

= Polyethnicity =

Polyethnicity refers to the proximity of people from different ethnic backgrounds within a country or other specific geographic region . It also relates to the ability and willingness of individuals to identify themselves with multiple ethnicities . It occurs when multiple ethnicities inhabit a given area , specifically through means of immigration , intermarriage , trade , conquest , and post war land divisions . Professor William H. McNeill states in his series of lectures on polyethnicity that it is the societal norm for cultures to be made up of many ethnic groups . This has had many political and social implications on countries and regions .

Many , if not all , countries have some level of polyethnicity , with countries like the United States and Canada having large levels and countries like Japan and Poland having very small levels ( and more specifically , a sense of homogeneity ) . The amount of polyethnicity prevalent in current society has spurred some arguments against it , which include a belief that it leads to the weakening of each society 's strengths , and also a belief that political ethnic issues in countries with polyethnic populations are better handled with different laws for certain ethnicities .

= = Conceptual history = =

In 1985 Professor William H. McNeill , a Canadian historian known for his expertise on the subject of polyethnicity , gave a series of three lectures on polyethnicity in ancient and modern cultures at the University of Toronto . The main thesis throughout the lectures was that it has been the cultural norm for societies to be composed of different ethnic groups . McNeill states that the ideal of homogeneous societies may have grown between 1750 and 1920 in Western Europe due to a growth in the belief in a single nationalistic base for the political organization of society . McNeill believes that World War I was the point in time when the desire for homogeneous nations began to weaken .

= = Impact on politics = =

Polyethnicity divides nations , complicating the politics as local and national governments attempt to satisfy all ethnic groups . Many politicians in countries attempt to find the balance between ethnic identities within their country and the identity of the nation as a whole . Nationalism also plays a large part in these political debates , as cultural pluralism and consociationalism are the democratic alternatives to nationalism for the polyethnic state . The idea of nationalism being social instead of ethnic entails a variety of culture , a shared sense of identity , and a community not based on descent . Culturally plural states vary constitutionally between a decentralized and unitary state ( such as Great Britain ) and a federal state ( such as Belgium , Switzerland , or Canada ) . Ethnic parties in these polyethnic regions are not anti state but instead seek maximum power within this state . Many polyethnic countries face this dilemma with their policy decisions . The following nations and regions are just a few specific examples of this dilemma and its effects :

= = = United States = = =

The United States is a nation founded by different ethnicities frequently described as coming together in a " melting pot , " a term used to emphasize the degree to which constituent groups influence and are influenced by each other , or a " salad bowl , " a term more recently coined in contrast to the " melting pot " metaphor and emphasizing those groups ' retention of fundamentally distinct identities despite their proximity to each other and their influence on the overall culture that all of those groups inhabit . A controversial political issue in recent years has been the question of bilingualism . Many immigrants have come from Hispanic America , who are native Spanish speakers , in the past centuries and have become a significant minority and even a majority in many areas of the Southwest . In New Mexico the Spanish speaking population exceeds 40 % . Disputes have emerged over language policy , since a sizable part of the population , and in many areas the

majority of the population , speak Spanish as a native language . The biggest debates are over bilingual education for language minority students , the availability of non @-@ English ballots and election materials , and whether or not English is the official language . It has evolved into an ethnic conflict between the pluralists who support bilingualism and linguistic access and the assimilationists who strongly oppose this and lead the official English movement . The United States does not have an official language , but English is the default national language , spoken by the overwhelming majority of the country 's population .

= = = Canada = = =

Canada has had many political debates between the French speakers and English speakers , particularly in the province of Quebec . Canada holds both French and English as official languages . The politics in Quebec are largely defined by nationalism as French Québécois wish to gain independence from Canada as a whole , based on ethnic and linguistic boundaries . The main separatist party , Parti Québécois , attempted to gain sovereignty twice ( once in 1980 and again in 1995 ) and failed by a narrow margin of 1 @. @ 2 % in 1995 . Since then , in order to remain united , Canada granted Quebec statut particulier , recognizing Quebec as a nation within the united nation of Canada . Canada is often described as a cultural mosaic .

= = = Belgium = = =

The divide between the Dutch @-@ speaking north ( Flanders ) and the French @-@ speaking South ( Wallonia ) has caused the parliamentary democracy to become ethnically polarized . Though an equal number of seats in the Chamber of Representatives are prescribed to the Flemish and Walloons , Belgian political parties have all divided into two ideologically identical but linguistically and ethnically different parties . The political crisis has grown so bad in recent years that the partition of Belgium has been feared .

= = = Ethiopia = = =

Ethiopia is a polyethnic nation consisting of 80 different ethnic groups and 84 indigenous languages . Due to the diverse population and rural areas throughout the nation , it was nearly impossible to create a strong centralized state ; though it was eventually accomplished through political evolution . Prior to 1974 , nationalism was only discussed within radical student groups , but by the late 20th century the issue had come to the forefront of political debate . Ethiopia was forced to modernize their political system to properly handle the nationalism debates . The Derg military regime took control with a Marxist @-@ Leninist ideology , urging self @-@ determination and rejecting compromise over any nationality issues . In the 1980s , Ethiopia suffered a series of famines and after the USSR broke apart , they lost their aid from the Soviet Union and the Derg regime collapsed . Eventually Ethiopia restabilized and adopted a modern political system that models a federal parliamentary republic . It was still impossible to create a central government holding all power , so the government was torn . The central federal government now presides over ethnically @-@ based regional states and each ethnic state is granted the right to establish their own government and democracy .

= = = 19th century Spain = = =

In Spain from 1808 @-@ 1814 the Spanish War of Independence took place amidst a multi @-@ cultural Spain . Spain , at the time , was under the control of King Joseph , who was Napoleon I of France 's brother . Because the nation was under the control of French rule , the Spanish formed coalitions of ethnic groups to reclaim their own political representation , instead of the current French political system in power .

## == Southeast Asia ==

In Southeast Asia the continental area ( Myanmar , Thailand , Laos , Cambodia , and Vietnam ) generally practices Theravada Buddhism . Most of insular Southeast Asia ( namely Malaysia , Brunei and Indonesia ) practices mostly Sunni Islam . The rest of the insular region ( Philippines and East Timor ) practices mostly Roman Catholic Christianity and Singapore practises mostly Mahayana Buddhism . Significant long @-@ distance labor migration that occurred during the late 19th into the early 20th century provided many different types of ethnic diversity . Relations between the indigenous population of the region arose from regional variations of cultural and linguistic group . During this time immigrant minorities , especially the Chinese , developed as well . Although there were extreme political differences for each minority and religion , they were still legitimate members of political communities and there has been a significant amount of unity throughout history . This differs from both nearby East and South Asia .

## == Impact on society ==

Polyethnicity , over time , can change the way societies practice cultural norms .

## == Marriage ==

An increase in intermarriage in the United States has led to the blurring of ethnic lines . Anti @-@ miscegenation laws ( laws banning interracial marriages ) were abolished in the United States in 1967 and now it is estimated that one @-@ fifth of the population in the United States by 2050 will be part of the polyethnic population . In 2000 , self @-@ identified Multiracial Americans numbered 6 @. @ 8 million or 2 @. @ 4 % of the population .

While the number of interethnic marriages is on the rise , there are certain ethnic groups that have been found more likely to become polyethnic and recognize themselves with more than one ethnic background . Bhavani Arabandi states in his article on polyethnicity that :

Asians and Latinos have much higher rates of interethnic marriages than do blacks , and they are more likely to report polyethnicity than blacks who more often claim a single ethnicity and racial identity . This is the case , the authors [ Lee , J & Bean , F.D ] argue , because blacks have a " legacy of slavery , " a history of discrimination , and have been victimized by the " one drop rule " ( where having any black blood automatically labeled one as black ) in the US .

## == Military ==

Presently , most armed forces are composed of people from different ethnic backgrounds . They are considered to be polyethnic due to the differences in race , ethnicity , language or background . While there are many examples of polyethnic forces , the most prominent are among the largest armed forces in the world , including those of the United States , the former USSR , and China . Polyethnic armed forces are not a new phenomenon ; multi @-@ ethnic forces have been in existence since the ancient Roman Empire , Middle Eastern Empires and even the Mongol Khans . The U.S. Military was one of the first modern militaries to begin ethnic integration , by order of President Truman in 1945 .

## == Criticisms ==

There are also arguments against polyethnicity , as well as the assimilation of ethnicities in polyethnic regions . Wilmot Robertson in *The Ethnostate* and Dennis L. Thomson in *The Political Demands of Isolated Indian Bands in British Columbia* , argue for some level of separatism .

In *The Ethnostate* , Robertson declares polyethnicity as an ideal that only lessens each culture . He believes that , within a polyethnic culture , the nation or region as a whole is less capable of cultural culmination than each of the individual ethnicities that make it up . Essentially , polyethnicity

promotes the dilution of ethnicity and thus hinders each ethnicity in all aspects of culture .

In *The Political Demands of Isolated Indian Bands in British Columbia* , Thomson points out the benefits in some level ( albeit small ) of separatist policies . He argues the benefits of allowing ethnic groups , like the Amish and the Hutterites in the United States and Canada or the Sami in Norway , to live on the edges of governance . These are ethnic groups that would prefer to retain their ethnic identity and thus prefer separatist policies for themselves , as they do not require them to conform to policies for all ethnicities of the nation .