文化多样性与世界发展

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前言

文化的多样性是人类社会的主要特征，是其繁荣发展的宝贵资源。人类社会的每一次跃进，人类文明的每一次升华，无不镌刻着文化进步的烙印；任何一个国家历史的变革，社会的进步，也从未离开文化的引导与推动。因此，正确认识文明的差异、理解世界文化的多样性和相对性，增强文明的兼容性和互补性，使世界不同文明取长补短，和谐相处，具有重要的意义。

2011年6月11-14日，由青海民族大学和马来亚大学联合主办，在青海民族大学召开了“文化多样性与世界发展”为主题的国际学术论坛。大会收到学术论文63篇，来自南开大学、中央民族大学、宁夏大学、华中师范大学、暨南大学、兰州大学、新疆师范大学、青海民族大学、西藏民族学院、云南社会科学院、黑龙江民族研究所、宁夏社会科学院、青海社会科学院及马来西亚、新西兰等国的国内外50余位与会专家学者，从政治学、民族学、人类学、社会学、历史学等多学科、多角度，对文化多样性的意义和价值、文化多样性与世界发展关系、文化多样性与中华民族的繁荣和发展等问题进行了探讨和交流。一致认为，人类社会有着最为广泛的不同文化意义与行为模式，文化的多样性使得我们这个世界丰富多彩。文化是人类社会生存和发展的必要条件，人们既要学会欣赏本民族文化，又要学会尊重他民族文化，尊重文化多样性是发展本民族文化的文化内要求，是实现世界文化繁荣的必然要求。大会取得的这些共识，对于推动不同文化、
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Ethnicity and Development: State Action and Ethnic Coexistence in Multicultural Societies

Emile Kok-Kheng Yeoh

Abstract: The political and socioeconomic problems confronting multiethnic and multicultural societies have in recent years attracted increasing attention not only of the politicians and academics around the world, but also the public at large, partly due to the impact of reethnicization of social segments and the widening of inequalities in various parts of the world due to political and economic transition. Although ethnic and cultural diversity is not an exclusive feature of the developing countries, it is nevertheless critically relevant to them, since economic deprivation or desperate poverty often heightens sensitivities and leads to unreasonableness and distrust, creating barriers in searching for solutions based upon reasonable give and take. Commenting on the arguments posited in Amy Chua’s controversial treatise World on Fire (2003), this paper investigates the role of the State in ethnically and culturally diverse societies in the modern world, taking into consideration the two major dimensions of ethnopolitics—ethnic politics and the politics of ethnicity, both polyethnic and bi-ethnic countries, as well both homeland and homeland-diasporic configurations, with special reference to the cases of the two developed countries of Spain and Belgium, and the developing country of Malaysia.
Keywords: multicultural societies, world development, ethnic fragmentation, State, ethnopolitics, homeland, diaspora

Introduction: The political and socioeconomic problems confronting multiethnic and multicultural societies have in recent years attracted increasing attention not only from politicians and academics, but also the public at large, mainly due to the impact of reethnicization of social segments and the widening of inequalities in Eastern Europe and the Balkan conflicts after the collapse of communism. Although ethnic diversity is not an exclusive feature of the developing countries, it is nevertheless critically relevant to them, since economic deprivation or desperate poverty “unduly heightens sensitivities and breeds a general atmosphere of unreasonableness and distrust, making it immensely more difficult to attain solutions to outstanding problems on the basis of a reasonable give and take”[1]. That said, one should be mindful that the threat of ethnic unrest is not solely the bane of third world countries. The Economist observed in 1965 that the sizzling ethnic tension in Malaysia and Singapore at that time coincided with a week of race riots in Los Angeles, as well as ethnic violence in southern Sudan[2]. The threat of interethic mistrust looms large and wide. It could be the scourge afflicting the poor nations, and the sword of Damocles even in times of prosperity.

In 2003, Amy Chua, a Yale Law School professor of Filipino Chinese descent, published a book entitled World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability[3]. The book’s main contention is that the spread of free market democracy breeds ethnic violence in developing countries by simultaneously concentrating wealth in the hands of the ethnic minority and empowering the impoverished majority that resents the former. The exposition of the thesis, however, relies heavily on a thread of argument with a disturbing emphasis on the role of the ethnic minority, often immigrants and their descendants, and being termed the “market-dominant minority”. The precariousness of such a predilection for reductionism – which historian and Pulitzer Price laureate Frederick Turner (1861-1932) described as “an addiction to the primary, the elementary” – lies in the undue emphasis on one particular aspect at the expense of a broader, more complex, structure – a simplification that runs the risk of misleading stereotyping by neglect. Such dangerous essentialization is compounded by the inclination for blanket, semantically specious, generalizations as in Chapter 6 of the book where it is noted that “once the Chinese realized that the Marcoses wished only to redistribute wealth to themselves and not to the poor, the Chinese rejoiced…” (p. 155, italics added).

Typology of Immigrant Communities

In discussing the dependence of the exact outcome in a mixed-multiplex society the strength of the contending homeland and immigrant movements, Esman (1985) identified three types of immigrant movements[4]. The first evolved from the organized migration of settlers into areas inhabited by peoples commanding weaker technological resources, who are subdued and displaced, e.g. the ethnic Europeanization of the Americas, New Zealand and Australia. In this case, the “homeland” movement of the earlier inhabitants (the Amerindians, Maori and Australian aborigines), reduced to impotent and impoverished minority status, is usually of little significance. The second category of immigrant movements is the result of labour migration into established societies (e.g. the Third World “guest workers” in the industrialized countries, such as the Turkish Gastarbeiter in Germany or the Pakistanis in West Yorkshire, England). Ethnic movements organized and led by their second generation usually demand non-discrimination in education and employment, full inclusion as citizens and toleration for cultural differences. Esman’s third category refers to the migrations of “pariah entrepreneurs” – ethnic communities that moved