INTRODUCTION TO LONGMAN CLASSICS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability

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Politics in Plural Societies sets forth a formal model that seeks to explain politics in the plural society, one divided by ethnicity, race, language, religion, tribe, or custom. The hallmark of the plural society, and the feature that distinguishes it from its pluralistic counterpart of ethnic diversity, is the practice of politics almost exclusively along ethnic lines.

The first edition of our book, published in 1972, documented developments in eighteen plural societies in Asia, Africa, South America, the Middle East, and the Caribbean. Most were newly-independent countries that emerged from colonial rule in the aftermath of World War II. A few became independent in previous years: Belgium in 1830, South Africa in 1934, Yugoslavia in 1918, which was created as a unified new state out of territories that had been under the jurisdiction of foreign powers, and Lebanon in 1943, from the French Mandate. Northern Ireland has been an integral, at times partly self-governing, part of the United Kingdom.

The political process in plural societies typically consists of several phases. The first is the establishment of pre-independence ethnic cooperation among political elites in common cause against alien rule. The first edition of our book documents the cooperation that took place among different ethnic groups which enabled many colonies to gain independence from their colonial overlords. Independence under the leadership of a multiethnic coalition presaged a future of stable democracy.

The elites of different groups that worked together to secure independence derive their
power from ethnically-based political, social, and economic associations in their communities. With the departure of the colonial power, the elites strive to hold their multiethnic coalition together as long as possible. However, strains among the groups begin to surface in the competition for the scarce political and economic spoils of independence. Groups begin to turn against each other to secure their “fair” share of national resources. Ethnic politicians and their followers who are discarded from, or who were never included in, the governing multiethnic coalition, face incentives to “ethnicize” politics, to “fan the flames” of ethnic chauvinism in order to gain electoral office. We call this the politics of demand generation and the increasing salience of ethnicity.

The multiethnic coalition becomes strained by the increasing frequency of ethnic appeals. A process of “ethnic outbidding” racks the coalition. Each member of the coalition, fearing a loss of power to one of its partners or rivals, strives to establish itself as the dominant power. This process gives rise to electoral machinations and violence. Those in power manipulate voting rules to favor their own group. They give increased representation to rural or urban communities depending on where their supporters reside. They gerrymander voting districts. As the need to entrench themselves in power increases, they resort to more severe measures, including jailing opposition politicians, military intervention, forced emigration, violence, and intimidation. Democratic practices are severely restricted or eliminated. Democracy often gives way to military rule or one-party states based on force.

Plural societies vary in their ethnic configurations. In our book we classify plural societies into four main configurations depending on the share of the population represented by the main population groups: balanced competition (two competitive groups), dominant majority,
dominant minority, and fragmentation (multiple groups, with no one group demographically dominant). The balanced cases in our book include Malaysia, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Belgium; dominant majority cases include Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon), Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Mauritius, Rwanda, and Zanzibar; dominant minority cases include South Africa, Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia), and Burundi; and fragmented cases include Lebanon, Congo, Nigeria, Sudan, and Yugoslavia. For each country we enumerated the politically-salient ethnic groups in each country. The first edition of book described the evolution of ethnic politics in each plural society up to the date of publication.

By 2007, another thirty-five years have passed, which provides ample opportunity to assess the continuity or changes that have transpired in these eighteen countries. In addition, we believe the framework set forth in the book is applicable to other cases along with the new dynamic conditions that have arisen from the migration of millions of people from North and West Africa, the Middle East, East Africa, and South Asia to Western Europe. Millions of migrants have established well-defined, often segregated, communities of ethnically distinct peoples, thereby injecting pluralism into previously homogenous polities. Time will tell if this process gradually transforms any Western European countries into plural societies.

Other cases illustrate peaceful moves to ameliorate ethnic tensions. One is the peaceful separation of Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in January 1993 when Czechs and Slovaks chose to establish separate homelands. Another is the devolution of a greater local autonomy to Scotland and Wales in the United Kingdom, institutionalized in the establishment of regionally elected assemblies. Spain, too, has conceded an increasing degree of autonomy to several provinces, Catalonia, the Basque region, and Valencia, with approval for
local languages. Some devolutions have gone more smoothly than others. The Basque region in Spain with its armed wing ETA, for example, is still a source of strain and conflict with the central government in Madrid.

An additional newsworthy case is Iraq. Following the U.S. invasion and overthrow of the Baathist regime of Sadaam Hussein in March 2003, hundreds of thousands of American troops have rotated in and out of Iraq in an effort to pacify the country (peaking at 160,000 in 2007), and the U.S. government has spent hundreds of billions of dollars on military activities and development programs. As of Fall 2007, there was no explicit timetable for a draw down of troops. Military intervention was initially justified on the grounds of preventing Hussein from developing and using weapons of mass destruction. Since then, U.S. policy has sought to develop Iraq as a stable, multi-ethnic democracy of Shiites, Sunnis, Kurds, and other smaller groups. The goals are to inject a democratic model of governance in the Middle East and rebuild Iraq as a viable state that can survive there. Iraq has adopted a new constitution, had several elections, and established a multi-ethnic cabinet and parliament, which fits the pre-independence ethnic cooperation phase of the plural society. Given the historical animosities among the groups, in which the minority Sunni ruled over the majority Shia, the stability of the multi-ethnic coalition was tenuous at best. The elected government of Iraq has been victimized by the ethnic flame fanners of Sunni and Shiite extremists and outside Islamic radicals. As of Fall 2007, the multi-ethnic governing coalition has found it difficult to resolve such key issues as sharing oil revenue, bringing low-level Baathists into the government, disarming ethnic militias, establishing an equitable, honest system of delivering public services, and building up unified military and police forces. It is too early to foretell the future of Iraq, but the evidence from the
countries treated in our book, along with the brief updates in this introduction, indicate that achieving and sustaining a harmonious, multi-ethnic democracy will not be easy. Possible outcomes include some form of separation such as federation or confederation. The most extreme is the division of Iraq into three countries.

As previously mentioned, *Politics in Plural Societies* describes the survival or breakup of the multiethnic coalition into one or another political regime up to 1972. The remainder of this introduction briefly updates the eighteen cases in the book through 2007. It also includes a consideration of some dynamic processes that are changing the demographic composition of Europe away from ethnically homogenous Caucasian populations into pluralistic societies and assesses the prospects for the emergence of plural societies on the European continent.

In the same vein, but to a lesser degree, a potentially new transformation is gradually taking place in the United States. It has been revealed in the debate over extremely contentious immigration bills to deal with millions of undocumented immigrants, largely Spanish-speaking from Mexico and Latin America, and millions more who seek legal entry into the United States every year, largely for economic opportunity. Some analysts are concerned that this large number of Spanish-speaking immigrants may not assimilate into the dominant culture as readily as did previous generations from Europe. As Spanish-speakers grow in number and are perceived in unified group terms, the quest for the “ethnic” vote could play a larger role in American national politics. This would generate a greater degree of nationwide ethnicization of American politics than in previous generations, when ethnic differences tended to be localized to individual regions, states, or towns.

The following sections briefly review key historical trends in the four ethnic
configurations in which plural societies are set in the original edition of the book. Since the history of each case is set forth in the book, only a brief background is presented when necessary to highlight developments between 1972 and 2007.

Balanced Competition: Guyana, Belgium, Trinidad and Tobago, and Malaysia

**Guyana.** Racial tensions have continued to structure Guyanese politics. From 1964 to 1985, Forbes Burnham, leader of the black People’s National Congress, ruled Guyana in an increasingly autocratic manner. International observers concluded that his party rigged several elections. Upon his death, Hugh Desmond Hoyle, his successor, became president. The first election internationally recognized as free and fair in 1992 resulted in the election of Cheddi Jagan (Jagan had previously served as premier during 1956-1964 prior to independence in 1966), the Indian head of the People’s Progressive Party, the first time an Indian held the top office. Upon Jagan’s death in 1997, he was succeeded by his wife Janet for two years, and then by

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The U.S. Department of State publishes a document called “Background Note” on almost every country in the world. These timely reports cover each country’s demographics, political systems, history, government, current political conditions, economy, foreign relations, travel, and business information. For the cases updated in this introduction, the “Background Note” includes a thorough discussion of ethnic politics. The documents can be found on the State Department’s web site at http://www.state.gov/. The British Foreign Office publishes similar analyses. There is also an academic literature that is too numerous to cite, which consists of detailed treatments of individual countries or seeks to compare two or more plural societies.
Finance Minister Bharrat Jagdeo, who won reelection in 2006, the first non-violent election held in more than 20 years. For its part, the black PNC charged the Indian PPP with rigging the elections.

Race has been the dominant political influence in Guyana since the split of the multi-racial People’s Progressive Party in 1955. Political disturbances following elections, boycotts of parliament by the losing party, and suspensions of parliament have impeded orderly governance. Ethnic tensions between the two groups continue to this day, which are exacerbated by poor economic conditions and the lack of political will to overcome the racial divide.

Trinidad and Tobago. Politics in Trinidad and Tobago mirrors that in Guyana, with East Indian and African ethnic groups contending for power, albeit with less violence. The black People’s National Movement under the leadership of Dr. Eric Williams held sway through 1981. The PNM remained in power until 1986 when a rainbow party of Trinidadians of both African and Indian descent won a landslide victory. However, in 1988, that brief flirtation with a multi-ethnic coalition disintegrated with the withdrawal of its Indian component, the United National Congress. An extremist black Muslim group tried to overthrow the government in 1990, holding the prime minister and members of parliament hostage for five days while looting and rioting shook the capital, Port-of-Spain. A fresh election in 1991 brought the black PNM back to power. It was, in turn, defeated in 1995 by a coalition which put an Indian in the office of prime minister for the first time in the country’s history. In 2001 the PNM returned to power, with the next election to be held by the end of 2007. The discovery of huge natural gas deposits off the coast has heightened competition between the two major parties and ethnic communities. The two parties do not differ much in terms of ideas and policies, only in desire for control over the
government and its ability to allocate resources. Ethnic politics continue to define Trinidad and Tobago.

Belgium. Unlike the other balanced configurations, Belgium has never lapsed into severe ethnic violence. Nonetheless, language, economic, and political differences between Dutch-speaking Flanders and Francophone Wallonia have led to increased divisions in Belgian society. To address these tensions, over a period of years, the central government devolved upon the regions a significant degree of autonomy over language, culture, and educational affairs, with corresponding control over revenue. Multilingual Brussels was given its own legislative assembly and executive. In 1993, a major constitutional reform changed Belgium from a unitary to a federal state, providing for direct election of members of community and regional legislative councils. The Brabant province in which Brussels is situated was divided into separate Flemish and Walloon provinces.

Political institutions include a national government with diminished financial and political powers, along with Flemish and Walloon parliaments for regional affairs, a Francophone community parliament and government for Francophone community affairs, a regional parliament for Brussels, and a German-language community parliament and government for the small German-speaking cantons. Accounting for two-fifths of public expenditure, the regional governments have the power to levy taxes. They are responsible for transportation, public works, water policy, cultural matters, education, public health, housing, economic and industrial policy, foreign trade, and oversight of local government.

Devolution means that there are no national parties. The national government consists of a coalition of parties split along linguistic lines within the regions. No one party from either
region is able to dominate national Belgian politics. The one explicitly separatist, racist, anti-immigrant party, Vlaams Bloc, was banned in 2004, and was subsequently reconstituted into a less radical party in order to participate in elections.

*Malaysia.* Malaysia’s predominantly Malay-based political party, the United Malays National Organization, has held power in coalition with other parties since independence in 1957. Following severe race riots between Malays and ethnic Chinese in May 1969, in which several hundred people were killed, the government declared a state of emergency. To prevent future uprisings, it announced a New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971 which contained a series of measures to benefit Malays in order to reduce the wide gaps in income and wealth with the Chinese. Between 1970 and 1995, Malay income as a percentage of average Chinese income increased from 44 to 55 percent. Malay ownership of share capital rose from 2.4 to 20.6 percent. Malay social mobility accelerated, creating a pool of Malay entrepreneurs. Malay poverty declined. These improvements among the Malays have helped to ease political tension with the Chinese.

To prevent ethnic flame fanning, the constitution was amended with an internal security act, a printing press act, and an official secrets act to limit dissent against constitutional provisions giving Malays preferential treatment in education, government, and employment, the status of Islam as an official religion (but with freedom of religion for other groups), and Malay as the official language. UMNO broadened its previous alliance with centrist Chinese and Indian ethnic parties into a National Front with inter-communal harmony as its official goal.

The NEP and a follow-up program, the National Development Program (NDP), set out to redistribute income and wealth for the benefit of Malays. The NEP stipulated that an increase in
the share of the nation’s equity capital be placed in the hands of Malays. The Malays, called Bumiputera (sons of the soil), received privileged access to public services, were granted land rights, preferences in education and training, and job quotas in the public sector. The coalition has maintained stability by encouraging rapid economic growth, fueled by direct foreign investment, to give all sectors economic opportunity. Great latitude was given to the formation of small and medium-sized businesses in all communities. Redistribution of wealth went hand-in-hand with economic growth for all. The inter-racial compact consisted of Malay political dominance coupled with economic prosperity for Chinese and Indians. Although political activity continues to be along racial lines, governance takes the form of a progressive secular democracy. Ethnic tensions remain under the surface and negative stereotypes continue to structure inter-group relations. Still, the ruling multi-racial coalition has held together. Fundamentalist Islamic parties have made little headway undermining its power. Although no distinct Malaysian identity has been created, no major riots or disturbances have taken place since 1969.

The most serious problem affecting Malaysia since 1969 was the financial crisis of 1997, but it did not result in an outbreak of ethnic discord. English education has been popularized in recent years. The Education Act of 1995 permitted the establishment of private universities with English as the medium of instruction, creating greater educational opportunities for non-Malays. In 2002, the government liberalized access to higher education, in which a meritocratic system and the establishment of private tertiary institutions have replaced the previous quota system for Malays. English has been reintroduced as the language of teaching in science and mathematics. Globalization and the primacy of English have forced modernity upon the country. All in all,
with the benefit of strong growth and greater economic opportunities for all groups, Malaysia has successfully managed its divisions for nearly four decades.

**Dominant Majority: Sri Lanka (Ceylon), Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Mauritius, Rwanda, Zanzibar**

*Sri Lanka.* The origins of ethnic conflict between the majority Sinhalese and minority Tamil populations arose shortly after independence. Sinhalese politicians pushed for and established Sinhala as the official language, which reduced employment opportunities for minority Tamils in the government. In 1972, a new constitution changed the country’s name from Ceylon to Sri Lanka, made protection of Buddhism a constitutional principle (Tamils are predominantly Hindu), and socialized the economy. Ethnic outbidding gave rise to ethnic conflict, the basis of Sri Lanka’s separatist war. Between 1972 and 1983, disgruntled Tamil youth began to form military groups funded by bank robberies. The leading group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE), who seek an independent homeland in the North and East of the island, began assassinating policemen and local politicians. In 1983, the LTTE launched a full-scale attack on the Sri Lankan army. Since then, politics in Sri Lanka has been dominated by an ongoing civil war. Cease fires and peace agreements have been signed and promptly discarded. To quell the violence and try to resolve the conflict, India intervened, sending troops to Sri Lanka in the late 1980s. It pulled out in 1990 after losing 1,100 Indian soldiers and having spent over 20 billion rupees to no avail.
The civil war has claimed more than 68,000 lives and caused considerable harm to the population and the economy. A fresh eruption of hostilities killed over 4,000 people between November 2005 and mid-2007. Several leading Sinhalese politicians have been assassinated and attempts have been made on the president’s life. Peace overtures from the central government, which has been governed by one of two major Sinhalese-based parties, have been routinely rejected by the LTTE. Little prospect for a political resolution appears over the surface. A nominal cease-fire remains in place, but assassinations, paramilitary activity, and battles between the army and LTTE continued without interruption through mid-2007.

**Northern Ireland.** The roots of conflict in Northern Ireland go back to the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, which established Protestant supremacy over Catholics in the north of Ireland. When Ireland became a separate nation as stipulated in the Government of Ireland Act in 1920, the six counties of Northern Ireland became part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Politics in Northern Ireland has consisted of intense rivalry between the majority Protestant Unionist and minority Catholic Irish nationalist communities. Although armed hostilities largely subsided after the island was divided into two separate political entities, violence again erupted in the late 1960s in Londonderry and Belfast. The conflict intensified as the Irish Republican Army and Protestant paramilitary groups carried out bombings and other acts of terrorism. Britain imposed direct rule from London in 1972. The conflict, which lingered into the 1990s, was known as “the Troubles.” Despite efforts to resolve the conflict in the 1970s and 1980s, British troops remained in full force. More than 3,000 people died during the troubles.
A serious attempt at peace was begun in 1985. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s effort to recognize consultative rights of Ireland in the affairs of Northern Ireland was blocked by extremist Protestant politicians. Talks continued off and on. A breakthrough appeared in 1994 when the Irish Republican Army declared a cease fire and its political wing, Sinn Fein, began to participate in multi-party talks. The British insisted that the IRA first give up its arms in exchange for British withdrawal before Sinn Fein could participate in talks on an equal party basis. The IRA cease fire broke down but was reestablished with U.S. involvement, which resulted in the Good Friday Agreement of April 10, 1998. The agreement called for an elected assembly, a cross-party cabinet with devolved powers from London, and cross-border bodies to handle issues of concern to both the Republic and the North.

The peace process stalled when the IRA refused to disarm prior to the formation of Northern Ireland’s new provincial cabinet. The new government subsequently failed to form on schedule in July 1999, again bringing the political process to a halt. The new parliament was suspended.

Discussions continued, but were interrupted with periodic outbursts of violence as extremist leaders in both camps refused to make vital concessions. Britain again suspended the operation of the Northern Ireland government in 2001. Ongoing resistance to disarmament by the IRA, which met with Protestant recalcitrance, forced Britain to again suspend the home-rule government in 2002, re-imposing direct rule from London. The next four years witnessed on-again, off-again negotiations to reinstate the Northern Ireland assembly, deadlock in attempting to reach power-sharing arrangements, violence and vigilantism, delays and prevarications.
Magically, perhaps physically and financially exhausted, the IRA declared an end to its campaign of resistance in 2005 and decommissioned its arsenal of weapons. In 2007, the Revered Ian Paisley, leader of the Protestant Democratic Union and Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein met face to face and hashed out an agreement for a power sharing government. Local government was restored to Northern Ireland on May 8, 2007, with Paisley sworn in as first minister and Martin McGuinness as deputy first minister of the Northern Ireland executive government. Centuries of conflict, animosity, killing, hardship, and hatred gave way for the moment to a historical deal. Britain offered a financial package of $100 billion over ten years to assist Northern Ireland’s rebuilding of towns damaged by violence, provide public sector jobs for members of both communities, and underwrite the regional government’s public finances. Such divisive issues as education and demography, in particular, the higher birth rate of the Catholic community that threatens to catch and perhaps someday exceed the numerically greater Protestants, require resolution and bear watching. As of May 2007, four decades of violence and instability gave way to peaceful government. Time will tell if this multi-religious government endures.

Cyprus. During the 1960s, violence periodically erupted between members of the Greek and Turkish communities on Cyprus. By 1964, Turkish Cypriots began moving into enclaves for self-protection. The House of Representatives, the elected assembly of the island, functioned only with Greek Cypriot members. The Greek Cypriot legislature established a National Guard with universal conscription, which alone had the right to bear arms. Concern arose in Turkey that regular troops from Greece were being clandestinely infiltrated into the Cypriot National Guard. Turkey began military preparations for an invasion of the island but the U.S. persuaded
Turkey to call off the invasion. However, Turkish jets attacked Greek Cypriot forces besieging Turkish villages on the northwestern coast. The crisis eased in 1967.

By the early 1970s Cyprus had become a partitioned country. Although it had a unitary government, the Greek president’s authority did not extend into the Turkish enclaves. In the summer of 1971, tension again built up between the two communities and incidents became more numerous. A military junta had taken over the Greek government and was funding ethnic Greek Cypriot fighters who sought enosis, union with Greece. A coup in Athens in November 1973 put Brigadier General Dimitros Ioannides, who had served on Cyprus in the 1960s with the National Guard, in charge of the junta. He sought to take control of Cyprus, which prompted the Turkish military to go on alert.

To prevent a Greek takeover of the island, Turkey invaded Cyprus on July 20, 1974. Three days later the Greek junta collapsed, eliminating the threat of war between the two NATO allies. Following an August conference in Geneva which proposed a bi-zonal federation, Turkey declared a cease-fire. By then, the Turkish military had seized control of 37 percent of the island’s area.

The island’s economy was devastated, with thousands dying in the conflict. One third of the population of each ethnic community had to find new homes. The Greek portion of the island quickly rebuilt and attained a large measure of prosperity within several decades, while the Turkish sector lagged behind. Both communities developed multi-party political systems on the European model with parties of the left and right, but all attempts at reconciliation and reunification failed. Greek Cyprus joined the European Union in 2006, with the Turkish zone remaining outside the European Union. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus that was
established in 1974 issued a unilateral declaration of independence in 1983, which is recognized only by Turkey.

Some relaxation of tensions has taken place since 2003. The buffer zone between the two parts has been partly opened, Cypriots of both groups have enjoyed greater freedom of travel throughout the island, and Turkish Cypriots have migrated to the Greek part to work. As of this writing, there is no evidence which indicates that the two governments will soon come together in a unitary state, a federation, or a confederation. Cyprus is one island, two systems. Ethnic politics sundered the unity of Cyprus into two opposing states.

**Mauritius.** Mauritius took its first steps toward independence with elections for a newly created legislative assembly in 1947. The independence campaign gained momentum after 1961 as a coalition of Hindu- and Muslim-based political parties won a majority in the 1967 election despite opposition from both Franco-Mauritians and Creoles, the other main communities. Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolan, a Hindu-Indian, became the first prime minister at independence in 1968.

Mauritian politics has been characterized by coalition and alliance building. All parties support democratic politics and an open economy. However, despite Hindu prominence, its leaders are compelled to form alliances to govern due to the divisions within the main ethnic groups. Indians are divided into Hindus, Muslims, and Tamils, while Creoles are split into two groups, urban middle class and lower-income rural residents. Muslims and Tamils rarely align themselves with Hindus. Hindus have constituted the leading political force and have dominated Mauritius for almost all of its modern history. Alone or in coalition, the Hindu-based Mauritian Labor Party, governed in Mauritius from 1947 through 1982, again from 1995-2003, and again
after 2005. An opposition party, the MMM, was formed as a multi-racial party, with Hindus as the leading element. In brief, there was some disenchantment with the older ruling Hindu MLP that had dominated Mauritian politics. The MMM won the 1982 election, but the party split when its Hindu cabinet ministers walked out after nine months. The MMM’s Hindu component took control of the government. In 1995, the MLP in coalition with the MMM returned to power, but in keeping with a campaign promise in the 2000 election, promoted the deputy prime minister, Paul Raymond Berenger, to prime minister in 2003. For two brief years through 2005, a Catholic, Franco-Mauritian became head of the government, the first time in history that a non-Hindu, non-majority member headed the national government. The 2005 parliamentary election returned an Indian, Ramgoolam’s son, to office as prime minister.

The Mauritian government has worked hard to maintain stability. It has emphasized economic growth through foreign investment in manufacturing and financial services to provide all communities with maximum economic opportunity. A specific political measure to mitigate ethnic conflict and discrimination has been the introduction of a system of “best-loser seats” to insure that every major ethnic group has some representation in parliament. Hindus have made concessions to minority Creoles, who continued to hold posts in the police and other public services. A measure of cooperation among the leading ethnic groups has enabled the majority Hindu community to govern through its elected representatives, but without driving Creoles and other groups into a state of open conflict.

Rwanda. Ethnic tribal conflict in Rwanda produced one of the postwar world’s greatest human tragedies. In 1959, the majority Hutu, 85 percent of the population, overthrew the Tutsi (15 percent) monarchy. Two years later, the party of the Hutu Emancipation Movement won an
overwhelming victory in a UN-supervised referendum. Belgium granted independence to
Rwanda (and Burundi) in 1962. In the intervening three years, some 160,000 Tutsis fled to
neighboring countries.

Rwanda experienced normal democratic government under Hutu control until 1973,
when the Hutu military took power, dissolved the National Assembly, and abolished all political
activity. The coup leader formed a political party, and held elections in late 1978, 1983, and
1988, with himself running as the sole candidate for president. In 1990, after more than a decade
of one-party Hutu rule, the Hutu leader announced his intention to transform Rwanda into a
multi-party, multi-ethnic democracy.

In October 1990, disgruntled Tutsi exiles organized the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)
and invaded Rwanda from their base in Uganda. The war dragged on for two years, until a cease
fire took hold and political talks began. On April 6, 1994, an airplane carrying the presidents of
Rwanda and Burundi was shot down and both men were killed. Tutsis were charged with the
crime. Hutu militia groups began killing Tutsis and Hutu political moderates. Between April 6
and the beginning of July, 1984, an estimated 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were
slaughtered. In response, the Tutsi-RPF resumed its invasion, defeated the Hutu Rwandan army,
and took control of the country.

After successfully establishing itself in office, the new RPF government organized a
coalition government of national unity. In 2003 it promulgated a new constitution that
eliminated reference to ethnicity, stipulating that no party could hold more than half the seats in
parliament to insure a balance of political power between Hutu and Tutsi. In elections held later
that year, the Tutsi Paul Kagame, whose RPF ended the genocide, was chosen as president. His
government set in motion the prosecution of thousands of those involved in the 1994 genocide. In 2007, some modicum of order and stability had return to Rwanda. If conditions hold, Rwanda has a chance to put decades of ethnic cleansing behind it for a more promising future.

Zanzibar. Britain granted independence to Zanzibar in 1963. It placed political power in the hands of the old Arab families that had governed Zanzibar since before the British period (1890-1964). No African Zanzibaris served in the government during British rule. In 1964, political activist John Okello, a Ugandan resident living on Pemba Island, started an uprising, found huge support among the black population, and overthrew the Arab regime. The bloody coup in which thousands died prompted Indian and Arab peoples to flee Zanzibar. Their property was confiscated by the state. Okello established a Marxist revolutionary government and, in 1964, joined with Tanganyika to form Tanzania. Despite union, Zanzibar retained a large measure of autonomy within Tanzania.

Between 1964 and 1990, politics in Zanzibar was replete with assassinations, strong-man rule, rigged one-party elections, human rights violations, all made worse by economic decline. An attempted coup failed in 1972, but its participants managed to assassinate the president. The government retaliated by tracking down and killing those involved in the coup. Political conditions moderated in 1990 with the election of a moderate, Dr. Salmin Amour, as president with a mandate to open the economy, develop tourism, establish a free-trade zone, and reintegrate Zanzibar into the world economy in order to reverse the country’s decline. Multi-party elections were held in 1995 and 2000. The ruling party won both elections, but the opposition claimed election irregularities and refused to take up its seats in parliament during 1995-97, and again for a brief period after 2000. In January 2001 government security forces
killed scores of people who staged an outlawed demonstration. As against the tyrannical Marxist regime of 1964-90, the holding of two multi-party elections since 1995 represented a significant improvement in the political life of Zanzibar and its population.

**Dominant Minority: South Africa, Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), and Burundi**

*South Africa.* South Africa epitomizes the successful, peaceful transformation of a racist, white minority regime into a multiracial democracy. In the 1970s, protests against apartheid led to uprisings in the black townships, and left 600 dead. The United Nations imposed sanctions and many countries divested their investment portfolios of South African holdings.

A political change in 1989, the replacement of the hard line Afrikaner President P.W. Botha with the more enlightened F. W. de Klerk, began a process of reconciliation. Nelson Mandela was released from prison and his party, the African National Congress, was legalized. In 1991, a multiracial forum led by de Klerk and Mandela began work on a new constitution. An interim constitution in 1993 dismantled apartheid and provided for a multiracial democracy with majority rule. Mandela’s ANC won the country’s first multiracial election in 1994, and a new constitution was promulgated in 1997. Mandela and his successor, Thabo Mbeki, have accorded generally enlightened, magnanimous treatment of South Africa’s whites. Two free and fair elections have been held under the new constitution. South Africa’s economically important white population did not emigrate in droves as did their counterparts in Zimbabwe (see below).

South Africa faced economic difficulties in the early years under Mandela, but the economy began turning around in the new millennium. White flight has been minimal, and black entrepreneurs are playing a larger role in the economy. Although the bulk of the
population remains poor, there have been no serious threats to the stability of South Africa’s government under black majority rule, either from disgruntled blacks or the former white rulers.

**Zimbabwe (former Rhodesia).** In marked contrast with the peaceful transformation to a multiracial democracy in South Africa, white minority rule in Rhodesia, and its successor black government, was marked with violence and bloodshed. White settlers, barely 5 percent of the population, sought to hold on to power as long as possible.

As part of its African decolonization, the British government adopted a policy known as No Independence Before Majority African Rule. The European minority government of Ian Smith rejected this policy. Smith’s government issued a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDC) in November 1965, which was internationally condemned and brought about United Nations sanctions.

The military wings of two black nationalist group, the most prominent led by Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriot Front), undertook a lengthy armed campaign beginning in 1972 with scattered attacks on isolated white-owned farms. The white government was able to contain the uprising until the end of Portuguese colonial rule in Mozambique in 1975 that left Rhodesia surrounded by hostile states. As black militants launched raids deep inside Rhodesia, the government conscripted all white men, which strained the economy. Whites began to take serious casualties in 1977, affecting almost every white family. The downing of an Air Rhodesia airplane by a surface-to-air missile in February 1979, which killed all the passengers and crew, destroyed what morale remained among the white settlers.
An agreement in 1979 between the white government and some fringe African parties resulted in an election that established a government with an African bishop who became the nominal prime minister. The country’s name was changed to Zimbabwe, but whites retained control of the police, army, and civil service. The two main black nationalist parties, including Mugabe’s, were excluded from the election.

Further negotiations with Britain resulted in an internationally-supervised general election in 1980, which was won by Mugabe. Zimbabwe became an independent country on April 18, 1980. For the first few years, Mugabe encouraged whites to stay and promised they could retain their land.

Concern over its future prospects under black rule, some two-thirds of the white population emigrated during the 1980s. In 1991, Mugabe announced a process of land reform, declaring his intention to transfer half of all remaining white-owned land to blacks. As seizures of white-owned farm land accelerated, most of the remaining white farmers departed, some to Zambia and others to Mozambique. In 2005, Mugabe nationalized all farm land, converting ownership rights into leases.

With the emigration of the overwhelming majority of the white population, intra-black strife rose to the fore. Mugabe accused opposition blacks of trying to overthrow his regime. In response, he imposed increasingly draconian measures, beating and torturing the leader of the opposition and clearing hundreds of thousands of people deemed opposition supporters from urban areas. Since the advent of black majority rule, Zimbabwe has been governed as a one-party state. Mugabe and his ZANU-PF dominated legislature have imposed restrictions on free speech, a free press, and rights of assembly. As of 2007, the economy has markedly
deteriorated, with 80 percent unemployment in formal jobs and hyperinflation that has sharply eroded the value of Zimbabwe’s currency.

*Burundi.* Belgium granted independence to Burundi in 1962. The Tutsi king (Tutsi made up 15 and Hutus 85 percent of the population, similar to Rwanda) established a constitutional monarchy comprising equal numbers of Hutus and Tutsis. The 1965 assassination of the Hutu prime minister set in motion a series of Hutu revolts and subsequent government repression. In 1966 the Tutsi king was deposed by his son, who, in turn, was deposed in a military coup. Civil unrest continued through the 1960s.

An aborted Hutu rebellion in 1972 left 2,000-3,000 Tutsis dead, which triggered the flight of several hundred thousand people. A bloodless coup in 1976 put Tutsis back in charge. Its leader was overthrown the following year by a new hard line regime that instituted a ruling military commission. Increasing tensions led to a war between the army, the Hutu opposition, and Tutsi hardliners, leaving 150,000 dead and tens of thousands refugees flowing to neighboring countries. For more than three decades between 1962 and 1993, Burundi was governed by a series of military dictators, all from the Tutsi minority.

An attempt to establish a multiethnic government, with Burundi’s first Hutu president in 1993, failed. He was assassinated by factions in the Tutsi army. A civil war erupted during 1993-96, which left tens of thousands dead. Since 1983, an estimated 200,000 people were killed. A new government chosen in 1994 was removed two years later in another bloodless coup. Violence and unrest continued until the establishment of an accord in August 2000 by representatives of the leading Hutu and Tutsi political parties.
Although tensions and conflict continued, Burundi was able to establish a new government in 2001. Despite small-scale conflict that continued over the next two years, the government succeeded in promulgating a new constitution in February 2005 and former Hutu rebels won the national election held the following July. After four decades of coups and civil wars, the people of Burundi conducted a peaceful, orderly, free, and fair election. The politically dominant Tutsi population peacefully yielded to a Hutu government. This was a truly historic event, giving the majority population a duly elected government.

Fragmentation: Lebanon, Congo, Nigeria, Sudan, Yugoslavia

Lebanon. Lebanese democracy has been extremely fragile since France granted independence in 1943. The country suffered a coup in 1949, an aborted attempt to change the constitution in 1952 to prolong the term of the incumbent president, a civil war in 1958 over another crisis of succession, and another civil war in the wake of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

In 1932, the Christian population exceeded the Muslim population by a ratio of six to five, which dictated the distribution of seats in parliament. Although no official census has been taken since 1932, it is estimated that the Christian population has declined to 39 percent, which has disrupted the agreement on the allocation of seats in Lebanon’s parliament. Muslims feel that the Christians are over represented and that they are under represented.

During the 1960s, Lebanon enjoyed a period of relative calm and prosperity. In the early 1970s, difficulties arose due to the presence of several hundred thousand Palestinians, many of
whom arrived after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, including Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Liberation Organization. Their presence exacerbated Muslim-Christian differences.

Full-scale civil war broke out in April 1975, which lasted intermittently through 1991. A new president was elected in August 1982, but he was shortly assassinated. This was followed by a Lebanese Christian militia massacre of 800 Palestinian civilians. Two governments ruled side-by-side during 1985-89, Christians in East Beirut and Muslims in West Beirut. Altogether, an estimated 100,000 Lebanese were killed, and some 900,000 displaced from their homes during the long-running civil war.

Postwar reconstruction brought a modicum of stability, but Syrians, who were heavily involved in the internal political affairs of Lebanon, were charged with committing several assassinations of high Lebanese officials in order to retain their influence. Global pressure forced Syrian withdrawal in 2005 following another high-profile assassination of a prominent Lebanese leader. Stability remained under threat due to the presence of a large Hezbollah force, which crossed into Israel and provoked a war in 2006 that resulted in substantial Israeli reprisals causing significant damage to downtown Beirut. As of 2007, no real progress has been made toward a multi-ethnic, non-confessional system of government. Lebanon remains a tinder box of opposing factions complicated by Syrian meddling.

Congo. Six major ethnic groups and over a hundred minor groups are distinguishable in the Congo. Creating a unified community out of a multitude of tribes with ethnic and regional particularism has been extremely difficult. In preparation for a pre-independence election in 1959, the 180 or so ethnic groups that make up the Congo organized nineteen major and countless minor parties largely along tribal lines.
Belgium granted independence to the Congo in July 1960. A secession movement in Katanga province, which took four years to settle, fractured the multi-party government. Colonel Joseph Mobutu seized power in a military coup in September 1960. New elections were held in 1965, but two months later Mobutu again seized power. Free, fair, popular elections were not restored until 2007.

Between 1965 and 1977, military rule provided some degree of stability. In the late 1970s, Katanga rebels undertook a series of invasions that were repelled with the assistance of Belgian paratroopers.

During the 1980s, Mobutu, now a lieutenant general, enforced one-party rule. Opposition parties were active, but posed no real threat to his regime. The end of the cold war, domestic protests, and international criticism of the government’s human rights regime compelled Mobutu to agree to a multi-party system with elections and a constitution. Although scheduled, an election did not take place.

In 1996, the war and genocide in Rwanda spilled over across the border. Congolese territory was used as a base from which defeated Hutu militia attacked the Tutsi-led government. Thereafter, Congolese politics consisted of twists and turns that involved, at one time or another, Rwandan troops and other troops from Uganda, Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. With the help of Rwandan troops, Laurent-Desire Kabila ousted Mobutu and declared himself president.

Kabila ordered Rwandan troops to leave the country, but they disregarded his command. By 1999 the Congo was effectively partitioned into three segments, with military deadlock between the controlling parties in each region. Kabila blocked a cease-fire accord to be enforced
by United Nations’ troops, but he was assassinated in January 2001. By April 2003, an all-inclusive power sharing agreement was reached by all the parties.

A new constitution was promulgated in early 2003. The economy was gradually liberalized. On July 30, 2006, in a calm and orderly manner, the first free, democratic, multi-party elections were held in more than 40 years. The first legislative session was convened in September and, in February 2007, the duly elected prime minister and his Congolese cabinet took office. Time will tell how long these democratic processes persist.

*Sudan.* Sudan, which became independent in January 1956, has been wracked by ethnic conflict between the Arab Muslim north and the black African Christian south for most of its modern history, and, since 2003, the conflict between the northern Arabs and black African Muslims in the western Darfur region. These struggles have been reinforced with the discovery of major oil deposits in 1979 by Chevron in the south. Previous agreements granting autonomy to the south were abrogated in 1983 when General President Gaafar Muhammed Nimeiry abolished the southern region, declared Arabic (instead of English) the official language of the south, and transferred control over southern armed forces to the central government. He further announced that traditional Islamic punishments drawn from Shari’a (Islamic law) would be incorporated into the penal code. Nimeiry, while out of the country, was overthrown, replaced with General Suwar al-Duhab.

Sudan has been at war for more than three-quarters of its existence. Northerners have sought to unify the country along the lines of Arabism and Islam. The first coup occurred in 1958. Thereafter, successful coups took place in 1958, 1969, two failed coups in 1972, 1985, and a successful coup in 1989 (following the election of 1986 which established a civilian
government). The north-south civil war finally came to an end in July 2002, with a final comprehensive peace agreement to be concluded by December 2004.

With the apparent resolution of the north-south conflict, a new conflict arose in Darfur in the western Sudan, which pit non-Arabized black African Muslims, largely farmers, against the northern Arabized Muslims. This conflict has raged into 2007, cost several hundred thousand lives, displaced hundreds of thousands more, and brought international condemnation to the Sudanese government.

A new constitution, which was ratified in July 2005, declared Sudan to be a democratic, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual state. A population census is to be taken in 2007 in preparation for national elections. The comprehensive peace agreement that established the new government permits the holding of a referendum in 2011 that allows southerners to secede if they wish. The constitution has not settled the issue of Darfur. Time will tell if the 2011 referendum allowing southerners to secede proceeds on schedule.

_Nigeria._ Nigeria consists of eighteen major tribal groups, of which three, the Muslim Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Yoruba in the West, and the Christian Ibos in the East, constitute over half the population. Parties are tribally based in Nigeria. Several elections between 1959 and 1964 tended to pull the country apart. In January 1966, the army seized power, suspended the constitution, and established a military government. A three-year civil war broke out during 1966-69 when the Eastern Ibo region seceded and declared itself the independent state of Biafra.

Reconciliation followed the civil war, with rapid economic development until a bloodless coup led by General Murtala Muhammed in July 1975 replaced General Yakubu Gowon’s
military government. One year later, Muhammed was assassinated in an abortive coup. His chief of staff, General Olusegun Obasanjo became head of state.

A constituent assembly was elected in 1977 and a new constitution published in 1978, when the ban on political activity was lifted. Elections in 1979 were marred with violence and irregularities and a coup overturned the Second Republic in 1983. It was, in turn, overthrown in a coup led by General Ibrahim Babangida in August 1985.

Babangida promised to return the country to civilian rule by 1990, but the date was extended three years in the wake of a failed coup in April 1990. Elections were held in 1993, deemed the fairest, but were annulled when Babangida faced defeat at the hands of a Yoruba businessman, M.K. O. Abiola.

In 1993 Defense Minister Sani Abacha assumed power and dissolved all democratic institutions. In the wake of an oil workers’ strike, Abacha arrested opponents, closed media houses, and curbed dissent. Two further coups were plotted without success in 1995 and 1997. Upon Abacha’s death in 1998, General Abdulsalami Abubakar assumed power. Abubakar eased up on human rights violations, and laid the foundation for a transition to civilian rule. A democratic Nigeria emerged in 1999 after sixteen years of military rule. Obasanjo became president and strove to put the economy on a stronger footing. High oil prices have provided windfall revenue to Nigeria, which has been able to repay its foreign debts.

Between 1999 and 2007, Nigeria endured recurring incidents of ethnic-religious strife over control of the country’s oil wealth. Several thousand people have been killed in inter-religious fights over the introduction of shari’a law. Violence has persisted in the oil-rich Niger River Delta as each region demands a greater share of the wealth.
Nigeria held an election in April 2007, contested by numerous parties. Obasanjo stepped down and Nigeria had a historic peaceful democratic transition from one civil administration to another for the first time in the nation’s post-independence 47 year history. Umaru Musa Yar’Adua was elected president.

Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia was created as a new state in 1918, composed of areas that had never been under a common unified government, and which for centuries had been under the domination of foreign powers. When the Communist Party came to power, it consisted of six distinct nations: Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina (hereafter Bosnia), Slovenia, Montenegro, and Macedonia. Serbia, itself, was further segmented into Serbia proper and Muslim Kosovo.

Post-World War II elections were dominated by Tito’s Communist Party. However, the Communist Party was a collection of the various regional Communist parties rather than a centralized, unified party.

Upon Tito’s death in May 1980, which removed the country’s unifying force, ethnic tensions grew in Yugoslavia. Nationalism rose in all of the republics and provinces. Slovenia and Croatia agitated for looser ties and the Albanian majority in Kosovo sought the status of a republic. Serbia, for its part, sought to maintain control over the entire country.

Following the fall of communism throughout Eastern Europe, each of the republics held multi-party elections in 1990. Slovenia and Croatia elected governments that favored independence. For the moment, Montenegro joined with Serbia in favoring Yugoslav unity. Croatia took steps to strip Serbs of their rights in the republic.

On June 25, 1991, Slovenia and Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav Army was ordered to restore national unity, but desisted, pulling out of Slovenia. In
Croatia, however, a bloody war broke out in August 1991 between ethnic Serbs in a portion of the republic they inhabited and the new Croatian army and police force. Meanwhile, in September 1991, Macedonia declared its independence without resistance from the Yugoslav Army. United Nations forces moved into the region to monitor Macedonia’s northern border with Serbia.

In Bosnia in November 1991, Bosnian Serbs held a referendum which favored staying in a common state with Serbia. The following January the Bosnian Serb assembly proclaimed a separate republic of the Serb people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The government of Bosnia declared the Serb referendum unconstitutional, but itself approved a referendum for Bosnian independence. In response, the Bosnian Serbs declared their independence as the Republika Srpska.

The war in Bosnia between Serbs, Croats, and Muslims followed shortly thereafter. In March 1994, the Muslims and Croats signed an agreement, which reduced the warring parties to two. The conflicted ended in 1995 with the so-called Dayton Agreement. Three years of ethnic strife destroyed the economy of Bosnia, caused the death of about 200,000 people, and displaced half the population. Bosnia was organized into two geographical units, the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosniak-Croat Federation). Elections are held for executive and legislative offices in both the provincial government and the separate Serb and Bosniak-Croat entities. The presidency of the Bosnian republic rotates among the three members (Bosniak, Serb, Croat). A national legislature makes laws for the republic, with two thirds of the delegates in both the upper and lower houses selected from the Bosniak-Croat Federation and
one third from the Republika Srpska. Separate parliaments, which exercise regional power, are elected in the Bosniak-Croat Federation and the Republika Srpska.

The unity of Serbia and Montenegro gradually weakened. By order of the Yugoslav Federal Parliament on August 4, 2003, Yugoslavia ceased to exist, with a federal government exercising only nominal powers. The two republics conducted their affairs as if they were independent, establishing customs along the traditional border crossings. On May 21, 2006, Montenegrins voted in favor of independence, just barely exceeding the 55 percent affirmative threshold set by the European Union for formal recognition as an independent country. On June 3, 2006, Montenegro declared its independence, with Serbia following suit two days later.

Ethnic tensions in Yugoslavia were resolved with its dissolution into six separate countries. One of them, Bosnia, further segregated into two political entities. As of this writing, the issue of Kosovo was not settled, with Russian opposition blocking its independence. It seems likely that Kosovors will continue to agitate for a separate republic.

Extensions to Other Cases

Space precludes discussion of other countries that fit the definition of the plural society and which have undergone or are currently going through several stages of politics that define plural societies. The list includes Fiji, Surinam, Indonesia-East Timor, Chechnya-Russia, Morocco-West Sahara, and perhaps Corsica, which seeks greater autonomy from mainland France. There are separatist movements in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan that merit observation.
Future Research

In the first edition we reviewed politics in many plural societies. In the intervening three-and-a-half decades since our book was first published, comparative politics has become much more sophisticated methodologically. What most scholars would not have realized then, but is quite apparent now, is that our choice of countries suffers from selection bias. With the partial exception of our treatment of Switzerland at the very end of the book, we looked only at societies that were ethnically plural – essentially their social and political sections organized along ethnic lines – rather than a sample of ethnically diverse societies some of which are plural and some of which are not. The next generation of analysis must compare ethnically heterogeneous societies that are plural with those that have retained their ethnic diversity but have not become (or are not becoming – see below) plural societies.

There is a second methodological matter of concern. For each of the eighteen plural societies treated by us, we present an historical sketch commencing at some initial period (often colonial rule), and then trace a country’s post-independence experiment with democracy. These stories unfold over time, but we are not particularly self-conscious about dynamic arguments. As an illustration, one question motivated by an explicitly dynamic perspective is: Why did founding fathers not foresee the rocky road on which their respective societies would find themselves under democratic governance? Attaturk provides an object lesson. While Turkey, with a 98 percent Muslim population, is hardly a plural society, Attaturk anticipated that active religiosity would limit what Turkey could accomplish as a society and economy. His “second-best” (as economists would call it) solution was to substitute for the kind of democracy most
attuned to Western values one in which the military loomed large as a guarantor of secularism. It is an example of a founder possessing foresight. The absence of such foresight (or misjudgments) in most plural societies, whose experiences with western-style democracy were disastrous, is something requiring explanation.

Dynamics, rational foresight, and comparisons between plural and non-plural ethnically diverse societies are three issues that should inform future research. We can hardly pursue any of them in this brief introduction. One of the issues we would like to purse is a dynamic empirical matter that we had not anticipated at all when we published this book in 1972. One of the effects of our essentially static treatment of plural societies was to treat categories as fixed. For one set of ethnically diverse societies, democratic governance was a genuine prospect; whereas for another category – plural societies – democracy was a doomed experiment. We failed to take on board the possibility that non-plural societies could display “pluralizing” tendencies.

Consider migration. The last several decades have witnessed the massive inter-national movement of peoples, mainly (but not entirely) from the third world to the West. Both demand and supply factors are at work. In a sense, the supply of migrants has always been with us. Individuals and families seeking an improved economic future, or escaping political persecution, constitute a major category of immigrant – true today as it was a century or two ago.

However, demand for migrants, especially in western welfare states, is a consequence of a major demographic effect. Most western countries experienced baby booms in the wake of World War II (following a baby-dearth generation born during the Great Depression and
followed by another baby-dearth generation as baby boomers reduced family size). This was also a time of growth in welfare state guarantees, especially on matters of health care and pensions for retirees. The reason: the depression-era generation, because of its relatively small size, would place minimal fiscal demands on the implementation of welfare state retirement policies, especially in light of the fact that there was a very large baby-boom generation to enter the workforce and provide the tax base to support pay-as-you-go pensions and health benefits. As the demographers phrased it, the dependency ratio – the ratio of the number of young and old to the size of the work force – was very favorable.

As the baby-boomers aged, however, their shadow on the dependency ratio loomed large. Exacerbating the impending reversal of the formerly favorable dependency ratio was the change in family structure. Female fertility – measured by the number of live births per fertile female –

2 One recent measure of population aging was offered by Peter Peterson – the Floridization index. In 2000, the proportion of Florida’s population over age 65 was approximately one-fifth. The Floridization index for country X is the year in which the proportion of country X’s population over age 65 will exceed that of Florida in the year 2000. For one conservative set of demographic projections, the Floridization index for Italy was 2003, Japan 2005, Germany 2006, UK 2016, France 2016, Canada 2021, and the US 2023. See Peter G. Peterson, Gray Dawn (New York: Random House, 1999). Other books have appeared recently forecasting similar demographic disasters in the offing. One by a leading economic demographer, with an appropriately scary title, is Laurence J. Kotlikoff and Scott Burns, The Coming Generational Storm (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).
declined precipitously. There is much debate about the causes of fertility decline – birth control technology, abortion, female labor-force participation, declining influence of religious imperatives, falling economic value of children – but whatever the causes, the effects for pay-as-you-go welfare policies is apparent. The number that would be dependent on benefits relative to the working population that covers the costs of these policies is destined to become unsustainable.

Roughly speaking, there are three options available to social planners for the twenty-first century welfare states of Western Europe: cut benefits to the elderly, increase taxes on workers, or import more workers. (In principle, of course, exporting elderly is an option, one often taken by primitive societies living on the edge of subsistence.) Given the volume of the elderly’s political voice, and their organizational prowess, cutting benefits can only come at an extreme political price, one that most governments are intent on avoiding. But the second option, raising taxes on labor income, is not economically viable with too few workers relative to the dependent population, producing an unrealistically large tax burden. So, the third option – importing people – looks increasingly attractive.

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3 Population replacement requires 2.1 live births per fertile female. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the US and Canada were close – at approximately 1.9. But most of Western Europe and Japan fell far short, hovering in the 1.2-1.4 range.

4 With smaller family size, the number of young dependents would actually decline as a proportion of population. But this is more than made up for by the increase in old dependents.
Obviously all these options will be pursued – benefits will be cut at the margin, taxes on incomes will rise, and governments will look for other things to tax – but the point to make here is that immigration is one of the arrows in the quiver of social planners. From the perspective of labor markets, former colonial powers are especially advantaged. Many potential immigrants, coming to the mother country from former colonies, already speak the mother tongue, thus reducing labor costs. Such is the case with immigrants to France from North and West Africa and parts of the Middle East and to Britain from the Caribbean, East Africa, and South Asia. Still valued as immigrants, even if they don’t speak the home language, are those in Eastern Europe eager to take advantage of the free mobility afforded by their respective countries’ membership in the European Union. Polish work crews are now found in Ireland, Czech waiters in London restaurants, Slovenians laborers in Austria, and so on.

But how is immigration received by home populations? It is a double-edged sword. On the benefit side is the increase in labor services provided by new immigrants. This added supply has obvious economic consequences, among which is the added revenue from taxes on labor income to help sustain intergenerational transfers. To the extent that immigrants compete with native workers, either taking jobs away from them or “merely” disadvantaging labor in wage bargaining, there is unhappiness that may well find political expression.5 Labor parties in Western Europe, for example, are not keen on opening national borders to immigration. What is especially notable is the fact that immigrants are often people of color; they bring language,

5 There are, of course, other costs – in particular those associated with education, training, and health for immigrant populations.
dress, and cuisine from their respective homelands; they may segregate themselves (or find themselves segregated) residentially. In short, they are seen by the home population as different and as a potential threat – to jobs, to safety, to the national culture.

It is these fears that serve as grist for the political entrepreneur’s mill. In France, for example, Jean Le Pen has, for more than a decade, run successful national political campaigns founded in part on anti-immigrant sentiments. (The successful campaign of Nicolas Sarkozy for the French presidency in 2007 was tinged with hostility toward immigrant communities that ring Paris.) In Britain there are Scottish, Welsh, and Northern Irish separatist parties with representation in parliament (as well as one without representation campaigning for Cornish autonomy). The British National Party, the eighth largest party in Britain, campaigns for the preservation of the national and ethnic character of the British people and is opposed to racial integration between British and non-European peoples. According to its constitution, the party is "committed to stemming and reversing the tide of non-white immigration and to restoring, by legal changes, negotiation and consent the overwhelmingly white makeup of the British population that existed in Britain prior to 1948." Even the Dutch, well known for their social liberalism, have begun to express concerns about the multi-cultural consequences of immigration. The main political instigation comes from the Christian Union Party, a minor party to be sure, but currently in the government for the first time (controlling two of sixteen cabinet positions). As reported recently:

The Netherlands is going through the same racial, ethnic, and religious metamorphosis as the rest of Western Europe: Large influxes of black, Arab, and Muslim immigrants are changing the
social complexion of an overwhelmingly white, Christian nation 
struggling with its loss of homogeneity.⁶

The immigration phenomenon is a dynamic element affecting many relatively homogenous 
societies. As noted, there are genuine economic benefits that come from expanding the pool of 
labor, not least of which is smoothing out imbalances in the size of generational cohorts. And, as 
several centuries of immigration to the United States suggests, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and 
racial heterogeneity may stimulate anti-immigrant nativism but it need not make much of a dent 
in the political order. The pluralizing tendencies observed in recent years in Western Europe 
may also have minimal impact on the body politic and need not transform pluralistic societies 
into plural societies. It is, however, worth watching.

Some Concluding Thoughts

In the book, we cited the case of Switzerland as the persistent counterexample. Its 
political stability, we argued, was due to its confederation status, with most of the political and 
financial power resting in the cantons, not in the central government.

We drew up a list of six possible solutions to maintaining stability in plural societies 
based on the evidence of the eighteen countries up to 1972. They were:

(1) colonial or foreign rule,
(2) confederation, as in Switzerland,
(3) restrict political competition by force or by elite cooperation,

(4) restrict the scope of government and public goods,

(5) create homogeneous societies, and

(6) create permanent external enemies.

We are now in a position to summarize developments over the past thirty-five years to see how these solutions apply.

Except for Kosovo, which remains under UN jurisdiction in 2007, none of the plural societies are subject to foreign rule or maintain permanent external enemies. The second prescription, confederation, has been broadly established in Belgium in the form of regional assemblies and executives, and also in Bosnia. The third prescription, particularly restricting political competition, was the standard applied in most of the eighteen plural societies. Military rule and/or one-party states governed for most, or a substantial portion, of the post-1972 history in Guyana, Sri Lanka, Rwanda, Zanzibar, Zimbabwe, Burundi, Congo, Nigeria, Sudan, and Yugoslavia. Malaysia has managed to hold its multi-ethnic coalition together through entrenching Malay political rights in exchange for according the Chinese rights in education and economic opportunity. The fourth, restricting the scope of public goods, has been gradually applied in the past decade or two. Those plural societies that suffered hardship due to war or socialist economic policies gradually liberalized their economies, permitting markets and open trade. The fifth prescription, the creation of homogeneous societies, was exemplified in Yugoslavia’s dissolution, and the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. As noted earlier, substantial devolution has taken place in the United Kingdom and Spain, but has not yet reached the level of Swiss confederation. Efforts by Quebec to separate from the rest of Canada have routinely fallen short of majority vote in the province.
An encouraging development, though time will tell of its durability, is the recent establishment of multi-ethnic, multi-party constitutions and elections in such plural societies as Rwanda, Zanzibar, South Africa (peacefully achieved), Burundi, Nigeria, the Congo, the Sudan (excluding Darfur), and Northern Ireland. Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Mauritius have experienced peaceful transitions of power among leaders of their respective ethnic groups.