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Racial Pluralism and the Creation of a National Identity

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The problem of citizenship and pluralism is easy to state but very difficult to solve, we will find that it leads us on to the question, “What is the relationship between racial pluralism and the creation of a national identity?” Are those two concepts contradictory and mutually exclusive or can they be reconciled?

Let us examine the concepts of racial pluralism and national identity. Then we can consider the question of creating that identity and look at its relationship with racial pluralism.

On “Racial Pluralism”

One thing that distinguishes the present era—the era of political modernism—with those that came before it

is the fact that it sees the issue of "pluralism" in a regulated, institutionalised and "constitutionalised" manner. In the West they talk about "multi-ethnic societies," "multi-national societies" and "multi-denominational societies," while echoes of those concepts have reached us in the Arab world and people here have also begun to talk about various kinds of pluralism—religious pluralism, multi-sectarianism, cultural pluralism, confessional pluralism etc. However, the reality is that Arab societies in the old days were always pluralistic societies; indeed, Arab Islamic civilisation in general is a pluralist civilisation. However, the "pluralism" they talk about today is a regulated, institutional and constitutional pluralism, recognised by the state and the different political and social groups and based on the principle of recognition of "the other."

However, acceptance of this racial pluralism is impossible to achieve in numerous parts of the Third World. An observer of most of the violent conflicts that have swept the world over the past century will note that they were caused by ethnic/national differences, whether in Darfur, East Timor, Eritrea, Georgia, Kashmir, Rwanda, Sri Lanka or Yugoslavia. Many people have maintained that in an independent modern state development is impossible without a homogeneous national structure, and thus without a "single national identity." Hence the calls to "kill the tribe in order to create the nation." However, what seems to have actually happened is that the tribe has turned out to be a

dragon with a thousand and one heads and if you cut off one head, numerous heads grow in its place, suggesting that the "monolithic model of nation building" is a failure and that it is impossible to shut ones eyes to racial diversity.

When one considers the concept of "race"—as in the term "racial pluralism"—one finds that it is like the legendary phoenix; whenever it dies it emerges, reborn from the ashes again and again for all eternity. The concept of "race" has "died" numerous deaths—perhaps the last time it died was after the Second World War, a war in which it played a sinister role. However, it has come to life again on several occasions; perhaps one of the most recent was the racial—or ethnic—war in Yugoslavia. Whenever it is thought to have ended for good (a particular example of this being after the Second World War in which Hitler fought his bloody war in the name of "race," which led to massive humanitarian catastrophe), it promptly re-emerges and returns to life.

People's views on "race," "racial origin" and "ethnicities" fall into three categories—denial, affirmation and uncertainty. Perhaps the easiest way for us to understand these "race attitude categories" would be if we look at the conclusions of a body of scientists at UNESCO in 1949 in the wake of the Second World War, which some fought under the banner of "race." The scientists consisted of anthropologists, ethnographers and biologists—academics from the disciplines most directly concerned with race—who met to prepare the UNESCO *Statement on Race* (pub-

lished 1950);[1] of these the first group included two leading anthropologists, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Ashley Montagu. The first meeting was followed by a second in 1952, which eventually led to a final statement published in 1962. Following a proposal from his colleague Lévi-Strauss, the editor of the first statement (Ashley Montagu) concluded that the statement should be based on "scientific certainties" about "race" on the grounds that "there is there is only one race—the human race" thereby denying and rejecting the idea of separate, individual races. In fact, this statement concealed more than it revealed in that it glossed over two centuries of disputes over the question of "racial classification" and the "reality of the existence of race, or rather races."

The second statement, which this time round was edited by geneticists and physical anthropologists, was less fundamentalist than its predecessor in denying the idea of "race." While recognising that "races" existed, and even though there was no such thing as a "superior" race and an "inferior" race it declared that "pure races" had disappeared a long time ago. At the same time, however, it asserted that "race" was not an obsolete concept, as had been believed, but that it could be a useful tool for classifying different human groups, starting from their physiological characteristics. Moreover, the preamble to the statement included this

1 *A Statement by Experts on the Race Problem,* UNESCO International Social Science Bulletin, 1950, II (3), p. 391-94.

highly significant observation, “Like the man in the street, physical anthropologists know that races exist.”

Thus the question of “race” remains suspended between denial, affirmation and uncertainty.

From “Race” to “Culture” and “Ethnicity”

Not long after these two UNESCO statements, Claude Lévi-Strauss, as a scientific authority, entered into a debate on the question of “race” when he wrote a paper laying out his views on the matter—*Race and History* (1952)[2]—in which he replied to a question put to him by UNESCO on the contribution of the different human races to world civilisation. However, he attempted to circumvent the problem of “races” by turning his attention to the question of “cultures,” thereby shifting the debate—implicitly—from “racial pluralism” to “cultural pluralism,” that is to say he did not approach the issue under discussion using the term “race” but instead preferred to use the term “culture,” focusing on anthropology’s interest in “cultures” while leaving “race” to the biologists. From then on, instead of speaking about races, most anthropologists have taken to referring to “societies,” “groups,” “cultures” and “ethnicities.”

However, despite Claude Lévi-Strauss’ “shift,” there are still numerous biologists who are happy to talk about

2 Claude Lévi-Strauss. “Race et Histoire” in *Race et Histories et Culture*, Paris, Albin Michel, éditions UNESCO, 2001.

"race" and "races." Indeed, some anthropologists and sociologists maintain that even though there may not be "races" in the actual/natural sense, they do exist in the social sense—that is, as "social structures" with historical origins. Thus the concept of "race" has survived within a context known in Anglo-Saxon countries as "social race" (as in the works of Charles Wagley, Marvin Harris, Michael Banton and Oliver Cox).

Some two decades after his first paper (1952-1971) Claude Lévi-Strauss himself changed his view on "race," or rather, on the question of "culture," in another paper—"Race and Culture"—that he produced at UNESCO's request. This paper caused what he referred to as a "lively scandal" among UNESCO staff because in it he criticised the basic principles of the organisation itself; he was critical of the Utopianism of cultural convergence, a convergence that was considered to be crucial to so-called universal happiness but that, if examined closely, would have to be recognised as a kind of cultural standardisation and uniformity, not a unity in the positive sense. "Unity" preserves diversity while "standardisation" destroys it and kills the soul of cultures. His book *The View from Afar* (1983) was the straw that broke the camel's back and led to accusations of racism and far-right prejudice.

He begins his study of "race and culture" with the following sentence, "It does not behoove an anthropologist to try and define what is or is not a race," then he refers to the speculative conclusions reached by the different pro-

ponents of the racist creeds, from the shape of the skull to blood groups. Then, transforming the whole issue into one of "cultural diversity" he points out that the "question (of race) has been badly formulated," because we "(…) are well aware what a specific culture signifies, but we do not know with the same awareness what a specific race signifies." He shows that he is quite happy to start a positive dialogue with population genetics and to link cultures with genes, citing the example of the nomadic inhabitants of Brazil whose chief is the only man allowed to practise polygamy, with the result that it has a crucial impact on the entire group's gene pool. This line of discussion opened the way for a return to the debate on "races," since Lévi-Strauss soon begins to talk about "the possibility of a return to collaboration between the study of races and the study of cultures"; this statement was, in fact, the last drop that caused the "glass to overflow."

Whatever problems may be caused by the concept of "race"—and the concomitant concept of "multi-racialism"—it would appear that we could possibly solve the difficulty completely if we were to substitute the concept of "ethnicity" for the concept of "race" (even though this may reduce the significance of "blood" and shift the focus more onto "language" and "culture"). The term "ethnicity"—and the concomitant term "ethnic pluralism"—is itself imperfect (even if it is less imperfect than the term it replaces). Long ago the renowned German sociologist Max Weber cautioned that it was a "loose term that

is capable of covering everything." However, numerous theorists of "cultural pluralism" and "recognition of the other" prefer it.

While the end of the last century was characterised by "ethnic strife," human geographers, anthropologists and ethnographers believe that ethnicities are an ancient phenomenon almost as old as mankind itself. Indeed, it is "a permanent and essential given in our societies" and, in their view, the "social phenomenon par excellence" because its existence is inextricably linked to the existence of cultures and languages, which are the essential elements that make humans human.[3]

The Islam and Pluralism

I would like to brief before we go discus further the Islamic concept on the Pluralism. The concept of Pluralism was probably unknown during Islam's classical times, yet we know that the Holy Qur'an recognised Judaism and Christianity. Moreover, the Prophet Muhammad was contemporary with Jewish and Christian communities that coexisted at that time and signed agreements and pacts with them. Later on, Islam expanded after the chilaphate and a relationship with other communities emerged under the name *Dhimma*, a name given to the people under the custody of Islamic states and peace-seekers.

3 Roland J.-L. Breton, *Les Ethnies*, coll. *Que sais-je?*, Paris, 1981, p. 3.

Thus, coexistence was achieved and over the ages various societies existed within Islamic communities, something that continues right up to the present time.

One can say that contemporary pluralism differs both in concept and application compared with how it was during medieval times. Pluralism today is based on freedom, human rights and citizenship, however, this was not so in Islam's medieval ages. We should, however, contemplate the Qur'anic basics that supported historical coexistence and its power. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an,

> O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye despise each other).

"Knowing each other" means contact through interaction and recognition that is unimpeded by the differences between species, gender, ethnicity and social patterns (nations and tribes), but which becomes a necessity for contact and proximity. There are also criteria that determine the treatment of people:

> God forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for God loveth those who are just.

Whatever stage repulsion reaches in belief and inclination, friendly treatment should remain possible provided, at least, that there is no religious persecution or people being driven out of their homes. Thus, there should be no aggression, either spiritual or material. This matter deserves consideration; the inference is that religious free-

dom, the right of citizenry and private ownership are sacred and should not be challenged aggressively. The Holy Qur'an stipulates the safeguarding of contact to the extent that it calls upon the people of the book, who are closer to Muslims in doctrine and coexistence, to work together in the world:

> Say: O people of the book come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, lord and patrons other than God. IF then they turn back, say ye: bear witness that we (at last) are Muslims (bowing to God's will).

That means the convergence of faith, equality and freedom. But if Muslims are faced with rejection that should not be a cause for enmity—each should retain his religion and beliefs and none has the right to disparage them, whatever the case may be.

Today there are those who talk about textual burden or strain and the burden or strain of history. Certainly texts can be a burden, but in this particular case there are characteristics of thinking, appreciation and consideration to be taken into account. Text can be a burden if it is considered in the context of separation and/or killing on the basis of religion, ideological difference or difference of interests. As for the Qur'anic text, the term "know each other" is basically considered as the exchange of recognition, the minimum condition for virtuous interplay and without aggressions towards others' states and their faiths. Faith and equality, however, are the two main principles for full communication, harmony and unlimited cooperation.

We now embark on the other issue pertaining to the burden or strain of history. Within the Islamic Caliphate, the system of non-Muslims who come under the canopy of the Islamic state *Ahl Al Dhimma* develops; the issue is related to the rights of non–Muslims (especially Jews and Christians) and their duties towards Islamic societies and the Islamic state. In actual fact, Christians and Jews did not enjoy the same rights that Muslims enjoyed in certain arenas, although freedom of religion, property and mobility were guaranteed. Non-Muslims had to bear a symbolic material burden called *jizya* (a tax levied on them by the Islamic state). During certain epochs of history, particular patterns of dress, rules for intermingling and religious ceremonies were imposed upon *Ahl Al Dhimma*, but there was never a period of persecution and segregation within the state's policy, just as there was never a period in which pluralism came to an end within the various societies and state administrations.

We, of course, do not wish to return to medieval times in view of the fact that they represented a haven of pluralism. Yet those textual and historical precedents stand not only as a pretext of the face of extremism today but also of those who wish to condemn the Islamic historical experience. The situation now, as it was many decades ago, is totally different from that of the medieval Islamic state. National states emerged and pluralism became engaged with democracy or affiliated to it. Pluralism means recognition of religious, ethnic, cultural or other interested communities in societies that enjoy equal rights and are capable of

practicing such rights, and that the tendency to merge, or pluralism or religious majority should not be an overriding factor. Indeed, this is a major challenge because it stipulates the state of establishments and the rules and regulations that allow each individual to express his opinion and interests. Any person in a minority may find his interest in a breakaway state or entity from the majority; complaints from minorities can cause chaos in societies and states that cannot be avoided.

The fact is that modern times descended on Arabs and Muslims while they were under the oppression of imperialism and they were afraid of the separation and oppression of minorities who cooperated with the controlling colonialists. Therefore, through these two factors societies were controlled by the tendency to merge through the concept of *ummah* (nation) for which support was found in the Holy Qur'an:

> Verily, this Brotherhood of yours is a single Brotherhood and I am your lord and Cherisher: therefore serve Me (and no other).

However, if we contemplate the issue quietly, we find that the origin of the tendency to merge is of national origin. The national state that emerged in the eastern Muslim world after the First World War, when ideas and practices were imported from Europe, rejected both ethnic and religious differences. Certainly, the nation must be based on the state and there should be no differences whatsoever because they weaken the cultural and political unity of the nation. Subsequently, after the Second World War, movements and organisations have emerged in the whole of the

Muslim world that struggle for independence from colonialism and for the unity of nation in a state that encourages the disappearance of all differences. Such action is often affiliated either to nationalism or the development of Islam. Since the middle of the twentieth century particularly, Islamic political movements embracing the idea of mergers, which was prevalent in national regimes and imposed, as mentioned before, in the name of Islam, have been crystallised.

Therefore, whether the medieval Islamic period believed in pluralism or not, there is no relationship between it and what is happening now, whether the reference is nationalism or Islamic.

What is happening now is that Islamic societies are full of different ethnicities and sects even though, within societies, a single religion or sect was insufficient to unify them in order to establish modern states. Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sudan manifest indisputable evidence of that. Internal solidarity is sometimes prevented by ethnic factors and sometimes by religious and sectarian factors. In many instances the system of dictatorial rule leads to divisions within societies, as is the case in many Islamic societies with a single sect. In addition, internal stability no longer hinges on one system of rule and on ethnic and religious unification, but becomes influenced, to a large extent, by regional and international factors. In Iraq, for example, there were hidden ethnic, sectarian and religious differences that only became evident as result of the American invasion in 2003.

It is imperative, therefore, to look for factors of unity rather than ethnic and religious ones. In addition to a democratic system of rule that recognises political and cultural pluralism, there are common denominators between religions and cultures represented by ethical values such as mercy, love, justice and the common good. Religious communities, including Muslim communities, recognise these values, which become the foundation of knowing one another and the basis for political, economic, cultural and ethical agreement, which I feel qualifies Islam to accept cultural, religious and political pluralism.

The Term “Ethnicity”—and thence “Ethnic Pluralism”—a History

Originally, in Greek culture, “ethnicity” referred to a non-urban population group and carried the pejorative connotation of “uncivilised,” whether those referred to by this term were living in the town (as a group that had retained its original customs and had not become integrated in urban society) or outside it. In his widely despised book, *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* (1854), which is regarded as the racist’s bible, Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, one of the first major racialist theorists, equates the term “race” with “ethnicity.” Then in 1870, the nascent science of ethnology gave it the meaning of “uncivilised culture.”

Following on from this, in his book *Social Selections* (1896) the French ethnologist Vacher de Lapouge was largely responsible for reviving the term and giving it its mod-

ern meaning; the French philosopher and psychologist Alfred Fouillee also deserves immense credit for continuing the work of his predecessors with his book *The Psychology of the French People* (1898). The French publisher and naturalist Felix Regnault draws a distinction between "ethnicity" (which he associates with "language") and "race" (which he associates with "blood"). This is also the focus of *French Ethnicity* by G. Montaldon, following his writings on "Race and Races" (1933). The term became widespread after the Second World War after the term "race" fell into disrepute and—in its narrow sense—it acquired a linguistic/cultural connotation.

Is it appropriate to give the language a positive spin by changing "race" to "ethnicity" and, concomitantly, "racial pluralism" to "ethnic pluralism," in view of the fact that the former term has become corrupted, particularly where the creation of a national identity is concerned.

Now let us examine the concept of "national identity."

On "National Identity"

The term "national identity" is a problematic one, both in terms of its origin and its meaning. Even though it is not seen as a problem in its Arabic usage, it is quite the opposite in a Western context.

The current expression "national identity" only became widespread in the 1980s when it was adopted by right-wing political thinkers and leaders. In France, for example, the right-wing extremist Jean-Marie Le Pen, while recalling France's "glorious" history and its immortal heroes (St.

Joan of Arc, martyr of independence against the English), uses the expression to attack the nation's enemies—not the enemies of the past but those of the present day, the immigrant workers. In earlier European political tradition, people usually tended to speak of the "national character," the "spirit of patriotism" and the "national idea."

In fact, the expression "national identity" has its origins in the war of 1870, which was a critical turning point in the history of national identities throughout Europe because it was then that the notion of the "nation state"[4] arose. A scholar researching the subject shows that it was not a "given" concept but a notion that had developed over a long period of time that had witnessed numerous birth pangs, setbacks and conflicts. To begin with, no one had any idea what national identity was; at the time of the French Revolution the differences between individual French people—a shepherd in Brittany and a menial in Cevennes, for example—were greater than the differences between Europe's aristocrats whatever country they belonged to. In France only a minority spoke French as their everyday language. This meant that a long, hard struggle (lasting a century) was needed in order for national identities to be created out of all those differences, involving a collective effort led by the European states in which they encountered obstacles and exchanged ideas before they succeeded in achieving something akin to a template for European national identi-

4 Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La Création des identités nationales, Europe XVIIIè-XXè Siècle*, Paris, Le Seuil 1999.

ties based on the following elements: founding forefathers, a single language, a continuous history, heroes, a past with memorable exploits and folklore.

This "national idea" was soon successful because it "became clear that it (ie. the notion of national identity) mobilised and united people. And some kings—or their advisers—realised the need to take it into consideration and the benefits they could reap from it."[5] Some states resorted to imposing national identity by force, particularly France, which banned the use of local languages in the Republic's schools. However, it eventually became clear that the idea of "national identity" was incapable of mobilising people effectively unless it was acceptable to, and embraced by, a large section of the population. This led to a series of massive educational campaigns, first in schools then through the mass media (popular songs, rousing patriotic tunes, postcards, local styles, national dress) and what the author calls "producers, broadcasters and promoters of the national heritage"—intellectuals, poets, cultural associations, organisers of exhibitions, museum curators etc. At the same time, this promotion of heritage also took care to include some local features; formerly these had been marginalised or even eradicated altogether but had now been "rehabilitated" as evidence of the richness and diversity of national identity.

However, from 1972—the year in which the French sociologist Claude Lévi-Strauss held a memorable sympo-

5 *Ibid.*, p. 109.

sium on the question of identity—sociologists observed the anomaly that although one might assume identity to be a "given," it was in fact something that had been "constructed" and would continue to be "reconstructed" for all eternity, ie. that identity was constantly reinventing and reshaping itself.

This led to a long and extensive debate on identity between the "deniers," the "affirmers" and the "doubters." Some, like Bayarl (1996), considered it an "illusion" and some scholars, such as Brubaker and Cooper (2000) and Avanza and Laferle (2005), claimed it was necessary to abandon it, not only on the grounds that it was an "analytic proposition" but because it was unproven. Jacques Berque was quick to note that although it was confidence inspiring and able to mobilise people, "identity" was a loose and elastic concept capable of conveying an infinite number of meanings; it was in fact a "synthesis" (Berque, 1978, p. 13).

Claude Lévi-Strauss maintained that it was essential to "eliminate the mythical element" from the question of "identity crisis." One of the defenders of the notion of the "mythical nature of identity" went so far as to write a book entitled *The Myth of National Identity* (2009)[6] in which he claimed that "national identity" was not only a myth, but an "enormous myth" and "a tremendous old wives' tale" and that "national identity" was "for the most part a fiction."[7]

6 Regis Meyran, *Le Mythe de l'identité nationale*, Paris, Berg International Editeurs, 2009.

7 *Ibid.*, see esp. p. 7 and 9.

If one were to ask him in what way he saw "national identity" as a "myth," his reply would have been, "I am using the word "myth" here in its anthropological sense. Myths are stories that are passed on from generation to generation and have been from the beginning of time. The basic function of those myths is to mobilise a group of individuals and unite them round a single idea, a single world view and a single view of existence. In this sense "national identity" is a myth, since it essentially speaks about the formation of a race in opposition to other races, all of whom compete with each other within the same vital space."[8]

On Racial Pluralism and National Identity

Nations' Experiences

Nations have had a wide range of experiences in racial pluralism and the creation of a national identity. Some have been negative, others positive. A negative example would be Yugoslavia's experience in creating a single national identity. Over the ages—both recent and past—Yugoslavia's history has been one of sectarian and religious tensions and ethnic conflicts because the country is a mosaic of different ethnicities. From time to time its governments have carried out censuses of its racial and confessional groups, and there were occasions, ie. during the censuses, when specifying ethnic identity was compulsory. Later, the situation was reversed and there was a "national option" in which the citizen was free to choose what to put

8 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

in the “race box”—he could either state that he belonged to one of the six main Yugoslavian peoples or to one of the numerous national minorities, or he could choose the general “Yugoslavian nationality” option, a choice popular with many members of the younger generation. Alternatively, he could write nothing at all. Praising this initiative, a researcher referred to its “wisdom, which has managed to avoid breaking the thermometer while trying to fight the fever.” However, after years of regimented unity during the Communist era came to an end, Yugoslavia’s “wisdom” turned to “folly.”

Nevertheless, other experiences—positive ones this time—almost make us forget what happened in Yugoslavia and offer examples of racial—or ethnic—pluralism and national identity that may be described as “model experiences.”

One such example is Australia. Commenting on the close interrelationship between “national identity” and “multiculturalism,” a 1999 report by the National Multicultural Advisory Council entitled *Australian Multiculturalism for a New Century: Towards Inclusiveness* notes that pluralism is fundamental to the creation of a national identity since “multi-racialism” is an inevitable “reality” that cannot be denied and must of necessity be accepted. The report adds that it is also essential to benefit from it since it is a positive thing, and recommends the use of the term “multiculturalism” as the most apt description of the reality and meaning of Australia’s cultural pluralism. It stresses that the word “multiculturalism” must always be linked

with the word "Australian"—ie. "Australian multiculturalism"—to express Australia's unity and harmony.

From the above we can recognise the role of racial pluralism in creating a national identity.[9] The main focus of Australia's "identity policy" is on the following points:

1. Instilling concepts of "citizenship," "democracy" and "mutual respect" (recognition of the contributions made by all Australians, including those of British and Irish racial stock, in ensuring the success of the multicultural experience).
2. The need to strive for the success of measures to promote reconciliation with the country's original inhabitants.
3. The need to embrace the values of social justice.

These have been Australia's goals for over twenty years.

Another example is Canada, particularly Quebec since the 1970s, where Quebec society comprises the distinct elements of the "Quebecois national minority," "immigrant multicultural integration" and "self-rule for the original inhabitants," all of which, taken together, combine to form the "Quebec national multicultural identity." Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka have written books dealing with this subject in depth.

In our discussions on national identity and ethnicity we find two strongly contrasting national identity expe-

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9 *Australian Multiculturalism for a New Century: Towards Inclusiveness*. National Multicultural Advisory Council report, April 1999, http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/multicultural/nmac/.

riences—what we may call the “forced unity experience” (in which people are forced by blood and fire to become “one”), and the “unification experience” (in which people come together as one while preserving their diversity).

The Wisdom Behind These Experiences

“Unification” Pluralism

“Identity” is actually “identities.” Identities are interconnecting circles, while ethnic identities, if we focus on them to the exclusion of all others, are inflexible—even fanatical—identities. The reality is that a collective sense of a uniform identity is a phenomenon that is generally an integral part of human existence and every people expresses it in its own way. The Germans, for example, speak of *Wir-Bewusstsein*—“We-awareness” or *Volksbewusstsein*—“People-awareness” (see Herder, philosopher of German nationalism, in *Another Philosophy of History*) or “the national spirit” or even the *Volksseele*—”People’s Soul”—(see the German nationalist poet Ernst Moritz Arndt, 1806).

The sense of belonging to a group is a common human phenomenon and fosters a patriotic spirit. A number of its features—other than “togetherness”—have led various scholars to wonder whether some elements of “patriotism,” “nationalism” and “ethnic feeling” might not be a collective neurosis. If it is true that belonging to a group is ultimately a matter of individual choice in modern societies, it may also be imposed by force in some other cases, thus causing mass psychosis and neurosis.

In modern democratic societies ethnic awareness is a unifying factor in making individuals part of a group and it can be seen as helping to facilitate the state's work of promoting integration by virtue of the fact that the state prefers to deal with groups rather than scattered, isolated individuals.

In fact, states always interfere in situations in which ethnicities represent disparate political positions since there are numerous instances in which countries have been established on the basis of ethnicity. Hence, the dialectic between ethnicities and states. These dialectics give rise to numerous possibilities. They can lead to "national independence"; several modern nation states descended from old European empires from the nineteenth century—the "age of nationalisms"—are the offspring of ethnic movements (didn't the leader of the French Revolution say, "A people that oppresses another people is not a free people"?). Alternatively, they can lead to "national unity" based on either choice or force; after the 1848 crisis, Germany, Italy, Poland and Yugoslavia developed unitary "national identities" which adopted "Liberty and Unity" as their identifying slogan. Or they can lead to "forced integration," which is based, firstly, on a denial of ethnic pluralism, as was the case in Bulgaria, for example, with the Macedonian ethnic minorities; in other situations, in the absence of actual denial the state—reluctantly—recognises some ethnic minority rights. Or they can lead to "genocide"—the most extreme version of a desire for forced integration—on the Hitlerian model of exterminating numerous ethnic minor-

ities including, among others, Jews and gypsies, or on the Stalinist model of deporting entire ethnic minorities.

This, generally speaking, is the negative aspect of the dialectic between the state and ethnicities on ethnic pluralism and the creation of a national identity. Forced integration, genocide and mass deportations are the basic means that states have resorted to throughout history to make "ethnic pluralism" compatible with the "nation state" in the manner of the bed of Procrustes, the legendary bandit who used to stop people on the road, capture them and take them to his lair, where he made them lie on a bed made to his specifications. If they did not fit, he stretched them or used his knife to cut them down to size. Such is the practice of the Procrustean state!

However, during the present era we have adopted an approach that is almost unprecedented in history—with the possible exception of some rare instances such as al Andalus and the Ottoman *Milal* system—an "ethnic pluralism stipulated in the constitution." Instead of forcing multiracialism to adapt to the state, some states have gone in the opposite direction, ie. by making the state adapt to the complexities of multi-ethnicity and creating a national identity on the basis of pluralism rather than the other way round. Hence the relationship between ethnicity and the state has become central to political life and has given rise to a new dialectic whereby some rational and mature ethnic groups have come together to form a "nation," and the "nation" has proceeded to form a "state." Similarly, rather than undermining ethnicities, the state has strengthened them by

granting them political and cultural rights and protecting their languages and cultures. So "safeguarding multi-ethnic identities" has become the state's justification for its existence on the principle that it is a democratic way of creating a pluralist "national identity."

A Pluralist Identity

The concept of "national identity" is based on the concept of "citizenship." This has been the case since the days of Ancient Greece, when the intellectual class were divided on the subject. Some only believed in a citizenship that was "global" or "cosmopolitan." This group ranged from Socrates and Diogenes—who would reply to anyone who asked them which country they belonged to, "I am a citizen of the world"—to the modern American political, ethical and human rights thinker Martha Nussbaum, who revived the debate over the question of "citizenship" in her famous article "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanisn"; this view formed the central theme of the book *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*,[10] which cites twelve responses from leading political thinkers, including the call for universal citizenship by the writer H G Wells, who is quoted as saying, "Our true nationality is mankind."

The second group regarded the concept of "universal citizenship"— ie. the idea that a person should be a "citi-

10 See Martha Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanisn", Boston Rev. Oct.-Nov. 1994, reprinted in *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism* (Joshua Cohen ed., 1996).

zen of the world"—as nonsensical. Reactions to the notion include, "We cannot be truly citizens of the world unless there is a world order. And on the basis of what we know today it is impossible to have a world order unless it is a tyranny" (Amy Gutmann, *Democratic Citizenship*); or "I am not a citizen of the world as she (Nussbaum) would like me to be. I do not know if there is a world like that which a person can belong to, and nobody has ever offered me citizenship (of that kind)" (Michael Walzer, *Circles of Sympathy*); or "Nussbaum speaks about a "citizen of the world" and "citizenship of the world", but these are expressions that have no real meaning except within the context of a state" (Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Illusions of Cosmopolitanism*). Or, in the case of a doubter, "Can a person be a citizen of the world without there being a world state?" (Amartya Sen, *Humanity and Citizenship*). Prior to this debate the political thinker Hannah Arendt asserted that "a citizen is by definition a citizen among citizens in a country among countries. His rights and duties must be defined and limited, not only by those of his fellow citizens, but also by the boundaries of a territory." This indicates that "citizenship is a national project"; in its original and basic meaning, citizenship does not mean that "a person should be a member of a particular political group or other."

These responses are agreed on two things: firstly, that citizenship cannot exist without a state and, secondly, that citizenship is linked to national character (national identity).

In addition to this, the author of *Citizenship and National Identity* states that there are at least two reasons for a person to remain attached to his nationality and national identity.

Firstly, "personal identity." When a person asks "Who are you?" the response will not be the response of Socrates, Wells or Nussbaum, but "I am an Omani citizen" or "I am a Palestinian citizen," indicating that identity is represented by the fact that a person belongs to this or that national group with a specific national identity.

Secondly, ethical reasons, in that a person has a duty and responsibility towards his country and he has the right to determine its destiny in conjunction with the political group he belongs to.[11]

Numerous people with an intellectual interest in identity and pluralism maintain that "national identity"—whether pluralist or unitary—is the result of "cultural congruity" between groups of people.

Political thinkers are split into two groups over the question of the "creation of a national identity." The "spontaneous group" believes that "national identity" is something that is formed "spontaneously" when the reasons for it are present, ie. race, land, language and soul. That was the view of most of the earlier nationalist theorists. On the other hand, the "constructivist group" maintains that "national identity" is not a given but something that has

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11 David Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000, p. 27.

been "constructed"; it is not possible to accept an identity that has been imposed by force and national identity is not something created by decree. That would lead to the coercive imposition of a "prescriptive" or "mandatory" tendency on political thought where the question of the "nation" or "national identity" is concerned. National groups grow out of belief: when a people believe that they have a national identity, that national identity comes into being. It is not merely a question of a group of people sharing some common features such as race or language, since those features in themselves do not automatically lead to the emergence of nations. They only lead to such a situation after a specific sense of national belonging considers them to be so.[12]

National identity is seen as a "daily referendum," which means that it is constantly changing and reshaping itself, it is not a permanent given: "A nation becomes what it becomes through the decisions it takes." Hence "national identity" is never static under any circumstances but is always prepared to include features that it did not include before. Its arms are always open—it is a "dynamic" kind of identity. That is why this writer puts "shared belief" at the top of his list of conditions for creating a "national identity"; this is followed by "continuous history," "connected effectiveness," "attachment to land" and "distinctive common features." This does not prevent him from acknowl-

12 David Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000, p. 28.

edging what he calls the "mythological aspects of national identity"[13] since identity must have an imaginative dimension, that is to say, a mythology, usually involving heroic acts of some kind. However, it is the above features that form the meat of the constructive process.

Responding to the classic liberal view of national identity (which in principle demands that identity should reflect the dominant group—the values of that group being regarded, in principle, as objective, impartial and universal), he says that this is not a necessary element of every identity to the extent that it offers a model for everyone to follow; rather, national identity should be constructed so that it is inclusive, not exclusive.

The fact is that modern states do not discuss questions of racial and cultural pluralism as if they are something to be ashamed of. Instead, they recognise them and accept that their societies include individuals or groups with a range of disparate identities who need to coexist politically. This means that common ground and common points of reference need to be established, and the notion of citizenship is ideally suited to fit the bill.

So how can citizens share a common national identity?

There are two citizenships—hence national identity—models. There is the liberal model, which was predominant in the 1960s; the best example of this is represented by the English sociologist Thomas Humphrey Marshall, who regarded citizenship as a system of equal rights—

13 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

civil rights, political rights and social rights—enjoyed by every member of the community. However, if we look closely at this picture, we find that it is based upon the notion of "the existence of a common civil condition shared by the individual members of the community," that is a single culture and a shared lifestyle, which would make a constructed identity a "standardised identity." The difficulty this view came up against was the emergence of a radical cultural pluralism.

Despite the fact that the renowned American political thinker John Rawls sought to correct the classic liberal view by taking "the fact of pluralism" into account and by asserting that it was important to consider the confessional, creedal, philosophical and ethical differences that exist in democratic societies (and to regard them as crucial rather than incidental), he was inclined to see these differences within the context of the "private space," while he saw the "public space" as the "commonsense space."

However, one thing that Rawls may not have considered was that not everybody—indeed this is true of most people—is commonsensical to the point of keeping his private opinions to himself and not announcing them in public or dragging them into every political decision. On the whole, people are more inclined to declare their beliefs than to conceal them. Moreover, people are not—as Rawls' theory stipulates—inclined to revise their principled beliefs or, if they do, they rarely do so. Nor would one expect them to put their identity as citizens above their ethnic identity; this, too, is something that occurs only on rare occasions.

The second model that emerges from "pluriculturalism," which has sometimes taken a form known as the "politics of recognition," represents one of the most striking features of politics in our day—the requirement that different cultural groups should recognise and affirm their different cultural identities; the groups concerned may be defined first and foremost in terms of their ethnicities and religions—Hispanics in the United States of America, for example, or Muslims.

This "recognition requirement" has become so pressing that democratic systems have found themselves forced to become more open and jettison any measures that cause offence to—or ignore—those groups, while taking all possible steps to grant them recognition on equal terms with the majority culture.

Conclusion

From the Politics of Tolerance to the Politics of Recognition

Generally speaking, the question is one of inclusive national identity versus exclusive ethnic identities. The politics of recognition has sought to go beyond "tolerance" in the sense that the word is understood in liberal societies. The "politics of tolerance" requires that free groups should be left to assert their identities and express their cultural values within their private space or through their cultural associations. The state's role here is primarily a negative one: the state is required not to coerce minori-

ty groups into fitting in with or conforming to the majority culture, nor is it entitled to erect artificial barriers that hamper the development of those minority cultures.

The politics of recognition, on the other hand, is critical of the liberal state for its negative approach in that it relegates minority groups to the private space and fails to actively support their respective identities, while leaving the majority culture (the prevailing one) dominant and wrongly endowing it, ie. the majority culture, with the quality of “universality,” “neutrality” and “objectivity.” This is why the “politics of recognition of the other” maintains that the state needs to be proactive in its attitude towards ethnic pluralism, so that the nation’s national identity is created from a plurality of ethnic identities and is constructed on the basis of dialogue and consultation, ie. a state of identity pluralism and pluralist identity.