K. McRoberts, “Canada and the Multinational State,” *CJPS* 34:4 (December 2001)

**Overview**

In addition to our regular conception of nation-state, there are “internal nations” within states. Several such nations exist within the Canadian state. Canada has historically privileged the notion of dualism, with accommodation to the franco internal nation, but this is increasingly being replaced by state nationalism that has entrenched a purely territorial rationale for federalism, and made multiculturalism the only legitimate bases for accommodating cultural diversity. Canada has failed to develop into a truly post-modern state, and is now caught in the contradiction between the nationalism of Cdn state and nationalisms of “internal nations.”

**Definition: nations** are the work of nationalist leaderships who try to invest social conditions with “national” meaning, combining them to form a national ideal.

**Analysis:**

* Contemporary interest in multinational state has been propelled by the evidence that political life is increasingly shaped by the presence of multiple nations
* Globalization/regional integration may have contributed, accelerating latent nationalisms and providing minority nations with new opportunities – additionally, reducing the powers of established states in favour of regional organizations and international capital have served to reveal force of nations within
* Second form of multi-nationalism involves the development of nationhood more recently (previously did not think of themselves as nations) through involvement with IOs and public opinion – this is the case with many indigenous peoples
* Canada clearly multinational in composition. Internal nations include: Quebec francophones, Acadians, aboriginal nations (making up ~23% of Cdn population)

**Hx of Canada’s ‘multinational state’**

* Term first made an appearance in an article of Trudeau’s in *Cite libre* in 1962
* Binational Canada emerged from Taylor, Horowitz, Watkins, and a number of Quebec academics in the 1970s
* By 1990s, ‘binationalism’ had been replaced by a “three nations” framework, in which Aboriginals were included
  + “three nations” view has its problems – presumes certain coherence of each component
* Yet, contemporary political life shows little trace of these ideas – within federal political discourse, the only nation is the *Canadian nation*

**Conclusions/Arguments**

* Few states that are ‘multinational’ in their composition are ‘multinational’ in their functioning
* Suggests that Canada has not embraced multinationalism – if it had, it would have worked to put institutions of multinationalism in place. The opposite has been true.
* Argues that reason for this stems from the rise and dominance of a Canadian state nationalism which, by definition, precludes any meaningful recognition of “internal nations”
  + HOWEVER, McRoberts argues that this new state nationalism has ancillary effect of erecting new principles of Cdn life which are highly inimical to multinationalism

Canada is undeniably multinational in composition – with ‘internal nations’ that are more mobilized than ever – yet Cdn institutions show no evidence of themselves being multinational – Canada is not yet a ‘post-modern’ state that many want it to be