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Bridging Unequal Relations, Ethnic Diversity, and the Dream of Unified Nationhood: Multiculturalism in Canada

Zusammenfassung

In diesem Artikel gebe ich einen Überblick über die Entstehung und Entwicklung des kanadischen Multikulturalismus als gesellschaftliche Zielvorstellung. Besondere Aufmerksamkeit widme ich den Beziehungen zwischen „nationalen“ und „ethnischen“ Gruppenkämpfen. Multikulturalismus wird hier weder als eine altruistische Umdeutung des Nationenverständnisses noch als eine Ideologie der Minderheiteneinhegung betrachtet. Vielmehr ist es ein sozial konstruierter Kompromiss, welcher aufgrund der Besonderheit des kanadischen Kontexts ungleiche Gruppenbeziehungen, ethnische Vielfalt und den Wunsch nach nationaler Einheit sowohl überbrückt als auch reproduziert. Zunächst behandle ich Kolonialisierung, Eroberung und Einwanderung bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg. Dann untersuche ich die Uminterpretation der kanadischen Identität vom Dualismus zum Pluralismus. Mein Hauptaugenmerk liegt auf den Ereignissen seit den frühen 1990er Jahren, als Kanadas „postmodernes Experiment“ besonders attackiert wurde. Derzeit floriert der kanadische Multikulturalismus als Gesellschaftsbild, seine institutionellen Parameter haben sich aber grundlegend geändert.

Résumé

Dans cet article, nous proposons une vue d'ensemble de l'émergence et de l'évolution du multiculturalisme canadien comme projet sociétal. Nous accordons une attention particulière aux relations de lutte entre groupes « nationaux » et « ethniques ». Ici, le multiculturalisme n'est ni une redéfinition altruiste de la nation, ni une idéologie de l'enfermement des minorités. Il s'agit plutôt d'un compromis socialement construit qui, étant donné la particularité du contexte canadien, concilie – et reproduit – les relations de groupes inégaux, la diversité ethnique et le désir d'une collectivité nationale unifiée. Tout d'abord, nous abordons la colonisation, la conquête et l'immigration jusqu'à la Première Guerre mondiale. Ensuite, nous examinons la redéfinition de l'identité nationale canadienne du dualisme au pluralisme. Nous nous concentrons sur les événements depuis le début des années 1990 lorsque l'« expérience postmoderne » du Canada se voyait attaquée. De nos jours, le multiculturalisme canadien prospère en tant qu'imaginaire social, toutefois ses paramètres institutionnels se sont transformés de façon importante.

Introduction¹

In recent years, Canadian multiculturalism has received much attention in Canada and abroad. In a world increasingly characterized by international migrations and rising opposition of minority populations towards subordinate positions within traditional nation-states, multiculturalism seems to offer a means to combine both the recognition of ethnic “difference” and the continuation of unified nationhood (Kymlicka 1995; Angus 1997). For some critics, multiculturalism’s emphasis on ethnic or cultural diversity goes too far. By empowering ethnic minorities, so they argue, it encourages societal fragmentation and cultural relativism (Bibby 1990; Stoffman 2002). For others, however, multiculturalism remains an ideology of minority subordination and unequal incorporation by reproducing and fixing existing power relations. Multiculturalism is here merely the continuation of white supremacy and colonialism (Day 2000; Bannerji 2000). During the past decade, these opposing positions have dominated the Canadian debates. Introduced to the international scene through Charles Taylor’s seminal work on the “politics of recognition” and Will Kymlicka’s liberal theory on “multicultural citizenship”, the Canadian way of dealing with ethnic diversity has become a model and test case for the possibilities, successes, and failures of multiculturalism *per se*. In order to understand what Canadian multiculturalism is and implies, to better predict its prospects for the future, and to evaluate its applicability in other countries and contexts, it is important to understand how it came into being, and how it is being sustained and reproduced over the years. This paper aims to contribute towards these objectives. It is written from a perspective that cherishes Canadian multiculturalism but is also critical of its shortcomings. By providing a concise overview of the emergence and development of multiculturalism as a societal project in Canada, the paper aims to foster a better understanding of the sociological conditions that produce and reproduce multiculturalism as a normative framework of nation-building and immigrant integration.

Writing an overview necessarily implies taking a position: some elements are included, others are left out, and certain causal links are privileged over others. Besides, history is always (re)written from a particular moment in time. Thus, there have been earlier summaries of the development of multiculturalism in Canada, and there will unavoidably arise the need for new ones. The present paper does not claim to provide a radically new view on Canadian multiculturalism. Rather, it introduces important nuances and new materials that may serve as resources for further research and study. While I do not have the space, here, to discuss opposing theoretical approaches on multiculturalism in detail, in the remainder of this introduction, I will briefly describe the theoretical perspective that inspires this particular reconstruction of Canadian history.

1 Many thanks to Alan B. Simmons and Melisa Salazar for their helpful comments and suggestions. This article has been completed during a DAAD Visiting Fellowship at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. It is part of a larger research project for which I received funding through York University (Toronto), the Government of Ontario, and the Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes. I gratefully acknowledge this support.

As an attempt to pluralize national identity and societal integration, multiculturalism is, to my mind, a highly laudable objective. Simplistic celebrations of “ethnic diversity” and “Canadian tolerance”, by contrast, are unhelpful and even dangerous. By failing to view ethnic and national groups and their signifying cultural expressions as being constituted in unequal group relations, these interpretations fetishize and essentialize “culture”. The resulting portrayal of multi-culturalism is rightly rejected by the critics. On the one hand, if ethnic groups are characterized by a particular “culture”, and some cultures are incompatible, as conservative authors argue, the outcome of multiculturalism might indeed be societal fragmentation. On the other hand, as postcolonial critics underline, culturalist definitions of groups usually serve to assign members of ethnic groups a fixed, subordinate place within the multicultural mosaic while English Canadian “culture” is mistakenly defined as superior Canadian “civilization” (Mackey 1999). As long as we remain within the logic of culturalism, there is indeed some truth to both perspectives. If, however, we view ethnic and national groups and their signifying cultural expressions as being *socially* constructed in unequal group relations (Winter 2004), multiculturalism does not so much produce group struggle as it emerges out of it. As a consequence, it does not merely circumvent minority group agency but, to a certain degree, encourages and facilitates it, without, however, being able to evacuate all conflict and power relations.

Multiculturalism should therefore neither been seen as an altruist redefinition of nationhood nor an ideology of minority containment. Rather, it is a socially constructed compromise that, given the particularity of the Canadian context, bridges – and reproduces – unequal group relations, ethnic diversity, and the desire for unified nationhood. As Danielle Juteau puts it, the Canadian experience must be interpreted as “a specific and interrelated set of ethnic social relations. Embedded in the world system and engendered by colonialism, [conquest] and migration, these relations foster the implementation of different forms of structural pluralism and the ever-present debates on normative pluralism” (Juteau 2003, 255). From this perspective, it is particularly important to situate the production of multiculturalism as both a policy and a “social imaginary” (Taylor 2004) of nationhood within the wider context of both *factual ethnic diversity* and *normative ethnic pluralism*. Rather than following the widespread separation between clearly identifiable categories of minority groups – such as minority nations, Aboriginal peoples, and immigrant communities – with particular minority rights (Kymlicka 1995), this paper argues that neither the emergence nor the resilience of multiculturalism in Canada can be understood without taking into account the rights and recognition claimed by and (in part) granted, particularly, to Québec and, to a lesser degree, to First Nations. To support this argument, I have divided the paper into three sections. I first review colonization, conquest, and immigration until World War II. I then discuss the recasting of Canadian national identity from dualism to pluralism. Thirdly, I focus on the time span since the early 1990s, when Canada’s “postmodern experiment” came increasingly under attack.

Colonization, Conquest, and Immigration

Even before its foundation as a country in 1867, Canada was populated by collectivities that – with the exception of not being sovereign – corresponded in many ways to Benedict Anderson's (1991) description of "imagined communities": the Aboriginal Peoples, French settlers, and British colonizers were *in themselves* relatively closed "horizontal communities" (Anderson) that shared political structures and a sense of collective culture and ancestry. However, even if Canada was then a "multicultural" country in a factual sense, the dominant ideology was certainly not normatively "pluralist". On the contrary, the relations *between* these different groups were discriminatory and hierarchical. French settlers first acted as colonizers and subordinated Aboriginal peoples. Later, the French settlers became colonized themselves. When the British gained the upper hand in politics, *Canadiens* (of French origin) and Aboriginals were turned into British subjects with the expectation that they would either assimilate or vanish. "Pluralism" was used to serve strategic goals. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 provided Aboriginals with territorial rights in the western areas of North America – arguably with the aim of preventing the Westward expansion of the American colonists (Mackey 1999, 27) – and created the province of Québec to restrict the French fact to a circumscribed territory (Delâge 2001). Territorial pluralism was here clearly a means of domination and containment. Nevertheless, when the power balance on the North American continent changed, new alliances had to be formed. The British Crown secured the *Canadiens'* support against American revolutionaries by guaranteeing them linguistic and religious rights in the 1774 Québec Act. To accommodate the demands of incoming United Empire Loyalists, it granted French Canadians their own legislature in the 1791 Constitution Act. Turning ethnic diversity into structural pluralism was here less a matter of domination than a concession that emerged from political need. An important side effect of this legislation, namely minority empowerment, was far from being intended.²

The British North America Act in 1867 gave French Canadians residing in Québec their own government and a relatively high degree of "institutional completeness" (Breton 1964) and autonomy from the federal government. Québec, like other provinces, was given control over education, social services, and health. However, the power to raise revenues through taxation and matters related to the control of trade and international relations were held by the federal government. This division of powers between the provinces and the federal government, combined with the fact that Québec was a large and "distinct" province (in terms of language and culture) resulted in a certain ambiguity. More than a century after Confederation, the question of whether Canada is made up of two "founding nations" (not includ-

2 Lower and Upper Canada, separated by the Constitution Act in 1791, were reunited in 1841 as a result of Lord Durham's 1838 recommendations in favour of assimilation. This was a setback for the *Canadiens* in terms of self-determination. Although stripping them of their name (Brunet 1954: 22), structural dualism within the United Canadas reinforced French Canadian identity during this period (McRoberts 1997, chap. 1), because it emphasized cultural (linguistic/religious) differences rather than territorial ones.

ing the Aboriginal "First Nations", who were clearly not on the minds of the "founding fathers"), or of a series of equal provinces remains at the centre of the constitutional debate (McRoberts 1997; Meisel *et al.* 1999).

The BNA Act created a structure that allowed English and French Canadians to be masters of their own destinies – interpreted as provincial pluralism by the former and as national dualism by the latter. Hoping to prevent Canada from losing its distinctiveness from the United States, but located at different positions within the system of social power relations, English and French Canadians developed opposing ideologies of what they wanted "their" society/societies to be. While the English Canadians situated the Dominion of Canada within the larger project of British imperialism, French Canadian elites favoured a more narrowly defined nationalism based on culture, language and religion (Lacombe 2002). By contrast, Aboriginals were placed under tutelage. The 1867 Indian Act established the rights of "Status Indians". Contrary to the French Canadians' territorially anchored rights, eligibility for treaty rights was based on ancestry and male lineage. Here, structural pluralism was synonymous with subordination, and the "rights" associated with it were transitory, racist, and patriarchal (Delêge 2001).

Large-scale immigration after the closure of the American frontier around 1890 reinforced yet another form of ethnic diversity and structural pluralism arising from immigration. As before, "pluralism" was based on the host society's racist ideology and its demographic inability to easily assimilate people who were viewed as ethnically and racially different. In addition, the newcomers often welcomed structural pluralism as an opportunity to maintain their own cultural traditions and values. Some immigrants, such as the Doukhobors, came to Canada on the promise of immigration authorities that they would have the right to settle in their own religious communities. Between 1901 and 1920, the arrival of three million immigrants, mainly from central and northern Europe, increased Canada's population by forty-three per cent. Roughly half of the immigrants were channelled to the prairies by Canadian authorities in an effort to colonize the Canadian West, and to prevent the United States from annexing the vacant prairies (Palmer 1975)³. In the 1930s, with the proliferation of ethnic diversity becoming more and more noticeable, the metaphor of the Canadian mosaic emerged. It was soon used to distinguish Canadian multicultural integration policies from the American "melting pot". Indeed, enhancing social and economic stability, block settlements, mainly on the prairies, were encouraged by the Canadian government to entice immigrants to settle and remain in Canada, even when economic opportunities tended to make the U.S. more attractive. Nevertheless, pluralism remained structural and was restricted to official settlement policy. The social-normative context remained racist and exclusionary. "Nativism" in the 1920s, was followed by increased racism and anti-Semitism in the 1930s, and the internment of "war enemies" (e.g. Canadians of Japanese and German origin) in the 1940s. In sum, Can-

3 For Canada's history of immigration, see Burnet and Palmer (1988); for migration movements between Canada and the United States, see Ramirez (2001), as well as DeVoretz and Werner (2002). For an overview of demographic change in Canada, see Henripin (2003), for demographic change in Québec, see Piché and Le Bourdais (2003).

ada's "plural society" of the past was profoundly discriminatory (Abella/Troper 1982; Li 2003; Mensah 2002).

From Dualism to Pluralism

In the period after World War II, Canada's self-understanding as a British society remained virtually unaltered. Prime Minister Mackenzie King declared, in 1947, that Canadians were uncomfortable with large-scale immigration from the "Orient" since this would change the fundamental composition of the Canadian population and have undesired effects on Canada's international relations (Ponting 1994, 93). The 1947 Citizenship Act promoted an even stronger and more centralized vision of Canadian nationhood and identity than in the pre-war era (Igartua 1997; Jenson 2003). The construction of the welfare state in the 1950s and 60s partly succeeded in creating a pan-Canadian "community of solidarity" (Banting 1987), but it could not erode the various historically shaped group identities.⁴ While ethnicity continued to work as a crucial mechanism for sorting social groups along class lines into a "vertical mosaic" (Porter 1965), Anglo-conformity remained the dominant ideology until the 1970s (Burnet/Palmer 1988, 223).⁵

Two global developments influenced Canada's changing attitude towards ethno-cultural diversity in the 1960s. First, the same economic growth that allowed for the construction of the welfare state, also led to the modernization, expansion and bureaucratization of the Québec state apparatus, labour shortages, and decreasing immigration from Central and Northern Europe. Immigrants were now recruited from Southern Europe and later increasingly from Asia, Africa, South America and the Caribbean (Simmons 1990). In 1967, the federal government implemented a supposedly "race blind" universal point system which replaced immigrant selection according to "national preference".⁶ Second, decolonization and the "world revolution" in human rights, demonstrated by the proceedings of the Nuremberg Trials, the war in Algeria, and the civil rights movement in the United States, led to a critique of assimilationism. They provided Québec's nationalism in the 1960s with legitimacy, inspired cultural claims from Canada's (other) ethnic groups, and paved the way for the political emergence of Aboriginal peoples as "First Nations" during the late 1970s.

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- 4 Important steps in the development of the Canadian welfare state were the Tax Rental Agreements (1947-1954), the Canada and Québec Pension Plans (1965), and Hospital Insurance and Health Insurance (1957-1968). The establishment of the welfare state was flanked by the adoption of the Canadian flag in 1964 and the Canadian "national" anthem in 1967.
 - 5 The term Anglo-conformity, originally developed by Gordon (1964), stipulates the assumption that immigrants and their descendants assimilate to British language and culture.
 - 6 The point system was legally enshrined by the 1976 Immigration Act. For a critical view see Simmons (1998).

The increasing relegation of French language and culture to the province of Québec, concerns about the tendency of immigrants to assimilate to English (even within Québec), and the ongoing domination of Québec's economy by English Canadians, provoked the emergence of a Québécois "national" identity during Québec's "Quiet Revolution" (Juteau 1993; McRoberts 1997). The new identity transformed the former dualism of linguistically defined French and English Canadians into a territorial opposition between Québec and ROC (rest of Canada). As a consequence, in 1963, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism was established on the assumption that Canadian society was composed of two linguistic and cultural groups whose fundamental relationship needed clarifying. Throughout the time of investigation, the terminology used by the Commission gradually shifted from the equality of two groups to the equality of two languages and multiple cultures (Juteau 1997).⁷

The shift from dualism to pluralism has been catalyzed by the increasing number of Canadians who did not belong to one of the two "founding peoples". Slowly gaining political influence, these Canadians, defined as "ethnic groups", had become a "third force" in Canadian politics (Gray 1989; Wangenheim 1966; Lütsch 2004).⁸ Their members questioned the legitimacy of granting cultural and linguistic rights only to Québec⁹ and thereby provoked the Commission to "take into account the contribution made by the other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada" (Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, 1969, Volume IV). However, as Kenneth McRoberts (1997) insists, neither the Pearson Government nor the Commission had seriously questioned the bicultural character of the country. The replacement of dualism by liberal pluralism is strongly associated with the political influence of Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau – particularly with his individualist orientation and opposition to Québécois nationalism.

In the late 1960s, the federal government proposed a series of separate but inter-related policies. In 1969, the Official Languages Act recognized the equality of the French and English as Canada's official languages. In the same year, the Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy (the White Paper) proposed the elimination of all government arrangements addressing Aboriginal rights. Interpreted as an attempt to bring about the assimilation of Aboriginal Peoples, the Statement was later abandoned (Weaver 1981; Wotherspoon/Satzevich 1993; Cairns 2000). Finally, in 1971, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau declared that "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework" not only constituted an official state policy but was also the essence of Canadian identity (House of

7 Canadian "dualism" must be understood in terms of political power and normativity. Aboriginals were always culturally and structurally separate. The term thus reflects their political and symbolic marginalization.

8 The term "third force" is attributed to Senator Paul Yuzyk. He introduced this term in his first speech before the Senate on 3 May 1964 (Kelner/Kallen 1974, 33).

9 As Howard Palmer puts it: "The public debate surrounding the work of the commission [...] necessarily raised the question: if it is valuable for French Canadians to maintain their distinctive culture and identity, why is it not so for other groups?" (Palmer 1975, 516).

Commons 1971, 8580). Though there are two official languages, there is no official culture and no ethnic group should take precedence over any other (House of Commons 1971, 8545; cf. Hoerder 1995). This marked, at least officially, the passage from assimilationism to normative pluralism. The "concessions" offered to First Nations, French Canadians and (other) ethnic groups (Kobayashi 1993, 215-216; McRoberts 1997, 78-116) sparked both substantial criticism and praise in Canadian public opinion. Most importantly, critics have pointed to a deliberate political shift from the equality of groups to the equality of individuals (White Paper), languages (Official Languages Act), and cultures (Multiculturalism) (McAndrew 1996; Juteau 1997). To what extent this political shift was *deliberately designed* to obscure "the Québec business" by giving the impression that we are all ethnics and do not have to worry about special status for Québec, as many Francophones claim (Wilson 1993, 656), remains a highly controversial question. It is nevertheless widely accepted that *in practice* multiculturalism helped, indeed, to undermine French Canada's distinctiveness in terms of its history and place in the Confederation (Bouthillier 1997; McRoberts 1997; Meisel *et al.* 1999).

In the decade after its announcement, multiculturalism focused on symbolic rather than on material matters. While it remained silent about political and economic inequalities (Moodley 1983), it allocated symbolic resources to ethnic groups (Breton 1984) and thereby provided them with a normative and institutional framework that allowed them to identify with the Canadian nation, as well as to pursue further claims of inclusion (Angus 1997). The vision of a pan-Canadian bilingual and bicultural nation nevertheless conflicted with Québec's aspirations to pursue its own *projet de société*. Ongoing concerns about Québec's status within Canada finally led to the Québec referendum on sovereignty-association in 1980. Shortly after the referendum (which was rejected by 60% of the voters), the federal government re-launched the constitutional talks for the "repatriation" of Constitution in 1982. However, the Constitution was ultimately repatriated without the consent of Québec.¹⁰ While multiculturalism and equality rights were enshrined in the Constitution Act as part of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the partnership between Canada's founding peoples had become more fragile than ever before (Bourque/Duchastel 1996; McRoberts 1997).

In the 1980s, while Québec's demands for more political and financial autonomy remained unanswered (Meisel *et al.* 1999, 253-260), multicultural policy shifted its focus from heritage issues (symbolic multiculturalism) to anti-racism, social participation and equity issues (structural multiculturalism) to address the increasing concerns of Canada's "visible minorities".¹¹ These changes were introduced – much against the protests of previously established ethnic groups of European back-

10 Québec did not sign the Constitution because it enabled the Supreme Court of Canada to invalidate Québec's laws and regulations in the name of individual rights (Bourque/Duchastel 1995, 34).

11 The category of "visible minorities" is an ambiguous construct. The criteria of "visibility" refer sometimes to skin colour (e.g. Blacks), sometimes to cultural belonging and/or religion (e.g. Arabs and South Asians), and sometimes to the nationality of origin (e.g. Chinese).

ground (McRoberts 1997, 127) – after a report confirmed the absence of racialized groups from virtually all areas of power in Canadian society (Special Committee on Visible Minorities in Canadian Society 1984; Stasiulis 1991). In 1986, the Employment Equity Act was passed, and two years later, in 1988, multiculturalism was made law through the Canadian Multiculturalism Act.¹² In 1991, the creation of a separate federal Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship symbolized the peak of multiculturalism as a policy and ideology.

In the meantime, on 23 June 1990, the 1987 Meech Lake Accord – an effort to bring Québec into the constitution as a “distinct society” – collapsed. It failed to be ratified by the provincial parliaments of Newfoundland and Manitoba.¹³ The failure was provoked by the procedural obstruction of Elijah Harper, an Aboriginal member of the Manitoba Legislature. Harper’s refusal of the Accord on the grounds that it put Québec’s needs ahead of those of Canada’s First Nations questioned the interpretation of Canada as “founded” by two European “nations”. It showed that historical rights of Aboriginal Peoples could no longer be ignored. Harper’s rejection soured the previously good relations between Québécois and First Nations. By contrast, English Canadians became more sympathetic to Aboriginal issues and started viewing them as more urgent than the concerns raised by Québec (McRoberts 1997, 208; Laczko 1997). This tendency became reinforced through the 1990 Oka crisis (a land dispute between Mohawks and a Québécois municipality). When, in 1991, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) was invested with the broad mandate of investigating the relationships between Aboriginal Peoples, the Canadian government, and Canadian society as a whole (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996), hopes were great that at least some of the problems that had plagued these relationships for centuries, could be overcome.

The End of a Postmodern Experiment?

In the early 1990s, Canada’s ethnic diversity had become more complex. There were now three very different “nations”: English Canada, which was not perceived as a nation, became identified in territorial terms as ROC (rest of Canada);¹⁴ Qué-

12 According to this Act, multiculturalism becomes an integral part of Canadian citizenship, and each Canadian has the freedom to choose to enjoy, enhance and share his/her heritage, and the federal government is responsible to promote multiculturalism in its departments and agencies (Government of Canada 1989, 9).

13 The centerpiece of the Meech Lake Accord was the recognition of Québec’s distinctiveness. The proposed Act did not include multiculturalism as a fundamental characteristic of Canada. Leaders of ethnic groups criticized the Act for giving special status to one group, French Canadians, and thereby not ensuring the equality of all others. For different views on the Meech Lake Accord see, for example, Breton (1992) and Rocher (1992).

14 As implied by the name, ROC is not a polity but a fragment. Although it is essentially English or British – in terms of language, values, and institutions, “English Canada” is rarely viewed as a “nation”. The question whether ROC has or should have a distinctive

bec, which claimed to be an independent nation based on common language, culture and a unified homeland, and Aboriginal nations, which remained territorially fragmented while demanding increased self-government, not separation. Furthermore, society was increasingly defined in terms of two ethnic clusters: "white" (of European origin) and non-white (from Third World countries). To make matters more complex still, state equity legislation classified non-white communities and Aboriginal Peoples into a "visible minorities" designation.¹⁵ With a multiplicity of groups emphasizing their "difference" in the name of equality, pluralism came under attack. Too much diversity, it was feared, would break up the country. In 1991, the Citizen's Forum on Canada's Future (known as the Spicer Commission) recommended the refocusing of multiculturalism policy so as to "welcome all Canadians to an evolving mainstream – and thus encourage real respect for diversity" (Citizen's Forum on Canada's Future 1991, 129).

In 1992, the struggle to constitutionally accommodate a multiplicity of often mutually exclusive claims that were raised not only by Québec and First Nations, but also by the federal government, the remaining provinces, and various "interest groups" (women, ethnic groups, the disabled, etc.) ended in vain. On October 26, the Charlottetown Accord was rejected in a pan-Canadian referendum. The NO victory of the opposition left the federal government without a project of constitutional renewal, and without a satisfactory answer to the demand of group-differentiated citizenship rights within a pan-Canadian state (Cook 1994; Bourque/Duchastel 1996). Commentators have concluded that Charlottetown signified the end of Canada's postmodern experiment (Schechter 1994).

For many French Canadian Quebeckers, the Charlottetown failure was an incentive to continue with the project of building a Québécois nation. Immigration, integration and pluralism policies in Québec had followed *grosso modo* the developments in ROC (Juteau *et al.* 1998) – with the exception of a stronger emphasis on the majority's language and culture.¹⁶ From the Quiet Revolution to the first referendum on sovereignty (1960-1980) Québec strove to build a nation based on French Canadian culture and language within a territorial state. While the Québec government slowly started to adapt a pro-active role with respect to immigration and integration (Piché 2003), the relations with *les Anglais* remained constitutive for the Québécois national community (Symons 2002). In 1977, the introduction of the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101) settled the question of which of the province's "double majorities" (Anctil 1984) should constitute the linguistic host society into which "allophone" immigrants (whose mother tongue was neither French nor

"English Canadian" identity was debated in the wake of the 1995 Québec referendum (Resnick 1994; Angus 1997).

15 Long-term racialized minorities (e.g. Chinese and Blacks) who have been living in Canada for several generations are also categorized as "visible minorities". French Canadians in ROC, and an English Canadian minority in Québec are yet other types of ethnic minorities. Women, disabled persons, gays and lesbians, etc. were commonly subsumed under the category "special interest groups".

16 These differences can be explained with respect to Québec's position within intra-Canadian power relations and, consequently, its conception of the nation.

English) should integrate (McAndrew 2003). After the failed referendum in 1980, the Québec government started to promote a more inclusive definition of membership in the Québécois nation. If the cultural rights of ethnic minorities had already been recognized through Québec's *Charte des droits et libertés*, adopted in 1975, the implementation of "interculturalism" in the early 1980s – a policy of normative pluralism similar to multiculturalism (McAndrew 1996)¹⁷ – led indeed to better integration of ethnic minorities into Québécois society. However, as *communautés culturelles* they remained at the margins of the French Canadian nation (Fontaine/Shiose 1991), and few of them identified with the project of national sovereignty. In the 1995 referendum, 95% of non-French Quebecers voted against the prospect of independence whereas 60% of French Canadians voted for separation (Drouilly 1997; Helly/Van Schendel 2001).¹⁸ Since the 1995 referendum, the Québec government has focused on the construction of a Québécois citizenship. Within this approach pluralism is gradually replaced with the ideal of creating "a 'universal' national Québécois subject [...] which can neither be ethnic nor Canadian" (Juteau 2002, 451).

A group that has been particularly successful in sabotaging Quebec's aspirations for sovereignty during the 1995 referendum campaign were Canada's First Nations. By adopting the discourse of nationhood, and by contesting the legitimacy of a democratic vote in favour of Québec's sovereignty against Aboriginal consent, the James Bay Cree succeeded in making their voice heard in Canada and abroad (Jhappan 1993; Jenson/Papillon 2003; Rynard 2000). Within Canadian scholarship, the language of tri- or multi-nationalism is now commonplace. Indeed, the creation of Nunavut in 1998, the Nisga'a Agreement of the same year (ratified in 2000), and the Supreme Court's ruling in favour of the Mi'kmaq Indians' fishing rights in 1999 demonstrate a certain progress with respect to Aboriginal rights in the 1990s. Nevertheless, the social, political and cultural situation of Canada's First Nations is still deplorable in many respects (diverse contributions to *Citizenship Studies* 2002-2003, Green 2003) as the federal government has been slow to implement the recommendations made by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Zinterer 2004).¹⁹ Aboriginal rights, which served as powerful tools against Québec separatism during the first half of the 1990s, were later quickly forgotten.

17 The preferred metaphor in interculturalism is that of a tree into which various rootstocks are grafted: A solid Québécois core culture is to be enriched by the contributions from minority cultures (McAndrew 1996).

18 The result prompted Québec's Premier Jacques Parizeau to blame "money and the ethnic vote" (meaning Anglophone Quebecers and immigrants) for losing the referendum. Indeed, although the vote followed "ethnic" and residential patterns, Quebecers of all origins criticized Parizeau's statement and forced him to resign (El Yamani 1996). The outcome of the referendum has been accepted as the result of a democratic voting process. There were no violent attacks or open hostility against potential adversaries.

19 For contradictory viewpoints on the RCAP recommendations see, for example, Cairns (2000) and Flanagan (2000).

After the narrow victory of the anti-separation campaign in the Québec referendum on sovereignty-partnership on 30 October 1995,²⁰ the federal government increased its efforts to redefine national belonging in Canada through the promotion of Canadian symbols and celebrations,²¹ the review of its multiculturalism policy, and its citizenship and immigration legislations. Already in 1993, in response to concerns about Canada's "balkanization",²² the new department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada was created: its mandate was centred more on the integration of newly arriving immigrants than on promoting a pluralist society. Multiculturalism was retained as a state policy under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of State (essentially a very junior minister) responsible for the new Canadian Heritage department: the term "multiculturalism" was removed from prominence. Under review since 1994, the goals of multiculturalism were now identified as "build[ing] a more inclusive and cohesive society by addressing three objectives: social justice, identity and civic participation" (Government of Canada, 1997). The emphasis on citizenship was welcomed for its commitment to civil society, and as an inclusive expression for membership in the Canadian "nation". However, the new policy guidelines were also attacked for "diluting multiculturalism" (Kordan 1997, 138), and for shifting its financial support from mono-ethnic associations to "mainstream" agencies serving a multiethnic clientele (McAndrew *et al.* 2005).

On 20 August 1998, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Québec could not unilaterally secede from Canada, whether according to the Canadian Constitution or international law.²³ The decision of the Court was univocal as to the interpretation of the law. However, it also described Canada's constitutional democracy not as an attained end-state but as "a 'global system of rules and principles' for 'the reconciliation of diversity with unity' by means of 'continuous processes' of democratic discussion, negotiation and change'" (Tully 2000, 4). The Secession Reference thus invites Québec and ROC to find creative and democratic ways to assure the continuation of Canada and the pluralist society/societies that it has come to stand for.²⁴ Arguably, the Clarity Act (Bill C-20), adopted in June 2000, circumscribes the

20 49.4 % of Québec's population voted in favour and only 50.6 % against the possible separation of the province) For a discussion of the debates surrounding the referendum see Bernard (1996).

21 Only three months after the 1995 referendum, 15 February was declared National Flag of Canada Day. For a critical analysis see Rukszto (1997).

22 For recent discussions of the backlash against immigration and ethnic pluralism in Canadian public opinion see Wayland (1997), Juteau *et al.* (1998), and Helly (2001)

23 Three measures were prompted by the 1995 referendum: 1) a resolution in parliament that recognized Québec as a "distinct society" within Canada, 2) the 1997 Calgary declaration in which the provinces recognized the "unique" character of Québec while affirming the equality of all provinces (the declaration was not ratified by Québec), and 3) a call to the Supreme Court of Canada to rule on the legality of a unilateral declaration of independence. For details on post-referendum Québec-ROC relations see Trent *et al.* (1996), McRoberts (1997, 245-276), Gibbins and Laforest (1998).

24 The Court stated: "The clear repudiation by the people of Québec of the existing constitutional order would [...] place an obligation on the other provinces and the federal government to acknowledge and respect that expression of democratic will by entering into

creativity of democracy. Stipulating the rules for a future referendum on Québec sovereignty, the Act implements provisions for a “clear” referendum question and a “clear” majority of votes. Interpretations of the Clarity Act differ: For some commentators (mainly in ROC), the Act assures the continuity of a united Canada (Ryan, 2000) for others (mainly in Québec), the Act imposes one fixed definition of clarity: “debate is ended and democracy, even as the Court defined it, is stifled” (Rocher/Verrelli 2003, 233).

Tendencies to foster stronger “national” identity among Canadians can also be traced in the 1998 proposition of a new Citizenship of Canada Act (C-63, reintroduced as C-16) which stiffens criteria for residency and requires new Canadians to commit to Canada’s “fundamental values”, expressed notably in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.²⁵ Canada’s Anti-Terrorism Act, adopted on 15 October 2001 in response to the attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September, and its new immigration legislation (under review since 1997, implemented in 2002) are in line with this trend. The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act aims to respond to “new social realities” (such as family life outside marriage and same-sex couples) and to uphold Canada’s “humanitarian tradition”. However, the Act also serves Canada’s need for highly educated immigrants with flexible and transferable skills. In addition, it complies with concerns for “national security” in times of “international crime” and “terrorism” (Government of Canada 1998).²⁶

Despite numerous examples of government initiatives to streamline the expression of ethnic or national “difference” during the 1990s, there is reason to believe that Canada’s postmodern experiment is not yet over, even though its parameters have undoubtedly changed (Helly 2002). First, the 1988 Multiculturalism Act has remained intact, and there have been no attempts to dismantle it. On the contrary, the inauguration of Multiculturalism Day on June 27, 2003 shows that the federal government has no intention of abandoning multiculturalism as an essential element of Canadian identity. Second, none of the Canadian political parties is seriously opposing immigration or is using a discriminatory discourse against particular ethnic groups. Even the right-of-centre Alliance Party, which advocates more stringent procedures for refugee claimants and a rebalancing of admission levels towards more skilled workers and fewer family members, supports immigration in principle and has redressed its position on multiculturalism. To put it with Daniel

negotiations [...]. The [...] Canadian constitutional order cannot remain indifferent to the clear expression of a clear majority of Quebecers that they do no longer wish to remain in Canada” (Supreme Court of Canada 1998, 28-29, my emphasis).

- 25 According to Labelle and Rocher (2004, 268), these values refer to the five founding constitutional principles defining the Canadian state: equality of opportunity, freedom of speech, democracy, basic human rights and the rule of law.
- 26 Critics have argued that the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act reinforces systemic racism not only at Canada’s borders but also within society. Immigrants and refugees with “undesired” racial, religious, and national backgrounds suffer from increased discrimination. For details on Canada’s new immigration and anti-terrorism legislation, see the recent discussions in *Refugee 2000-2002*, Daniels *et al.* (2001), and Kent (2003).

Hiebert and his colleagues: "There is absolutely nothing like [Australia's] One Nation or New Zealand First on the Canadian political horizon" (Hiebert *et al.* 2003, 18).

Conclusion

Adopting a perspective that views multiculturalism as being constructed in social processes, I have underlined the intersections between "national" and "ethnic" group struggles. From this follows that Canadian multiculturalism cannot be conceived without reference to US-American hegemony on the North American continent, which confines Canadian nation-building to a particular political role and a circumscribed symbolic space. Furthermore, the logic of multiculturalism depends upon the existence of a multiplicity of historically grown "imagined communities" on the Canadian soil that are reproduced in unequal power relations. Arguably, newer "ethnic" communities are also fed by the memory of migration and an ongoing high influx of migrants (Schmidtke 2003). However, my argument here has not been built upon the quantitative dimension of immigration. Rather, I have emphasized the ambivalent relations between Canada's two dominant majorities, the English Canadian and Québécois "nations". I have also emphasized the impact of these relations upon the "multicultural" integration of immigrant groups and ethnic minorities, as well as, to a lesser degree, the recognition of Aboriginal nationhood. Without the ongoing conflict between Canada's linguistically defined dominant groups, which culminated in the 1995 referendum on Québec's independence, conservative attacks on multiculturalism may have succeeded. These attacks, which were particularly powerful in the early 1990s, lost importance in comparison to the threat of Québécois separatism. In public discourse, the representation of Québec as an "ethnic nation" serves often as a supporting cast, compared to which multicultural conflict within the rest of Canada becomes relative and multicultural 'diversity within unity' gains new legitimacy (Winter, 2001). It thereby allows a vaguely defined multiculturalism to become a common ground for otherwise conflicting visions of Canadian nationhood.

In the new century, the overwhelming majority of Canadians perceives their country as both factually and normatively multicultural (Pearson, 2002) and "over eighty percent of Canadians agree that multiculturalism has contributed positively to Canadian identity" (Jedwab 2003, 1). This suggests that multiculturalism must come to be seen as an acceptable compromise, and this neither *only* by the dominant strata to whom it serves, according to postcolonial critics, as tool for subordination, nor *only* by minority populations to whom it offers, according to liberal and republican commentators, the possibility to claim rights and recognition. Rather, it must serve the material and ideal interests of a large number of Canadians.

For ethnic groups and "visible minorities", multiculturalism continues to allocate valuable symbolic resources, which allow them to improve their chances of socio-economic integration, as Raymond Breton (1984) has convincingly argued. Symbolic resources also serve as a normative blueprint that allows minorities to make

claims and take the Canadian government to task. For White Anglo-Saxon Canadians, multiculturalism has slowly but steadily become a means to portray their society as one of the most desirable in the world. This self-portrayal allows them to gain allies against the looming Québec separatism. It also provides them with a sense of “uniqueness” that Canadians, particularly English Canadians, require in order to legitimately claim independent nationhood. For Francophone Québécois and members of First Nations, multiculturalism remains ambiguous since it undermines their claim for more autonomy. The precarious situation of First Nations is demonstrated by the fact that their claims for land and self-government rights, which served as powerful tools against Québec separatism in the first half of the 1990s, are now largely forgotten by the media and in public opinion. Thus, if multiculturalism can be viewed as a symbol for a normatively pluralist Canada, this view is only relevant for both Québec and First Nations if it implies the prospect of *multinationalism*²⁷.

The widespread acceptance of multiculturalism should, however, not lead to the conclusion that Canadian society has moved beyond the challenges of racism, sexism, and ethnic exclusion (Henry/Tator 2006; Stasiulis/Bakan 2005). Indeed, regarding immigration and integration of minority populations, Canada does not differ that much from other countries and this neither with respect to policy nor social outcomes. In particular, the notorious opposition between Canada and the United States has been repeatedly deconstructed (Reitz/Breton 1994; Bloemraad 2006). In Canada, First Nations are still grieving, urban violence particularly among Blacks and other members of “visible minority” groups is on the rise, and highly skilled immigrants are fighting a seemingly endless battle for the recognition of their credentials (Goldberg 2006).

At present, multiculturalism as a national identity has become far more powerful than the original state policy that introduced it. As such, it derives parts of its success from being a vaguely defined catch-all term whose theoretical assumptions, normative interpretations and political consequences vary greatly within a variety of discourses. Exacerbated by the latest riots in France, heated debates about what it means, in concrete, to be a “multicultural country” are already underway. Ultimately, the success of multiculturalism in Canada will depend upon the extent to which government authorities manage to realize, through concrete policies, the vision of a structurally pluralist and socio-economically inclusive “radically different North America” upon which the *Daseinsberechtigung* (right of existence) of an independent Canadian state relies so heavily.

27 On November 27, 2006, the Canadian Parliament passed a motion (by 266 votes to 16) stating that the “Québécois form a nation within a united Canada”. Phil Fontaine, the chief of the Assembly of Canada’s First Nations, demanded that Aboriginals’ uniqueness should also be recognized.

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