



Combating Coloniality

the cultural policy of post-colonialism

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RESUMO

A característica distintiva da política cultural em países caracterizados por um legado de colonialidade é a importância da formação da identidade e das políticas envolvidas na formulação de sua definição. Na raiz, a colonialidade é uma experiência que envolve a influência dominante por um poder mais forte sobre um estado sujeito. No entanto, isso não é apenas uma questão de governança externa ou dependência econômica, mas de um domínio cultural que cria uma relação assimétrica entre o “centro” e a “periferia” entre a “hegemonia dominante” e o “outro” marginalizado. Nestas circunstâncias, o que constitui uma cultura “autêntica” e como isso informa a identidade nacional é uma preocupação política e social central.

Palavras-chave: Formação de identidade. Pós-colonialismo. Hegemonia. Colonialismo cultural.

ABSTRACT

The distinguishing characteristic of cultural policy in countries characterized by a legacy of coloniality is the importance of the identity formation and the politics that are involved in formulating its definition. At root, coloniality is an experience involving dominating influence by a stronger power over a subject state. However, this is not just a matter of external governance or economic dependency, but of a cultural dominance that creates an asymmetrical relationship between the ‘center’ and the ‘periphery,’ between the ruling ‘hegemon’ and the marginalized ‘other.’ In these circumstances, what constitutes an “authentic” culture, and how this informs national identity, is a central political and social concern.

Keywords: Identity formation. Post-colonialism. Hegemony. Cultural colonialism.

Any discussion of cultural policy must take into account the importance of public culture and tradition “in giving a sense of uniqueness and meaning to individual political cultures”. (PYE; VERBA, 1965, p. 19) Accordingly, a comprehensive analysis of a nation’s development involves not only its political institutions, but its cultural identity as well.

As with politics in general, cultural politics involves the expression of the collective values of a people, the feelings of people about their social and group identities, and above all else the tests of loyalty and commitment. (PYE; VERBA, 1965, p. 19)

The distinguishing characteristic of cultural policy in countries characterized by a legacy of coloniality is the importance of the identity formation and the politics that are involved in formulating its definition.

At root, coloniality is an experience involving dominating influence by a stronger power over a subject state. However, this is not just a matter of external governance or economic dependency, but of a cultural dominance that creates an asymmetrical relationship between the “center” and the “periphery,” between the ruling “hegemon” and the marginalized “other.” In these circumstances,

what constitutes an “authentic” culture, and how this informs national identity, is a central political and social concern.

A further legacy of coloniality can be a deracination that renders a people deprived of an agreed-upon history. To the extent that coloniality is “one of the purest forms of cultural destruction,” it is because “it insistently degrades the self-image of those who are colonized”. (HOGAN, 2000, p. 83) Consequently, a country’s independence is akin to being born (ZOLBERG, 1993, p. 234); or, more exactly, to being reborn as a people emerge from cultural repression. Post-coloniality necessitates constructing both a unique public culture and a distinct political culture if full sovereignty is to be realized. The discourse on post-coloniality emphasizes the role of culture in the imposition of imperial rule and in liberation from this imperialism.

As Edward Said, the Columbia University literary theorist (and a Palestinian Christian) observed, “The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the major connections between them”. (SAID, 1979, p. xiii) While formulated by Western scholars, missionaries and administrators, the telling power of a construction such as “Orientalism” was that its “hegemonic power” was able to persuade the colonized that “the idea of European identity was a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures”. (SAID, 1979, p. 7) Furthermore, this power reaches across geography and generations, as “colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule on the present and future of a dominated country. By a kind of perverted logic it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it”. (FANON, 1968, p. 51)

Post-colonialism emerged when the colonized recognized and contested regulatory and hegemonic dominance. (ASHCROFT, 2001) In essence, culture and politics are inextricably intertwined as they are about the redefinition of national identity. This involves “legitimizing the nation to its own citizenry and (perhaps most

important) to outsiders”. (ZOLBERG, 1993, p. 235) The nation-building project for the newly independent is the creation of an authentic culture to replace that imposed by the colonial power. “At the level of cultural policy, this means a core of common cultural practices, beliefs, customs and such has to be allowed to become manifest.” (ALEXANDER, 1995, p. 216) “The search for authenticity, for a more congenial national origin than provided by colonial history or a new pantheon of heroes and (occasionally) heroines, myths and religions” (SAID, 1994, p. 226) is an essential element in the creation of a post-colonial public culture. For the decolonized, a policy of cultural reclamation is a necessary commitment to political reconstruction. The past is reclaimed by a people as a necessary element of realigning political sovereignty. The consequences of coloniality have an importance in shaping cultural policies if only because national identity typically cannot be assumed. These policies often involved the invocation of “imagined communities” (ANDERSON, 1983) that were constructed to define nations that were not states in the empires that ruled in Eastern and Central Europe from the mid-seventeenth century until the end of World War I. Educated elites formalized dialects into languages and folk lore into national sagas while composing music and creating literature in the new national spirit. It also followed that political history was reimagined to correspond with cultural identity. Similarly, the consequences of coloniality have necessitated a re-imagined public culture to counter the suppression of their marginalized values.

Consequently, post-colonization requires cultural policies that would assert influence over the discourse that defined national identity. In this way, such cultural policies have as a central goal the determination of whether the hegemon or the other controls the definition of identity. The classic question in politics asks: “who is ruled by whom?” In cultural politics, the “who/whom” question is the determination of “by whom are a people told who they are?” In essence, post-colonial societies seek to reclaim a voice in telling

their stories; that is, in creating their own cultural distinctiveness rather than being defined as the “other” by another.

For example, in the cultural ideology of *Negritude*, Leopold Senghor, the writer and first president of Senegal, articulated a universal vision of a culture that would valorize the contributions to civilization of not only black Africans, but also of the black minorities in America, Asia and Oceania. Essentially, *Negritude* is the:

Acceptance of the existence of this civilization and its forward projection into the continuing historical process... to accept the values of the civilization of the black world, making them a living, fruitful reality... in order to experience them ourselves and for ourselves, and also to cause them to be experienced by and for others... (M'BENGUE, 1973, p. 9)

As such, *Negritude* is an ideology of transnational cultural identity that challenges the hegemonic assumptions of Western cultural values.

This essay will review the major themes that have informed cultural policies given the legacy of coloniality. Little will be said about specific administrative structures, funding levels or programmatic activities. What will be discussed herein are the ideological arguments and developmental imperatives that couple cultural sovereignty with political sovereignty. Cultural policies are not simply about support for the arts but entail addressing major political concepts and redressing legacies of coloniality. What should be clear is that these cultural policy issues are not just found in imperial dependencies, but also in regions that have been absorbed into modern states as a part of their nation-building experiences. Moreover, the experience of coloniality is not restricted to the former colonies of the so-called “developing world,” but can also be found in the “internal colonies” of developed countries as well. Emblematic examples of differing approaches to reconstitutive cultural policies include: (1) the cultural reassertion of post-Revolution Mexico;

(2) the cultural renaissance of Quebec; (3) the cultural reconstruction of South Africa; (4) the cultural conundrum of Ukraine; and (5) the cultural revivalism of the Middle East. (Other examples that represent efforts to reinforce national identity by combating the effects of coloniality as cultural colonialism include Scotland and Catalonia, whose conditions might be termed “internal coloniality.”) A coda will offer some concluding observations about cultural nationalism and the politics of identity.

CULTURAL REASSERTION: MEXICO AFTER THE 1920 REVOLUTION

The countries of Latin America became independent from Spain in the early part of the nineteenth century. However, many retained a dependency status: economically to the American “colossus to the North” and culturally to a Europeanized aesthetic and the values of a Hispanophile elite who subordinated their national identities to the perceived superiority of Spanish (and more generally European) cultural values. Consequently, it is not surprising, that artists and intellectuals have been in the vanguard of Latin American political struggles of the twentieth century. Two of the distinguishing characteristics of modern Latin American culture are:

an intense interest both political and cultural in the past civilizations and present life of the original inhabitants, with an attempt to revive native forms (Indianism or *indigenismo*), and an intense role for the social role of the artist. (GOWING, 1995, p. 911)

Nowhere was this confluence of the political and cultural greater than in post-revolutionary Mexico during the 1920s. Strongly committed to cultural nationalism, the Secretary of State for Education, José Vasconcelos, believed that art should have a direct and didactic public role. To this end, he commissioned a number of monumental murals from young Mexican artists to decorate the walls of public buildings. The murals commissioned by Vasconcelos were

part of a cultural policy designed to institute a state-sponsored program of sponsoring artistic creativity designed to realize a revolutionary nationalism that would realize a cultural renaissance that celebrated Mexico's indigenous past and cast the "pre-Hispanic Indian as a symbol of the nation". (ROCHFORD, 1993, p. 17)

The names of the "Big Three" (*Los Tres Grandes*) are most familiar: Jose Clemente Orozco, David Alfaro Siqueiros and, especially, Diego Rivera. The complex phenomenon of Indian culture was not addressed solely in mural paintings. However, the murals were a staple of a revolutionary art whose goal was not simplistic political indoctrination, but to affect a change in "consciousness and sensibility". (HENNESSY, 1971, p. 72) For Siqueiros, his experiences in one of the twentieth century's bloodiest civil wars gave him a heightened sensitivity to Mexico's popular traditions. "It led to a direct reflection of the immense cultural traditions of the country, particularly with regard to the extraordinary pre-Columbian civilizations". (ROCHFORD, 1993, p. 28) This cultural policy, which valorized indigenous people and pre-Conquistador history, was at root a commitment to the realization of a social consciousness and a cultural renaissance.

In murals such as those of Rivera in the National Preparatory School, the National Palace in Mexico City, and the Palace of Cortes in Cuernavaca, the context of the iconography is "art in the service of politics." The themes represent a new comprehension of Mexico's identity as a nation, "replacing the previous colonialist ideology and subservience of its people". (CATLIN, 1980, p. 198) The murals' images were meant to be pedagogical, "to convince their audience of certain virtues and to promote corresponding behavior". (FOLGARAIT, 1998, p. 12) Rivera's murals

exude an air of revolutionary optimism and idealism, creating visual eulogies to the gains of the revolution with its new atmosphere of political liberation... and seem to represent Rivera's attempts to give expression to what

he saw as an authentic indigenous image.” (ROCHFORD 1993, p. 57)

As part of a broader, nationalist program of popular education the murals addressed the theme: “What is Mexico?” For Vasconcelos, this endeavor had spiritual overtures; his teachers were termed “Maestros Misioneros;” his motto was “to educate is to redeem”. (FOLGARAIT, 1998, p. 18) This approach gave precedence to Mexican national objectives and equated the importance of native cultural values with the generalized imperatives of the revolutionary process. (CATLIN, 1980) Vasconcelos’s motives in forming a national culture through education echoed the sentiments of President Alvaro Obregon. “The hope of every nation is the development of a morality among the people themselves. This is the great task of education and culture.” (FOLGARAIT, 1998, p. 19)

The mural painting, with its popular accessibility and ideological iconography, was the revolutionary art without equal:

Not only was it possible to convey to a wide audience a sense of continuity with a largely forgotten past, and to give ordinary spectators a vicarious sense of participation in a great historical process, but also, being rooted in a popular tradition and employing popular themes, the art enabled painters to appeal over the heads of a philistine bourgeoisie, to break away from the exclusiveness of a narrow literary culture and to reach out to the wider illiterate society. (HENNESSY, 1971, p. 73)

Moreover, the murals were definitely intended to be important. “Even today they are spoken of in awe by Mexicans, and guided tours of Rivera’s murals in the National Palace in Mexico City are conducted in almost ceremonial fashion”. (FOLGARAIT, 1998, p. 12) Rivera, and his fellow muralists, also represented a cultural policy that succeeded in inculcating a “sense of nationality, with its own demos and ethos, for a major part of the Indian and Mestizo community in Latin America”. (CATLIN, 1980, p. 211)

The political agenda of the mural paintings was fourfold: first, creating a common national culture on a secular basis; second, formalizing an idealized version of the past; third, interpreting national history to give primacy to the contributions of the indigenous people; and fourth, representing a universe of commonly accepted national symbols and a pantheon of immediately recognizable national heroes. (HENNESSY, 1971) In this sense, the overall objective was less historical and more mythopoetic. Post-Colonial nations must seek to create a history that will validate their new status and legitimize the new regime. Vasconcelos remarked about his history of Mexico: “I am not writing history; I am creating a myth.” (HENNESSY, 1971, p. 76) Indeed, in 1925, after four years as Minister of Education, Vasconcelos argued in his book *The Cosmic Race* that the mestizo represented the essence of Mexican nationality. For Vasconcelos, “the mestizo was seen as embodying national consciousness.” (ROCHFORT, 1993, p. 83)

The “invention of tradition” (HOBSBAWM; RANGER, 1983) is not unique to developing nations, but it has a particular urgency when a new political culture is being created. In the case of the Mexican muralist movement, a public culture was mobilized to assist in the creation of a political culture. The murals spoke to a socialist-revolutionary ideal and to the integration of Indian and mestizo viewers into a working-class political and cultural ideology rooted in the Mexican experience.

Diego Rivera’s distinctive aesthetic achievement was to have created a visual image of an indigenous culture that transcended the realm of memory. He carefully crafted a popular vocabulary of socio-political themes that were understandable to the general public.

Rivera managed to convey to this much wider audience the sense of community with a forgotten past and a feeling of participation in a historical process that had been largely ignored in the history of the country’s colonial experience. (ROCHFORT, 1993, p. 87)

“As such, Rivera’s work stands as a kind of *Summa Theologica* of the modern Mexican revolution”. (CATLIN, 1980, p. 211)

CULTURAL RENAISSANCE: QUEBEC

Canada’s federal system, which resembles a confederacy, gives its provinces significant powers (much more than American states), especially regarding law, immigration, education and cultural matters. For example, Quebec alone among Canada’s ten provinces and three territories has civil law, rather than common law. Also, French is deemed the province’s official language (albeit unilaterally) and preferences are given to francophone immigrants. Indeed, what is most significant about Quebec’s cultural policy, and accounts for the seriousness with which it is engaged in the public arena, is its relationship between cultural and political identity. (MULCAHY, 1995) Cultural policy in Quebec is not just support for artists and the arts, but is also a matter of support for its heritage and the valorization of the French language. (ARPIN, 1991) To put a complex matter very simply, the francophone cultural heritage is favored for enhanced support as are contemporary French-Canadian aesthetic expressions. Quebec’s cultural policy, then, is intertwined with constitutional and linguistic matters that have been at the heart of Canada’s ongoing debate about nationalism and federalism. (MINISTERE DES AFFAIRES CULTURELLES, 1992, p. 39-42)

Starting with the “Quiet Revolution” in 1960, Quebec governments – Liberal, Union Nationale, and Parti Québécois – have sought to replace the long-dominant influence of the English-speaking minority with a self-confident and modernized francophone cultural identity. This revolution has largely been won and the resulting renaissance of Quebec’s artistic and intellectual life transformed a provincial culture into one with an independent international standing. A frequent observation is that, while Quebec is politically but one of Canada’s provinces, Quebec is a nation in cultural terms.

The creation of Quebec's Ministry of Cultural Affairs can be seen as a manifestation of the cultural nationalism of the 1960s, which predated the political nationalism of later decades. It was established by the government of Liberal premier Jean Lesage "for the purpose of maintaining and fostering all those traits and characteristics of the people of Quebec as a distinct cultural group on the North American continent." That cultural distinctiveness is its "Frenchness" and, in addition to goals of cultural development, the ministry also included an *Office de la Langue Française* under Jean-Marc Leger, a well-known nationalist intellectual. This office was designed to oversee the "correctness and enrichment of French in Quebec as well as the promotion of greater francisation of Quebec society." Overall, the Ministry was charged with the task of supporting the development of French language and culture in Quebec. (LACHAPELLE and others, *Quebec Democracy*, 332)

The Ministry's commitment to the revalorization of French culture was an official counterpart to the more general explosion of cultural ebullience during the quiet revolution, which saw "a new maturity of French Canadian artistic, dramatic, lyric, and literary production." In this highly charged, nationalistic environment, language emerged as a potent symbol of French Canadian cultural affirmation, political emancipation, and group identity. This was especially true for the Quebecois intelligentsia of teachers, administrators, journalists, and policy analysts, whose occupational skills involved the manipulation of knowledge and information. (This is a class, which is termed in French, *travailleurs du langue*, or "language workers," for which there is no exact English-language equivalent.) For this technically skilled, francophone middle class, the survival and blossoming of Quebec society required the reconciliation of its French Canadian cultural heritage with the realities of a modern, urbanized world.

Otherwise, the French language and culture would survive in Quebec, as it did in Louisiana, merely as folklore,

while English dominated the dynamic elements of Quebec life and inexorably threatened the cultural survival of the French-speaking people. (LEVINE, 1991, p. 45)

It is crucial to note that the cultural nationalism of the decades beginning with the quiet revolution is of a fundamentally different character than that of survival of the previous two centuries. There is arguably a remarkable continuity between the ethos of survival and that of blossoming. Both are rooted in the efforts of French Canadians after the Conquest in 1759 to resist assimilation and “a determination to survive, a ‘will to live’ as a cultural group.” As a result of their determination to retain their cultural distinctiveness, French Canadians have been engaged “in an intermittent, and at times bitter, struggle against assimilation by the dominant English group”. (QUINN, 1963, p. 3) The blossoming ideology, by contrast, was a modernizing nationalism that sought the economic empowerment of the francophone majority in Quebec. The fostering of French-Canadian culture, and the concomitant rise of the language issue as a matter of cultural survival, mobilized the ethnic pride of francophones, and “formed the impetus for a tremendous effort toward economic self-reliance”. (LACHAPELLE et al., 1993, p. 331) In her introductory message to *Notre Culture, Notre Avenir* (“Our Culture, Our Future”), Quebec Minister of Culture, Liza Frulla, noted the fundamental importance of culture in Quebec because its francophone majority constitutes a unique society in North America. She argued for the necessity of Quebec having mastery over cultural matters within its territory. (*Notre Culture, Notre Avenir*, vii-viii) Whatever the political and constitutional recognition of Quebec as a distinct society, the status of French as the province’s official language, the predominance of French-language schooling and ambitious francophone arts activities, mark it as a distinctive culture. In turn, this cultural distinctiveness distinguishes its approach to public support for the arts. (MEISEL, 1989, p. 82-83; MEISEL;

VAN LOON, 1987, p. 276–310). Certainly, there is no question of the centrality of language as a component of cultural identity; the defining element of Quebec culture is its French-speaking character. Quebec is identified first and foremost with the French fact and its importance for the future of Quebec is decisive. Accordingly, Quebec's cultural policy explicitly fosters the dissemination and consumption of French-language cultural products.

In sum, Quebec's national identity is centered on the language as the expression of the cultural heritage of its francophone population. A formulation of this sense of politics and culture might be that the language is the culture; the culture is the people; the people are the nation. Even with such a formula, Quebec's cultural policy must assess the relative weights to be accorded a modern culture, which seeks to compete in the international cultural mainstream, and a provincial culture, which celebrates the uniqueness of its local folk arts. Arguably, Quebec has succeeded in reconciling the traditional with the modern and, most important, resolving the language issue on its own terms. That one hears less about independence testifies to the success of measures such as Law 22 and Law 101 which codified the provincial primacy of French both in principle and in practical matters (particularly the language of education). Quebec rests more easily in Canada because its culture rests more easily at home.

CULTURAL RECONSTRUCTION: SOUTH AFRICA

To the extent that colonialism is “one of the purest forms of cultural destruction,” it is because “it insistently degrades the self-image of those who are colonized”. (HOGAN, 2000, p. 83) Consequently, a country's independence is akin to being born; (ZOLBERG, 1993, p. 234), or, more exactly, to being reborn as the former colony emerges from its colonial subjugation. Post-coloniality necessitates constructing both a unique public culture and a distinct political culture if full sovereignty is to be realized. Much of the discourse on post-colonialism emphasizes the role of culture in the imposition

of imperial rule and, by extension, in the liberation from imperialism. As noted earlier, Edward Said noted that controlling narrative power is one of the key components in the construction of cultural imperialism. (SAID, 1979, p. xiii) Narrative control – its construction or blockage – was a particularly powerful tool in asserting and maintaining the cultural superiority of the colonial power over indigenous peoples.

Post-colonialism emerged when the colonized recognized and contested this alleged cultural dominance. (ASHCROFT, 2001) In essence, culture and politics are inextricably intertwined as they are about the redefinition of national identity. This involves “legitimizing the nation to its own citizenry and (perhaps most important) to outsiders”. (ZOLBERG, 1993, p. 235) The nation-building project in newly independent nations is the creation of a core culture to replace that infused by the colonial power. “At the level of cultural policy, this means a core of common cultural practices, beliefs, customs and such has to be allowed to become manifest.” (ALEXANDER, 1995, p. 216)

In essence, a post-colonial public culture must reclaim and reconstitute its identity as a space and a people. “The search for authenticity, for a more congenial material origin than provided by colonial history for a new pantheon of heroes and (occasionally) heroines myths, and religions” (SAID, 1994, p. 226) is an essential element in the creation of a post-colonial public culture where the land is redefined and reappropriated by its people. With reference to post-apartheid South Africa, for example, this required not only the termination of a European and white centric public culture, but one that rejected the colonial construction of African identities and “promotes an evolving core culture that is itself constituted by the pooling of different cultural streams from which the citizens of the country derive”. (JACKSON, 1995, p. 217)

Museums can play an important role in the process of cultural redefinition and re-appropriation. This is especially the case of

South Africa with its history of systematized apartheid. Museums have the capacity to reconnect people to cultural legacies that have been severed by the experience of colonization. Museum representations can articulate ideologies about how a society perceives itself in determining what is culturally significant in defining a society and in constructing the face that it presents to its own people and the world at large. “In Africa, anthropological museums and exhibitions were often compliant in the imperialistic program of establishing one group’s superiority (White) at the expense of another”. (DUBIN, 2006, p. 5) In a similar vein, Western fine-art museums as recently as thirty years ago would classify the artistic creations of indigenous peoples as “primitive art” (for example, the Metropolitan Museum’s exhibition “Masterpieces of Primitive Art from the Rockefeller Collection” in 1978) or these artifacts were displayed in natural-history museums within an ethnological context; that is, as artifacts exemplifying pre-industrial, underdeveloped societies.

It should be noted that there have been significant changes in such curatorial practices as evidenced by the transfer of indigenous people’s art from the Smithsonian’s Museum of Natural History to the newly-created Museum of the American Indian where curatorial decision-making is exercised in consultation with tribal representatives. Moreover, its organization is not predominantly by aesthetic categories in the style of an art museum. Rather, it is closer to a historical museum in its displaying objects— both quotidian and unique – to document the development of tribal societies. Its closest institutional equivalent could be the Musée de la Civilization (which opened in 1998) in Quebec City that, in a series of exhibits called “Memories,” encapsulates the daily life of the province from its origins to the present. In this manner, the museum gives the people of Quebec a sense of their French origins without stereotype and unmediated by the dominant English culture.

In a similar fashion, *The Neglected Tradition: Towards a New History of South African Art (1930–1988)* merits the distinction of a “watershed” cultural event by effectively changing the way in which South African art was perceived. Cultural sociologist, Steven Dubin, echoing widely-shared sentiments in the South African artistic milieu, argues that *The Neglected Tradition* represented a major corrective to the tyranny of aesthetic hierarchies that validated the apartheid ideology and inaugurated a policy of cultural inclusiveness. The exhibition presented the work of a hundred artists, the majority of them black, previously not exhibited and relatively unknown. It also featured a catalog essay by curator Steven Sack that systematically evaluated a sixty-year period of black creative expression that had been largely ignored. Today, there is substantial consensus that the artists showcased in *The Neglected Tradition* are to be counted among the most gifted in South Africa. *The Neglected Tradition* also prompted museums to review their curatorial policies and to begin acquiring the work of black artists. The legacy of the exhibition’s revolutionary outlook is apparent in a later generation of scholars, curators and artists who have received a very different sort of education than the one that reflected the racist perspective of apartheid. These changes in curatorial values are not simply technically significant, but reflect a profound shift in cultural policy. As realms of representation, museums are also sites of contestation as they visually convey not just aesthetic insights, but also the socio-historical values of a community. Consequently, restoring black artists to their rightful place in the museum pantheon is not just a victory for aesthetic integrity, but also constitutes an important realization of public policy goals. For the decolonized, a policy of cultural reconstruction is a necessary commitment to political reconstruction.

CULTURAL CONUNDRUM (UKRAINE)

Ukraine may seem, at first glance, an unusual example of a developing country. However, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe under Communism were typically classed as “second world”. It is important to note that development is not simply an economic index, but relative to political, social and cultural dimensions as well. Ukraine, for example, has exhibited dramatic socio-political problems with systematic official corruption, widespread election irregularities and business illegalities in the acquisition of state enterprises. The “Orange Revolution” of 2005 was a popular uprising against such abuses. At root, it was a manifestation of deep cultural chasms – historical and contemporary. Ukraine, an old nation (in the sense of a distinct people) became an independent country in 1991, but without a clearly established, and commonly shared, cultural identity.

Ukraine shares many of the problems other post-colonial states face, including having to address national identity as a matter of public policy. The so-called “Little Russians,” as the Russian metropole regarded the Ukrainians, were an integral component of the Russian nation. “From the eighteenth century until its collapse in 1917, Imperial Russia officially held that the Russian nation consisted of three branches: Great Russian, Little Russia (Ukraine), and White Russia (Belarus)”. (PLOKHY, 2005) Yet, as Russians saw Ukraine as a branch of their own nation, “a Ukrainian national movement began to articulate a distinctive Ukrainian culture.” (ASH; SNYDER, 2005, p. 28) Even after independence in 1991, many Ukrainian intellectuals insisted that the “pervasiveness and persistence of the colonial status quo” by Russia gave the nominally independent Ukraine the status of “a kind of Creole state, that is, a state dominated by the descendants of Russian settlers and by Russified Ukrainians”. (RIABCHUK, 2002, p. 53)

The rise industrialization in the nineteenth century coincided with a policy of Russification of Ukraine that created a widely held cultural belief that there was a contradiction between things modern and Ukrainian. Not only did the indigenous population (native-speaking Ukrainians) become the oppressed majority in their own country in relation to the dominant Russophones,

but also the Ukrainophone would become firmly associated with village backwardness and ‘bumpkin-ness.’ In fact, this world became a kind of inner colony, a local Third World of *kolkhoz* (slaves) that provided the First World of the higher (Russophone) civilization with lower-class employees. (RIABCHUK, 2002, p. 53)

Yet, the fact remains that in the early modern period “the level of learning in Little Russia was higher than anywhere else in the Orthodox world; scholars from Kiev, traveling to Moscow at this time, did much to raise intellectual standards in Great Russia”. (WARE, 1977)

It should be noted that the politics of identity in a heavily Russified Ukraine is not so much ethnic as linguistic and cultural. Ethnic Ukrainians predominate, especially in the part of the Ukraine west of the Dnieper River while the eastern Ukraine gravitated toward Russia. Ethnic Ukrainians predominate, but there is rough equivalency between the number of Ukrainian and Russian speakers; the latter includes ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians. Again, it is this cultural divide that is the most divisive aspect of Ukrainian society. The Russian viewpoint was expressed in the early nineteenth century: “A Little Russian language never existed, does not exist and shall not exist. Its dialects as spoken by the masses are the same as the Russian language, with the exception of some corruption from Poland.” (REID, 1997, p. 88) “The theory that Ukrainian culture and language is nothing but Polonized Russian is still widespread amongst Ukrainians of a certain age and/or

politics as well as amongst Russians”. (RIABCHUK, 2002, p. 69) For example, during the Orange Revolution, Putin noted emphatically in *Pravda*, “The whole country speaks Russian”. (ASH; SNYDER, 2005, p. 29)

Not surprisingly, Ukrainian speakers see the cultural condition differently. Article 10 of the 1996 Ukrainian constitution clearly states that: “The state language in Ukraine is the Ukrainian language.” Ukrainian nationalist thinking is reflected unequivocally in this key clause. (WILSON, 2000, p. 208). However, the constitution and statutes also accord Russian the status of an official regional dialect. Russian-speaking Ukrainians have been characterized as “denationalized” Ukrainians, “who have been separated from their native language and culture by forcible policies of ‘Russification’”. (WILSON, 2000, p. 208) In the view of some leading Ukrainian cultural figures, “Russified Ukrainians are those who recoiled from their own ethnic community for the most part not of their own will, but as a consequence of deliberate colonial policies”. (WILSON, 2000, p. 208) There is also a strong belief among Ukrainian speakers that while Ukrainians who speak Russian may give lip-service to political independence, and many historic symbols, they are, in cultural and linguistic terms, “Russian” in nature, that is biased against Ukrainian language and culture regarding it as low-status and peasant-like. (WILSON, 2000)

In sum, Ukrainian cultural nationalism classifies Russian speaking Ukrainian as agents of the aforementioned “Creole nationalism,” that is, proponents of a transcendent Russian culture both in its higher manifestations, but also with the popular culture of mass fiction, rock music, game shows. The politics of identity raises the issue of whether political independence can be fully realized without cultural independence. For Ukrainian nationalists, this necessitates a cultural policy that challenges the idea of its subservience to a cultural empire that undermines its national integrity. Effective political sovereignty, in this formulation, can only be

realized through cultural sovereignty. However, the conundrum, exhibited by recent internal warfare, is that the Ukrainian nation is not coterminous with the Ukrainian state. The significant ethnic Russian population in eastern Ukraine increasingly resists the correlation of Ukrainian nationalism with the Ukrainian nation. What is the state is not universally seen as the nation.

CULTURAL REVIVALISM: THE MIDDLE EAST

The Ottoman Empire, or “the sick man of Europe”, was dismantled by the Sykes–Picot Agreement of 1916, which partitioned the Asian area of the Ottoman Empire. (MACMILLAN, 2003, p. 382–388) Most of the late Ottoman European Empire had already been granted independence by the end of the nineteenth century. Sykes–Picot established mandates under European control—Syria and Lebanon for the French, newly constructed Transjordan and Iraq for the British. Concerning the growing Zionist movement in Europe and early Aliyahs, the Balfour Declaration of 1917 created a Jewish homeland in Palestine as a British protectorate. This dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire was codified in the Treaties of Sevres and Lausanne, from 1921 and 1923 respectively, as part of the post–World War I settlement. After this time, the Ottoman Empire ceased to exist and was replaced by many various states created by colonial powers.

In its 1300 year history, Islam overwhelmed the Byzantine Empire, conquered Spain, the Balkans and twice reached the gates of Vienna. However, from the latter part of the nineteenth century until the mid–twentieth, the Islamic world became increasingly colonized by European powers. Algeria was annexed as part of metropolitan France in 1830 until independence in 1961 after a protracted civil war; Tunisia and Morocco became French protectorates in 1882 and 1912, respectively, with internal self–rule, strong francophone educational and cultural influences, and French determination of military and diplomatic issues; Libya was a protectorate of Italy from

1911 to 1947; the British established protectorates in Egypt in 1882 and Sudan in 1889. (ARMSTRONG, 2002, p. xxvii–xxx) It might be noted that none of these European protectorates were very successful. King Abdullah, who was installed by the British in Jordan, was assassinated before the eyes of his youthful successor, King Hussein. The struggle for independence in Algeria was called a “savage war of peace.” The British fought a ten-year war in Iraq before ceding rule to local elites. Lebanon has been in almost perpetual civil war among Maronites, Sunnis, Shias and Druzes.

A more general observation that can be offered is the artificial construction of these colonial entities. Lebanon, for example, has functioned through “consociational governance” in which key political positions are distributed on a confessional basis. Of course, this was always fragile and France traditionally supported the interests of the Maronite Catholics. Iraq may be the model of what not to do in creating a state; as an amalgamation of Sunni (a minority, but predominant) in the central region, Shia (a majority, but oppressed) in the south adjacent to Iran, and the Kurds, non-Arabs with significant ethnic minorities in Turkey, Syria and north Iran. The only people that each group hates more than each other is an imperial outsider, as evidenced by a ten-year (1922–1932) insurrection against the imposition of the British mandate (as well as against the current American intervention).

In essential ways, what has been called the “Middle East” has never been successfully reconstructed—politically or socially—since the fall of the Ottoman Empire. In the modern world, cultural constructions of Islam have taken place against the hegemonic influence of powerful colonial forces. Consequently, modern Islamic identity has been affected by the region’s struggle against coloniality and its association with a concept of modernity, which is judged antithetical to Islamic values. Indeed, the relentless export of a unilateralized modernity has put the West, especially the United States, on a collision course with the Islamic world. For a proud civilization,

its battle with an aggressive, intrusive Western culture understandably produces an acute identity crisis. It is within this context, that new religious, political, and intellectual movements have sought to grapple with this crisis mentality.

Western hegemony has aggressively manifested its power culturally, as well as, politically. In particular, the cultural uniqueness of a colonized area is marked by a stereotypical exoticism that sees them as the “Other.” As such, the Other can never be fully assimilated into the dominant culture. These cultural attributes, which Edward Said termed, “Orientalism,” became instruments of mental conquest, as well as cultural racism. (SAID, 1979) Education was used to create an indigenous elite who were effectively coopted by Western cultural values. This Westernized elite became disaffected from its traditional cultural norms and rendered unable to synthesize the civilizational context in which they lived with their newly acquired Western cultural values.

For Said, “Orientalism” signified a cultural discourse that stylized the population of the East as variously indolent, treacherous, passive, inscrutable, devious, inferior. (SAID, 1979, p. 12) This ideological construction was both persuasive and persistent in Western thought and eventually affected the Middle East’s view of itself. The idea of the Other underpinned the asymmetrical relation between East and West in which cultural power augmented political power to constitute what Antonio Gramsci called “hegemony”. (SAID, 1979, p. 6-7) The essence of hegemony is its ability to destroy cultural diversity by subordinating it to a universal, homogenous culture. This is effectively the distinction between “colonialism” and “coloniality.” The former is typically associated with direct rule by a foreign power while the latter denotes the internalization by a people of a belief in their cultural inferiority. With reference to the Islamic world, this involved devalorizing Koranic values and the assertion of Occidental cultural values as superior.

Arabic efforts at liberation from Orientalist constructions involved emphasizing the delegitimization of coloniality assumptions principles as the first step in a post-colonial era. Much of the difficulty of Western nations in coming to terms with a resurgent Arabic cultural identity is associated with revising the status of Occidental culture as inherently superior. This is extremely difficult because the fundamental legitimization of hegemony over the “other” is the “conviction not just of technological superiority (military, economic, scientific), but of moral superiority”. (SAID, 1994, p. 17) The former can be said to be the empirical rationalization for *colonialism*, the latter is the normative justification for *coloniality*. It may be that the existence of the Middle East as a tinder box is the result of Western resistance to granting cultural parity to a system of values different than its own. In sum, it is against the Western construction of the Islamic world as an inferior Other that the contemporary Islamic culture seeks to revalorize its identity, roots and future. For example, the cultural uniqueness of Arabic art and architecture has been revitalized, both which triumph Islam. Unfortunately, some of these efforts have been seen as the genesis of Islamic fundamentalism, and are equated with terrorism; this essentially hinders most opportunities for meaningful engagement. Furthermore, cultural revalorization is additionally exacerbated by positing these difficulties as a “clash of civilizations”. (HUNTINGTON, 1998)

Western encroachment has given a centrality to politics in the Islamic quest for a renewed identity; the disruptions brought about by Western intrusions have been, for many Muslims, a sign that something had gone gravely amiss in Islamic history. In such situations, devout Muslims turned to religion to guide them in their new circumstances. To understand Islamic culture, it would be helpful to keep certain facts in mind:

- ❖ Far from monolithic, Islam is a highly variegated phenomenon;
- ❖ Modern Islam has been shaped by its experience with European colonization of the Arab world;

- ❖ Islam has always adapted to changing circumstances and uses a religious discourse to legitimize these changes;
- ❖ Islam has been in a state of crisis for several decades and a new guard of Islamic religious leaders has emerged;
- ❖ The most controversial, and most misunderstood, aspect of this post-colonial Islam has been the question of Islamic fundamentalism. (ARMSTRONG, 2002, p. 165)

Fundamentalist movements of all religious persuasions share certain characteristics. At root, they exhibit a deep disenchantment with modernity. Fundamentalists often look back to a “golden age” before the corrupting influence of the modern experiment. All fundamentalist movements, regardless of their confessional nature, share a disenchantment with what are perceived as a pernicious state of affairs and/or a conviction that fundamental theological principles have not been compromised. Islamic fundamentalism is essentially a revulsion against the secularist expulsion of the divine from public life paralleled by an often desperate effort to reassert spiritual values as the proper basis for the Islamic community. “Indeed, the new emergence of fundamentalism has now problematized the relationship between nationalism and religious identity”. (BARAKAT, 1993, p. 36)

It would certainly be a mistake to assume that the reaction of the Arab world to modernity has only entailed fundamentalist dogma. Indeed, many Arab intellectual, religious, and political leaders have sought to achieve a rapprochement between the demands of modernity and religious belief. The cultural revivalism occurring in the Middle East is unique and complex due to the latent effects of coloniality, the historical cultural significance of the region, and the influence of Islamism and Islamic fundamentalism.

In conclusion, as has been manifested in discussions of the nature of cultural identity, herein, stereotypical thinking and confrontational assumptions can only hinder understanding and accommodation. Learning about Islamic culture, as with studying any worldview,

requires a two-fold process by which “static and oversimplified views are replaced by “a dynamic, analytical approach to a highly complex and contradictory reality”. (BARAKAT, 1993, p. 181)

CODA: CULTURE AND IDENTITY

This last section is not designed so much to offer definitive conclusions about cultural policy and colonized nations as to make a final statement about the relationship between culture and national identity. Essentially these constitute the shared values and traditions, whether invented or inherited, that are the essential glue for sustaining a sense of collective cohesiveness. As discussed previously, nations that have been subject to coloniality are particularly sensitive to any devices whereby a hegemon seeks to impose cultural superiority. Particularly suspect are the supposed requirements of modernization that, in fact, barely disguise the superiority attributed to Europeanized norms over indigenous values.

In this vein, Ukrainians were historically stereotyped as “little Russians” – backward, cultureless peasants in need of advancement through Russification and absorption into the Russian state. The doctrines of “white man’s burden” and “civilizing mission” rendered Africans as essentially sub-humans. Similarly, the pure-blooded Spanish ruling class in Latin America asserted a racial, as well as cultural, suzerainty over the indigenous peoples and those of mixed blood. It has been noted that the destructive effects of colonialism are incalculable, and that these costs are largely associated with systematic cultural deracination. Since the cultural damage experienced by the former colony outlives the realization of political sovereignty, its cultural policy must attempt to define a sense of identity.

Typically, such a cultural policy takes on two forms. The first is to stand in opposition to the colonial power’s hegemonic culture, and often in opposing American commercial culture. The second is to invent a tradition that is typically an idealized nostalgia for a

largely lost historical community. This might be a tenuous Gaelic revivalism (HUTCHINSON, 1987), the fabrication of clan-specific tartan regalia (HOBSBAWM; RANGER, 1983, p. 15-41), or a “Puerto Ricanness” involving agrarian folklore “and a romanticized and harmonious integration of the indigenous Taino, Spanish and African components of society, under the rubric of a Hispanic tradition”. (DAVILA, 1997, p. 5) The construction of an idealized cultural identity can be judged a necessary response to the destructive effects of colonialism; on the other hand, the construction may oversimplify cultural complexities and marginalize inconvenient historical and societal realities.

What can also result from even the most benign efforts at identity construction is a policy that consigns the formerly colonized country to a cultural cul-de-sac as a “traditional” society of only anthropological interest. This can render its cultural sector out of touch with contemporary developments and unable to mediate the impact of an increasingly globalized world. For example, the anthropological concept of culture was used to justify Greenland’s political and cultural struggle for independence from Denmark that culminated in Home Rule in 1991. Greenland’s cultural policy priorities for the first ten years of its autonomy were based on Eskimo cultural heritage. However, a younger generation of artists had little desire to see their artistic creativity and aesthetic idioms limited by ethnic, mono-cultural tradition, even as they had no wish to deny their origins. In 1991, the Greenland Parliament set up a national Cultural Council that drew up a comprehensive policy for funding “modern” arts activities while also promoting a revitalization of Greenland’s Eskimo cultural heritage. (DUELAND, 2003, p. 425-26)

In sum, the challenge that countries combating coloniality face in constructing a cultural policy is to value its redefined past while being receptive to aesthetic innovation and the possibilities of cultural syncretism. Obviously, this is not a challenge that can be easily

addressed. The pervasiveness of cultural globalization, which, as noted, is in the minds of many synonymous with Americanized values, makes the retention of national cultural identity a difficult issue even for countries such as France and Canada, which were the principal sponsors of the Unesco Declaration on the Protection of Cultural Heritage.

These difficulties are compounded for nations with histories of coloniality that are only recently defining distinct cultural identities after long periods of hegemonic subjugation. Effectively, coloniality's legacy leaves near insurmountable difficulties in formulating a fully-realized identity. As Edward Said (1994, p. 22) noted,

[t]he thing to be noticed about this kind of contemporary discourse, which assumes the primacy and even the complete centrality of the West, is how totalizing is its form, how all-enveloping its attitudes and gestures, how much it shuts out as it includes, compresses and consolidates.

In this sense, identity and cultural policy is a central means by which nations of the periphery maintain their eligibility to compete in a centralizing world order.

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