



## Challenges for cultural liberty

Some of the most socially divisive debates today are on cultural identity and diversity—in vastly different contexts, in many different ways. The debates can be about the choice of official language (Afghanistan’s new Constitution), political representation of ethnic or religious groups (Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq), relations between the state and religion (Muslims in France), claims of indigenous people against mining by multinational corporations (Amazon region of Brazil), immigration policies (United Kingdom) or naturalization procedures (Germany). Such tensions can also be at the heart of violent conflicts (Rwanda, Yugoslavia). Globalization adds yet another dimension, as ethnic groups, indigenous people and nation-states challenge international agreements on trade and investment on the grounds that they diminish cultural diversity.

Around the world people are more assertive in demanding respect for their cultural identities. Often, their demands are for social justice, for greater political voice. But that is not all. Their demands are also for recognition and respect (box 2.1). People care about jobs and schools. But they also care about whether their history is acknowledged, their heroes are respected and their religious celebrations are recognized as official holidays. And they care about whether they and their children will live in a society that is diverse or one in which everyone is expected to conform to a single dominant culture.

Many states face an urgent challenge in responding to these demands. But responding can threaten ruling elites who impose their language, religion and ways of life to consolidate power and control of the state. And many states fear that recognizing diverse identities gets in the way of other important objectives: state unity, economic growth, development, democracy, peace and stability.

People have been persecuted for their identities for millennia. But suppressing identities is

becoming more difficult in today’s world. Political movements for cultural recognition are difficult to suppress without resorting to extreme repression or violence, strategies that are less feasible in today’s world of instant communication and strong international human rights networks.

All countries, and the world as a whole, face the challenges of promoting diversity and expanding the cultural choices of all people. These are not just challenges for a few “multi-ethnic states”, for almost no country is homogeneous. The world’s nearly 200 countries include some 5,000 ethnic groups.<sup>1</sup> Two-thirds of countries have more than one ethnic or religious group making up at least 10% of the population.<sup>2</sup> Many countries have large indigenous populations that were marginalized by colonization and settlers.

*Around the world people are more assertive in demanding respect for their cultural identities*

### BOX 2.1

#### Two aspects of cultural exclusion

Cultural liberty is the freedom people have to choose their identity—to be who they are and who they want to be—and to live without being excluded from other choices that are important to them. Cultural liberty is violated by the failure to respect or recognize the values, institutions and ways of life of cultural groups and by discrimination and disadvantage based on cultural identity.

##### Living mode exclusion

Living mode exclusion occurs when the state or social custom denigrates or suppresses a group’s culture, including its language, religion or traditional customs or lifestyles. Needed are policies that give some form of public recognition, accommodation and support to a group’s culture. Through such policies of cultural inclusion members of the group see their cultures in the symbols and institutions of the state and in the respect of society.

Source: Chapter 1 and Kymlicka 2004.

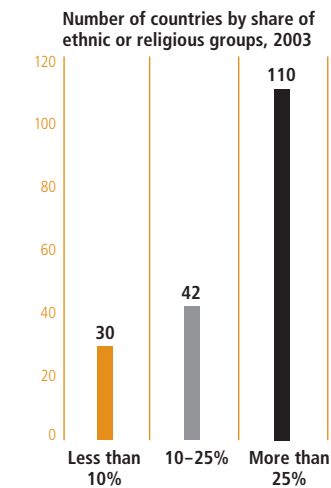
##### Participation exclusion

Participation exclusion—social, economic and political exclusion along ethnic, linguistic or religious lines—refers to discrimination or disadvantage based on cultural identity. Such exclusions operate through discriminatory policies from the state (such as the denial of citizenship or of the right to vote or run for office), past discrimination that has not been remedied (lower performance in education) or social practice (such as less access in the media to a cultural group’s point of view, or discrimination in job interviews). Needed are approaches that integrate multicultural policies with human development strategies.

##### Specific remedies required

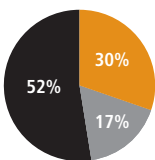
There is much reinforcement between living mode exclusion and social, economic and political exclusion, and some of their causes (viewing some cultures as “backward”). Each type of exclusion requires its own analysis and remedies.

**Figure 2.1** Most countries are culturally diverse



Share of world population, 2003

■ Less than 10% of population  
■ 10-25% of population  
■ More than 25% of population



Note: Percentages refer to all ethnic or religious groups except the largest.  
Source: CIA 2003.

The pace of international migration has quickened, with startling effects on some cities. In Toronto 44% of the population was born outside of Canada.<sup>3</sup> One way or another every country is a multicultural society—containing ethnic, religious, linguistic and racial groups that have common bonds to a heritage, culture, values and way of life.

In the agenda for human development in the 21st century, expanding cultural liberty is an important, and often neglected, challenge (box 2.2). This chapter explores the nature of that challenge.

### CULTURAL LIBERTY—AN UNCHARTED DIMENSION OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Human development is about people. It is about enlarging the choices people have to do and be what they value in life. Much work on human development—including the human development index and previous *Human Development Reports*—has focused on greater access to health and education, on pro-poor economic growth and on democratization as the main challenges. But as chapter 1 explains, people must also be free to be who they are and to

choose their cultural identity accordingly—as a Thai, a Quaker, a Wolof speaker, a South African of Indian descent—and to enjoy the respect of others and live in dignity. They must also be free to make cultural choices without penalty, without being excluded from other choices—for jobs, schooling, housing, health-care, political voice and many other opportunities critical to human well-being. They must be allowed to choose multiple identities—as Thai and Muslim, for example, or as Wolof and Senegalese.

The core argument of this Report is that societies should embrace, not suppress, such multiple and complementary identities. The challenge for policy-makers in the 21st century is to broaden choices—so that people need not renounce their identities to have access to the full range of social and economic opportunities.

### DIVERSE FORMS AND ORIGINS OF CLAIMS FOR CULTURAL LIBERTY

Throughout history, in all regions of the world, cultural identities have been suppressed. Conquerors, colonizers, despots and democratically elected governments alike have tried to impose

#### BOX 2.2

### Defining cultural rights lags behind defining civil, political, economic and social rights—why?

Of the five categories of human rights—civil, cultural, economic, social and political—cultural rights have received the least attention. The first-ever resolution on cultural rights adopted by the Commission on Human Rights was in 2002, on “Promotion of the enjoyment of the cultural rights of everyone and respect for different cultural identities”.

This neglect has its roots in the heated debates that arose during the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. At issue was whether cultural rights should explicitly recognize minority rights. Canada, most Latin American countries and the United States argued against minority rights, while the Eastern bloc countries and India argued for them. In the end, minority rights were not recognized in the final wording. It was not until 1966 that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights recognized that people belonging to ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities “shall not be denied the right, in community with other

members of their group, to enjoy their culture, to profess and practice their religion, or to use their own language”.

These reservations reflect the unease that surrounds the notion of cultural rights:

- Cultural rights can provoke arguments about cultural relativism, arguments that use culture to defend violations of human rights.
- Cultural rights are difficult to operationalize because they are tied up with the concept of culture, which is a moving target.
- Cultural rights, according to some, are a “luxury”, to be addressed once the other rights have been achieved.
- Cultural rights cannot be addressed without confronting the cultural “wrongs” that exist in societies. These are traditions and practices that violate human rights. States are cautious about recognizing such wrongs.
- Cultural rights evoke the scary spectrum of group identities and group rights that some people fear threaten the nation-state.

Some human rights and political philosophy theorists argue that ensuring the civil and political rights of individuals—such as freedom of worship, speech and association—is sufficient to allow individuals to freely pursue their cultural beliefs and practices.

Though slow to start, the work of human rights bodies has made important strides in clarifying the elements of human rights to participate in cultural life, including equality and non-discrimination, freedom from interference in the enjoyment of cultural life and the freedom to create and contribute to it, freedom to choose in which culture and which cultural life to participate, freedom to disseminate, freedom to cooperate internationally and freedom to participate in the definition and implementation of policies on culture. Overriding all these elements is the fundamental principle that cultural rights are an indivisible part of human rights, although not every custom or practice is a right.

Sources: Stamatopoulou 2002; Kymlicka 2004; and Arizpe 2004.

a particular language, religion or way of life on the people under their rule. In some places non-favoured cultures have been labelled “inferior” or “backward”. In others, such as apartheid South Africa, rulers sought to keep people separated, in part by denying some groups the same rights of citizenship and participation as others enjoyed. Worst of all are the places that have tried to obliterate groups through genocide, such as in Nazi Germany and Rwanda.

The result is a legacy of widespread cultural exclusion, both living mode exclusion and exclusion in political, social and economic participation along ethnic, linguistic or religious lines (participation exclusion). This Report explores such exclusions in three categories: minorities in multi-ethnic states, indigenous people and migrants.

*Minorities in multi-ethnic states.* More than 150 countries have significant minority ethnic or religious groups, and only 30 countries do not have a religious or ethnic minority that constitutes at least 10% of the population (figure 2.1). An example is the ethnic groups in former colonial states, especially in Africa, where boundaries did not coincide with ethnic identities, creating highly diverse states. In most of these groups members share a common history or at least perceive a shared experience.

Not all these groups are discriminated against or disadvantaged, and the situations they face vary widely. African Americans have twice the unemployment rate of their white counterparts and nearly three times the infant mortality rate (see figure 3.4 in chapter 3). They are also underrepresented politically in upper and lower houses of legislatures. But civil rights struggles have led to greater respect for African American culture and affirmation of the African American identity as a source of pride. Other minorities may be economically privileged but culturally or politically sidelined. In Indonesia the ethnic Chinese constitute 3% of the population but control about 70% of the private economy.<sup>4</sup> Despite their economic power they face restrictions on Chinese-language education and publishing. In many countries in South-East Asia residents of Chinese descent are considered “foreigners” even when they have lived there for generations.

For some groups discrimination is wider spread. The Roma of Eastern Europe have unemployment rates averaging 45% and rising above 60% in some areas. They also suffer from sub-standard health and living conditions.<sup>5</sup> Only one in three Roma children in Serbia and Montenegro has ever attended primary school, and no more than 0.4% of Serbian Roma have a university education.<sup>6</sup> Often perceived as lazy, unclean, uneducated and petty thieves, Roma disproportionately suffer violent attacks in countries such as Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.<sup>7</sup>

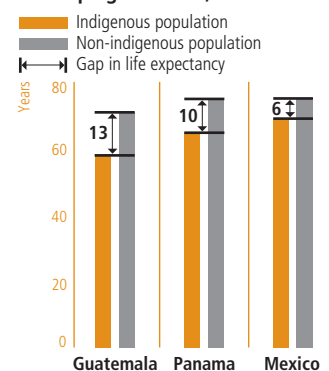
*Indigenous people.* Around 300 million people belong to the world’s indigenous groups,<sup>8</sup> representing some 4,000 languages in more than 70 countries.<sup>9</sup> Latin America’s 50 million indigenous people make up 11% of the region’s population. Indigenous people are not always in the minority.<sup>10</sup> In Bolivia and Guatemala indigenous people make up more than half the population.<sup>11</sup>

These groups are heirs to unique cultures and unique ways of relating to other people and the environment. They maintain political, cultural and economic characteristics distinct from mainstream society. In Australasia, the Americas and elsewhere the sound of foreign feet on indigenous soil was too often a death knell. Military conquest, ecological destruction, forced labour and lethal diseases reduced indigenous populations in the Americas and Australia by as much as 95%.<sup>12</sup> In Australia alone some 500 languages have been lost since the arrival of Europeans.<sup>13</sup>

For those who remain, the struggle continues. The world’s indigenous people share many challenges, such as poverty and poor health (figure 2.2) and education. While many culturally identifiable groups face inequalities in these areas, indigenous people share some distinct problems. Often the lands they use for productive purposes and to maintain historical and spiritual links are not secure and so are being taken over for logging, mining, tourism and infrastructure. From occupying most of the earth’s ecosystems two centuries ago indigenous people today have the legal right to use about 6% of the earth’s territory. And in many cases the rights are partial or qualified.<sup>14</sup> In most South-East Asian countries, for example, there are no laws granting indigenous people the right to

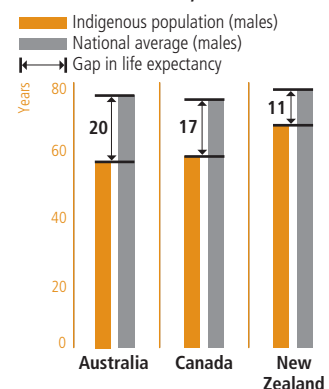
Figure 2.2 Indigenous people can expect a shorter life

Gap in life expectancy in selected developing countries, 1997–2000



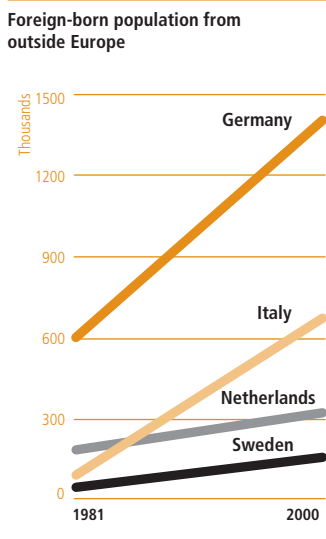
Source: During 1993 (share of indigenous peoples); WHO 2001 (Guatemala); UNDP 2002b (Panama); Mexico, Ministry of Health 2004 (Mexico).

Gap in life expectancy in selected industrial countries, 1997–2000



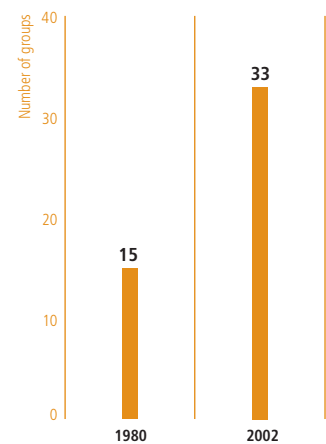
Note: Data refer to the most recent year available during the period specified. Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004 (Australia); Justiniano and Litchfield 2003 (Canada); WHO 2001 (New Zealand).

**Figure 2.3** Europe's non-European migrant population has increased significantly...



... and migrants are coming from more places

Migrant groups in Sweden with populations greater than 1,000



Source: Wanner 2002; Statistics Sweden 2004.

their land. And not only their land is being coveted and taken—so is their knowledge. Multi-national corporations have discovered its commercial potential, and the race is on to patent, privatize and appropriate.

*Migrants.* The number of international migrants—defined as people living outside their country of birth—more than doubled since the mid-1970s—to about 175 million.<sup>15</sup> The numbers have increased most dramatically in the richest countries. The number of migrants to the European Union from outside Europe is up 75% since 1980.<sup>16</sup> Migrants are coming from a wider range of countries, too, so that more people of different cultures are living together. In London children in state schools speak some 300 different languages.<sup>17</sup> And in Sweden migrants come from twice as many countries as they did in 1980 (see figure 2.3 and feature 5.1 in chapter 5).<sup>18</sup>

While the inflow is fastest in the richest countries, migration is an issue in all regions. People have moved from poorer to more prosperous developing countries (such as the migration into the oil-rich countries in the 1970s and 1980s) and from countries experiencing political upheaval or persecution to neighbouring countries (see figure 5.2 in chapter 5). As a result developing countries make up 10 of the 15 countries with the highest proportion of foreign-born residents, including the top three (United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Jordan).<sup>19</sup> Saudi Arabia has the fifth largest foreign-born population, at more than 5 million.<sup>20</sup>

In both richer and poorer countries one of the greatest challenges for migrants is their legal status in the receiving country. For immigrants there is a sea of gray between full citizenship and illegal status. This uncertainty affects their civic participation, such as receiving health and education services, being able to drive legally and being able to enter the workforce without being subjected to discrimination. Often immigrants' uncertain legal status culminates in their having no political voice and being vulnerable to human rights abuses. Their uncertain status also puts recognition of their cultural identity in jeopardy. Immigrants, particularly those deemed illegitimate, can face severe restrictions on building houses of worship, celebrating holidays and wearing their traditional or religious clothing or

symbols. In the United Kingdom, for example, 69% of Muslims surveyed felt that the rest of society did not regard them as an integral part of it.<sup>21</sup>

#### CULTURAL EXCLUSION IS WIDESPREAD

In many areas of human development much work has been done to document performance and the nature and the size of the problems to be overcome. Measurement techniques, developed through decades of research and established traditions in data collection, provide numerical evidence: 1.2 billion people survive on less than \$1 a day,<sup>22</sup> 828 million go to bed hungry,<sup>23</sup> 114 million children of primary school age are not in school,<sup>24</sup> 11 million children die each year of preventable causes,<sup>25</sup> and 1.8 billion people live in countries lacking the key elements of formal democracy.<sup>26</sup>

Capturing living mode exclusion is intrinsically more difficult than capturing social, economic and political exclusion. Living mode exclusion happens when the culture of a group—whether ethnic, linguistic or religious—is denied recognition and respect. It is often reflected in a culture being considered “inferior” or in its practices not being recognized. The most extreme forms of exclusion result from state policies to suppress or prohibit the use of languages or religious or other important practices such as dress that are visible markers of identity—for example, turbans worn by Sikhs or the headscarf worn by some Muslim women.

State policies of living mode exclusion include official language laws—where a national language must be used in the bureaucracy, courts, public services and education—and restrictions on religious freedoms. Policies of exclusion also include elevating state symbols celebrating the history and culture of dominant groups through national holidays and the naming of streets and buildings while ignoring the history and culture of other groups.<sup>27</sup>

Charting living mode exclusion is difficult (box 2.3). Few national or international statistical agencies track such exclusion. As with data on gender and the environment—also once novel to statistical offices—this must change. But the challenges are enormous, and not just the technical aspects. Language, religion, history, clothing,

customs, ceremonies and cuisine are just some of the areas that define cultural identity. Just as there are myriad ways to understand “culture”, there are myriad ways to curtail cultural liberty and to fail to recognize cultural identities. A comprehensive understanding of culture and cultural liberty will always be out of statistical reach.

But attempts can be made to gain a rough idea of the scope of the problem based on some key cultural markers such as religion, language and ceremonial practices. The *Minorities at Risk* data set attempts to capture the exclusion of people and groups on the basis of cultural identity (see feature 2.1). It estimates that almost 900 million people—around one of seven—belong to groups that are discriminated against or disadvantaged as a result of their identity, facing cultural, economic or political exclusion.

Of course, these categories often overlap, and many people in these groups face some combination of these exclusions. About 518 million of them belong to groups that are estimated to face living mode exclusion, including restrictions on religion, language, ceremonies and appearance (see figure 1 in feature 2.1).

*Recognition of religion.* History is full of examples of religious persecution. In the 14th century BCE Egyptian Pharaoh Akhenaten proclaimed that there was no god but Ra and ordered references to all other gods to be expunged, forbidding even the use of the plural form of the word *god*.<sup>28</sup> The infamous Spanish Inquisition of the 15th century sought to discover and punish Jews and Moors who had publicly converted to Christianity under duress but continued practicing their true beliefs. In mid-19th

#### BOX 2.3

### Measuring cultural liberty

To date, cultural statistics have dealt mainly with the production and consumption of “cultural goods”—film, books and theatre. But can cultural liberty—and its opposites, living mode exclusion and social, economic and political exclusion along ethnic, linguistic or religious lines—be measured?

#### Measuring living mode exclusion

Language, religion, history, clothing, customs, ceremonies, cuisine and values, among others, interact to define cultural identity. All of these ways to understand culture provide ways to exclude cultural identities such as language policies, treatment of different religions, school curricula and attitudes within society. Information can be collected on these issues, but rarely is. Beyond the simple data availability problems are the analytical challenges of converting information into statistically useful numbers. One possible approach is qualitative assessments—expert assessments of the severity of the situation—on issues that are important to many cultural identities, such as language and religion. This Report, for example, includes information from the *Minorities at Risk* data set of the University of Maryland (see feature 2.1), which does not capture the whole detail or scope of cultural exclusions but can provide useful evidence for understanding the problem.

#### Measuring participation exclusion

Measurement of social, economic and to a lesser extent political exclusions along ethnic, linguistic

and religious lines is more advanced. Often lacking, however, is a breakdown by culturally identified groups. Some data collection does include questions on religious, ethnic and linguistic identity and some post-censal surveys focus specifically on these cultural groups, but they could be much more comprehensive and comparable. An important issue is allowing people to register multiple identities. Political exclusion is more difficult to capture. There are some hard data, such as representation in parliament and voter participation (although they could be more disaggregated), but other issues, such as freedom of expression, movement and organization, are more difficult to capture and require qualitative approaches.

#### Next steps

More work can be done at the country level, where understanding of the issues may be greater. This could involve improved data monitoring and collection—such as including questions on identities in survey questionnaires and post-censal surveys targeted at specific cultural groups—as well as qualitative assessments.

At the international level leadership by an international statistical body could bring sharper focus to what is a formidable and urgent task. For example, the UNESCO Institute of Statistics has already done much work in measuring culture. The coordinating institution could advocate for the collection of information, such as the inclusion in national surveys of questions on cultural identity, and could be the lead depository for

these data. In more qualitative areas of cultural and political exclusions enormous benefits could accrue from having an international institution take the lead on comprehensive approaches to these complex issues at the country level.

#### No index of cultural liberty

There are demands not only to produce statistics on issues of culture but to go farther and produce a cultural liberty index. A lesson of the human development index and other composite indicators is that such measures need to be grounded in a conceptual framework and must be policy relevant as well as measurable and comparable.

As this Report acknowledges, data on issues of cultural liberty are extremely limited. And the conceptual and methodological challenges are enormous for capturing such issues as discriminatory policy and social practice and the extent of historical neglect that cultural groups face.

And the problem is more than empirical. Unlike some other aspects of human development, such as health and education, where many countries face common challenges, the challenges in dealing with cultural exclusion are more diverse. It will never be fully possible to compare homogeneous Japan with diverse India, or how Europe is dealing with issues posed by immigration with how Latin America is meeting the demands of indigenous people for land and self-rule.

Sources: Goldstone 1998; Fukuda-Parr 2001; Kymlicka 2004; and Valdés 2002.

## Feature 2.1 The *Minorities at Risk* data set—quantifying cultural exclusion

The *Minorities at Risk* data set, created by researchers at the University of Maryland's Center for International Development and Conflict Management, collects data on groups that suffer discrimination and disadvantage and that organize politically on the basis of their group identity. Discrimination and disadvantage include exclusion through public policy and through social practice, both current and the lingering effects of historical patterns of discrimination.

These data track a group's status relative to that of the majority. If the minority groups are not worse off than others in the country, their situation is not reflected in the data. While this may miss many people living in countries where cultural freedom is restricted for all, focusing on discrimination is at the heart of this Report—capturing the different treatment of cultural groups in society and the suppression of cultural identities.

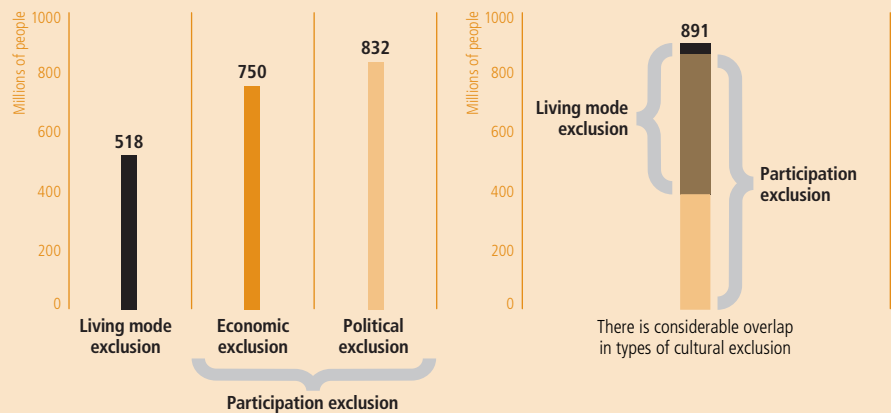
### What is a minority at risk?

The project deals with “communal groups” whose members share a “distinctive and enduring collective identity” based on shared history, religion, language, ethnicity or other factors. Group identity is not seen as rigid, unchanging or inextricably linked to a particular feature of the group, but as a perception shared by the group or society.

While the project tracks many variables for each group, of particular interest for this Report are the variables on cultural (living mode), political and socio-economic discrimination and disadvantage. Data used for this report are current through 2000 and are derived from the project's most recent global survey, completed in 2002.

- *Cultural (living mode) discrimination and disadvantage* were assessed according to discriminatory policy and practice in several fields: restrictions on religion (affecting groups with some 359 million members); on the use of language, including for instruction (334 million); on ceremonies (305 million), appearance and family life (144 million); and on cultural organizations. For each category the project assessed restrictions giving a value from zero (no restrictions) to three (activities sharply restricted). The scores were summed to give a broad overview of cultural restrictions. The project found that 129 groups with around 518 million people face at least some of these restrictions (figure 1).
- *Political discrimination and disadvantage* were graded on a five-point scale. Zero means no discrimination, and one signifies a situation in which public policies are actively trying to remedy historical patterns of discrimination. Two refers to situations where there are historical patterns of discrimination, but no

Figure 1 **Discrimination and disadvantage of culturally identified groups can be cultural, political and economic—with considerable overlap**



remedial public policy. Three refers to exclusion based on prevailing social practice without remedial public policy. And four refers to cases in which public policy actively discriminates against a group. There were also detailed assessments of discrimination in key political rights: freedom of expression, freedom of movement, rights in judicial proceedings, freedom to organize, right to vote and access to the police and military, civil service and higher office. For the last case, the absence of minorities in these fields is not enough to signal discrimination. There needs to be evidence of discriminatory policy or governmental practice. According to the project 191 groups, with around 832 million people, were considered to be discriminated against politically (figure 2).

- *Economic discrimination and disadvantage* were also graded on a four-point scale. For the 189 groups with about 750 million people that faced economic discrimination, zero refers to the case where public policy aims to reduce

disadvantages, for example, through affirmative action. Four refers to the case where both policies and prevailing social practice actively discriminate against the group.

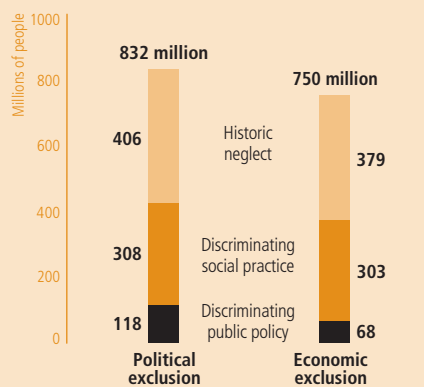
The data from the *Minorities at Risk* data set can be used to reveal a good deal about the living mode and participation exclusions faced by members of culturally identified groups, showing not only how extensive these exclusions are but also how frequently they overlap (see figure 1). The data set can also reveal some specific aspects of the living mode exclusion that some minorities face, as well as the varying causes—from discrimination by the state to historic neglect of cultural groups that has not been remedied (see figure 2).

### Caveats

The data set is a pioneering effort to measure the conditions that minority groups experience and the policies affecting them. Subjective data capture aspects of the traits and challenges of groups not available through other means. The Minorities at Risk Project consults multiple sources—including journalistic accounts, international organization reports, human rights reports, government accounts and expert opinion—when scoring groups on their various characteristics. Every effort is made to ensure consistent coding across cases and to minimize the dangers of ideological bias. Additional information on the project is available online at [www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar](http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar). Data updated through 2003 will be available by the end of 2004.

This Report uses the data carefully, to give a broad overview of the immense challenges of cultural discrimination, not as an attempt to rank or evaluate specific countries for their policies. Used in that way, the data set is a useful tool and a great step forward in measurement.

Figure 2 **Political and economic exclusion have different causes**



Sources: Gurr 1993, 2000; MAR 2003; Kymlicka 2004.

century Korea several hundred Christians were killed for their beliefs. And non-Catholic Christian denominations were not recognized in Italy until 1984 and in Spain until 1992.<sup>29</sup>

In some countries religious restrictions can affect everyone; in others they focus on people with certain beliefs. The *Minorities at Risk* data set found that some 359 million people (of the 518 million who belong to groups that face some form of cultural exclusion) are disadvantaged or discriminated against relative to others in the state in following their beliefs (see feature 2.1).

In many cases the religious activities of groups discriminated against are closely controlled. For example, religious activities and organizations of the 80% Muslim population of Uzbekistan are banned unless the group is registered, allowing the state to exert close control over religion. In other instances discrimination against religion is more active.<sup>30</sup> Since 1997 Turkmenistan has officially allowed religious activities for only two religious denominations—Sunni Islam and Orthodox Christianity. All other religions have been severely persecuted, including Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals, Baptists, Adventists and Hare Krishnas, and the Shiite community has been denied registration. However, registration requirements were formally lifted by the president in early 2004.<sup>31</sup> In Iran the Baha'i community—the largest religious minority, with 300,000 members—is not recognized in the Constitution, which essentially considers them “non-persons”.<sup>32</sup>

These are just three examples. Not only is the issue widespread and a direct concern to cultural liberty and human development. It is contentious and emotive. Of the many unmet claims of current political movements, the claim for religious freedom is often central.

*Language recognition.* Language is often a key element of an individual's cultural identity. Limitations on people's ability to use their mother tongue—and limited facility in speaking the dominant or official national language—can exclude people from education, political life and access to justice. There is no more powerful means of “encouraging” individuals to assimilate to a dominant culture than having the economic, social and political returns stacked against their mother tongue. Such assimilation is not freely chosen if the choice is between

one's mother tongue and one's future. In 19th century Belgium, for example, the Flemish who strived for upward mobility had little choice but to learn French—the sole official language—and in time many abandoned their ancestral language altogether.<sup>33</sup> These pressures have not gone away in other countries: the indigenous people of Guatemala are much more likely to prosper speaking Spanish.

An indication of the resulting assimilation is the death of the world's languages. Of the estimated 10,000 languages that have existed over time, only about 6,000 are spoken today.<sup>34</sup> And the number is projected to drop by 50–90% over the next 100 years.<sup>35</sup>

The challenges are greatest where linguistic diversity is greatest. Sub-Saharan Africa has more than 2,500 languages (although, as chapter 3 shows, many of these languages share commonalities), but the ability of many people to use their language in education and in dealings with the state is particularly limited. In more than 30 countries in the region—with 518 million people, 80% of the region's total—the official language is different from the one most commonly used.<sup>36</sup> Only 13% of the children who receive primary education do so in their mother tongue (figure 2.4).

Does a lack of education in one's mother tongue stall development? Research suggests that the answer might be yes. In the United States children educated in their mother tongue for the first six years of school perform much better than those immediately immersed in English. And there is every reason to believe that the process of learning would follow a similar pattern in developing countries (chapter 3).<sup>37</sup>

While the ability to use one's mother tongue in public as well as private life is important, this does not make the use of multiple languages in government, the courts and education easy or practical. Chapter 3 looks in detail at the costs and benefits states face in their language policy.

*Other aspects of living mode exclusion.* Language and religion are often important parts of an individual's cultural identity, but there are many ways different cultures can be respected and recognized. According to the *Minorities at Risk* data set, 60% of people who face cultural discrimination are restricted in

*There is no more powerful means of “encouraging” individuals to assimilate to a dominant culture than having the economic, social and political returns stacked against their mother tongue*

Figure 2.4 Many lack access to primary education in their mother tongue

Region or group	Number of spoken languages	Population with access to education in mother tongue in 2000	Total population (millions)
Sub-Saharan Africa	2,632	13%	641
East Asia and the Pacific	2,815	62%	1,918
South Asia	811	66%	1,480
Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS	625	74%	409
High-income OECD	1,299	87%	912
Latin America and the Caribbean	1,086	91%	530

Source: SIL International 2004b.

performing ceremonies. A further 25% face restrictions in the clothes they wear and how they can appear in public, including many indigenous people in Latin America and the Roma in parts of Eastern Europe.<sup>38</sup>

Also important is the way the state recognizes and respects the history of different cultural groups within its borders. This is not an easy matter on which to collect data, particularly by region or city. One way of assessing how diverse groups are recognized and accepted is by the way national holidays celebrate key moments in the history or religion of cultural groups in a country or the way streets are named.

In the United States most national holidays are non-denominational. In India central government employees have 17 holidays, 14 of which celebrate the diversity of its religions (figure 2.5). But in France 6 of 11 national holidays are of religious origin, all Christian, and 5 are non-denominational although almost 1 in 13 French citizens is Muslim.

*POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION BASED ON CULTURAL IDENTITY*

Facing restrictions in expressing one's identity (living mode exclusion) is only part of the challenge for cultural liberty. Many groups, because of their cultural identities, face discrimination or disadvantage in other aspects of human development. More than 750 million people are estimated to belong to groups that are disadvantaged or discriminated against in economic or political life (see feature 2.1).

*Political participation.* The limits of political participation are obvious in dictatorships or one-party states. But inequalities in political participation can be widespread even in established democracies. Political processes can be rigged or restricted in many ways to create obstacles to members of certain ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. The *Minorities at Risk* data set estimates that more than 300 million people belong to groups that face restrictions on access to higher office relative to others in the state as a result of their identity. Just under 300 million belong to groups that have restricted access to the civil service. Some 250 million belong to groups that do not have equal rights to organize. About 280 million belong to groups that do not enjoy equal freedom of expression. And 83 million belong to groups that do not have equal voting rights.<sup>39</sup>

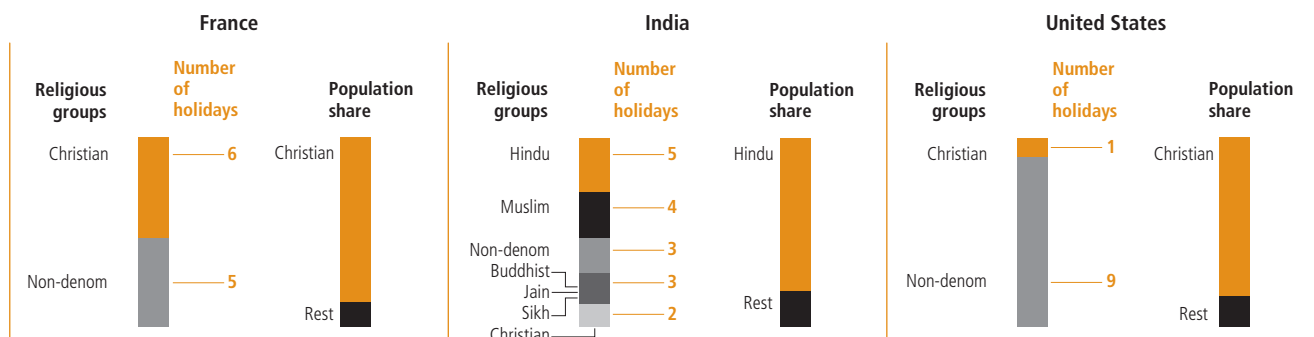
Denial of citizenship is one of the most direct ways of excluding groups of people from the political process. More than 300,000 people of the "hill tribe" minority in Thailand have been denied nationality and the rights and privileges afforded to full citizens, and Myanmar has denied citizenship to more than 250,000 Rohingya Muslims who had previously fled the country because of persecution. Despite a growing parliamentary lobby Kuwait continues to deny citizenship to more than 100,000 Bidun, many of whom have lived in the country for generations.<sup>40</sup>

Ensuring equality at all stages of the political process is vital for preventing discrimination against culturally identified groups, but it is difficult to assess. Looking at outcomes, which are easier to define and measure, can be more revealing. Of high-income OECD countries with data, only in the Netherlands is the proportion of ethnic minorities in parliament similar to their share in the population. The United States comes in second and Belgium third (table 2.1).

The problem is more widespread, of course. In Brazil only 2 of the 33 cabinet members are Afro-Brazilian, even though they make up almost half the population.<sup>41</sup> In Kenya the number of Kikuyu cabinet members dropped from 31% in 1979 to 3% in 1998, even though their share of the population remained steady at around 20%.<sup>42</sup> The situation changed again in the 2003 elections. In Fiji ethnic Fijians occupied 19 of 21

**Figure 2.5 National holidays are important ways to recognize—or ignore—cultural identities**

Religions reflected in national holidays, 2003



Source: National holidays: France 2004; India, Ministry of Personnel 2004; Office of Personnel Management 2003; religious populations: India, Office of the Registrar General 2004; France and United States, CIA 2003.

cabinet seats in 2001 although they make up just half the population.<sup>43</sup> In Trinidad and Tobago citizens of Indian descent (especially Hindus) were essentially excluded from cabinet positions from 1961 to 1986 (the situation has improved since then).<sup>44</sup>

The *Minorities at Risk* data set estimates that more than 800 million people are part of more than 200 culturally identified groups that face political disadvantage or discrimination based on ethnic, linguistic or religious identities,<sup>45</sup> with around 130 million of them facing directly discriminatory public policy. The rest are discriminated against because of social customs in the country or the lingering effects of historic discrimination (see feature 2.1).

Remedying this is vital. Politics is power. Too often inequalities in political participation are at the heart of the unresolved claims of cultural groups, which are discussed in the rest of this Report.

*Health, education and income.* Rarely are levels of human development—or its progress—spread evenly in a country. Certain religious, ethnic and linguistic groups are too often left behind (box 2.4). These pockets of poverty matter in their own right. But inequalities along cultural lines can be a key source of tension in society.

Few states collect information on life expectancy, infant mortality, literacy and school enrolment by ethnic, linguistic and religious group, even though population censuses can be an effective means for collecting such information.

Available data show consistent patterns of inequality. According to the *Minorities at Risk*

TABLE 2.1 Political representation of ethnic minorities in selected OECD parliaments

Country (year of last election with data)	Ethnic minorities in parliaments <sup>a</sup>			
	Number in lower house/ total	Share in lower house (%)	Share in population (%)	Ratio in house to ratio in population
Netherlands (2003)	13/150	8.7	9.0	1.0
United States (2002)	69/440	15.7	28.1	0.6
Belgium (1999)	6/150	4.0	10.0	0.4
Canada (2000)	12/301	4.3	13.4	0.3
United Kingdom (2001)	12/659	1.8	8.7	0.2
New Zealand (1999)	2/120	1.7	10.9	0.2
Denmark (2001)	2/179	1.1	5.8	0.2
Australia (2001)	1/150	0.7	6.0	0.1
Germany (2002)	5/603	0.8	8.5	0.1
France (2002)	0/577	0.0	8.0	0.0
Switzerland (1999)	0/200	0.0	6.0	0.0

a. Refers to visible ethnic minorities based on census or academic reports. Non-visible immigrants (of European descent) are not included. The share of ethnic minorities is likely to be lower than the reported figure because reports include citizens and non-citizens and ethnic minority groups tend to be disproportionately young compared to the majority population. Does not include aboriginals or members of dominant linguistic or national minority groups.

Source: Bird 2003.

data set, around 750 million people in the world belong to groups that face socio-economic discrimination or disadvantage because of their cultural identities. Many groups face both kinds of discrimination (see feature 2.1). For some 68 million of them this is a result of direct government policies of discrimination. But the more common causes are discriminatory social practices or unremedied neglect.

Around the globe people with different cultural identities live side by side, but often in different worlds. Black South Africans still earn about a fifth of the incomes of whites.<sup>46</sup> Romas in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia believe that their ethnicity is the main reason they cannot find a job.<sup>47</sup> Black men and women in São Paulo, Brazil, have half the salaries of whites.<sup>48</sup> In Guatemala there are

clear overlaps between indigenous groups and social exclusion (map 2.1).

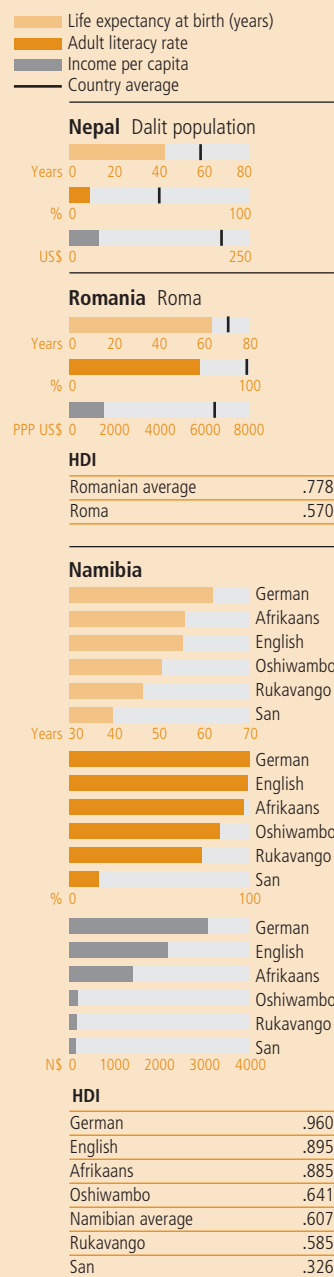
The same patterns are found in health and education. Life expectancies are consistently lower for indigenous people than for non-indigenous people (see figure 2.2). The Dalit

population of Nepal has a life expectancy almost 20 years less than the national average.<sup>49</sup> Of Roma children in Serbia and Montenegro 30% have never attended primary school, and one in five of those who do attend will drop out.<sup>50</sup> In South Africa almost a quarter of the black population has had no schooling.<sup>51</sup>

BOX 2.4

**The human development index: capturing inequalities across groups**

**Large disparities exist between cultural groups within countries 2000**



The human development index has become an invaluable tool for capturing human development and a country's development performance—roughly—in one number.

One of the index's most effective uses is in comparing the performance of neighbouring or similar countries, creating a healthy sense of competition. While creating a similar index for cultural liberty (see box 2.3) or including cultural liberty in the human development index is not possible, disaggregating the human development index by ethnic, linguistic or religious groups can shed some light on exclusion in health, education and income. This is rarely done, however.

In the rare cases when the human development index is calculated by cultural group, a revealing picture often emerges. The Roma in Romania, for example, have a human development index well below the Romanian average (see figure). Romania is ranked 72 in the human development index, but its Roma population would rank 128.

Namibia is the only country to have calculated a human development index by linguistic group. Again, the differences are staggering. The German-speaking population would finish comfortably ahead of Norway at the top of the rankings, with the English and Afrikaans speakers not far behind. San speakers would come 174 places below, with speakers of Tswana, Otjiherero, Oshiwambo, Rukavango, Caprivi-Lozi and Nama-Damara falling in between.

These examples show the huge challenges. Spotlighting these challenges is the first step in solving them. Governments are often reluctant to collect and disseminate this sort of information. Where data are available, they should be considered an important first step, not a damning revelation.

Source: Sen 2004b; UNDP 2000b.

**PROMOTING CULTURAL LIBERTY REQUIRES RECOGNIZING DIFFERENCES IN IDENTITY**

Living mode exclusion and participation exclusion require different policy solutions. Traditional policy approaches alone cannot address participation exclusion in social, economic and political life, and removing barriers to social, economic and political participation will not eliminate issues of living mode exclusion. New approaches are needed that integrate multicultural policies into human development strategies (table 2.2).

*CULTURAL EXCLUSIONS REQUIRE THEIR OWN POLICY APPROACHES*

There is no evidence that eliminating economic and political inequalities would erase living mode inequalities. Some groups are economically privileged but culturally (and politically) marginalized, such as the Chinese in South-East Asia.<sup>52</sup> Nationalist minorities like the Catalans in Spain or the Québécois in Canada enjoy the same standard of living as the majority, and in some cases a higher than average income, and their right to participate in the political process is well protected. Yet they have suffered living mode exclusion as their language and traditions were marginalized by the central government.<sup>53</sup>

So while it is common for living mode exclusion and political or economic exclusion to go together, they are distinct (see chapter 1). Living mode exclusion requires its own analysis and remedies. Too often cultural policy-making has been more concerned with the promotion of arts and the protection of cultural heritage than with the promotion of cultural liberty. Even today, key debates on cultural policies focus largely on protecting cultural heritage. But while these issues are important, the fundamental question of promoting cultural liberty has largely been forgotten (box 2.5).<sup>54</sup> To promote cultural

liberty, policies of cultural inclusion need to give public recognition, accommodation and support to suppressed cultural identities. When this happens, disadvantaged cultural groups can see their identities reflected in the symbols and institutions of the state, removing many of the sources of their discontent.

*INCORPORATING MULTICULTURALISM INTO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES*

Many traditional approaches to social, economic and political equality have been based on assimilation. Groups are expected to take on the language of the dominant culture at the expense of their own and must sometimes deny their religious and other traditions to succeed. There is nothing wrong with identifying with a dominant culture, but people should not be forced to make a stark choice between their identities and economic or political progress. Cultural liberty and human development require that individuals be as free to maintain their identities as they are to change them. For that, multicultural policies

need to be integrated into human development strategies (see table 2.2).

For example, while democracy is the only form of government consistent with all freedoms (including cultural freedoms), majoritarian rule does not always protect claims for cultural recognition and respect. As chapter 3 argues, asymmetric federalism (different rights—such as language rights—for different regions based on cultural need) and power sharing through proportionality and representative electoral arrangements are options to consider when majoritarian democracy falls short. Nor can socio-economic exclusion be addressed simply through policies of pro-poor growth and redistribution. Special programmes may be appropriate, even essential, to overcome discrimination and redress past wrongs. Bilingual education can give non-dominant language groups equal opportunities. In essence, multicultural policies require looking at equity in a new way. Where groups have specific cultural needs or are disadvantaged as a result of past wrongs, identical policy approaches will not produce equal opportunities—differentiated policy approaches are required (see table 2.2).

**Map 2.1 Guatemala exhibits substantial overlap between linguistic communities and social exclusion**



TABLE 2.2  
**Integrating multicultural policies into human development strategies**

Three pillars of the human development strategy	Necessary for cultural liberty	But not sufficient for cultural liberty	Additional multicultural policies	Potential contradictions between aims of multiculturalism and three pillars
Democracy	Democracy is the only form of government consistent with all human freedoms and human rights, including cultural freedoms and rights.	Democracy does little to accommodate minority interests. Well developed democracies have neglected claims for cultural recognition from ethnic, linguistic and religious groups, including indigenous groups and immigrants. Democracy also permits the rise of violent extremist groups.	Incorporate accommodation of minority identities and adopt policies of multiculturalism. Consider asymmetric federalism and executive power sharing. Recognize multiple identities and multiple citizenship.	Claims for cultural recognition often made by non-democratic groups. Demands can be antithetical to building democracy, freezing traditional practices that are oppressive in the name of "authenticity", and may not be supported by many members of the relevant group.
Pro-poor growth	Pro-poor growth is necessary to redress socio-economic exclusion (participation exclusion) of cultural groups.	Pro-poor growth is not enough to overcome discrimination and redress past wrongs.	Develop special support programmes for jobs, training and credit. Institute affirmative action programmes.	Affirmative action is contrary to principles of equality. Are special programmes an alternative to affirmative action?
Equitable expansion of social opportunities	Equitable expansion of social opportunities is necessary to redress socio-economic exclusion of cultural groups.	Equitable expansion of social opportunities is not enough to overcome discrimination and redress past wrongs. Also, does not address demand for different opportunities, such as different kinds of education.	Develop special support programmes for excluded groups. Institute affirmative action programmes. Offer separate publicly funded provisions, such as schools.	Affirmative action is contrary to principles of equality. Are special programmes an alternative to affirmative action? May involve "unfair inclusion" and exclusion from many choices and opportunities open to all other citizens.

Source: Human Development Report Office.

**Cultural policies—protecting cultural heritage and promoting cultural liberty**

In 1969 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) introduced the notion of “cultural policies”, calling on governments to explicitly recognize cultural actions as an important end of public policy. The world community has step by step heeded this call: the 1982 World Conference on Cultural Policies in Mexico, the UN declaration of 1988 through 1997 as the Decade for Culture and Development, the 1998 Stockholm Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development and the increasing number of states establishing cultural ministries are all evidence of the realization that culture is development and vice versa.

In the beginning, the notion of cultural policy-making was concerned with the promotion of arts and the protection of cultural heritage. It is now increasingly related to cultural liberty, as the World Commission on Culture and Development proposed in its 1995 report, *Our Creative Diversity*. Cultural liberty is inseparable from respect and recognition of cultural diversity and the safeguarding of cultural heritage, both physical and intangible.

The cycle of cultural policy must end where it began a quarter of a century ago, with people, and their cultural freedom and fulfilment, the central end of cultural policy-making.

Source: Arizpe 2004.

**THREE MYTHS SURROUNDING CULTURAL LIBERTY AND DEVELOPMENT**

Few countries have attempted formal multicultural policies. Most countries have resisted them. Political scientists and philosophers have debated whether multiculturalism is consistent with democracy and human rights. Part of the reason lies in the realities of majority politics. The vulnerable are easy to ignore. Policy-makers have serious concerns about the effect of such policies on the country as a whole. Perceptions persist that ensuring cultural liberty is a luxury: it would be nice, but the costs are just too high.

Many of these perceptions are based on misconceptions about the role that cultural liberty, cultural diversity and even cultures themselves play in a society’s development. Here, three such myths are examined in detail:

- Some cultures are more likely to make development progress than others.
- Cultural diversity inevitably leads to clashes over values.
- Cultural diversity is an obstacle to development.

**MYTH 1: SOME CULTURES ARE MORE LIKELY TO MAKE DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS THAN OTHERS**

There is no clear relationship between culture and development.<sup>55</sup> The idea that a group’s culture matters for its development has enormous intuitive

appeal, allowing cultural stereotypes to be turned into explanations for the state of the world. This idea is not new. It goes back at least as far as de Tocqueville’s view of American democracy in the early 19th century and Weber’s idealization of the Protestant work ethic. But a new wave of cultural determinism is emerging—attributing the failures of growth and democratization to inherent flaws in cultural traits.

These are dangerous ideas—that can lead to extreme policy conclusions. If some cultures in a society are believed not to be attuned to economic growth or democracy, it is not a long step to argue that they must be suppressed or assimilated. To overgeneralize, if Africa’s failure to progress can be blamed on culture, why bother with political and economic policies or with foreign aid?

Proponents of cultural determinism often label large parts of the world as simply “African” or “Islamic”.<sup>56</sup> But culture is not a homogeneous attribute. There are huge variations in language, religion, literature, art and living styles within the same cultural “group”.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, culture is not uniquely pivotal in determining our lives and identities. Class, gender, profession and politics also matter hugely. Without being able to identify these clear and common cultural traits, a meaningful theory of cultural determinism struggles to get off the ground.<sup>58</sup>

There can be great continuity in a culture, but even in cultures with very long traditions rapid changes can occur over one or two generations.<sup>59</sup> For example, it is difficult to ascribe Japan’s development to “Japanese culture” when interaction with the industrializing West in the mid-19th century led to the Meiji restoration and the determination to change the face of Japanese education. Even aspects of culture that seem entrenched can be altered. Bangladesh, for example, has taken great strides in reducing practices of gender inequality. Because cultures evolve, a society’s culture today may determine very little of its future development. And these changes happen not as a result of targeted policies of cultural change, as cultural determinists might propose. They happen through economic and political interactions with other cultures and through better education—a policy conclusion that differs little from those in other areas of development theory.<sup>60</sup>

Even what is perceived as valuable for development in a culture is apt to change, and Western economies can no longer be assumed to be the model for the world.<sup>61</sup> Consider Japan again, which drew from a different class of cultural values than did the West for economic operations, emphasizing company loyalty, responsibility, interpersonal trust and implicit contracts to drive tremendous economic progress in the 20th century—values now espoused in every management training course in the West. But it was not always this way. So, predicting the value—and future—of cultural traits is far from straightforward.

It is not that culture offers no insights into the development process—cultural influences can make a difference. Some analysis has found, for example, that work ethic, thrift, honesty and openness to strangers can play a role in economic growth.<sup>62</sup> And when those influences are understood to be varied and changeable and one source of influence among many, culture can offer constructive insights into human behaviour and development. But there is no grand cultural theory of development here. The econometric evidence underlines this. In explaining growth rates, for example, economic policy, geography and the burden of disease were all found to be highly relevant. Cultural factors—such as whether a society is Hindu or Muslim—were found to be insignificant.<sup>63</sup>

So, while statistical analysis can help in assessing the validity of a theory, history is perhaps its greatest judge: and so far the history of cultural determinism exposes a theory one step behind the real world. By the time Weber's glowing assessment of the Protestant ethic was being recognized, many Catholic countries (France, Italy) were growing faster than Protestant Britain or Germany. The theory was then expanded to be more generally Christian and Western. But then Japan had to be included. And soon, East Asia was growing fastest, and old views that Confucian values do not promote conditions for growth had to be quickly jettisoned. Then Thailand, essentially a Buddhist country, became the fastest growing, so the theory had to be altered again.<sup>64</sup> So far, then, cultural determinism has not been able to catch up. Are today's views better founded and better able to predict a culture's influence

on development—say, in Africa—or the compatibility of some religions with democracy—say, Islam?

*Growth and development in Africa.* Some propose that culture is determining development in Sub-Saharan Africa. A problematic “African culture” the argument goes, is unsuited to economic, political and social development.<sup>65</sup>

It is a convenient tautology for the cultural determinist to combine the idea of an “African culture” with the fact that Africa is failing. But African countries have much more in common than their cultures, and many of these factors may be more relevant in their struggles to develop.

*Human Development Report 2003* identified 38 “priority” countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that have both low levels of development and weak progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (see Statistical feature 1, *The state of human development*). Of these, 21 are landlocked or have a large proportion of their populations living far from the coast. And most are small—only 4 have more than 40 million people. These countries are also highly dependent on primary commodities, which make up more than two-thirds of exports for 16 of the 23 countries with data. The disease burden in these countries is also extreme: in 22 of them more than 5% of the population has HIV/AIDS, and malaria remains prevalent.

In the examples showcased to argue the decisive role of culture in development, realities such as these often lie just below the surface. An often cited example, discussed in detail in chapter 1, is that of the Republic of Korea and Ghana in the 1960s, whose rapid divergence in the following decades has frequently been attributed to cultural differences. But analysis, as chapter 1 points out, has shown more important differences, such as levels of investment in education.<sup>66</sup> The example demonstrates that economic and social policy can have an enormous influence. Focusing internal and external resources on health and education is the first step out of the poverty trap. Even handicaps of geography—such as small internal markets and limited access to world trading routes—can be addressed through regional integration and cooperation.

African success stories are emerging. In Cape Verde, Mauritius, Mozambique and Uganda

*By the time Weber's glowing assessment of the Protestant ethic was being recognized, many Catholic countries (France, Italy) were growing faster than Protestant Britain or Germany*

*All religions contain some ideas that can be helpful to development and some that can be harmful*

GDP per capita grew at more than 3% in the 1990s.<sup>67</sup> Benin, Mali and Senegal increased primary enrolment rates by more than 15 percentage points.<sup>68</sup> Despite the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa, Guinea and Niger reduced child mortality rates by more than 5 percentage points.<sup>69</sup>

The world has the knowledge and the resources to overcome such policy challenges, offering the possibility that Africa can take its place as a full partner in the global economy. It would not be the first time the cultural determinist thesis had to adjust—this time bringing “African culture” into the fold.

*Islam and democracy.* All religions contain some ideas that can be helpful to development and some that can be harmful.<sup>70</sup> Islam is sometimes alleged to be incompatible with democracy, another way that culture is said to determine development (see also chapter 1). Yet there are basic Islamic principles that lay a foundation for democracy including the *shura* (consultation), *ijithad* (independent reasoning), *ijma* (consensus) and the Qur’anic injunction that there be no compulsion in matters of religion.<sup>71</sup>

The idea that Islam is incompatible with democracy is counter not only to the word of Islam, but also to the practice of states with Muslim majorities. Driving this misunderstanding, perhaps, is the coincidence that many Arab countries are both Islamic and have non-democratic regimes. But the difference between Arab countries with Muslim majorities and non-Arab countries with Muslim majorities is stark. None of the Arab countries that is predominantly Muslim has had five consecutive years of moderate or strong political and electoral rights in the past quarter of a century. In the non-Arab Islamic world 8 of 29 countries have enjoyed such rights.

With one set of Islamic countries performing poorly on democracy and another performing strongly, their common trait, Islam, cannot be the lone reason for a failure of democracy. The evidence shows that Islamic countries can perform as strongly as non-Islamic countries on measures of democracy. Among the world’s poorest countries (to control for income because richer countries are more likely to be democratic) non-Arab Islamic countries are as likely to be democracies as non-Islamic countries.<sup>72</sup>

The *Arab Human Development Report 2003* identified a freedom deficit in the Arab region relative to other world regions. The reason for this deficit does not appear to lie with the people of the Arab states or with an anti-democratic culture: surveys have shown that as many if not more people in the Arab countries believe that democracy is the best form of government as in any other part of the world including the United States and Europe.<sup>73</sup> Perhaps the answer lies in the history of power politics. And in a lack of openness to ideas and culture from outside the region—only 330 books were translated into Arabic in the whole Arab world in 1995. Greek, a language with one-twelfth the number of speakers, had five times the number of books translated.<sup>74</sup>

#### *MYTH 2: CULTURAL DIVERSITY INEVITABLY LEADS TO CLASHES OVER VALUES*

There is little evidence to justify this claim. Since the 1950s, 70 territorially concentrated ethnic groups have engaged in violent conflict.<sup>75</sup> These types of conflict rose sharply with the end of the cold war, doubling between the 1970s and 1980s and reaching a peak of 48 in 1991. At the start of 2003, 22 such conflicts continued, and another 76 groups sought greater autonomy but used tactics short of full-fledged war (such as protests or isolated acts of violence).<sup>76</sup>

A popular explanation of such violence points to cultural or ethnic differences as fundamentally responsible—arguing for some innate propensity among people from different cultures to fight one another for domination and autonomy over differences in values that are incompatible. This view is captured by Samuel Huntington’s well known prediction of a “clash of civilizations”.<sup>77</sup> These ideas have also been used to explain interethnic conflicts within nations, as in Liberia and the former Yugoslavia.

It certainly is true that many conflicts have a cultural dimension. The opposing groups each see themselves as belonging to a common culture (ethnicity or religion) and fighting (at least partly) for cultural autonomy. For this reason conflicts have been attributed to primordial ethnic passions, making conflict appear unavoidable and intractable.<sup>78</sup>

Chapter 1 points out the serious flaws in this approach, based as it is on an incorrect view of the formation, role and malleability of identities. This argument also diverts attention from important economic and political factors. Extensive evidence on how identities form and change and why their salience varies over time indicates that while a culture is inherited, it is also constructed and chosen. Many people have multiple identities.<sup>79</sup> Cultural differences are not the primary cause of conflict. And in some cases diversity might even reduce the risk of conflict by making group mobilization more difficult.<sup>80</sup> So, what causes these tensions?

*Ethnic conflicts—or greed and inequality?*

Many conflicts do fall along cultural lines, because people engaged on each side of these wars see themselves as belonging to a common culture. But the root causes are rarely the cultures themselves or an incompatibility of values. Recent research offers two other explanations: greed and horizontal inequalities. The struggle

to control valuable natural resources, such as oil or diamonds, may be at the heart of ethnic warfare, as in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Sudan. What often appears to be ethnic conflict may simply be a resource grab by elite groups that have manipulated ethnic loyalties.

Declining economic performance and high poverty levels are other important incitements to war, as in Sierra Leone and Somalia. Behind many other conflicts are inequalities among ethnic, religious or linguistic groups (horizontal inequalities). When the cultural, political or socio-economic claims of different groups remain unmet, tension builds and can boil over into violence.

Recent research shows that many conflicts have erupted when groups have had unequal access to economic assets, income or employment opportunities, social services or political opportunities (box 2.6). Work by the UNDP Bureau of Conflict Prevention and Recovery shows that the likelihood of conflict increases with rising

BOX 2.6

**Inequalities between groups can fuel conflict and tension**

The root causes of violent conflict are rarely simple. But as the examples below show, a common theme is emerging from recent research into conflict: the role that socio-economic and political inequalities between groups can play in causing tensions and violence. Less research has been done on the role that cultural exclusions of groups may play (such as lack of recognition of languages or religious practices), but as this Report argues, these are also issues that can lead to mobilization and protests and so may also be important root causes or triggers of conflict.

- Severe rioting against the Chinese in **Malaysia** in the late 1960s has been attributed largely to the animosity felt by the politically dominant but economically sidelined Bumiputera majority towards the economically dominant Chinese minority.
- Civil war in **Sri Lanka** since the early 1980s has been linked to tensions resulting from inequalities between the Tamil minority and Sinhalese majority. Colonial administrators had favoured the Tamil minority economically, but this advantage was sharply reversed once the Sinhalese gained power and increasingly sidelined the Tamil minority in such areas as educational

opportunities, civil service recruitment and language policy.

- In **Uganda** the Bantu-speaking people (largely in the centre and south) have been economically dominant but politically sidelined compared with the non-Bantu-speaking people (largely in the north). These economic and political inequities have played a role in major conflicts, including the violence initiated by Idi Amin (1970s) and by the second Obote regime (1983–85).
- Indigenous people in the state of Chiapas, **Mexico**, have long suffered political and socio-economic deprivations. They have demanded greater political autonomy, improved socio-economic conditions and protection of their cultural heritage, culminating in uprisings against the Mexican state in four municipalities.
- In **South Africa** before 1994 the black majority was severely disadvantaged politically and socio-economically. That led to many uprisings between 1976 and the transfer of power in 1993.
- Catholics in **Northern Ireland** have suffered economic and political deprivations since the 16th century. The establishment of Northern Ireland as part of the United

Kingdom in the 1920s ensured that Protestants would enjoy permanent political and economic dominance—fuelling demands by northern Catholics to become part of the predominantly Catholic Republic of Ireland. Violent conflict started in the late 1960s and began to ease in the 1990s following systematic efforts to reduce these inequalities.

- Constitutional crises and coups have occurred in **Fiji**, notably in 1987 and 1999, as economically sidelined indigenous Fijians have feared losing political control to the economically dominant Indian-origin Fijians.
- Increasing tensions between Muslims and Christians in Poso, Central Sulawesi, **Indonesia**, began surfacing in the mid-1990s as the Muslim community increasingly gained more than indigenous Christians from new economic policies.
- Since colonial times the indigenous people of **Guatemala** have suffered political and economic discrimination, contributing to the country's ongoing conflicts.
- The Maoist insurgency launched in **Nepal** in 1996 may be attributed to deep grievances stemming from the systematic marginalization and exclusion of certain ethnic groups, castes and women.

Source: Stewart 2002; UNDP 2004; Fraenkel 2003.

*Creating an environment in which multiple identities flourish begins with encouraging cultural liberty and equality between groups in cultural, political and socio-economic opportunities*

group inequality, as in Indonesia and Nepal. The root of conflict in the Solomon Islands was the struggle for scarce and poorly managed resources (box 2.7). In Bolivia the government of Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada was forced to resign in October 2003 in large part because of the activism and uprisings of the indigenous majority and their supporters, aroused by their poverty and political marginalization. In Ecuador, too, indigenous groups mobilized around issues of poverty and inequality and joined other groups in protest against the government of Jamil Mahuad, who was forced to resign in January 2000.<sup>81</sup> In some cases groups have been both economically and politically deprived (as in Mexico and South Africa), while in others a group may be politically dominant yet economically deprived (as in Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Uganda).

The industrialized world is not immune to this sort of violence. Race riots in US cities have been linked to severe racial disparities in income and public spending.<sup>82</sup> In Northern Ireland the Catholic minority suffered both economic and political discrimination. Statistical evidence supports this in-depth research. A study of 233 groups in 93 countries strongly supports the hypothesis that such inequalities between groups are liable to lead to violence.<sup>83</sup>

BOX 2.7

**Solomon Islands' ethnic difference not the cause of conflict**

In the conflict in the Solomon Islands, ethnicity issues diverted attention from the core issues of land tenure, economic development and more accountable governance that underpinned the protests. The peace agreement, for example, refers to the victims of “ethnic unrest” and the need to restore “ethnic harmony” in the Solomon Islands. But it is naïve and potentially dangerous for would-be peacemakers to view the conflict solely through the lens of interethnic hostility. Situated in a culturally diverse region with more than 1,000 languages, the Solomon Islands (where at least 70 distinct languages are spoken) is a weak and impoverished modern state, incapable of collecting taxes or delivering basic services. With hundreds of tribal groups and small clans known as *wantoks*, the concept of larger ethnic loyalties is almost as foreign and artificial as the notion of the state.

Although an ethnic feud on the surface, the recent intense social unrest in the Solomon Islands stems more from the struggle for scarce and poorly managed resources, whose ownership was previously vested in the clan, tribe or line. With the arrival of increasing numbers of migrant workers in the 1990s on the resource-rich island of Guadalcanal, resentment grew among the island's native settlers. Starting in 1998 armed groups of Guadalcanal youth (known as the Isatabu Freedom Movement, or IFM) engaged in belligerent actions that resulted in the internal displacement of more than 35,000 Solomon Islanders. Clashes ensued, predominantly with inhabitants from the neighbouring island of Malaita, and continued until late 2000 and the signing of an Australian-brokered peace agreement.

Source: Ponzio 2004 citing Reilly 2002; Schoorl and Friesen 2000.

Most research on these conflicts has focused on economic and political inequalities, but a lack of cultural recognition can also be important. The introduction of the “Sinhala only” language policy was a strong impetus to the dramatic escalation of conflict in Sri Lanka. Language policy also played a role in the civil war in Moldova. And the Soweto riots in South Africa were triggered not by new economic or political deprivations but by attempts to impose Afrikaans on black schools. The peace agreement that ended more than 30 years of fighting in Guatemala included the Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous People (as part of the general peace accords), which gave official recognition to the country's multi-ethnicity.

The state's typical response to cultural differences is suppression and assimilation—to build a homogeneous nation. But suppression of cultural liberty is an attack on human development. And attempts to suppress and assimilate can heighten the tensions in society—so much so that they spill over into violent conflict.

*Multiple identities can reduce conflict.* Identities based on common cultural characteristics, such as religion, language or ethnicity, appear to promote stronger loyalty among group members than identities based on other characteristics. From that, leaders have learned that uniting groups based on a single cultural bond may be the best way to “rally the troops”. The idea that individuals have a single rigid identity is divisive and confrontational. There is no question that this has been important in many conflicts.

Creating an environment in which multiple identities flourish is no easy task. It begins with encouraging cultural liberty and equality between groups in cultural, political and socio-economic opportunities. People must be free to choose how to define themselves and must be afforded the same rights and opportunities that their neighbours enjoy. This Report asserts that a main hope for harmony lies in promoting our multiple identities.

*MYTH 3: CULTURAL DIVERSITY IS AN OBSTACLE TO DEVELOPMENT*

There is no clear relationship, good or bad, between diversity and development. An argument

## SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION

### Diversity—from divisive to inclusive

On 27 April 1994 the people of South Africa founded a nation on the pledge that we would undo the legacy of our divided past in order to build a better life for all.

It was not a pledge that we made lightly.

For generations, millions had been deliberately reduced to poverty. And to perpetuate itself, the apartheid system that claimed to be ordained from on high was sustained only by brute force, robbing us all of our humanity—oppressed and oppressor alike.

For decades we had fought for a non-racial, non-sexist society, and even before we came into power in the historic elections of 1994, our vision of democracy was defined by the principle, among others, that no person or groups of persons shall be subjected to oppression, domination or discrimination by virtue of race, gender, ethnic origin, colour or creed.

Once we won power, we chose to regard the diversity of colours and languages that had once been used to divide us as a source of strength.

We ensured that the basic law of our land, our Constitution and Bill of Rights, promoted unity and gave unique attention to social and economic rights. Our path of inclusiveness was not new, nor had it been chosen in haste. For decades the African National Congress had promoted national unity, and even at the height of oppression, when racial interaction led to prison and death, we never gave up on our aim to build a society grounded on friendship and common humanity.

Now, although laws no longer enforce the old divisions, they are still visible in social and economic life, in our residential areas, in our workplaces and in the growing inequality between rich and poor.

When we took on the project to transform our society, one of our rallying cries was “freedom from want”. Our goal was to banish hunger, illiteracy and homelessness and ensure that everyone had access to food, education and housing. We saw freedom as inseparable from human dignity and equality. Now the foundation for a

better life has been laid, and construction has begun. We are fully aware that our freedom and our rights will only gain their full meaning as we succeed together in overcoming the divisions and inequalities of our past and in improving the lives of all, especially the poor. Today, we are starting to reap some of the harvest we sowed at the end of a South African famine.

Many in the international community, observing from a distance how our society defied the prophets of doom and their predictions of endless conflict, have spoken of a miracle. Yet those who have been closely involved in the transition will know that it has been the product of human decision.



Nelson Mandela

1993 Nobel Peace Prize Winner

for suppressing cultural groups and encouraging assimilation is that cultural diversity hampers development. Historically, one of the ideological backbones of the nation-state is that it functions much more effectively if it has a single cultural identity.

Much fuel for that argument today comes from Sub-Saharan Africa. A region rich in diversity but struggling with economic growth and development leads to speculation that diversity itself might be the cause of the problem. But the literature reveals an important distinction: problems arise not simply when diverse groups live together but also when tensions between these groups lead to inefficient political decision-making and disproportionate access for one or more groups to material resources and patronage.<sup>84</sup>

In Kenya, for example, President Daniel arap Moi took over from Jomo Kenyatta in 1978. By 1988 the share of road building in the “home regions” of the Kenyatta coalition was a third of what it had been at the end of the Kenyatta years, while road building in the Moi home regions almost doubled. The picture was similar for health spending in 1988, which was

18% in the regions of the Kenyatta coalition and 49% in the regions of the Moi coalition.<sup>85</sup>

The way to overall economic growth, and to high levels of health and education, is to formulate policies for the country, not for interest groups. Interest group politics are a problem in all countries, not just the culturally diverse. Indeed, the purpose of democracies is to manage conflicting interests through a transparent political system and open dialogue. Many established and prosperous democracies are constantly balancing the interests of powerful groups and those of the country.

In culturally diverse countries that are performing poorly, how much can diversity be blamed? Many of the poorest countries face enormous hurdles: high levels of HIV/AIDS and malaria, low levels of education, a location far from world markets. Resolving the tensions between groups is clearly not going to solve these problems. Consider Botswana, a homogeneous country with a stable political situation—and the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence in the world.

Again, the idea that diversity is bad for development is demolished by the many success stories of societies that recognize diversity.

*Attempts to suppress and assimilate diverse cultural groups are not only morally wrong—they are often ineffective, heightening tensions*

Malaysia, with 62% of its people Malays and other indigenous groups, 30% ethnic Chinese and 8% Indian, was the world's 10th fastest growing economy during 1970–90, years when it implemented a broad range of affirmative action policies.<sup>86</sup> India has managed its diverse cultures with pluralist policies and 15 official languages—and made remarkable progress in economic growth and in health and education.

These success stories of culturally diverse countries point to the importance of pluralist policies. To the extent that cultural diversity can lead to tensions between groups and to inefficient political decision-making, the solution lies in reducing these tensions. As this Report argues from beginning to end, attempts to suppress and assimilate diverse cultural groups are not only morally wrong—they are often ineffective, heightening tensions. Needed instead are accommodating pluralist policies for incorporating individuals with diverse cultural identities into society.

*Economic benefits of migration.* A special case in the relationship between diversity and development is migration to the more developed countries. Unlike managing existing diversity, accepting economic migrants—or turning a blind eye to illegal immigrants looking for work—is a clear policy decision to increase diversity for economic gain.

The positive impact of migration on the ageing demographic profile of the West lies behind softer approaches to economic migration. Large inflows of migrants are needed for countries to maintain the ratio of working to non-working citizens—the European Union needs about 3 million immigrants a year, roughly twice the current number.<sup>87</sup> Immigrants also bring entrepreneurial skills—30% of the new companies in Silicon Valley in California in 1995–98 were started by Chinese and Indian immigrants (these ideas are further developed in chapter 5).<sup>88</sup>

And while debate continues on the brain drain from developing countries, the economic benefits of migration are not just one way. Remittances have soared, adding up to \$80 billion in 2002, outstripping foreign aid and providing one of the biggest sources of revenue for some poor countries.<sup>89</sup>

But there are losers as well as winners. People already residing in the country feel threatened by the new immigrants and unfairly treated, through perceptions about a depressing impact on wages and employment. Key issues arise for the immigrants too. Needed for their labour and not their culture, their cultural freedoms are often not protected. Chapter 5 looks at the delicate policy balances of ensuring the benefits of migration while avoiding growing tensions between groups within a country and the negative consequences that can follow.

*Diversity and dynamism through an exchange of ideas.* Diverse societies can reap real benefits through the dynamism and creativity arising from the interactions of different cultural groups. Such effects are not easy to capture. They are most visible at the international level, where benefits can accrue from interactions between countries through trade and a sharing of experiences. A key element in Japan's emergence as one of the world's richest economies was a reversal of isolationist policies, with a firm commitment to "seek knowledge throughout the world".<sup>90, 91</sup> And *Arab Human Development Report 2003* identifies the lack of openness to ideas as a major factor holding back progress in that region.<sup>92</sup>

Effects within countries can be similar. The United States is the leading example of a country founded on diversity and tolerance where enormous economic success has followed. Benefits can come directly from interactions between groups. And businesses and entrepreneurs can be drawn to cities and societies where cultural freedom and diversity flourish. A study by the Brookings Institution finds that 11 of the metropolitan areas in the United States with the highest overall diversity are among the top 15 high-technology areas.<sup>93</sup> The implication is that diverse and tolerant environments foster the creation and innovation necessary for high-technology industries.

## TODAY'S CHALLENGES FOR CULTURAL LIBERTY

This Report argues that multicultural approaches to managing diversity (see table 2.2) need not end in conflict, fragmentation and weak

development. Indeed, such approaches may help avoid problems by easing tensions before they become acute. In the big picture the arguments for these policies are clear. But for policy-makers the contradictions, trade-offs and clashes with other aspects of human development can monopolize their attention.

For example, should London provide instruction in the 300 different languages that students in its state schools speak when there is so much demand for resources elsewhere? Does affirmative action violate principles of equity? How can a secular state balance the varying needs of religious groups? These are difficult questions. Ignoring the problem will not make it go away.

In some areas policies for cultural recognition will not interfere with human development. In others innovative policy solutions are needed to manage trade-offs. As the following chapters show, the tensions and policy trade-offs can be managed, despite what current discourse might suggest, especially where the costs have been exaggerated and the benefits ignored.

In a world where about 900 million people belong to groups that experience cultural exclusion in some form, promoting cultural liberty is an enormous challenge. Almost twice as many people are discriminated against or disadvantaged socially, economically or politically. The rest of this Report focuses on the policy issues for addressing the challenges to cultural liberty.

