

Defining Pluralism

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In the late 1980s and 1990s, His Highness the Aga Khan began asking Canadian leaders to explain the key to Canada's success managing its diversity. In July 2001, a formal Pluralism Initiative was launched to understand how and why Canada's unique experiment works *and* how its lessons might be shared with other culturally diverse societies around the world. A research program and a series of consultations with Canadian leaders, officials, academics and cultural groups and with world leaders followed, resulting in the decision to establish a major new international institution dedicated to the creation of successful pluralist societies. Ottawa was the obvious location for such an undertaking.

Originally presented in October 2010 to the inaugural meeting of the Centre's Board of Directors, *Defining Pluralism* offers a critical assessment – grounded in three country experiences – of the challenges facing diverse societies seeking to become more pluralistic. The definitions and analysis presented here draw on research and consultations undertaken during the Global Centre for Pluralism's preparatory phase of development. Rather than a definitive statement, the discussion of issues and questions is offered as a starting point for engagement.

I. What is “pluralism”?

A number of textbook definitions for pluralism exist. Social scientists have ascribed different meanings to “pluralism” and its variants for over a century. As the work of building the Global Centre for Pluralism begins, the word requires further explication. The following definitions are offered for discussion.

Pluralism is an ethic of respect that values human diversity

Irrespective of cultural differences, peoples around the world – male and female – share a common humanity. Pluralism rejects division as a necessary outcome of diversity, seeking instead to identify the qualities and experiences that unite rather than divide us as people and to forge a shared stake in the public good. Respect for diversity transcends tolerance to embrace difference as an engine of commonwealth.

In contrast to *multiculturalism* – which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a policy response to immigrant diversity in places such as Australia, Canada and parts of Western Europe – pluralism emphasizes individual choices as well as collective compromise and mutual obligation as routes to peace, stability and human development. As such, the concept of pluralism speaks to the experiences of countries around the world regardless of the origins of their respective diversities.

Pluralism is a set of practices and outcomes as well as a set of intentions

Pluralist societies are not accidents of history. They are products of decision and public investment characterized by good governance, strong civic institutions, and sound public policy choices that promote respect for diversity, whereby diversity itself becomes a public good and citizens are enabled to realize their rights as well as their obligations. Pluralist societies foster the equal participation of all citizens in the political, economic and socio-cultural life of the nation – enabling individuals as well as groups to express their cultural, linguistic and religious identities within a framework of shared citizenship. Through these means, the ethic and practices of pluralism can foster a more equitable and peaceful human development.

Fairness and respect are thus the cornerstones of a pluralistic ethic, as well as mechanisms of balance between the sometimes competing claims of group rights and human rights and the obligations and/or choices implied. Respecting difference depends on a capacity and willingness to acknowledge, negotiate and accommodate alternative points of view. Equitable outcomes often require asymmetrical treatment. In this sense, the intentions and practices of pluralism are intertwined with the cosmopolitan ideal that seeks to build bridges of shared aspiration and common purpose where only conflict and chasms were thought to exist.

The state, as Canada's history shows, can function as an important engine of pluralism, providing the institutional scaffolding on which all else rests. But equally the state can spark or exacerbate group tensions, especially where state institutions play a fundamental role in the allocation of resources. In such cases – Kenya is one example – the state becomes a site of intergroup struggle and competition rather than a mechanism for preventing or remedying conflict or promoting equity.

Policies to support pluralism must address the relationship of the state to groups as well as the dynamics among groups. Competition for economic benefit rather than cultural differences *per se* – as the Kyrgyzstan case illustrates – is a wedge that leads to “us and them” thinking and ultimately, left unchecked, to conflict and worse. For this reason, a commitment to pluralism often necessitates adjustments in the principles, institutions and procedures of the state.

II. From theory to practice: three pluralism experiences

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to pluralism. History matters. Although Canada's experience is compelling, Canadian history is not a recipe for “success”. Canada's approach to managing and enabling diversity emerges from a particular historical dynamic and set of choices. Nor is it possible to categorize societies seeking greater pluralism in general terms. Some

countries have longer journeys than others to make along the pathways to pluralism. The decisions taken and pace of change will depend on the particularity of each society's historical and contemporary circumstances. And perhaps most importantly, pluralism is a process, not a product. It is a series of choices informed by the desire to balance equality of treatment with equity of outcome. Although a journey, pluralism is not a fixed destination. The work of seeking pluralism is never ending.

To provide a context for assessing the definitions proposed above, and to elaborate some of the factors that support or impede pluralism, this section examines three quite different pluralism experiences: Canada, Kenya and Kyrgyzstan.

Canada: what constitutes “success”?

Around the world, Canada today is widely viewed as a successful pluralist society – although Canadians rightly point out that as an equitable society Canada remains a work in progress. The condition of the country's diverse population of aboriginal peoples – on and off reserve – is a persistent source of concern and debate. Immigration, too, is once again refashioning the country's religious, ethnic and racial make-up. Racism has emerged again as a fresh challenge as many newcomers struggle to integrate into the economy, leading to concerns in Toronto and elsewhere of the development of a permanent urban underclass.

Irrespective of these ongoing challenges, Canada perceives and manages the diversity of its populace as a positive asset to the extent that diversity itself is now central to Canadian national identity. This was not always so. The specific fabric of laws, policies and practices that support Canadian pluralism is of comparatively recent manufacture, emerging for the most part since the Second World War. Nevertheless, the political institutions that enabled the country's culture of compromise to develop – rooted first in ethnic dualism and then in multiculturalism – have a much longer history.

In 1760, Britain asserted dominion over colonial Canada (the territory now known as Quebec), a largely Catholic and French-speaking territory founded by France in the 16th century. In stark contrast to its attitude toward religious diversity in England, in 1774 the British Parliament passed the *Quebec Act*, which allowed Canada's French-speaking colonial subjects to practice their faith and retain use of the French *Code civil*. In ways unimagined by its British authors, this one piece of legislation set Canada on a slow path to pluralism.

That Canada would reach that destination was by no means automatic. Over the course of the next century, a series of choices made by individuals and institutions combined to permit Canada's foundation in 1867 as an ostensibly bi-national country with “two founding peoples” – English and French – that extended constitutional and territorial protections to the French Catholic minority through a bilingual Parliament and the institution of federalism. The peopling of Canada through immigration over the next century added greatly to the national and religious diversity of Canadians, but until 1970 most newcomers originated in Europe.

The jettisoning of Canada's *de facto* "white Canada" immigration policy in 1967 occurred during a period of intense self-reflection among Canadians about national identity – a self-reflection made necessary by the rise in the 1960s of Quebec nationalism and later separatism, a newly articulated aboriginal discourse of "first nations", and demands from Canadians of non-British and non-French origin as well as from women for equitable recognition as nation builders.

Over the next 40 years, the Canadian state embraced a pantheon of measures designed to respond to these demands – official bilingualism, official multiculturalism (framed initially as recognition of group identity and later as protection of individual rights), gender equality, aboriginal self-government, and asymmetrical federalism. Today, the ethic of pluralism – as represented in the country's multiculturalism policies and its associated practices – has taken deep root in the country's collective imagination. Respect for diversity and the institutions and mechanisms that support recognition of difference have become sources of pride and national identity.

Although rooted in a particular time and place, and evolved over a long period of time, Canada's experience highlights some of the generic building blocks of pluralism.

Time – Canada's democratic institutions evolved incrementally between the late 18th and early 20th centuries. Following confederation in 1867, a further century elapsed before Canadians began to acknowledge – in law, policy and practice – the bilingual, multicultural and multinational logic of their history. This work continues today.

Design – That the colonies of British North America would one day come together to form a union is not surprising. That they would come together as a bicultural and bilingual federation was by no means automatic. Choices were made. In 19th-century colonial Canada, liberal democracy and bi-nationality evolved in tandem.

Compromise – Social cohesion is not achieved through an evisceration of difference, but through recognition that different, legitimately held perspectives do exist. The twin challenge of pluralism is to locate points of balance between competing views and then to live with the results. Compromise is required again and again.

Process – Effective institutions of governance that enable and support compromise as well as power sharing are as important as the content of the choices made. The operation of Canadian pluralism today depends on liberal democracy underpinned by the rule of law and the institution of federalism. Although institutional mechanisms are critical to the articulation and operation of pluralism, Canada's highly decentralized state is not a significant site of inter-group struggle.

Inclusion – In a pluralist society unity is achieved by respecting differences, valuing diversity as a public good, and seeking collaboration through compromise. A shared civic identity creates an inclusive umbrella for the multiple identities citizens hold, shed and/or acquire through the course of their lives.

Commitment – Supporting pluralism is a never-ending process that requires continuous investments of good will, resources and effort. Economic development and democracy are not enough. Commitment – expressed through political will and leadership – completes Canada’s triangulation of pluralism “success”.

Kenya: looking back to go forward

Many international observers view Kenya as a development success story. In a region scarred by genocide and civil war, Kenya stands as a beacon of peace and security. However, with a population mired in poverty and fractured by ethnic rivalries, the benefits of development have not been widely or evenly shared. The two months of violence that followed Kenya’s disputed presidential election in December 2007 revealed the country’s tenuous hold on stability. The conflict left more than a thousand people dead, thousands more scarred from sexual violence, and still more displaced from their homes and lives. What caused the violence in 2008, and what difference might a commitment to pluralism make?

Kenya is a multiethnic society with over 40 ethnic groups representing four main language groups: Bantu, Nilotic, Cushitic and Swahili (a blending of coastal Bantu and Arabic). The country is also religiously diverse with a largely Protestant Christian majority, a sizeable Muslim minority and smaller Hindu and indigenous communities. Established as a British colony following the European partition of Africa in 1895, Kenya Colony gained independence in 1963 with a short-lived Westminster-style Parliament and an equally short-lived federal system of government intended to offset the numerical dominance of the country’s larger ethnic groups.

Kenyans divide themselves into “minority” and “majority” ethnic groups. These are relative categories as no one group enjoys majority status. Historically minority ethnic groups have thought of themselves as victims while ascribing a sense of entitlement to majority groups. In reality, the country’s first president was Kikuyu (a “majority” group) and its second Kalenjin (a “minority” group). What these two leaders shared in common as members of Kenya’s political elites was far more significant than what divided them: a shared capacity to exploit Kenya’s ethnic divisions and constitutional arrangements for political and economic gain.

Competition between ethnic groups in Kenya revolves, for the most part, around access to and control of the state. Periodic efforts to stir hatred and fear on the basis of religion – the country’s only significant cultural demarcation – generally fail. State control enables exploitation of the state for personal advantage and group benefit. The mechanism for achieving state control is the politicization of ethnicity and the ethnic foundations of party politics.

Ethnic appeals employ attacks on other groups, exploiting Kenyans’ fear of being left out – literally and figuratively of not “eating” their fair share. Poverty, connected to corruption and theft of state resources, further exacerbates divisions. But because politicians form a class irrespective of ethnic affiliation, these issues – along with violations of rights and the rule of law – are excised from public discourse. These concerns were aired in 2002, when the Moi regime’s ending generated hopes for a new beginning, but the promised reforms came to nothing.

The extreme violence in 2008 is in part attributable to these dashed hopes. The crisis also highlighted the extent to which post-colonial Kenya has failed to develop the institutions, policies and practices needed to manage a multiethnic state and the mindset to support it. Instead, successive generations of political elites have used “tribalism” as a political wedge to divide and rule.

Despite these challenges, since the Moi regime ended in 2002, Kenyans have sought a new social compact with their government. Prior to 2008, meaningful constitutional reform encountered resistance from political elites, who as a class (irrespective of partisan divisions) benefit from the status quo. Parallel efforts to resolve outstanding historical grievances – land tenure, corruption, regional disparities, impunity – have likewise failed due to a lack of political will. The outcome of the reconciliation process now underway will determine whether Kenyans choose pluralism or follow their leaders down the well-rutted path toward greater ethnic and social fragmentation.

The power-sharing arrangement that ended the post-election violence in February 2008 has pushed Kenya’s political leaders to address some of the root causes of pluralism failure in Kenya. A commission to investigate and assess blame for the violence has reported, as has the commission on electoral reform. Although a new electoral commission has been constituted to oversee the 2012 election, prosecution of the accused perpetrators of the post-election violence has fallen to the International Criminal Court, which has charged six high ranking Kenyan politicians (including two potential 2012 presidential contenders) with crimes against humanity.

Efforts to launch the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission – with a mandate to air and resolve festering historical grievances related to state-sponsored human rights abuses – initially met entrenched resistance on both sides of the legislature. The Commission is now working but with a more limited mandate than originally envisaged. The coalition government’s new National Cohesion and Integration Commission has begun to monitor hate speech, but its powers to sanction perpetrators are limited.

After nearly a decade of trying, Kenyans finally adopted a new constitution by popular referendum in August 2010. The new constitution rebalances power at the national level, effectively dismantling the imperial presidency, and devolves some powers to the local level. As well as reforming Kenya’s institutions of governance, the constitution frames a shared set of national values, notably the balancing of national unity with the recognition of diversity.

The new constitution, if implemented with the necessary legislative reforms, has the potential to reorient Kenya toward pluralism. Implementation is by no means certain, however, as the political class – which has resisted every effort to revise the basic law since 2000 – is by no means reconciled to reform.

Kenyans citizens, too, have a role to play. Unless Kenyans embrace the spirit of reconciliation embodied in the new constitution, manipulation of ethnicity by political elites remains a risk. With another presidential election on the horizon in 2012 – complicated by the ongoing

International Criminal Court proceedings, which will likely confirm charges against two potential presidential candidates – Kenyans’ resolve to change will soon be tested.

Although the 2008 Reconciliation Accord has been vital to reform, wider actions are needed to transform Kenya into a more pluralist society.

- A new ethic of leadership is needed whereby the public good replaces personal gain as the primary engine of politics.
- To undermine the culture of corruption that permeates state institutions and the society at large, citizens must believe that the law will be implemented in predictable ways and that no one, no matter how wealthy or politically connected, sits above its reach.
- New civic spaces are needed – civil society initiatives, cultural spaces, libraries and museums, parks and recreation facilities – where Kenyans of different background can come together and learn about each other, forming in the process a new civic identity that both transcends difference and embraces diversity.
- The resources of the state must be shared equitably so that every Kenyan has a stake in government.
- Above all, through formal and informal education, the past and politics must be de-mined as sites of inter-ethnic conflagration.

Kyrgyzstan: mapping a cultural crossroads

Located in Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan is a landlocked, mountainous, multi-ethnic state consisting of over 80 distinct ethnic groups. Predominantly Muslim (75 percent), its population also consists of significant (20 percent) populations of Russian Orthodox and Ukrainian Orthodox Christians. Kyrgyz is the state language, but Russian maintains a special designation as an official language, with many others used throughout the country. The Kyrgyz (65 percent) are the largest ethnic group, followed by the Uzbeks (15 percent). Russian and other Slavic groups have established a considerable presence in the North and in the capital city, Bishkek. With only 36 percent of population living in urban centres, Kyrgyzstan remains a rural society.

As part of the Silk Road trading route between Asia and Europe, Kyrgyzstan has long served as a cultural crossroads. The Kyrgyz themselves migrated to the area from Siberia sometime between the 12th and 14th centuries. Previously nomadic pastoralists, from the 1920s onward Soviet planning forced many Kyrgyz to adopt a sedentary way of life. Following national delimitation in 1924, tensions between the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks increased in the Ferghana Valley, as the Kyrgyz sought to claim land and access to local resources, particularly in areas where Uzbeks, historically agriculturalists in the South, had cultivated the land. Forced collectivization in the 1930s further disrupted the region’s centuries-old economic and social structures. Over time, expanded ethnic Kyrgyz settlement in the country’s southern regions has exerted additional pressure on land and resources.

The Soviet legacy in Kyrgyzstan extends to the ethnic and linguistic makeup of the country. During the Soviet period large numbers of Europeans, primarily Slavs and Germans, but also Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Chechens, Georgians and other ethnic groups, either migrated or were exiled to Kyrgyzstan, joining an already ethnically diverse group of indigenous Central Asian peoples, including Uzbek, Uighurs, Dungans (Hui), and Tajiks. Multi-ethnic states like Kyrgyzstan were nevertheless designated as the property or homelands of a particular group. The consequent privileging of such groups by Soviet nationality policy has had residual effects. In Kyrgyzstan today, state policy is perceived – by both Kyrgyz and non-Kyrgyz alike – to favour the titular nationality, exacerbating inter-ethnic tensions and resentment.

Twice in the past two decades – in June 1990 and again in June 2010 – tensions between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks have spilled over into violence in southern Osh province and city. Competition over land and housing resources, the emergence of a distinct rural-urban divide, and a perception among the majority Kyrgyz that they are marginalized within their own “homeland” fuelled both outbreaks. Urban dwellers (predominantly Uzbek) have a greater range of economic opportunities compared to the largely rural Kyrgyz, who account for 73 percent of Osh province’s rural poor. Poverty is a fact of urban life as well, but at a much lower rate, although recent food and energy insecurity have created the perception that life is getting worse.

Inter-ethnic violence in Osh in June 2010 occurred against a wider tableau of political instability in Kyrgyzstan as a whole and long-standing north-south divides along political and socio-economic lines. With an educated population, reserves of gold, and a government committed to market and land reforms, the country seemed poised for rapid economic and political development in 1991. Instead, undemocratic leadership, endemic poverty, land grievances, and other inter-ethnic conflicts have plagued post-independence Kyrgyzstan. Under President Akayev, a pattern of flawed elections, opposition harassment and imprisonment, and media muzzling became the norm.

A revolt in 2005 inaugurated a fresh period of optimism, but in practice little changed under Akayev’s successor, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who did little either to alter the balance between presidential (extensive) and legislative (limited) power or to widen minority access to state resources in a political system dominated by personal interests. A second political revolt, in April 2010, swept President Bakiyev from power. The interim government, under the leadership of former Foreign Minister Roza Otunbayeva, revised the constitution to limit the possibilities of corruption and provide greater political accountability.

In a constitutional referendum held on 27 June 2010, 90.7 percent of voters supported amendments to limit the power of the president and afford greater power to the parliament. The 2010 constitution – the first of its kind in Central Asia – is undoubtedly a step forward; however, as with previous constitutions, the challenge rests with its implementation given the extent to which informal practices and traditions continue to dominate Kyrgyz politics.

Kyrgyzstan's most recent presidential elections, on 30 October 2011, resulted in the first peaceful transfer of presidential power since its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. The vote also marked the culmination of the political reform process resulting from the 2010 constitutional referendum.

Political reform alone will not redirect Kyrgyzstan onto the path of pluralism. Significant investments in human and economic development are also needed to counter the country's endemic poverty and the ethnic tensions arising from it. Already one of the poorest countries of the former Soviet Union, the recent financial crisis has hit the country hard. In particular, decreasing foreign remittances from Kyrgyzstan's almost half million migrant workers – which have accounted for as much as 20 percent of GDP – have had a negative impact on poor households. Serious socio-economic frustrations – focused largely on land and housing – in combination with dissatisfaction over poor government policies, inaction and corruption informed the popular revolts of 2005 and 2010.

Kyrgyzstan therefore is still struggling with significant challenges. Lack of meaningful judicial reform has heightened entrenched ethnic grievances, leaving both the Kyrgyz and Uzbek increasingly cynical about each other and the government's capacity to help them. The profoundly flawed investigations of the 2010 violence and subsequent trials, which mainly affected the ethnic Uzbek minority, have further undermined efforts to promote reconciliation, thereby laying the ground for renewed violence.

The prospect of a more representative parliamentary democracy holds out hope that a political solution to the country's simmering ethnic tensions might be found. However, while focused in theory on building the institutions of liberal democracy, the current constitution does not give particular precedence to Kyrgyzstan's multi-ethnic composition or focus sustained attention on the political, economic and social challenges stemming from this diversity. Until the political situation stabilizes it is too soon to tell which path Kyrgyzstan's leaders and citizens will choose.

For lasting impact, supporting pluralism in Kyrgyzstan may require broadening the view. Kyrgyzstan is not the only multiethnic state in Central Asia struggling to reorient its political and economic systems at a moment of cultural reawakening. Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan face similar challenges. Afghanistan, too, is grappling with an absence of pluralism with great and tragic consequences. Reassessing the sources of poverty and economic competition underpinning the conflict in Osh on a regional basis might unlock a wider analysis and set of options for moving forward.

III. Pluralism Drivers

What, then, can be learned from these three experiences? What factors drive some countries toward pluralism and send others spinning into conflict? The following section highlights some of the key pluralism drivers that have been identified to date.

Livelihoods

Poverty impedes pluralism through exclusion. Poverty fosters social tensions and promotes political exclusion, especially in developing countries where the gap between rich and poor can be extreme. Conversely, equitable access to the market economy and to national prosperity fosters wellbeing and a shared stake in the institution of citizenship. Closing the often-extreme gaps between haves and have-nots – often but not always drawn along ethnic lines – is a critical precursor to pluralism.

Economic prosperity is a support to pluralism, but only if the benefits of development are widely shared. The relationship between pluralism and development is not, as yet, well understood. Although poverty clearly fosters social and political exclusion, pluralism is not an automatic outcome of economic development. Nevertheless history suggests that, as well as increasing incomes, economic development empowers people to demand and seek political change. Economic growth depends on innovation. By fostering an empowering climate, where diversity is valued as an asset, pluralism can drive development as much development supports it.

Economic disparities are often drawn along urban-rural lines. Diversity is often viewed as an urban phenomenon, especially in industrialized countries where the vast majority of people, including most new immigrants, reside in cities. But in the predominantly agrarian societies of the developing world inter-group tensions – over access to land and other diminishing resources such as water – are often of long standing. Deep-seated poverty and, in some cases, the active politicization of ethnic or religious differences often exacerbate tensions stemming from rural diversity.

Changing environmental conditions have global implications for pluralism. Many modern societies are experiencing economic and social transformations due to climate change. Uneven or unequal access to diminishing natural resources, such as water or arable land, often exacerbate competition and resentment among ethnic groups in developing societies. These kinds of threats to livelihood push people into movement. Unprecedented levels of international migration since the 1990s from the developing to the developed world have transformed Europe's previously homogenous societies, most of which now depend on immigration to maintain their economic standing. Globally, climate change is thus a critical determinant in many ethnic conflicts.

Law and Politics

Institutional mechanisms preempt violence by managing conflict through political means. Over time, resilient institutions enable citizens and their representatives to find points of balance between competing interests and values that serve the widest possible public good. Effective institutions do not, in themselves, guarantee pluralism. Although political instability can impede pluralism, preventing the kind of open dialogue and negotiation required for compromise, “stable” regimes rooted in domination and discrimination exacerbate or even create ethnic division. A multiethnic state's institutional arrangements and political culture – whether

informed by liberalism, consociation or some combination of the two – must intend pluralism as an outcome of good governance. It will not happen by accident.

Electoral democracy without good government is a recipe for conflict. Electoral democracy is an insufficient support for pluralism. Political power must be anchored in institutions that promote political participation as well as political representation and accountability. A focus on elections rather than on the broader governance arrangements that promote equality, such as the rule of law, inclusive state structures and equitable access to state resources, allows conflict to fester, with the risk that conflict cannot be managed without recourse to violence. The capacity to govern for pluralism requires deep institutional roots.

The law has no meaning unless implemented in predictable ways. Individual rights and freedoms are meaningless unless observed and enforced. A culture of impunity – whereby some citizens by virtue of class, gender, ethnicity or political affiliation stand above the law – fosters inequality and corruption and enables the exploitation of ethnic divisions for political ends. The rule of law requires robust judicial institutions and an independent judiciary whose members serve the law. A stable legal and regulatory environment is also needed to support sustainable economic development.

Well-intentioned political leaders can foster inclusive civic spaces through public policy. Shared citizenship depends on the conscious and consistent manufacture of civic spaces – embodied in state as well as civil society institutions – in which citizens of all backgrounds can literally and metaphorically gather and exchange. Policy choices can play a role in regularizing intergroup communication, exchange and cooperation.

Ethnic politics can be difficult to control once unleashed. The exploitation of ethnic competition for partisan political ends precludes the possibility of compromise and heightens the risk of violence. To foster an inclusive civic identity and participation in nation building, political parties must become more than ethnic associations.

Citizens and Civil Society

Civic identity is an inclusive space that transcends and encompasses difference. Identities can be multiple and overlapping. National and ethnic identities are not by nature oppositional. Nevertheless, citizens are often excluded from the national project on the basis of ethnic and/or religious difference, as well as because of other factors, among them gender, class and language. For pluralism to take root, the concepts of “nationality” and “citizenship” must be uncoupled. At the same time, traditional conceptions of citizenship, which posit a limited range of rights, must be expanded toward egalitarianism in order to counter social hierarchies.

To support pluralism, citizens must enjoy the freedom to meet their civic obligations as well as exercise their rights. Reciprocity – a sense of shared experience and mutual obligation – is the foundation for understanding between people, groups and nations. Compromise requires identification with the greater good. Active citizenship grounded in reciprocity is a vital ‘bottom-up’ support to pluralism. The politics of accommodation begins at home.

Non-state actors can be important engines of change. Civil society offers an intermediary social space where citizens of different backgrounds can organize for collective aims. Although civil society is not immune to communal division, civil society organizations and networks have tremendous potential to function as intercultural nodes that can empower people to explore issues of shared concern as well as new forms of community, action and learning.

Especially where governance is weak, civil society has the potential to embody pluralist norms. State institutions are not the only organizations that can support or embody pluralist principles and practices. As expressions of active citizenship, civil society organizations and sectors have the potential to support pluralism in various ways.

Media competence and freedom are important pillars of pluralism. Media diversity and freedom are necessary in promoting pluralistic attitudes, ensuring political accountability, and providing social commentary on current affairs. At the same time, media has the potential to corrode the trust between individuals and communities. Hate speech disseminated through the media demonizes difference and weakens civic bonds. The quality of professionalism among journalists and media owners is therefore of critical importance if the capacity of media to promote inter-ethnic understanding and cooperation is to be realized. The potential of new media such as cell phones and the internet to promote or impede pluralism is not yet well understood.

Education and Culture

Education is a route to intercultural literacy and communication as well as sustainable human development. If directed toward pluralistic ends, through both curricula and pedagogy, formal education systems can nurture the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to support critical reflection on difference and promote bonds of mutuality. Too often ignorance drives the fears that lead to division. Access to more education is not enough; content is also needed. State curricula must actively promote pluralism as a learning outcome, and bring early childhood education, teacher training, school design, classroom dynamics, and pedagogy into line with this objective. Professional development and adult education are additional avenues of formal learning. Informal learning through voluntary and civil society initiatives, including basic literacy training, is another route forward, coupled with professional development opportunities for groups such as journalists, teachers and public servants who can exert a direct influence on public discourse and choices.

Early childhood education provides a critical foundation for pluralism. A growing body of research tells us that attitudes and behaviours acquired in the earliest years of life can shape an individual's perceptions and life choices in fundamental ways. Exposing young children to pluralistic thinking and conditions that inculcate respect for difference and diversity is a vital pathway to pluralism.

Investments in culture and cultural expression foster confidence and lessen fear of “the other”. Too often, conflict stems from fear of the unknown. Education can counter ignorance but pluralism concerns more than overcoming fear. Pluralism is also a positive expression of identity coupled with a willingness to learn and exchange. Cultural investments and cultural expression are two critical drivers of pluralism. The provision of cultural spaces and places where individuals and communities can express their cultural identities and aspirations through the arts is a critical support to openness and tolerance. With confidence comes curiosity, which can only lessen conflict.

History and Memory

History and memory can impinge on the present in significant ways. Every society faces its own historical challenges. Grievances arising from the perception of past injustices, if ignored, can fester and grow until they become so firmly entrenched in communal memory and/or the national psyche that they are almost impossible to resolve. A shared understanding of the past is a necessary platform for national identity and shared citizenship moving forward.

Historical literacy is a route to reconciliation. Who controls collective remembering wields a tremendous power within the society. In dictatorships, history is often used as a weapon to disenfranchise – through erasure from the historical record – or bolster – by propagandizing the past. In pluralist societies history can serve as a critical civic space where divergent memories are acknowledged but the past is examined through a critical lens. In societies where the past has been used for political ends, “truth and reconciliation” commissions can play a role in restoring justice and creating a level historical playing field.

The past is a key to predicting pluralism failure. Pluralism failure ultimately stems from weak civic bonds, that is, the imaginative bonds of reciprocity that underpin nation building. Systems of exclusion and inclusion in the present are often structured by the past, especially in postcolonial societies where imperial racial hierarchies and divide-and-rule politics invented or reoriented local ethnic relations. Overt ethnic conflict and simmering ethnic cleavage are clear indicators of realized or impending pluralism failure. Understanding the processes by which such conflicts and cleavages emerge and are sustained is vital to predicting pluralism failure. Historical case studies are one means of developing this capacity.

IV. Key conclusions: moving forward

The foregoing analysis suggests several key working principles:

- Pluralism is a set of intentions and practices that seek to institutionalize recognition of difference and respect for diversity as civic culture.
- Pluralism is a process, not a product. It is a series of choices informed by the desire to balance equality of treatment with equity of outcome.

- Compromise, achieved through mediating institutions of governance as well as civil society, is critical.
- The choices made will depend on each society's own particular history and aspirations.
- The processes used to achieve compromise are as important as the content of the choices.
- Political leadership and political will are required for lasting change.
- To achieve lasting impact, change processes must be organic, driven by demand rather than supply.
- Civil society, especially where institutions of governance are weak, can function as an engine of change.
- No society is free of conflict. Pluralism seeks not to eliminate differences but to foster the mechanisms of compromise and accommodation that lead to peace and prevent violence in at risk societies.
- Predicting and preventing pluralism failure requires systematic attention not just to the present, but also to the past. Distinguishing between surface issues (triggers) and subterranean tensions is the challenge.
- Climate change can exacerbate tensions by threatening rural livelihoods and pushing people into migration, which often creates new tensions in host societies.
- Learning to live together peaceably with disagreement is an achievement.

Pluralism involves a wide range of issues – from cultural expression and economic development to legal frameworks and political institutions. Supporting pluralism therefore requires multi-dimensional approaches to change. The Global Centre for Pluralism's immediate and long-term challenge is to identify, in a systematic way, the risk factors that lead to a breakdown of empathy between and among peoples in order to prevent as well as ameliorate the conditions of pluralism failure.