

# Quebec and Puerto Rico: Parallel Destinies

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## RESUMEN

Este artículo compara la historia de Puerto Rico y Quebec para mostrar una similitud en la evolución histórica desde los primeros días de la colonización europea hasta hoy. Durante la primera fase de su historia, ambas colonias tenían una importancia estratégica más que económica para sus imperios. Una segunda fase empezó cuando ambas sociedades fueron conquistadas por un imperio que intentó integrarlas dentro un marco político y cultural extraño. Como resultado, en ambas sociedades surgieron varios movimientos nacionalistas en busca de independencia o autonomía en el nuevo marco imperial. Una tercera fase en la historia de estas sociedades empezó con el logro de la autonomía local. En ambas sociedades han surgido discursos de afirmación nacional similares. Ninguna de estas sociedades ha podido resolver la cuestión del *estatus* hasta la fecha.

Palabras clave: colonialismo, imperialismo, nacionalismo, autonomía, independencia, Quebec, Puerto Rico, comparación

## ABSTRACT

This article compares the history of Puerto Rico and Quebec to demonstrate a similarity in evolution from the first European settlements to the present day. During the first phase of their history both colonies were of strategic rather than economic importance to the empires that created them. A second phase began when both societies were subjected to conquest by an empire that sought to integrate them within an alien political and cultural framework. As a result, both societies saw the rise of various nationalist movements seeking independence or autonomy within the new imperial framework. A third phase in the history of these societies began with the attainment of local autonomy. In both societies similar discourses of national affirmation have appeared. Neither society has been able to resolve the *status* question to this day.

Keywords: colonialism, imperialism, nationalism, autonomy, independence, Quebec, Puerto Rico, comparison

In the large and growing literature comparing minority nationalisms in the Western world, Quebec is often included in a group of “nations without states” such as Scotland, Catalonia, or the Basque country of Spain that are struggling to attain new forms of political relationships with the “majority” nations of which they are part (Guibernau, 2007). Another angle of comparison has been with Ireland: both are Catholic societies that have been subject to British rule and have developed a culture of colonial resistance to it (Jolivet, 2006a, 2006b; King, 2007; O’Brien, 2003; Reilly, 1994, 1995; Rudin, 1994; Stevenson, 2003). From another perspective, Quebec is often described as the only polity of the American continent that has not achieved political independence.<sup>1</sup> This is, of course, untrue: Puerto Rico, for one, provides another example of an American hemisphere polity whose constitutional status, like Quebec’s, remains in contention.<sup>2</sup>

This article sketches the outline of a historical comparison of Quebec<sup>3</sup> and Puerto Rico as two societies that share one major similar historical experience: both are societies that have been twice colonized, first by European powers that took over the territory of native societies, and second through military conquest by a culturally alien empire. Both Quebec and Puerto Rico have obtained a large measure of political autonomy from the conquering power, but both have remained linked to the larger political entity that controls their eventual constitutional destiny; in the case of Puerto Rico, a change of *status* has to be approved by the United States Congress (Rivera Ramos, 2007), and in the case of Quebec, the Canadian Supreme Court decision of 1998 on secession and the Federal Clarity Act of 2000 have set the parameters within which separation could be negotiated.<sup>4</sup>

In both Quebec and Puerto Rico, political status has been an object of intellectual and political debate for more than a century. In Quebec, the options are the status quo, a renewed form of federalism giving greater autonomy to the province, or independence. In Puerto Rico, the options are the status quo or Estado Libre Asociado (ELA), i.e. local autonomy without representation in the US Congress or the right to vote in presidential elections; an improved form of ELA giving Puerto Rico sovereignty, but maintaining its association with the US; statehood within the American union; or independence. In Puerto Rico as in Quebec, the status question permeates most other political issues: political parties are largely defined by the options they champion. More broadly, the issue of constitutional status looms large in the representations of national identity that both peoples have constructed for themselves. The experience of double colonization has given both societies a similar historical narrative of resistance to the second colonization, and of achievement of autonomy within a larger entity that is not altogether satisfactory in either society. Comparing Quebec and Puerto Rico can offer new perspectives: something may

be learned about Puerto Rico from a comparison with Quebec, and something may be learned about Quebec from the comparison with Puerto Rico.

There are, of course, substantial political, demographic, and economic differences between Quebec and Puerto Rico that need to be acknowledged from the outset. Constitutionally, Puerto Rico has much less weight in US federal institutions than Quebec has within Canadian institutions. Puerto Rico has a resident commissioner who can address the US House of Representatives, but who cannot vote. Unlike Quebec in the Canadian Senate, Puerto Rico has no representation in the US Senate. Since they have no home constituency on which to build a federal career in the House of Representatives or in the Senate, politicians in Puerto Rico have little role to play in US federal politics,<sup>5</sup> while some Quebec politicians have attained the highest office in the Canadian federal government.

The demographic make-up of both contemporary societies is substantially different as well. The Puerto Rican population of nearly four million is the relatively homogeneous product of old *mestizaje* between Spaniards, African slaves, and some of the indigenous population.<sup>6</sup> Recent immigration to Puerto Rico has come from the culturally similar islands of Cuba and the Dominican Republic. The French-Canadian population of Quebec, which makes up about 80% of the province's nearly eight million inhabitants, has long considered itself homogeneous as well, but it has incorporated Native and British components and now lives together with a very diverse and visible *allophone* (of non-French and non-English mother tongue) population.<sup>7</sup>

Economically, the two populations live under markedly different economic conditions. In Puerto Rico, the 2006 estimated median family income was \$20,425;<sup>8</sup> the Quebec median family income for the same year was \$59,000.<sup>9</sup> Unemployment in Puerto Rico in 2006 averaged 10.4%;<sup>10</sup> the Quebec rate was 8.0%.<sup>11</sup> The 2007-2009 recession had a more severe impact in Puerto Rico, where the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate rose to 15.4%,<sup>12</sup> than in Quebec, where it stood at 8.4%.<sup>13</sup> The Quebec Gross Domestic Product comes essentially from services (69%), with a relatively light industrial sector (18.9%), while Puerto Rico retains more of a traditional breakdown between industry (45%) and services (54%).<sup>14</sup>

Yet, in spite of these contemporary differences, a comparative examination of the history of both societies reveals remarkable parallels. In both societies, political structures of foreign origin and a strong sense of cultural specificity in the face of a foreign culture combine to shape similar self-perceptions of *exceptional* societies uncertain of the national self-definitions they want for themselves.

The comparison sketched out here is divided into three periods: the first colonial period, where each colony was directly administered

by its mother country (1492-1898 for Puerto Rico, 1608-1760 for Quebec); a second colonial period, where limited political self-governance was allowed each colony, but during which the colonial power pursued policies of assimilation (1898-1948 for Puerto Rico, 1760-1867 for Quebec); and an *autonomous* period, during which the *national struggle* grew in intensity and representations of national identity in each society were reconfigured under the pressure of new elites in each society.

### The First Colonial Period

In spite of a markedly different chronology, the first colonial period bore some similar characteristics in both colonies. Puerto Rico and Quebec (or Canada as it was called under the French regime) both possessed few natural resources of use to their mother countries. Puerto Rico had little precious metal and limited amounts of land for Spain to exploit; Canada had lots of land but offered little else beside furs and fish (neither requiring an extensive French colonial presence) to the French empire. Rather, both colonies played an essentially strategic role: Puerto Rico offered a fortified harbor to defend the sea lanes from Spain to South America, while Canada slowed the advance of British colonists into the interior of North America. In both cases, immigration from the mother country was limited and, as a consequence, population grew slowly. Of the 27,000 French men and women who made the crossing to Canada, only about 10,000 stayed and had descendants (Greer, 1997: 12). At the end of the French regime, in 1760, the Canadian population has been estimated at 72,500 (Trudel, 1999: 82); likewise, Puerto Rico did not draw much immigration from Spain. In 1765, its population was given as 44,883 (Dietz, 1986: 31).

In neither colony did Native populations contribute much to demographic growth. The native Arawak and Taino populations were chased into extinction in Puerto Rico, and in New France, after the conflicts of the 17th century, only a few Native settlements remained within the territory of the colony (Trigger, 1986). It would take centuries before these Native populations would be acknowledged in the historical narratives of either colony.

Historians have remarked that the strategic importance of Puerto Rico and Canada for their respective metropolises contributed to create societies dominated by the military class dependent on the favours of metropolitan authorities (Eccles, 1971; Lewis, 1963: 48). On the other side of that coin were the exactions committed by the military upon the local population (Dechêne, 2008). In Canada, the Seven Years' War required the mobilization of most able-bodied men and brought about the pillaging and destruction of villages down the St. Lawrence river from Quebec City (Dechêne, 2008: 397-429; Deschênes, 1988).

In Puerto Rico, the conquest of the island by US troops in 1898 was a less devastating affair, but Puerto Ricans had long chafed under Spanish rule, especially as Spain maintained the Island economy within a “neomercantilistic protectionism,” to use Gordon K. Lewis’s phrase (Lewis, 1963: 49). New France has also been subjected to the French variant of mercantilism that arguably constrained its economic development by depriving it of immigration (Charbonneau & Bates, 1993) and limiting its industrial development (Lunn, 1942). During this first phase of colonialism, neither Quebec nor Puerto Rico obtained political autonomy.

Because Puerto Rico experienced nearly four centuries of Spanish rule, including a 19th century that witnessed the birth of independent states in Latin America, scholars claim that it developed a sense of ethnic identity distinct from that of Spain with the rise of an intellectual elite in the 19th century (Babín, 1986; Carrión, 1996). This is less evident in the case of New France,<sup>15</sup> although nationalist historians have tried to portray the colony as “Canadian,” living a sort of idyllic age before the calamity of the Conquest (Frégault, 1969).

### **The Second Colonial Period**

For Britain in 1760 as for the United States in 1898, the newly-conquered colonies were mostly valuable, at the outset, for strategic reasons. In conquering Canada, Britain removed France as a North American colonial power, took control of the vast lands in the interior of North America, and reduced the Native threats to its other colonies (Neatby, 1966; Gipson, 1936-1970). For the US, Puerto Rico offered a strategic naval location from which to exert dominance over the Caribbean trade routes to North and South America (Estades Font, 1988). The US strategic interest in Puerto Rico would flare up again at the beginning of the Second World War (Rodríguez Beruff, 2007). The economic resources of each colony, although valuable, were not crucial to the imperial requirements of each colonial power. Quebec would provide furs, fish, and later timber, but each of these resources was available to Britain elsewhere. Puerto Rico produced sugar and coffee, and American capital poured into Puerto Rican sugar production, transforming Puerto Rico’s rural world (Lewis, 1963: 85-94) and reducing US dependence on sugar imports, but sugar was hardly a strategic commodity: in 1898 the US imported more than twice as much sugar (in volume) from the British West Indies, and four times as much from Cuba as from Puerto Rico (United States, 1902: 347).

For both Britain and the US, as well, the newly-conquered colonies posed a substantial problem of integration. Both colonies were well-organized societies, with religious, linguistic, legal, and cultural characteristics quite different from those of the imperial power. How

would these colonies fit into each imperial polity? The answer in both cases was that the new colonies were to be assimilated into the dominant culture of the empire. In Quebec, this was the long-term policy of the British government, but for a long time the demographic make-up of Quebec made this policy difficult to implement (Buckner, 1985); only after the failed rebellions of 1837 and 1838 did the British government take strong political measures to “raise the defective institutions of Lower Canada (Quebec) to the level of British civilization and freedom,” as Lord Durham, the British commissioner sent to Canada in the aftermath of the rebellions, advocated (Lambton Durham, Buller, & Wakefield, 1839: 390). In Puerto Rico, US policy from the outset was to turn Puerto Ricans into “tropical Yankees” (Navarro, 2002: 48) by fostering the use of English in schools and encouraging Protestant ministers to proselytize Puerto Ricans (Silva Gotay, 1998). This policy, however, soon proved impracticable. Economic development would be the tool for bringing “peace, education, and progress” to Puerto Rico, as to the other peoples of the Caribbean (Healy, 1988: 69, 176).

In Puerto Rico as in Quebec, imperial policies of assimilation required the construction of stereotypes of the newly-conquered peoples as ignorant and indolent, child-like in their intellectual development. In Quebec, the British merchants and administrators who came to the colony in the aftermath of the Conquest believed in the superiority of British institutions and in the backwardness of the “Popish” new subjects (Neatby, 1966). In Puerto Rico, official efforts to impose English as the language of schooling were but one manifestation of the attitude of superiority that the Americans exhibited *vis-à-vis* Puerto Ricans. These attitudes were similar to attitudes towards the colonials that French and Spanish administrators had displayed during the first colonial period.<sup>16</sup>

The administrative structure implemented by the US in Puerto Rico was also similar to what Britain had done in Canada more than a century earlier. Canada during the French regime did not have representative institutions; it was governed by a governor and an appointed council. This structure was maintained in the aftermath of the Conquest, but in 1791 a representative assembly was granted to Lower Canada (Quebec) in order to raise taxes locally; the governor kept control of the administrative apparatus and could veto legislation from the assembly and dismiss it. It was only in 1848 that *responsible government*, i.e. the requirement that ministers of the Crown command a majority in the representative assembly, was granted to Canada for domestic affairs.

For most of its Spanish colonial history, Puerto Rico was also administered by governor and council. The latter part of the 19th century saw the rise of autonomous movements within the remaining colonies of the Spanish empire, notably in Cuba, but also in Puerto Rico. Only

in the last year of Spanish rule did Madrid grant Puerto Rico local representative institutions. Like in Quebec in the immediate aftermath of conquest (1760-1764), Puerto Rico after the US conquest was first administered by military government, which was replaced in 1900, by the terms of the Foraker Act, with a governor-and-assembly structure similar to the one established in Quebec in 1791. In 1917, the Jones Act made both houses of the Puerto Rican Assembly elective, and it also conferred US citizenship to Puerto Ricans, but without representation in the US Congress or the right to vote for the US president. This was similar to the situation of Canadians within the British Empire: local autonomy but no representation in imperial political institutions.

In Quebec and in Puerto Rico, this second colonial period was marked by the rise of nationalism as imperialism tried to impose the culture of the imperial power upon the vanquished colony. The threats to cultural survival contained in the assimilationist policies of imperial authorities, the yearning of local bourgeoisies for greater political and economic power, and the example of independence movements in America and in Europe fed the nationalist movements. This nationalism found in representative institutions a permanent locus of expression. This rested in part on the application in each colony of British rights of habeas corpus and due process; these rights, however, were at times put aside by imperial authorities.<sup>17</sup>

In Quebec, the elected assembly was made up of a permanent majority of French-Canadian reformers, who became ever more hungry for local autonomy. Within 40 years the elected assembly and local representatives of the imperial administration were deadlocked over use of the public purse and access to administrative office. Despairing of obtaining control of the local administration, the Reformers became increasingly attracted to the idea of independence from Britain, taking the US as their model. This led to the uprisings of 1837 and 1838 (Filteau & Desbiens, 2003; Senior, 1985), which aimed to gain independence for Quebec, and the imposition of a constitutional merger between Lower Canada (Quebec) and Upper Canada (present-day Ontario) aimed at submerging the French-Canadian population into a greater, English-speaking and Protestant political entity: the Union of the Canadas.<sup>18</sup> For Puerto Ricans, belonging to the US and having US citizenship presented a dilemma: should Puerto Ricans try and become full-fledged Americans, perhaps eventually losing their language and their culture, should they try to make the best of their autonomy within the American orbit, or should they seek independence (Bernabe, 1996)? In both colonies, independence appeared as a means of undoing conquest, but it entailed depriving each colonial power of important strategic positions and was thus a high-risk proposition.

In both colonies also, political cleavages among parties revolved around nationalist issues more than class or economic issues. In



Quebec, the *conservative* or Tory party mainly drew supporters from the British Anglophone minority, which benefited from government appointments, although a few French Canadians shared in these spoils. Reformists—French-Canadian and English-Canadian alike—were split between those who advocated reform within the framework of British institutions and those who, inspired by the American example, sought independence and, for some, incorporation as a state within the American republic.<sup>19</sup> In Puerto Rico, a similar political cleavage gradually appeared after the US conquest. The Union party, the most popular in Puerto Rico between 1904 and 1924, initially had independence as its ultimate aspiration, but sought more autonomy as its immediate goal. More clearly *independentist* parties also sprang up in 1912 and 1922 but were ill-regarded by the US administration. On the other side of the constitutional issue stood the Republican and Socialist parties, who favored access to statehood within the American Union, seeing in this avenue the road to Puerto Rican prosperity and development (Malavet, 2004: 57-67). By and large, in Quebec as in Puerto Rico, the political elites were made up of members of professional classes—merchants, lawyers—but in Quebec the Catholic clergy also played a prominent role on the side of conservatism (Ouellet, 1980), which does not appear to have been the case in Puerto Rico (Silva Gotay, 2005).

The most emblematic figures of Quebec and Puerto Rican nationalism in this second colonial period were Louis-Joseph Papineau and Pedro Albizu Campos respectively. Papineau, a seigneur's son trained as a lawyer, became the parliamentary leader of the Canadian (later called Patriote) party in the Lower Canadian assembly. When London repeatedly failed to answer the Patriotes' call for making the administration answerable to the assembly, Papineau grew increasingly radical. Inspired by the American example, he rejected British rule as illegitimate and adopted a rhetorical strategy reminiscent of the American revolutionaries of 1775. A brilliant public speaker, Papineau was a republican, an anticlerical deist and a liberal defender of the French-Canadian *nationalité* who advocated independence for Quebec in a series of popular meetings, in 1837. He seemed to have believed that British rule would fall of its own under popular pressure. Papineau contemplated the prospect of insurrection, but as Patriote leader did little to provide a clear strategy for the overthrow of British rule. The Patriotes trained in martial arts and the rebellion of 1837 began as a skirmish between British troops and Canadian Patriotes. When the armed uprising began, Papineau fled to the United States, and later France. He remained in exile until 1845, when he returned to Canada and resumed his political career, but he thereafter remained a secondary figure of Quebec politics.<sup>20</sup>

Like Papineau, Albizu Campos was a brilliant orator who

could inflame crowds of his supporters. Trained like Papineau as a professional man, also knowledgeable about American institutions (he studied engineering and chemistry in Vermont and obtained a law degree from Harvard) and British colonialism, he denounced American control of Puerto Rico as illegitimate, advocated worker resistance to American monopoly capital and independence for the Puerto Rican nation, and in so doing incurred the wrath of US authorities. Convicted of sedition in 1937, he served a ten-year sentence and returned in Puerto Rico to resume the nationalist struggle. Like Papineau, he was involved in attempting revolution, and like Papineau, he has been seen as an amateur rebel (Malavet, 2004: 96). Albizu was, however, much more harshly treated by US and Puerto Rican authorities than Papineau had been a hundred years earlier; he was sentenced to 80 years in prison for his support of the 1950 nationalist attack on the governor's mansion in San Juan and on the president's residence in Washington. While Papineau's political support had been overwhelming in Lower Canada, Albizu's Nationalist Party never made much headway at the polls. Both Papineau and Albizu Campos were eclipsed in their later careers by more moderate politicians seeking a less confrontational increase in political autonomy. In Quebec, leadership of the French-Canadian reformists fell to Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine, who forged an alliance with reformers in Upper Canada to gain a majority in the assembly of United Canada in 1848 and to obtain responsible government. Twenty years later, it was the conservative George-Étienne Cartier who allied with a Conservative from Upper Canada, John A. Macdonald, to promote the union of the British North American provinces in a Confederation which would be autonomous within the British Empire, save for matters of international relations (Monet, 1976; Bonenfant, 1972). In Puerto Rico, Luis Muñoz Marín abandoned the ideal of independence in favor of the fruits of American aid during the Depression and devised the ELA as an autonomous position half-way between assimilation into the US federation and independence.

In both Quebec and Puerto Rico, autonomy was achieved because the loosening of political control suited the colonial power: the British practiced indirect rule as a less costly form of imperial rule, and the US had to appear to follow the post-World War II decolonization trend by granting Puerto Rico autonomy in internal affairs. The interests of the colonial powers coincided with those of colonial politicians who sought in autonomy a tool to insure the cultural survival of Quebec or Puerto Rico.

### **The *Autonomous* Period**

In Quebec, the autonomous period began in 1867 with the adoption by the British Parliament of the British North America Act, which

brought three British North America colonies – Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the United Province of Canada, composed of Canada West (Ontario) and Canada East (Quebec) into a federal arrangement under the name “Dominion of Canada.” The new constitution made Canada sovereign in domestic affairs, though London retained control of external affairs. Canada formally gained absolute control over its constitution only in 1982 with the Canada Act.<sup>21</sup> In the 1867 constitutional division of powers, which was essentially maintained in 1982, Quebec, like the other provinces, had jurisdiction over local affairs, from natural resources to marriage, including health, education, and social welfare, while the Federal government had power over trade and commerce, banking, military affairs, as well as anything not specifically assigned to the provinces. The Federal and Quebec governments and courts were to be bilingual. In the Federal Senate, each “region” of the country had equal representation: Quebec was one such region; however, senators were appointed by the federal government. In the House of Commons, representation was based on population. The 1867 Act did not provide any mechanism for substantial constitutional rearrangement of powers between the Federal government and the provinces, as this fell within the purview of the Imperial Parliament. It is this anomaly that the Canada Act 1982 sought to remove. Amending the Canadian constitution henceforth requires resolutions of the Federal Parliament and of two thirds of the legislative assemblies of the provinces, provided these represent a majority of the Canadian population. This was intended to be a difficult process, and so it proved in two successive attempts to modify the constitution—the Meech Lake (1987) and Charlottetown (1992) accords—which ended in failure.

The Canadian constitutional arrangements of 1867 did not explicitly provide for the preservation of French-Canadian culture and institutions, but since the Quebec government was the only level of administration controlled by French Canadians, it soon claimed to be speaking for the French-Canadian element throughout Canada. In an attempt to loosen the identification of French Canadians with the Quebec government, the Canada Act, 1982 inserted into the Canadian constitution what were called “minority language educational rights,” i.e. the right of Anglophone minorities in Quebec and of Francophone minorities elsewhere in Canada to receive schooling in their language where numbers warranted (Canada, 1982). Notwithstanding the formal lack of recognition of French-Canadian culture in the Canadian constitution, French Canadians have obtained more weight in Canadian Federal institutions than Puerto Ricans have in US Federal institutions. French Canadians have always made a substantial proportion of members of the Canadian Federal Cabinet and a number of them have been prime ministers of Canada.<sup>22</sup> Yet, at critical junctures in Canadian

history—such as the trial and execution of Métis leader Louis Riel in 1885 or Canadian participation in the two World Wars—the majority English-Canadian population fully exerted its weight. Puerto Ricans' political weight in US federal institutions, on the other hand, depends more on the political strength of their mainland communities than on the particular characteristics of Puerto Rico as a cultural entity (Rivera Ramos, 2007). Still, Puerto Rico, like Quebec, enjoys local autonomy and can use the power vested in local government to bolster the Puerto Rican nation through cultural nationalism (Morris, 1995; Dávila, 1997).

This institutional framework of constrained local autonomy within a larger federal system set the stage for the appearance of political leaders, both in Quebec and in Puerto Rico, who used nationalism to sustain their political coalitions. The most durable of these politicians were Maurice Duplessis, who was premier of Quebec from 1936 to 1939 and from 1944 until his death in 1959, and Luis Muñoz Marín, who was governor of Puerto Rico from 1949 to 1965. Duplessis was a small-town Conservative lawyer who became Leader of the Opposition in the Quebec provincial legislature in 1933. Two years later, he joined with a left-wing splinter group of the dominant Liberal Party to form the Union Nationale party on a reformist platform to end government corruption, reign in the electric power monopolies in the province, and help farmers hard hit by the Depression. Duplessis soon elbowed out his reformist colleagues, took over the leadership of the party, and won the 1936 provincial election. He accomplished few of his reforms during his first term, which ended in 1939 with a precipitously-called provincial election to fight against Canada's involvement in the Second World War. Returning to office in 1944 after the Federal government had imposed conscription upon the country, Duplessis let loose his conservative tendencies. He fostered industrialization, mostly by American capital; he was strongly anti-labor; and he revived the corrupt practices of his Liberal predecessors as he built a powerful political machine. Duplessis used nationalist rhetoric to fight against the Federal government's encroachment over provincial spheres of activity, but his rhetoric based on the affirmation of Quebec as rural, French-speaking, and Catholic did not temper his contempt for intellectuals and artists. He was close to the Catholic hierarchy, attacked his enemies as Communists, and deprived some of them of their civil liberties under a law, passed in 1937 and popularly called the Padlock Law, which allowed the Attorney General (Duplessis served as both Premier and Attorney General), to lock up any premises supposedly used for Communist activities. Duplessis catered to the nationalist, often conservative, elements of Quebec society, notably by giving the province its own flag in 1948 after the Canadian government failed to find agreement on a flag for the whole country. The *fleurdelysé* flag

became the emblem not only of the province, but also of Duplessis's Union Nationale party.

As Duplessis extolled the rural and Catholic character of Quebec during the 1950s, the province paradoxically became a very urban society, and the post-war boom led to the development of an urban middle class. The baby boom required investments in schooling and the extension of health services, but both of these sectors remained under the control of the Catholic Church. The repressive character of the Duplessis administration generated strong resistance among nationalist intellectuals.<sup>23</sup>

Muñoz Marín was a more complex and, in many ways, a more successful and adulated figure than Duplessis, but there are many similarities in their political trajectories. Muñoz Marín came to politics from a nationalist family. Unlike Duplessis, he flirted with socialism and Puerto Rican independence in his youth, but as he gained political influence his views shifted to a more moderate approach. The formal achievement of local autonomy became, for Muñoz Marín, the first step in the political maturation of Puerto Rico. Muñoz Marín gained political prominence as one of the founding members of the Partido Popular Democrático (PPD), who won a majority in the Puerto Rican Senate in 1940. Muñoz navigated between socialist, *independentista*, and progressive forces, which he shaped for his own purposes (Villaronga, 2004). Muñoz became president of the Senate and, in 1948, won the first election to be held for the post of governor. He worked hard to give the Island a new constitutional status, which was formalized in 1952 with the adoption of a constitution by the Puerto Rican people and its ratification by the US Congress. This status was called Estado Libre Asociado in Spanish and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in English. It was a middle ground between outright independence on the one hand, which would eventually deprive Puerto Ricans of their US citizenship and would cut Puerto Rico off from the US market, and statehood on the other, which would threaten the cultural survival of Puerto Ricans as they would be driven to become English-speaking Americans. Like Duplessis, Muñoz Marín made his political party the symbol of local autonomy.

Muñoz Marín and his party worked to transform Puerto Rico from an agricultural economy reliant on the monoculture of sugar into an industrialized economy by attracting US investment through subsidies and tax exemptions, in a strategy reminiscent of that employed by Duplessis.<sup>24</sup> The PPD also worked to strengthen cultural institutions in Puerto Rico, notably with the creation of the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, in 1955 (Flores, 1998). The construction of Puerto Rican national identity was to be detached from the status issue. Like Duplessis's Union Nationale, Muñoz Marín's *Populares* appropriated for their partisan purposes the flag and national anthem of Puerto

Rico (Dávila, 1997: 97). Like the Union Nationale, which published the *Le Catéchisme des Électeurs* for the 1935 provincial election, the *Populares* published a *Catecismo del Pueblo* for the 1940 election (Villaronga, 2004: 72, 148). Both propaganda tools borrowed the simple question-and-answer format and, by their title, associated their party with the true faith. Like Duplessis also, Muñoz Marín used the police and the legal system against some of his political enemies, especially after the failed nationalist uprising of 1950, by the application of the Ley de Mordaza, which made it illegal to advocate the use of force to implement political change (Acosta, 1987).

Both Duplessis and Muñoz Marín were gifted public speakers, populist politicians who were able to manipulate progressive forces into supporting them, who “talked left” at the beginning of their careers, but who “acted right” later. They shared the spotlight with intellectual figures who sought to define the nation, and between whom there are also striking parallels: Antonio S. Pedreira and Canon Lionel Groulx. Both Pedreira and Groulx saw in history the essence of the nation, and both were worried about its degradation under the impact of the modern, North American, English-speaking, and Protestant world. Groulx (1878-1967) was a priest who self-trained in history.<sup>25</sup> Pedreira (1899-1939) became professor of literature and Hispanic studies (Flores, 1980). Both offered essentialist definitions of the nation, grounded in part in biology, and both ascribed a providential mission to their nation in America. Neither shied away from criticism of their fellow citizens’ meekness, lack of enterprise, lack of vision, traits which, they argued, made up their countrymen’s national character. Both were alarmed by the intrusion of materialistic North American culture and values and considered Latin culture nobler. Pedreira’s ideology in his classic *Insularismo* has been linked to the Arielist movement in Spanish-speaking countries in the first third of the century, which stressed “elitism, individualism, rhetorical appeal to ‘youth’ and national rejuvenation” (Flores, 1980: 46; Bernabe, 2002: 49-52). Groulx, for his part, was close to the French Action Française of the same period, a royalist movement with strong conservative, anti-Semitic tendencies, and he created a Quebec version of the French movement.<sup>26</sup> He saw independence for Quebec as an ideal, but did not engage in active politics. He venerated French culture, but not French republicanism. Like Pedreira, he believed the salvation of his nation was in the hands of its youth. Both intellectuals borrowed from European conservative traditions in a paradoxical effort to underline their society’s specific national traits.

In both Quebec and Puerto Rico these fairly conservative intellectuals shared the ideological field with more trenchant opponents of the status quo, who wanted to end what they considered the national oppression of their country by a colonial power. Puerto



Rico experienced a nationalist, anticolonialist uprising in many parts of the Island in late October 1950: Peñuelas, Ponce, Arecibo, Utuado, Mayagüez, Naranjito, Jayuya, San Juan, Santurce, and on November 1st in Washington, D.C., where Puerto Rican nationalists attacked Blair House, the president's temporary residence as the White House was under renovations. The insurgents (at least 140 in numbers) were mainly young males, agricultural and non-agricultural workers, whose aim was to liberate Puerto Rico from foreign domination and establish independence (Seijo Bruno, 1989: 243-244). They had been frustrated by the adoption of Public Act 600 by the US Congress in July 1950, which provided for a referendum on the internal constitution of Puerto Rico, but which did not fundamentally alter its relationship with the United States and formally left to the US Congress the power to modify Puerto Rico's constitution.

The post-war decolonization movement, of which Algeria and Cuba were the best-known examples, also simulated the development of an anticolonialist, socialist ideology among Quebec youth in the 1960s,<sup>27</sup> some of whom resorted to violence to further their political agenda. One of the earliest advocates of independence and socialism for Quebec, Raoul Roy, was said to have been inspired by the Puerto Rican nationalist movement (Lapointe, 2002: 156; 2008; Nadeau, 2007). The Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) sought liberation by a series of bombings of symbols of "Anglo-Saxon capitalism" that began in 1963. Inspired by Marxism and decolonization movements in Algeria and Cuba, the FLQ claimed that the only way to achieve the socialist revolution for the "white niggers of America" was to overthrow the government and declare Quebec's independence (Vallières, 1971). By 1970, frustrated that the pro-independence Parti Québécois (PQ) had obtained few seats in the provincial election, while obtaining 23% of the popular vote, the FLQ resorted to kidnapping of political figures: first, the British trade delegate in Montreal, and then the Quebec Labour minister, who was to die in the hands of his captors (Laurendeau, 1990). As in Puerto Rico with the Ley de Mordaza, the government's response was to invoke the War Measures Act in the face of an "apprehended insurrection" and carry out wholesale arrests of advocates of radical change in Quebec society. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional, a Puerto Rican revolutionary group also inspired by Marxist and decolonization ideologies, wanted to overthrow "Yanki colonial domination" as part of the "international workers revolution;" they carried out bombings in Puerto Rico and in the US mainland, in a fashion similar to the FLQ in Quebec, a few years earlier (Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional Puertorriqueña, 1974; Morris, 1995: 56).

Short of independence, nationalist efforts in Quebec and in Puerto Rico strove for the preservation and strengthening of national culture.

In Quebec and in Puerto Rico, language constituted the prime vehicle of national culture, and efforts were deployed by nationalist politicians to make the language of the majority the official language. In Quebec, this became a potent issue in the late 1960s, as the language of schooling for immigrants became a contested matter: should immigrants to Quebec have to right to send their children to the English minority's schools, or should they be forced to send their children to French-language schools, so as to become acculturated to the majority? This was resolved in large part in 1977 when the PQ, which had won the provincial election the previous year, chose the latter option and embodied its decision in a law called Bill 101. This followed 1974 legislation by the previous Liberal provincial government declaring French to be Quebec's official language. The issue has remained contentious, as some parents—both French-speaking and English-speaking—have claimed that restriction to schooling based on language violated Canada's 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Language laws also applied to outdoor signage, requiring French to be predominant; the intent was to make Quebec—and especially Montreal—look French-speaking. Quebec nationalists argued that the power of attraction of English in North America required counterbalancing regulation on the part of the State.<sup>28</sup>

In Puerto Rico, the language of schooling was a contentious issue right from the outset of American rule; the effort to make English the language of instruction failed in part for lack of suitable teachers (Torres-González, 2002: 105). Under the 1902 Official Languages Act, English and Spanish were declared by the US rulers to be the two official languages of Puerto Rico for government, the courts, and public office; this was for the convenience of US residents in Puerto Rico as well as in furtherance of the assimilationist policies of the US administrators. In 1949, Muñoz Marín's PPD made Spanish the language of instruction (Malavet, 2004: 116). In 1991, in the contest between the pro-statehood Partido Nuevo Progresista (PNP) and the autonomist PPD over the status of Puerto Rico, the PPD passed a law declaring Spanish to be the official language of Puerto Rico for government business and contracts. The intent was to foil the PNP, who advocated statehood for Puerto Rico before the US Congress; members of Congress were quite aware of the tensions raised in Canada by the language issue and feared similar difficulties in the US and Puerto Rico, if the Island became a state. The PPD's 1991 language law was repealed two years later as the PNP regained office in the Island legislature and resumed efforts in Washington to make Puerto Rico into an American state (Barreto, 1998: 66-79, 118-130; Negrón-Muntaner, 1997).

In both societies, language is not only a legal issue. The local idiom is often unfavorably compared with its metropolitan counterpart and denigrated for the poor quality of spoken expression, for the



incorporation of English vocabulary, and for its divergence from other dialectical forms of the language. These criticisms imply some adhesion to metropolitan cultural norms, which are at some remove from the daily experience of Quebeckers or Puerto Ricans and are sometimes viewed as a form of colonial self-hatred.

In both societies, overthrowing colonialism required, in the minds of the more fervent nationalists, a political, indeed a constitutional solution. And in both societies, none of the solutions advocated could draw enough popular support to become dominant. Puerto Rico held plebiscites in 1967, 1991, 1993, and 1998. The results of the first one gave a 60% majority to the Commonwealth option; the second one closed the door to a “review” of the Commonwealth status. The later referendums revealed growing popularity for the statehood option, but not enough to carry a majority. Indeed, the 1998 referendum gave a very slight majority to the “None of the above” option! In none of these referendums did the independence option gather more than 5% of the vote.<sup>29</sup> Puerto Ricans remain sharply divided over the *status* issue.

Quebec’s Parti Québécois, which had first gained power in the provincial legislature in 1976, held two referendums on the status question in Quebec. The 1980 referendum asked citizens to give the provincial government a mandate to negotiate “sovereignty-association” with the rest of Canada on the basis of the equality of the two nations. Only 40% of citizens voted ‘Yes.’ In 1995, the PQ, once more at the helm of the Quebec provincial government, held a second referendum, asking citizens whether they wanted Quebec to become “sovereign” after having offered an economic and political partnership to the rest of Canada. A slim majority (50.6%) of voters rejected the proposition. The narrowness of the results led to much acrimony on both sides and kept the idea of sovereignty alive, though in recent years support for it has declined to about 40%.<sup>30</sup> So in Quebec as in Puerto Rico, the *status* question remains alive and colours almost every issue of political life.

Yet over the last 50 years, the concept of nation that provided the basis for the independence movement in Quebec or for autonomists and *independentistas* in Puerto Rico has undergone considerable transformation. Nations used to be conceived of as organic entities, endowed with a national character that made each one unique. In the case of Quebec, the traditional definition of the nation included the Catholic faith, the French language, communitarian values, an intellectual as opposed to a materialist orientation, and a gregarious *joie de vivre* amidst economic dependence on *Anglo-Saxon* capital. None of these general traits are nowadays considered constitutive of the Quebec nation, save for French as the shared language of public discourse. Quebec society today appears much less homogeneous than 50 years ago, particularly in Montreal, where long-standing

communities of descendants of European immigrants are now joined by a plethora of new ethnic neighborhoods that have grown with more recent immigration from Lebanon, North Africa, Haiti, Viet-Nam, China, and Latin America. So the debate about what defines Quebec as a distinct society continues apace, with adherence to shared *civic* virtues and values instead of ascribed personal characteristics forming the ground on which to construct the new definition of the nation.<sup>31</sup> Debates about accommodating minority religious and cultural practices arise now and then, as they do in other societies (France, Britain), but a broad consensus still holds over the democratic, rights-based characteristics of the polity. This procedural liberalism is seen by some as a thin base on which to erect tomorrow's democratic nation (Beauchemin, 2002).

In Puerto Rico as well, the definition of the nation has changed. The continuous flow of Puerto Ricans to and from the mainland has brought about a broadening of the geographical scope of the nation, and along with it a broadening of cultural strands making up Puerto Rican identities (Duany, 2002; 2005; 2007). As well, the focus on cultural nationalism as a way of avoiding resolution of the status issue has been called into question. In Puerto Rico more than in Quebec, post-nationalist and subaltern readings of the history of the nation have appeared and challenged traditional nationalist interpretations (Carrión, 1996; Coss, 1996; Pabón, 2003; 2007; Torrecilla, 2004). They have stressed the futility of the debate over constitutional status, although the issue remains alive both for the proponents of statehood and for those wishing for an improved ELA. In both Puerto Rico and Quebec, there is little expectation that the status issue will be resolved in the foreseeable future.

## Conclusion

Quebec and Puerto Rico thus have had remarkably parallel destinies. Both societies remain "stateless nations," a fate which is more widely shared than is usually thought (Minahan, 2002). Both societies were created by colonizing European powers that introduced their language, religion, laws, and cultural patterns in the New World. Within their respective empires, both colonies were of relatively little economic value, but of substantial strategic import. Their population remained small, relative to that of the mother country, as so they relied on the mother country for trade and defense.

Quebec and Puerto Rico were then both conquered by major powers intent on remaking the colonies in their images. Both struggled to obtain a measure of political autonomy and to defend their language and culture against the dominant force of an English-speaking empire that was far too powerful, politically and economically, to

be overthrown, as failed attempts at insurrection demonstrated in both colonies. More modest efforts to achieve political autonomy produced some results, in large part because it was advantageous for the metropolis to grant local self-government.

This second stage of colonialism eventually gave way to the current situation, where autonomy over local administration is assured, but where constitutional status remains a contested issue strongly linked to the survival of each society's cultural make-up. During this third stage, both societies have absorbed values and cultural practices from the conquering power; in each society, this has produced new forms of cultural *mestizaje*. Both societies continue to evolve culturally, as they stake their place in a world facing global issues of ecological degradation and economic uncertainty. In both societies, the meanings of national identity will continue to be manifold and evolving.

NOTAS

1. A recent instance is former Parti Québécois leader and Quebec Premier Bernard Landry in Toronto, on 11 November 2009, during a public debate over the consequences of the British Conquest of 1760 for the people of Quebec. See <http://www.rom.on.ca/news/releases/public.php?mediakey=mil51ofm3w>.

2. Gérard Bouchard's comparative essay on the rise of nations and cultures in the New World repeatedly underlines that Quebec is one of the few New World communities, along with Puerto Rico, not to have achieved political independence. The Puerto Rican case is mentioned mostly in parentheses. Bouchard does acknowledge, in a footnote, the strikingly parallel political and cultural situations of Puerto Rico and Quebec (Bouchard, 2000: 60, 173, 369, 401).

3. A useful English-language introduction to Quebec history is found in (Dickinson & Young, 2003). For basic information on Canada and Quebec, consult the Canadian Encyclopedia Online, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com>. The *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, which offers scholarly biographies of Canadians and Quebecers who died before 1931, is also available online, <http://www.biographi.ca>. According to Margaret Conrad, past president of the Canadian Historical Association, information on Canadian history on Wikipedia is not very reliable (Conrad, 2007: 20-23). A selection of reference materials on the history of Canada is available on the French-language Histoire-Hypermédia website, <http://www.h-h.ca>.

4. Reference re Secession of Quebec, [1998] 2 S.C.R. 217, <http://csc.lexum.umontreal.ca/en/1998/1998rcs2-217/1998rcs2-217.html>; Clarity Act 2000, c. 26, <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/C-31.8/text.html>.

5. Politicians of Puerto Rican descent have of course banked on their ethnicity to gain elective office in parts of the US (New York, Chicago, for instance) with large Puerto Rican communities.

6. See [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTable?\\_bm=y&-geo\\_id=04000US72&-qr\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF1\\_U\\_DP1&-ds\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF1\\_U](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=04000US72&-qr_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U_DP1&-ds_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U).

7. See <http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/publications/referenc/qcem/principale.htm>.

8. See <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/medincsizeandstate.html>.

9. See <http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/famil108a-eng.htm>.

10. Computed from the monthly figures in [http://data.bls.gov/PDQ/servlet/SurveyOutputServlet?series\\_id=LASST43000003&data\\_tool=XGtable](http://data.bls.gov/PDQ/servlet/SurveyOutputServlet?series_id=LASST43000003&data_tool=XGtable).

11. See <http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/publications/referenc/qcem/principale.htm>.

12. See <http://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.pr.htm>.

13. See <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/71-001-x/2009004/t008-eng.htm>.

14. See [http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/publications/comparaisons\\_econo/pdf/quebec\\_monde.pdf](http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/publications/comparaisons_econo/pdf/quebec_monde.pdf), p. 343; and <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rq.html>.

15. There is no systematic scholarly study of national sentiment in New France. The prohibition of printing presses in New France means there are no printed sources that could provide illumination on this issue. French contemporary observers noted some differences between the Canadians and the French, but the differences observed might be as much class-based as grounded in different national characteristics. Much has been made of the opposition between the Canadian-born last governor of New France, Vaudreuil, and the last French intendant, Montcalm. See Frégault (1966). Louise Dechêne, perhaps the best regarded recent historian of New France, did not perceive any feelings of collective identity uniting Canadians at the end of the French regime against metropolitan France. See Dechêne (2008: 438-440).

16. On the stereotype of the French-Canadian habitant, see Dépatie (2002). How these stereotypes were reproduced in English-Canadian textbooks is analyzed in Igartúa (2008), [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal\\_of\\_canadian\\_studies/v042/42.3.igartua.pdf](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_canadian_studies/v042/42.3.igartua.pdf). On Puerto Rico during the first colonial period, see López Cantos (2000). American attitudes are described in Navarro (2002).

17. During the American Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, British authorities suspended habeas corpus in Quebec. After the rebellions broke out in Lower Canada in 1837 and 1838, habeas corpus was again suspended; see Greenwood (1993). In

Puerto Rico, the Ley de la Mordaza (1948) muffled nationalist and *independentista* expression; see Acosta (1987).

18. A major survey of the political, economic, and social history of Quebec from the Constitutional Act of 1791, which created a representative assembly for Lower Canada (Quebec), to the Union Act of 1840, which merged Upper Canada (Ontario) and Lower Canada to form a single province, is Ouellet (1980). Ouellet's interpretation is strongly anti-nationalist and seeks to explain political turmoil by economic factors.

19. On French-Canadian nationalism and political parties, see *ibid.*, Bernard (1971), Careless (1967), and Monet (1969).

20. The literature on Papineau is large. An introduction to the figure is Ouellet (1972). See also Ouellet's treatment of Papineau in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, <http://www.biographi.ca/FR/ShowBio.asp?BioId=39325>. A more recent and favorable look at Papineau's public career is Papineau, Lamonde, & Larin (1998).

21. The British North America Act and the Constitution Act, 1982, are available at <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/const/index.html>.

22. Wilfrid Laurier was Prime Minister of Canada from 1896 to 1911; Louis St-Laurent, from 1948 to 1957; Pierre Elliott Trudeau, from 1968 to 1989 and from 1980 to 1984; Jean Chrétien, from 1993 to 2003; and Paul Martin, from 2003 to 2006.

23. The standard biography of Duplessis is Black (1977). On political ideologies in Quebec during the 1945-1060 period, see Boismenu (1981) and Behiels (1985).

24. This was known as Operación Manos a la Obra in Spanish and Operation Bootstrap in English.

25. There is a small industry of Groulx specialists. For a recent, critical examination of Groulx's thought, see Bouchard (2003). See also a sequel to this work, Bouchard (2004).

26. On the Action française in Quebec, see Mann (1975). For the links between Action française and Latin America, see Rolland (1998), Rivera (2008), Hampe Martínez (2003), Ayala Diago (2007), Rivera (2008), and González Calleja (2007).

27. This was largely a Montreal phenomenon; see Mills (2010).

28. See <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/bill101/>.

29. See <http://www.topuertorico.org/history6.shtml>.

30. See <http://www.cyberpresse.ca/actualites/quebec-canada/politique-quebecoise/200906/08/01-873807-sondage-la-souverainete-suscite-peu-despoirs.php>.

31. Amidst an abundant literature, a brief programmatic statement description of a "civic" Québécois nation is provided by Bouchard (1999).

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