Federalism and Ethno-National Conflicts: The Belgian Case

Carlos de CUETO

In ethnically segmented societies, the participation of ethno-national groups in the political life of the state is crucial not only to reinforce the democratic legitimacy of these political systems, but also to guarantee a scenario of peace, stability and harmonious coexistence of different groups under the same polity. Federalism, under a precise set of favourable conditions, could be an appropriate solution for managing and settling ethnic conflicts, as each group enjoys some degree of self-government in matters of particular interest for them. Belgium is a small democracy, comparable with many other small states in Western Europe, but also with its own quite special dynamics deriving from its multilingual character, as the country is culturally and politically divided into a Flemish- and a French-speaking group. To deal with the cultural and political demands of the Flemish nationalist movement that emerged at the end of the 19th century Belgium was gradually transformed from a unitary into a federalized state. But the Belgian federal structure shows many sui generis features that, while not found in other federal systems, certainly do not disqualify Belgium from being considered virtually a federal state. Among these specific and particular features we can stress the centrifugal disassociation nature, the gradual and permanent process of federalization, the hyper-complexity of its institutional structure and its bipolar and asymmetric character. In short, this is federalism but a very Belgian form of it, designed in that way to save rather than to destroy national unity, to meet the needs of the Belgian citizens and the high cultural, linguistic, religious and ideological diversity of the Belgian society and to soften the high level of intensity in the structural conflict between the two main linguistic communities of the country. Moreover, Belgian federalism works together with a fully-fledged power-sharing system -linguistic parity in the federal council of ministers, highest federal courts, federal administration, upper ranks of the army; special veto rights for the linguistic groups in both houses of parliament (alarm-bell procedure) and the need of double majorities to adopt certain pieces of legislation; etc.-. Under these appropriate institutions, ethno-national actors are strongly stimulated to formulate an agreement and develop compromise-oriented strategies because the consequences of non-agreement are likely to be very disadvantageous for all groups and segments. Non-agreement rendered the political resolution of the other social problems impossible and brought the political system in a state of paralysis. Most ethno-national actors preferred to tune down their preferences and to accept a compromise rather than to confront the consequences of a general policy paralysis. So federalism and power-sharing structures help to foster learning processes among decision-makers. Political institutions could be decisive to transform old patterns of confrontation behaviour into co-operative and consensus attitudes.

2004　11

The U.S. and Terrorism: Explaining Policy Errors and Identifying Needed Policy Changes

Davis B. BOBROW

The war on terrorism as framed and conducted by the Bush Administration has not been and perhaps is not being won by terrorists -- but it is being lost by the United States. That is true far more broadly than with reference to the invasion and occupation of Iraq or even only to international actions by American government instruments. The ill-advised course followed by the US since 9/11 should surprise no analyst of public policy processes. The dismal result should surprise no serious student of international relations.

U.S. losses are not irreversible, but changing course has two necessary conditions. The first is to break out of the self-defeating policy tendencies which tend to mark responses to shocking setbacks by political elites and major bureaucracies. Those tendencies are emphasized in prospect theory, treatments of politicians and bureaucracies as self-interest maximizers. More specifically, it means substituting the reduction of probabilities of hostile acts through aggressive policing and safety engineering for an emphasis on total war victory (preventive elimination of hostiles). Aggressive policing requires multilateral collective action. Safety engineering requires a civil rather than a military emphasis. The second is to stop violating the basic policy wisdom provided by all major conceptual schools on how to conduct international security affairs: the accumulated maxims and rules of thumb provided by realist,

neo-liberal institutionalist, and constructivist schools. While each school provides imperfect guidance to policy, it takes a special sort of arrogance to go against all their suggestions. Continuing to do so gets in the way of aggressive policing and safety engineering approaches in favor of the utopian goals of threat elimination through coercion.

Meeting either of the two necessary conditions will depend on the degree of success in meeting the other--they are interdependent. Both will require meeting an additional condition: that of "regime change" in the U.S. Regime change means the election of Kerry to the presidency with a large enough margin, and substantial enough erosion of Republican power in the Congress, for the first two conditions to be pursued quickly and vigorously.

2004　11　30

Singapore-China Special Economic Relations: In Search of Business Opportunities

SHEE Poon Kim

Why is it important to study Singapore's special economic relations with China? First, Singapore's special economic relations with China can be an important pillar for China-ASEAN economic relations. Second, the emergence of the 'flying dragon' model of 'developmental regionalism' can be an alternative 'flying geese' model for economic integration. Third, it offers a possibility to create a greater 'flying dragon' model of an economic commonwealth, including Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao and the ethnically based Chinese bamboo net-

work. Fourth, for Singapore, a Singapore-China economic nexus will imply an alternative to the western oriented 'human capital' development such as from advanced higher-education training in the Ivy Leagues in the US to Chinese universities in China. In the long run, it will revitalise Confucian culture as the core of East Asian civilisation and bring about the emergence of a Sinic cultural renaissance as happened during the Tang dynasty (AD 618-907). Sixth, Singapore is a 'future-oriented anticipatory state' and a Sino-Singapore symbiotic economic nexus is a good example for other East Asian states to emulate.

What observations can be made from this study? The overriding consideration in Singapore's China policy is based on "enlightened" economic pragmatism. The island Republic saw China's push for modernization from l978 onwards as a good business opportunity to get a foothold in China as part of its "second wing" strategy to expand its markets, regionally and globally.

From China's perspective, Singapore's strategic position, its population's ethnic Chinese background, its strong and stable government, plus the success of its economic development strategy has attracted China's interest to learn from Singapore's experience of modern management of its economy, including running ports, managing the public housing programmes, social security, etc.

In short, economic rationality is the main thinking in China's Singapore policies. Since both countries emphasize more on economic interactions, non-economic variables have become secondary in shaping Singapore-China relations. The trade data consistently and clearly show that the trade volumes between

Singapore and China gradually increased over time, despite political distrust from 1965 to 1975. There was no negative correlation between political suspicion, hostility and trade. Although Singapore continues to suffer from a trade deficit, it does not have adverse effect on political cooperation between the two states. Singapore and China's economic nexus represents a unique example whereby China was willing to learn from Singapore's "build, manage and transfer" model of managing a modern industrial park in Suzhou.

In conclusion, economic pragmatism and seeking business opportunities and profits are the main thrusts in pushing both Singapore and China to widen and deepen their special symbiotic economic relations in the areas of trade, investments, joint developments and finally free trade area and economic integration in the 21st century.

Australia, Canada's Foil in Asia Pacific

David EDGINGTON

Australia, like Canada, exports raw materials and other products to the Asia-Pacific region, so it provides a useful comparison with Canada in terms how it interacts with Asia. There are many similarities between Canada and Australia, but Australia has no large American market next door, so it depends on more than half of its merchandize exports being sold in Asia Pacific. Moreover, tourist flows from Asia, not the US, are the more important for Australia. There were also important differences in the outcomes of the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98 for Australia and Canada. Finally, Australia's federal government plays a

more forceful role in trade policy than is the case in Canada. Nonetheless, Australia and Canada share some priorities. Notably, they were among the founding members of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. Yet in the 1990s, while Australia vigorously pursued closer cooperation with Asia in terms of trade, tourism, foreign investment and international education, Canada moved closer to the US following negotiation of the Canada-United States free-trade agreement and then the North American Free Trade Agreement. But in the current decade Australia has itself signed a free-trade agreement with the US and strengthened ties with Washington. Despite the Asian crisis, and close security and military links with the US in Iraq, Australia continues to depend on and pursue linkages within the Asia-Pacific region. The lessons for Canada from Australian policies are the benefits of developing alternate regional markets.

2004 12 14

Local Government in Transnationalization:
Bridging the Gap between Positivism and Postpositivism

Yasuo TAKAO

This presentation suggests that local government can help initiate a process of norm shift in world politics. In Japan, transnational issues have brought a new dimension to local communities. Some critically important instances include: China's industrialization is causing acid rain affecting Japanese communities; international migration to Japan raises the issue of human rights protection for foreigners;

and global standardization related to business is said to harm a safety net for protecting community development. In this context, local government occupies a strategic position to act as an intermediate agent in reconnecting citizens with states. On the one hand, local government as part of the state apparatus has a range of political access to national authority. On the other hand, local government is the immediate body that tries to assure individuals safety and health in local communities and can be seen as potential partner of civil society groups.!

Once individuals and domestic groups bypass their own states and directly seek counterpart groups beyond national borders, or establish their alliances with non-national citizens to solve those issues, this strategic position of local government provides political access, leverage, and opportunities to the transnationally connected groups. The transnational advocacy coalitions of civil society groups who work with local governments would create the opportunity structure. Local government has a potential to act as a key agent in converting the moral authority of civil society groups into a source of power to change state policies and practices.

The theoretical purpose of this presentation is to bridge two sets of literatures: the literature on material, utility-based positivism (i.e., neorealism and neoliberalism) in world politics, and the literature on transnationalism and norms (i.e., constructivism) in sociology and international relations. It is to look at the interplay of material forces and normative rationality in the process of transnationalization. This study examines the mechanism by which local government may transform its

material access and opportunities into a form of power for morally principled coalitions.

Japan, East Asia and Latin America: A Missing Link?

Jorge Rafael DI MASI

The objective of this paper is to explore the perspectives of relations between Japan and East Asia with Latin America. Assuming that the level of exchanges is relatively low, we will study what are the real possibilities to deepen them considering the existing difficulties, originated in the "long distance" between those regions. "Long distance" is not only a geographical concept, but political, cultural and economic. The study will concentrate in a comprehensive way of partnership, including all those matters.

Assuming that there is a wide range of issues that can be included in a future common agenda, some of the main topics to be considered in its design are: a) A long term vision, where results will be seen in the mid and long term; b) A political commitment at governmental level; c) An improvement of the mutual knowledge, to understand the differences on how our societies are organized; d) The necessity for more activity on the Latin American side to make it more "visible" in East Asia and e) A better use of existing positive elements like: The lack of historical/territorial disputes, the mutual perception not characterized by the idea of dominator-subordinate, the large Asian communities in Latin America, the availability of natural resources in Latin America, the capital that East Asian countries can offer for investment projects, Latin America's expertise

in University education or in democratic transition.

Other topics can be included in this list. The low level of exchanges gives them a wide range of possibilities to explore new initiatives. This paper intends not to be wishful thinking, but to think about a reality that both regions can face in order to "discover" the advantage of developing relations between partners that have common interests and do not know each other enough.

2005　　21

Cosmopolitanism and the 'War on Terror'

Anthony MCGREW

This lecture presents a critique of the current Bush Doctrine and advocates an alternative conception of a world order in the form of cosmopolitanism. It identifies a set of conceptual confusions and fallacies at the heart of the Bush Doctrine developing a critique from within traditional international theory. In particular it seeks to show why the notion of a hegemonic world order, under conditions of contemporary globalization, is a source of both disorder and lacking in necessary legitimacy. As an alternative, cosmopolitanism is reviewed and its inherent dangers assessed as a normative conception of world order better suited to the conditions of globalization. In conclusion the argument is presented for a form of cosmopolitan social democracy as a progressive political imaginary for confronting the world as it is today : divided, fragmented and deeply unequal. For cosmopolitan social democracy

presents an ethical and political justification
for a more democratic and just world order. The
triumph of hope over fear.

2005   86

McGrew