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Multiculturalism: A Canadian Defence

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Multiculturalism: A Canadian Defence

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Abstract

This paper offers a defence of multiculturalism as currently set out in Canadian policy documents. It notes a range of academic and increasingly popular criticisms of multiculturalism, in Europe as well as Australia and Canada. In the past five years particular anxiety has arisen in the media about the emerging segregation of immigrant and minority groups in major gateway cities. Multiculturalism is commonly held responsible both for segregation, and even for the emergence of subversive political cells among the second generation. These specific challenges are addressed. The key argument is that multiculturalism sustains a philosophy for engaging difference and a policy for cultural integration. Both are urgently required in the apparent cultural pluralism of immigrant gateway cities in Canada and elsewhere.

Keywords

Canada, Western Europe, gateway cities, immigration, multiculturalism, segregation, terrorism

Introduction

Overriding national variations in the meaning and practice of multiculturalism in Western Europe is a unifying sense of unease, and periodic crisis, in assessing the failure of immigrant and refugee inclusion. Integration policy has become very unstable terrain in Europe, with significant policy turbulence accompanying the swings of public opinion, the oscillations of electoral behaviour, and knee-jerk and sometimes opportunistic political responses. Former low level anxieties accompanying the slow pace of cultural, economic, political and social integration are punctuated by unpredictable but increasingly common shocks creating national hypertension: the assassination of Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands, severe rioting in France and Britain, the cartoons crisis in Denmark, numbing terrorist attacks in Spain and Britain, and the existence of impulsive terrorist sleeper cells in Germany and elsewhere. The co-existence of the visible and publicized social exclusion of immigrant groups, the prospect of random violence, and the rapidity of cultural change have, understandably, generated a fundamental sense of dislocation, casting long-established patterns of identity, affiliation and security into doubt. These are propitious conditions for backlash, with further polarisation and deterioration of inter-group relations.

In this troubled context, a comparative perspective from the new world may be useful, not because the three largest immigrant-receiving countries of Australia, Canada, and the United States are without integration challenges of their own – far from it – but because as settler societies they have had a longer experience with an intentional strategy of diversity planning and management, of nation-building within which immigration is a fundamental corner stone. The earlier inter-racial history of all three countries is in fact one of desperate, indeed atrocious failure, and includes aboriginal genocide and near genocide and entrenched racism solidified by institutionalized social exclusion, directed initially against those from outside north-western Europe, and later against non-Europeans. But the last third of the twentieth century has seen substantial cultural and institutional re-positioning, and in this more hopeful period, multiculturalism has played an important role, notably in Canada and Australia and to a much lesser degree in the United States. In light of the pessimism about multiculturalism in theory and practice in Europe, a Canadian perspective in particular may be helpful.

Multiculturalism as a Canadian Institution

The origin of Canadian multiculturalism was to some extent unintended. In the 1960s, to address the growing challenge of the Quebec question during the ‘quiet revolution’ of growing self-expression in

that province, the federal government set up a Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. As public hearings were held across the country representation was made by Ukrainian-Canadians and other groups of non-British and non-French ethnicity challenging the conventional national assimilation model of Anglo- and Franco-conformity. By 1961 citizens outside these two 'charter groups' accounted for 25 per cent of the national population, and immigration trends, notably after the 1967 reforms, suggested this share would grow steadily, as indeed it has. In an ambiguous positioning of this population, neither exclusionary but yet clearly partitioned and separate, the Royal Commission produced a fourth and final volume in 1969, entitled 'The Cultural Contribution of Other Ethnic Groups'. It was the political intuition of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, in a speech in the Canadian Parliament in October 1971, that reversed the bicultural (but not the bilingual) recommendations of the Royal Commission, ushering in multiculturalism as official government policy. The Prime Minister's intent was that the 'Other Ethnic Groups' should become mainstream.

Trudeau later oversaw the inscription of multiculturalism into the 1982 Constitution where article 27 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms asserts a declaration of rights "in a manner consistent with the multicultural heritage of Canadians." I will want to return to that issue of rights later. Other legislative institutionalisation was the 1988 Multiculturalism Act, followed by the 1995 Employment Equity Act, giving Canada the strongest legal and constitutional basis for multiculturalism in any country. In recent years the appointment by the Prime Minister of immigrant women of colour as Governor General of Canada, the Queen of Britain's official representative in Canada's constitutional monarchy, has provided symbolic and highly visible institutionalisation of cultural diversity as a national norm. Reflecting large Caribbean- and Chinese-origin populations in Canada, Michaëlle Jean, the current Governor General, was born in Haiti, her predecessor, Adrienne Clarkson, in Hong Kong. Interestingly, both women are married to white men, perhaps projecting a multicultural moral into the nuclear family itself. Following, and in some cases, anticipating this symbolic positioning of immigrants of colour, several provinces have also appointed members of visible minorities (to use the Canadian term) as Lieutenant Governor, filling the equivalent provincial constitutional role as the federal Governor General. Extending the modelling of inclusion to aboriginal populations, the current Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, James Bartleman, a diplomat and philanthropist, is a member of the Mnjikaning First Nation. His mandate includes three key priorities: "to eliminate the stigma of mental illness, to fight racism and discrimination, and to encourage aboriginal young people" (Government of Ontario 2007).

The federal Department of Canadian Heritage is official protector of cultural pluralism. Its website announces the official face of multiculturalism:

Canadian multiculturalism is fundamental to our belief that all citizens are equal. Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging. Acceptance gives Canadians a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them more open to, and accepting of, diverse cultures. The Canadian experience has shown that multiculturalism encourages racial and ethnic harmony and cross-cultural understanding, and discourages ghettoization, hatred, discrimination and violence (Government of Canada 2007).

Allowing for a certain level of public relations decorum, this summary statement still makes important claims. Multiculturalism is associated with equality, a sense of identity, acceptance of diversity, ethnic understanding, and harmony, while discouraging social and spatial exclusion, bias and hatred. These are strong claims, and the Department sought to substantiate them in four pamphlets, “The Evidence Series: Facts about Multiculturalism” that summarise academic research indicating that multiculturalism encourages attachment to Canada and that it promotes immigrant integration and citizenship. However, the pamphlets also document bias in the labour market and the existence of hate crimes, suggesting that much remains to be done. But, above all, this dossier underscores that multiculturalism is part of the immigrant integration project, and stands opposed to parochial separation. Such an ideology was inherent in Trudeau’s cosmopolitan view of Canada in the world and his persistent opposition to Quebec separatism that he regarded as divisive and small-minded. Multiculturalism continues to be seen in senior policy circles as a bridge-building tool between immigrants and the long-settled to achieve integration (Duncan 2005). That is why citizenship requires a short test of knowledge of Canadian institutions and the citizenship ceremony itself is a celebratory event before a judge and an officer of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in iconic uniform. There is a rite of passage here, as immigrants and refugees are welcomed into citizenship as equal partners.

For equality to exist it must be monitored and this is the rationale for the extraordinarily detailed census record on indicators of cultural pluralism. From the Census of Canada, population data are available every five years on place of birth, citizenship, immigrant status, ethnic self-designation, racial self-designation, religious affiliation, mother tongue use, and facility in English and French.¹ Many of these questions, accounting for almost a quarter of the census inventory, are

¹ Census data are supplemented by several large data bases assessing current and recent immigrant and ethnic attitudes, outcomes, and conditions collected by government surveys, including the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (3 waves, n = 12,000, 2001-) the Ethnic Diversity Survey (n = 42,000, 2002), and continuing linked data bases such as the Landed Immigrant Data System (LIDS), developed from a landing

nominated and paid for by the Department of Canadian Heritage. A principal objective is to monitor performance against standards required by compliance audits in such legislation as the 1988 Multiculturalism Act and the 1995 Employment Equity Act.

Outside government, multiculturalism is deeply embedded in school curricula, socializing children into the advantages of an open society. It has been promoted by public intellectuals, notably the political philosophers Charles Taylor (1992) and Will Kymlicka (1995, 1998). As a result, multiculturalism is often seen to be a defining characteristic of Canadian identity (Li 2003). Moreover, it continues to receive strong popular endorsement as a positive contribution to integration. A stratified random sample of 1500 Canadians in September 2006 showed that in Canada at least the demise of multiculturalism in public sentiment has been exaggerated (Jedwab 2006).² Among respondents, 76 percent agreed that multiculturalism aids immigrant integration, 76 percent that it aids equal participation in society, 74 percent that it assists a sense of national belonging, 69 percent that it assists national identity and citizenship, 69 percent that it enhances the identification of shared values, and 64 percent that it aids social cohesion. These data seem to bear out the official pronouncement on the Canadian Heritage web site. The survey revealed that professional and university-educated respondents were more positive in their assessment, while low income and retired Canadians were less supportive (but not negative). There was a slight but consistent tendency for respondents whose mother tongue was neither English nor French, almost all of whom would be immigrants, to endorse multiculturalism even more enthusiastically along these dimensions than the rest of the population.

There are frequently congruent attitudes between multiculturalism and immigration in national surveys, and it is notable that opinion polls typically find that, though cyclic, Canadian attitudes toward immigration are invariably affirmative. International surveys in 2002 and 2004 showed that Canadians were by far the most accommodating to immigration; in the 2002 poll, three out of four endorsed immigration, while in no other country was this position supported by a majority (Hiebert 2006). No political party opposes immigration and there has been no variation in annual entry targets in the transitions between Conservative and Liberal federal governments over the past 15 years – indeed there has been a slow but steady upward trajectory in target numbers.

card completed by all immigrants, and the longitudinal Immigrant Data Base (IMDB, 1980-) linking landing cards with tax files of all immigrants landing in Canada since 1980 who submitted an income tax return .

² The data were collected only a few months after Canada's worst terrorist incident, the arrest of 18 alleged terrorists in the Toronto region, reputedly affiliated with Al-Qaeda, who were apparently planning various attacks on public buildings and leaders in Ontario. We would expect the timing of the survey to have depressed the approval ratings of multiculturalism, but nonetheless they remain high. I am grateful to Jack Jedwab for access to these unpublished statistics.

Counter-flow: Multiculturalism under Attack

To a non-Canadian reader this account must seem hopelessly utopian, perhaps even an unattractive form of national grandstanding. And so it should, for despite significant achievements, it would be disingenuous to present either immigration or multicultural policy as unflawed, and such a position would generate incredulity in Canada where academic and popular criticisms are unrelenting on such issues as immigrant and refugee selection, refugee adjudication, discriminatory responses to racial diversity, harmonizing border policy with the United States, the adequacy of settlement services, the failure to recognise overseas professional credentials, the delayed economic, social and political integration of immigrants with Canadian society, and the fundamental position of multiculturalism as a governance umbrella.

Multiculturalism has never been given an easy ride in Canada. Rather, there has been a spirited and sometimes cantankerous debate with dissenters representing a broad range of political positions (Ley 2007). I want first to review some of the older, typically, intellectual challenges before moving on to the current populist and sometimes more visceral attacks, where some convergence with, and inspiration from, European criticism has occurred.

From the political right has come the anxiety that multiculturalism is an exercise in post-modern identity politics that fragments the nation-building project. The charges of national separation with 'the proliferation of problematic diversity' are widespread (Day 2000). This was also the *cri de coeur* of Pauline Hanson's One-Nation Party in Australia in the 1990s (Ang and Stratton 2001), and lies behind Samuel Huntington's (2004) recent interventions in the USA. Though no comparable political movement to Hanson's developed in Canada, nonetheless there were, and are (Gregg 2006), concerns that multicultural fracturing, superimposed onto periodically acute relations with Quebec and the growing mobilisation of the aboriginal first nations, might over-extend the steering capacity of the state.

More troublesome for the federal advocates of multiculturalism was the response of certain representatives of the immigrant communities themselves. In general, as Jedwab's 2006 poll suggests, immigrants (and their organisations) are keen supporters of multiculturalism, seeing it as an endorsement of tolerance and respect toward their own cultural heritage and (more importantly) their citizenship rights (cf. Bloemraad 2006). But that support is not shared by everyone, and particularly not by some articulate figures who, like the conservatives, also challenge the seeming partition of the nation into multicultural fragments, but unlike them do so from an immigrant perspective. They disagree with the cultural essentialism of multiculturalism, seeing not only the benign project of cultural recognition, but also a more troubling (if unintended) consequence that reproduces cultural

difference, thereby prescribing the appropriate cultural repertoire for any hyphenated Canadian. This argument was raised most persuasively by Neil Bissoondath (1994) in *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism*, where he argued that his Trinidadian past should have no bearing on his Canadian present. Rather he wanted to be a simple Canadian, unencumbered by ethnic expectations. Rebutting state mantras, he charged that multiculturalism contributed to the containment, marginalisation and ghettoization of essentialized immigrant identities. Soon after, Canadian Heritage issued its Evidence Series of pamphlets defending multiculturalism by using academic research against such charges.

Bissoondath's challenge is a more measured version of Ghassan Hage's (1998) vigorous attack on Australian multiculturalism, where he objects to what he calls the ethnic caging of immigrant identities. This project of classification and containment by an older Anglo-Celtic elite is intended, writes Hage, to maintain their own power base as guardians and controllers of the national society, a charge he directs not only against transparent racists but also against the more subtle privileges of the middle class 'cosmo-multiculturalist'. In a strategy of divide and conquer, he argues, new immigrants are sorted into groups predicated on cultural difference, an essentialization of identity that harkens back to older and more pernicious models of ethno-racial classification (Anderson 1991). The tendency of categorisation to homogenize and thereby limit the range of identities was brought home to me powerfully at a community meeting where, as part of a presentation, I showed a map plotting Vancouver residents of South Asian background. A voice from the audience took objection to this map. "Am I on it?... I object. I have almost nothing in common with all the other dots on the map. Don't limit our individuality." This objection raised the relevant question of how far mapping, or any other use of ethnic classification as a form of academic representation, is itself a version of essentialization and containment.

These criticisms by no means exhaust the range of challenges to multiculturalism in Canada. It is not surprising that in a neo-liberal age a further charge against multiculturalism is that its founding purposes have been co-opted and that it has become commodified (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002). Katharyne Mitchell (1993) cites a speech of Prime Minister Mulroney from the 1980s, where he makes much of the capacity of multiculturalism to contribute to international trade and capital flows. Multiculturalism also enables elites to play the ethnic card as a sign of a worldly cosmopolitanism, and growth boosters have certainly taken advantage of the cultural diversity of large gateway cities in their place promotion activities. An ethnic advantage was fully claimed in Sydney's successful bid for the 2000 Summer Olympic Games and Vancouver's for the 2010 Winter Games.

A final critical challenge to multiculturalism is the claim, usually from the political left, that it is an exercise in false consciousness. Lisa Lowe (1996), an American scholar, has advanced an argument often heard in Canada that the gaiety of multicultural festival, the welcome diversity of immigrant cuisine, induce a soporific sense of cultural equality, concealing a more insidious reality of immigrant marginalisation in economic and political integration to national life. Indeed and here her argument returns to some of Hage's themes, multiculturalism is supported because it adds variety, spice even, to the dull life of the middle-class native-born. But sustaining such bourgeois pleasures are legions of low-paid service workers, whose exotic self-presentation and smiling faces conceal an everyday life of poverty and social exclusion.

Defending Multiculturalism in Difficult Times

There are responses to each of these challenges – for example an answer that has been given to the concern about national fragmentation is the statement that multiculturalism is a core Canadian value and thus a source of unity, not fragmentation, as Jedwab's survey indicates – but instead of working through each of these responses in turn, I want to address a broader issue about the understanding of multiculturalism upon which many of the challenges are assembled. For it is frequently the case that criticisms are derived from an imputed meaning of multiculturalism which is now largely obsolete in practice. The complaints about the fragmentation of a national culture, the commercial hijacking of ethnic culture, the essentializing of immigrant culture, or the chimera of cultural equality, all miss the point that in Canada today multicultural policy is only indirectly concerned with the maintenance of old-world cultures. The criticisms have not kept up with the evolution of a mutating practice.

Audrey Kobayashi (1993) has written cogently on the three stages of multiculturalism in Canada. The first stage is simply *demographic multiculturalism*, the recognition that a national society's charter group, in Canada the two English and French charter groups, are no longer the only teams in town. This acknowledgment occurred in Canada with the lobbying of other Canadians to the Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission and the inclusion of their call for cultural pluralism in Volume IV of the Commission's Report. Trudeau's declaration of official multiculturalism in 1971 gave rise to a second stage of *symbolic multiculturalism*, a somewhat unfocussed support and celebration of heritage cultures through grants for events, programmes, and cultural centres. As Minister of State for Multiculturalism, Joseph-Philippe Guay, declared in 1977: "If we accept our cultural pluralism then we assure our Canadian unity. It is as simple and as complicated as that...assimilation is not an option we Canadians want or choose" (Kobayashi 1993: 216). This was the era of modest state support for elements of immigrant culture including music, literature, dance,

and pioneer histories, and respect for their worthy and equal status. Cultural difference was preserved, even promoted, and it is this emphasis on the accentuation of cultural difference that continues to be commonly understood as comprising multiculturalism today.

But in fact multiculturalism has moved on. According to the 2004-5 Annual Report on the Multiculturalism Act: “As society has evolved and needs have changed so too have the priorities of the Multiculturalism Programme” (Government of Canada 2006: 9). The four programme areas in the report emphasize active citizenship, not heritage cultures. They comprise: 1) fostering cross-cultural understanding, 2) combating racism and discrimination, 3) promoting civic participation, and 4) making Canadian institutions more reflective of Canadian diversity. Similarly, the British Columbia multiculturalism program is merged with anti-racism, and “its primary goal...is the elimination of racism and other forms of hate activity” (Government of British Columbia 2006). There are no longer grants to sustain heritage cultures, but there are grants for official-language programmes offered by NGOs to enhance integration.

Since the passing of the Multiculturalism Act, then, the emphasis has moved to a third stage of *structural multiculturalism*, the advancement of human rights as constitutionally protected in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Anti-racism, employment equity, equal treatment before the law in policing, education and immigration policy, and redress for group discrimination in the past, are all agenda items of presently existing multiculturalism. The intent is integration and social inclusion through equality of opportunity and treatment. In June 2006 an official apology, with a cash settlement, was granted by the Government of Canada to Chinese-Canadians and their descendents who were obligated to pay an invidious head tax, intended to block their immigration, from 1885 until 1923, when all Chinese entry was barred by the Chinese Immigration Act until it was annulled in 1947. Surviving head tax payers, family members and descendents successfully pressed their human rights for fair and respectful treatment that includes redress for past injustices. Chinese redress follows the earlier Japanese redress settlement in 1988 when an apology and cash settlement was made to acknowledge and nominally compensate Japanese-Canadians for the suspension of their human rights when they were moved to internment camps during the 1939-1945 War, and their property was confiscated. The purpose of these redress settlements is not only to remove the stigma of past social exclusion but to testify to such exclusion as an historic error, thereby underscoring the contemporary commitment to an open inclusive society. Like Canadian multiculturalism more generally the intent is the social integration of ethnic diversity.

Multiculturalism and the Present Crisis

But all of this may appear to be superseded and seemingly arcane in the face of urgent, populist challenges that have in part been agitated by media flows from Europe. Despite its human rights remit, it is multiculturalism that has borne the brunt of a renewed round of challenges this decade, more significant because they are now populist, politicized and widely publicized reactions to traumatic events. Troubling emergencies elsewhere that were generally viewed through the media from a safe distance came home with 18 arrests in 2006 in Greater Toronto of an alleged terrorist ring sympathetic to Al-Qaeda, whose bizarre plans are said to include included bombings, an invasion of Parliament and the beheading of the Prime Minister. Subsequent debate showed that Canada was not immune from the same anxious, sometimes shrill, reflections as Europeans.

Indeed much contemporary popular writing is inspired by the cross-national transmission of media text and images that selectively highlight points of crisis, presenting them as normative, eliding significant differences in national conditions, and sliding across thin ice in prescribing causality. In this spontaneous and often uncritical transmission of tarnished ethnoscaples from elsewhere, multiculturalism has been projected as the abiding context, the grab bag for all manner of policy failures.

The spectre of spatial segregation

A seminal example is a widely-read article in *The Walrus*, a magazine of art, politics and commentary, prior to the Toronto arrests but hard on the heels of the London bombings, the French *banlieue* riots, and the Cronulla beach violence in Sydney. In March 2006, its lead article, written by Allan Gregg, a respected pollster and political commentator, was entitled “Identity Crisis” with the revealing sub-title “Multiculturalism: A twentieth century dream becomes a twenty-first century conundrum” (Gregg 2006). The article’s first three paragraphs elaborated in turn the London, French and Sydney incidents, rolling them together in a common and alarmist semantic field. The fourth paragraph turns to Canadian multiculturalism, and raises fears of violence in Canada. Citing a poll, Gregg declares that the Canadian public want multiculturalism to be aimed at integration not separation. But that has *always been its objective*, and more explicitly in the third phase of structural multiculturalism than ever before. The perceived dysfunction of separation then leads in Gregg’s argument to the familiar lament that “ethnic groups are self-segregating.” The *bête noir* of spatial segregation is reminiscent of Trevor Phillips’ anxiety in the United Kingdom of a society “sleepwalking toward segregation.” It is undoubtedly the case that the huge immigration to Toronto and Vancouver in the past 25 years has led to higher levels of residential segregation, though these

concentrations fall far short of any definition of ghetto (Walks and Bourne 2006), and many immigrants live in a district with pronounced ethnic mixing.

The anxieties associated with social isolation and residential segregation are ubiquitous in the popular media, as well as in charges directed by policy-makers and influential figures like Phillips or Gregg; compare, for example, the current Swedish policy imperative ‘to break up segregation’ (Andersson 2006). While multiculturalism is invariably blamed, such charges are far from the mark. In the United Kingdom, Deborah Phillips (2006) has discounted such accusations. She makes the pertinent observation that a comparable pattern of segregation of white Britons is not regarded as problematic: “The white suburb and school thus become normalized, centralized spaces in the popular imagination, against which other spaces and lives are judged to be deviant or marginal” (2006: 29). The anxieties associated with ‘parallel lives’ and Muslim ‘self-segregation’, she points out, also overlook the effects of inner city disinvestment by more powerful groups as well as informal and institutional racism in shaping the residential choices of visible minorities. In England’s northern cities, for example, British Muslims avoid residential areas where they fear harassment. The issue then is not simply one of self-segregation, but of societal intolerance. Moreover, segregation can serve positive ends. In Ceri Peach’s oft-cited distinction there can be good segregation, encouraging mutual aid and shared problem-solving, as well as negative segregation (Peach 1996). Whenever appeals are made to the ‘Muslim community’ to ‘police itself’ against disruptive elements, policy-makers are themselves confirming that ‘its’ social cohesion does create a capacity for positive ends to be achieved.

But an even more important issue is that residential segregation is scarcely influenced by multiculturalism. The obvious example is the tenacious immigrant segregation in the *banlieues* around major French cities, existing despite the national policy of aggressive republicanism that rejects multiculturalism in favour of assimilation. The same point has been made in a comparison of levels of residential segregation between cities in Canada and the United States, for aside from the much *higher* Black segregation in American cities, differences are minor and do not “reveal any major distinction between a Canadian Mosaic and a US Melting Pot” (Peach 2005: 22). No relationship is evident between segregation and multiculturalism.

We need to challenge the false assumption that social and spatial separation have much if anything to do with multiculturalism.³ Historically, one can easily find examples of cultural difference surviving in unexpected contexts that are free of multicultural influence. It was in the

³ Gregg (2006) seems to acknowledge this point in noting that Caribbean immigration in the United Kingdom under earlier “generally assimilationist” policy was also associated with segregation, inequality and violence, but does not draw the obvious lesson concerning multiculturalism’s alleged causal role.

period of vigorous assimilation from 1910-1960 that the Chicago School of urban sociology diffused the widespread study and measurement of ethnic segregation in American cities. They also pioneered the detailed study of the social worlds of the inner city, where social closure led to the creation of distinctive urban sub-cultures, distinctiveness sharp enough that *social distance* between groups became an operational and measurable concept (Bogardus 1925, Ley 1983). Consider the following familiar lament, which though it resonates with current complaints, occurred in the 1920s during the unchallenged period of the melting pot and assimilation in American cities. Moreover it was directed at *European* immigrants. The immigrant, complained an urban newspaper, “has been all the time working for himself; he has kept to his own circles in the most clannish manner possible, he has learned too little English, familiarized himself all too little with our local laws and public movements and remained a [Dutchman], whereas he should have become more an American” (*Kalamazoo Telegraph* 1922, cited in Jakle and Wheeler 1969: 447). The targets of this contemporary-sounding criticism against clannishness during the assimilationist era of the 1920s were the Dutch who were draining and farming the glacial muck lands of southwest Michigan. They needed no multicultural umbrella to assemble an institutionally complete and separate community, a community which a generation later had dispersed and Americanized (Jakle and Wheeler 1969).

The spectre of hostile difference

But in recent commentary the stakes have been raised, for it is not just separation and difference that are now the popular cause of concern, but rather *hostile* difference, introverted communities where social separation and economic marginality aid a receptiveness to ideologies and projects that challenge, in a few instances violently challenge, national values and civic order. It is multiculturalism we are told that has encouraged cultural difference, social isolation, the perpetuation and even the perversion of homeland beliefs, and disloyalty to the new state. The example of the Netherlands is produced repeatedly by critics as the object lesson of the failure of multiculturalism.

So Gregg (2006) like many others moves from the anxiety of segregation to the greater anxiety of segregation-bred violence among economically disenfranchised groups. A few months after his article was published, the arrest of the Toronto 18 revealed the apparent prescience of his argument, and his measured prose was replaced by the circulation in the media of more sensational and speculative opinion. More sober than many was the column by veteran journalist, Robert Fulford (2006) in the right wing *National Post*, two weeks after the Toronto arrests. His title, “How we became a land of ghettos” is replete with sensational exaggeration of separateness (cf. Walks and Bourne 2006) that he attributes to multiculturalism. This is not his only example of false causal

reasoning. His fullest example is a study revealing the apparent lack of cultural integration of Turkish-born women in Germany, leading to the conclusion that “we need substantial criticism of multiculturalism and a redefinition of what it means.” Yet multicultural policy scarcely exists in Germany. Once again multiculturalism is inflated to a size where it becomes the only target that is visible.

A similar non-sequitur was evident in the response of the British government to the London bombings in 2005. Prime Minister Blair announced in the wake of the bombings the creation of a Commission on Integration and Cohesion, a re-visioning that implied that previous British multicultural policy had not pursued such objectives. Launching the Commission in August 2006, two weeks after another terrorist plot to blow up planes leaving Heathrow had been foiled, Minister Ruth Kelly declared that Britain had moved away from a “uniform consensus on the value of multiculturalism to one where we can encourage the debate by questioning whether it is encouraging separateness” (Woodward 2006). The coincidental timing between the announcement of the Commission following immediately upon a terrorist event and its launch right after a second event had been thwarted makes the imputed connection between multiculturalism and the formation of terrorist cells transparent. Multiculturalism is the permissive environment in which the state is ‘sleepwalking toward segregation,’ sustaining a milieu of isolation and encouraging an exotic version of homeland culture to take root.

Yet the pattern in the current round of arrests in Canada and England makes that case hard to sustain. Suspects were invariably quite integrated: English-speaking, often native-born, sometimes middle-class and well-educated. Arrests in 2006 occurred in such places as Mississauga in middle-class suburban Toronto and Crawley, an equivalent middle-class town south of London. Why would his son give up his BMW convertible and corner office in a high rise tower, protested one Canadian father of an arrested suspect. Some of the suspects and their families are converts to Islam: the wife of the alleged ring-leader in the Toronto cell was born Cheryl MacAulay in a Scots-Irish region of Atlantic Canada. British arrests have also included converts who did not grow up in an ethno-specific ideological hot-house.

It is not confinement within a warped cultural setting sustained by multiculturalism that is at issue here. More important is the identification of particular individuals with a larger national or pan-national political cause and their search for an extremist sub-culture, or their indoctrination into such a sub-culture by persuasive, even charismatic leaders. That cause is typically the war on terror, more specifically the war in Iraq, widely seen as a war on Muslims. But this cause, which is identified constantly in polls on Muslim opinion and is repeated by suspects themselves, is categorically and

ideologically ruled out by the British government (Ash 2006; Bunting 2006). Multiculturalism is a much less embarrassing target than unpopular foreign policy and friendly fire is re-directed toward it.

Terrorist cells are not new in North America or Europe and they extend well outside the immigrant population. Are Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City bomber, and the anti-government white militias in the US the fault of multiculturalism? Or what about the FLQ, Quebec separatists who undertook 200 acts of political terrorism in the 1960s culminating in the political assassination of the deputy Premier of Quebec during the October Crisis of 1970, when tanks were called to the streets of Montreal? Should we blame multiculturalism that they did not learn core Canadian values? What these extremists, like *ihadists*, held in common was a political vision, however perverse, that had received and rejected both immigrant and homeland values in favour of a grand theory, an amoral meta-ideology. They repeat the familiar European twentieth-century story of ETA and the IRA, where the means justified the ends, whatever the collateral cost. From this perspective, “immigrant integration and terrorism have nothing to do with each other” (Bunting 2006).

Conclusion

In December 2006, in its year-end review of the leading global migration issues, the Migration Policy Institute listed in first place the demise of multiculturalism. The brief review moved quickly through familiar episodes in Britain, the Netherlands and Denmark to make its case, ending by citing a Winnipeg-based journalist who suggested that not all was well in Canada. Surprisingly this Washington-based think tank made no reference to the United States, where 2006 had provided further evidence of its argument for the return of assimilation. After all, campaigning for his new immigration bill, President Bush had declared:

One aspect of making sure we have an immigration system that works, that’s orderly and fair, is to actively reach out and help people assimilate into our country...That means learn the values and history and language of America... When you hear people like me talking about assimilation, that’s what we’re talking about, helping people assimilate into America, helping us remain one nation under God (Stolberg 2006).

In contrast, even under provocation, the Government of Canada has not followed this path. Two weeks after Mr. Bush’s statement, the Conservative Prime Minister of Canada had a somewhat different message at the opening of the World Urban Forum in Vancouver. The context of Stephen Harper’s speech was the recent discovery of the terrorist plot in Toronto. But Mr. Harper offered a defence of sustained immigration and multicultural policy: “Canada’s diversity, properly nurtured, is our greatest strength” (Mickleburgh 2006) he observed, asserting continued support for immigration and multiculturalism.

This essay has similarly offered a defence of multiculturalism, policies that have evolved, and continue to evolve, in Canada over the past 35 years. A first premise is that the objective of multiculturalism is the integration of new immigrants into the Canadian mainstream – a definition which has not always been at the forefront of European applications. An open society, not ethnic fiefdoms, was Trudeau's original objective, and the citizenship test and ceremony, only now being introduced in Europe, have been part of the status passage to inclusion in a national project since the 1970s. That inclusion is protected and enhanced by a battery of human rights legislation, monitored and audited by compliance requirements that are measurable through the census and other data bases. While providing individual rights, this legislation moves beyond assimilation by recognizing group rights nested within a larger commitment to Canada and its values. Anti-racism, employment equity, equal treatment before the law in such sectors as policing, education and immigration policy, and redress for group discrimination in the past, are all part of the multicultural agenda. The intent is integration and social inclusion through equality of opportunity and treatment. While funds for ethno-cultural projects are now minimal, public resources for settlement services, notably English- and French-language courses, are made available to NGOs that must represent a diversity of cultures and not a single ethnic origin. Like all nation-building, this is a work in progress, and evokes, as it should, criticism pointing to evident shortcomings and failures to reach mandated targets. But it is on the whole a system that has worked, granting Canada a reputation amongst immigrants and potential immigrants of being, albeit imperfectly, an open society (Bloemraad 2006).

Against these achievements and continued national support for the Canadian version of multiculturalism, criticisms commonly seem ill-directed. The repetitive argument that multiculturalism promotes segregation, separation socially and spatially, does not survive serious scrutiny. Segregation has always been a feature of sustained immigration and it always will be, and its extent has typically been exaggerated by critics. There was more segregation in the Chicago melting pot between 1880 and 1930 (Philpott 1978) than in multicultural Toronto or Vancouver in 2001 (Walks and Bourne 2006), and in both cases many more immigrants lived outside ethnic concentrations than within them. Chicago immigrant neighbourhoods were sometimes places of violence: in 1927, Frederic Thrasher wrote in great detail of the 1313 teenage gangs he had located in the Chicago slums (Thrasher 1927). Poverty and social exclusion were among their causes, the same conditions as have provided the setting for the 2005 French *banlieue* riots.

Terrorist cells are another matter. Many of the 2001 New York bombers were well-educated with pan-national connections; the core members met as students in (non-multicultural) Hamburg. They were motivated by American policy in the Middle East, articulated in the 1998 *fatwah* against

the United States issued by Osama bin Laden. The prevalence of western foreign policy in agitating young Muslims has been demonstrated repeatedly, most recently by the study, *Living Apart Together*, for the conservative think-tank, Policy Exchange (Mirza et al. 2007). Based on a survey of a thousand British Muslims, the study showed that British foreign policy mattered more to the respondents than economic issues, public services, or even ethno-specific Muslim issues such as discrimination. “Foreign policy has become a major focus for Muslims in the West, as it concerns the persecution of fellow Muslims – the ‘imagined community’ worldwide...Muslim anger about foreign policy has been confirmed in numerous surveys over the past few years” (Mirza et al. 2007: 56). Yet, dutifully following the conservative impulse of ‘sleepwalking toward segregation’, the report overlooks its own findings and draws primary attention to the ‘paradox of multiculturalism’.

Some of the most ardent challenges to multiculturalism in the most recent past spring from a spurious causality. High levels of immigration, poverty and social exclusion have generated apartness, parallel lives, in the presence and the absence of multicultural policies. Hostile difference, currently the mobilisation of small but militant Islamic cells in western cities, derives its primary sustenance from an international movement that rejects western foreign policy in the Middle East. These irritants of integration policy need fuller attention, in place of the fire drawn toward the inflated target of multiculturalism.

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