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REGIONAL CONTEXT

Multiculturalisms in Crisis: Reflections from Southeast Asia

Johan Saravanamuttu

I. Introduction

Even a cursory rendering of contemporary developments in social relations, within states and among states, will reveal the myriad unresolved conflicts between nationalities, ethnic, and religious groups. In an era when globalization has unleashed not just destabilizing economic forces but political and social ones as well, questions of ethnicity, religion, and nationality are becoming unravelled again, in yet another cycle of revivalisms. The spiral of violent events that have occurred since the September 11, 2001, terror attacks on New York seem to confirm that in the 21st century, human foibles remain embedded within the unresolved religious and cultural conflicts of the global system. Theorists such as Anthony Smith (1986) have written about ethnic revivalism and the reemergence of the “*ethnie*” in political and social discourse. However, much academic work remains somewhat unhelpful about possible philosophical or practical directions for the different practices of multiculturalism across the globe.

More countries have begun to introduce policies of multiculturalism to cope with the huge influx of various ethnic communities from former colonies or associated countries. Others have extended refugee status and political asylum to nationals from countries that are festering with political and social instability. Such developments have been compounded by the regular movement of human beings across national borders for better life chances. Thus, it seems imperative for the global community to think carefully and to fashion better policies of multicultural practices across the globe. Multicultural practices need

not be uniform — indeed, the term itself suggests an imperative for a plurality of practices.

The liberal philosopher Will Kymlicka has offered the notion of “multicultural citizenship” as a model for accommodating minority rights. Non-Western thinkers, such as Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im, Anwar Ibrahim, and Abdurrahman Wahid, believe that issues of human rights can be usefully addressed within the parameters of Islamic discourse, although they may differ on practical solutions. It appears that for the practical resolution of the crisis of multiculturalisms today, notions of cultural relativism must now engage more consciously with universalist notions based on humanist traditions found in both the East and the West. Models of assimilation (melting pot) and liberal conformity within democratic discursive practices are often as flawed as models of non-integration (salad mix and consociationalism) more often found within non-liberal discursive paradigms.

This essay deals with contemporary multicultural practices — or lack thereof—in the region of Southeast Asia, often seen as the confluence of many cultures and civilizations in the past. Implicit in contemporary social and political practices in the region today are various discursive (or discourse-based) practices of ethnic and religious accommodation, sometimes transparent, sometimes opaque, but more often than not, flawed, in a contemporary world where the values of democracy, human rights, and social justice demand a stricter adherence to principles and practices that valorize human difference and diversity.

The essay examines problems recently faced by Indonesia arising from independence struggles and religious revivalism in East Timor and Aceh, and Islamic separatism in Southern Philippines as well the problem of national minorities in Burma. It posits that ethnic multicultural accommodation models of politics are rare, poorly practiced, and sometimes never even applied in Southeast Asian states. The essay does not attempt comprehensive accounts of these cases as much as tease out whether current policies and past actions accord with humanist approaches to multiculturalism. It is also important to interrogate not just state-centric perspectives on multiculturalism but also those that emanate from civil society. Malaysia is profiled as an example of a multicultural polity in Southeast Asia.

Which discursive practices are suitable for Southeast Asian countries or, vice versa, how can Southeast Asian models offer positive or negative lessons for the discursive practice of multiculturalism in other

parts of the world? What sort of dialogic discursive practices are imperative for arriving at “overlapping consensus” (John Rawls) or the “politics of recognition” (Charles Taylor)? Are we seeing an ominous slide of Southeast Asia toward distinctly nonprogressive interpretations of Asian or Islamic models of discursive practice? Or can we tap into the wellsprings of the enduring wisdom of Eastern and Western traditions to address the practices of multiculturalism today? These are some of the issues and questions that are explored.

II. Discursive Disjunctures of Multiculturalisms

A. A Brief History

My premise is that discourses and practices of multiculturalism remain highly diverse, hence my preference for the plural to depict the discursive terrain. The embeddedness of cultural pluralism in social and political milieus that have evolved historically through colonial, postcolonial, and now global developments would mean that models of multiculturalism vary enormously.

Yet postcoloniality and globalization virtually ensure that a humanist liberalism has become a fundamental tenet of social relations within and among nations. This is not to say that varying shades of political regimes do not try to distance themselves from liberal discourse. However, the fact is that “democracy” as a political construct either underpins or is a point of departure for the whole spectrum of political practices across the globe. At the end of the Second World War, the victorious allies imposed a liberal or neo-liberal global order on the vanquished with considerable — although not unqualified — success. The United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the plethora of U.N.-sponsored agencies carried that liberal-humanist spirit. However, with the emergence of the Cold War and the unfolding of postcoloniality, the liberal ethos faced challenges from Marxism and Third World ideologies that illuminated the myriad injustices perpetrated by so-called liberal political regimes across and within nations. Some of these ideologies rejected the recognition of pluralism in the interest of the greater good of a larger humanity. Stated famously by Marx in his essay *On the Jewish Question*, ethnicities were the manifestation of a false consciousness that needed to be set aside in the imperative to create larger, more purposeful national entities.¹ Paradoxically, the inexorable spirit of nationalism also infected

Western liberal regimes, such as the United States, with its melting-pot notion of national integration to create an “American” consciousness.

In the Third World, the “*ethnie*” was harnessed to drive nationalist struggles, in the process exacerbating the contradiction of “national” minorities existing within territorially-defined national formations.² Thus emerged, in Furnivall’s phrase, “plural societies,” which only shared a common economic or “market” discourse but not a deep social discourse, making it quite understandable why national integration projects became the order of the day with the onset of independence. By that same token, postcoloniality also allowed for the suffusion of civil liberties and human rights into inchoate democratic political practices. Not surprisingly, the elusive search for “national unity” within these proto-democratic discursive frames was mired by cultural conflicts and compromises.

With the collapse of the communist regimes in the 1980s and the ascendancy of a renewed, “post-modern” liberalism, the recognition of difference has again seized the political imagination. Not least of all, this is because of the unintended consequences of globalization, which has impelled the influx of Asians, Africans, Eastern Europeans, and a host of other ethnic communities into former colonial empires in Europe and North America in a new wave of immigration. Hence, inevitably, the Western world has had to introduce a new discursive paradigm of multiculturalism within its increasingly antiquated practice of liberal democracy.

B. The Liberal Debate

Liberalism has been at the core of Western political practice since the Enlightenment. Restated recently by John Rawls, “political liberalism” has re-established itself, *a fortiori*, at the center of Western practices of democracy in Europe and North America in various permutations. Rawls’ theory of justice, in my view, has clearly taken liberalism to a new high ground of liberal democratic political practice. Drawing on the best traditions of liberal thought and positing justice as “fairness,” Rawls basically offers the formula of proceduralism, devoid of substantive value, as the answer to the problem of dealing with differences.³ Without going into the niceties of Rawls’ theory, this appears, at first glance, to be eminently persuasive as a way of dealing with societies that are multicultural.⁴ Will Kymlicka has extended the Rawlsian thesis furthest in this respect in applying it to a “liberal theory of

minority rights.”⁵ The underlying argument offered here is that there is no necessary conflict between “individual” and “collective” rights. Furthermore, Kymlicka takes the moral high ground by arguing that liberalism is eminently qualified to accommodate values beyond the usual narrow range assumed by liberal proceduralism:

Various critics of liberalism — including some Marxists, communitarians, and feminists — have argued that the liberal focus on individual rights reflects an atomistic, materialistic, instrumental, or conflictual view of human relationships. I believe that this criticism is profoundly mistaken, and that individual rights can be and typically are used to sustain a wide range of social relationships. Indeed, the most basic liberal right—freedom of conscience—is primarily valuable for the protection it gives to intrinsically social (and non-instrumental) activities.⁶

He goes on to posit that liberal democracies can and do accommodate ethnic and cultural differences, whether they be multinational and/or polyethnic states; that is, comprised of nationalities or migrant ethnic groups. Three forms of group-differentiated rights are identified, namely, self-government rights, polyethnic rights, and special representation rights. Kymlicka argues that constitutional provisions, institutional mechanisms, and special laws and regulations can accommodate all of these group rights, as they do in a country like Canada. The partial proof of his assertion is found in the evolution of Canadian multiculturalism. Canada has evolved from a narrow linguistic biculturalism to a *de facto*, if hesitant, acceptance of Quebec as a “distinct society,” and the accommodation of some claims of aboriginals as “first nations.” In 1972, a policy of multiculturalism was officially proclaimed, which included recognizing the rights of all immigrant communities.

An important contribution that Kymlicka brings into multicultural discursive practice concerns the conflation between internal restrictions imposed by groups on their members and the external protections sought by groups. The liberal perspective merely endorses external protections to preserve broad attributes of these groups but not illiberal restrictions that a group might impose on its own members. In other words, liberal democracies of the Kymlicka persuasion would allow an “exit voice” for members of a group who are unhappy with its internal restrictions. Herein lies the rub: What if these internal restrictions are necessary elements for the group’s survival? This is the

issue raised by Charles Taylor when he states, “Kymlicka’s reasoning is valid (perhaps) for existing people who find themselves trapped within a culture under pressure, and can flourish within it or not at all. But it doesn’t justify measures designed to ensure survival through indefinite future generations.”⁸

A greater *problematique* of “fairness” lies within liberal philosophy itself, however. A liberalism that tries to transcend “difference-blindness,” as Taylor phrases it, may still be a reflection of one hegemonic culture:

This last attack is the cruellest and most upsetting of all. The liberalism of equal dignity seems to have to assume that there are some universal, difference-blind principles. Even though we may not have defined them yet, the project of defining them remains alive and essential. Different theories may be put forward and contested—and a number have been proposed today—but the shared assumption of the different theories is that one such theory is right.⁹

Taylor has no real answer to the problem but reiterates the primacy of “equal worth,” namely, “that we all recognise the equal value of different cultures; that we not only let them survive, but acknowledge their worth.”¹⁰ This is an admirable statement against all forms of ethnocentrism, but, to my mind, it still begs the question as to how one goes about ensuring that equal worth is practiced. One could adopt a Habermasian intersubjectivity approach or make an absolute virtue of the authenticity of various practicing cultures,¹¹ but in my view only a constructivist approach, which recognizes the embeddedness of differing cultures in particular historical contexts, can take us out of the liberal dilemma. I will return to this point later.

III. Malaysian Consociationalism: A Non-Liberal Paradigm

A. The Quintessential “Plural Society”

There is, of course, an “other” reality that militates against the hegemony of liberalism. It is not only a reality that lies in the margins of political discourse and practices but one that is alive and kicking, especially outside of Western societies.

Notions of multinationalism and polyethnicity existed in many Asian contexts, as suggested earlier. “Primordialism”¹² and “commu-

nalism"¹³ were thought to be the basic leitmotif or features of Southeast Asian postcolonial "plural"¹⁴ societies. The heterogeneity of cultures was virtually a given in many of these territorial social formations where colonial political practices of divide and rule, with some modification, were seemingly grafted onto new modern constitutions in the flush of independence that followed.¹⁵ Actual practice naturally differed enormously from what was written down in the constitutions. In time, the constitutions were revised, rewritten, or simply replaced or heavily amended to accommodate the political reality and predilections of succeeding regimes.

In Indonesia, for example, in order to accommodate the diverse communities forming the new Indonesian Republic after the departure of the Dutch, a policy of *bhinneka tunggal ika* (unity in diversity), based on the national ideology of *Pacasila*,¹⁶ was implemented. In Malaysia, an "ethnic bargain" was struck among the three major ethnic communities and suffused into a secular state at the point of independence. Both countries, one could say, recognized and practiced multicultural politics and, to a great extent, both models of multiculturalism continue to inform political practice in those two countries today.

As a consequence, the discourse of multiculturalism in Southeast Asia (although no such appellation is usually used)¹⁷ took its departure from the notion of the quintessential "plural society," as depicted by J. S. Furnivall in his book *Colonial Policy and Practice*. A plural society, such as Indonesia or Malaysia, had the following putative features:

- The presence of different ethnic groups brought together only for commercial ends.
- People meet typically in the marketplace and there is no real social mixing and cross-cultural contact.
- An economic specialization and an ethnic division of labor obtains.
- Society lacks shared values and a "common will."
- Society is held together by dint of colonial power.
- The plural society is inherently an unstable social form.

While admittedly orientalist, this colonial perspective and model of Furnivall has been used to great effect to analyze the early political developments and contemporary political practices of a country like Malaysia by writers such as Ratnam (1965), Milne (1967), Means (1970), Vasil (1971), Milne and Mauzy (1978), Von Vorys (1975), Nagata (1979), and many others. Although nuances are evident, there

is an implicit tendency of these analyses to picture the political discourse of the plural society as ethnicity with a negative sign, i.e., in its discursive practice as primarily “communalism.”¹⁸

Communalism was seen as a debilitating, negative phenomenon of every ethnic group working for its self-interest or, whenever possible, domination of the *Other*. Such a realist perspective of social and political relations was taken even further by post-Furnivall theorists of the plural society such as M. G. Smith (1965) who, basing his work on the Caribbean, began to put the accent on the *ethnie* elements of the plural society, discarding altogether the pragmatic considerations of mutual gains, and depicting it as a recipe for democratic disaster. For writers like M.G. Smith,¹⁹ plural societies are marked by “mutually incompatible” social structures, values, and belief systems as well as by systems of action at the “cultural core,” and thereby merely a formal diversity in the basic system of compulsory institutions.

These societies therefore have the following characteristics:

- internal ethnic integration of ethnic groups, and consistency within closed sociocultural units.
- a political order in which one or more cultural sections are subordinate to the others.
- social and political relations defined by “dissensus” and “conflict.”

A corollary is that a plural society is regulated by force, the implication being that democratic practices would not strictly be possible. Such a view, based on Smith’s analysis of the British West Indies, was as unsympathetic as it was ahistoric in the double sense that the author failed to factor in the larger picture of the colonial practice of divide and rule, which had reinforced the plural divisions in the first place, and the colonial relinquishment of political responsibility to elites who were usually ill equipped to deal with the political dilemmas at the point of independence.

Dutch political scientist Arend Lijphart, whose theorizing interestingly takes its point of departure from European experiences, has provided a somewhat more liberal and sympathetic treatment of the plural society.²⁰ Lijphart’s fundamental points were that ethnically divided societies could live with their ethnic cleavages, that conflict could be contained by elites and leaders of the ethnic communities, that democracy is possible within such ethnically divided societies, and that formal institutional arrangements — such as federalism and proportional representation — could be used to contain conflict. He

suggested four conditions for the successful implementation of what he termed “consociationalism,” or consociational democracy, namely:

- grand coalition of all ethnic groups.
- mutual veto in decision making.
- ethnic proportionality in allocation of opportunities and offices.
- ethnic autonomy, often through federalism.

The corollary to Lijphart’s argument was that the adversarial democracy of the Anglo-American variety was unsuitable for plural societies. Writers like Milne and Mauzy have shown that consociationalism can be applied with some modification to Malaysia.²¹ I am inclined to accept this thesis but would stress that looking at Malaysian politics through the lens of consociationalism does not provide the full picture. It fails to include important class and political economy dimensions, and, most importantly now, Islam as a factor central to the current phase of Malaysian politics.²²

From the perspective of multiculturalism, the plural society paradigm *qua* consociational democracy has a rather static quality about it. It is pragmatic and realist but remains essentially within the discourse of conflict management (as opposed to that of conflict resolution) and does not account sufficiently for the role of human agency in positive (or negative) dynamic change over time. Put differently, it is basically a *status quo*, unreflexive approach to ethnic relations. Because social and political relations change dynamically over time, this has affected not only pluralism as a discursive practice but also, concomitantly, the understanding and advocacy of multiculturalism by political and social groups within Malaysia. It is important to briefly review and interrogate the evolution of multicultural practice in Malaysia and the state of the art today.

B. Malaysian Multiculturalism: State of the Art²³

Initially the practice of multiculturalism fitted to a “t” the plural society mold described above. The Alliance government, which was composed of the three dominant communal parties of Malaya, crafted the famous formula of inter-ethnic accommodation between Malays, Chinese, and Indians as the basic social contract of the newly-independent Malayan state formation. Something of the M. G. Smith concept of ethnic domination by one group existed. In this case, it was the Malays as *primus inter pares*, based on the notion of *ketuanan Melayu* (Malay hege-

mony). Hardly anyone questioned the fact that the Malays were an originary ethnic community who provided the basis of the polity prior to the arrival of colonists.²⁴ However, there has always been only a grudging acceptance, if not rejection, of a secondary citizenship by the non-Malays.

This concept of *ketuanan Melayu* could not be applied to Sabah and Sarawak, which joined Malaysia in 1963, where non-Malay indigenes were in the majority (Kadazan) or were the largest plurality (Iban). Hence, the term *Bumiputera* (sons of the soil) was coined to accommodate the change. The National Front government today incorporates political parties representing all ethnic communities with the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), which acts as the dominant political force. And today, as in the past, *Bumiputeras* get special rights and affirmative action in educational and employment opportunities, usually up to the point of their numerical strength. In other words, a rough proportionality is maintained.²⁵ It should be stressed that all communities largely accepted, even if grudgingly, the positive discrimination policies as correctives for the economically disadvantaged *Bumiputeras*. A defining moment in Malaysian political history occurred on May 13, 1969, when communal riots broke out in Kuala Lumpur after a general election, eventually leading to the suspension of parliament. Remarkably, some twenty-two months later, in 1971, democratic processes were restored but new restrictions were imposed on civil liberties through the Sedition Act, among others. More importantly, the new five-year plan of 1971–76 introduced a plethora of measures to further uplift *Bumiputera* economic conditions. A quiescent non-*Bumiputera* minority was hardly able to object when presented with the hard facts of continued *Bumiputera* “backwardness,” now touted as the root cause of the May 13 event.

In a sense, the M. G. Smith form of consociationalism was applied *a fortiori* post-1969 and may have further justified the excesses of an authoritarian state, as illustrated by the crackdown on 107 social activists and opposition politicians in 1987. But a major difference in political mobilization has perhaps occurred since the 1980s. It is evidenced by the rise of middle class forces from all ethnic groups within a nascent civil society, which have protested illiberal legislation ranging from the amendments to the Societies Act (1981) to the Official Secrets Act (1986), and they continue to oppose legislation like the Internal Security Act, which allows for detention without trial.²⁶

The state, on its part, introduced in the 1990s a putative shift in national objectives enunciated in Mahathir's Vision 2020 policy calling for:

- national integration and the development of a "*Bangsa Malaysia*" (Malaysian "race").
- creating a psychologically liberated and secure Malaysian society.
- developing a mature and democratic society based on communitarian democracy.
- establishing a mature liberal and tolerant society.
- establishing a caring society and caring culture.
- ensuring an economically just society.
- establishing a moral and ethical society.

Any astute observer of politics would dismiss as grandiose, even if praiseworthy, these objectives, and, indeed, little has changed in the implementation of actual policies since the dismantling of the New Economic Policy (NEP) and its replacement, in 1990, by the New Development Policy (NDP). This notwithstanding, competing notions of discursive political practice emanating from the state and civil society will necessarily have implications for the manner in which Malaysian multicultural practices will eventually evolve.²⁷

The Mahathir government of 21 years continues to maintain a grand coalition dominated by UMNO, along with policies of "carrot and stick" vis-à-vis ethnic minorities in Peninsular and East Malaysia. The challenge to UMNO-dominated consociationalism now comes from an emerging civil society, which seeks to dismantle authoritarianism and ethnically divisive policies. Civil forces have largely put their weight behind the *Reformasi* movement, which began after the sacking of Anwar Ibrahim as deputy prime minister in 1998. A complication arises, however, from PAS's more aggressive insistence on the introduction of an "Islamic State" in a post-Mahathir regime and, indeed, its de facto (if watered-down) implementation in the states of Kelantan and Terengganu.²⁸ The concern of non-Muslims is that PAS seems to want to substitute *ketuanan Melayu* with a new *ketuanan Islam*. Has the discourse of multiculturalism any kinship with the notion of a theocratic state? How will the politics and evolution of multiculturalism be acted out in this current historical phase? This discussion will be revisited in the concluding section of the essay.

IV. The Lacunae of Multicultural Practice in Southeast Asia: Some Highlights

No country in Southeast Asia today has an explicit policy or formal practice of multiculturalism. However, it could be argued that three countries — Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore — have fashioned national policies that could be considered as under the multicultural rubric. Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that all manner of internecine ethnic conflict has afflicted the region in contemporary times, given that no national formation can be said to comprise a homogenous culture. In this section, a few case studies will be highlighted of the continuing surfacing and re-surfacing of ethnic-cum-religious rebellions, separatist and irredentist tendencies that have peppered the contemporary politics of the region. The burden of analysis is not intended to be comprehensive but instead to show how the absence of the politics of recognition as a generic phenomenon lies largely behind the Southeast Asian condition of continued crisis in ethnic relations.

An intellectual and empirical effort by Ted Robert Gurr to document *minorities at risk* has shown rather conclusively that few countries in the world are culturally homogenous. Significantly, most countries have few or no considered strategies or national policies to deal responsibly or effectively with minority populations. In his second volume of reports, Malaysia has figured as an example of what Gurr calls “ethnopolitical conflict.”²⁹ Admittedly, Gurr’s quantitative and statistical approach tends to gloss over nuances in different societies but the point remains that ethnic and cultural deprivation is a crucial and fundamental root cause of most conflicts in the world today. Based on this research, virtually all Southeast Asian countries today have minorities at risk or in political contention with the state, as shown in Table 1. It is evident from the Table that Southeast Asian countries are either multinational formations or polyethnic states or both.

Table 1

Country	Minority	Type (population)
Burma	Kachins	indigenous (710,000)
	Karens	ethnonational (3,311,000)
	Mons	indigenous (946,000)
	Rohinya (Arakanese)	indigenous (1,314,000)
	Shans	ethnonational (4,257,000)
	Zomis (Chins)	indigenous (993,000)
Cambodia	Vietnamese	national minority (340,000)
Indonesia	Acehnese	ethnonational (3,620,000)
	East Timorese	ethnonational (852,000)
	Papuans	indigenous (1,065,000)
Laos	Hmong	indigenous (210,000)
Malaysia	Chinese	communal contender (5,652,000)
	Dayaks	indigenous (628,000)
	Indians	communal contender (1,675,000)
	Kadazan	indigenous (607,000)
Philippines	Igorots	indigenous (1,088,000)
	Moros	ethnonational (3,886,000)
Singapore	Malays	communal contender (520,000)
Thailand	Chinese	ethnaclass (6, 604,000)
	Malay-Muslims	national minority (1,801,000)
	Northern hill tribes	indigenous (600,000)
Vietnam	Chinese	ethnaclass (1,067,000)
	Montagnards	indigenous (1,296,000)

Source: Gurr, *Peoples versus States* (2000), pp. 322–336.

A. The Acehese Struggle for an Islamic State

One of the most intractable struggles for independence in the world is in Aceh. Situated at the northwesternmost part of the island of Sumatra in Indonesia, Aceh was a veritable center of Islamic civilization from the early 17th century onward until Dutch subjugation was more or less imposed by the turn of the 20th century. In many writings, Aceh has been thought to be an originary “Malay” state since not only was Malay the language spoken but a generic Malay polity was also in evidence.³⁰ Under Sultan Iskandar Muda, local customs (*adat*) were harmonized with Islamic *Sharia*. The long and costly war with the Dutch officially lasted from 1873–1903 and resulted in an inordinate number of casualties.³¹ According to a Dutch historian, it was the country’s worst war:

The Netherlands had never fought a war greater than the one against Aceh. In terms of the time of its duration this war can be called the eighty years war and in terms of casualties—more than 100,000 dead—it was a military event that has no equal in the history of our land. For a century, Aceh War was at the centre of our diplomatic, military, internal and international politics....³²

Continued resistance to Dutch rule was manifested in outbreaks of violence throughout Aceh in the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s. However, during the Dutch period, Islamic education through *madrasahs* flourished and during the Second World War, the Persatuan Ulama Seleruh Aceh (All-Aceh Scholars' Association) was able to expand its activities and influence considerably. By the time the Dutch and leaders of the new Indonesian Republic were ready to agree to independence in 1949, Aceh was already virtually an autonomous region. The sympathetic interim government of Sumatra established a new province of Aceh in place of the wartime military region but the new Indonesian Republic refused to recognize this and ended Aceh's autonomy in 1950.³³ Subsequently, the "*Darul Islam*" (House of Islam) challenge to Indonesian *pacasila* secularism by Javanese Muslims provided a good pretext for Aceh to join in the Sumatran-based rebellion against the Indonesian Republic in 1953.

The rebellion failed but Christie makes an important point about the centrality of the quest for an Islamic state in the Aceh uprising:

By joining Darul Islam and becoming part of the Negara Islam Indonesia, Aceh was linking itself to an Indonesia-wide project — which included parts of Sulawesi and Kalimantan — to replace the Republic of Indonesia by an Islamic state. As the Manifesto issued by the Acehese rebels to justify their insurgency made clear, the defining of this objective of an Islamic state was not a matter of detail but of overall, fundamental principle. For the Darul Islam rebels of Aceh, the key point was that Islam was indivisible.³⁴

After the rebellion of 1953, the domination of the Indonesian state continued despite the overwhelming support of Acehese and Sumatrans in general for the Islamic Party, Masyumi, in the 1955 general election. This had been Indonesia's only nationwide election up until the collapse of Suharto's New Order in 1998 and the subsequent 1999 general election. Admittedly, the Indonesian state had accorded Aceh a degree of autonomy as a "special region," including a special role for

Islam, but resentment against “Javanese imperialism” remained high.³⁵ The *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (Movement for Acehese Independence, or GAM) was formed in 1976. In that same year, GAM declared Aceh’s independence from Indonesia on December 4. The movement’s objectives are manifestly to form an Islamic State of Aceh (Negara Islam Aceh) based upon the argument that Aceh never participated in the 1949 agreement of independence and that its link to the Indonesian Republic was achieved by force, not consent.

In the aftermath of *Reformasi* politics and Suharto’s ouster, the Aceh struggle for independence has perhaps been given a new breath of life. GAM, headed by Hassan Tiro, who lives in exile in Sweden, is said to command a force of several hundred thousand soldiers.³⁶ A new group has also been formed called Referendum Information Centre (SIRA) under the leadership of students. Its demand is that Jakarta allows for a referendum on Aceh’s independence. Former President Abdurrahman Wahid’s conciliatory though ineffective approach towards Aceh³⁷ will probably be replaced by a more hardline stance by the new President, Megawati Sukarnoputeri.³⁸ It is unlikely that any new policies will assuage the angst created by the mounting levels of violence, deaths, and other incidents nor quell the demand for an Acehese future that is not locked into the Indonesian Republic. It is also patently clear that, in the context of our discussion of multiculturalism, the national policy and strategy of Indonesian “unity in diversity,” whether of the New Order or present order, has failed comprehensively in Aceh. Another example of failure in Indonesia is the different and yet mirror image case of East Timor, which will be discussed next.

B. The East Timor Independence Movement

East Timor, situated on the northeastern side of the island of Timor in the Indonesian archipelago, has become the world’s newest independent state. An unending series of tragic events brought matters to a head in the closing years of the 20th century to give independence to this predominantly Christian micro-state of 850,000 people,³⁹ a former colony of Portugal. Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975 and occupied this eastern half of the island. History will record the horrendous genocide that was committed by the Indonesian military against the Timorese people. It was responsible for the decimation of about one-third of the population in direct killings, disappearances, and due to other effects of military occupation.

In the aftermath of the fall of Suharto, the Timorese independence movement was resuscitated and a referendum on August 30, 1999, under United Nations oversight, was conducted for the East Timorese to choose autonomy within Indonesia or full independence. An overwhelming 78 percent of the 450,000 voters chose the latter. Further tragedy ensued, however, when some 330,000 people were forced into the mountains and 150,000 were forcibly moved to West Timor and corralled into refugee camps in the wake of the terrorist activities of militia and soldiers who opposed independence.⁴⁰ On August 30, 2001, a general election was held under U.N. auspices for an independent East Timor government. The Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretilin) captured a majority of 55 seats in the 88-member constituent assembly, far outdistancing its rivals: Democratic Party (seven seats), Social Democratic Party and Associacao Social-Democrat (six each), Timorese Democratic Union, National Timorese Party, Klibur Oan Timor Asuwain, People's Party of Timor and Christian Democratic Party (two each), and Socialist Party of Timor, Liberal Party, and Christian Democratic Party of Timor (one each).⁴¹

The Timor story marks the hubris of an Indonesian state bent on imposing an "imperialist" domination over a people who clearly did not "belong" to the Indonesian state. Despite its supposed practice of multicultural secularism, nothing that the Indonesian government did in twenty-five years of its presence gave any confidence that such a policy was actually applied to East Timor.

It was clearly a case of too little, much too late, when former President Habibie's eleventh hour offer of autonomy was finally made. We also saw in the Aceh case that treating it as a special region without addressing the core concerns of the most significant political forces was doomed to failure. In East Timor, not only was no such offer made in the early stages of Indonesian occupation, the unconscionable acts that followed occupation also guaranteed an enduring resistance and a lasting struggle for independence. The capture and later sentencing of East Timor's foremost "freedom fighter" (and *de facto* leader), Xanana Gusmao, to 20 years in jail proved to be a further rallying point for self-determination, rather than something that would douse it. Undeniably, the role of the international community in profiling the plight of the East Timorese, such as awarding the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996 to Bishop Carlos Belo and Foreign Minister-designate Jose Ramos-Horta, was an important element in East Timor's ultimately successful quest for independence but such actions were never a guarantee of it.⁴²

Some may argue that the Timorese victory was, in the end, pyrrhic. The tiny state, tucked away in one corner of Indonesia, with a per capita income of US\$300 and an 80,000 diasporic population now has to cope with the Herculean task of economic reconstruction. As one observer put it, "Even if rapid economic growth of say, five percent per capita is achieved (approximately comparable to the record under the 'normalization period' of Indonesia's current rule), it would take about twelve years to catch up with Indonesia's current income level."⁴³ However, the social cost of remaining in Indonesia, even as an autonomous region, would have been not only psychologically unbearable but would have also led to the prospect of continuing guerrilla war and resistance.

East Timor highlights governmental failure to implement even a modicum of multicultural practice as an imperative to forging reasonable relationships among groups having somewhat different historical memories but shared destinies of nationhood. It is also a hideous example of how identity politics, or the cultural politics of difference,⁴⁴ was totally ignored by an authoritarian, supposedly multicultural state. The East Timor case may also suggest that state-sponsored multiculturalism might be inapplicable under circumstances where historical memories are clearly divergent.

C. The Bangsa Moros' Quest for Autonomy and Statehood

This is arguably one of the most complicated cases of liberation movements in the world today. It certainly is the most complex case in Southeast Asia. The *Bangsa Moro* (Moro Nation) quest for both independence and autonomy was in the past not unlike that of Aceh. However, because of the intervention of numerous historical developments, the situation has become highly complex while at the same time generating interesting dynamism in a positive direction for multicultural discursive practice.

The Moros of Mindanao, the large south island of the Philippines, resisted Spanish colonialism, beginning in the 16th century, for some 300 years, and the military might of another colonist, the United States of America, for almost half a century. In the contemporary period, resistance to the Philippine government persisted right through the 1950s till today. Like Aceh, the initial struggle was for an Islamic state but developments, especially since the 1970s, have seen the dominant Moro National Liberation Movement, led by Nur Misuari, settle for

Bangsa Moro autonomy inside the Republic of the Philippines. The other significant player, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), persists in its quest for an independent Islamic state. Developments in 2001 – 02 saw Nur Misuari and the MNLF being isolated after an unsuccessful revolt, and the MILF signing a Malaysian-brokered peace accord with the Arroyo administration.⁴⁵ The third most significant player today is the radical militant Abu Sayyaf group, which has carried out dramatic terrorist activities in recent years to become the target of a U.S.-assisted anti-terrorism campaign in 2002.⁴⁶

Two significant events in the modern period gave rise to the present configuration of the Moro liberation movements, namely the Jabitah Massacre (Corrigidor Incident) in 1968 and the Manili Massacre of 1972. Details the Jabitah Massacre remain vague. In gist, the Philippine army executed a group of 28–64 Moro recruits in March that year on Corrigidor Island because of the leakage of its plan to use the trainees to attack the Malaysian state of Sabah (claimed by Philippines) in Borneo.⁴⁷ This move by the Marcos government earned the ire not just of the Moros but also the Malaysian government, which has since periodically provided support for Moro liberation groups.

The second event was the Manili Massacre in June 1971, when about 65 Muslims — men, women and children — were murdered by so-called *Ilagas* (Rats)⁴⁸ at a mosque in Barrio Manili, North Cotabato. This incident led to the subsequent intervention of Libya in the Moro peace process but the immediate effect was hostilities between Muslims and Christians on the eve of the November 1971 election. Not long after, Marcos imposed martial law in the Philippines in September 1972. An important point to note is that as a result of Spanish and U.S. settlement and national integration policies, the Christian population of Mindanao had far outstripped that of Muslims. By 1980, Moros only constituted about 23 percent of the 11 million people on the island.⁴⁹

The conflict management phase came about in the post-Marcos period. Following the “People Power” revolution in the Philippines in 1987, a new constitution was ratified with specific provisions made for an Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and the creation of a Regional Consultative Commission (RCC) to draft the legislation for the ARMM.⁵⁰ The RCC was deeply flawed. Not only did the MNLF not participate in it but when the required plebiscite was held in 1989, only four of the thirteen provinces and none of the nine cities proposed by the ARMM were involved. A new process was set in motion by the Fidel Ramos administration in 1992, culminating in the

Peace Agreement of September 1996 between the Philippine government and the MNLF. Unfortunately, the Peace Agreement involved no other Moro liberation group, in particular, the MILF. The Organization of Islamic States (OIC), with Indonesia as chair, brokered this agreement. It provided for the creation of a Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD) and the Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD). The SZOPAD was comprised of fourteen provinces and nine cities specified in the 1976 Tripoli Agreement “to be the focus of intense peace and development efforts” over the next three years.

The Agreement provided for a Consultative Assembly of 81 members, composed of the chair as head, the governor and vice-governor of the ARMM, the 14 provincial governors, 9 city mayors, 44 members of the MNLF, and 11 sectoral representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The SPCD was to be assisted by a *Durul Iftah* (Islamic advisory council) and a Joint Monitoring Committee with oversight over the ceasefire and continuing peace process. In practice, as Ronald May notes, the regional autonomy scheme has hit many rough patches and snags, too complicated to fully discuss here.⁵¹ Two developments, however, require our attention, even if brief: the MILF’s continuing quest for an Islamic state and the emergence of the Abu Sayyaf.

After a number of stalled initiatives between the government and MILF, hostilities broke out in February 2000 in Cotabato when the Army of the Republic of the Philippines’ military offensive killed some 70 MILF fighters and forced the evacuation of 16,000 villagers. Two camps of the MILF fell in July 2000, and Hashim Salamat reportedly took refuge in Malaysia, where he issued a call for *jihad*. However, in April 2001, the Arroyo administration declared a ceasefire with the MILF. At the time of this writing, the MILF was scheduled to have peace talks with the government following the signing of a peace accord in Kuala Lumpur.

The Abu Sayyaf, on its part, achieved notorious prominence in March 2000, when it took 53 people hostage and announced ransom demands, followed by the beheading of two hostages. In the meanwhile, another Abu Sayyaf group kidnapped 22 people, including nine Malaysians, three Germans, two French, two South Africans, a Lebanese, and two Filipinos, from the Malaysian tourist resort island Sipadan. The long and short of it was that several of the hostages were released after ransom payments of up to US\$1 million per hostage, fol-

lowed by a military blitz by the Estrada government on the Abu Sayyaf hideouts at Basilan and Jolo in September. Reportedly, 100 Abu Sayyaf members were killed and about 50,000 civilians fled to Malaysia. But late that year the Abu Sayyaf took new hostages, an American and a Filipino, and the hostage-taking activities of the group have continued into 2002.⁵²

The Bangsa Moro case suggests several important elements that must enter into our discussion of multiculturalism. Where states are willing to institute serious negotiations to accommodate cultural difference, even the botch of history may be overcome in limited fashion. The willingness of post-Marcos governments to step-up the politics of recognition in the south ushered in the current phase of conflict management efforts, which, while deeply flawed, appear to be ongoing. The exclusion of different groups from time to time in the instituted peace process is a glaring flaw that would minimally require attention. How one should deal with the Abu Sayyaf is highly problematic given its alleged *Al-Qaeda* connections. In a post-September 11 environment, the Moro uprisings may no longer be defined as a simple matter of the nonrecognition of an ethno-religious group but something with wider implications for the global community.

A multi-faith peace track based on the Bishop-Ulama Forum is clearly derailed under the present political environment while a discussion of federalism for the Philippines, initiated by Nur Misuari in 1997 and called the "Mindanao Agenda," failed to pass muster. These failures notwithstanding, new dynamisms for the peace process had proceeded cautiously during 2000 when several prominent senators proposed a constitutional convention on the federal idea as a solution to the Moro conflict. Two NGOs, the Federal Movement of the Philippines and *Lihuk Pederal Mindanao*, have now appeared on the scene to consolidate pro-federal groups and individuals.⁵³

D. The Karen Quest for an Indigenous State

The final case study is the Karens, an indigenous people of Burma, arguably one of the most multinational or polyethnic states in the world, given the number of distinct minorities. One author identified some 21 ethnic groups.⁵⁴ Thus, if there is any candidate more suitable for a policy of multiculturalism, it is Burma; but no such policy was followed in the old "Union" of Burma nor in the military-run state of Myanmar. The Karens inhabit Lower Burma, which borders Thailand.

The various Karen sub-groups combined would form the second largest minority of about four million in the Burman state.⁵⁵ Dr. San C. Po, the acknowledged “father” of the Karen nation, who made the first call for an independent Karen state, led the modern Karen nationalist movement in the early years. Thousands of Karens were arrested or killed as British “collaborators” by the Burma Independence Army (BIA), with the tacit approval of Japan during the Second World War. Christie records the “loyalist” tendencies of the Karens and their betrayal by Britain when it returned to govern Burma, granting independence for a Burman state and ignoring the plight of minorities like the Karens.⁵⁶ Thenceforth, the Karens took their struggle to a separatist plane. In its 1945 “Memorial,” the Karen leaders declared, “The Karens . . . have come to feel very strongly that they must strike out on a course of their own to preserve their national ideals and develop into a progressive and useful state of Burma in the British Commonwealth of Nations.”⁵⁷ The Karen National Union (KNU) was formed in February 1947 after attacks by government militia earlier that year. By June, the KNU had declared the formation of the “Free State of Kawthoolei.”

Under General Ne Win’s rule, the Karen communities were forcibly relocated into Lower Burma from 1968 – 1975. Anti-communist and pro-communist factions had begun to split the KNU and, in time, the demand for secession was dropped. Instead, the KNU successfully built up a large “liberated zone” along a 400-mile stretch of the Thai border, thriving on black market trade. The KNU was in alliance with the Burmese pro-democracy forces in the 1980s but was subjected to an attack in 1992 by the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) forces, with disastrous consequences for the civilian population. Tens of thousands of Karens were again forcibly relocated or fled to Thailand. About one-third of Karens have been displaced from their homes, with some 120,000 in Thai refugee camps.⁵⁸ The one thing that the SLORC has been able to negotiate and enforce since the late 1980s, by dint of military superiority, has been a series of ceasefires with ethnic liberation groups and minorities, including with the ex-KNU 16th Battalion of the Karen Peace Force (since 1997). But these ceasefires are hardly long-term solutions to the fundamental problem of the quest for self-determination by these groups.

The Karen case illustrates the lack of any dynamic developments or any inclination by the present Burmese state to constructively address the problems of national minorities, let alone introduce policies of multiculturalism. It is the most extreme case in our survey. At the present

time, when a pariah military regime administers the country and continues to ignore the results of the general election of 1989, the chance of any movement toward multicultural practice is nil. An orientation favoring democracy constitutes the minimum condition for multiculturalism.

V. Conclusion: Towards Constructivist Resolutions

This essay began with an examination of the liberal debate on multiculturalism and went on to examine the non-liberal model of consociationalism found in Malaysia. An examination of the actual situation in various parts of Southeast Asia, focusing on hard cases, reveals a deep crisis in multicultural practice, or worse, a total lack of adherence to any such policy. This is so despite the fact that all Southeast Asian national formations were profoundly multicultural historically and remain so in their current manifestations.

A particularly important point in the politics of recognition is the suggestion that ontological differences stemming from culture and religion are often deeply incompatible, especially when survival of a culture or religious formation is at stake. Liberal multicultural strategies are clearly stymied by this *problematique*. The discourse on the "Islamic State" is the prime focal point for the discussion to draw further insights into this problem. It is undeniable that the Islamic state issue has become one of the major factors leading to intractable conflicts not just in Southeast Asia but over the globe generally. The implications of this discussion will also become obvious for ontological differences stemming from seemingly irreconcilable differences of ethnicity so common in Southeast Asia.

In the cases of Aceh and Bangsa Moro, where an "Islamic State" is a central discursive tenet of conflict, it appears that the "secular" state to which the struggle is addressed has no conceivable resolution to this problem without a paradigmatic switch in its form of governance. Is this at all a possibility? A realist answer is clearly no. However, a constructivist answer may be that coexistence is possible. Much has already been written about the obsolescence of the so-called Westphalian "nation-state," a 17th century creature of Western civilization. Indeed, many states (including multicultural Canada, I would argue) deviate considerably from this pristine Westphalian model today, although employing many of its symbols. Malaysia, likewise, as a par-

allel example from the postcolonial Third World, is no Westphalian nation-state in practice.

At the very least, it is undeniable that most countries in Southeast Asia are multinational and polyethnic states, **not** nation-states. For example, Indonesian multiculturalism has faced the prospect of non-reconcilable differences that came from East Timor and perhaps Aceh too, but has so far coped with other separatist and fissiparous tendencies in its huge archipelago. But I would argue that there remains no thorough-going recognition in the current Indonesian system for the distinctness and equal worth of its many cultures through mutually agreed constitutional and legal processes. Malaysia has similarly only coped with the distinctness of its ethnic groups through processes of political negotiation, legal and constitutional guarantees, and provisions for cultural rights, via the path of an authoritarian political model. But could countries like Indonesia or Malaysia, while still maintaining their models of politics, extend the recognition of distinctness and respect for equal worth to accommodate the demand for an "Islamic State"? This is indeed the primary locus of debate in Malaysian politics today as we saw in our earlier discussion. In principle, I do not see why multiculturalism as discursive practice cannot accommodate an Islamic state (read, "society") that practices its own *Sharia*. A federal system, the use of proportional representation, and the holding of plebiscites are various ways one can settle such problems based on the "human right" for "ontological" groups to exist as distinct societies.⁵⁹ The problem is rather more with whether Islamic discourse can accommodate multiculturalism.

What has been termed "fundamental" political Islam insists that a distinct Islamic state based on the *Sharia* be implemented for all. There is apparently no compromise on this question for fundamentalists. This notwithstanding, it is hardly deniable that great divergences of opinion do exist within political Islam today. We witnessed this in our case study of Bangsa Moro and even Aceh. In Islamic intellectual discourse, we can find a particular "liberal" strain of political Islam advocated by such intellectuals as Abdurrahman Wahid, Anwar Ibrahim, and Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im.

Wahid or "Gus Dur," the former president of Indonesia, leads the world's largest Islamic movement, *Nahdatul Ulama* (Renaissance of Religious Scholars), of about 35 million followers. Not only was Gus Dur associated with democratic forces and activities in the Suharto days but when he assumed the reins of the presidency in October 1999,

he assiduously continued to advocate the separation of the state from religion, and a progressive, pluralistic, and tolerant Islam. The three basic premises of Gus Dur's thought and Islamism may be summarized as follows:

- a cosmopolitan Islam which must be creatively and at times substantially reinterpreted or reformulated in order to be responsive to the demands of modern life.
- the belief that Indonesian Islam must reflect and respond to its diverse religious and ethnic history and communities.
- the conviction that in the Indonesian context, Islam should not be the state religion but rather an inclusive religious, democratic, pluralistic force.⁶⁰

Another advocate of modernist political Islam is Anwar Ibrahim, the former Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia. Anwar argues in his book *Asian Renaissance* (1996) that an Islamic civil society (*Masyarkat Madani*) is not only conceivable but imperative for Muslim and multi-ethnic countries like Malaysia. The difference between the civil society of the liberal or Western model and the Islamic model is the underpinning of religion or, minimally, spiritualism:

The civil society we envisage is one based on moral principles, where governance is by rule of law not human caprice, where the growth of civic organization is nurtured and not suppressed, where dissent is not stifled, and where the pursuit of excellence and the cultivation of good taste takes the place of mediocrity and philistinism.⁶¹

A third example of Islamic intellectualism comes from Abdullahi An-Na'im, a former activist of the Republican Brotherhood in the Sudan, led by modernist Islamist Mohamed Taha.⁶² An-Na'im, now a professor of law, advocates an Islamic "reformation" and a system of *Sharia* that can provide the basis for political life in Muslim societies in the contemporary world. He is categorical in rejecting the introduction of the existing *Sharia* into the public sphere although it may be adequate for the private sphere:⁶³

Unless a religiously acceptable case for genuine modernist reform is established, present and future Muslims face only two alternatives: either implement the public law of *syariah*, despite its inadequacies and problems, or abandon it in favour of secular public law. I find neither alternative satisfactory, and hope to reconcile Muslim commitment to

Islamic law with the achievement of the benefits of secularism within a religious framework.⁶⁴

An-Na'im suggests, in essence, that an Islamic reformation can occur through the tradition of *ijtihad*, which is the exercise of juristic reasoning and openness on matters where the Quran and Sunna are silent. More conservative jurists prefer the tradition of *ijma*, which is consensus or closure.

Our discussion has led finally to two broad and plausible conclusions of multicultural discourse. As universalist humanist practice, it can accommodate "distinctness" (such as ethnicities and religions) and, more importantly, universalist and humanist Islamic perspectives can accommodate multicultural practices. In both instances, there must be an insistence on the recognition of equal worth and the possibility of exit voice.

The three Islamic intellectuals either openly or tacitly accept the universality of procedural justice as the basis of discursive practice for Muslims. The insistence on introducing substantive elements of Islam within such a discursive practice need not, therefore, invalidate in principle the full-fledged procedural practice of multiculturalism. Where substantive clashes occur, there is also no conceivable reason why negotiations for coexistence, pivoted on universalist procedural principles, cannot be applied to resolve conflicts. In most cases of breakdowns, it is not the principles of natural justice, shared by all cultures, which are lacking but the political will to apply them even-handedly. Of course, each situation of conflict has to be examined on its own merits and on its own embeddedness of historical memories and shared cultures, and where irreconcilable differences genuinely obtain, the "exit" (as opposed to "voice") of a victimized party cannot be denied. In conclusion, I would argue that reflexive and open-ended constructivism is imperative in addressing the practice of all forms of multiculturalisms in the contemporary world. ●

Notes

1. Marx's idea has interesting parallels with the Islamic notion of "*assabiya*," derived from Ibn Khaldun's notion of group consciousness, and seen as an obstacle to higher "*umma*" (societal) consciousness.
2. Anthony Smith's work suggests that nationalisms in the 20th century were heavily driven by originary *ethnies*, which in my view is mistaken because the so-called *ethnie* itself is very much a social construction or "imagined community," albeit suffused with common historical memories (Anderson 1983).

3. The difference between “procedural” and “substantive” justice has been restated by, among others, Ronald Dworkin (cf. Taylor 1994, p. 56) but harks back to the Aristotelian notion of political justice, the legal aspect of which has been adopted in jurisprudence and is known as the notion of “natural justice.”
4. Various critiques have been levelled at his theory and Rawls, in the 1999 edition of *A Theory of Justice*, has sought to accommodate some criticisms as well as restate his original thesis (Rawls 1999). For an excellent critique of Rawls from the perspective of the “politics of difference,” see Worku 1997.
5. Kymlicka 1995.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
7. The hiving off of one-half of the Northwest Territories to form the 13th province of Nunavut, occupied by the Inuit people, is an example of the evolving character of Canadian multicultural practice. The French attempt to win acceptance of its notion of “distinct society” was a major subject of the failed Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords of 1990 and 1992. The Charlottetown Accord would also have accorded the aboriginals an inherent right to self-government. (See Kymlicka 1998, pp. 147 — 150, and Fleras and Elliot 1992, pp. 167–178).
8. Taylor 1994, p. 41.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 44. See Hopgood (2000) for another statement of the liberal hegemonic project and particularly in respect to American assimilation of native communities. In the Canadian case, an underlying assimilationist model of “Anglo-conformity” was at the heart of Canadian practice until the 1970s. French Canada was successful in resisting Anglo-conformity only on pain of a separatist threat. For Kymlicka, a “national culture” growing out of the interaction of Canada’s “charter societies” (English, French and First Nations) now supposedly underpins Canadian multiculturalism. Others would argue that some form of Anglo-conformity at the informal level still exists. For a sense of the rich and continuing debate on Canadian multiculturalism see Fleras and Elliot (1992) and Kymlicka (1998). For other debates, see Kukathas (1993) for a discussion emanating from Australia, and Seminar, “Multiculturalism: A Symposium on Democracy in Culturally Diverse Societies,” *Seminar* 484, December 1999, for an Indian perspective on the subject.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
11. The comments by Habermas and Appiah on the Taylor essay (Taylor 1994) pertain to these issues.
12. Geertz 1963.
13. Ratnam 1965.
14. Furnivall 1948.
15. One should qualify this by saying that revolutionary postcolonial regimes informed by Marxism also existed in Asia, and in these cases “socialist democracies” supplanted colonial regimes. Typically ethnic and cultural differences were set aside in the push for socialist transformation in such countries.
16. The five principles of this ideology were belief in God, nationalism, democracy, humanitarianism, and social justice.
17. The exception is the recent book by Hefner (2001).

18. The exception in the works cited would be Nagata, who employs a distinctively anthropological perspective, using the concept of “poly-ethnic society” to depict Malaysia. Even so, Nagata admits that “the plural model appears to be the one that approximates most closely to the situation in Malaysia” (p. 224).

19. Not to be confused with Anthony D. Smith.

20. Arend Lijphart 1977.

21. Milne and Mauzy 1978, p. 352ff.

22. For an attempt to go beyond the plural society, see the cultural approach advocated by Kahn and Loh (1992). An important recent effort to look beyond ethnicity and yet not ignore it is Maznah and Wong (2001).

23. A statement I made about the Malaysian polity in 1996 remains largely accurate today: “Malaysia, situated just above the equator, in Southeast Asia has in 39 years since it became independent of British colonial rule become a vibrant economy and a pulsating, if slightly flawed, multicultural democracy. Many writers gave this country little chance of overcoming its ethnic problems, when at independence in 1957, a polyglot ensemble of about 7 million Malays, Chinese and Indians with different cultures, languages and religion—half of whom were migrants—came together to form the country ‘Malaya.’ Even more improbably, this new country, Malaya, enlarged its geographical spread in 1963 to include the British territories of Sarawak and Sabah to form the Federation of Malaysia, which also included Singapore at that time. Singapore left Malaysia in 1965 for political reasons but suffice it to note that the Federation of 13 states of Malaysia has remained intact from 1965 until today” (Saravanamuttu 1996).

24. Cf. the earlier work of Gullick (1958) and more recent work of Milner (1982) on this subject.

25. The exception would be in the civil service and the military where a preponderance of *Bumiputeras* is evident but this imbalance must be contrasted with the non-*Bumiputera* preponderance in the professions and private sector occupations.

26. See my analysis of middle class politics and the political awakening of Malaysian civil society (1992, 2001).

27. I have argued that the new political awakenings in Malaysian civil society has engendered a political culture of peaceful political protest and dissent, in particular with the formation of the Barisan Alternatif (Alternative Front) of opposition forces growing out of the *Reformasi* movement (Saravanamuttu 2001, pp. 106–107). However, the continuous political detention of *Reformasi* activists by the Mahathir government may push especially Islamic activists over the edge of non-violence. Indeed, the government has insisted that its arrests of the so-called “Mujahideen Group” in mid- and late 2001 were for the very reason of their violence potential.

28. Both Kelantan and Terengganu are now under PAS state governments and Kelantan has indicated its intention to introduce “*hudud*” (criminal) Islamic law, which is currently thwarted on constitutional grounds. Terengganu has also introduced various Islamic practices like compulsory veiling for Muslim women. In late 2001, after the September 11 event, the Islamic state issue has captured center stage in political debates in Malaysia. The Prime Minister got into the fray when he suggested that Malaysia was already a practicing Islamic State (“*Negara Islam*”), and governmental ideologue and Law Minister Rais Yatim has echoed this. PAS has called for the matter to be openly

debated as has the DAP, for diametrically opposite reasons. DAP had left the Alternative Front of opposition forces in August 2001 because of disagreements with PAS over the Islamic state issue. Meanwhile, a spokesperson of PAS and former Chief Justice Salleh Abas has argued that Malaysia will not be an Islamic state until it introduces comprehensive *Sharia* Law for all Muslims in the country. See www.Malaysiakini.com, Oct. 6–9, 2001.

29. Gurr 2000.

30. See, for example, Milner (1982) for such an argument.

31. Christie 1996, p. 142.

32. Paul Van't Veer, *De Atjeh-Oorlog* (1969), as cited in Hassan M. di Tiro (1986), p. 62.

33. Christie 1996, pp. 144–148.

34. *Ibid.*, p.151.

35. Hassan Tiro 1986.

36. A GAM splinter faction, called MP-GAM (Majelis Pemerintahan Gerakan Aceh Merdeka), is led by Don Zulfahri, a.k.a. Don Malindo, reportedly based in Thailand. MP-GAM favors Islamic Democracy rather than an Islamic Sultanate, which is presumably favored by Hassan Tiro, who is a direct descendant of the Aceh royalty.

37. See Mally 2000, pp. 160–163.

38. The presence of natural gas resources in Aceh is often cited as a reason for Jakarta's reluctance to part with Aceh. The Lhokseumawe liquid natural gas plant supplies 30 percent of Indonesia's export. See Mally 2000, p. 61, and *Aliran Monthly* 21, no. 7 (2000): 28.

39. 95 percent of East Timorese are Roman Catholic.

40. Taylor 1999, p. xii.

41. See "Daily Highlights," www.un.org/News/dh/20010906.htm, p.3. The presidential election is scheduled for May 2002, after which East Timor will formally end its U.N. trusteeship.

42. Witness how another Nobel Peace Laureate, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, continues to this day to face seemingly insurmountable obstacles to assume her legitimate role as leader of Burma.

43. Hill 2001, p. 84.

44. The second phraseology is preferred by pioneers of the relatively new field of "cultural studies" (cf. West 1993).

45. In early 2002, Nur Misuari took temporary refuge in Malaysia but was later repatriated back to the Philippines.

46. Multiple splits have affected the Moro struggle. The MNLF was formed in 1969 by left-leaning students, and led by Professor Nur Misuari. The MILF is headed by Salamat Hashim, representing aristocratic-conservative Islamists, and officially emerged in 1984 because of a schism between Nur Misuari and Salamat Hashim. The Abu Sayyaf emerged in the 1990s among those disaffected by Nur Misuari's leadership, and is led by the mysterious charismatic leader Abdurajak Janjalani. Che Man (1990, pp. 77–96) has identified three other groups: Bangsa Moro Liberation Organization (BMLO), subsequently renamed Bangsa Muslimin Islamic Liberation Organisation (BMILO), formerly headed by the late Rashid Lucman and now by Yusoph Lucman, his cousin; the Moro

Revolutionary Organization (MORO), founded in 1982, and headed by communist-influenced activists and students; and MNLF-Reformist Group, also formed in 1982, and aligned to MILF and BMOLO.

47. Che Man 1990, pp. 74–75.

48. Armed bands of Christians, usually Ilonggos, who terrorized Muslims (McKenna 1998, p. 151).

49. Che Man 1990, p. 19.

50. See Ronald May 2001, pages 264–269, for an excellent discussion of the peace process and the attendant problems and developments to date. My account draws largely from his.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 267–269.

52. At the time of this writing, two American missionaries have been taken hostage.

53. May 2001, p. 273.

54. These, alphabetically, were: Akha, Burman, Chin, Chiense, Danu, Indian, Kachin, Karen, Karenni, Kayan, Kokang, Lahu, Mon, Nga, Paluang, Pao, Rakhine, Rohingya, Shan, Tavoyan and Wa. See Smith 1994, p. 34.

55. Smith 1994, p. 42.

56. Christie 1996, pp. 53–67.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

58. Steinberg 2001, pp. 191–192.

59. In theory, Kelantan and Terengannu, for example, can become Islamic states within the Federation of Malaysia. However, it would be imperative that these states allow for the “exit voice” of non-Muslims and Muslims alike should they want to eschew Islamic governance.

60. Esposito and Voll 2000, p. 631. Admittedly, Gus Dur failed to resolve the Aceh question although he introduced a truce in the short time he was in power. While counterfactual, there’s no gainsaying that given more opportunity and time, he may have moved in a constructivist direction.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

62. For his beliefs and politics, the Numayry government in 1985 executed Mohamed Taha.

63. Take a relatively uncomplicated matter as equality before the law, which *Sharia*, as practiced today, cannot guarantee. We will take two examples, given by An-Naim, of *Sharia* as applied to “*dhimmis*” (non-Muslims) and women. *Dhimmis* can have freedom of belief and live freely within an Islamic state but the testimony of *dhimmis* is inadmissible in serious cases of *hudud* (criminal law). In civil matters, the testimony of women is admissible but it takes two women to make a single witness (An-Na’im 1990, p. 90).

64. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

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