

“The Politics of reconciliation in multicultural societies”¹, Will Kymlicka and Bashir Bashir

Bashir Bashir, a research fellow at the Department of Political Science at the Hebrew University and The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, and Will Kymlicka, established author and Canada Research Chair in Political Philosophy at Queen's University, are the editors of the volume *The Politics of Reconciliation in Multicultural Societies*. The volume addresses various perspectives of multicultural processes. It brings together various experts from different theories, and also geographical origins.

In the introduction Bashir Bashir and Will Kymlicka address the need to overcome the problem of continuing practices and ideologies that do not acknowledge equal rights to all people, regardless of racial, ethnic or religious background. They focus on “politics of reconciliation” which were introduced to international discourse with the establishment of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in the post-Apartheid period in South Africa.

The politics of reconciliation are very important in two different contexts. One is the context of transition countries where the key normative of reconciliation is transitional justice. The second important context represents the rise of the politics of difference. This rise happened recently in the established Western democracies as a result of the traditional majority model of democracy. For example, apart from Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in transitional South Africa, the case that represents the transitional reconciliation, the editor also presents the case of Canada, an established western democracy aiming at a more inclusive and deliberate democracy. To achieve this goal Canada is using the reconciliation process in the dialogue with the indigenous peoples.

The key question that Kymlicka and Bashir ask is: after we, at least formally, eliminate formal discrimination, what else can be done to create genuinely inclusive democracies? In answering this question they admit that both situations described in the previous paragraph (reconciliation

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in transition countries and in established western democracies) are being implemented on the ground. However, they do miss serious academic discourse. Attention should be brought upon the concepts alone, and on the notion of their overlap. This volume aims at bridging this gap of academic discussion about these two concepts. The authors explore how normative and conceptual premises invoked by theories of reconciliation in divided societies relate on a philosophical level to those invoked by theories of inclusive citizenship in diverse societies.

At the empirical level this volume addresses the question of how the actual practice of reconciliation and reparation affects the deliberative and agonistic character of politics or the pursuit of a more multicultural conception of citizenship. It also provides some thoughts about the conditions needed for the politics of reconciliation to support politics of deliberation and multiculturalism.

Jonathan Van Antwerpen focuses on the discourse of the definition of "reconciliation" in South African case of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC). In the process of South-African TRC he focuses on the concept that defined the reconciliation process. As the process of reconciliation was led by the Archbishop Tutu, it was defined on the basis of Christian narrative of individual forgiveness. Reconciliation was carried out intensely in the theological interpretation followed by liberal re-statement. One of the harshest criticisms of the forgiveness narrative of the reconciliation process, raised especially by the human rights groups, was issued against amnesty in exchange for testifying which was awarded to the perpetrators.

As Van Antwerpen agrees with the Thompson and Gutman's criticisms of the reconciliation concept, he does acknowledge that in the immediate period after the fall of apartheid system in South Africa, the conceivers of the TRC project tried their best to reconcile severely divided society. He also adds that the TRC project in South Africa opened the academic discourse about the reconciliation. As every new project this one was also criticized on different levels. However, in all critiques it was claimed that reconciliation as a concept should not be changed, only re-defined in a liberal, more political way, instead of being used within the theological narrative. Despite the religious and secular distinction, which proved

to be a very difficult task, they were able to reach a widely accepted consensus about the secularization of the reconciliation which was also the original aim of the critiques.

Bashir Bashir discusses the relation between reconciliation and deliberative democracy. In his opinion the concept of deliberative democracy is in a sense weak when it comes to confronting historical injustices. Therefore, it would have to include the politics of reconciliation.

Bashir addresses the responds to the growing multicultural diversity. The groups that went through a long and systematic oppression demand a different treatment than just democratic inclusion based on the system "one person, one vote" offered by deliberate democracy. In order for the effects of deliberate democracy to take place, the recognition and restorative justice process needs to be implemented. Reconciliation should therefore be seen as a precondition to deliberate democracy and not as an effect of it. He also accepts Young's general characterization of historical injustice which is links together five varieties of oppression: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. Focusing on the last two varieties, he claims that reconciliation must be done on a group basis and on the basis of acknowledging and remedying historical injustices.

For Bashir reconciliation is not a universal tool for healing historical injustices which have been inflicted on the oppressed groups. It is merely a guiding principle which should be adapted to each case individually with emphasis on the historical dimension, acknowledgement, responsibility, and apology. It also has to include deliberate actions following symbolic gestures of apology.

In his chapter Nadim N. Rouhana argues that democratic citizenship in the divided society is not possible without the process of reconciliation. According to his suggestion in the article, democratic citizenship can be achieved through reconsideration of historical injustices. He focuses on the process of constitution building which was presented to be built by a consensus. Indeed, the process was supposed to be guided by the principles of deliberative democracy. However, historical injustices were insufficiently and inaccurately recognized. The mistaken recognition of the past is described as "historical denial".

In the case of Israel he argues that politics of recognition are not enough for a multicultural citizenship. Instead the politics of recognition need to be carried out with a hard emphasis on the recognition of historic truths and responsibilities, and overcoming of historical denial.

The chapters by Lawrie Balfour and Paul Muldoon address the connection between the agonistic conception of democracy and the reconciliation process. As Balfour focuses on slavery, Muldoon builds his article on colonialism. Both articles are built on the fact that reconciliation processes aim at the restoration of the previous state of harmony.

However, because of the fact that in slavery and colonialism the previous state of harmony does not exist, reconciliation must be readjusted in a more transformative way. In the context of contemporary movement for reparations for slavery in the United States, Balfour suggests that the reconciliation should rise above one-time payment or symbolic apology to the black community. Instead, it should address the deeper roots of American racism. The agonistic approach, which defines the features of political life as a contest or a struggle, is seen as a tool.

The main object of the reconciliation process which contains the transformative, rather than the restorative, narrative is the option to create an environment for new identities. As agonistic theorists presume that identities are unstable, contestable and therefore unsuitable as a basis for policy making, Balfour adds that the long history of exclusion shaped the identity of the African American community which can be treated as a basis for democratic policy of reconciliation.

Muldoon examines two perspectives of reconciliation in colonial oppressed societies. He calls one the "perspective of society" and the other the "perspective of war." The perspective of society has more of a restorative nature and tends to bring the society to the relations and the level which it had before the war. Perspective of war on the other hand actually renegotiates the patterns existing before the conflict and questions if the reconciliation process is not just another use of power.

Muldoon claims that both perspectives are unsatisfactory since they narrow down understandings of the current reality and the future

possibilities. The agonistic model is suggested as an alternative. It would overcome the problems of restorative reconciliation and avoid conflict in order to question existing patterns. However, he does not accept Mouffe's agonistic model in whole. Muldoon's suggestion is that the model should be further radicalized. He concludes that reconciliation in colonial societies must allow for the contestation of the meaning of agonistic democracy. He admits that to avoid war some rules have to be set. However, the rules have to be contested by participating parties and who should not be sanctioned for their actions.

Sonali Thakkar builds her article on the case of an exhibition "Into the Heart of Africa" at the Royal Ontario Museum. This exhibition is an example of failure in multicultural discourse which should acknowledge and address historical injustices. The exhibition raised many negative responses with its projection of the Canadian colonization in Africa.

The exhibition was setup by Jeanne Cannizzo, who took a daring approach and accompanied the artifacts with stereotyped descriptions. As this daring move was made deliberately in order to raise colonization awareness, other crucial mistakes were also made. As the entire exhibition consisted of artifacts mostly donated or loaned by Canadian collectors who were members of the army the content was displayed without deep anthropological research. One of the crucial mistakes was also the complete ignorance of the African community in Toronto. The community was only notified of the opening of the exhibition and not included in any of the previous steps.

To sum up, instead of anthropological research and presentation of African culture, culture was presented from the perspective of Canadian colonizers. Multicultural citizenship and multicultural society requires public institutions to celebrate diversity and pay special care to cultural history. This exhibition definitely lacked the dialogue perspective of multiculturalism and consequently presented an imperialistic view of the suppressed cultures of Africa. The exhibition had therefore the exact opposite effect for the multicultural perspective in Canada.

Mark Walters addresses the position of the concept of reconciliation within law theory. The process of reconciliation is considered more of a

political process then a legal one. The political classification allows the process to achieve goals such as forgiveness, healing, truth-telling. These goals cannot be achieved in a strictly legal process. In fact, in some cases the rule of law is actually sacrificed for the sake of revealing the actions and truth. This process was questioned the most during South African Truth and Reconciliation Commissions where perpetrators were given amnesty for their willingness to cooperate in revealing injustices.

Walters focuses on the Canadian process of reconciliation with indigenous peoples. He explains that the Canadians have fashioned a constitutionally sanctioned and court-driven jurisprudence of reconciliation. He examines recent court cases and concludes that the reconciliation process must also include reconciliation of the legal cultures in order to secure legality. However, in Canada, despite the fact that the reconciliation process was promised to be a relationship between both legal traditions, the promises are for now unfulfilled. It seems that the indigenous peoples must reconcile them with the judicial rules of the majority without any consideration for their own legality. Nonetheless, Walters insists that a jurisprudence of reconciliation is a neglected component of reconciliation process and should be further addressed and discussed.

Ruth Rubio-Marin further explores the transformative potential of judicial reparations of the reconciliation process. Judicial reparations in the process of reconciliation were intended mainly for individuals. The intention was to for the victims to be allowed to return to the status quo and also to receive some compensation for the injustice which was caused them.

The author describes the shift from individually-based to group reparations. The process is marked by a tendency to recognize the group-based nature of rights violations. As good as the intention of the group reparations sounds, it also presents some dilemmas. The dilemma is illustrated in a cases of groups or gender-specific violence, namely violence against women. The process of reparation and restorative justice for the crimes that were committed against women because they are women challenges the process of restorative reconciliation.

If the status of women before the conflict was degrading the process of reconciliation with the restorative goal must question its purpose of

returning to the previous state of hierarchy or order. Here the transformative role of reconciliation can be manifested in order to redefine the traditional roles. However, to project the characteristics of inclusive citizenship with the intention of defining the role of women according to liberal Western perception would also be wrong. The women, the author argues, must be included in the process of a restorative, however transformative, reconciliation along with their perception of the crimes and with special care toward the perception of their role in society. What Rubio-Marin especially emphasizes is that in cases where the victims' perception of reconciliation predicts a continuous traditional role in society, it must not be ignored. It must be taken into the consideration within the process of reconciliation and its final effect.

The volume presents an overview of the process of reconciliation and some of the issues relating to the topic. Reconciliation is not presented as one dimensional, but through cross-disciplinary perspectives and various case studies around the world. However, due to its cross-disciplinary approach and geographical distribution of case studies, the volume requires previous knowledge of the subject as it does not focus on describing the process and concept in its basics. Overall, the book presents good reading material for any student or scholar working in political science, peace and conflict studies, ethnic studies and similar fields.

Renata Ríbežl