-beneficiaries by painting “a picture of unrestrained preference for those who are not distinctly worse off than non-beneficiaries”.⁶⁵

Indian compensatory discrimination policies have helped create a larger middle class drawn from the most downtrodden communities than would otherwise have emerged. Some remedial policy to offset the rigid barriers to equality created by the caste system for the most degraded and stigmatized communities would seem ineluctable. But experience suggests the necessity of limiting application to the most seriously disadvantaged communal categories.

“Affirmative action” in the United States has a complex legal history; its actual meaning slowly evolves through the interplay of occasional legislation, more frequent administrative regulations and constant litigation. Its dilemmas well illustrate the contradictions faced by ethnic preference policies in a liberal state where basic rights are held to be individual. Federal anti-discrimination legislation dates from 1883, but great difficulties were encountered in making it operative. The 1964 Civil Rights Act and subsequent interpretive administrative regulations introduced the premise that historic patterns of discrimination against racial minorities (and women) could only be overcome by setting numerical goals “to increase materially the utilization of minorities and women, at all levels”. “Result-oriented” procedures to achieve this end were proposed, but the regulations also (pursuant to the legislative mandate) stipulated that “goals may not be rigid” nor could they result in “inflexible quotas;” rather they should be “targets reasonably obtainable by means of applying every good-faith effort”.⁶⁶ However contested its ethos and precise meaning, affirmative action became widespread from the 1970s on, initially targeted mainly on African-Americans, but subsequently expanding to include Hispanics, Native Americans and to some extent Asian-Americans, as well as women. The effort has clearly been of some benefit to targeted groups, though how much is a matter of heated debate.

The case for remedial action in spheres such as education, employment and housing to compensate for pronounced historical inequality — whether a product of state action, societal barriers or both — is strong. The track record of such policies is mixed, and there are clear limits to their useful scope. Ethnic preference has been subject to a barrage of criticism: difficulty of defining beneficiary groups so that only the genuinely disadvantaged benefit; tendency to foster rigid group categories with an entrenched interest in defending their allocations; propensity to advantage the more privileged segment of beneficiary groups; alienation of those who believe their life chances curtailed by affirmative action; difficulty of defining the criteria for determining when such measures, invariably argued as transitional and temporary, are no longer required. These real difficulties suggest caution in embarking on this course. Yet the tensions and discontents fostered by historically structured ethnic inequality, which can only be dissolved very slowly by the operation of the marketplace and purely individual notions of “merit”, may necessitate some carefully crafted initiatives in this domain.

conclusion

By way of conclusion, we may return to some of the more general issues raised in our opening passages. If any definitive instruction for statecraft is found in the harsh experience of recent decades, the lesson is clearly that “nation building” homogenization cannot succeed. Nor, over time, can simple ethnic domination serve as a stable formula for rule.

Thus the content of the discourse of nationhood, which doubtless will continue to be perceived by states as critical to meeting the imperative of legitimation, merits careful reflection. “Nation” defined as civic community, rooted in values that can be shared by all ethnic components of the national society, offers the most durable framework for accommodating diversity. Accommodation does require such a framework, which in turn needs affective attachments by the citizenry at large. Such an ethos of community is best achieved when “nation” is shorn of any connotations of ethnic exclusivity.

Self-determination as an international norm also needs to evolve beyond assertion of imprescriptible sovereignty rights by all self-identified “peoples”. Its constant invocation in everyday ethnic interactions formulates differences in categories which are all too often unresolvable. Although in extreme cases the break-up of existing state units may be inevitable, secession cannot be a general formula for accommodation of diversity, and self-determination is often an unhelpful principle in the search for conciliation of conflict. Constant brandishing of the threat of secession may stand in the way of a more constructive search for solutions.⁶⁷

Finally, patience and perseverance can be supreme virtues. Frequently, formulas for accommodation will only become acceptable to contending parties after long periods of impasse. Containing violent conflict within tolerable bounds during such a process is an under-recognized achievement of ethnic statecraft. A study of Northern Ireland shows how a seemingly intractable conflict, while unresolved, has been contained, despite the images created by the terrorist exploits of extreme elements on both sides; Belfast through the “time of troubles” has remained a safer city than Johannesburg or New York.⁶⁸ Although Canada has lived for two decades under the shadow of threats of Quebec’s secession, the country has coped with an endemic constitutional crisis in a resolutely civic fashion. As in Northern Ireland, no permanent settlement is yet in view. But living with crisis in a civic fashion is surely a triumph of ethnic accommodation.

The search for effective policies to achieve ethnic accommodation will continue on a global scale. The world will benefit from a collective learning process, which entails careful observation of the innumerable experimental fields constituted by the 180-odd sovereign units in our global community.

Perhaps in time human security can supplant state security as the fundamental norm of the international system. The unlimited brutalities which can ensue when the bonds of comity dissolve are a powerful reminder of the importance of an ongoing search for community that transcends ethnic difference.

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notes

1. Gurr, 1994.
2. Moynihan, 1993; Kaplan, 1994; Huntington, 1993.
3. Most notably in the important 1960 United Nations General Assembly Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which, after restating the right of all “peoples” to self-determination, affirmed in its sixth article that “any attempt aimed at the partial or whole disruption of the national unity and territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations”.
4. In the UNRISD project, “ethnic” is understood to encompass differences of race and religion as well as ethnicity narrowly defined to refer only to identity based on shared cultural attributes and presumed ancestry.
5. Weber, 1976.
6. See for example the magistral controversial study by Greenfeld (1992); see also the valuable collection in **Daedalus** (1993).
7. For more detail, see Young (1993), especially pp. 3-35.
8. As argued in the influential work of Anderson (1983).
9. This is particularly the case in Africa: thus the compelling arguments by Leroy Vail and his collaborators in Vail (1989).
10. “Race” is a contested concept, and its meanings vary widely in the various societies where it is encountered. I find particularly helpful, for comparative purposes, the treatment by Banton (1987).
11. Premdas, 1994.
12. Maier, 1994, p. 51.
13. Jackson, 1990.
14. One could add the break-up of two newly created and weakly established unions, with the expulsion of Singapore from the Malaysian Federation and the withdrawal of Syria from the United Arab Republic. These are exceptions which prove the rule, however, as both involved reassertion of separate status of previously distinct territorial units.
15. For a thoughtful analysis of the complex issues of ethnic diversity lurking in the new state of Eritrea, in spite of the unifying effect of its remarkable three-decade struggle for independence, see Tekle M. Woldemikael (1993).
16. For an intriguing example, see the sobering analysis of the unsuccessful effort to define a long-term constitutional framework for the Federated States of Micronesia in 1990. This micro polity has four main islands, with associated ethnicities, and a total population of 106,231, and now seems likely to dissolve in 2001 when its present pact of association expires (Petersen, 1993).

17. I am indebted to Kumar Rupesinghe (formerly of the International Peace Research Institute of Oslo, Norway) for this figure.
18. Debates over constitutional arrangements in recent years have been strongly influenced by the seminal contributions of Arend Lijphart, especially Lijphart (1977), and Donald Horowitz (1985 and 1991).
19. This section draws heavily upon the pair of papers prepared for the UNRISD project by Ghai (1994) and Longman (1994a).
20. We do not consider here federal (or pseudo-federal) systems in which cultural diversity was not a significant issue, such as Argentina, Germany, Mexico or Venezuela.
21. McRae, 1964.
22. See the illuminating paper by Jáuregui (1994).
23. Guyer, 1992.
24. Ghai, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-24.
25. Lijphart, 1977. See also the proposed application of his theory in Lijphart, 1985a.
26. This section is largely based upon the two excellent UNRISD project theme papers by de Silva (1994) and Jenkins (1994). See also the key works by Grofman and Lijphart (1985), Taagepera and Soberg Shugart (1989), and Horowitz (1991) .
27. Taagepera and Soberg Shugart, *op.cit.*, pp. 2-4.
28. Huntington, 1991.
29. See Premdas (*op.cit.*), and Dinan, Nababsing and Mathur (1994).
30. Duverger, 1954.
31. Lijphart, 1985b.
32. In the quarter-century between 1968 and 1993, francophones Pierre Trudeau and Brian Mulrooney held office continuously except for two brief interludes of a few months each.
33. For detail, see de Silva (*op.cit.*) and Lee (1994).
34. Dinan, Nabasing and Mathur, *op.cit.*, p. 43.
35. For detail, see the appendix on “The mechanics of electoral systems,” in Mackie and Rose (1991).
36. de Silva, *op.cit.*, p. 14.
37. Jenkins, 1994a.
38. Cox and Niou, 1994. The system as it actually operates not only favours large parties but factionalizes them.
39. Guinier, 1993.
40. Sawyer and MacRae (1962) show through game theory why this outcome was likely.
41. Horowitz, 1991, p. 189.
42. Dinan, Nababsing and Mathur, *op.cit.*, p. 39.
43. The key issues are given succinct and cogent exposition in the UNRISD project paper by Gundara and Jones (1994).
44. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
45. See the useful detail on bilingual education policies in the United States in the paper by Fuchs (1994, pp. 66-72).
46. Laitin, 1992.
47. Laponce, 1987, p. 25.

48. Tripp, 1994.
49. Jáuregui, op.cit.
50. On these processes, see Srinivas (1962), Young (1976, pp. 428-459) and Cornell (1988).
51. Fuchs, 1994, p. 7.
52. This section relies heavily on the valuable UNRISD project paper by Collinson (1994).
53. See Brubaker (1992).
54. Collinson, op.cit., pp.28-29.
55. This does not take full account of illegal immigration, or of possible scenarios which might create a flood of political refugees: the advent of a rigorously Islamist régime in Algeria, for example.
56. On this issue, see the useful collection by Samarasinghe and Coughlan (1991a). For this section, I am indebted to the working paper prepared by Longman (1994b).
57. This point is central to the Lee (1994) paper.
58. The dramatic deterioration of urban ethnic relationships in Brazzaville in the 1990s is given chilling analysis by a pair of social anthropologists from the University of Lund: Ekholm Friedman and Sundberg (1994).
59. In view of the importance of this topic, the relative dearth of comparative studies which frontally address these issues is surprising. For one exception, see Samarasinghe and Coughlan (1991b).
60. One needs to add that not all Asians are either prosperous or beneficiaries of liberalization. Yet the economic skills and access to capital of a visible minority among them are perceived by the citizenry at large as conferring a privileged position to the group as a whole. For some detail, see Tripp (op.cit.).
61. This section benefits from the working paper prepared by Jenkins (1994b).
62. Our perspective here diverges from the conclusions of the comparative study by Sowell (1990).
63. See the UNRISD project paper by Kennedy (1994).
64. See the careful study by Galanter (1984).
65. Ibid., p. 140.
66. See the succinct review in Fuchs (1994, pp. 51-54). See also his comprehensive monograph (Fuchs, 1990).
67. See the careful study of the moral grounds for secession by the philosopher Buchanan (1991). See also the exploration of the ambiguities and contradictions in the doctrine of self-determination by Buchheit (1978).
68. Darby, 1994.