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NATIONALISM AND IDENTITY : CANADIAN EXPERIENCES

1. Introduction

Nationalism is a paradoxical phenomenon of modern state system. The historical origins of nationalism are as obscure as the theories of political science defining it. The history of the cause, nature and consequences of nationalism is as enigmatic as its conceptual and emotional construct. The integrative and disintegrative potentials of nationalism have defining implications for peace and security both in national and international spheres. These are but few of the cardinal aspects of nationalism that intellectually challenge the study of contemporary dynamics of nationalism as a determinant of success and sustainability of present state structure.

As a significant political denominator of history, nationalism cannot be said to have been pervasive much before the 18th century. The Greek city states, some empires and some kingdoms seem to have derived legitimacy from some elements of nationalism but there is no convincing historical evidence that nationalism was

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decisive in defining the centripetal and centrifugal forces in the ancient or medieval state structure. The United States of America - in its rejection of British Crown, and France - in its repudiation of monarchy, are among the modern states that pioneered the manifestations of political and populist nationalism inspired by Rousseau and Locke. Nationalism or the absence of it in Canada can be attributed to a strong allegiance to the British Crown by the anglophones and the power of British Imperial Army and Navy. In this perspective, the study of the evolution of nationalism in Canada would provide useful insight into the unresolved and unattended nationalistic aspirations and emotions that continue to threaten the integrity and security of many contemporary states around the world.

The modern states are essentially nation states. One state may include multiple nationalities (e.g. Canada, Russia, U.K., Spain, France, India, China etc.) and on the other hand, one nation may be divided up into multiple states (e.g. the Arabs, the Kurds, the Afghans, the Serbs, the Croats, the Russians, the Chinese etc.) These factors make nationalism a major factor in shaping the security, stability and unity of many contemporary states. Consequently, it becomes imperative for a student of nationalism to inquire into the causes, nature and consequences of nationalism. Failure to integrate and harmonise micro-national aspirations and identities may shake the very foundations of a state. Canada is a clear example of historical failure in forging a common national identity and a shared sense of collective nationalism among diverse groups.

The history of nationalism in Europe, Asia, America and Africa followed disparate paths in defining streams of political, cultural, economic, linguistic, religious and ethnic-identities, aspirations and compulsions. The disintegration of empires in the second half of this century was both the cause and consequence of the rising tide of

nationalism around the world. The forces of nationalism and more particularly, micro-nationalism, would continue to influence and perhaps change the political map of the modern world. The map of Canada was almost being redrawn but for the razor thin majority in the last referendum in Quebec in 1995. Many developed and developing states can draw useful conclusions from Canadian experience with emotive aspects of micro-nationalism exploited by some myopic elites for advancing their perceived need for power.

Nationalism can be a maker as well as a breaker when it comes to the question of national security, peace and integrity. The phenomenon of micro-nationalism is an insidious disintegrative force that continues to haunt the developed and developing countries alike. Quebecois, Scots, Irish, Basques, Catalans, Flemish, and Corsicans are causing anxiety and even disruptive impact on the nationalism of Canada, Britain, France, Belgium and Spain. Similarly Tamils, Nagas, Moros, Tigre, Shan and Karen, Sikhs, Kurds, Eritreans, Albanians, Baluchis and many others are posing threat to internal stability and security to many developing countries which have weak and inexperienced political institutions. A brief study of Canadian experience with the disintegrative aspects of nationalism, cultural nationalism, micro-nationalism, political violence, and above all, threat to national peace, security and stability, would help others in similar situation to appreciate and understand the political implications of unresolved ethnic aspirations. The following analysis of Canadian history seeks to bring into perspective the particular historical experience of Canada in dealing with the disintegrative aspects of nationalistic ethos of Quebec.

2. Evolution of Nationalism in Canada : An Overview

History has not been one of the promoters of a strong national identity in Canada, at least, not a macro-identity. The national

identity of every nation state is the product of its history. The history of the national identity of Canada is primarily the history of micro-nationalism. In fact the national identity of Canada stands divided by its history. The fault-line of history runs between two languages, two religions, two cultures and above all, two ethos. The history of present day Canada started on this political fault-line, with the conquerors, on one side and the conquered, on the other.

The history of defeat, conquest and cultural subjugation, the history of constitutional manoeuvres to legalize the linguistic and religious asymmetries, the history of an emerging urban middle-class among the francophone people of Quebec and the history of Parliamentary democracy and rule of law have been among the major determinants of the Canadian national identity.

The historical interface between the centrifugal and centripetal socio-political forces caused more erosion to the sense of a national identity in Canada than accretion. Actually there never was much of a true macro-identity of shared togetherness in Canada. The political history of Canada just did not help to foster a sense of oneness among the two dominant groups of Canadians - one English and Protestant, the other French and Catholic. The two ethos glided along in history - parallel and separate. Such diversities have prompted some to state that, "Canada is, not a real country but a country of two peoples, two nations and two territories".¹

The pricking point in Canadian history is that the French did not on their own come forward to join forces with the British to build Canada. They had very little say in it. It was the result of a defeat in

1 Desmond Morton, "Two Nations Theory Has Deep Roots", *The Ottawa Citizen* 29 February 1996, p. A8.

a war which originated in Europe and which was settled in Europe between Britain and France. A study of the British policy towards the French in North America will reveal that ever since the conquest and defeat of the French at the hands of the British in 1760, their policy, instead of unifying the French and the English Canadians, helped to stimulate the growth of French nationalism in Quebec and not Canadian nationalism in the whole of Canada. During the first hundred years after the conquest, the policy of the British towards the French in Canada was that of one towards its colony. Strictly speaking that was natural, if one takes into consideration the time and the spirit of the age. The British for various reasons, however, could not maintain that policy. One important fact being that unlike the other British colonies the people in the French colonies in North America were white men, and a people the British had known for centuries, with a culture they had admired. As a result, they could not assign to the French Canadians the same role in Canada as they had done to the original settlers of Canada - the Indians. They looked upon the French Canadian not as one of themselves but also not quite like the people of the other regions Britain had colonised. The French Canadians, however, could not accept the role of a second class citizen assigned to them by the English. They felt that they had as important a role to play in Canada as the British.

French Canadians have continuously struggled to maintain their separate identity in a region surrounded by the English. This struggle of the French for their cultural and political survival coupled with the British notion that Canada was primarily an English speaking region with a large concentration of the French in Quebec kept the country from developing a separate national identity of its own. A study of the first hundred years after the conquest of the Confederation that followed and of the subsequent rise of nationalism in Quebec will make this clear.

3. Historical Experience of Canada with Quebec's Nationalistic Ethos

3.1 1700-1900

France and Britain, the two great imperial powers of Europe had for centuries been rivals in trade, political power, and colonial empires. Thus, while New France (the French North American colonies, later the province of Quebec) was transferred to Britain after the defeat of the French in the Seven Years War in 1763 by the Treaty of Paris, it was too much to expect the North American French to forget their historic past, religion, their rich culture and language, and totally become British. However, that was exactly what the British wanted them to do. Several measures were, therefore, taken to effectively impose British rule in North America and forcibly assimilate the French Canadians. Steps were taken to encourage British settlements in New France and to spread Protestantism and English language there. Therefore, following closely on the heels of the Treaty of Paris came the Royal Proclamation of October 1763, which is often regarded as the first Constitution of Canada. The Royal Proclamation was passed with the set purpose of one, to populate Quebec with English-speaking settlers from the American colonies and two, to establish British supremacy over the Roman Catholic Church and in other fields of law and culture. To encourage settlements in Quebec, free land was offered to ex-soldiers and on easy terms to others. Lands were set aside to support Protestant churches and schools. The Proclamation required Catholics wishing to hold public office to renounce their faith.² James Murray, the first governor-general of Quebec after military rule had been replaced by civil rule, was instructed to erect

2 Robert Sibley, "Nations Apart - History set the stage for our great debate," *The Ottawa Citizen*, Saturday, 9 September 1995, p. B1

Protestant schools and maintain Protestant ministers, "to the end that the Church of England may be established both in principle and practice and that the said inhabitants may by degrees be induced to embrace the Protestant religion and their children be brought up in the principals of it".³ Furthermore the Proclamation introduced English criminal law in Quebec. It, however, maintained the civil law and the seigniorial landholding system.⁴ Quebec was not given a representative assembly as it was felt that, "for Quebec with a population made up almost entirely of Roman Catholic French Canadians, a representative assembly was impracticable for the present."⁵ To maintain the supremacy of the English Canadians, English was made the colony's official language.⁶

As a result of this policy most of the French elite -administrators and merchants-returned to France. Their places were taken by British officials and merchants. The French Canadians withdrew from large towns and became a rural people. Montreal and Quebec cities became predominately British. The French people who were left behind were the farmers and the clergy. It is not surprising, therefore, that the French could not develop normal relations with the English Canadians. They withdrew within themselves and became as the French historian Maurice Sequin states an "annexed nation."⁷

Things, however, began to change towards the end of the century and the British felt it to be prudent to drop their policy of

3 W.P.M. Kennedy, *Constitution of Canada, 1534 - 1937 : An Introduction to its Development, Law and Custom*, 2nd edition (London: Oxford University Press 1938) p. 39.

4 Robert Sibley, *op. cit.*, p. B1

5 Peter H Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey, Can Canadians become a Sovereign People*, 2nd ed (University of Toronto Press 1993) p. 13.

6 Robert Sibley, *op. cit.*, p. B2.

7 *Ibid.*, p. B1

forced assimilation. Several factors prompted the British to change their policy. First, few English-speaking settlers came to Quebec in the years immediately after the conquest. Second, Governor-General Murray's dislike of the British community in Quebec. His dislike made him interpret the Royal Proclamation in a conservative manner. That helped to preserve the French Canadian character of the colony. Under the Proclamation the benefits of English law had been promised to new settlers, but the Court of Common Pleas continued to settle French-Canadian litigation according to French law. Likewise, there was little interference with the activities of the Roman Catholic Church. Thirdly, as tension grew between the British and their colonies in America in the years leading up to the American revolution in 1775, the British needed the support of the French. Moreover, there was fear that the Americans may win over and take control of Quebec.⁸

The policy of forced assimilation was, therefore, dropped from the second British Constitution for Canada, the Quebec Act of 1774. This statute has been called the *Magna Carta* of the French-Canadian race. By it, the individuality and separateness of Quebec was at last officially recognized by the British Parliament.⁹ The Quebec Act granted the French Canadians religious freedom and the use of their traditional civil law. The Act, in effect, was a recognition of the return to the earlier conditions of New France, with the exception that now, London took the place of Versailles.

In the years that followed the American Revolution, further changes took place in French society and politics. Following the American Revolution those British who were loyal to Britain moved

8 J.A. Lower, *Canada An Outline History* (Mc. Graw - Hill Ryerson Ltd. 1973) p. 48. For detail, see, pp. 52-53.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 48.

north into Canada and settled in western Quebec. The influx of the United Loyalist, as they were known, brought about a radical change in the society and politics of Quebec. Quebec changed, "from a homogenous French Canadian society to one with a prosperous and vocal English minority."¹⁰ The newcomers demanded a government separate from that of Quebec, English law, local courts, freehold land tenure, and financial help in establishing schools, roads and churches. The French Canadians therefore, found themselves dominated by "small English-speaking clique which saw the French as backward peasants, cowed by the seigneurs and the priests".¹¹

In 1791, in an attempt to satisfy both the French Canadians and the English Canadians (including the Loyalists) the British government passed the Constitutional Act or Canada Act. The Act provided one, for the division of Quebec into the province of Upper Canada in the west, the future Ontario with an English speaking Loyalist majority (about 20,000), and in the east, Lower Canada, the future Quebec with a Roman Catholic French speaking majority (about 100,000 French and 10,000 British). Two, each province was to have a government consisting of a British Lieutenant-Governor, an appointed executive counsel and an elected legislative assembly.¹² The purpose of the division explained by the colonial secretary was to reduce, "dissension and animosities among two classes of men differing in their prejudices and perhaps in their interests."¹³ This purpose however was not achieved. While the French Canadians dominated the legislature, the real power was

10 Kenneth McRoberts, "Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis," quoted in Robert Sibley, *op. cit.*, p. B2.

11 Robert Sibley, *op. cit.*, p. B2.

12 Lower, *op. cit.*, pp. 57- 58. See, also, Peter H. Russell, pp. 13 - 14.

13 Quoted in Peter H. Russell, *op. cit.* p. 13

retained by the British Governor and his English cabinet-like executive counsel. Thus though the French in Lower Canada outnumbered the English, they were not masters in their own house. The stage was set for conflict and the birth of a radical political nationalism that reached a climax in the rebellion of 1837-38.

Towards the beginning of the nineteenth century many more English people arrived in Lower Canada and settled there. This caused alarm among the French who felt that their culture was threatened. Reforms were attempted but they were always opposed by the English. In 1834 the legislative assembly presented the British government with its famous 92 Resolutions asking for reforms under the veiled threat of secession. When the demand for reforms were turned down, an armed rebellion broke out in 1837 under Louis-Joseph Papineau, the leader of the Patriotes—a French dominated political body. The British government cracked down on the Patriotes with a firm hand. As a result the "French Canadians added to their collective memory as a conquered people the images of execution, exile and villages in flames".¹⁴ Thus the purpose of the division of Quebec was defeated. Though all French Canadians did not support the rebellion, the action of the British left a bitter memory.

After the rebellion of 1837, the British government in an effort to solve the French-English relations, asked Lord Durham¹⁵ to recommend solutions. Lord Durham felt that for the good of the British Empire and for the good of the French Canadians, the French must become Englishmen. Eventually, he said, "the growing English-speaking population would swamp the French."¹⁶ According to

14 Robert Sibley, *op. cit.*, p. B2.

15 Lord Durham was a British liberal who was appointed Governor-General of all British North America except Newfoundland.

16 Robert Sibley, *op. cit.*, p. B2.

Lord Durham's advice, the British government passed the Act of Union in 1840. The Act united Upper and Lower Canada into a province of Canada which came to be known as Canada East and Canada West. The Act ensured that the English speaking colonists in both Upper and Lower Canada would together possess a majority of seats in the new combined legislature. English was to be the official language of government and business. The long term objective of the Act was the assimilation of the Quebecers into the culture of the emerging English Canadian majority. Lord Durham wrote, "I entertain no doubts, as to the national character which must be given to Lower Canada, it must be that of the British Empire."¹⁷ In this Act there was no place for the liberal principle of cultural diversity.

The French Canadians for a time resigned themselves to the fact that they were a part of a British colony in North America. This realization, however, did not kill the French spirit. The period from 1840 to 1857 was the period of moderate or liberal nationalism. During this period the foundations of Canadian dualism were firmly established. French Canadian leaders like George Etienne Cartier and Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine sought political power within the government of the colony by taking advantage of the division within the English community and using accommodation and compromise. They were eminently successful.¹⁸ In 1849 the Governor-General announced that the French had the same status as the English. Despite Lord Durham's intentions of establishing a single legislature, Canada East and Canada West functioned as culturally distinct provinces - the one predominantly French and Catholic, the other mainly English and Protestant. Thus as Douglas Verney points out

17 George F.G. Stanley, *A short History of the Canadian Constitution* (Toronto : Ryerson 1968) p. 29.

18 Douglas Verney, *Three Civilizations, two Cultures and one State* (Durham: Duke University Press 1986) p. 200

the French Canadians, "Instead of being assimilated ... became partners in the government of Canada."¹⁹ and instead of having one identity, preserved two. From that time the French Canadians gradually grew in strength. The second stage in the ever growing divergence in the national identity of Canada began with the Confederation.

Since the end of the eighteenth century the possibility of a federation among the various regions had come up from time to time. It was however not till 1867 after the passage of the British North American (BNA) Act was a Confederation possible. Under the terms of the Act the new state, the Dominion of Canada was formed. The Dominion consisted of the four provinces of Ontario (formerly Canada West), Quebec (formerly Canada East), New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The Confederation therefore created the French dominated province of Quebec and three English provinces. The Act however did not give complete independence to the Dominion of Canada.²⁰ The French leader Cartier hailed the Confederation by stating, "The new constitution recognizes the French Canadians as a distinct and separate nationality. We constitute a nation within a nation. We enjoy the full exercise of our rights and the formal recognition of our national independence."²¹ To most English speaking Canadians 1867 is when the story of Canada really begins. English Canadians thought that Canada as a whole including Quebec was British in civilization and that Quebec was entitled to preserve French culture within it.²² Thus the BNA

19 Douglas Varney quoted in Robert Sibley, *op. cit.*, p. B2

20 The new dominion could not have direct dealings with other states, could not control immigration, could not command Canadian armed forces - except through British Officers - and could have any of its parliamentary measures disallowed by the Westminster Parliament. See, Lower *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.

21 La Minerva, July 1, 1867 quoted in Robert Sibley, *op. cit.*, p. B1.

22 Douglas Varney, *op. cit.*, p. 225

Act, which brought about the Confederation, instead of forging the nation together planted the seed of conflict in Canada.

To the French Canadians the Confederation was a compact between two founding nations - the French and the English, each wanting it for its own reasons. For the French, "Confederation was [also] another turn in the long struggle to survive as a French speaking 'nation' on a continent dominated by a foreign culture."²³ As historian W. L. Morton points out, the 'compact' theory gave the French Canadians, "a collective claim to equality in a state which otherwise condemned them to be a minority."²⁴ This dualist notion of Canada by the French was, and largely is, rejected by the English. The English have insisted on majority rule and individual rights. They opposed the French arguments for group rights and for a nationality other than the political nationality provided by the state. The BNA Act was a carefully worded document which gave English Canadians the power they wanted to develop the Dominion. It also insured majority rule both at federal and provincial levels. The BNA Act recognized the existence of the linguistic and religious rights of the French Canadians in three main areas: (1) by section 133, the use of French in the Parliament of Canada; (2) by section 92:13, the preservation (by implication) of the civil law tradition in Quebec; and (3) by section 93, the protection of Roman Catholic (not French) education in Ontario.²⁵ Therefore, for the English Canadians, dualism was confined to the legal recognition of the rights of the French Canadians. The English Canadians felt that Confederation would establish a strong central government that could avoid the threat of U.S. annexation by promoting a transcontinental commercial empire. To achieve this empire a cross-country railway

23 Robert Sibley, *op. cit.*, p. B1.

24 *Ibid.*, p. B1

25 Douglas Varney, *op. cit.*, p. 215

was to be built connecting the east with the west. The Prairies would in course of time be settled and that in turn would become a market for goods produced by "tariff-protected eastern industries." This empire was to be loyal to the British Empire while containing, if not eliminating, the French fact."²⁶ George Brown, one of the more prominent promoters of the Confederation, believed "French Canadianism (would be) extinguished outside Quebec leaving the rest of the country British."²⁷ The period from 1763 to 1867 was therefore, one of continuous struggle, both for the French, to keep their identity alive and for the English, to make the French understand that they were one of the provinces in the Confederation. However, the Confederation gave the French a much surer ground to stand on. Henceforth, the French nationalism in Quebec grew steadily stronger creating in its wake a weaker Canadian identity.

3.2 1900-Present

Closely linked with the two nations theory of the French Quebecers are the cultural and language issues. "Culture", according to the Quebecers, "is the very foundation of Quebec's national identity and it is transmitted through the French language, history and art."²⁸ During the first twenty years after the conquest language and culture were not political problems. As historian Emile Gosselin noted, "The British authorities did more than use French in their relations with their new subjects. They used French as their own language of work and for correspondence. Nothing gave greater satisfaction to British pride than to be able to show a knowledge of

26 Robert Sibley, *op. cit.*, p. B1.

27 Quoted in Robert Sibley, *op. cit.*, p. B1.

28 *Commission Nationale - ReSur L'Avenir Du Quebec - Report 1995* (Official publication - provinces of Quebec) p. 19.

French."²⁹ This liberal attitude, however, changed towards the end of the eighteenth century as fear for everything French whether Continental or Canadian, gradually settled down on the British. Continental tension between Britain and France during the next twenty years led to ethnic tension hitherto unknown in Canada. The role the French played in the American war of independence left its impact on those British who had supported the British monarchy during the war. After America became independent these Loyalists were given offices in Canada by Britain. They came to Canada with a suspicion bordering on 'hysteria' to everything French. Their anti-French feeling led to strained relations between the two communities.

However, the language dispute in Quebec did not become the focal point of communal tension till 1960. Around that time the Quebecers were urbanized and "language became the main characteristic distinguishing the two groups and the central point of conflict."³⁰ Nevertheless right from the start Quebecers had to struggle to give their language its rightful place in Quebec. As has been noted earlier, the Act of Union in 1840 had forbidden the use of the French language. In 1848, however, this Act was amended and French was made an official language in the legislature. This was confirmed by the BNA Act in 1867. This Act allowed the French to use French in the Federal Legislature. In the twentieth century the French campaigned and obtained bilingualism for stamps in 1927, currency in 1936, and checks in 1962.³¹ Until 1958 debates

29 Marcel Rioux *Quebec in Question*, (translation - James Booke (pub Toronto : James Lorimer) - quote in Sheila McLeod Arnopoulos Dominique Clift, *The English Fact in Quebec* (McGill - Queens University Press Montreal 1980), p. 52.

30 *Sheila McLeod, op. cit.*, p. 51

31 *Ibid.*, p. 60

in the Commons could not take place in French. A great change was ushered into the Quebec society by the educational reforms of the 1960s. An educated group of French Canadians entered the scene. The emergence of the educated middle class gave a new dimension to the language question in particular and to the political issues in general.

Among these middle classes was a small section of intellectuals. Though this group was emerging in the period between 1930 and 1945, it was not till the 1960s that they were able to assert their influence in Quebec. Three factors helped this group to play an active role. First, during this period the Roman Catholic Church which wielded extraordinary influence in politics lost its hold.³² Second, by this time the mass media had become powerful. The intellectual group made full use of it to transmit their views to the general public. An awareness of Quebec's political, economic and cultural problems was thus created.³³ Thirdly, as this group came into the political limelight they were able to properly direct their political activities. About the same time this group was inspired by the independence movements which were taking place in the Third World in the 1960s.³⁴ The language movement thus slowly became a political one. A movement for separation from Canada gradually gained ground. Several small separatist groups sprang up. By the end of the 1960s these groups under the Party Quebecois leader Rene Levesque became a significant political force in Quebec. The separatist groups felt that the Confederation experiment had been a failure for the French Canadians. They felt that their homeland

32 *The Globe and Mail*, "Quebec's school reforms" - Editorial, Friday 24 January, 1997.

33 Leon Dion, *Quebec The Unfinished Revolution* (Translation by Thérèse Romer, *La Prochaine Révolution*) McGill - Queen's University Press 1976 p. 7.

34 *The Globe and Mail*, Sat., 14 October 1995, p. A5.

Quebec should become an autonomous state and that the French Canadians should be recognized as a distinct national group.

The problem surrounding the question of whether Quebec should be recognized as a province with a 'distinct society' is one of great political significance. According to the Quebecers, "When languages, religions and legal institutions clashed, the population became aware of how unique its life style and culture were. But it was not enough merely to realize that its institutions were different, it had to defend them to ensure their survival."³⁵ Hence their continuous demand that Quebec be recognized as a "distinct society," and be given the right to veto any reform of the Constitution.³⁶ The English Canadians do not accept this. They feel that the "distinct society" clause in the Constitution would undermine the equal rights of all citizens. The Quebecers point out that the distinct character of Quebec has always been a major factor in any political development. According to them, the Quebec Act of 1774 was the first legal precedent confirming Quebec's distinct character. That Act by legalizing the use of French and the French civil code and by repealing the Test Oath, established that Quebec was different from the other provinces.³⁷ In 1791 the Constitutional Act divided Quebec into Upper Canada (Ontario) and Lower Canada (Quebec). The Quebecers argue that by separating the English speaking Canadian in Upper Canada from the French speaking in the Lower the British Parliament recognized that Quebec was different from Ontario.

35 *Understanding Quebec Through Glimpses of the Past*. (An official handbook of the province of Quebec) published by secrétariat A' Lavenir du Quebec Ministère du Conseil executif 1995 p. 34.

36 Marc Chevrier, *Études Documents Canadian Federalism and the Autonomy of Quebec: A Historical Viewpoint*. official pub. Govt. du Quebec Ministeres des Relations Internationales) p. 23.

37 *Understanding Quebec*, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-36.

In order to protect the distinctiveness of Quebec the French Canadians in the later half of the twentieth century undertook several measures. In 1974 the Quebec government passed Bill 22. The Bill limited access to English school to those who already had a working knowledge of English and established programs for the francization of firms doing business with the government. In 1977 the Quebec government, in order to further strengthen the position of the French, passed The Charter of the French Language (Bill 101). This Bill severely restricted access to English schools, introduced francization programs for all firms with more than hundred employees, and forced the elimination of most public signs written in English. It also made French the sole official language of the National Assembly and the courts.³⁸ The object of the Bill was to 'protect the language and culture of French-speaking Quebecers.'³⁹ However, from time to time the Supreme Court of Canada invalidated certain provisions in the legislation. In 1979 the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the provisions of Quebec's Bill 101 which had made French the sole official language of the legislature and courts. Similarly the Supreme Court invalidated other provisions when they were deemed to contravene the Constitution Act, 1982 and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom passed by Prime Minister Trudeau.⁴⁰ In 1985 the Supreme Court invalidated a section of Bill 101, which had restricted English language education in Quebec. The Court ruled that this violated Section 23 of the Charter, which protects the language, education rights of Quebec's anglophone minority.⁴¹ Three years later the court struck down the

38 Sheila McLeod, *op. cit.*, p. 226. See also, Commission Nationale sur L'Avenir Du Quebec Report p. 53.

39 Commission Nationale sur L'Avenir Du Quebec p. 53. For detail, see, pp. 53-54.

40 Sheila McLeod, *op. cit.*, p.226.

41 Robert Sibley, "A History of Failure", *The Ottawa Citizen*, Sunday 1 October 1995, p. C2.

section of Bill 101 that required that all signs whether commercial or otherwise be in French. The Supreme Court stated that it violated the Charter's guarantee of freedom of expression. This Act brought about sharp reaction from the Quebec government and the Federal government was forced to allow the French only sign law to remain in force.⁴²

In 1988 the federal parliament passed the Official Languages Act with the intention of promoting bilinguals in Canada. The object of the Act was different from the Charter of the French Language - and as such it was not favourably received by the French. The francophones believe that, "By establishing bilingual areas in which both languages must receive equal treatment, the federal legislation engenders unfavourable competition for the French language."⁴³ They also fear that with the spread of English education among the French, the French would be tempted to leave Quebec in search of better jobs. This would shake the foundation of Quebec's language and society

The Quebecers also feel that the Charter of Rights and Freedom by implying that the idea of Quebec as a distinct society promoted inequality, undermined the efforts of the francophones to protect the French language and culture. The recognition of multiculturalism irrespective of cultural origin in Canada, according to them was and is a rejection of the Quebecers vision of Canada as the Creation of two founding peoples. It was feared that the clause that permitted every citizen of Canada to reside and work in any place in Canada would harm the French language.⁴⁴ The vision of an anglophone dominated society and the disappearance of the francophones therefore looms very large in front of the Quebecers.

42 *ibid.*, p. C2.

43 Commission Nationale *op.cit.*, p. 54.

44 Understanding Quebec, *op.cit.*, p. 23.

Apart from the conflicting interest of the English and the French which is pulling the country in different directions and never towards a united common identity, several other factors are damaging the image of a sovereign Canada. The lack of a strong national identity in Canada may be traced to the slow growth and development of the institutions of an independent and sovereign country and the close link Canada has with Great Britain.

Though Canada had her first Constitution in 1763, Canada, until the "Second World War, ... was viewed as Britain's senior colony or dominion, loyal in its support of the empire."⁴⁵ The political parties in Canada, the Liberal and Conservatives, believed in the unity of the British Empire. The Privy Council in London was the highest court of Canada from 1867 to 1949. This changed when the Supreme Court of Canada was established in 1949.⁴⁶ It was only in the 1940s that Canada made it clear that it was an independent member of the Commonwealth.⁴⁷ Even so till 1952 the office of the governor general was reserved for a British national. Strictly speaking till 1965 Canada had no flag of its own. The Canadian Red Ensign first used in 1870 had in one corner the British Union Jack. The national flag of Canada as it is today, was raised for the first time at the Peace Tower of Parliament Hill on February 15, 1965⁴⁸ only thirty-two years ago. Until 1982 the Canadian Constitution could only be amended by Great Britain. Though since 1927 every Canadian government from that of Mackenzie King to Pearson had tried to end

45 Commission Nationale, *op.cit.*, p. 54.

46 Douglas Varney, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

47 Marc Chevrier, *Études Documents Canadian Federalism and the Autonomy of Quebec: A Historical Viewpoint*. published Govt. du Quebec Ministeres des Relations Internationales) p. 12.

48 Douglas Varney *op.cit.*, p. 3.

"this vestige of colonialism"⁴⁹, it was not possible for various political reasons to do so before 1982. Writing on the subject Prime Minister Trudeau stated, "115 years after becoming a country, Canada still depended on London's consent to amend its Constitution"⁵⁰ In the 1980s Trudeau had appealed to the Canadians to support his scheme for constitutional changes that would, "complete the foundation of our independence and of our freedoms."⁵¹ The Canadian constitution was finally patriated in 1982. Hence from a constitutional point of view, Canada cannot be said to have been absolutely sovereign until 1982.

Until now the Queen of Britain is Canada's Head of State. Though Australia and New Zealand can continue to have the Queen as their Head of State, this would be difficult for Canada. Canada is a multicultural country with a very strong French group. To them the British monarchy does not represent the same thing it does to the English. Having the head of the British monarchy as the head of State of Canada, might not help to engender a sense of Canadian identity amongst Quebecers.

Another point of interest is that Canada does not have, strictly speaking a common national anthem for the whole nation. While *O Canada* is sung all over Canada, the lyrics in French Quebec are different from the rest of English Canada. Thus while the English lyrics read:

O Canada! our home and native land!

True Patriot love in all thy sons command.

49 "Symbols of Nationhood," *The Ottawa Citizen*, Tuesday, 13 February 1996, p. A3. Source Department of The Secretary of State of Canada.

50 Pierre Trudeau, "J'accuse Lucien Bouchard betrayed the people of Quebec," *The Ottawa Citizen*, Sunday 4 February 1996, p. D9

51 *Ibid.*, p. D9

With glowing hearts we see thee rise
The True North strong and free:
And stand on guard, O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada! glorious and free!
We stand on guard, we stand on guard for thee,
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The French lyrics read:

O Canada! land of our forefathers,
Your brow is crowned with glorious garlands!
The arm that knows how to wield the sword, knows how to carry
the cross!
Your history is a saga of brilliant exploits.
May your valour, tempered by faith,
Protect our hearts and rights,
Protect our hearts and rights.⁵²

4. Conclusions

In conclusion it may be said that the emotional hiatus that historically divided the francophones of Quebec and the anglophones of Canada still runs deep and wide as evinced by the following excerpt from the proclamation of Quebec as a sovereign country on the eve of the Referendum of 1995. At a gathering in Quebec City, the Declaration of sovereignty stated, "At the dawn of the 17th century, the pioneers of what would become a nation and then a people rooted themselves in the soil of Quebec. Having come

52 Quoted in David Milne, *The New Canadian Constitution* (Toronto: James Lorimer 1982) p. 83.

from a great civilization, they were enriched by that of the First Nation, they forged new alliance and maintained the heritage of France.”

The conquest of 1760 did not break the determination of their descendants to remain faithful to a destiny unique in North America. Already in 1774, through the Quebec Act, the conqueror recognized the distinct nature of their institutions. Neither attempts at assimilation nor the Act of Union of 1840 could break their endurance.

The English community that grew up at their side, the immigrants who have joined them, all have contributed to forming this people which became in 1867 one of the two founders of the Canadian federation.⁵³

The two ethos of Canadian identity have developed historically on divergent tracts. The degree of divergence seems to have been accentuated by the determination of both the French and the English Canadians to hold on to their respective languages and cultures.⁵⁴ The 'French only' policy of Quebec and the education system in Quebec does not seem to create much of a sense of Canadian consciousness among the future generation of francophones. Similarly the predominance of English language in Canada and the continued identification with the British monarchy have not helped to foster the growth of a culture-not French nor British but typically Canadian. Unlike the Americans who have completely uprooted themselves from British soil and from the other regions they had immigrated from, the Canadians still have strong attachments to

53 Douglas Varney, *op.cit.*, p. 225.

54 "We the Men and Women of this place" - Declaration of sovereignty read in public, in Québec City, on September 6, 1995. *Govt. du Québec Secretariat a l'avenir du Québec* (a pamphlet). See also *Maclean's* 18 September 1995, p. 12.

Britain and France. "Je me souviens - we remember- the provincial slogan of Quebec since 1883⁵⁵ is not helping much to bridge the psychological gap in the national identity of Canada." The francophones of Quebec continue to remember the defeat, colonization, part assimilation and their French cultural roots. Per se these are not disruptive of the national unity of Canada. But the majority of the emerging middle-class in francophone Quebec and the optimistic intellectuals visualizing the full political potentials of this slogan have used it to keep alive in the mind of the Quebecers their past in the hope that it will help them to realise an independent francophone country in North America.⁵⁶ Despite all the forces of division and disruption, Canada is being held together by Canadian federalism, democracy and economy. These centripetal forces in Canadian national life may prove to be stronger than the centrifugal forces of micro-nationalism and the emotional need for redeeming historical humiliation and military defeat. The creative and flexible federalism of Canada and its innovative democracy have the best chances of overcoming the serious historical problems of Canadian national identity, specially as over the years English Canada has done much to accommodate the francophone Quebecers and bring them into the fold of a united French-English Canadian nationhood.⁵⁷

55 As recent as November 1995 Quebec Premier at that time Jacques Parizeau said, "The battle for a country is not over. And it will not be until we have one." *Maclean's* (Canada's weekly Magazine) 6 November 1995. p. 14.

56 Robert Sibley, *op.cit.* Sat. 9 September 1995 p. B1.

57 It should be noted that not all Quebecers want separation from Canada. In the referendum of 31 October 1995 which took place in Quebec 50.6 per cent voted to stay with Canada 49.4 per cent voted to separate. *Maclean's* 6 November 1995, pp. 14 to 19. Most Canadians know that Quebec has not done badly by joining the Confederation and being in Canada. According to Alastair Taylor, a Professor emeritus of political studies at Queen's University in Kingston,

The strength of Canadian democracy can be gleaned from the fact that the official opposition in the national Parliament - Block Quebecois (BQ) is committed to break up the country, while the rest of Canada is working in the Parliament with the BQ - a declared enemy of Canadian unity. Both the government party and the BQ are committed to democracy and the rule of law. Those who want to break up Canada want to do so democratically, constitutionally and without violence. Those who want to keep Canadian unity want to achieve their goals through the means of democracy, constitutional process and peaceful methods. Here lies the real strength of Canadian federalism and hope for a united Canada with a strong national image.

The Canadian historical experience with evolution of nationalism avers the efficacy of democracy and economic-interdependence in minimising the destabilising potentials of separatism. Peace, security and economic well-being of a nation depend on the degree of success with which it strives to

Ontario, Quebec has been the largest beneficiary of the revenue equalization program since it began in 1957. Taylor found that six province - the four in Atlantic Canada, plus Manitoba and Saskatchewan - received 51 per cent of the payments, while Quebec got the remainder: \$62.7 billion. *Maclean's*, 18 September 1995, p. 2 Out of a total of 26 Prime Ministers four are from Quebec.(from the House of Commons). The editor of *Maclean's* write, "It is a land where, just last week, a Quebecer, Major General Joseph Maurice Baril of St-Albert-de-Warwich, became head of the Canadian army. It is a place that embraces Quebec's own Robert Lepage, whose first film, "Le confessionnal," opened the Toronto International Film Festival last week. Across town at deepest blustery Glen Abbey, prominent Montreal attorney Jacques Nolo was taking centre stage at the Canadian open as president of the Royal Canadian Golf Association. All of that is not to mention the entrepreneurs, like Quebec's Bombardier family, whose work enriches all over lives." *Maclean's* 18 September 1995, p. 2.

accommodate and assimilate the disintegrative forces of micro-nationalism ensuing from ethnic, linguistic, and religious identities of minority groups within its folds. Canada's problems with micro-nationalism are unlikely to wither away, similarly the destabilising consequences of ethnic and religious separation in many developing countries are equally unlikely to get resolved in peaceful ways. The challenge would be to politically defuse the disintegrative threats of micro-nationalism and developing a sustainable *modus vivendi* with the centrifugal dynamics of separatist aspirations. The quality of democracy the uniting strength of national economy and the perceived sense of shared destiny of all groups of people in the state will continue to be the silver linings around the dark clouds of divisive nationalism of ethnic and religious minorities.