

# Canada and the Multinational State

KENNETH MCROBERTS *Glendon College, York University*

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Over the last decade, a new phrase has surfaced in analyses and commentaries on Canadian politics: “multinational Canada.” As a way to denote the presence of several nations within Canada, “multinational” is not the most fortuitous of terms. It has far too many other meanings. A better candidate would have been “plurinational.”<sup>1</sup> But, for some reason, “multinational” Canada has stuck.

### The Multinational State

Unlike the nation of the nation-state, the multiple nations of a “multinational” state are not the creations of the state itself. But they do not have to be understood in essentialist terms either. Despite the romantic notions of some nationalist historians, these nations are indeed “con-

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1 As with “plurinacional” in Catalan (as in Ferran Requejo, *Federalisme, per a què?* [Barcelona: L’Hora del Present, 1998]). For his part, Michael Keating distinguishes between “multinationalism,” referring to “the co-existence of two or more sealed national groups within a polity,” and “plurinationalism” in which “the very concept of nationality is plural and takes on different meanings in different contexts,” as in Canada where most people identify directly with Canada but in Quebec identification with Canada is mediated through identification with a Quebec nation (Michael Keating, “Beyond Sovereignty: Plurinational Democracy in a Post-Sovereign World” [unpublished paper, 2001]).

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Kenneth McRoberts, Department of Political Science, Glendon College, York University, Toronto, Ontario M4N 3M6; [kmcroberts@glendonyorku.ca](mailto:kmcroberts@glendonyorku.ca)

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structed.” Still, they are not constructed from thin air. They rest on bases that are no less substantial than the political structures that underlie the nation of the nation-state. They are supported by social conditions: language, culture, history, media structures, communication networks, and so on.

Decades of scholarly struggle to find the one indispensable sociological basis of these nations have only served to establish that it does not exist.<sup>2</sup> Nations are the work of nationalist leaderships who try to invest social conditions with “national” meaning, combining them to form a national ideal. Only if the nation is defined in ways that are credible to the general population and capture part of their lived experience will the national ideal spread beyond its erstwhile promoters to the presumed nation as a whole. Yet, once a sense of nation takes hold, it is usually tenacious, persisting even under the most draconian of repressions.

The concept of the multinational state has produced some new terms which often seem to raise as many questions as they resolve. There is talk of “sociological nations,” as opposed to political ones.<sup>3</sup> Yet, most so-called “sociological” nations have distinctly political aspirations, including control of autonomous political structures. There are “minority nations.” Their minority status is usually a function of not only numbers but power. Still, cases such as Catalonia and the Basque Country are sufficient to show that minority nations may be the dominant economic, if not political, force. These minority nations are usually assumed to be “stateless,”<sup>4</sup> but this may not hold if the state is in fact a federation. With the multinational state there is usually the assumption of “multiple identities” since many minority nations do not in fact aspire to independence, for one reason or another, and their members also identify with the larger state. Finally, if there are minority nations then there are also “majority” nations, whether the criterion be numbers or power. Here, the complexities are especially great since, typically, members of majority nations do not see themselves as distinct nations. They will understand their own nationality in terms of the central state and will see all of the state as a single nation.<sup>5</sup> Taking all this into account, I will refer simply to

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2 Ian Angus, *A Border Within: National Identity, Cultural Plurality and Wilderness* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 13.

3 See, for instance, Philip Resnick, *Thinking English Canada* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1994), chap. 3.

4 Montserrat Guibeau, *Nations without States: Political Communities in a Global Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 17.

5 The particularities of majority nations and majority nationalism are discussed in Philip Resnick, “Recognition and Ressentiment: On Accommodating National Differences within Multinational States” (unpublished paper).

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**Abstract.** Along with the nations created by states, there are “internal nations” within states. Several such nations exist within the Canadian state, representing close to one quarter of the population. In recent years, Canadian political scientists have been actively theorizing this multinationalism and showing how it might be accommodated. Yet, the political realm has become highly resistant to such notions. Dualism, the primary historical accommodation of the francophone “internal nation,” has been displaced by a state nationalism which, in turn, has entrenched a purely territorial rationale for federalism and has made multiculturalism the only legitimate basis for accommodating cultural diversity. Moreover, the nationalisms of the two predominant “internal nations,” Quebec and “First Nations,” have been mobilized in direct opposition to each other. In the end, rather than constituting a new form of “post-modern state” which transcends nationalism, Canada is in fact caught in the contradiction between the nationalism of the Canadian state and the nationalisms of its “internal nations.”

**Résumé.** Il existe parallèlement aux nations créées par les états, des « nations intérieures » au sein des états. On trouve plusieurs de ces nations au sein de l'État canadien et elles représentent un quart de sa population totale. Au cours des dernières années, les politologues canadiens ont activement développé des théories pour expliquer ce phénomène plurinational et tenté d'adapter la structure étatique en conséquence. En même temps, le monde politique a manifesté une résistance croissante à ces tentatives d'accommodement. Le dualisme, le mode d'accommodement principal et historique de la nation intérieure francophone, a été remplacé par un nationalisme d'état qui, à son tour, s'est enraciné dans une logique purement territoriale du fédéralisme et a fait du multiculturalisme le seul fondement de légitimité de toute tentative d'accommodement de la diversité culturelle. De plus, les nationalismes respectifs des deux « nations intérieures » prédominantes, la nation québécoise et les peuples autochtones ou « premières nations », se sont manifestés en s'opposant l'un à l'autre. Il résulte de tout cela qu'au lieu de présider à la constitution d'un nouvel état « post-moderne » transcendant le nationalisme, le Canada s'est enlisé dans une contradiction entre le nationalisme de l'État canadien et ceux de ses « nations intérieures ».

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“internal nations.” The term can embrace all forms of nations which see their collectivity as being smaller than (or internal to) the state as a whole.

The contemporary interest in multinational states evokes a school of English liberal thought which has championed the state with several nations.<sup>6</sup> John Stuart Mill's declaration that it is “a necessary condition of free institutions that the boundaries of governments should coincide in the main with those of nationalities”<sup>7</sup> provoked Lord Acton to declare that in fact freedom was secured by the presence of

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6 See the discussion of the Acton-Cobban position in Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: the quest for understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), chap. 1. See also Will Kymlicka, *Multiculturalism Citizenship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 53.

7 John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861), in *Three Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 380-88. Cobban notes, however, that Mill went on to qualify the statement very heavily (Alfred Cobban, *National Self-Determination* [London: Oxford University Press and Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1945], 65).

several nations within the same state. Indeed, in an oft-quoted phrase, he wrote in 1907: "The co-existence of several nations under the same State is a test, as well as the best security of its freedom. It is also one of the chief instruments of civilization; and, as such, it is in the natural and providential order, and indicates a state of greater advancement than the national unity which is the ideal of modern liberalism."<sup>8</sup> Four decades later, Alfred Cobban wrote that "the multi-national state must re-enter the political canon from which, as Acton many years ago declared, it should never have been expelled."<sup>9</sup>

Yet, theorists such as these were not necessarily contending that the state should itself be multinational.<sup>10</sup> The new theorizations take this extra step, basing the multinational state itself wholly or in part on the multiple nations it contains. The political culture is one that accepts that many if not most citizens will identify primarily with one of the internal nations; they may well identify with the common state and political community but this will be secondary, or of a different character, to their national identity. By the same token, the state is organized multinationally. There is a variety of strategies for achieving this. Federalism, in both "intra-state" and "inter-state" modes, might seem to be the logical candidate for entrenching multinationalism although in fact some scholars of federalism have argued otherwise.<sup>11</sup> Theories of consociationalism can be put to use.<sup>12</sup> And devolution offers itself as a way of accommodating "minority nations."<sup>13</sup> Indeed, as we will note later, devolution arguably is a more promising route than federalism for doing so.

The contemporary interest in the multinational state has been propelled by the gathering evidence that political life is itself increasingly

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- 8 John E. E. Dalberg Acton, *The History of Freedom and Other Essays* (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1967), 290.
  - 9 Rather than propounding the superiority of the multinational state, Cobban only sought to show that "it must be accepted among the possible and legitimate forms of political organization" (Cobban, *National Self-Determination*, 63).
  - 10 For instance, Acton saw federalism not as about accommodating multinationalism but curbing the power of the state and popular majorities (Acton, *History of Freedom*, 98).
  - 11 Ferran Requejo argues that past scholarship on federalism has been unduly influenced by the American example and the presumptions of the "mononational model" (Ferran Requejo, "Federalism and the Quality of Democracy in Plurinational Contexts: Present Shortcomings and Possible Improvements. The Case of Catalonia" [unpublished paper], 14).
  - 12 Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).
  - 13 See Michael Keating, "Managing the Multinational State: Constitutional Settlement in the United Kingdom," in Trevor C. Salmon and Michael Keating, eds., *The Dynamics of Decentralization: Canadian Federalism and British Devolution* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 21-46.

shaped by the presence of multiple nations. Clearly, the best efforts of most nation-states to eliminate their longstanding minority nations or "historic nations," whether by persuasion or by outright repression, have failed. In some cases, these are populations that saw themselves as nations long before the nation-state was formed; indeed, eliminating these nationalisms was a primary purpose of the nation-state from the outset. Examples would be Croatia or Slovenia and their sustained resistance to a Yugoslav nation-state. In other cases, the sense of nationhood emerged within an established state, as with Catalan nationalism which did not emerge until the late-nineteenth century. Either way, most of these nationalisms seem to be stronger than ever.

Globalization and regional integration may have contributed to this directly, accelerating latent nationalisms and giving minority nations new opportunities to express themselves. Indeed, this is often seen as a great paradox: transnational and global forces seem to be stimulating and fostering decidedly local identities. But it is also the case that by reducing the powers of the established states in favour of regional organizations or international capital these forces have simply served to reveal the continuing force of the nations within.

Yet, there is a second form of multinationalism that does seem to be quite directly related to globalization and integration. This involves populations that did not necessarily think of themselves as nations until recently, but have acquired a sense of nationhood through involvement with international organizations and public opinion. This is most clearly the case with indigenous peoples. Seven years after the World Council of Indigenous Peoples was formed on Vancouver Island, in 1982 the United Nations established the Working Group on Indigenous Populations which, in turn, prepared a Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Through the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, Canadian Inuit leaders, who played a leading organization role, are linked with their counterparts in Russia, Alaska and Greenland elsewhere in the Far North.<sup>14</sup> By the same token, the mobilization of the Quebec Crees against further northern development was assisted by the support of public opinion in the northern United States and Western Europe.<sup>15</sup>

As a result of these twin processes, most contemporary states (even in the so-called "First World") are marked by some form of "internal nations." If the proportion of the population comprised by minority nations is set quite high, say at 25 per cent, then several examples come to mind. One thinks of the United Kingdom, Belgium

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14 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Vol I: *Looking Forward, Looking Back* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996), 229-37.

15 See Guibernau, *Nations without States*, 88.

and Spain not to mention states that recently were destroyed by their multinationalism: such as Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. But if the threshold is relaxed then few states are exempt. France has Brittany and Corsica; New Zealand and Australia have Aboriginal peoples, and so on. Thus, if only to protect the utility of the concept of "multinationalism," it would be best to set the threshold quite high, perhaps in the 25 per cent range. As we shall argue below, very few states that are "multinational" in their composition are actually "multinational" in the functioning.<sup>16</sup>

### Canada's Internal Nations

By all the conventional indicators Canada is clearly multinational in its composition. In other words, it contains important "internal nations." Not all of the population is composed of such nations; indeed, most of it is not. But close to one quarter of Canada's population can be claimed by "internal nations."

#### *Francophone Nations*

Most of Canada's francophone population has long shared the discourse of nationhood, even if the terms of this discourse have changed radically. The old idea of a French-Canadian nation which binds together all francophones in Canada, if not North America as a whole, dated back as far as the 1820s and remained supreme until the mid-twentieth century. Now, of course, it has virtually disappeared, replaced by ideas of nation that are more territorially bound.<sup>17</sup>

The process through which, starting in the 1960s, Quebec francophones began to see their nation as Quebec, rather than French Canada, is a familiar story. Far less well-known are the ways in which during the 1960s New Brunswick's Acadians also experienced a

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16 Wherever the threshold is set for "multinationalism" it is important to restrict it to clearly constituted internal nations. For instance, in *Multicultural Citizenship*, Kymlicka differentiates two manifestations of multiculturalism: "ethnic groups," that have resulted from immigration and "national minorities," based on historical communities that occupy a territory and share a distinct language and culture (11). Yet, this ignores the phenomenon of ethnically/culturally distinct historical communities that do not have a national consciousness. A case in point is the linguistically distinct populations of Switzerland, which clearly do not see themselves as nations. To dub them "national minorities" is quite misleading, generating reference to Switzerland as "the most multinational country like Switzerland" (ibid., 18) when, manifestly, it does not even qualify. In the process, the challenge of accommodating multinationalism is occluded. By the same token, treating these different categories as all manifestations of "multiculturalism" is itself quite misleading.

17 Yves Frenette, *Brève histoire des Canadiens français* (Montreal: Boréal, 1998).

nationalist resurgence, triggered in large part by the modernization and expansion of the provincial state.<sup>18</sup> The creation of the Parti Québécois in 1968 was paralleled four years later by the creation of the Parti Acadien. By 1991 the notion of Acadian national distinctness was sufficiently entrenched that the association grouping Francophones outside Quebec was forced to change its name from La Fédération des francophones hors Québec to La Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada.

There is ample evidence that most francophones do indeed understand themselves in these terms. Surveys regularly show that francophones in Quebec see themselves primarily as Québécois. At the same time, many also see themselves as Canadian, however secondary that identification may be.<sup>19</sup> In New Brunswick francophones also bear dual identities, except that the Canadian identity is the primary one.

Delimiting the social organization of the Quebec nation, and Acadian nation, is a less straightforward task. But in major areas of civil society one can identify structures and organizations that are distinct to each nation. Thus, in many areas pan-Canadian organizations are coupled with organizations that are distinct to Quebec. Examples are: the labour movement, where the Confédération des syndicats nationaux did not join the Canadian Labour Congress at its creation in 1957 and the Fédération de travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec, eventually withdrew from it; social policy advocacy, where the Canadian Council on Social Development is now paralleled by a Conseil québécois de développement social; and professional associations, such as the Canadian Medical Association which in Quebec plays a secondary role to Quebec-based associations.<sup>20</sup> In some instances,

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18 Philippe Doucet, "La Politique et les Acadiens," in Jean Daigle, ed., *L'Acadie des Maritimes: Études thématiques des débuts à nos jours* (Moncton: Chaires des études acadiennes, 1993), 322-25.

19 By one interpretation, Quebec francophones identify only on a mediated basis with Canada. They are Canadian through their identification with Quebec. Yet, the data may also support a more straightforward attachment to Canada or "dual identities," albeit with the Canadian identity as secondary. Thus a survey taken among Quebec francophones in 1995, just before the referendum, found that even then most Quebec francophones did profess to identify with Canada: "Québécois(e) d'abord, Canadien(ne) ensuite" 29.1 per cent and "Québécois(e) et Canadien(ne) à part égale" 28.1 per cent with "Canadien(ne) d'abord, Québécois(e) ensuite" 6.7 per cent, "Québécois(e) seulement 29 per cent, and "Canadien(ne) seulement 5.4 per cent (André Blais, Pierre Martin and Richard Nadeau, "Sondage omnibus référendaire" survey conducted by Léger et Léger, October 23-26, 1995).

20 The last two examples are drawn from studies prepared for the "Patterns of Association in Canadian Civil Society: Linguistic Relations in Non-Governmental Organizations," a research project led by David Cameron, Jane Jenson and Richard Simeon. Interestingly, a study in the project by William Coleman and

relations between the pan-Canadian and Quebec-based organizations may be quite harmonious. Nonetheless their existence reflects distinct, even competing ideas of nationhood.

As with any "minority nation," Quebec nationalists have invested great energies in securing international recognition. The 2001 Summit of the Americas in Quebec City was testimony to this determination but also to the resistance of established states to grant such recognition. On the other hand, Quebec nationalists have been remarkably successful in securing recognition among other "minority nations." Indeed Quebec often stands as a "model," given both the political autonomy it enjoys and the uses to which it has put that autonomy. For instance, Catalonia claims to have modeled its Linguistic Normalization Law after Quebec's Bill 101,<sup>21</sup> the Catalan president and Quebec premier have made official visits to each other, and so on.

Claims of Quebec nationhood have drawn many criticisms. If the nation is territorial and extends to all the population within Quebec, what is the status of the cultural and ethnic minorities or, within Quebec government parlance, the "cultural communities"? If, as is the case with most of these groups, the overwhelming majority of the members reject the idea of a Quebec nation, are they still part of the Quebec nation? Quebec nationalists can make a plausible case that the Quebec nation does extend to these groups, whatever their self-perception. Indeed, the accommodation of diversity and the development of a pluralist conception of the nation have become basic staples of intellectual debate in contemporary Quebec. But, does this extend to anglophones, who have a longstanding identification with the Canadian nation? And what of the Aboriginal Peoples, who in 1985 were themselves formally recognized as nations by the Quebec National Assembly, led by René Lévesque and the Parti Québécois?<sup>22</sup> Are they still part of the Quebec nation?

Yet, these ambiguities about the precise boundaries of the Quebec nation do not weaken the contention that such a nation exists. Nor have regular criticisms along these lines muted the sense of most Quebecers (albeit essentially francophone) that there is indeed a national collectivity, of which they are part, and that they are following a long historical tradition in seeing themselves this way.

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Tim Mau shows that business association have been quite successful in bridging the national question, as their class interests would commend.

21 The two are compared in Kenneth McRoberts, *Catalonia: Nation Building without a State* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2001), chap. 7.

22 Adopted on March 20, 1985, "Motion portant sur la reconnaissance des droits autochtones" begins: "Que cette assemblée: Reconnaisse l'existence au Québec des Nations abénaquise, algonquine, attikamek, crie, huronne, micmaque, mohawk, monagnaise, naskapie et inuit" (as reproduced in Éric Goudreau, "Le Québec et la question autochtone," in Alain-G. Gagnon, ed., *Québec: État et société* [Montreal: Québec/Amérique], 334).



### *Aboriginal Nations*

Over the last two decades, the centuries-old idea of a francophone national collectivity (or collectivities) has been joined by a claim to nationhood on the part of Aboriginal leaders. The term "First Nations" is itself of recent origin, reflecting a renewed use of the term "nation" after a long disuse. When the first lobby organization to group together Status and Treaty Indians was created in 1968, it was called the National Indian Brotherhood; only in 1982 was the name changed to the Assembly of First Nations.

While the notion of Aboriginal Peoples extends beyond status and non-status Indians, to include Inuit and Métis, maintaining a coherent leadership among all four components has proven to be a virtual impossibility.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Aboriginal social organization is very diffuse. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples declared that there are between 60 and 80 distinct Aboriginal nations in Canada.<sup>24</sup> Nor are these Aboriginal nations clearly delimited territorially: about half the Aboriginal population lives in urban areas. Nonetheless, Aboriginal leaders have been remarkably successful in securing international sympathy and recognition for their claims to constitute nations or peoples, indeed more successful than their Quebec counterparts.

In sum, reasonably compelling claims to nationhood, as "internal nations," can be made on behalf of Quebec francophones, Acadians and Aboriginal Peoples. Together they represent about 7 million people or 23 per cent of the Canadian population. To be sure, the overwhelming majority of the Canadian population does not see itself in these terms. It thinks of itself simply as Canadian, and sees itself as part of a nation that extends throughout Canada and is centred in the Canadian state. There is no interlocutor for the internal nations. Yet, this does not seem to deter the internal nations from seeing themselves as such. Canada's multinational dimension is simply too strong to be ignored or wished away.

### **Canadian Political Theory and Multinationalism**

For that matter, the issue has engaged some of Canada's leading thinkers and commentators. One of the first Canadian references to a "multinational state" appears in an article by none other than Pierre Elliott Trudeau, published in *Cité libre* in 1962.<sup>25</sup> There, Trudeau

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23 As Alan Cairns points out, the 1982 *Constitution Act* declares that Indian, Inuit and Métis are all included in Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Alan C. Cairns, "Searching for Multinational Canada: The Rhetoric of Confusion" [unpublished paper], 24).

24 Ibid., 11.

25 "On the one hand they could respond to the vision of an overbearing Anglo-Canadian nation-state with a rival vision of a French-Canadian nation-state; on

seems to be entertaining the notion that through federalism “nations” can secure autonomous institutions that they might quite legitimately use to pursue their national interests.<sup>26</sup> But Trudeau rarely made this explicit in his writings.

For his part, Charles Taylor argued in his 1970 *Pattern of Politics* that Trudeau underestimated the importance for francophones of “the collective dimensions of identification with *la nation canadienne-française*.”<sup>27</sup> On this basis, he proposed a strongly asymmetrical federalism in which Quebec would effectively have a special status. In his 1979 essay “Why Do Nations Have to Become States?” he called for “public acceptance that the country is the locus of two nations.”<sup>28</sup> Other academic commentators have echoed this binational vision: Gad Horowitz, Mel Watkins, and a host of Quebec francophones.

By the 1990s the “binational” formulation had been replaced by one of “three nations,” in which Aboriginal Peoples were presented as a third national collectivity. Spawned by the manifesto of a group of Toronto-based academics,<sup>29</sup> “three nations” very rapidly became the common perspective of all who were prepared to recognize the presence of distinct nations within Canada. Binationalism became multinationalism, but by and large multinationalism really stood for a “three nation” vision.

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the other hand they could scrap the very idea of a nation-state once and for all and lead the way toward making Canada a multi-national state” (Pierre Elliott Trudeau, “New Treason of the Intellectuals,” *Cité libre*, 1962, as reproduced in Trudeau, *Federalism and the French Canadians* [Toronto: Macmillan, 1968], 164).

- 26 In the same essay, Trudeau declares that “the different regions within the country must be assured of a wide range of local autonomy, such that each national group, with an increasing background of experience in self-government, may be able to develop the body of laws and institutions essential to the fullest expression and development of their national characteristics” (ibid., 178) and “By the terms of the existing Canadian constitution, that of 1867, French Canadians have all the powers they need to make Quebec a political society *affording due respect for nationalist aspirations* and at the same time giving unprecedented scope for human potential in the broadest sense” (ibid., 180; emphasis added).
- 27 “A Canadian Future,” in Charles Taylor, *Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 34.
- 28 In 1979, Taylor called for “A new form of Canadian federation . . . founded on a recognition of the duality that is basic to the country” and “a public acceptance that the country is the locus of two nations” (“Why Do Nations Have to Become States?” in Taylor, *Reconciling the Solitudes*, 57.)
- 29 Christina McCall, et al., “Three Nation: Eleven of Canada’s Leading Intellectuals Declare Their Support for a Canada Equitable from Sea to Sea,” *Canadian Forum*, March 1992, 4-6.

Over the years many Canadian academics have endorsed the notion of multinationalism, typically in the tripartite version.<sup>30</sup> Indeed the new interest in multinationalism has been sufficiently strong to alarm the keepers of the Trudeau flame, who have railed against this new heresy.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, the notion has reached beyond academia, strictly speaking, to appear in influential commentaries aimed to the larger public, such as John Ralston Saul's *Reflections of a Siamese Twin* which, while avoiding any talk of internal nations, refers to Canada's "triangular reality."<sup>32</sup>

The "three nation" vision of Canada does have its problems.<sup>33</sup> It presumes a certain coherence of each of the components. Yet, among francophones it is hard to deny the presence of an Acadian nation along with Quebec. And Aboriginal Peoples are far too diverse to be treated as a single national collectivity. Beyond that, the literature tends to presume a commonality among these various national entities that is not at all evident.

Still, this attempt to conceive Canada in "three nation" terms has been complemented by a more recent effort on the part of some Quebec intellectuals to conceive Quebec itself in "trinational" terms. For instance in a collection of essays, *Penser la nation québécoise*, Gilles Bourque insists that "le mouvement national ne peut mener son combat pour la reconnaissance politique de la nation québécoise en niant le caractère plurinational du Québec." He contends that Quebec society is "plurinationale" since it contains not only the Quebec nation but Aboriginal nations and members of the Canadian nation.<sup>34</sup> Denys Delâge insists that just as Canada is based on three founding peoples so is Quebec<sup>35</sup> and Danielle Juteau evokes a vision of "la collectivité

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30 Philip Resnick, "Toward a Multinational Federalism: Asymmetrical and Confederal Alternatives," in F. Leslie Seidle, ed., *Seeking a New Canadian Partnership: Asymmetrical and Confederal Options* (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1994), 71-90; and Will Kymlicka, *Finding Our Way: Rethinking Ethnocultural Relations in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998).

31 See, for instance, Max Nemni, "Two Solitudes, Two Nations, Two Illusions," *Cité libre*, June-July 1998, 31-40.

32 John Ralston Saul, *Reflections of a Siamese Twin: Canada at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 1997), 81-100.

33 See the critiques in Alan C. Cairns, "Searching for Multinational Canada," and Sigurdson, "Canada as a Multi-national Federation."

34 Gilles Bourque, "Le Québec: entre nations et société," in Michel Venne, ed., *Penser la nation québécoise* (Montreal: Éditions Québec-Amérique, 2000), 185.

35 Deny Delâge, "Le Québec et les autochtones," in Venne, ed., *Penser la nation*, 215-28. To be sure there is no consensus around this problematic. For instance, Gérard Bouchard seeks to accommodate these forces within the Quebec nation through a "coalition nationale" that would be composed of Franco-Québécois, Anglo-Québécois, Aboriginals, and "communautés culturelles" (Gérard Bouchard, "Construire la nation québécoise: Manifeste pour une coalition

québécoise comme multinationale et multiethnique” in which both Aboriginals and English Canadians would be viewed as “peuples fondateurs.”<sup>36</sup>

In short, multinationalism has become a major theme in academic analyses on Canada. Many of these analyses have caught the attention of scholars elsewhere, especially when their authors are of such international prominence as Charles Taylor, Will Kymlicka or James Tully.<sup>37</sup> Multinationalism has become no less than an important and influential Canadian school of political thought.

Yet, contemporary political life in Canada shows little trace of these ideas. As Canada has become more and more multinational in its underlying social composition, and political theorists have sought to take account of this, so long-established notions of sociological or minority nations have been effectively drained from Canada’s political life. Within federal political discourse the only nation is the *Canadian* nation and that is the nation of the Canadian *nation-state*. Nor have Quebec’s *péquistes* leaders shown much interest in, or even awareness of, the efforts of Quebec intellectuals to see Quebec in multinational terms.

There could not be more striking demonstrations of an all too common phenomenon: the total disjunction between the political realm and the academy. If, in fact, it is increasingly evident that Canada contains “internal nations” and if Canadian scholars have been leading the way in theorizing a multinational Canada, why has there not been progress in putting the institutions of multinationalism in place? Why instead has the movement been in the opposite direction?

## The Demise of Binationalism

Attempts to theorize a multinational Canada have tended to take as their starting point the political tradition of understanding Canada on a binational basis. Admittedly, this tradition was recognized more by francophone than anglophone political leaders. But for francophones at least, the binational idea of Canada was sufficiently credible to secure their continued allegiance to Canada. Yet, such notions have all but disappeared from Canadian politics.

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nationale,” in Venne, ed., *Penser la nation*, 49-68). See also Michel Seymour, “Une nation inclusive qui ne nie pas ses origines,” in Venne, ed., *Penser la nation*, 245-58.

36 Danielle Juteau, “Le défi de l’option pluraliste,” in Venne, ed., *Penser la nation*, 211. She also proposes that the distinction between “fondateurs et non-fondateurs” be dropped completely.

37 Tully’s most recent work, co-edited with Alain Gagnon, was not available at the time of writing this article: see Alain-G. Gagnon and James Tully, eds., *Multinational Democracies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

The initial versions of the compact theory, first elaborated in the mid-1880s, saw Canada as a compact among the colonies and their several successors, the provinces, rather than between nations. However, by the turn of the century Henri Bourassa had established the notion of a double compact. For Bourassa, the “political” compact among the provinces was coupled with a “national” compact between the two Canadian colonies: Canada West and Canada East. The idea of Canada as a pact between two founding peoples rapidly became a given among Quebec’s intellectual and political elites.<sup>38</sup> Their English-Canadian counterparts may not have shared such binational notions but at least they continued to subscribe overwhelmingly to the idea that Canada was a compact among provinces. A Canada of compacts, however defined, could not be the unitary nation of a Canadian nation-state.

The constitution itself affords little explicit recognition of binationalism. The *British North America Act* simply proclaimed a very limited recognition to English and French within the federal and Quebec provincial governments. Moreover, despite some claims to the contrary, federal institutions have never demonstrated a serious adherence to consociational norms and practices.<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, Confederation drew upon *the federal principle* in a most creative fashion. While it has been regularly noted that Canada was the first political system to combine federalism with parliamentary government, it is not always appreciated that Canada was the first political system in which federalism was designed, at least in part, to accommodate and protect cultural and linguistic differences, as opposed to purely territorial ones. Even Switzerland cannot claim that title, contrary to some experts.<sup>40</sup>

This understanding of Canadian federalism was fully recognized at the time by Confederation’s champions in Quebec. Thus, the *Bleu* newspaper *la Minerve* celebrated Confederation in these terms: “As a distinct and separate nationality, we form a state within the state. We

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38 See Ramsay Cook, *Provincial Autonomy, Minority Rights and the Compact Theory, 1867-1921*. Studies of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism No. 4 (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1969), 57, Richard Arès, *Dossier sur le pacte fédératif de 1867* (Montreal: Bellarmin, 1967), Paul Romney, *Getting it Wrong: How Canadians Forgot Their Past and Imperilled Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 142; and McRoberts, *Misconceiving Canada*, 19-24.

39 I try to demonstrate this in Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis* (3rd ed.; Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993), 35-36, and “The Structure of English-French Relations in Canada” (unpublished paper).

40 Kymlicka notes that the old Swiss Confederation was based entirely on cantons that were ethnically and linguistically Germanic in contradiction to the late Daniel Elazar’s claim that Switzerland was the first federation built on cultural/linguistic difference (Kymlicka, *Finding Our Way*, 206, n. 17).

enjoy the full exercise of our rights and the formal recognition of our national independence.”<sup>41</sup> The assumption that a fundamental purpose of the Quebec provincial government is to protect and nurture francophone society in Quebec has become a leitmotiv of Quebec governments, whatever the political party. Moreover, it was on this premise that, during the 1960s, the Pearson government afforded the Quebec government various asymmetrical arrangements and was lauded by the other federal parties for doing so.<sup>42</sup>

In the immediate postwar period the federal leaders began to articulate the discourse of a Canadian nation-state. For his part, Louis St. Laurent rejected the compact theory outright.<sup>43</sup> But in the 1960s, faced with the rise of Quebec neo-nationalism, Lester Pearson’s government openly embraced the binational tradition. It gave the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism a mandate to recommend how the Canadian Confederation should be made “an equal partnership between the two founding races [the unfortunate translation of “deux peuples fondateurs”].”<sup>44</sup> The Progressive Conservatives and the New Democratic party both adopted the “two nation” credo.<sup>45</sup> Even then, the idea of an English-Canadian nation produced considerable discomfort. But, during the 1960s at least there was a majority sentiment among federal political leaders, anglophone as well as francophone, that there existed a French-Canadian or Quebec nation.

Now, of course, it would be very difficult to find such intimations in Canadian political discourse. Merely the idea that Quebec constitutes a “distinct society” within Canada, and that this should be recognized in the constitution, was the death knell of the Meech Lake Accord among not only most of public opinion outside Quebec but also many of Canada’s political leaders. The collapse of Meech in 1990 proved that for most Canadians federalism can only be about territory not culture, let alone “nations,” and Quebec can only be a “province like the others.”

In the wake of that debacle, all political leaders have treaded most carefully. Even the near victory of “Yes” forces in the 1995 Quebec referendum could not engender any readiness to recognize Quebec’s distinctiveness, beyond a House of Commons resolution

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41 *La Minerve*, July 1, 1867 (as translated and quoted in Arthur I. Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation, 1864-1900* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982], 41).

42 McRoberts, *Misconceiving Canada*, 40-45.

43 In 1943, as minister of justice, St. Laurent declared that “La Confédération n’a pas été vraiment un pacte entre les provinces” (quoted in Arès, *Dossier sur le pacte fédératif*, 92).

44 Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, *Preliminary Report* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1965), 151.

45 This is documented in McRoberts, *Misconceiving Canada*, 45-53.

which recognized that "Quebec is a distinct society within Canada" but had no concrete import<sup>46</sup> and a carefully contrived premiers' (excluding Lucien Bouchard) statement, the Calgary Declaration, in which recognition of "the unique character of Quebec society" was coupled with a firm declaration that "all the provinces are equal."<sup>47</sup> The current federal government has been steadfast in presenting Canada as a single nation with itself as the "national government."<sup>48</sup> Gone is the older vocabulary of a "Canadian Confederation," let alone a "compact" that is binational, interprovincial or both. Among the federal parties, only the Bloc Québécois has consistently articulated the arguments for a binational Canada, and has been marginalized for its efforts.<sup>49</sup>

Such a state of affairs has given the Parti Québécois free rein to claim that it is only by assuming full political sovereignty that Quebec can secure recognition of its nationhood. In other words, the Quebec nation can exist only within the framework of a nation-state. If Canada is to be a nation-state, then so must Quebec. Canadian political culture seems to have lost forever the capacity to distinguish between state and nation and to imagine creatively the relationship between the two.

### State Nationalism and Nation-building

How could such a total change have come about? The short answer lies in the rise and dominance of a Canadian state nationalism which, by definition, precludes any meaningful recognition of "internal

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46 "Resolution Respecting the Recognition of Quebec as a Distinct Society," House of Commons, *Journals*, 1st session, 35th Parliament, No. 273, December 11, 1995, 222.

47 As reproduced from *Ontario Speaks: A Dialogue on Canadian Unity*, Government of Ontario, 1998.

48 Federal Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Stéphane Dion has acknowledged on occasion that Quebec constitutes a "sociological nation": "In sociological terms, I would say that a nation exists as soon as human beings consider that they form one. They feel that they share common historical, cultural, ethnic, linguistic or religious traits and on this basis see themselves as a nation. It is undeniable that a large number of Quebecers consider themselves to be a nation and are one from that moment on." At the same time, he presents this as the "French" understanding of the term nation, as to be distinguished from an "English" understanding which equates nation with a sovereign state (Stéphane Dion, "In Honour of the Presidents of the Council for Canadian Unity: Some Reflections on the Concept of Nation, Notes for a keynote address to the Council for Canadian Unity," Montreal, Quebec, April 6, 2001).

49 Among the federal opposition parties, the New Democratic party has gestured toward Quebec's national distinctiveness by recognizing Quebec as a "people." (New Democratic Party. "Fixing Federalism: A Better Unity," Position Paper, N.D.P. Web Site, September 15, 2001).

nations.” However, as I will argue below, this new state nationalism has had the ancillary effect of erecting new principles of Canadian life which are themselves highly inimical to multinationalism.

The stage for Canadian state nationalism and state-building was set in the post-Second World War years by the decline of the British connection and the idea of a larger British nationality associated with it, and the rise of the cultural and economic hegemony of the United States. For many English-speaking Canadians the need for a new political identity was most efficiently met by a Canadian nationalism that focused upon the Canadian government and saw it as the national state. The Massey Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences was the most prominent among many post-war intimations of this state nationalism. During the 1960s, the new Canadian nationalism jostled with notions of binationalism as federal leaders struggled to come to terms with the Quiet Revolution and the Quebec nationalism that animated it. However, Canadian state nationalism took full flight with the arrival of the Trudeau government.

Pierre Trudeau’s vision of a Canadian nation united by a charter of rights and a strong national government, combining bilingualism with multiculturalism, may have been devised to integrate Quebec francophones with the rest of Canada. But it had relatively little impact there: most Quebec francophones remained attached to the much older idea of a distinct nation of their own. In one of the greatest ironies of Canadian political history, the new identity took hold not in Quebec but in the rest of Canada. Not only did the vision offer a compelling response to the felt need for a Canadian identity, but such elements as the charter and multiculturalism turned out to be ideal for mobilizing social forces already emerging outside Quebec.

Some claims to the contrary, Trudeau did not bring about this fundamental transformation singlehandedly. Rather, he mobilized social forces outside Quebec that were themselves attracted to a charter of rights or multiculturalism or a strong government in Ottawa. Beyond that, he appealed to a growing nationalism by offering a vision of the Canadian nation that was free of ambiguity and contradictory principles. These forces had already been building well before the Trudeau era began; Trudeau had the effect of tipping the balance in their favour. It seems to me that it is legitimate to ask whether this would have happened under another prime minister.

In Quebec as well, state nationalism and “nation-building” came to the fore in the 1960s. Unlike the old French-Canadian nationalism, Quebec neo-nationalism placed the state front and centre. The Quebec “gouvernement provincial” became “l’État national du Québec.” Indeed, the very term “provincial” was banned from official discourse. This wholesale adoption of the “nation-state” model has left little room for subtlety or creativity. Thus, among the *péquist*e leadership there is little acknowl-



edgment that Quebec itself might be "multinational," although this is the logical consequence of the National Assembly's 1985 recognition of Aboriginal nationhood. And it is generally presumed that recognition of Quebec's nationhood must mean full sovereignty.

There is, of course, a direct, indeed symbiotic, relationship between these two state nationalisms. The Quebec neo-nationalism of the 1960s was at least in part a response to the federal government's postwar nationalism and the many incursions into heretofore provincial functions that this nationalism legitimized. Indeed, during the 1950s Ottawa's expansionism provoked Maurice Duplessis' government to charge the Tremblay Royal Commission on Constitutional Problems with articulating a comprehensive defence of provincial jurisdictions; Jean Lesage's government used the Commission's elaborate vision of a decentralized federalism to legitimize its own interventionist agenda. Conversely, in more recent decades the alleged need to counter the Quebec government's state nationalism has provided much of the justification for Ottawa's nation-building measures. The primary official rationale for the Trudeau government's constitutional patriation, without the consent of the Quebec legislature, was the need to counter the secessionism inherent to Quebec state nationalism.

In their mutual celebration of state nationalism, the federal government and the Quebec government (at least in *péquist*e hands) have each sought to reserve full sovereignty for itself and, in the process, doomed political debate to sterility. Neither government has displayed much interest in notions of "divided sovereignty," however fashionable they have become elsewhere. The federal principle lends itself well to such ideas. Back in the 1950s, the Tremblay Report fashioned a sophisticated vision of Canada in precisely these terms.<sup>50</sup> But when the erstwhile federalist Robert Bourassa evoked notions of "cultural sovereignty" to characterize Quebec's place within the Canadian federation, he was quickly rebuked by Ottawa for his heresy.

Outside Quebec, the new Canadian state nationalism has proved to be most resilient. Free trade and globalization may have greatly circumscribed the powers of the federal state and virtually eliminated any notion of a national market, yet at the level of popular identity the Canadian nation is just as strong as ever. For instance, in a 1998 survey 90 per cent of respondents outside Quebec agreed strongly that they were "proud to be Canadian." In Quebec, the figure was 50 per cent.<sup>51</sup> It is as

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50 Quebec, *Rapport de la commission royale d'enquête sur les problèmes constitutionnels*, 1956, 5 vols.

51 The Goldfarb Poll, conducted in January and February 1998 was published in *Maclean's*, July 1, 1998, 13. A Canadian Institute of Public Opinion poll, released on June 30, 1999 found somewhat lower positive results to "How proud are you to be a Canadian?" Outside Quebec the provincial percentages declaring "very proud"

if, having come late to the idea of the nation-state, Canadians are making up for lost time.

In part, the success of the new Canadian nationalism may lie in the way it has been constructed. Unlike many majority nationalisms, it does not portray the nation in terms of the majority population. Whereas Spanish nationalism affords no status in central institutions to the minority languages, whether Catalan, Basque, or Galician, and French nationalism treats Breton, Corse and Occitan in the same manner, the dominant form of Canadian nationalism celebrates the minority language. In official discourse, French is given formal equality with English in the national government and presumed to be recognized throughout the Canadian nation. A central basis of Quebec's claim to nationhood, the French language, is instead attached to the Canadian nation as a whole.

With such assumptions of linguistic and cultural diversity, the Canadian nation can be presented as somehow transcending the conventional nation. Indeed, Anthony Giddens has dubbed Canada "the first post-modern state."<sup>52</sup> On this basis, it might be argued that Canadian nationalism is not really nationalism at all. As this ideology of the "non-nation," Canadian state nationalism can escape many of the common criticisms of nationalism, while decrying the "narrow" nationalism of Quebec.

### **Making Canadian Federalism Exclusively Territorial**

Beyond a frontal attack on binationalism, or any recognition of a francophone nation, the new nationalism of the Canadian state has had indirect consequences for binationalism or any other form of distinct nationality within Canada. The first impact has been to entrench the principle that federalism is exclusively about *territory*, thus undermining the historical notion that Canadian federalism was intended to protect the cultural/national distinctiveness of francophones in Quebec.

From the very beginning, Canadian federalism had been shaped by the competition between these two principles, territory and culture. While it may well have been pressures from Quebec that forced the

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were in the 70s, except for 61 per cent in British Columbia. But the Quebec percentage was also lower: 40 per cent (The Gallup Poll, "Majority Very Proud to be Canadian," *The Gallup Poll*, Toronto, June 30, 1999).

- 52 Anthony Giddens, "Canada: The First Postmodern State?" keynote address, University of Cambridge, March 1993 (I owe this reference to Annis May Timpson). In a similar vein, Peter Katzenstein has written that Canada is "arguably the first post-modern state par excellence" (Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1966], 25 [I owe this reference to Stephen Clarkson]).

adoption of federalism, the federal principle took rapidly elsewhere in the new British North America. The case of Quebec aside, Canada paralleled quite readily the federation to the south: the difference among the original provinces was no greater than among the American colonies. Indeed, it was considerably less; there, a civil war had resulted. If the entities within a federation are differentiated only by geography then it follows quite readily that the same set of jurisdictions and powers should be sufficient for all. And, of course, it might also be argued that the real purpose of the federation is not to meet the needs of collectivities, however defined, but to protect individuals from arbitrary actions of a central state. Federalism is only one among different means to do this, and it may well not be the most efficient. Entrenching individual rights in a charter is another means and might well have precedence over the federal principle. Be that as it may, with such priorities as the protection of individual rights and the uniformity of rights across the country, federalism can only be about territory.

Thus, in Canada the possibility of using federalism to protect cultural/national difference was always under attack from a competing principle that had the potential to place in question its very legitimacy. Many scholars have commented on this competition between principles but they have generally overlooked the singularity of this situation. As best as I can determine, Canada is the only federation to have been founded upon two competing principles. All other federations were based on one principle or the other.<sup>53</sup> At least 12 federations followed the US model, and were founded squarely on territory: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, The Comoros, Germany, Malaysia, Nigeria, St Kitts and Nevis, Switzerland and Venezuela. Seven others, all of them created after Canada, clearly used cultural/national difference as the essential basis for drawing up the constituent units: Belgium, Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, Russia, the United Arab Emirates and Yugoslavia.<sup>54</sup>

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53 Resnick distinguishes between "territorial federations" and "multinational federations." The latter are federations where "more than one major linguistic or cultural grouping claims to be considered a distinct national community within that federation" (Philip Resnick, "Toward a Multinational Federalism: Asymmetrical and Confederal Alternatives," in F. Leslie Seidle, ed., *Seeking a New Canadian Partnership: Asymmetrical and Confederal Options* [Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1994], 71) Strictly speaking, this distinction ignores cases of cultural difference that do not give rise to a sense of nationhood. Thus, Switzerland is listed as a multinational federation even though the several linguistic groups of which it is composed bear no national identity. Kymlicka follows this same practice.

54 Spain is the closest exception to this proposition. The Constitution of Spain refers to "the right to autonomy of the nationalities and regions of which it is composed" (*Spanish Constitution*, Article 2, Presidencia del Gobierno, 1982, 13). But, formally speaking, Spain is not a federation.

The singularity of the Canadian federation also can be seen in its social composition. It is the only federation in which only *one* major unit is culturally distinct and all the others are defined in terms of territory. Spain comes closest: three culturally distinct entities, the “historic nations” of the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia stand against 14 other Autonomous Communities which have no significant cultural distinctiveness. But, technically speaking, Spain is not a federation.

In short, the legitimacy of the culture/nationality principle of federalism was never fully secure in Canada; it was always threatened by a competing principle of federalism that afforded it no legitimacy whatsoever. Nonetheless, for one reason or another, most successful Canadian leaders deliberately sought to manage this conflict, in particular by cultivating a certain ambiguity regarding the purpose of federalism. The compact theory served this goal wonderfully, especially when it allowed for alternative formulations based upon provinces and upon peoples.

The Trudeau era brought an end to all this. In the name of “nation-building,” contradictions over principle were to be faced squarely rather than finessed. For Trudeau the prime minister, as opposed to the political essayist of the 1960s, only the territorial vision of federalism could be legitimate, and even it was problematic to the extent it threatened rights entrenched in a charter. Within his vision of the Canadian nation-state there was no room for compacts, however conceived.<sup>55</sup> The Meech debate confirmed that outside Quebec Canadians had become wedded to this belief that federalism could only be about territory.

As it happens, in many parts of the world scholars of federalism are at last abandoning the longstanding presumption, reflecting the hegemony of the American model, that federalism is about accommo-

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55 Trudeau made this crystal clear in a remarkable intervention in the House: “We [the Members of Parliament] are the only group of men and women in this country who can speak for every Canadian. We are the only group, the only assembly in this country, which can speak for the whole nation, which can express the national will and the national interest.” He even went so far as to proclaim it a good thing that the Fathers of Confederation had given the powers of disallowance and reservation to the federal government so that it could intervene against a province that was acting “contrary to the national interest.” After all, “when there is a conflict of interest, not of laws, which will be judged by the courts, the citizens must be convinced that there is a national government which will speak for the national interest and will ensure that it does prevail” (Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1st session, 32nd Parliament, April 15, 1980, 32-33). And he repeatedly used the same reasoning to justify repatriating the constitution without the consent of the Quebec provincial legislature—or indeed without a majority of all the provinces.

dating geography and protecting the individual and that federations rooted in cultural difference were bound to be unstable.<sup>56</sup> Yet, in Canada federalism has now been wedded to these very same outdated presumptions and can no longer be used to accommodate multinationalism.

### Canada as Multicultural

While entrenching the principle that federalism is about not cultural, let alone national difference, but territory and territory alone, the Trudeau era nation-building did establish a second principle which does address cultural difference: multiculturalism. On this new basis, the Canadian nation is portrayed as culturally diverse but in a way that is totally divorced from territory.

The celebration of cultural diversity is a novel component for a state nationalism. Typically, of course, state-building entails the effort to implant a single culture, along with a single language. Even the self-proclaimed "civic nations" presume a common culture, however much they claim otherwise.<sup>57</sup> Yet, multiculturalism can serve nationalist purposes by being presented as a distinctively Canadian creation. It constitutes Canada's contribution to world betterment. Moreover, it has found a ready clientele among "new Canadians": recent immigrants of neither British nor French origin for whom multiculturalism assures equal status to "old stock" Canadians. In this way, Canada parallels other countries featuring high levels of immigration, such as Australia where multiculturalism has also assumed major importance.

Conceptually, multiculturalism offers a way of perceiving the social order which is not only different than multinationalism but potentially antithetical. Simply put, multiculturalism recognizes and even celebrates a wide variety of differences that multinationalism seeks to subsume within the framework of the individual nations. To the extent that multiculturalism emphasizes these differences, it may appear to be denying the credentials of these nations. Indeed, national distinctiveness may itself become simply one more form of difference. In effect, multiculturalism can, by trivializing the differences upon

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56 See Requejo, "Federalism and the Quality of Democracy"; Will Kymlicka, "Minority Nationalism and Multination Federalism" in Will Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 91-119; Resnick, "Toward a Multinational Federalism," Murray Forsyth, ed., *Federalism and Nationalism* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1989); and Graham Smith, ed., *Federalism: The Multiethnic Challenge* (London: Longmans, 1995).

57 This point is made in Will Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 244-45.

which nations are based, appear to absorb them within a common nation.<sup>58</sup>

To be sure, this need not happen. Multiculturalism could be conceived within a multinational framework and stand for relations of diversity within each of the internal nations.<sup>59</sup> It can be argued that the Quebec government's policy of "interculturalisme" is in fact quite similar to the federal government's policies of multiculturalism.<sup>60</sup> Conceived in this manner, multiculturalism can free multinationalism from the ethnic connotations of such terms as "founding nations." But, by definition, the overall framework must be multinational. Otherwise, multinationalism may be occluded.

Programmatically, especially when conceived as part of a nation-building project, multiculturalism can be directly opposed to multinationalism—and has been so in Canada. The issue may not have arisen in other societies where the concept of multiculturalism has taken root, as in Australia where only indigenous peoples might claim national status and multiculturalism has generally not been extended to them. But the issue has arisen in Canada. Despite what some critics claim, multiculturalism in Canada has been demonstrably integrative, especially of new immigrants.<sup>61</sup> But to precisely "what" are these individuals being integrated? There is every reason to believe that they are being integrated to the entity articulated by the Canadian state: a single Canadian nation which is multicultural, perhaps bilingual, but which bears no "internal nations" and in which even federalism is losing much of its pertinence.

This fundamental tension between multiculturalism and multinationalism is frequently ignored, or even denied, in the scholarly literature. Thus, a leading study proposing that Canada be made a "multinational federation" at the same time celebrates Canada's multicultural policy. In making a case for both concepts, it fails to analyze the relationship between the two. Noting that in Canada multiculturalism has prospered but multinationalism remains problematic, it does not

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58 As Alain Dieckhoff writes, before commenting on Canadian multiculturalism: "Malgré la différence structurelle entre minorités immigrées et groupes nationaux, certains hommes politiques se sont pourtant ingénies, pour des raisons plus ou moins avouables, à gommer toutes les nuances pour les subsumer sous la catégorie générique de multiculturalisme" (Alain Dieckhoff, *La nation dans tous ses États: Les identités nationales en mouvement* [Paris: Flammarion] 189).

59 See Ian Angus, *A Border Within*, 146.

60 See McRoberts, *Misconceiving Canada*, 129-30; and Kymlicka, *Finding Our Way*, 68.

61 This is well documented in Kymlicka, *Finding Our Way*.

entertain the possibility that maybe the success of the first explains the difficulties of the second.<sup>62</sup>

There have been conceptualizations of Canadian society that do take direct account of the relationship between multiculturalism and multinationalism, establishing a priority in the process. For instance, a certain ranking appears in Taylor's much-discussed concept of "levels of diversity." In effect, multiculturalism constitutes a first order of diversity that exists among those who do not belong to Canada's internal nations—whether Québécois or Aboriginal—and who feel "Canadian as a bearer of individual rights in a multicultural mosaic."<sup>63</sup> The second order or "deep diversity" is reserved for those who identify first with an internal nation.<sup>64</sup> Yet, one might ask why there could not be a diversity, or at least a sense of diversity, comparable to multiculturalism within the internal nations as well, especially the Quebec nation. In any event, Taylor's focus in this piece is more on forms of identity than on diversity itself.

The fact remains that back in the 1960s there was a well-developed conceptualization of diversity within francophone and anglophone collectivities. The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism eschewed the term "nation" for "society." At the same time, it was careful to avoid any suggestion that Canada's two societies, anglophone and francophone, should have an ethnic base, fearing that this might imply biological origin. While insisting that it is only as part of one society or the other that individuals can fully participate in Canadian life, the Commission also insisted that the two societies would each have to welcome immigrants and allow them "to preserve and enrich, if they so desire, the cultural values they prize."<sup>65</sup> On this basis, it devoted a whole volume to the cultural contribution of these Canadians recommending such measures as teaching of non-official languages in public schools, allowing use of these languages in

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62 Ibid. For that matter, Kymlicka propounds a version of multiculturalism which is directly antithetical to multinationalism since, unlike the "communitarian" version of multiculturalism developed by Taylor and others, it is fundamentally individualist (Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 92-93; and the discussion in Jean-Luc Gagnac, "Sur le multiculturalisme et la politique de la différence identitaire: Taylor, Walzer, Kymlicka," *Politiques et Sociétés* 16 [1997], 31-65).

63 Charles Taylor, *Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 183.

64 It should be noted that Taylor does not use the term "nation" in presenting his concept of levels of diversity.

65 Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, Book I, *General Introduction* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1967), xxiii. Taylor echoes this vision in Taylor, *Reconciling the Solitudes*, 200.

broadcasting and supporting organizations fostering “the arts and letters of cultural groups other than the British and French.”<sup>66</sup>

The Trudeau government’s policy of multiculturalism, as proclaimed in 1971, was developed in direct response to the B&B Commission’s notions of biculturalism. Prime Minister Trudeau could have not been clearer as to what he was about: “The very name of the royal commission whose recommendations we now seek to implement tends to indicate that bilingualism and biculturalism are indivisible. But, biculturalism does not properly describe our society; multiculturalism is more accurate.”<sup>67</sup> For good measure, he insisted that “there are no official cultures in Canada.”<sup>68</sup>

An argument even can be made that back in 1971 one of the Trudeau government’s purposes in promulgating a policy of multiculturalism was precisely to rein in biculturalism, and the binational implications that it bore. Some authorities dispute this, contending that there was no clearly thought out rationale for the policy, other than to placate “third force” Canadians who resented bilingualism.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, whatever the original conception of multiculturalism, clearly multicultural policy has evolved over time, far beyond what was in the original statement.<sup>70</sup>

Be that as it may, the original statement did set a basic context for multiculturalism in Canada; it served to make official a particular understanding of Canadian society. This certainly was not lost on academics and politicians in Quebec, including such federalists as Claude Ryan and Robert Bourassa who publicly protested the departure from the B&B Commission’s formulation.<sup>71</sup> In Quebec, Canadian multiculturalism continues to be firmly associated with a notion of Canada that excludes any national recognition of Quebec.

Moreover, it can be readily demonstrated that outside Quebec multiculturalism has had the effect of reinforcing resistance to Que-

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66 Ibid., Book IV, *The Cultural Contribution of the other Ethnic Groups* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1970), 228-30.

67 Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, October 8, 1971, 8581.

68 Ibid., 8546.

69 Ibid., 40. For a presentation of the opposite case, see McRoberts, *Misconceiving Canada*, 120-21. In particular, it should be noted that Trudeau had already articulated his opposition to the term biculturalism in the early days of the B&B Commission. Kymlicka does allow that the term “multiculturalism” may “be partly to blame” and that it might have been better dubbed “polyethnicity—that is, recognizing and accommodating immigrant ethnicity within the public institutions of the English and French societal cultures” (Kymlicka, *Finding Our Way*, 59). That is precisely the formulation that the B&B Commission had developed, and Trudeau had explicitly rejected.

70 This is Kymlicka’s point (ibid.).

71 The Quebec reaction is described in McRoberts, *Misconceiving Canada*, 129-30.



bec's demands for national recognition, especially among Canadians who feel themselves to have been recognized through multiculturalism. This was quite evident during the debate over Meech. Some of the strongest opposition to the "distinct society" clause came from champions of multiculturalism, themselves of neither French nor British heritage, who saw the clauses as an attack on the co-equal status of all cultures and cultural heritages within Canada.<sup>72</sup>

In sum, the old tradition of recognizing a francophone nation, if not outright binationalism, has been undermined by a new nationalism of the Canadian state which has attacked it both directly, through the outright denial of its existence, and indirectly through the erection of new principles, territorial federalism and multiculturalism, which preclude the very possibility of recognizing geographically grounded "nations within."

### Recognition of Aboriginal Nations

At the same time, while politics has been drained of any remnants of recognition of a francophone nation, contemporary Canadian politics has allowed a certain, well-constrained space for recognition of *Aboriginal* nations. Generally speaking, multiculturalism has not precluded recognition of Aboriginal Peoples. Unlike Quebec nationalism, Aboriginal nationalism does not have a significant secessionist variant that directly challenges Canadian nationalism, and the very integrity of the Canadian state. On the other hand, the constitutional initiatives that the Quebec question has generated over the last few decades, whether they be designed to accommodate or to frustrate Quebec nationalism, have created an opportunity for Aboriginal leaders to campaign for initiatives to address Aboriginal concerns.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, it can even be argued that political and opinion leaders outside Quebec have at times

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72 For instance, two Liberal MPs, Charles Caccia and Sergio Marchi, declared that that Accord constituted "a review-view mirror vision which may have been valid generations ago, [an] outdated [definition of Canada] . . . primarily satisfied with only depicting our people's past and our country's history . . . Millions of Canadians are left out who do not identify with either English or French" (quoted in Alan Cairns, "Political Science, Ethnicity and the Canadian Constitution," in David Shugarman and Reg Whitaker, eds., *Federalism and Political Community: Essays in Honour of Donald Smiley* (Peterborough: Broadview, 1989), 124.

73 Thus, the 1982 constitutional repatriation and revision, ostensibly designed to respond to Quebec, afforded Aboriginal leaders the opportunity to secure recognition of "existing aboriginal and treaty rights" in section 35 of the new Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In effect, an important breakthrough for First Nation claims took place under Trudeau's tenure. Nonetheless, Trudeau's own attitude to recognition of Aboriginal claims was revealed in his fierce opposition to the provisions of the Charlottetown Accord that had been secured by Aboriginal leaders.

seemed to endorse Aboriginal objectives in order to counter the claims of Quebec nationalists. Finally, international opinion has proven to be much more sympathetic to Aboriginal claims than to those of Quebec nationalists.

As a result, at least the vocabulary of Aboriginal nationalism has entered mainstream Canadian politics. "First Nations" has become a generally accepted term; even the federal government routinely uses it.<sup>74</sup> The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *People to People, Nation to Nation*, forthrightly elaborates proposals through which Aboriginal Peoples would be formally recognized as nations and would control "national governments."<sup>75</sup> Treaty negotiations are now underway with respect to land and governance questions at around 80 "tables" bringing together Aboriginal and government representatives in different parts of Canada.<sup>76</sup> A new territory, Nunavut, has been created specifically to provide Aboriginal autonomy: 85 per cent of the territory's population is Inuit. Under an agreement with the federal and British Columbia governments, the Nisga'a people would be formally recognized as citizens of the Nisga'a nation and their government would have supreme law-making authority in key areas.<sup>77</sup>

Nonetheless, these accommodations to Aboriginal nationalism have real limitations. The Nisga'a Agreement is highly unpopular with public opinion in British Columbia and has been the subject of widespread condemnation by politicians and commentators, precisely because it directly contradicts the idea of Canada as a single nation. After being formally embraced by the responsible federal minister, Jane Stewart,<sup>78</sup> the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples promptly fell from public view. As to Nunavut, it remains a territory of the federal government and, as such, does not directly challenge the now prevailing view that federalism cannot be based on

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74 Alan C. Cairns, "Searching for Multinational Canada: The Rhetoric of Confusion," (unpublished paper), 9.

75 "A first crucial component of the renewed relationship will be nation rebuilding and nation recognition. All our recommendations for governance, treaty processes, and land and resources are based on the nation as the basic political unity of Aboriginal peoples. Only nations can have a right of self-determination" (*Renewal: A Twenty-Year Commitment*, Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996], 5).

76 Peter H. Russell, "Constitutional Politics in a Multi-National Society," *Cité libre*, Fall 2000, 59.

77 Ibid.

78 Minister Stewart outlined an "action plan" for implementing the Report ("Notes for an Address by the Honourable Jane Stewart on the occasion of the unveiling of 'Gathering Strength—Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan,' Ottawa, Ontario, January 7, 1998").

cultural or national difference. The ill-fated Charlottetown Accord did contain measures through which Canadian federalism would require a new level of government structured on the basis of Aboriginal Peoples but was, of course, massively rejected in a referendum.

Beyond that, whatever its limitations, the acceptance of Aboriginal nationalism in Canadian politics has not served the larger cause of multinationalism by restoring the former role of binationalism or recognition of a francophone nation. Indeed, the two dimensions have remained very much in competition. At most, Canadian political life has simply exchanged one form of internal nation for another. This, in turn, points up the greatest challenge facing multinationalism in Canada: it seeks to bring together fundamentally opposed notions of the "nation." This contradiction, which once again is unique to Canada, has also been largely overlooked by the theoreticians of Canadian multinationalism.

### **Contradictory Bases of Canadian Multinationalism**

Unlike the old notion of Canadian binationalism, the new multinational idea seeks to combine two very different conceptions of nation: nations that originated with white settler colonies, while subsequently acquiring other populations, versus nations that consist of Aboriginal Peoples. As best as I can determine, once again Canada is unique in this—at least among the states with which it is normally compared.

The differences between the two conceptions of nation are obvious, but no less profound for that. The Quebec and Acadian nations have seen themselves as distinct nations for centuries; the idea of Aboriginal nations, at least in its contemporary form, is a phenomenon of the last few decades. The nations of Quebec, Acadia and, if need be, anglophone Canada, share a common European heritage that continues to form the basis of concepts of justice, authority and the good society. The First Nations claim a very different heritage, which produces a different conception of the appropriate political order.<sup>79</sup> The criteria for determining membership in the nation are not the same. Nor is the role of language in contemporary life of the nation. At the beginning of the twentieth century, 60 Aboriginal languages were spoken in Canada; now only four are regularly spoken. According to the Assem-

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79 See the argument in Menno Boldt and J. Anthony Long, "Tribal Traditions and European-Western Political Ideologies: The Dilemma of Canada's Native Indians," in Menno Boldt, J. Anthony Long and Leroy Little Bear, eds., *The Quest for Justice: Aboriginal Peoples and Aboriginal Rights* (Toronto:University of Toronto Press, 1985), 333-46; and Richard Sigurdson, "Canada as a Multi-National Federation: Promises and Problems" (unpublished paper).

bly of First Nations half of Aboriginal adults and three quarters of Aboriginal children do not know an Aboriginal language.<sup>80</sup>

Beyond that, there is a profound asymmetry in the political resources and infrastructures enjoyed by the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Nations. Thus, the discourse of equality and nation-to-nation negotiation lends itself reasonably well to relations between the Quebec nation and the rest of Canada and even the Acadian nation and the rest of New Brunswick. But the disparities between Aboriginal nations and the rest of Canada are simply too great for this discourse to hold.<sup>81</sup> If anything, it is highly deceptive. Finally, the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal nations are not well differentiated territorially.

In short, the “three-nation” conception and similar versions of a multinational Canada seek to equate fundamentally different conceptions of the nation. Not only do they lack theoretical coherence, but they cannot provide the bases for an effective social movement. Typically, adherents to the multinational cause have been longtime sympathizers with a specific form of nation, whether it be Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. They have difficulty sharing a common discourse, let alone agreeing on programmatic goals.

In sum, Canadian state nationalism has served, both directly and indirectly, to undermine the historical basis for recognition of internal nations within Canada, focused on a francophone nation centred in Quebec. A new form of internal nation, based on Aboriginal Peoples, has emerged but it has secured only limited recognition. Nor has its relative success served to give new life to the older sense of internal nation. Rather than allies, the two have been competitors, effectively stultifying each other. This internal contradiction goes a long way to explaining the failure of theorizations of Canadian multinationalism to have an impact on Canadian political life.

### **Constructing a Multinational Order**

Among critics of a multinational Canada there is a common fear that any movement in this direction will be self-reinforcing and could lead straight to the break up of Canada.<sup>82</sup> Yet, this ignores the extent to which members of minority nations may have dual identities: their national identities are coupled with continuing identification with Canada as a whole. Rather than leading to the abandonment of Canadian identity, recognition of minority nations could have quite the opposite effect since it would show that minority national identities

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80 FCFA du Canada, *Parlons-nous! Dialogue* (Ottawa: 2001), 32.

81 Cairns, “Searching for Multinational Canada,” 12.

82 See, for instance, Sigurdson “Canada as a Multi-National Federation.”

are indeed legitimate in Canada. The dramatic post-Meech surge in support for Quebec independence was driven, not by some recent shift of power to Quebec, but by the perception that there was no place in Canada for those who identified with Quebec.

Still, there are some hard questions about a multinational order that would need to be faced. Defining Canada in terms of its internal nations, if only in part, may cause an estrangement and weaken the sense of common civic responsibility among Canadians. Thus, it would be important that the members of the respective nations continue to have some direct involvement in common political institutions, if only to pursue their distinct objectives, and that these institutions be perceived as operating fairly.<sup>83</sup> Perhaps there could be established a purely "functional citizenship" that would in turn support a "constitutional patriotism."<sup>84</sup> Recognition of rights and distinctiveness could be secured on a reciprocal basis, creating a process of mutual recognition.<sup>85</sup>

Once it is established that Canadian federalism cannot be based on 10 equal provinces but must come to terms with a wide variety of internal nations, then the door is open to highly complex institutions. Conceivably, all this could be costly for the weaker minority nations—in effect, for Aboriginal ones.<sup>86</sup> Yet, it is hard to see how these concerns justify the obstinate pursuit of a vision of a unitary nation-state which, by all indications, is doomed to failure.

## The Challenge of Multinationalism

The fact of the matter is that while many states are multinational in their composition very few of them actually function as multinational states.<sup>87</sup> Switzerland is often cited as a model yet it hardly qualifies: it

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83 See the discussion in Kymlicka, *Finding Our Way*, 171-81.

84 François Rocher, "Citoyenneté fonctionnelle et État multinational: pour une critique du jacobinisme juridique et de la quête d'homogénéité," in Michel Coutu, Pierre Bosset, Caroline Gendreau and Daniel Villeneuve, eds., *Droits fondamentaux et citoyenneté. Une citoyenneté fragmentée, limitée, illusoire?* (Montreal: Les Éditions Thémis, 2000), 201-35.

85 Michael Ignatieff, *The Rights Revolution* (Toronto: Anansi, 2000), 120.

86 Cairns, "Searching for Multinational Canada," 18.

87 Resnick cites as examples of multinational federations Switzerland, Belgium, Spain, India and "until recently" Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union (Resnick, "Toward a Multinational Federalism," 71). In effect, he follows Kymlicka's 1995 treatment of Switzerland (*Multicultural Citizenship*, 13). In *Finding Our Way*, Kymlicka includes Switzerland with Belgium, Spain, Russia, India, Malaysia and Nigeria (128 and 135). For his part, Ferran Requejo restricts the list to Belgium, Canada, India and Spain in "Federalism and the Quality of Democracy in Plurinational Contexts: Present Shortcomings and Possible Improvements. The Case of Catalonia" (unpublished paper).

does not even have internal nations. Spain does not recognize its multinationalism to any real extent. Nigeria has been cited, but its federalism is resolutely territorial. Malaysia might be seen as multinational on the basis of the central state's asymmetric relations with the two Borneo states, although the official state discourse has sought to implant a new resolutely Malaysian national identity. Belgium and India would clearly qualify as states that function on a multi-national basis. They, of course, do not have the distinctively Canadian situation whereby the territorial principle of federalism has competed with, and ultimately defeated, the notion that federalism might accommodate cultural and national difference. Not only was federalism based on the latter principle from the outset, but all the units do possess such distinctiveness. Yet, neither state may be attractive models for those who prize high levels of political stability.

However, there is a case of a multinational state in the making which Canadians might find especially inspiring: the United Kingdom. While remaining a unitary state, the UK has devolved significant powers to Scotland, and to a lesser extent, to Wales, creating a regime that is highly asymmetrical. Thus, the UK has not been stymied by the problem which is so frequently cited to argue multinationalism's impracticability in Canada: the asymmetry between Quebec and the rest of Canada in preferences for the roles of federal and provincial governments.

Yet, these reforms have been possible precisely because multinationalism itself has a legitimacy that it does not in Canada. Britain's political culture has long been firmly multinational, as can be seen in the unquestioned practices of maintaining distinct sporting teams for Wales and Scotland, organizing the British military along national lines, or issuing Scottish notes through the Bank of Scotland. Any of these practices would be inconceivable in Canada. For that matter, the very term "nation" is regularly used by Britain's political leadership. That too is inconceivable in contemporary Canada.

For its part, Canada remains undeniably multinational in its underlying composition; indeed, its "internal nations" are more mobilized than ever before. In 1995, the most important of these nations came breathtakingly close to a mandate for secession. If only for this reason, Canadian political theorists have been in the forefront of theorizing the multinational state. Yet, these schemes remain no more than that: speculative schemes whose circulation is essentially limited to the academy.

As we have argued, Canada's political institutions show little evidence of multinationalism. Indeed, Canada has lost the historical traditions upon which multinationalism might have been fashioned. Binationism, or at least the recognition of a Quebec nation, has fallen victim to state nationalism and the new principles it has put in place:

that federalism is exclusively territorial and that all cultural difference should be equated within multiculturalism. The limited progress made in accommodating Aboriginal nationalism has not brought the Canadian polity any closer to a comprehensive multinationalism; the inherent tensions between Quebec and Aboriginal nationalism have been greatly heightened by the ways in which each of them has been treated by the Canadian state.

And yet, if Canada has not joined the very small circle of formally constituted multinational states, neither has it joined the far larger circle of nation-states. Too much of the population refuses to see itself exclusively, or even pre-eminently, in terms of the Canadian nation.

Given this state of affairs, it has been tempting to suggest that in fact Canada has transcended the alternatives of nation-state and multinational state to constitute something totally new: a "post-modern state" that points the way to an emerging world cosmopolitanism. Flattering as such a notion may be, it is fundamentally mistaken. Instead of creating something new Canada is simply caught in an impasse between two established notions of the state, and the nation: the attempt to establish a Canadian nation-state has run up against Canada's underlying multinationalism. On the basis of present trends, rather than being the harbinger of something radically new Canada seems headed for quite a different distinction: to be among the last states to try to become a nation-state, and to risk its very existence in the process.