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BIOGRAPHY

Alain-G. Gagnon is a full professor of political science at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) and has held the Canada Research Chair in Quebec and Canadian Studies since 2003. From 1982 to 2003, he taught at Queen's, Carleton, and McGill Universities. He is the founding director of the Centre de recherche interdisciplinaire sur la diversité (CRIDAQ) and the director of the Research Group on Plurinational Societies (GRSP).

An internationally renowned researcher and political scientist, Alain-G. Gagnon contributes actively to the debate on the organization and future of Western societies. His work spans different fields of analysis, from regional development to the sociology of intellectuals, political economy, and the questions of federalism and nationalism. His engagement is demonstrated in both his teaching of young researchers and his participation in public debate. His work has profoundly influenced researchers on federalism in Belgium, Spain, the United Kingdom, and Canada.

Alain-G. Gagnon pioneered the comparative study of small nations and plurinational societies, a fast-growing field today, and has become one of the most influential experts on these issues. The collective work he co-edited with James Tully, *Multinational Democracies*, has become a must-read for political scientists. It assesses the capacity of different multinational states to combine justice and stability in the management of national and cultural diversity. His work on the multination—in particular his book *The Case for Multinational Federalism: Beyond the All-Encompassing Nation*—earned him the Josep Maria Vilaseca i Marcet award from

the Generalitat de Catalonia in 2007. Recently he edited a major work on Canadian federalism that gave shape to what can be called the Quebec school of federalism. This book, *Le fédéralisme canadien contemporain*, was released by University of Toronto Press under the title *Contemporary Canadian Federalism*. With Michael Burgess from Kent University (Canterbury, England), Gagnon has just published *Federal Democracies*, which is expected to become a critical element in the study of comparative federalism. He is currently editing, with James Bickerton of St. Francis Xavier University, the sixth edition of *Canadian Politics* (University of Toronto Press). This book quickly became an important reference work in the field of Canadian politics. Gagnon's most recent book, *L'âge des incertitudes : essais sur la diversité nationale et le fédéralisme* (Presses de l'Université Laval, 2011), is being translated into 10 languages.

Alain-G. Gagnon was elected a member of the Royal Society of Canada in 2008. The same year, he received the Award of Excellence of the Quebec Political Science Association. In 2010, he received the Santander Award of Excellence in Research from the Universidad Carlos III in Madrid. He was named a Trudeau fellow in 2010.

ABSTRACT

Born in Quebec's Lower St. Lawrence region in the mid-1950s, Alain-G. Gagnon has long felt a moral obligation to advance a politics of empowerment for communities in need of dignity. From his early work on local and regional development to his more recent research on multinational federalism, Gagnon has consistently advocated for the advent of a democracy that feeds justice. The decolonization movement in Africa and Asia, the Maritime Rights Movement, and—closer to home—Quebec's nationalist movement and First Nations' claims for recognition are some of the elements that have aroused Gagnon's concern for regional and cultural circumstances. What does empowerment mean in a world that is increasingly globalizing and encompassing? How can such empowerment be achieved? In his Trudeau lecture, Alain-G. Gagnon addresses three distinct ways to give meaning to empowerment: regional mobilization, nationalist expression, and federal pursuit.

LECTURE

“Empowerment Through Different Means: Regionalism, Nationalism, and Federalism”

St. Francis Xavier University

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In this paper, I engage the central idea of my discussion—the idea of empowerment—from three perspectives.¹ At the most general level, I illustrate how the idea of empowerment is in many ways a byproduct of my intellectual rapport with two iterations of Pierre Trudeau and his legacy. From a more personal and emotive perspective, I will try to shed light on the centrality of the idea of empowerment during my adolescence in Quebec and my years as a young academic in British Columbia. Finally, bringing this contribution into the 21st century, I will focus on my work as an academic in a new Quebec preoccupied both with the process of continual emancipation and with its commitment to enshrining an intercultural model of nationhood within a multinational political setting.

I strongly believe that there is a need to rethink Canada continually. This is what drives my research and social engagement as a public intellectual. I understand Canada primarily as three societies

1. Words of thanks go to Arjun Tremblay (PhD candidate, University of Toronto) and Alex Schwartz (Banting Fellow, Queen’s University, Kingston), who provided me with feedback on the first drafts of this text. A final word of thanks goes to Eric Bergeron, translator, and to Bettina B. Cenerelli for her comments and final editing of this paper.

that continue to reimagine themselves on a day-to-day basis. I would argue that this can be achieved only via a political project that revolves around three pillars: moderation, dignity, and hospitality.

Introduction

The objective of empowerment has been the driving force behind most of my social and intellectual pursuits. It is an idea that has provided meaning and hope for so many disenfranchised groups and communities across the globe. The Maritime Rights Movement of the 1920s and 1930s is a clear example of the quest for empowerment.² So too are the decolonization movements in Africa and Asia and, more recently, the women's rights movements and the claims of First Nations peoples that have for too long fallen on deaf ears.

My interest in the politics of empowerment is inextricably linked to the period of political upheaval surrounding my youth and adolescence. I was born at the tail end of the Duplessis regime in Quebec and grew up during the Quiet Revolution. As such, I witnessed first-hand the emergence of a generation of political actors who launched major institutional reforms that have fundamentally altered Quebec's political and social landscape. Although there was no clear consensus on the road to be followed, virtually everyone agreed that things needed to change so that people could be properly educated, receive adequate health care, and find employment necessary for enjoying a decent life.

Levels of unemployment in my native Lower St. Lawrence region during the 1960s were as high as those then prevailing in the Atlantic provinces. Fortunately, my parents had a farm—which they had inherited from their own parents—that could easily feed a family of six. Our grandparents lived with us, as did an uncle that

2. For a thorough account of this movement, refer to James Bickerton, *Nova Scotia, Ottawa, and the Politics of Regional Development* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

had been severely injured in Italy during the war. He was a proud member of the 22nd Regiment of the Canadian Army. He had not been conscripted. He had served voluntarily. Like many Quebecers, he wanted to travel the world and be a righter of wrongs.

My uncle's capacity to empathize with others has left a lasting impression on me. He was buried on June 24, 1968. I remember this very clearly, as this was the day before Pierre Trudeau and the federal Liberal Party came into office following their landslide electoral victory. These two unrelated events became two defining moments for me and provide the backdrop for the ideas that I will be presenting below.

I will proceed in three steps with a view to exploring the concept of empowerment and conciliation under the ambit of three distinct domains: regionalism, nationalism, and federalism. But first, let me get a little more personal with respect to my connection to the Trudeau community.

A Trudeau Fellow

The main objectives of the Trudeau Foundation dovetail nicely with my own values. Those objectives are to advance a sense of responsible citizenship, to situate Canada in a globalizing world, and to advance the cause of human rights and social justice. I have had the good fortune to be associated with other Trudeau fellows who have dutifully taken up these objectives. James Tully, Roderick Macdonald, Donald Savoie, Will Kymlicka, Jane Jenson, Joseph Yvon Thériault, and Constance Backhouse are known from their contributions to the advancement of a just democracy in the areas of Aboriginal rights, respect for cultural diversity, regional development, citizenship regimes, identity politics, and women's rights. Not only are their contributions to the advancement of society unprecedented in the Canadian academy, but the conceptual tools they have developed have been adopted in many other countries. Each of these fellows brings something unique to the Foundation.

Pierre Trudeau's legacy has left no one in Canada indifferent. Among other things, he is remembered for his battle to secure Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, an instrument that primarily protects individual claims, as well as for his contribution in developing a collective Canadian identity that could stand its ground against the influence of both the United States and the United Kingdom. He is also remembered for the patriation of the Constitution, an event that took place 30 years ago, albeit against the will of the Quebec National Assembly. In Atlantic Canada, Trudeau's image as an engaged philosopher-king is generally well-received and contrasts sharply with the image of the current prime minister as a cold economist. In Western Canada, Trudeau's reputation is sewn of a different cloth. There, Trudeau is remembered for the National Energy Program, the collection of high tax revenues, and the appropriation of royalties from oil development. Former premier Peter Lougheed of Alberta, for example, accused Trudeau of having traded off Western Canada for the support of Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic provinces. In Quebec, the name of Pierre Trudeau is associated with contradictory stances. On one hand is his determination to provide individual French- and English-speaking Canadians equal access to federal public services—where numbers warrant, in the language of their choice—to build pan-Canadian institutions such as CBC/Radio-Canada and to entrench a Charter of Rights and Freedoms. On the other hand, he is remembered for the War Measures Act, for his opposition to Quebec's special status within Canada, and for the 1982 patriation of the constitution. More than any other facet of his legacy, the latter two events have left a major imprint on Quebecers' mindset.

As a Quebec-based academic, I have had difficulty fully connecting with Trudeau as a political leader—this, despite having found him particularly inspiring at the 1968 convention. I spent the entire day of Saturday, April 6 in our living room, watching the convention that led to his election as leader of the Liberal Party. I was

glued to the television screen, totally immersed, checking each move by the contenders, including then health minister Allan McEachen, who, with a solid base from his native Nova Scotia, aligned himself with Trudeau on the second ballot, thus giving a clear indication of the camp to which he belonged. Negotiations between the contenders continued all day, in plain sight of the public. It was a thoroughly exciting time. Looking back, I realize that at the age of 14, I found this political process far more exciting than do today's youngsters enthralled by *Call of Duty* or other PlayStation video games. So it seems I have always been a nerd when it comes to politics.

Empowerment Through Regional Mobilization

In terms of geography and social capital, the Lower St. Lawrence and the Atlantic regions have much in common. People value hard work and are strongly connected to the land of their ancestors. Residents of the area can broadly be grouped into three categories: those involved in navigation and fisheries; those who plow the land, grow food, and raise cattle; and those who risk their lives mining coal and copper. Naturally, manufacturing and the service sectors have reached these regions, but the sea, forestry, and mines continue to do most to shape the region's personality. Under varying circumstances, people in these regions have mobilized to improve the conditions of their employment, to make mines safer, and to obtain respect from their employers.

In the early 1960s, the region of Eastern Quebec was selected for a pilot project known as the Eastern Quebec Planning Bureau (BAEQ). This was a time of particularly high social and political unrest in Quebec. My region was picked for the BAEQ pilot project for the simple reason that it was one of the most economically depressed areas in the country. Farming, fishing, and forestry operations were experiencing very tough times. The choice seemed to be between surviving in this remote land or abandoning the community in favour of urban service centres. Obviously, if a large number

of people chose to leave the area, it would be difficult if not impossible those who remained to make a living there. Tensions could be observed in local hall meetings as people expressed their concerns.

To get a better sense of the transformations that took place in the region, we can look to the fact that in 1931, the first census conducted in rural areas counted 135,000 farms. Twenty years later, this number had dropped to 100,000. Nowadays, there are less than 28,000.³

The driving idea behind the pilot project was that it was possible to bring about major economic transformations through technical and scientific advancements. State intervention had been gaining popularity in a province that had otherwise produced the least interventionist governments in the country. It became obvious that the changes being considered might have a negative impact on the region's social fabric, given that they were pointing towards industrialization, urbanization, and bureaucratization. These processes would further alienate and enrage people from the villages that formed the region's backbone.

It is worth noting that what seemed to matter most to decision makers was the need to inform people about the urgency to become more active, rather than to advance concrete measures to allow people to continue living in the region. Sociologist Edward Smith reminds us that "participation was carefully thought out, painstakingly structured, generously staffed and supported; more than half of the nearly 4 million dollars (under federal-provincial matching funds) was spent by the BAEQ on public information and consultation."⁴ If nothing else, the BAEQ helped to sensitize people to the fact that they were a regional community and that their efforts could make a difference.

3. "Bernard Vachon : Un homme qui a la passion du rural," *Horizon*, 12 November 2011.

4. Edward Smith, "Planning for People: The Gaspé Project," in *Social and Cultural Change in Canada*, vol. 2, ed. W.E. Mann (Vancouver: Copp Clark, 1970), 21.

Governments in Ottawa and Quebec were also trying to reap the political benefits from these interventions, but they often wound up getting caught up in jurisdictional battles. In the end, in 1966, the BAEQ tabled 10 solidly documented volumes including a major inventory of the region's economic potential. These volumes were rooted in the language of program efficiency and advanced recommendations for the consolidation of economic vocations, the specialization of policy sectors, the selection of potential winners and losers, and the shifting of populations from remote and under-populated areas to urban centres.

Despite having been picked for a pilot project designed to foster economic development and economic stability, the region experienced high political tensions.

I harken back to this period, and to the year 1970 in particular, for several reasons. For one, 1970 marked the election of Robert Bourassa (1933-96) as Quebec's premier. Bourassa fit perfectly with the spirit of the time. At 36, he became the youngest premier of Quebec. His strategy to gain power was simple and is strangely similar, at least in name, to a contemporary political project: A Plan for the North. During the spring election campaign of 1970, Bourassa declared that this initiative would create 100,000 jobs. In the Lower St. Lawrence region, a saviour had been found and, as a result, Liberals who had been out of power since 1966 took 8 of the 10 ridings, including my riding of Matapedia (won by Acadian-born Bona Arsenault) and that of Bonaventure (won by Gérard D. Lévesque).

That year, 1970, was also when I entered college in Rimouski. I remember taking courses in literature, geography, psychology, religious studies, and Quebec sociology, the last being the most stimulating for me. The course was taught by Alain Marcoux, a recent graduate of Laval University who was later elected Member of the National Assembly in the historic November 15, 1976 election of the Parti Québécois.

In addition to entering college in the fall of 1970, two other events are still very present in my mind. The first, which everyone has heard of, is the October Crisis. Many books, documentaries, and films have been produced about this event. Throughout the province and in various CEGEPs,⁵ political science and sociology were gaining prominence as legitimate fields of research. One must recall that not long before, the fields of study most valued by francophones were law, medicine, and religious studies and theology. Now Quebec had become a laboratory for social science research; it was a concrete pilot project of social planning, economic modernization, and political and social innovations.

At the time of the October Crisis, the Canadian Armed Forces were present in urban centres and were to be seen on rural roads. I remembered seeing soldiers in my village of Saint-Gabriel and wondered who they were after. In the region, rumours and suspicions ran very high. Richard Amyot, Gilles Gauvin, Pierre Jobin, and Rodrigue Lévesque were well known for their acquaintances with a variety of progressive forces and were suspected of fomenting political disturbances and distributing political materials: all were jailed. More than 50 arrests took place in Rimouski alone.⁶ At the time, Quebec and Ottawa teamed up to eradicate what politicians depicted as evil forces throughout the province. In doing so, however, not all actors demonstrated good judgment—incarcerating hundreds of people for no reason other than the police were said to have found anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist, secessionist, or anarchist material on the suspects' bookshelves or that the incarcerated had spoken against the establishment. At the provincial election of November 1976, of the eight ridings still attributed to the region, only the riding of Bonaventure did not fall into the hands of the Parti Québécois.

5. CEGEPs in Quebec correspond to Grades 12 and 13 or to Grade 12 and the first year of university in the other provinces.

6. The names and the number of people arrested were confirmed by Pierre Jobin (Rimouski) on April 3, 2012, in a telephone interview.

I also remember October 1970 for an event that has loomed much larger in the minds of the people of the Lower St. Lawrence—an event that would prove central in my formative years as a master’s and later a doctoral student at Simon Fraser University (1976-78) and Carleton University (1978-83), respectively. One might call it the moment of the “angry priests.” In short, 19 priests published a manifesto that depicted government initiatives as being counterproductive and leading to the closing of municipalities throughout the region. Those angry priests denounced government initiatives for weakening the social milieu. Known as Operations Dignity I, II, and III, those social movements convinced many people to get involved in local, regional, Quebec, and federal politics. Of the 85 villages that the province had targeted for closure, only 10 finally closed down. Nevertheless, these closures left a very sour taste for the people of those regions.

State bureaucrats always followed the same pattern. After buying up the properties for a pittance, the government put its plan into action. First, the electricity was cut. Next, houses and barns were burned down under the supervision of government agents to make sure that residents would not return to their villages. Mail was delivered to neighbouring service centres, schools were closed, and snow removal and plowing ceased. In many cases, people moved to urban centres to live in low-income community housing; in some cases, they bought a piece of land on the outskirts of urban centres and hoped for a fresh start that never materialized because their very basic education made it difficult for them to find jobs and make a new start in life.

It was reminiscent of *le grand dérangement*—the Great Expulsion of the Acadians—but instead of removing the *habitant* (the inhabitant) from the land, the plan was to remove or burn the *habitations* (the housing). People would have no choice but to leave the region.

This state of affairs left a major impression on me and convinced me to focus my energy as a graduate student on issues pertaining to regional development. Along the way I met many colleagues who shared my concerns for people living in remote and unevenly developed regions.

This is the main reason why I hoped to give my Trudeau lecture at St. Francis Xavier University. The Bickerton-MacNeil family that is housing me tonight is surely the one that has sensitized me most to the fact that similar challenges had been faced by people from scattered towns and villages in Nova Scotia and Cape Breton. My connection to this family goes back to 1979.

I have returned frequently to my native region. One of my most touching moments was on October, 15, 1981, when, with my long-time friend journalist Claude Morin, I went to Sainte-Paule to launch my first book.⁷ This collaborative effort, recounting the story of courage and determination of the people of the region, brought together social actors and social scientists. The event took place in the local church where the first Operation Dignity had been launched on September 25, 1970. Through their continued resistance, and against all odds, the residents had managed to keep their village alive. This event made it clear to me that empowerment is a potent concept whose strength is drawn first and foremost from the minds and the will of the people.

Empowerment Through Nationalist Mobilization

I grew up in a family where politics mattered. My father was very involved in municipal and provincial politics. Very critical of the clergy, he identified closely with the provincial Liberals and hoped to improve our family's conditions following the defeat of the Union Nationale. Lesage's victory in 1960 brought much-needed

7. Alain-G. Gagnon, ed., *Les Opérations-Dignité: Naissance d'un mouvement social dans l'Est du Québec* (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1981).

work in the province as roads, hospitals, and schools were built with unprecedented urgency. My family benefitted from these infrastructural reforms: indeed, as a result of the election my father was hired as a foreman, taking over from a neighbour who was known to be a supporter of the Union Nationale.

Sociologist Marc Renaud has written a useful summary of the social and economic conditions prevailing in Quebec in the 1960s. At the time, francophone Quebecers represented 80 percent of the population of the province and owned 50 percent of the companies, but controlled barely 15 percent of the value of the industrial sector.⁸ In short, francophones controlled the least profitable sectors of the economy, those sectors being primarily agriculture and, to a much lesser degree, retail trade, services, and construction. This excerpt is from Renaud's account:

Quite a few French Canadians had the formal training enabling them to fulfill top managerial, professional, and technical jobs in the economy and, after the educational reforms of the mid-1960s, their number considerably increased. In effect a new middle class was born... This new middle class is, in essence, different from Quebec's old middle class and traditional elites whose power and status derived above all from their position vis-à-vis the religious order. In the early 1960s, this new middle class was confronted with a private economy quite incapable of generating new job outlets and quite inhospitable to certified French-Canadian skills. The expansion of the state in this context came as a miracle. It provided job outlets to university and technically trained French Canadians, thus securing the survival of that class within Quebec.⁹

The implementation of such overwhelming changes helped to give Quebec's state actors legitimacy as they were viewed as responsible for the upward mobility of francophone Quebecers. In turn,

8. Marc Renaud, "Quebec New Middle Class in Search of Social Hegemony," in Alain-G. Gagnon, ed., *Quebec: State and Society* (Scarborough: Methuen, 1984), 160.

9. *Ibid.*, 169.

state nationalism was advanced as the main mechanism for transforming economic and political conditions, and for providing francophone Quebecers with equal job opportunities. The task was gargantuan considering that, in 1959, fewer than 50 specialists in the human and social sciences (including economists, urban planners, and social workers) were employed by the Quebec government, and that almost a third of all public sector employees had less than five years of formal education. At the same time, more than half of all public sector employees worked in the administration of justice, highways, Hydro-Québec, or the Liquor Commission.¹⁰ It is in this context that the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education in the Province of Quebec, better known as Parent commission, was set up to bring about a major reform.

The Parent commission was set up in 1961 to bring the key field of education under state control. Its report, tabled in 1966, found that the state

must see to social and economic progress, provide for the general welfare, protect the community, correct injustice, help the weak. In view of this, it may be said that the modern state can no longer leave a part of its people in ignorance without jeopardizing the progress and peace of society and without complicity in inequities which it has a mission to redress. Thus it is obligated to provide, directly or indirectly, for the education of all, and this is one of its essential functions, of which it will never again be able to divest itself.¹¹

The work of the Parent commission corresponds to a period in Quebec politics when state nationalism was also on the ascent in the public consciousness. For many francophone Quebecers, the only

10. Stephen Brooks and Alain-G. Gagnon, *Social Scientists and Politics in Canada: Between Clerisy and Vanguard* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988).

11. *Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education in the Province of Quebec* (Quebec City: Department of Education, Pierre de Marois Printer, 1966), 13-14.

way to reverse the power structure was to call upon the state to tame the forces of private capital.

Most francophone Quebecers also saw state nationalism as a potent instrument for advancing democratic practices, developing solidarity and social cohesion, attenuating discrimination, increasing social inclusion, stimulating public investment, advancing privatization, or undermining liberal economic practices. Within this context, I would submit that from the 1960s onwards, all of the political parties within the Quebec National Assembly have defended some form of state nationalism.

Francophone Quebecers have been spared from the dark side of nationalism; instead they have focused on its potential for transformative and emancipative politics. I remember very well the unfettered excitement of Québécois youth when René Lévesque was first elected premier on November 15, 1976. The feeling in the air was that things had begun to change for the better. A sense of confidence had been imprinted in the public consciousness.

At this time, I was pursuing a master's of arts degree in political science at Simon Fraser University. I remember clearly that Monday in November. A group of Quebec students gathered in the evening at the university's main quadrangle to wave the Quebec flag, emulating Italian-born Quebecers when their team advances to the World Soccer Cup. Several students were so excited by the Parti Québécois victory that, enraptured in their own euphoria, they jumped in their cars and drove eastwards.

To the best of my knowledge, none made it farther than Kamloops.

A couple of months later, Lévesque went to New York to address the prestigious Economic Club. Although he received a cool reception, I was nonetheless thrilled by this unprecedented move. Naturally, my anglophone compatriots at SFU were not as thrilled, but they nonetheless agreed that one could no longer envision Quebec as a priest-ridden province, a province made of cheap

labour, or a province where English could continue to dominate the commercial, financial, and industrial sectors.

Let me clarify Quebecers' enthusiasm for state nationalism. To be clear, nationalism is a polysemic concept. For some, it is a reactionary movement that seeks to advance an ethnic project based on certain primordial ties and in opposition to liberal values. For others, it is the expression of a social movement that seeks to transform power relations and redress past injustices. For others still, it is a quest for identity in a world that is caught between forces of integration and disintegration.¹² So, both Canadian majority nationalism and Quebec minority nationalism have at times adopted different postures with respect to culture, economy, and identity politics. That being said, my general understanding of these two forms of nationalisms in Canada is that, over the last 30 years, they have overwhelmingly tended to push for liberal values in their nationalist projects.

So nationalism is not always an ugly thing. American political scientist Craig Calhoun invites us to avoid discussing nationalism simply

through instances of passionate excess or successful manipulation by demagogues. For nationalism is equally a discursive formation that facilitates mutual recognition among polities that mediate different histories, institutional arrangements, material conditions, cultures, and political projects in the context of intensifying globalisation. Nationalism offers both a mode of access to global affairs and a mode of resistance to aspects of globalization. To wish it away is more likely to invite the dominance of neoliberal capitalism than to usher in an era of world citizenship.¹³

12. Guy Laforest and Douglas Brown, eds., *Integration and Fragmentation. The Paradox of the Late Twentieth Century* (Kingston: Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, 1994).

13. Craig Calhoun, *Nations Matter: Culture, History, and the Cosmopolitan Dream* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 166.

My own point then is simply to underline that we should not jump to conclusions too quickly when we address nationalism as a socio-political project. The requirement of national solidarity has been particularly well illustrated by pacifists such as Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948) in the case of India, by Martin Buber (1878-1948) in the case of Israel, by protestant theologian Paul Tillich in Europe, and by Catholic theologian Jacques Grand'Maison in Quebec.¹⁴

As with regionalism, nationalism can help to empower communities that have been ignored, neglected, or taken for granted. This brings me to my discussion of federalism as a potent tool for recognition and the empowerment of communities and societal cultures in a pluralist context.

Empowerment Through Multinational Federalist Mobilization

In addition to regionalism and nationalism, federalism can be understood as an instrument for empowering communities. Federalism facilitates inter-state relations, intra-state linkages, and inter-community relations. Elsewhere I have identified five main uses of federalism in divided political settings¹⁵: federalism as a conflict management mechanism, federalism as a shield for minorities and territorial interests, federalism as a device to search for an equilibrium between forces of unity and forces of diversity, federalism as a system of representation in dual if not multiple expressions of democratic practices, and federalism as a social laboratory propitious for developing innovative socio-political programs. What has

14. For a detailed account of these individuals and their position on nationalism, refer to Gregory Baum, *Nationalism, Religion and Ethics* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001).

15. Alain-G. Gagnon, "The Political Uses of Federalism," in *Comparative Federalism and Federation: Competing Traditions and Future Directions*, eds. Michael Burgess and Alain-G. Gagnon (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 15-44.

been lacking in most accounts of federalism is an understanding that federalism can also serve as a mechanism for empowering minority cultures and nations in complex political settings. I have tried to address this oversight in recent writings, including *Multinational Democracies; The Case for Multinational Federalism: Beyond the All-Encompassing State*; and, recently, *L'Âge des incertitudes: essais sur le fédéralisme et la diversité nationale*.

In *Multinational Democracies*, my colleague James Tully introduces this new distinctive type of political association in the following manner:

First and foremost, multinational democracies, in contrast to single-nation democracies (which are often presumed to be the norm), are constitutional associations that contain two or more nations or peoples... Since the nations of a multinational democracy are nations, their members aspire to recognition not only in the larger multinational association of which they are a unit, but also to some degree in international law and other, supranational legal regimes (as for example, the four nations of the United Kingdom). Accordingly, multinational democracies are not traditional, single-nation democracies with internal, sub-national "minorities," seeking group rights within, but societies of two or more, often overlapping nations that are more or less equal in status.

Second, multinational democracies are not confederations of independent nation-states, plural societies of separate peoples or multinational empires... The jurisdictions, modes of participation and representation, and the national and multinational identities of citizens overlap and are subject to negotiation...

Third, the nations and the composite multination are constitutional democracies. That is, the legitimacy of both the nations and the multinational associations rests on their adherence to the legal and political values, principles and rights of constitutional democracy and international law...

Fourth, multinational democracies are also multicultural. Both the nations and the multinational association as a whole are composed of individuals and cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic minorities

who struggle for and against distinctive forms of representation and accommodation of their cultural diversity. In response, the nations and the multinational association develop procedures and institutions for the democratic discussion and reconciliation of these forms of diversity...¹⁶

Tully has done a superb job of depicting and seeing the potential of this distinctive type of political association for the advancement of justice and political stability in advanced democracies.

Pierre Trudeau's writings prior to his entry into federal politics have much in common with Tully's perceptive account of multinational democracies. Trudeau, in fact, once argued in favour of a political project known as the *multinational option* in which federalism and democracy could be advanced simultaneously. For this younger Trudeau, the classic Westphalian model of the state could not provide a satisfying response to minority claims or contribute to the advancement of plural communities. Tully has recently revisited some of Trudeau's earlier writings on multinational federalism and found them deserving of high praise as they are based on "grass-roots democratization, local and regional experiments in socialism, and a plurality of national, ethnic, democratic, regional and economic associations" and proposes that "English-Canadian and French-Canadian nationalisms... co-exist within the federation and be civic and plural rather than ethnically homogeneous."¹⁷

Following his entry into federal politics, however, Trudeau chose not to pursue his own conceptualization of the multinational option. He also clearly showed discomfort with the idea that

16. James Tully, "Introduction" in *Multinational Democracies*, eds. Alain-G. Gagnon and James Tully (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3-4.

17. James Tully, "Federations, Communities and Their Transformations," in *Dominant Nationalism, Dominant Ethnicity*, eds. André Lecours and Geneviève Nootens (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2009), 196.

Canada could be imagined as a “community of communities.”¹⁸ Instead, he defended the idea that all Canadians should fall under the scope of undifferentiated recognition and that individual rights should prevail over all other forms of political recognition. In other words, institutions, culture, identity, belonging, history, gender, and Indigeneity should not interfere with concrete political life.

On these points, my view of politics is more in tune with the understanding of young Trudeau.

The Time of Uncertainties¹⁹

I feel it is crucial to connect with Trudeau’s earlier writings, as we now find ourselves in an age of great uncertainty. This age is defined by the creation of a global market and economic standardization, by a rising tidal wave of cultural Americanization, by the decline of political literacy and civic engagement, by a growing uniformity between societies and cultures that used to be distinct, and by the continuing atomization of the individual. Taken together, these phenomena constitute an unprecedented threat to the survival of minority cultures, identities, and nations. There is thus a pressing need for minority groups to reassert themselves and to resist the homogenizing imperatives of in this age of uncertainty.

Within this context, I hope to identify how multinational polities can most effectively attend to the recognition of diversity and respond to the claims of minority nations. Since its inception, Canada has had to address these issues and, as such, the Canadian case provides an informative account of the manner in which minority and majority nations have been engaged in an evolving

18. See James Bickerton, Stephen Brooks, and Alain-G. Gagnon, *Freedom, Equality, Community: The Political Philosophy of Six Influential Canadians* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006).

19. This section borrows from my most recent book, *L’âge des incertitudes: Essais sur le fédéralisme et la diversité nationale* (Quebec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 2011).

institutional and ideational dialogue. I in turn will attempt to elicit, from this particular context, broader lessons that may be applied both to other federal polities and to states undergoing the process of federalization. I will also link the Canadian case to the Spanish case. An examination of these two polities provides a new launching point from which I hope to advance a model for the continuing survival and advancement of minority nations. In doing so, I will attempt to sketch the principles that are vital to ensuring that national minorities and national majorities coexist under the auspices of just and equitable intercommunal relations and that allow minority nations to fulfill their legitimate and democratic aspirations.

The relationship between international organizations and national minorities underwent a significant transformation between 1995 and 2005. Instead of promoting the rights of national minorities, as they once did, international organizations now tend to focus on protecting the rights of individuals *within* minority nations. It is true that international organizations brought the plight of the national minorities of Kosovo and East Timor to public attention. But these cases are exceptions to the trend that has taken hold in the supranational sphere—that of a tradeoff between the recognition of national minorities and the promulgation of a global society constituted of culturally diverse groups. This development is perhaps best captured in a 2004 United Nations Development Programme Report on Human Development titled *Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World*.

To ensure their long-term survival, national minorities must overcome a major hurdle. National majorities have long downplayed or ignored national minority claims-making under the pretext that recognizing these claims would threaten the state's position in international organizations and/or in international economic competition. Confronted with threats emanating from minority groups, representatives of the encompassing state have demanded the

unquestioned loyalty of national minorities. Within the context of unfettered cultural and economic globalization, however, minority nations could find the dual threat of cultural erosion and declining international relevance far more devastating.

In other words, these nations must not only counteract the homogenizing forces of globalization, they must also resist the pressure for cultural uniformity from their own state. In Canada, Aboriginal peoples are arguably most affected by these global phenomena.

The loyalty and unity that national majorities demand of national minorities cannot be accepted unless it is accompanied by the adoption of measures to protect liberty, freedom, and democracy within the multinational polity. This is an issue of conditional trust.

Here the words of Lord Acton resonate across time. Lord Acton argued that modern multinational federalism entailed finding a balance between unity and liberty; avoiding the reconciliation of these two ideas would have damaging consequences on any state. On one hand, if the goals of unity are served at the expense of liberty, the logical outcome is despotism. On the other hand, the entrenchment of liberty without attention to unity inevitably leads to anarchy. For Lord Acton, the institutionalization of multinational federalism presented a means to avoid both of these paths. Lord Acton made clear that

the presence of different nations under the same sovereignty... provides against the servility which flourishes under the shadow of a single authority, by balancing interests, multiplying associations, and giving to the subject the restraint and support of a combined opinion... Liberty provokes diversity, and diversity preserves liberty by supplying the means of organisation... The coexistence of several nations under the same State is a test, as well as the best security of its freedom.²⁰

20. John Emerich Acton, "Nationality," in *Essays on Freedom and Power*, ed. Gertrude Himmelfarb (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1949), 185.

In the last segment of my lecture, I offer my take on how liberty, diversity, and unity can be reconciled in this age of uncertainty. I also outline the contours of a new political project for multinational states that is rooted in the ideals of liberty, recognition, and empowerment. I contend that a political project based on these ideals will open new vistas for minority and majority nations to engage in frank and honest dialogue and will allow for the mutual and compatible coexistence of difference, trust, and liberal communitarianism within the context of modern democracy.

The adoption of this new political project is not a given. It will require that minority nations follow the path laid before them by Indigenous movements and that they are vigorous in resisting those that seek to maintain or promote the status quo.

Toward a New Politics in Multinational Polities: Moderation, Dignity, and Hospitality

The enshrinement of a new political project for multinational polities requires cultivating three principles: the principle of moderation, the principle of dignity, and the principle of hospitality. These three principles are the fibres that, when sewn together, create the canvas of a politics based on liberty, recognition, and empowerment.

The Principle of Moderation

Montesquieu's excursus on creating balance in political societies provides the theoretical basis for the first principle. In the 18th century, Montesquieu argued both for the separation of legislative, executive, and judicial powers and for the unrelenting pursuit of diversity. The principle of balance, which underlies both of these objectives, is vital for the enshrinement of a new politics within the context of the age of uncertainty. Balance, according to Montesquieu, is a necessary buttress against the development of autocratic, totalitarian, and tyrannical systems of government. As such, the entrenchment of balance and good government, via the separation of powers and the

pursuit of diversity, requires that political ambitions and intentions be tempered or moderated.

History is, however, rife with countless instances where political actors have defied the principle of moderation and have instead attempted to impose their will on constituents and political subjects. The First Nations of the New World have paid the price for the unfettered ambition of colonial powers. So too have minority nations been subject to the creation of structures of domination. In the Canadian context, this phenomenon is most readily brought to light by the landmark works of Eugénie Brouillet, John Conway, Michel Seymour, and James Tully, which document the process of cultural, religious and linguistic homogenization that the Quebecois and the Acadian nations have had to resist since the foundation of the Canadian state.

The Principle of Dignity

Other great thinkers have focused on human nature and the conditions for the creation of a just society. David Hume (1748) and John Rawls (1971), in particular, have addressed the need to design rules that lead to and sustain justice. Alain Renault has attempted to apply these precepts to the contemporary context. In doing so, Renault has translated Hume's "condition of justice" as the "condition of diversity." To cite Renault: "I define the 'condition of diversity' as the totality of factors that have led contemporary societies to question the nature of the rules that they themselves must adopt in order to recognize that human nature is intrinsically differentiated and that it is only by acknowledging this fact that it can be treated with dignity."²¹ This acknowledgement constitutes the basis for the second principle that must undergird relations among nations in modern democratic societies.

21. Alain Renault, *Un humanisme de la diversité: Essai sur la décolonisation des identités* (Paris: Flammarion, 2009), 73.

While the rhetoric of dignity is no longer a core component of majority–minority interactions in Canada, it is central to the persistent international conflict in another multinational polity. In recent years, Spain has seen a growing conflict between state nationalist forces and sub-state national movements in the Basque country, Catalonia, and Galicia. The nature of this conflict is captured in a comprehensive editorial (signed by 12 Catalan newspapers) published on the November 26, 2009. The editorial strikes at the heart of the conflict between Bourbon-style nationalists and advocates of multinational federalism.

The foundational pact that has allowed Spain to prosper over the last thirty years is now being questioned. At this time it is best to remember one of the founding and indispensable principles, drawn from Ancient Rome, that underlies our legal system: *Pacta sunt servanda*. Agreements must be kept.

Catalonia is in the grips of real fear and it is necessary for all of Spain to recognize this...Catalans fear, above all, a loss of dignity.²²

These quotes reveal that majority–minority relations could very well be at a turning point. Whether in Catalonia, in Scotland, or in contexts where national minorities have engaged in similar political projects, the idea of dignity has become the rallying cry for the re-entrenchment of democracy.

In Spain, demands for the enshrinement of dignity have not fallen on deaf years. Although it is unclear what the future holds for the Catalan people, we have nonetheless witnessed a return to national mobilization that rivals the power and numbers of the movements that emerged in the waning years of the Soviet empire. Within this more recent context, dignity is inextricably linked to the recognition of national diversity.

22. “La dignidad de Catalunya,” *La Vanguardia*, November 26, 2009; editorial published simultaneously by 12 newspapers with headquarters in Catalonia.

The Principle of Hospitality

The two first principles require that national majorities embrace moderation and respect national dignity. The third principle—and the most important of the three—that underlies the creation of a new political relationship between national groups requires that national minorities adopt an ethic of hospitality. The principle of hospitality is meant to enlarge contexts of choice and acts as a means to counteract the atomizing effects of procedural liberalism.

Philosopher Daniel Innerarity has recently devoted an entire book to the idea of an ethic of hospitality. According to Innerarity, adopting hospitality as a prime imperative permits one

to appropriate an interpretive approach for understanding the rich strangeness of life, the ways of others, and the often opaque and hostile cultural context that we find ourselves immersed in and that, nonetheless, drives us to seek out what is new, to enter into contact with what is different and to seek out harmony in the disparity that constitutes our existence²³.

This way of understanding reality casts new light on the political world and gives primacy to a good life rooted in society and inter-communal relations.

The principle of hospitality will undoubtedly lead to deliberation and to periods of uncertainty. But all mature democratic societies must embrace a certain degree of uncertainty and for that reason must be open to the possibility of change. It is only through inter-communal interaction (or creative tensions, to use Trudeau's terminology) that a modern society can implement a political project that listens to all voices and encourages political participation within and across communities. Minority nations, even more than majority nations, must embrace the ethic of hospitality. They must address a series of challenges entailing, inter alia, accommodating

23. Daniel Innerarity, *Éthique de l'hospitalité* (Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2009), 4.

and integrating migrant populations, maintaining the predominance of majority languages, addressing the disappearance of a sense of community, counteracting citizen disengagement, and moderating the cultural and economic impacts of globalization. When confronted with these phenomena, minority nations are at risk. As such, they must find new ways of sustaining mobilization and activism in both the intranational and the international arenas.

The principle of hospitality requires the adoption of a genuine politics of interculturalism. The intercultural model allows for healthy dialogue between the members of a diverse society as well as the articulation of an authentic pact between groups. This model also allows for the continued cultural and ideational diversification of the national minority, on one hand, and gives the national minority an opportunity to exist and thrive over time, on the other. While intercommunal dialogue may lead to the voicing of profound ideological disagreements, interculturalism is necessary for ensuring the survival and democratic evolution of minority nations. As Daniel Innerarity states,

Democratic renewal will not be instigated by the drive for consensus but rather under the auspices of reasonable disagreement. Although democracy is impossible without a certain degree of consensus, it must nonetheless be open to the expression of diversity and to the articulation of collective identities rooted in different traditions.²⁴

By Way of Conclusion

Throughout this lecture, I have presented the politics of recognition and the politics of empowerment as necessary for the deepening of democracy. By evoking the notions of regionalism, nationalism, and federalism, I have sought to question policies that lead to uneven development and regional disparities, to challenge policies

24. Daniel Innerarity, *La démocratie contre l'État. Essai sur le gouvernement des sociétés complexes* (Paris, Flammarion, 2006), 129.

insensitive to national minorities, and to suggest how we might advance political autonomy in line with a principle of the non-subordination of power in federal regimes.

My argument was developed through a series of four reflections. The first explored regional mobilization as a means to empower citizens inhabiting remote areas that are affected by uneven development. The second had to do with nationalist mobilization in a politico-economic context influenced by forces of globalization, forces that can undermine the life of national communities within the world order. The third reflection dealt with models for the management of linguistic and national diversity, focusing equally on models rooted in communal rights and models rooted in individual rights. In the third reflection, I was keen to examine multinational states as new institutional forms of constitutional association. I contended that political autonomy ought to be seen as a form of voluntary and consensual enfranchisement and not as a means to exclude the Other. The fourth reflection evaluated different conceptualizations of community, autonomy, and empowerment in nationally diverse states. I presented multinational federalism as the most promising framework for managing diversity within these states. In that reflection, I reassessed paths toward community reconciliation by reifying and deepening three federal instruments drawn from the past: the need to find a proper balance between forces in tension; the urgency to advance a politic of dignity that builds on a continually renewed trust; and the need to nourish a politics of hospitality so that no one feels excluded from the policy process and the path to democratic renewal.

In closing, and to go beyond the points I have addressed in this lecture, if there is one message I would like to communicate, it is that as individuals we have a key role to play in advancing principles of fairness and justice. Empathy, the quality I identified at the very outset in reference to my uncle, is an essential element to be emulated at all levels—that of municipal politics, as seen with Operation

Dignity; that of provincial affairs, as with the Maritime Rights Movement or Quebec's national affirmation; and that of multi-national forums, as I have been advocating for some time in various arenas. Seeking to advance these causes can only bring dignity to people and make the Other aware of the importance to act in good faith, lest trust weaken and unravel.

My hope is that a new group of scholars will take it upon themselves to ensure that redressing past injustices and unfair practices is not an idea limited to the rights movements of the latter half of the 20th century. In doing so, I would like to see these young people not only follow in the footsteps of Trudeau fellows such as James Tully, Jane Jenson, Jeremy Webber, Will Kymlicka, and John McGarry, but also to tell us how and why we, the older generation, are wrong. Past Trudeau fellows have not shied away from their obligation to sensitize Canadians to the importance of "reimagining Canada" from different societal perspectives and political traditions. My hope is that the next generation of Trudeau scholars will not abandon this challenging, complex, unique, and noble endeavour.