

SE News

HD **Multiculturalism vs. 'multihomelandism'; Many of the issues we attribute to multiculturalism have more to do with citizens' attachments to homelands (actual and wished-for) outside Canada**

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LP Following the recent release of 2006 census results showing the astonishing scope of immigration and diversity in Canada, scores of pundits have questioned whether Canadian multiculturalism is up to the challenge of coping with all this diversity. A typical litany of "problem cases" for multiculturalism might feature events such as the Hérouxville ban on stoning women; racist comments at the Bouchard-Taylor commission on reasonable accommodation; and MP Ujjal Dosanjh's testimony at the Air India inquiry that he still faces threats from Sikh extremists intent on using violence to carve out a national homeland in India.

TD But one of these things is unlike the others. Matters of culture, roughly speaking, the first two may be; not so when it comes to the extremism that has cost Mr. Dosanjh and many other Canadians dearly. What's at stake in the latter case is the nature of some citizens' activities in pursuit of a political aim abroad. And this problem concerns not the diversity of cultures within Canada but the nature and impacts of our citizens' active attachments to diverse homelands (actual and wished-for) outside Canada's borders.

It's important to notice these facts clearly. They may help in trying to disentangle culture from the many red herrings that make discussions about multiculturalism even more fraught than they already are. But equally pressing, they should lead us to recognize that "multihomelandism" is a pervasive Canadian reality in its own right -- one that poses a panoply of hard questions whose common elements often go unrecognized in public debate.

Take, for instance, the uproar that ensued last spring in British Columbia when politicians from most major parties attended a Sikh parade in which floats celebrated one of the masterminds of the 1985 Air India bombing. Or the controversy that has attended other politicians' attendance at Tamil community events widely believed to be fundraisers for the LTTE terrorist group fighting for an independent homeland in Sri Lanka. Both of these incidents call into question whether Canada's politicians are adequately committed to identifying and denouncing those fringe elements of ethnic minority groups who pursue homeland agendas through violence.

A broader look at other recent flashpoints of "multihomelandism" fills out the picture. Recall the public outcry about "citizens of convenience" -- and the Harper government's promise to review dual citizenship laws -- in the wake of the August 2006 evacuation of Canadian citizens from Lebanon.

We have also seen concerns about "divided loyalties" arising over the French citizenship of Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion and Governor General Michaëlle Jean. Here too, not culture but the nature of citizens' attachments to countries outside Canada was where the controversy lay.

It may well be, as pollster Michael Adams' recent book *Unlikely Utopia* proclaims, that Canada leads the world in making multiculturalism work within our borders.

But even if that's so, we certainly don't distinguish ourselves when it comes to grappling with issues related to our citizens' attachments to a truly global range of homeland countries.

The fact that many of our citizens are actively tied to homeland countries on every continent is more than just a by-product of Canada's country-blind immigration policies from the 1960s onward. It's also a vital component of national prosperity in decades ahead. In the face of an aging population and labour-force shortages, only by continuing to

attract immigrants from all continents will our prospects remain strong. In an age of increasingly fast and intense international travel and communication, Our immigrants' home-country attachments are, perhaps even more than in decades past, robustly active.

But politicians, pundits and the public only sporadically confront the implications of these facts -- and when they do, the reaction often takes sensationalized, hostile or opportunistic forms. Proposals to restrict dual citizenship, or to ban dual citizens from holding high office, are hardly constructive options in a world of increasing international movement -- particularly given Canada's need to recruit talented immigrants to choose our country over others.

That truth is tacitly acknowledged in the recent federal tabling of "lost Canadian" legislation, which extends dual citizenship to those unjustly deprived of it. The product of lengthy and wide-ranging House Committee hearings and internal bureaucratic review, the proposed amendments to the Citizenship Act are notably silent with respect to the concerns about the "unfair" exercise of dual citizenship that arose in the post-Lebanon evacuation hysteria. Further review of the details of Canada's citizenship policy in an era of transnational movement may well be called for -- but within the context of a frank public acknowledgement from the government that dual citizenship is here to stay as a Canadian reality, and that its rights and protections apply equally to citizens of western and non-western origins alike.

Hard thinking about the implications of citizens' attachments to foreign homelands is needed on other fronts as well. The temptation for politicians and parties to pander to diaspora group pressures for extremist foreign policy positions toward homeland countries is a troubling reality in Canada. And notwithstanding the unfairness of holding immigrants - particularly those from non-western countries -- to higher standards of citizenship than native-born Canadians, there indisputably needs to be more candid discussion about the value and purpose of Canadian citizenship as something that poses substantive obligations to this country, whatever other national attachments our citizens may have.

In short, what is needed across all levels of Canadian society is

a far more sustained grappling with the realities of "multihomelandism."

We are overdue for a shift in national conversations, away from the current almost-exclusive focus on multiculturalism toward questions of what being Canadian means, here at home, in a world of increasing international movement and engagement.

Natalie Brender, formerly a policy adviser to the Hon. Bill Graham as minister of foreign affairs, is writing a book called *Our Home and Native Lands: How 'Multihomelandism' Matters to Canada*.

ART Photo: Jana Chytilova, The Ottawa Citizen / A Sikh parade in Ottawa. Many of our citizens are actively tied to homeland countries on every continent. ;

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IPD Opinion

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These Countries Have the Most Well-Traveled Citizens. 10 Photos. by Caitlin Morton. September 25, 2017. Why does it seem like some people get to travel the world while the rest of us are stuck at our desks? Were they just born lucky? As it turns out, they might just be living in the right country.Â But this actual stat may make you cry at your desk: U.S. citizens only make 0.2 trips a year per person. Here, a look at the countries with the most well-traveled citizens. We're already considering a major relocation. Share via Twitter.Â And they have the time to do it, too, with four weeks of annual work leave for employees over the age of 20, and five weeks of leave for employees under 20. Getty. 7. Singapore. Singapore's citizens make 1.44 trips a year per person. Most of the debate over multiculturalism centers around whether or not public multiculturalism is the appropriate way to deal with diversity and immigrant integration. Recognition in the context of multicultural education is a demand not just for recognition of aspects of a group's actual culture but also for the history of group subordination and its entire experience. The term multiculturalism is most often used in reference to Western nation-states, which had seemingly achieved a de facto single national identity during the 18th and/or 19th centuries.[10] Multiculturalism has been offi