

Halved By Our Horizon? Journeys into the Pluralism of Identity Implications for Canadian Foreign Policy

I. Issue of Focus: My Global Youth Fellowship (GYF) is a *preliminary examination* into the nature and relationship of multiculturalism/diversity for Canadian foreign policy. Furthermore, my Fellowship examines whether another model for defining some aspects of Canadian foreign policy is needed, one that gives more attention to the pluralism of identity (*i.e.* multiple identities and affiliations) as opposed to multiculturalism/diversity alone; that is, are we halving our horizons (*i.e.* limiting ourselves) by rationalizing foreign policy through the lens of multiculturalism/diversity or is it time to move beyond this towards a more pluralistic framework which incorporates the relevance of the many ways people see and define themselves (*e.g.* ethnicity, religion, race, culture, class, gender, profession, politics, *etc.*)?

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II. Methodology: The formal period of this investigation took place from September 2006-April 2007. Two major highlights of the GYF research included: (a) *Interviews* with experts/leaders on multiculturalism, diversity and foreign policy. These experts/leaders came from politics, government, civil society, academia, journalism *etc.*; (b) *Comparative dimension:* interviews were undertaken with experts/leaders in Canada, the United Kingdom (U.K.) and South Africa.

Investigation into the GYF issue of focus assumed four important stages: (a) Background Research and Development of Interview Instruments; (b) Interviews with experts/leaders in Canada, the U.K., and South Africa, and Site Visits to Relevant Institutions (*e.g.* the apartheid museum); (c) Formal Feedback Opportunities (*e.g.* presentations) and Knowledge Development (*e.g.* attendance at conferences); and, (d) Synthesis of Findings.

III. Major Accomplishments & Deliverables:

Knowledge Development and Networks: Deeper knowledge of GYF policy issue of focus and connected into network of experts/leaders on matters related to my GYF issue of focus.

Knowledge Sharing and Policy Impact: Examples include:

- **Featured guest on Ottawa radio program** “A Luta Continua...” CKCU FM 93.1
- **Panel Presentation at Third Annual Maytree Leadership Conference 2007:** Panel Presenter on “A New Multiculturalism: Moving the Discourse Forward” with Michael Adams (Author/President, Environics), Dr. Jean Lock Kunz (Associate Project Director, Policy Research Institute), Dr. Mohammed Qadeer (Professor Emeritus, Queen’s University), and Ms. Marina Jimenez (Reporter, The Globe & Mail)
- **Publication:** “Minority Views: A Review of Canada Among Nations 2006: Minorities and Priorities” *Literary Review of Canada*, Vol. 15, No. 6, pp. 10-11 (July-August 2007)
- **Panel Presenter at 76th Annual Couchiching Summer Conference 2007:** Panel Presenter on “What Does Citizenship Mean in a World Without Borders?” with Pierre Pettigrew (former Minister of Foreign Affairs); Irvin Studin, (author of *What is a Canadian?*); and Drew Fagan (Assistant Deputy Minister, DFAIT)
- **Final Synthesis Report** delivered to the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation detailing key findings and policy recommendations

IV. Results

(a) *Multiculturalism and Diversity*: Interviewees were encouraged to share their views on multiculturalism and diversity in order to understand the domestic context of these issues in their countries. Furthermore, this was done to infer whether the issues raised in the domestic realm could have possible implications for foreign policy beyond the ones articulated by respondents when they were asked questions directly linking multiculturalism, diversity and foreign policy ((as in (b) below)).

Generally, interviewees spoke of issues around the following interrelated themes: contending with **Historical “Solitudes;” National Identity** in the face of immigration and globalization; practical challenges of **“Integration” & Economics**; the sharing of **Power and the “Business of Possession;”** representation in **Institutions**; and, misconceptions generated or sustained by **Politicians, the Media and the Popular press**.

(b) *Multiculturalism, Diversity, and Foreign Policy*: On the whole, several respondents across all three countries agreed that multiculturalism and/or diversity are important for foreign policy. Many believed that this was true because they saw foreign policy as a means of **defining and expressing what and who their country represented abroad** (that is, what their country “stood for”) as well as what their country’s **national interests and values** are. At the same time, however, some interviewees were not always sure if there was a direct relationship between multiculturalism and/or diversity and foreign policy but many believed some sort of relationship between these variables existed. Furthermore, many also felt that their countries were already taking advantage of the multicultural and/or diverse make-up of their countries for foreign policy purposes, at least to a certain degree.

The following are some of the major interrelated concerns that arose during the interviews: **Living by Example and Looking Inside**, or how a state behaves towards its own multicultural and/or diverse population is the basis of its foreign policy credibility inside and outside its borders; **Role of Diasporas and Transnationalism** in the development, shaping, or execution of foreign policy; instigating and/or exacerbating **Conflicts and Ignorance** of foreign policy actions; unconscious or subliminal **Racism in Foreign Policy**; the “closed door” nature of **Foreign Policy and Dialogue**.

(c) *Pluralism of Identity and Foreign Policy*: Generally speaking, the results were varied. In many cases, the points raised by interviewees represented extensions of those introduced in (b) around multiculturalism, diversity, and foreign policy; sometimes these points represented contradictions. This is expected when one is testing new ideas. Yet, however varied the points noted by interviewees, they still provided novel directions for foreign policy.

The following are some of the major interrelated issues and concerns that arose during the interviews: the pluralism of identity fosters appurtenance with **Multiple Societies and Peoples**; encourages **Global Interdependency**; stimulates **New Ways of Thinking** about foreign and domestic policy that may or may not have interesting outcomes; advances a **“Hospitality of Difference”** within Canada and outside of Canada; identifies and respects **Internal Pluralisms** in communities; speaks ultimately to the **Nature of Democracy**; presents a challenge to finding **Unity in Plurality**; and makes foreign policy **Complicated**

V. Moving Forward

Like many other “Western” democracies, Canada is undergoing a period of “reappraisal.” This is because Canada is endeavouring to adapt to a world that is globalizing *outside* of its borders. Given the nature of globalization as well as the realities of economic demography, Canada is also simultaneously attempting to adapt *inside* its borders. One of the manifestations of the latter is the increasing multicultural and diverse make-up of Canada’s population. What has made Canada distinctive *vis-à-vis* its contemporaries, however, is the broad support multiculturalism and diversity has enjoyed in Canada, and (to a certain degree) in Canadian foreign policy. Yet, with this distinctiveness comes responsibility. As an important scholar-*cum*-politician once noted, “If we cannot make a multicultural community composed of two national language groups, three founding peoples, and constituent communities from every nation in the world, no one can. No one will.”¹

Multiculturalism, diversity, and the pluralism of identity are not antithetical concepts; they are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. If, generally speaking, foreign policy is the encompassing expression of a country and its interests, values, and ideological objectives, then it is appropriate that multiculturalism, diversity, and the pluralism of identity figure prominently. To a certain degree, this is true of Canada. However, in the reappraisal Canada is presently going through (and will be going through in the coming decades), there exist risks and opportunities: *Risks*, that Canada will become complacent and worse yet turn a *volte face* to the very possessions from which it garners its international credibility; and, *Opportunities* to continue to build on the distinctiveness of its situation with regards to multiculturalism and diversity, with the value-add of the pluralism of identity.

What, therefore, are some general ways forward on this for our foreign policy?

- *Knowledge Development and Deeper Institutionalization* of multiculturalism, diversity, and pluralism of identity in government departments and civil society organizations involved in foreign policy issues. For example, moving beyond the *Muslim Communities Working Group* at DFAIT to encompass broader and representative issues around multiculturalism, diversity, and the pluralism of identity. This includes: fostering the role of Diasporas and transnational networks; deepening research on multiculturalism, diversity and pluralism of identity; outreach, and opening of doors for people to get involved in foreign policy beyond the “usual suspects” (such as established NGOs and Diaspora groups); collaborating with institutions working on immigration issues; finally, hiring of more diverse peoples. Real opportunity with the “Global Centre for Pluralism.”
- *Education*: Investments to continue to nurture educated youth and adults who are nationally and globally informed and conscious. This means among other things: representativeness of scholarly information (historical and international).
- *Engagement (Civic and Global)*: Investing in the power of individuals and communities to make connections with each other and the world outside of Canada with the objectives of dialogue to finding the commonalities that bind. For example, building on existing models, and encouraging fostering exchange of pluralisms for both youth and adults. These programs should be well supported with high public and international recognition.

¹ “Canada in the World: The Challenges Ahead” Beatty Lecture, McGill University. [Michael Ignatieff](http://michaellignatieffmp.ca/?p=69) <http://michaellignatieffmp.ca/?p=69>. [Internet accessed on August 30, 2007].

VI. Post-Fellowship

- *Immediate:*
 - “Canada Meets Germany Forum for Young Leaders 2007-2008”: a policy and cultural exchange to foster mutual cooperation between Canada and Germany
 - Climbing Mount Kilimanjaro for a local grass-roots charity, “Out of Afrika”
- *Short-Term:*
 - Fellowship dissemination (book, articles, book chapters, op-eds, *etc.*)
 - Exploring consulting and freelancing opportunities
- *Medium-term:* Doctoral education