DIASPORAS AND THE STATE: FROM VICTIMS TO CHALLENGERS

Robin Cohen

The notion of 'diaspora', used first in the classical world, has acquired renewed importance in the late twentieth century. Once the term applied principally to Jews and less commonly to Greeks, Armenians and Africans. Now at least thirty ethnic groups declare that they are a diaspora, or are so deemed by others. Why these sudden proclamations? Frightened by the extent of international migration and their inability to construct a stable, pluralist, social order many states have turned away from the idea of assimilating or integrating their ethnic minorities. For their part, minorities no longer desire to abandon their pasts. Many retain or have acquired dual citizenship, while the consequences of globalisation have meant that ties with a homeland can be preserved or even reinvented. How have diasporas changed? What consequences arise for the nation-state? **

Until a few years ago most characterisations of diasporas emphasized their catastrophic origins and uncomfortable outcomes. The idea that 'diaspora' implied forcible dispersion was found in Deuteronomy (28: 25), with the addition of a thunderous Old Testament warning that a 'scattering to other lands' constituted the punishment for a people who had forsaken the righteous paths and abandoned the old ways. So closely, indeed, had 'diaspora' become associated with this unpropitious Jewish tradition that the origins of the word have virtually been lost.

In fact, the term 'diaspora' is found in the Greek translation of the Bible and originates in the words 'to sow widely'. For the Greeks, the expression was used to describe the colonization of Asia Minor and the Mediterranean in the Archaic period (800–600 BC). Although there was some displacement of the ancient Greeks to Asia Minor as a result of poverty, over-population and inter-state war, 'diaspora' essentially had a positive connotation. Expansion through plunder, military conquest, colonization and migration were the predominant features of the Greek diaspora.

The opposing notions of a 'victim diaspora' and a diaspora of active colonization were resolved by over two thousand years of special pleading – based, to be sure, on many adverse experiences – on behalf of the first interpretation. However, Jewish diasporic experiences were much more diverse and more complex than the negative tradition allows and such an interpretation was imposed as well as internalized, advanced as well as contested. One way or another, it is impossible to understand notions of 'diaspora' without first coming to grips with some central aspects of the Jewish experience. Even for those who find in the changed meanings of the contemporary concept a new and exciting way of understanding cultural difference, identity politics and the proclaimed 'dissolution' of the nation-state, the origins and implications of the term have to be assimilated and understood before they can be transcended.[1] How then do we interrogate the Jewish tradition of diaspora?

Reassessing 'Babylon'

The destruction of Jerusalem and razing of the walls of its Temple in 586 BC created the central folk memory of the negative, victim diaspora tradition – in particular the experience of enslavement, exile and displacement. The Jewish leader, Zedikiah, had vacillated for a decade, then impulsively sanctioned a rebellion against the powerful Mesopotamian empire. No mercy for his effrontery was shown by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar. His soldiers forced Zedikiah to witness the execution of his sons; the Jewish leader was then blinded and, with his followers, dragged in chains to Babylon. Jews had been compelled to desert the land 'promised' to them by God to Moses and thereafter forever became dispersed.

'Babylon' subsequently became a code-word among Jews (and, later, Africans) for the afflictions, isolation and insecurity of living in a foreign place, set adrift, cut off from their roots and their sense of identity, oppressed by an alien ruling class. Since the Babylonian exile 'the homelessness of Jews has been a *leitmotiv* in Jewish literature, art, culture, and of course, prayer'.[2] Jewish folklore and oral tradition retold stories of the perceived, or actual, trauma of their historical experiences. The use of the word 'Babylon' alone was enough to evoke a sense of captivity, exile, alienation and isolation. Collectively, Jews were seen as helpless chaff in the wind. At an individual level, diasporic Jews were depicted as pathological half-persons – destined never to realise themselves or to attain completeness, tranquillity or happiness so long as they were in exile.

Perhaps the obvious starting point to a revisionist view of 'Babylon' is that the benefits of integration into a rich and diverse alien culture were evident both to many of the first group of exiled Judeans and to their immediate descendants. A substantial number adopted Babylonian names and customs; the group as a whole used the Babylonian calendar and embraced the language of Aramaic. Even for those who wished to stay true to their roots, their enforced residence in Babylon provided an opportunity to construct and define their historical experience, to invent their tradition. Myth, folk tales, oral history and legal records were combined into the embryonic Bible, while the earnest discussion groups at the homes of charismatic figures like Jeremiah and Ezekial ('the prophets') turned into rudimentary synagogues.

The Jewish communities in Alexandria, in Antoch and Damascus, in Asia Minor and in Babylon itself became centres of civilization, culture and learning. The Exilarch (the head of the Babylonian Jews) held a position of honour among Jews and non-Jews alike, Jewish academies of learning flourished, while the centre-piece of theological exegesis, the Babylonian Talmud, comprising 2.5 million words, made the religious leaders, the Gaons, the cynosure of Jewish culture until the early eleventh century. Sassanian Persia had tolerated and encouraged a cultural *mélange* of several brands of Christianity, astrology, a Persian literary revival, Zoroastrianism, and Indian and Hellenistic thought. Judaism thrived in this hothouse through engagement, encounter, competition and the cut and thrust of religious and intellectual debate.

Though the word 'Babylon' often connotes captivity and oppression, a re-assessment of the Babylonian period of exile can be shown to demonstrate the development of a new creative energy in a challenging, pluralistic context outside the natal homeland. When the Romans destroyed the second Temple in 70 AD, it was Babylon that remained as the nerve- and brain-centre for Jewish life and thought.

Jews and the nation-state

This is no place to write a full account of the subsequent vicissitudes of the Jewish diaspora. However, using the scholars' shorthand of a case study, I want to consider the central dilemmas of diasporas in the period of 'modernity', i.e. in the age of the Enlightenment and the nation-state. I shall use the example of French Jewry. Like their counterparts in Germany, Hungary and Austria, the Jews of France stood in marked contrast to the *Ostjuden* of the Russian Pale. They were more sophisticated, more liberal and more bourgeois. In Berlin, Budapest, Vienna and Paris Jews had made notable contributions to the professions and to intellectual, literary and artistic life. Normally, their primary loyalties were to their countries of settlement rather than to their religion, even less to their ethnicity. In France, legal emancipation had fostered the belief that adherence to the Jewish religion was no barrier to full citizenship and integration into France. However, as Muslims are currently discovering, the Revolutionary civic tradition in France has compelling secular implications. As one nineteenth-century French politician bluntly put it: 'To the Jews as Jews, nothing. To the Jews as citizens, everything'.[3]

French Jews who chose to ride both horses – a Jewish identity plus emancipation – were from time to time confronted with crises of dual loyalty. The first major dilemma arose in the 1840s. At the beginning of that decade the Sharif Pasha of Syria had arrested a Jewish barber on the charge of ritual murder after the mysterious disappearance of an Italian friar and his servant. Confessions under duress, the arrest of Jewish children and mob violence followed. Because of the then heated European rivalries in the Middle East, the 'Damascus Affair' commanded much attention. The French government was drawn into supporting the charges, the Austrian and British governments denounced them. French Jews were suddenly confronted with an impossible conundrum. To advance French international ambitions, the state that had emancipated them was prepared to countenance an anti-Semitic libel. After much shilly-shallying, the initiative was seized by Adolphe Crémieux, a Jew and prominent French politician, who co-operated with eminent Jews in Great Britain and Austria (France's enemies!) to secure the release of the prisoners in Damascus. The outcome was an apparent victory in humanitarian terms but, as Lindemann shows,[4] it was a Pyrrhic one. Thereafter, French patriots argued that love of their brethren would always be greater than the love of French Jews for France. Jews would always be Jews. Moreover, their increasing prominence in commerce and banking meant that wealthy and powerful Jews could act against the nation's interest. It was but a small step to convince fellow-patriots that Jews were part of a omnipotent global conspiracy. Such a widely-held perception was later to fuel nineteenth- and twentieth-century anti-Semitism.

The Damascus Affair was followed by an equally momentous event, the Dreyfus Affair when, in 1894, a French Jewish army officer was falsely accused of spying for the Germans).[5] 'The Affair', as it came to be known, led to a profound change-of-heart for Teodor Herzl, hitherto an assimilated, bourgeois, Viennese journalist, who had been sent to cover the Dreyfus trial and later became the key advocate of Zionism. More in sadness than in anger, he concluded: 'Everywhere we Jews have tried honestly to assimilate into the nations around us, preserving only the religion of our fathers. We have not been permitted to. ... We are a nation – the enemy has made us one without our desiring it ... We do have the strength to create a state and, moreover, a model state'.[6]

Faced with apparently inevitable outbursts of anti-Semitism, even in a country which had invented the Revolutionary ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, it was all too easy for Zionist ideologues to promote the idea of creating a national homeland as an alternative to a doomed attempt at assimilation. The partial acceptance of such an aspiration lent further support to the charges of dual loyalty, even if not to the more fanciful notions of an international conspiracy. The apparently persistent belief in France that Jews essentially remained an alien element was given dramatic affirmation in Vichy France, where half-a-century after Dreyfus's trial, disturbing evidence emerged that collaboration with the Nazis to identify and round-up Jews for the death camps was widespread.

If we seek to generalise the experience of Jews beyond the French case, two broad patterns emerge. Though there were often serious outbreaks of anti-Semitism in France, Britain and the USA from time to time, it would be perverse to compare them in scale and intensity to the unremitting pogroms of the Russian empire or the stunning, virtually incomprehensible, horror of the holocaust in Nazi Germany and Nazi-occupied territories. Those parts of the diaspora in the more benign countries of settlement were often beneficiaries of tolerance and acceptance and, like the Jews of Babylon, profited from the stimulus of cosmopolitanism and pluralism.

None the less, the Zionists have their strongest argument in suggesting that the outcome is essentially unpredictable, whatever appearances might suggest. It is virtually unimaginable to construct a scene of state-sponsored genocidal killers or mass anti-Semitism either in contemporary Britain or in the USA. Yet the obvious *riposte* is that German Jews of the 1930s equally could not believe this possibility and it was precisely their stubborn lack of prescience that contributed to the scale of their appalling fate.

The history of the Jewish diaspora in the modern nation-state is thus one of endurance and achievement but also of anxiety and distrust. However economically or professionally successful, however long-settled in peaceful settings, it is difficult for many Jews in the diaspora not to 'keep their guard up', to feel the weight of their history and the clammy fear that brings the demons in the night to remind them of their murdered ancestors. The sense of unease or difference that members of the diaspora feel in their countries of settlement often results in a felt need for protective cover in the bosom of the community.

Thence arises the Catch 22 characteristic of many Jewish communities. Their fear breeds an in-group mentality. This is intuited by the peoples amongst whom they live, which in turn breeds distance, suspicion, hostility and, ultimately, anti-Semitism. The system is compete when manifestations of anti-Semitism loop back to engender new sources of apprehension and further inclinations to clannishness and endogamy.[7]

Analogous cases

The Jewish tradition of diaspora, what might be called for simplicity the victim tradition, is shared by at least four other groups, all of whom experienced traumatic interludes in their histories which led to their dispersion or further dispersion.

The horror and cruelty of African slave trade has been exposed so many times that even justifiably hyperbolic language begins to lose its force. Though many Africans are found in Asia and the Middle East, the forcible transhipment of ten million people across the Atlantic for mass slavery and coerced plantation labour in the Americas provided the defining and constituent elements of the African diaspora.[8]

Though the origins of the Armenian diaspora were in commerce and trade, the Armenians took on the appearance of a victim diaspora following the massacres of the late nineteenth century and the deportations of 1915–16, when the Turks deported two-thirds of their number (1.75 million people) to Syria and Palestine. Many Armenians subsequently landed up in France and the USA. It is now widely accepted (though still implausibly disputed by Turkish sources) that some 1,000,000 Armenians were either killed or died of starvation during this mass displacement, the twentieth century's first major example of what has come to be known as 'ethnic cleansing'.[9]

The migration of the Irish over the period 1845-52, following the famine, can be regarded as an similarly traumatic event. To be sure, there have been ups and downs by Irish historians in seeking to assess just how salient the famine was in propelling the vast and continuous transatlantic migrations of the nineteenth century. However, in her up-to-date, powerfully-argued and scholarly account, Kinealy shows there was much more deliberation in the British response to the potato blight than has previously been adduced. She suggests that far from *laissez-faire* attitudes governing policy, the British government had a hidden agenda of population control, the modernization of agriculture and land reform.[10] This gives the Irish events a greater similarity to those that propelled the Jewish, African and Armenian diasporas.

When Britain withdraw from Palestine on 14 May 1948 the Israeli army occupied the vacuum and the ethnically-based state of Israel was proclaimed. First out of prudence, then out of panic, two-thirds of the Arab population of Palestine left their homes and became refugees, at first in neighbouring counties, then all over the Middle East and beyond. The final example of a victim diaspora, that of the Palestinians, had been born. Ironically and tragically, the midwife was the homecoming of the Jewish diaspora.

The scarring historical event – for the Jews 'Babylon', for the Africans slavery, for the Irish the famine, for the Armenians the genocide and for the Palestinians the formation of the state of Israel – lends a particular colouring to these five diasporas. They are, above all, victim diasporas in their origins. This does not mean they do not share several common characteristics of other sorts of diaspora considered below, merely that their inauspicious beginning is either self-affirmed or accepted by outside observers as determining their *essential* character.

Transcending the victim tradition

All scholars of diasporas recognize that the victim tradition is at the heart of any definition of the concept. Yet even if it is necessary to take full account of this tradition, it is also necessary to transcend it – for at least two reasons. First, as I have shown, the tradition is much more complex and diverse than many assume. For all the victim diasporas, their experiences in modern nation-states have been enriching and creative as well as enervating and fearful.

The Jews' considerable intellectual and spiritual achievements simply could not have happened in a narrow tribal society like that of ancient Judea. The Armenians and Irish thrived materially and politically in the 'land of opportunity', the USA. The Palestinians are characteristically more prosperous and better-educated than the locals in the countries of their exile, while those of African descent in the diaspora have made contributions of international significance in respect of the performing arts, music, painting, sculpture and literature.

The second reason why we have to transcend the victim tradition is that the expression 'diaspora' is now being used, whether purists approve of this or not, in a variety of new, but interesting and suggestive contexts. To mount a defence of an orthodox definition of 'diaspora', which orthodoxy in any case has been shown to be dubious, is akin to commanding the waves no longer to break on the shore. As Safran notes, 'diaspora' is now deployed as 'a metaphoric designation' to describe different categories of people – 'expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities *tout court'*. Moreover, a point again made by Safran among many others, the term now designates a vast array of different peoples. He lists Cubans and Mexicans in the USA, Pakistanis in Britain, Maghrebis in France, Turks in Germany, the Chinese in Southeast Asia, Greeks, Poles, Palestinians, blacks in the North America and the Caribbean, Indians and Armenians 'in various countries', Corsicans in Marseilles and 'even French-speaking Belgians living in communal enclaves in Wallonia'. [11]

As the notion of diaspora comes to be more widely applied, there is inevitable dilution, change and expansion of the meaning of the term. Looking at Safran's list in that light and even accepting that he probably means to be indicative rather than comprehensive, his

inclusions invite refutation and argument. What has happened to the Ukrainians, the Irish, the Italians, the Russians, the Germans or the Kurds – all of whom might have at least as strong a claim to inclusion as some of the peoples he identifies? There are also many more ambiguous cases – the Japanese, the Gypsies, the Hungarians, the Croatians, the Serbs, the British, the Sikhs, Caribbean peoples[12] to name but some possibilities.

Again, I would take issue with his expression 'diaspora X in country Y'. It is perhaps unnecessary that all diasporas are, like the biblical Jews, 'scattered to all lands', but I imagine most would agree that in order to qualify they should be dispersed to more than one. (Paradoxically, Safran himself makes this point elsewhere.) This makes Safran's listing of the Mexicans and (to a lessor extent) Cubans somewhat problematic. This is less of a problem in some of the other diaspora–destination examples he includes, as in some cases at least, the dispersal is greater than he indicates. The Turks are now more widely dispersed in Europe than just in Germany, while the overseas Chinese embrace many more destinations than Southeast Asia. However, I think it will open a Pandora's box to include cases of minorities (like Flemish-speaking Belgians) living in ethnic enclaves inside a country or in nearby countries. The stranded minority is not in my view (normally) a diaspora.

Whatever my immediate difficulties with Safran's argument, his subsequent list of the key characteristics of diasporas commands attention and emulation. He is properly relaxed in allowing that that no single contemporary diaspora will fulfil all the definitional desiderata. However, he maintains that the concept of diaspora can be applied when members of an 'expatriate minority community' share several of six listed features.[13] In my forthcoming book, already referred to, I explain in detail why I accept four of his features, amend two and add four further features. Here, I shall have to be content to produce a consolidated list of the 'common features' of a diaspora, drawing on the classical tradition, on Safran's insights, my modifications to his list and on my own views:

Common features of a diaspora

1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;

2. Alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;

3. A collective memory and myth about the homeland including its location, history and achievements;

4. An idealization of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;

5. The development of a return movement which gains collective approbation;

6. A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate;

7. A troubled relationship with host societies suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;

8. A sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement; and

9. The possibility of a distinctive yet creative and enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.

This list is quite consciously entitled 'common features', to indicate that no one diaspora will manifest all features. This rather slack methodological device none the less allows the inclusion of certain important cases that intuitively seem part, or claim they are part, of the diasporic phenomenon.

Consider, for example, the case of diasporas who disperse for aggressive or volunterist reasons (feature 2). This is a radical departure from the Jewish tradition, but one that can be justified by reference to the case of the ancient Greeks (who, after all, coined the word). It also conforms to the use of the term to describe trading and commercial networks (the Lebanese and Chinese, for example, have been so described), to those seeking work abroad and to imperial or colonial settlers. Indeed, the original Greek word, signifying expansion and settler colonization, can best be compared to the European (especially British, Portuguese and Spanish) settlements of the mercantile and colonial period. In the case of trade, labour or imperial diasporas, it is still necessary to the notion of 'diaspora' that they do not 'creolize' or indigenize, or only do so in a limited way, thereby retaining their link, sometimes their dependence, on the 'motherland'.

Take a second example, namely accepting the idea (feature 4) that a diaspora is not only concerned with maintenance or restoration of a homeland, but its very creation. This will cover the cases of 'imagined homelands' that only resemble the original history and geography of the diasporas' natality in the remotest way. In some cases (the Kurds or Sikhs come to mind) a homeland is clearly an *ex post facto* construction, yet they share many other features of diasporic groups.

Thirdly, and finally for the purposes of this article, consider the final two features that allude to sentiments of co-ethnicity and the possibility of creative expression. In these respects perhaps the most adventurous concept of diaspora has been proposed, a suggestion that diasporas can be constituted by acts of the imagination. The central

idea is that transnational bonds no longer have to be cemented by migration or by exclusive territorial claims. In the age of cyberspace, a diaspora can, to some degree, be held together or re-created through the mind, through cultural artefacts and through a shared imagination. Certain writers have suggested that a perverse feature of globalisation at the cultural level is that it has brought about *both* the universalization *and* the fragmentation and multiplication of identities. An identification with a diaspora serves to bridge the gap between the local and the global, even if the outcome is a cultural artefact rather than a political project.[14]

There are two final qualifications that need to be made, even to a thoroughly easygoing definition of diasporas. First, a number of diasporas commonly mutate in different phases of their migratory history. In the case of Indians, for example, about 1.5 million were employed as indentured labourers in various plantation colonies of the British empire – Fiji, Natal, Mauritius, Guyana and Trinidad. There is a continuing controversy in the literature about the degree to which they were voluntary or involuntary migrants,[15] but certainly there was some element of compulsion. An Indian trade diaspora followed in the wake of the indentured workers. Finally, over the last two decades highly-certificated Indian professionals have migrated in very large numbers to the USA.

Second, a point strongly emphasised by Marienstras, 'time has to pass' before we can know that any community that has migrated 'is really a diaspora'.[16] In other words, one does not announce the formation of the diaspora the moment the representatives of a people first get off the boat at Ellis Island (or wherever). Many members of a particular ethnic group may have the intent and the possibility to merge into the crowd, lose their prior identity and achieve individualised forms of social mobility. (The changing of ethnically-identifiable names by new immigrants signals this intention.) Other groups may inter-marry with the locals and slowly disappear as a separable ethnic group. A strong attachment to the past or a block to assimilation in the present and future must exist in order to permit a diasporic consciousness to emerge or be retained.

Challenges to the nation-state

Having widened the definition of diaspora to include a wider range of groups and phenomena, what has this all to with the contemporary nation-state? Since their state structures first cohered (starting roughly in the sixteenth century Europe) the leaders of nation-states have sought to have it all their own way. They coped with ethnic diversity by demanding exclusive citizenship, border control, linguistic conformity and political obedience. Moreover, the nation-state was offered as an object of devotion. Its citizens were enjoined to love their country, to revere its institutions, to salute its flag, to support its sporting teams, to fight and die for it in war. But there are crucial differences between the periods loosely known as 'modernity' and 'the age of globalisation'[17] The world is simply not like that any more; the space for multiple affiliations and associations that has been opened up outside and beyond the nation-state has also allowed a diasporic allegiance both to become more open and more acceptable.

In short national identities are under challenge from deterritorialized social identities. In the age of globalization, the world is being organised vertically by nation-states and regions, but horizontally by an overlapping, permeable, multiple system of interaction. This system creates communities not of place but of interest, shared opinions and beliefs, tastes, ethnicities (where these are trans-state) religions

(again, where these are trans-state), cuisine, the consumption of medicines (western and complementary), lifestyles, fashion, music, etc. Unlike those who argue that a single homogenized global culture is emerging, Perlmutter more plausibly suggests rather that multiple cultures are being syncretized in a complex way. The elements of particular cultures can be drawn from a global array, but they will mix and match differently in each setting.[18]

This reconstitution of identity threatens the nation-state by a form of semi-detachment or indifference. Unlike ethnicity, religion or diaspora, the nation-state is often too large and too amorphous an entity to be the object of *intimate* affection. One can marry a spouse of one's own kind and feel the warm embrace of kinship; one can kneel in common prayer with one's co-religionists; one can effect easier friendships with those of a common background. Bonds of language, religion, culture and a sense of a common history and perhaps a common fate impregnate a transnational relationship and give to it an affective, intimate quality that formal citizenship or even long settlement frequently lack.

In the face of powerfully-defended nationalist sentiments it has, until recently, been difficult for diasporic groups to express their true attitudes to the nation-states in which they found themselves. I use the expression 'found themselves' because many migratory movements (as in transatlantic slavery, the recruitment of indentured labour or forced migration arising from civil war) involved coercion. The more compulsion was involved the less likely that anticipatory socialisation to the new environment had taken place. In such contexts ethnic or transnational communities will persist or be recreated. Now, it cannot be denied, many diasporas want to have their cake and eat it. They want not only the security and opportunities available in their countries of settlement, but also a continuing relationship with their country of origin and co-ethnic members in other countries.

For such diasporas the nation-state is being used instrumentally, rather than revered affectively. A good example of a new openness about an old form of detachment is found in the case of the Chinese diaspora, often self-described as the 'overseas' Chinese. All the colonial powers in Asia were enthusiastic importers of Chinese immigrants. Sir Stamford Raffles founded Singapore with the help of Chinese traders, the French encouraged Chinese immigration to French Indochina, Mauritius and Réunion, while the Portuguese and Dutch followed suit in Macao and Batavia respectively. However, as Wang avers, the Chinese traders were not essentially loyal either to the colonial power or to their places of settlement. Rather, they were loyal to thriving entrepôts and a profitable arrangements, not caring overmuch whether the British, French, Portuguese, Malays, Dutch or Indians were in charge of the political superstructure.[19]

In the context of Europe, North America and Australia, the Chinese have perfected an organisational alternative to the nation-state in the form of Chinatowns, a unique institutional vehicle for the Chinese to be in, but not necessarily to become of, the societies in which they settled. The beginnings of the biggest of the world's Chinatowns, in New York, can be traced to one shop; as late as the mid-1960s it only covered six blocks with 15,000 people. By 1988 there were 300,000 residents; 450 restaurants employed 15,000 people while 500 garment factories hired about 20,000 Chinese women.[20] Participation of the inhabitants of Chinatowns in local or national elections is negligible. However, at the global level, the overseas Chinese represent a formidable economic network, exceeding in wealth the GNPs of all but the most powerful nation-states.[21]

Such examples raise important issues of dual loyalty, akin to those faced by the victim diasporas in the period of modernity. If the nation-state can no longer take for granted the fidelity to the country of settlement on which rests the possibility of mobilising troops and conducting war, one of the crucial functions of the modern state has been eroded. In the Second World War, Japanese-Americans were wrongly construed as a Fifth Column and suffered unjust internment. However, similar fears by states of other minorities may now be more credible. One indicator of this shift is that there seem to be few states with large immigrant populations that can rely on conscription rather than a professional army to fight their wars.

Even in peace-time, metropolitan politics are getting continually sucked into the politics of the homelands. Sikh demands for Khalistan, for example, have resulted in violent protests in Canada, the USA and Britain. However, one need not focus only on sensationalist episodes. The general point is that immigrants are no longer individualized or obedient prospective citizens. Instead, they may retain dual citizenship, agitate for special trade deals with their homelands, demand aid in exchange for electoral support, influence foreign policy and seek to protect family immigration quotas.

Where the homeland does not strictly-speaking exist, the politics of homeland conflict directly with the territorial claims of nation-states. In these cases violence, usually terrorism, is common. Illustrative cases are the IRA's [Irish Republic Army] claims for a united Ireland, Hamas's insistence on a reconstituted Palestine, the formation of militant Sikh groups demanding the *Kalsa raj* [a Sikh sovereign state] in the wake of the Indian troops' attack on the Golden Temple and the terrorist section of the PKK [Kurdish Workers' Party] fighting for a sovereign Kurdistan. While such terrorist challenges have, by no means, totally undermined the power of the nation-states concerned , they have none the less provided formidable military threats.

More subtle challenges arise in respect of social policy – in particular language rights, educational provision and the judicial system become open to question. Unlike the waves of previous immigrants from Europe and Asia, significant numbers of Hispanics in the USA have demanded equal language rights. Ethnically-defined schools are now common in many industrialised countries, while some diasporic groups have suggested that their customary law should run alongside, or even supersede, the law of their countries of settlement.

The optimists suggest that liberal democracies can construct 'an egalitarian multi-cultural society' where 'it is possible, without threat to the overall unity of the national society, to recognize that minorities have a right to their own language in family and community contexts, the right to practice their own religion, the right to organize domestic and family relations in their own way, and the right to maintain communal customs'.[22]

By contrast, the pessimists claim that certain values and ways of life that are imported are simply incompatible with the way in which western liberal democracies (in particular) have evolved. To take one important example, the separation of Church and State was resolved through bitter religious wars in Europe and the acceptance of secularism at the time of the founding of the large immigrant-importing states like the USA, Canada and Australia. The difference between the public and private domains is, however, fundamentally challenged by theocratic ideas (not only articulated by Muslims, but notably by them) which deny any domain-differences between private worship, the provision of education and the governance of the state. One author submits that by wanting to change the rules, rather than play the game, diasporas will

be 'a means of destroying the delicate balance between a common culture and a particular difference',[23]

Conclusion

Diaporas started in the classical and pre-modern period. Although often seen as casualties of misfortune and forcible dispersal, it did not always turn out badly for the victim diasporas in their exile in Babylon. Where undoubtedly a conflict did arise was in relation to the emergent force of nationalism. What the nationalists wanted was a 'space' for each 'race', a territorializing of each social identity. What they have got instead (only they do not admit it!) is a chain of cosmopolitan cities and an increasing proliferation of diasporic, sub-national and ethnic identities that cannot easily be contained in the nation-state system. There is no longer any stability in the points of origin, no finality in the points of destination and no necessary coincidence between social and national identities.[24]

Nationalists cannot now return the genie of social identity to the bottle of the territorial nation-state. Globalisation has put paid to that possibility and in so doing enhanced the practical, economic and affective roles of diasporas, showing them to be particularly adaptive forms of social organisation. Some diasporas appear to have mutated across several phases and assumed different forms, refurbishing themselves as they go along. Seen as a forms of social organisation, diasporas have pre-dated the nation-state, lived uneasily within it and now may, in significant respects, transcend and succeed it.

Notes

∗ This first part of this article draws on an earlier publication, 'Rethinking Babylon: iconoclastic conceptions of the diaspora experience', *New Community*, 21: 1, 1995, pp. 5–18, while my book entitled *Global diasporas: an introduction* (London: UCL Press, forthcoming) will greatly amplify the arguments advanced here.

1 Thus James Clifford, 'Diasporas', *Cultural Anthropology* 9: 3, 1994, p. 303, avers that 'We should be able to recognize the strong entailment of Jewish history on the language of diaspora without making that history a definitive model. Jewish (and Greek and Armenian) diasporas can be taken as non-normative starting points for a discourse that is travelling in new global conditions'. Similarly, Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett in 'Spaces of dispersal', *Cultural Anthropology* 9: 3, 1994, p. 340, while accepting Clifford's argument that the Jews should not be thought of as the normative model, argues that in discussing issues of homelessness, placelessness and statelessness, 'the Jew has served as the oncomouse of social theory'. Finally, Jonathan Boyarin, in an unpublished paper to the International Congress of the Historical Sciences, Montreal, 1995, p. 5, holds that: 'It is important to insist, not on the centrality of Jewish diaspora nor on its logical priority within comparative diaspora studies, yet still on the need to refer to, and better understand, Jewish diaspora history within the contemporary diasporic rubric'.

2 Arnold Ages, *The diaspora dimension* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), p. 10.

3 Daniel Halévy, an eminent French writer concurred. He thought it essential to escape the confines of a traditional religion: 'How happy I am to have left that hell, to have escaped from Judaism'. Many other emancipated European Jews shared this sentiment. The German poet Heinrich Heine, who also had Jewish ancestry, was equally blunt. Judaism was not a religion but a misfortune: 'Those who would say Judaism is a religion would say that being a hunchback is a religion' (quotes from Albert S. Lindemann, *The Jew accused. Three anti-Semitic affairs: Dreyfus, Beilus, Frank, 1884–1915,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 15 and 62.

4 Lindemann, *The Jew accused*, pp. 35–93.

5 There is an immense literature on the Dreyfus trial. A reliable account of its implications is provided by Michael R. Marrus, *The politics of assimilation: the French Jewish community at the time of the Dreyfus affair* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

6 Cited in David J. Goldberg and John D. Raynor, *The Jewish people: their history and their religion* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989), p. 166.

7 Breaks in the loop are evident in the contemporary USA and Britain where 40–50 per cent of Jewish women (who alone bequeath the identity) are marrying 'out'. Jewish community leaders complain they are being 'killed by kindness'. Better, I would suggest, than some other ways of being killed.

8 See Ronald Segal, *The black diaspora* (London: Faber, 1995) for a recent and engaging account.

9 This is the event on which the distinguished historian and former director of studies of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Arnold Toynbee, first cut his scholarly teeth. See his *Armenian atrocities: the murder of a nation* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915) and his edited book bearing the imprint of the British government, *The treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman empire, 1915–16* (London, HMSO, 1916).

10 Christine Kinealy, *The great calamity: the Irish famine, 1845–52* (London: Gill & Macmillan, 1995).

11 William Safran, 'Diasporas in modern societies: myths of homeland and return', *Diaspora* 1: 1, 1991, p. 83.

12 I have dealt with the ambiguities Caribbean peoples present under the interrogative title of 'A diaspora of a diaspora? The case of the Caribbean', *Social Science Information*, 31: 1, 1992, pp. 193–203.

13 Safran, 'Diasporas in modern societies', pp. 83–4.

14 See, for example, Stuart Hall, 'Cultural identity and diaspora', in Jonathan Rutherford (ed.) *Identity: community, culture, difference* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990) and Paul Gilroy, *The black Atlantic: modernity and double consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993).

15 See Hugh Tinker's classic account *A new system of slavery: the export of Indian labour overseas, 1830–1920* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974) for the involuntary view and P. C. Emmer (ed.) *Colonialism and migration: indentured labour before and after slavery* (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1986) for a heterodox account.

16 Richard Marienstras, 'On the notion of diaspora' in Gérard Chaliand (ed.) *Minority peoples in the age of nation-states* (London: Pluto Press, 1989).

17	As will have been gathered by now, I prefer the phrase 'the age of globalisation' to 'post-modernity' or 'late modernity' as the former expresses process not outcome and alludes more clearly to the totally of world-wide changes, not just to the shifts in the consciousness of the intelligentsia in the metropoles.

18	H. V. Perlmutter, 'On the rocky road to the first global civilisation', *Human Relations*, 44: 9, 1991, pp. 897–1010.

19	Wang Gangwu, *China and the Chinese overseas* (Singapore: Times Academic Press 1991), pp. 170–1.

20	Peter Kwong, *The new Chinatown* (New York: Hill & Wang 1987), pp. 25–6).

21	Sterling Seagrave, *Lords of the rim: the invisible empire of the overseas Chinese* (New York: Putnam, 1995).

22	Jon Rex, 'Ethnic identity and the nation state: the political sociology of multi-cultural societies', *Social Identities*, 1: 1, 1995, pp. 30–1.

23	Morris Dickstein, 'After the Cold War: culture as politics, politics as culture', *Social Research*, 60: 3, 1993, pp. 539–40.

24	Aisha Khan, 'Homeland, motherland: authenticity, legitimacy and ideologies of place among Muslims in Trinidad' in Peter van der Veer (ed.) *Nation and migration: the politics of space in the South Asian diaspora* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), p. 93.