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**Title: Citizenship and Conflicts: A Comparative Study of Malaysia and South Africa**

### **ABSTRACT**

This research has attempted to link the notion of citizenship and emergence of ethno-national conflicts in the multicultural state. It is often argued that resolution of the conflicts requires the understanding of the root cause of the conflict. Many analyses of the contemporary identity conflicts encompass around the resource based understanding of the conflicts. Merely 'resource factor' in any violent social conflicts will not give us a complete picture of the causes of conflicts. It will provide only a partial analysis of a much complex set of factors that led many countries into civil war.

Main concern in ethnic conflict is collective identity and its security in particular. Hence any agreement should provide assurance to all conflicting parties by addressing and resolving their collective fear. Studies suggest that conventional techniques are not effective in the dealing with identity based conflicts as they do not address the underlying issues related to a group's need.

Human needs theory argues that there are some non-negotiable basic human needs which are different from subsistence needs. Unless these basic needs such as recognition, security and participation are not considered in the resolution process that the conflict in the multi-ethnic society i.e. based on identity conflict would not be resolved, on the contrary it bound to repeat over the time period. But this does not mean that identity based conflicts do not contain issues of resources or other material interests, however, when identity is the prominent element of conflict it overrides other issues.

Creation of national identity is an important aspect but at what cost is the question often faced by the heterogeneous state. To manage the diversity, states use methods like; assimilation and integration of different cultural groups into the majority national culture. These are generally done by more or less in a coercive way. Hence this study of conflicts, focused on how state deals with issues of recognition, security, participation, acceptance and distribution, when it tried to resolve the ethno-nationalist conflicts in a multi-ethnic society.

Citizenship is traditionally linked to the state and its majority national people consequently it excludes different ethnic minority groups from the idea of nation-state. Hence state's definition of exclusive citizenship creates identity conflicts particularly in a multi-

ethnic society. Hence study argues there is direct relationship between notion of citizenship and ethno-nationalist conflict and concept of multicultural inclusive citizenship would helpful in establishment of peace and stability in multicultural state.

Citizenship has always been an important issue in societies that are heterogeneous and divided along ethnic and religious lines. Rather than merely focusing on its legal angle, citizenship must be relates to social process through which individuals and social groups articulate their claim. Hence, Citizenship has not only legal importance but also has a strong impact on the fulfilment of the psychological needs of dignity and cultural security.

In liberal tradition states are considered as a neutral in making of policies. Historically, in the process of the nation building, race, religion and caste had been used for excluding different minority groups and individuals from the public and political platform. Democratization process has challenged these discriminatory policies and destroyed the myth of the states' neutrality in the dealing of different groups under the notion of nation-state. Multicultural inclusive citizenship argues that differences could be made between citizens and some indicators of identity should be recognized if we treat all citizens democratically equal.

Study argued that articulation of the demands and grievances of the minority cultural groups in multicultural state should be address through a flexible liberal notion of the multicultural inclusive citizenship. Multicultural citizenship provides a number of different policies based on types of the minority and its nature of demands. Most commonly used policies are; representation of minority voices, recognition, redistribution and assistance, accommodation and autonomy.

On the basis above parameters, citizenship policies of both selected state's policies were discussed and a comparison was done. In order to create the non-racial society, South Africa has adopted the individual citizenship conception but at the same time, she has also provided cultural and educational rights to its minority communities. Similarly, Malaysian constitution granted multicultural differentiated citizenship rights with special provisions for majority Malays community. But since Malaysia has substantive number of minority ethnic population, it also provides freedom of cultural and religious practices and use of mother tongue up to secondary level. However Malays have predominant superior position in Malaysia due to their indigenous character but a strong sense of Malaysian feeling has established over the period among various non-Malays communities.

Overall, the study found that both Malaysia and South Africa despite their high diversity are able to manage substantive ethnic peace in most of their post-colonial period and stabilised democracy.