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Multiculturalism has since sunk deep roots in government, reflected in every-
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limited to whites. Almost half believe that immigrants should be free to maintain
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Thugs and politics

SAN ONOFRE
Investigating a reign of terror

The Economist November 18th 2006

THE paint still looks fresh on the signs urging voters of the small town of San Onofre to re-elect Alvaro Garcia to Colombia’s Senate and Erik Morris to its Chamber of Representatives. At an election last March the voters of the northern department of Sucre did as they were urged. But now both men and another senator from Sucre have been charged by the country’s Supreme Court with financing right-wing paramilitary groups who used terror to cow the population. Five other local politicians face investigation. Mr Garcia, who has yet to surrender to police, faces additional charges of helping to plan the killing of 12 people in nearby Macayepo in 2000, and of murdering an election official.

All three are members of political parties that support Colombia’s president, Alvaro Uribe. The charges are an embarrassment to Mr Uribe, who began a second term in August. Some Colombians think that they just might mark a turning point in a controversial peace process that has seen 31,000 paramilitaries demobilise and hand in their guns without any serious investigation of their crimes. The paramilitaries were originally formed by cattle ranchers in the 1980s. Many became involved in drug trafficking and extortion.

The charges stem from the seizure by police earlier this year of a laptop computer belonging to a senior paramilitary leader. The computer’s files included financial accounts and audio recordings of meetings with politicians in Sucre, whose purpose was to ensure the election of the militia’s favoured candidates. The files also carried evidence of schemes through which the paramilitaries stole public money intended for health services.

For people in Sucre, in the cattle-raising tropical lowlands of the Caribbean coast, these revelations do not come as a surprise. The department was the site of several brutal massacres of villagers whom the gunmen held to be sympathisers of left-wing guerrillas. Many of the charges against the politicians had been filed five years ago but had been buried in the prosecutor’s office.

The government has welcomed the charges. Carlos Holguín, the interior minister, said they were a “great step” towards learning the truth about paramilitary domination of large swathes of the country. But does the government, or the many landowners who supported the paramilitaries, want to know the whole truth?

José Miguel Vivanco of Human Rights Watch, a New York-based group, points out that the government has yet to develop any plan to require the paramilitaries to dismantle their businesses and political networks. “These criminal mafias need to be treated as such,” he says. Among other things, that would mean giving more resources to the public prosecutor’s office.

There is no reason to believe that Mr Uribe will be directly implicated in the Sucre scandal. But if investigations into the paramilitaries’ political influence go wider, with more legislators facing charges, they could cause difficulties for the president.

In San Onofre some residents fear reprisals. Arnol Gómez, the leader of a victims’ association, worries that his group may become a target of violence for having helped investigators look into paramilitary crimes. He says that several members of his organisation are already on a hit list circulating in the town. “We are happy and at the same time scared,” he admits.

Impunity rules

GUATEMALA CITY
The gruesome cost of a failure to reform

The morgue in Guatemala’s capital is a busy place. A dozen or more bodies come in every day. The roll call of violent death is recorded in thick stacks of binders that line the wall containing autopsy reports. The smell of formaldehyde seeps out into the nearby hospital and cemetery.

Guatemala has long had one of the world’s highest murder rates. An American-organised coup which overthrew a democratic government in 1954 led eventually to more than three decades of civil war between the army and left-wing guerrillas which ended only in 1996. This claimed perhaps 200,000 lives, most of them Mayan Indians killed by the army. Since the war’s legacy included many guns and many unemployed former combatants, violence continued. The recent rise of
Multiculturalism in Canada

One nation or many?

Ottawa

Canadians continue to believe in diversity and tolerance. But it is becoming harder to sustain a peaceful multicultural society. What is new about the latest arguments is the growing tension between some cultural practices and mainstream values, such as gender equality.

In recent weeks, the debate in Britain over the wearing of the niqab or face veil has crossed the north Atlantic to Canada. It came on the heels of claims that the leaders of the large Indo-Canadian population in British Columbia were turning a blind eye to widespread domestic violence. Last year saw an acrimonious dispute in Ontario over whether Muslims could use Islamic sharia courts to settle family disputes. The provincial government eventually decided that they could not.

In themselves, fights over cultural practices and symbols are nothing new in Canada. Sikhs went to the Supreme Court to win the right for uniformed policemen to wear turbans and students to wear ceremonial daggers known as kirpans. What is new about the latest arguments is an underlying tension between some cultural practices of recent immigrants and the mainstream values of Canadian liberal democracy, such as sex equality.

This comes as a small minority of Muslim immigrants seek to emphasize their separation from, and even hostility to, the wider society. In June 17 Canadian Muslims were arrested on charges of plotting terrorist attacks on targets including the national Parliament. "Muslims are the first group to seriously challenge our notions of multiculturalism and tolerance," says Neil Bissoondath, a writer on the subject.

Similar debates have raged in Europe. Two things give them a different edge in Canada. First, even more than the United States, Canada is nowadays a nation of immigrants (see chart 1). Immigration is both increasing and increasingly non-European (see chart 2 on next page). Second, from its birth as a self-governing nation in 1867 Canada was a multicultural mixture of British and French settlers and the indigenous people they called Indians. A century later, this was officially recognized. In 1971 Pierre Trudeau, a Liberal prime minister, declared Canada bilingual and multicultural. The Multiculturalism Act of 1988 replaced the previous policy of assimilation with one of acceptance of diversity.

Multiculturalism has since sunk deep roots in government, reflected in everything from broadcasting to education policy. It has itself become a basic Canadian value. Polls show that a majority support continued immigration and do not want it limited to whites. Almost half believe that immigrants should be free to maintain their cultural and religious practices. But a poll published this week reflected the new disquiet: when asked whether those practices should be tolerated if they infringe women's rights, a large majority said No. Some feminists counter that Canada tolerates other practices that they see as demeaning, such as cosmetic surgery.

One school of thought says that it is

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Cosmopolitan Canada

Foreign born as % of metropolitan population

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Source: Globalization: Studies Network
time to set firmer rules for what is expected of citizens and to define more clearly what it means to be Canadian. Adherents to this view gleefully seized on a comment by Yann Martel, a novelist, that “Canada is one of the greatest hotels on earth—it welcomes everyone from everywhere.” (Mr Martel claims that he was misunderstood.)

But most commentators still subscribe to multiculturalism as not just a worthwhile aspiration but as the only way of holding Canada together. To preserve it, some trust in middle-through. When another writer, Michael Ignatieff, who is standing for the vacant leadership of the opposition Liberals, said he favoured recognising Quebec as a “nation”, he was roundly abused, and not just by those who favour a stronger Canadian identity. Better to leave well alone rather than going through the wrenching process of reopening constitutional debates, his detractors said. “Canada is a country that works better in practice than in theory,” said Stéphane Dion (echoing a national cliché), one of Mr Ignatieff’s rivals for the leadership and himself a Quebecker.

Others worry that laissez-faire is a recipe for rising tension. They say there is no alternative but to negotiate solutions to cultural clashes, new or old. Rudyard Giffiths of the Dominion Institute, a think-tank concerned with Canadian identity, points to a long history of finding ways to accommodate seemingly intractable differences of language, culture and religion, such as those between English and French speakers or Catholics and Protestants.

Some of the new disputes will doubtless be resolved in the courts. Politicians, who until a few years ago were happy to talk up multiculturalism, have mainly fallen silent. There have been a few exceptions. Dalton McGuinty, the premier of Ontario, said of the niqab debate that women were free to do as they pleased. Stephen Harper, the Conservative prime minister, invited the Aga Khan to dinner. His government is helping to set up the new pluralism centre. Officially, then, Canada still stands squarely behind multiculturalism. But the silences are eloquent.

Colombia

**Thugs and politics**

**SAN ONSORE**

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Guatemala

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**GUATEMALA CITY**

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Canadian citizenship

I'm a lumberjack, and you're not

OTTAWA
Who is a real Canadian? The evacuation from Lebanon prompts a debate

IN A country composed almost entirely of immigrants or their descendants, defining what it means to be Canadian is often the subject of heated debate. Tempers have flared over whether Sikh Mounties (national police) may wear turbans, whether Jews in Quebec may build huts on their balconies to celebrate the festival of Sukkot and whether religious groups, including Catholics, Mennonites, Jews and Muslims, may arbitrate disputes involving family law in Ontario. (The answers are yes, yes and no.)

A new and ugly chapter in this argument began in July after Israel's war against Hizbullah in Lebanon forced an evacuation of foreigners. Were all the 13,000 holders of Canadian passports ferried to safety at taxpayers' expense real Canadians? Or were some, as Garth Turner, a member of Parliament from the government's backbenches, insisted on his website, "Canadians of convenience", who had returned to live in Lebanon after meeting Canada's three-year residence requirement for citizenship and who "should hardly expect taxpayers here to gladly fly [sic] them across the world"?

Mr Turner's outburst echoed across newspapers, television and the internet. "Does Canadian citizenship mean anything?" asked Jack Lawrence Granatstein, a prominent historian. Perhaps it is too easy to obtain it, suggested Jeffrey Simpson, a columnist. Stephen Harper, the prime minister, has tried to calm the furor by promising to review dual citizenship.

That Canada, which prides itself on its multicultural make-up, is having this debate may seem strange. About 1m Canadians are of aboriginal stock; the other 31m either came from somewhere else or are descendants of someone who did. One reason for the fuss lies in changing immigration patterns. Until the early 1960s immigration law explicitly preferred Europeans to "black and Asiatic races". With racist provisions now removed, most immigrants are from Asia and the Middle East. But ending legally sanctioned racism has not pulled up all its roots.

Not all the suspicions are racist, though. A growing number of immigrants choose to keep their former citizenship. Of the 5.5m Canadians born abroad, 560,000 declared in the most recent census that they hold passports from another country. This feeds the belief that some are using Canada as a safety-net. In the approach to the

British handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997, many Hong Kong Chinese emigrated to Canada, were granted citizenship and then went back. Today some 200,000 people in Hong Kong hold Canadian citizenship. The discovery in June that 17 members of immigrant communities were plotting terrorist attacks had already sparked doubts about some newcomers' commitment to their adopted country.

Unless he handles his review carefully, Mr Harper risks alienating actual and potential immigrants. Those already in Canada are concentrated in big cities, where his Conservatives fared poorly in January's general election. Mr Harper wants their votes to turn his minority government into a majority one. Potential immigrants are being wooed to ease growing labour shortages, particularly in the west. That is one reason why Canada admits around 340,000 immigrants a year, most of whom eventually become citizens. Would the highly skilled come if it meant severing their connections to home?

Canada is far from the only country to grapple with the complexities of dual citizenship. Around 90 countries, including the United States, allow it. Unlike Canada, though, the United States requires its citizens to pay American taxes no matter where they live. If Canadians did the same, they might grumble less about the cost of rescuing their embattled brethren from Lebanon.

Mexico's contested election

After maths

MEXICO CITY
An impressively bad loser draws the crowds

STANDING before a midnight crowd of several thousand in the Zócalo, Mexico City's central plaza, is Andrés Manuel López Obrador. The city's former mayor, and the presidential candidate of the centre-left Party of the Democratic Revolution in last month's election, is in his element. On July 30th he marched to the square for the third protest in a month. Then he declared that he was staying. He would, he said, live in the Zócalo until the Trief, the Federal Electoral Tribunal, a seven-judge court that is the final arbiter in electoral matters, had ordered a recount of all the ballots cast.

He also invited his supporters to stick around. They have. Thousands are camping in the plaza, and more have blocked off the Reforma, one of the city's main arteries. Because the local government, and so the police, are of Mr López Obrador's party, they have succeeded in paralysing the centre of Mexico's capital. This is a sharp escalation of his campaign to secure the presidency he apparently failed to win.

The crowds are impressively organised. Enormous canopies cover the Zócalo; banks of portable lavatories line the square's edges; and organisers circulate offering free food, drink and bedding. There is a steady stream of musical entertainment, and Mr López Obrador need not even speak to draw cheers; he sometimes just walks up on stage and smiles, revelling in his new-found role as the underdog. (He led the polls for most of the two years leading up to the election.) Vendors sell shirts and mugs adorned with his grinning caricature and the slogan, "Smile, we won!"

His supporters claim that the election was marred by fraud and that the Federal Electoral Institute, an independent body that oversees elections, favoured Felipe Calderón and his centre-right National Action Party. Mr Calderón won with a margin of just 244,000 of the 42m votes cast.

No convincing evidence of fraud has surfaced, but a recount could easily change the result. The Trief must decide by September 6th whether to order a complete or partial recount or none at all. If it does not do so or declares a victor by then, Congress would have to appoint a provisional president and a new election would be held early in 2008.

Mr Calderón argues that there are no legal grounds for a recount. Mr López Obrador says he would respect the results of a recount but has no doubt that he is the winner of the election.

So far Mexico has taken his insurrection in its stride. The stockmarket has barely fallen and most Mexicans expect a peaceful resolution. But with Mr López Obrador now occupying the capital's centre, some are beginning to wonder.