Migrant Transnationalism, the Nation-State and Multiculturalism

• on transnationalism
• what’s old, what’s new?
• disrupting Identities-Borders-Orders
• integration to citizenship via limits of multiculturalism
• some conclusions
Transnationalism

Sustained cross-border relationships, affiliations,

-- social formations spanning nation-states
-- non-government actors

- migrants & refugees, ethnic diasporas,
corporations & business networks,
social movements, criminal syndicates,
terrorist groups

- www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk
I. Transnationalism and Migration: what’s old?

- long-distance networks
- circulation / return
- ongoing communication
- remittances
- business links
- homeland politics
- sending country concern
Transnationalism and Migration: what’s new?

[1] advanced technologies of contact enabling
new ‘culture of migration’
– regular/daily contact & decision-making within transnational families
– acute awareness (‘bifocality’) re: happenings here-and-there
– global remittance industry
Transnationalism and Migration: what’s new? [cont’d]

[2] long-distance politics

• ‘Homeland’ outreach
  – policies, rhetoric
  – electioneering, parties

• Diasporic politics
  – exile or opposition groups (incl. terrorism)
  – Home Town Associations

• Dual citizenship/nationality
  – marked global upward trend in claims through naturalization, marriage and birth, widespread government policy shifts
Transnationalism and Migration: what’s new? [cont’d]

[3] 25 years of multiculturalism / ‘politics of recognition’ plus transnational ‘bifocality’ leading to:

ubiquity, salience and public display of cross-border multiple identities

e.g. ‘German Turk’, Mexican-American’, ‘British Pakistani’
[= more than (American-style) hyphenated identity?]

- cf. identification during assimilation-era;
  now, transnational identities have ‘come out of the closet’
II. Transnationalism disrupts ‘identities-borders-orders’ (IBO)

‘IBO’ as ‘analytical triad’ typifying conventional models of the nation-state

**Identity** – presumed to characterize a given ‘People’ (ethnic origin, language, heritage), territory and socio-political Order

**Border** – demarcates a territory inhabited by a People/Identity and a socio-political Order

**Order** – socio-cultural, political-legal system governing ‘a People’, contained by Border
Challenges to IBO

IBO/nation-state challenged in any case by economic globalization, multi-lateral political agreements, multiculturalism
- threats from ‘above’ and ’below’

Migrant transnationalism adds:
• homeland-oriented political activity
  - Questions of ‘loyalty’
• dual citizenship
  - Questions of ‘allegiance’
• Cross-border multiple identity
  - Questions of ‘integration’

= what is the Identity, where is the Border, how pervasive it the Order?
‘Integration’ → ‘Citizenship’
[social cohesion → immigrants]

Oldham & Bradford 2001
Cantle Report 2001
- ‘greater sense of citizenship’

Home Office Report 2001/2:
‘Integration: mapping the field’
White Paper 2002:
‘Secure Borders, Safe Haven’
- citizenship test, ritual
Limits of Multiculturalism

- ‘social cohesion’, ‘social capital’
- ‘Too Much Diversity?’ argument (see current *Prospect* piece by Goodhart)
Bhikhu Parekh:

‘[M]ultiple attachments do not hamper integration in the country of settlement. Why? Because two or more sets of attachment do not necessarily compete with each other. Further, when we accept the fact that people are attached to their countries of origin, it gives migrants the self-confidence to interact much more dynamically and creatively with the cultural lives of the country of settlement. …It is wrong to believe that if migrant communities would stop being communities and break up, it would be easier to integrate them into the mainstream society.’
• Indeed, research shows that in places in which dual citizenship is offered or policies are newly relaxed, immigrant naturalization has increased.
Related Debates & Developments

- Terrorism Act 2000
- September 11th / Al-Qaida
- Department for International Development:
  – ‘The Role of Diasporas in Poverty Reduction’
‘Multiculturalism, built around the images of 1950s Britain and 1950s immigrants, shows no real understanding of the complexity of our links with the rest of the world – the support from British Muslims for Bosnians and Kosavars; the flows of money from, say, British Bangladeshis… When these links don’t fit the neat multicultural story then they are left out and forgotten. The complexity of our real internationalism, our sense of the possibilities when identities move beyond the home and the hearth, is diminished.’
some concluding thoughts

-- [new] migrant transnationalism often seen as threat – a kind of ‘multiculturalism plus’
  - evils of ‘transnational progressivism’

-- question remains: are they *enduring* patterns?
  - ‘bifocality’ and border-crossing identities: for how many generations?
  - disrupted ‘IBO’ (especially post-9/11): trigger nation-state backlash?