

# SOFT DIVERSITY, HARD DIVERSITY, IDENTITY, AND CHALLENGES OF DUAL LOYALTY IN CANADA

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Draft

Not for citation or publication

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How shall we think of diversity and identity and related issues of national security and so-called dual loyalties after the events of Sept. 11 2001? Many apprehensions, some old and some new, appear conflated in the new environment. In this essay I would like to outline a basic taxonomy of Canadian diversity, and analyze two approaches to dual (or multiple) loyalties within that framework.

One can begin with a basic dichotomy between soft diversity and hard diversity.

What is **soft diversity**? Think of food, music, art, and other symbols. Soft diversity adds spice and excitement to our lives, while the accompanying “problems” are kept manageable. The last two Governors General of Canada, Adrienne Clarkson and Michael Jean, because of their ethno-racial, linguistic, and immigrant background (and their gender as well) were very positive symbols of soft diversity in Canada. Canada is known throughout the world for dealing well with diversity. At diversity conferences throughout the world one hears the mantra: “We have to learn about managing diversity and dealing with cultural differences from Canada.” The Metropolis Project dealing with Immigrant integration, in its program of annual Canadian and international conferences, incarnates this leading role. No matter what Canadians – especially critical academics – think about Canada’s handling of ethno-racial diversity, this is one issue the rest of the world seems to think Canada has got right.

Canada is an immigrant society. About 17% of Canadians are foreign born. The number in the United States is only 11%. Yet 17% underestimates the impact of immigration on Canadian life – there is a multiplier effect here. Many people who were born in Canada have parents or grandparents who were born somewhere else. They may have a spouse or in-laws born somewhere else. They may have brothers and sisters who have married someone who is an immigrant. The impact of the immigrant phenomenon, especially in our major cities is far greater than 17%. And we just love our soft diversity.

In praising soft diversity, let me be very clear: Serious and interesting problems arise. Some deal with the **intersection of ethnicity, politics, and public policy**. Some years ago Harold Troper and I authored a study about Jews, Ukrainians and the hunt for Nazi War Criminals in Canada. The study dealt with issues of passion, history, justice, communal honour and identity. The ups and downs of conventional ethnic politics are also part of soft diversity. During the last federal election of 2004, a candidate of Chinese origin sought the Liberal party’s nomination in a BC riding. He was defeated by a non-

Chinese candidate preferred by Paul Martin. In general ethnic voting patterns are interesting, and increasingly important in Canada. Some “problems,” like the stacking of nomination meetings, ensue. But they are manageable. They are part of our diversity. Despite this nomination clash in British Columbia mentioned above, there is no major fault line at this point between the Chinese community in Canada and the rest of Canadians, in large part because there are now no international conflicts which resonate, and because the Chinese are making steady progress towards equality in Canada.

Another example has to do with what jurists call “**reasonable accommodation**”. We have a diverse population; every institution in the country, whether a university a hospital or a social service agency, has to reasonably accommodate cultural differences. To fail to do so leaves the institution or government open to legal challenge for unlawful discrimination. This is new. I recall when I attended McGill University in the 1960s, some classes and perhaps tests were held on Saturdays. If you were an Orthodox Jewish student, you had a problem. Times have changed. Now McGill officially reminds professors to be sensitive to the religious obligations of their students, and has in the past supplied lists of all possible religions – large and small – to which this could apply. Ombudsmen are available to defend those rights. In short, McGill professors must make some reasonable accommodation.

Can a Sikh wear a turban and be a member of the RCMP? We Canadians wrestled with that case for a long time. In many ways this was a symbolic debate. There were Sikhs in the RCMP, though they did not wear their turban. But it was an interesting item on the Canadian equal rights agenda, and sparked lots of public debate. By a 2-1 decision of an Alberta court, the decision went in favour of the plaintiff Sikh, allowing him to wear the turban. (In the UK turbaned Bobbies had long been visible.) But just imagine if the court had gone 2-1 the other way. Would it have been racism? The many cases of reasonable accommodation are subtle legal and sociological puzzles, and wonderful intellectual fare for seminar discussions. But they are a vast improvement when dealing with potential cases of racial inequality, compared with pogroms, lynchings, bombings, ethnic cleansing elsewhere today, or the brutal and overt discrimination that marred the Canadian past.

There are interesting **interpersonal tensions** that go along with soft diversity. Every family that has an immigrant grandparent or parent knows about tension between generations. One generation wants to cling to the old ways; the other generation wants to integrate more rapidly into Canada, wants to abandon some of the old traditions, the old language or religious customs. There are tensions within families, tensions of immigrant integration and adjustment. Where to live: in an immigrant area or a more mixed suburb? Whom shall the children date? Whom shall they marry? And how to respond if a mixed marriage occurs? They too are fascinating questions, and material for many social scientific dissertations. They can sometimes be very painful. Some readers of this article may have lived some of those tensions. But they are part of the normal process of dealing with soft diversity. Time and generational transition usually heal these wounds.

How flexible should our legal system be in terms of accommodating certain types of culturally distinctive behaviours? Suppose my culture or religion permits – or I and some

anthropologists and/or religious leaders think it permits – me to physically punish my misbehaving child or disobedient wife, or have several wives, or engage in child marriage, or smoke marijuana, or kill seals or over-fish certain rivers. Section 27 of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms mandates Canada to recognize the importance of multiculturalism. There are very capable lawyers in Canada who could do a good job of defending these kinds of cultural practices in any Canadian court.

All of this is soft diversity. Even the tough cases do not overwhelm our social and political system. And in the main soft diversity is the benign stuff of daily life, with its challenges and negotiated resolutions.

*The story is told of the Jewish fellow who takes sick and checks into a Protestant hospital. After three days, he checks himself out and goes to a Catholic hospital. After three days in that hospital, he checks himself out and winds up in the Jewish hospital in the city. The directors of the first two hospitals hear about this and they are very upset. They rush to the bedside of this patient who is now in the Jewish hospital. “Excuse us, we are very concerned that maybe when you were in our hospitals, the service you got was not culturally sensitive. Was there a problem with the physician care?” The fellow says, “No, I couldn’t complain.” “Was there a problem with the nursing care?” He says, “I couldn’t complain.” “Maybe there was a problem with some of the other specialists?” He says, “I couldn’t complain.” So they say, “So why did you go to the Jewish hospital?” He says, “Here, I could complain!”*

We are comfortable; we laugh; we recognize and manage the issues. Soft diversity.

What is **hard diversity**? This is diversity that differs both in kind and in degree. It too can be of three types.

The first is any kind of diversity that **challenges the political integrity of a given country**. In Canada, the examples we have are primarily two: that of Quebec independence, and that of self-government for our First Nations populations. These pose challenges to the political functioning and integrity of the Canadian polity. And if western separatism ever gets serious, that will be a third challenge to the political integrity of Canada. These are serious, literally life and death matters for existing states. Failure to resolve them can lead to political instability, chaos or even violence.

The second example is a **fundamental rupture in the social cohesion** of the country. An example is the black/white divide in the United States. Despite all the progress that has been made in the creation of a black middle class, the divide persists. Gated communities. Persisting economic inequalities. Travails of the inner cities. White flight. Segregated and re-segregated schools. Oppositional cultures. Identity politics. Americans are continuing to struggle with this kind of hard diversity. When an event happens in Canada that deals with urban violence or racial conflict, some wonder if we are evolving in an American direction. “Will we see a flood of gated communities in

Canada with inner cities largely non-white?” Some may say we are already headed that way, as many non-white immigrants have settled in inner city areas, and many urban Canadian public schools have large concentrations of immigrant and non-white students. This fear of an urban underclass underlies some of the immigration debate in Canada. That’s the second kind of hard diversity with which a society like ours has to deal.

The third kind has to deal with issues **of national security and potential dual or multiple loyalties**. These are cases when a serious issue of foreign policy or security policy involving a perceived Canadian national interest clash, or appear to clash, with the rights or interests of a minority group in Canada. The main issue for which this is most prominent in a post 9/11 world is the case of the Muslim/Arabic community in Canada. The Arab-Israeli and Arab-Palestinian conflict provide some historical background, and the terrorist threat from jihadist Islam and the conflict in Iraq provide additional current dimensions.

These issues play out in many ways. Sometimes it happens through the regular lobbying process. Canadian Jews through their organizations have long been active in support of Israel. The growth in the Arab and Muslim population in Canada has produced a new counterweight. On the same day in Ottawa in 2003 when the government was passing the anti-terrorism bill, C-36, there were Muslim organizations testifying against the bill and Jewish organizations testifying in favour of the bill, even arguing that it should be stronger.

The challenge for Canadian liberal democracy deals with the right to dissent. Canada signed on for the war against the Taliban and Al Qaeda, but not the war to topple Saddam. Among Arab/Muslim Canadians, victimized of Islamophobia, stereotyping and profiling, a range of attitudes dealing with the aims and means of all three objectives is found. But there has been certainly a primary concern with protecting civil liberties in the face of national security excesses, and criticizing the invasion of Iraq. What is emerging is the sense that the world view which animates much of the Arab-Canadian community may be more reflective of that found in Al-Jazeera than the Globe and Mail. And what of it? If – repeat if -- there is a war of the Western states against jihadist terror or certain Middle Eastern states, or an ideological/civilizational clash between some militant elements of Islam and the Judeo-Christian world, should this penalize Arab or Islamic Canadians who wish to exercise the rights of free speech?

The sad and painful answer is that it must. We have been down this road before. Canada’s oppressive treatment of Japanese Canadians stands out, but the treatment of Italian and German Canadians was also highly problematic. And so, today we want to avoid the errors of the past in terms of mistreatment and labeling of minority groups. It is not easy to balance national security concerns with civil liberties concerns and multicultural concerns, as readers of Michael Ignatief’s The Lesser Evil know. How do we navigate between these two legitimate concerns: national security and the rights of minorities to dissent?

We have a clash of two distinct discourses or paradigms. The first deals with **rights**. It is a **legalistic** emphasis on our common citizenship rights, including the right to free speech and non-discrimination and the right to be different. It is an emphasis on the absolute refusal by Canadians to accept second-class citizenship. It values assertiveness. No more victims. No more group libel. In this discourse the rights of citizenship trump the obligations of citizenship. And we want to expand rights, especially in times of stress, not contract rights.

The other discourse or paradigm deals with **integration**. It is a **sociological** emphasis on with the way people interact with each other in their neighbourhoods, in their communities, at work, and in the media. It values compromise. The focus is on fitting in, on being accepted by your friends, associates, and fellow citizens.

These two paradigms are opposite in their implications for Canadian minority communities who are under siege.

Consider the rights paradigm. Individuals in Canada today have every right to hold and express views which the majority of Canadians may find difficult or abhorrent. In Canada, we are allowed to believe that the United States and Israel are satanic, or just oppressive, states. We are allowed to express beliefs that the war in Iraq was and is thoroughly unjust, that suicide bombings are noble or understandable ventures called for by desperate times, etc. On the other hand, a decision by an individual or a group to hold or express those kinds of beliefs in the public square may carry a sociological cost, namely, remaining marginal to a societal consensus. There is a likely zero-sum relation between asserting the right to dissent and full societal acceptance. (Note the relation is not zero-sum if the mainstream consensus shifts toward the dissenting view.)

Today, our society – and I include myself – tilts towards the “rights” discourse of freedom to dissent. No group of Canadian citizens ought to be victimized because of acts of foreign citizens. But in order to muddy the waters, to render things a little more complex, let us reconsider the events before, during and after the Second World War, when the “sociological” paradigm of integration was paramount. Let us revisit the Japanese, the Italian and German Canadian experience, as they were victimized by the potential or real stigmas of dual loyalties.

The Italian community in the 1930s was split, politically and ideologically, between the left and the right. There was significant support for Mussolini and fascism. Indeed, this support was not limited to the Italian community. But the main debate raged within the Italian community. There were arguments among North American Italian intellectuals and leaders in the 1930s about the real nature of “*Italianita*.” What was the real essence of being an Italian? Was it what Mussolini represented or had he basically usurped a historically more cultivated and liberal *Italianita*? Intellectuals, journalists, workers, even street gangs, fought this out in salons and in the streets.

The German community in North America also had visible groups supporting Nazism, especially Hitler’s anti-communism, and successfully preaching isolationism in the

United States. The support was less pronounced than among Italians only because the Germans were a very Americanized and Canadianized group, having arrived en masse well before the Italians. In Canada, several hundred Italians and Germans were interned. Some of those interned were openly supportive of Fascism (and Nazism). Then there were those who were rounded up innocently, by mistake. This was particularly true in the Italian case.

What did the Italians and Germans of North America do when the war broke out? Their position was: The debate is over. A clear consensus emerged: We are with the Allies. For Germans, the fact that the King was of German ancestry and that Eisenhower himself had German roots (his family came over in 1790), helped resolve the issue. And the sons of the German and the Italian communities in North America volunteered, fought, and shed their blood to prove their loyalty. If they thought about their ancestral homeland, they felt their task was to liberate these lands from dictators, and re-establish the great German and Italian civilizations they had had so corrupted.

The Japanese case was far more poignant. In Canada, not one Japanese was ever charged, let alone convicted, of any act of treason or sabotage. Talk about unfair profiling! Yet in this era which preceded the emergence of the rights paradigm, options were few. In the United States, unlike the case in Canada, the Japanese were conscripted. Thousands enlisted. And two Japanese American units that fought in the European theatre were among the most decorated, with the highest casualty rates, of all the units in the American army. Imagine what was going through the minds of some of those Japanese Americans at the time they were risking their lives defending the United States when many of their relatives were back in the United States being brutally dispossessed, and relocated, and victimized, by that same government.

Canada did not encourage Japanese participation in the army. There were some individuals who were able to fight, and a number of Japanese Canadians actually served with the British forces in intelligence work in the Pacific theatre. During the 1930s, there was a great deal of support in Canadian and American Japanese communities for the Emperor and for Imperial Japan. But after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese community in general, and most of the leadership in the United States and Canada said: "No, we must use this occasion to prove that we are good Canadians". And so they did. Even more telling was how strong the integrationist paradigm remained after the war. Not for the Issei a demand to redress for past wrongs, for justice. The Japanese Canadians buried the past, became model Canadians, and left for later generations that unfinished business.

The Italian and German communities also had legitimate grievances for people who were interned without cause and for the prejudice and discrimination that existed in Canada against people of Italian and German origin during the war years and immediately after. But here too the response was to carry on with continued integration. What was the response of the Italian and German Canadians in dealing with this stigma? They proved their loyalty unambiguously during and after the war. And in very short order, the Japanese, the Italian and German Canadians and Americans were reaccepted thoroughly in Canada and the United States.

This process was rendered relatively easy for these groups in North America because of the Cold War environment in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and the responses of their ancestral homelands. Despite the Allied occupation and accompanying indignities, such as war crimes trials, these countries offered no significant post-war resistance. All three countries unambiguously cast their lot with the democratic non-communist West, and embraced de-Nazification and its Italian and Japanese counterparts. The Cold War concentrated everyone's minds very effectively. There was, therefore, a symbiotic symmetry between the domestic actions of these three groups of Canadians and Americans and the geo-politics of their home countries. It may have appeared a brutal bargain, choosing acceptance at the expense of silently bearing the wrongs and the violations that had been done to them, especially to the Japanese.

We look back on that event from our perspective today with mixed feelings. Justice delayed was justice denied. We are uncomfortable with the deference and the resignation which underscores this long wait for redress.

On the other hand, the sociological integrationist approach worked. It accomplished its objective of fully reintegrating these communities in North America. During and after the war, the new consensus around the full acceptance of western democracy reemerged.

We live now in a world in which diasporic ties to homelands are easily maintained, through travel and communication links of all sorts. Identities and loyalties are fluid, often hybridized, and situational.

So, here we are in a post 9/11 world and Islamic and Arabic groups in Canada are enmeshed in a dual dilemma. First, is the ongoing challenge of finding a workable synthesis between Islam and elements of liberal democracy, both in the diaspora and in the respective homelands. Part of this synthesis will entail a liberalizing or pluralizing of Islam itself, as was the case for Christendom when faced with this challenge from the 17<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Second is the challenge of living as free citizens of faith in Canada, free to express views on political affairs, without enduring social ostracism or legal discrimination. What can or should Arab/Muslim Canadians, and indeed all minority members, learn from the World War Two cases I have described, if anything?

One painful lesson is that there may be an inevitable, painful tradeoff that may have to be made by individuals and by minority groups between the two paradigms described earlier. The more assertive legal and rights- based paradigm argues: you have the right to dissent, but if the position you take is at extreme variance with that of the majority and you cannot convince the majority of your point of view, then you may pay a sociological price for that dissent. On the other hand, the sociological or integrationist paradigm is accommodating and deferential, rooted in compromise, and risks sacrificing deeply held convictions.

The obligation of the Canadian state and Canadian majorities today is to avoid the excesses of World War Two, where innocent groups and individuals were victimized by state sanctioned oppression, and to stand on guard to preserve civil liberties despite perceived, or real, national security threats.

I hope we never allow the difficult but surmountable challenges that I've just described, the challenges that come with what I call hard diversity, to undermine our support for what I described earlier as soft diversity.

I have tried to do two things in this paper. I have tried to outline the difference between soft and hard diversity and then to describe how, in dealing with hard diversity, we are faced with competing paradigms: the legal, rights based paradigm and the one that is more sociological, focusing on integration. Let me tell you that there is no formula, no magic equation, for choosing the correct paradigm; that will vary case by case, for individuals and groups, circumstance by circumstance.