

Comparative multiculturalism: Policy of multiculturalism: theory and reality

The course that I worked on for the CASE program will examine the politics of multiculturalism in different types of nation-states, state policies in promotion of multiculturalism, public acceptance of multicultural policies, and the challenges that multiculturalism faces.

As there is little consensus on the definition of multiculturalism among scholars and politicians -- even in countries with a relatively long history of debate over the concept -- it is especially interesting to look at multicultural policies in different contexts. Debates over the nature of multiculturalism and empirical examples of multicultural policy implementation demonstrate the variety of approaches to the term multiculturalism itself, as well as the variety of policy areas to which the concept can be applied. Accepting multiculturalism both as a policy and as an ideology becomes even more difficult in the absence of a shared understanding and usage of such terms as nation, ethnicity, race, and even culture, because these terms form a basis for understanding multiculturalism and implementing multicultural policies, thus affecting the discourse of multiculturalism and its application as a policy.

Why study multiculturalism? First, as mentioned above, there is a lack of agreement on the definition of multiculturalism among scholars, politicians, and society at large. In many cases these same actors reject multicultural policies. Second, as British sociologist M. Billig states it, there is a strong tradition of nationalism in debates over multiculturalism, and strong influence from the “us-them” dichotomy (*Banal Nationalism* 1995: 148-149). The above referenced lack of consensus over multicultural policies is especially acute in the case of East-Central Europe. After the breakdown of the socialist bloc countries in East-Central Europe, as well as the former

Soviet republics, encountered problems when dealing with ethnic diversity in a new context. Processes of globalization and European integration go hand in hand with the process of social and political change on the national level . These parallel developments leads to the emergence of mutually contradicting processes and transformations within societies, and raises new national and ethnic challenges. On the one hand, multicultural policies had already been adopted by most European Union member states, and meeting the requirements of EU membership and improving their image as democratic countries became a crucial part of “returning to Europe” for most of the ECE countries. On the other hand, dealing with immigration, refugees, and guest-workers posed difficult challenges for these transitioning states. Slightly different trends emerged in the post-Soviet republics. In addition to a general tendency of multiculturalism becoming valued as part of a good democratic society, the FSU states are dealing with the legacies of Soviet nationality policies, which might be seen as promoting multicultural in some ways (multinational to be more exact, see Y. Slezkine 1994, S. Sunwoo Lee 2008, and S. Akturk 2007).

Increasing immigration flows and EU enlargement have refueled debates over multiculturalism in Western Europe as well. While the usage of the term multiculturalism might not raise any heated arguments anymore in the United States, it does not mean that the problem itself is solved. Rather, the debate over multiculturalism has become part of the debate over other issues, such as hate speech affirmative action, and immigration.

As most scholars who work on multicultural politics would point it out, modern societies are increasingly multicultural. Thus, the study of ethnic relations and the transformation of the national identities is essential to understanding contemporary European societies within a context of a changing international order. I think it is essential too for understanding the causes of ethnic

conflict and post-conflict reconstruction that would establish long-term peace and balance in the region.

One can use different footings and criteria for classifying models of multiculturalism: Some authors (e.g. Rostov scholar Oxana Karnaukhova) suggest analyzing multiculturalism in the context of postcolonial debates, which allows us to compare the roots and motives that shape the selection among models of multiculturalism. Other scholars (e.g. Sener Akturk 2007) classify multicultural models by focusing on the criteria for community membership (e.g. language policy, problems of citizenship, other forms of membership depending on the type of state). Mark Lopez (2000), writing on Australian multiculturalism, suggests a typology of models of multiculturalism based on the socioeconomic and legal situation of national minorities within a state. One should also mention here the debates between liberal multiculturalists (such as Will Kymlicka, Iris Young, Yeal Tamir, Charles Taylor, Joseph H. Carens, and Bhikhu Parekh) and their opponents (Brian Barry, Susan Okin, Nathan Glazer). Mark Brilliant uses the categories of multiculturalists (which could be characterized as cultural relativists), cultural conservatives (promoting the idea of protection of domestic culture through various means, including institutional ones, as opposed to cultural relativism), civil nationalists (focusing on the issues of citizenship, based on the idea of the social contract and establishing membership on the basis of loyalty to a particular state, regardless of ethnicity), cosmopolitanists (identifying with a single moral community, however, one should distinguish economic, political and cultural cosmopolitanists).

Peter Kivisto, (2002) together with several other theorists of multiculturalism, suggests making a distinction between multiculturalism as an analytical and as a normative concept,

which helps to draw a line between multiculturalism as a theory and multiculturalism as a policy.

This serves the aim of the course and helps define its structure:

- introduction to the general debates on multiculturalism existing western scholarship, including debates on concepts adjacent to multiculturalism debates: David Miller 2003: especially ch. 5-7 (on justice, feminism and multiculturalism, nation, state, and global justice), Cynthia Willett, ed. (1998), as well as Peter Kivisto (2002): especially the introduction, which provides a good survey of the debates, and would be especially helpful for students)
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- case studies of multicultural policies: U.S. implementation of multicultural policies in its educational system. Works by R. Takaki (1993) and P. Kivisto (2002: Chapter 2) would be good resources for this, as they provide a detailed overview of the development of multicultural society in the United States from the prospective of different ethnic minorities (R. Takaki 1993); M. Brilliant's article (2008) on affirmative action in American universities is a good introduction to the issue of implementation of multicultural values through the education system, and the challenges it faces. A more general survey of affirmative action in the United States is T. Sowell (2005: Ch. 6). Australia: there is a significant amount of work dealing with the position of white population of Australia. Of particular interest for this course is M. Lopez (2000), which details the development of multiculturalism in Australia, the application of theories of multiculturalism in politics, and the development of official policy regarding the status of minorities and issues of citizenship. Another useful work the chapter on Australia in P. Kivisto (2002: Ch. 3). Europe is the next case study of policies of multiculturalism. I propose to divide the topic into two separate cases: old Europe (old EU members) and new Europe (several EU accession countries in East-Central Europe). For both cases, of the research of the Programme of International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion (IMISCOE) is highly valuable and informative. R. Baubock, ed. (2007a, b) focuses specifically on issues of citizenship and policy changes in several ECE countries (the Baltic states, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic). J. Kelly (2004) can be used for discussion in this section of the course, together with several chapters from P. Kivisto (2002: Ch. 5). The next section of the course will look at ideas of multiculturalism (or to be more precise of multinationalism) by using the Soviet Union's nationality policies: here, we shall mention works by American scholar Yu. Slezkine (1994) and Ed. W. Walker (2003, 1997, ed.), which analyze the effects of the breakdown of the Soviet Union and also provide a historic survey of the understanding of ethnic diversity in the Soviet Union. The final case study from FSU countries is contemporary Russia. Works by Russian sociologists and anthropologists such as V. Tishkov (2004, 1997) and L. Drobizheva (ed., 1998) provide both empirical and theoretical data on the minority-majority relations and ethnic conflicts in the region, together with historic and political background. Another book related to similar issues is a collection of works by Russia political

scientists, historians and sociologists on ethnic conflict in the Russian borderlands (2005).

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Let us now turn to debates on definition of multiculturalism. As David Miller (2003) argues in a concise overview of political philosophy multiculturalism in the context of public and scholarly debates does not actually raise many new philosophical questions, but rather presents long-standing questions of political philosophy in a new way and in new circumstances (111). Debates on multiculturalism are naturally connected with debates over identity: its role in state formation, the way identities are transforming with globalization, and *fluidity of identity* (Peter Kivisto, 2002). Most of the scholars who debate multiculturalism, with the important exception of cosmopolitanists (Sam Scheffler, David Hollinger, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Kok-Chor Tan, Jeremy Waldron, Seyla Benhabib), seem to look at multiculturalism more in terms of transforming what are still nation-states and national identities, being involved in discussion of identities based on the principles of exclusion and inclusion, i.e. in us-them, divisive paradigm. These debates often deal with conflict between values of the nation-state and universal values. Analyzing debates on multiculturalism, Peter Kivisto (2002) identifies issues of citizenship as central (34-35). In this context, we can speak not only about citizenship, but also about membership in a society with diverse (actual or imaginative) loyalties. Other scholars looking at the questions of citizenship in pluralist democracies include Ch. Taylor, W. Kymlicka, B. Parekh, and A. Buchanan.

Emma Tarlo's article on Islamic cosmopolitanism (2007), which discusses another aspect of multiculturalism also needs to be noted. Discussing cultural diversity in Europe, Tarlo examines European Muslim women's deliberate selection of religious views, rituals, and fashion that represent and accentuate their origin. These actions were in response to cosmopolitan education (*Fashion theory* 11:2/3: 143-172). Tarlo examines how multiculturalism and

particularly cosmopolitanist policies that create an environment of equal opportunities for different cultures. This in turn, may at the same time may create a desire to maintain the culture of one's origin, to accentuate an original identity and therefore promote greater diversity while simultaneously promoting cultural exclusion.

Writing on Australian multiculturalism, Mark Lopez (2000) distinguishes four different policy approaches in multicultural communities.

(i) cultural pluralism, when government is supporting preservation and development of migrant/ethnic cultures; (ii) welfare multiculturalism, which conceptualized minority groups economically vulnerable and afflicted by a range of welfare problems; (iii) ethnic structural pluralism which depicts migrants as representatives of certain ethnic groups and as victims of socio-economic inequalities which affect their sense of identity; and finally (iv) ethnic rights multiculturalism, which conceives migrant problems in terms of violation of their rights.

Contrast this with the typology in an article at *Oxford Analytica* (2006) entitled 'Europe Backs Away From Multiculturalism', where three concepts of understanding multiculturalism are distinguished: first, multiculturalism as a value, which means that all cultures are of equal value. This position reflects the position of cultural relativism. Second, multiculturalism as a facilitation of integration (adopted in the Netherlands), which means a policy aimed at integration of ethnic minorities through their own culture and language as mediators of integration and adaptation. Thirdly, *inclusive* multiculturalism (typical for the United Kingdom and Canada) means that ethnic minorities "may maintain those aspects of their culture that do not violate the law or basic values of the hosting country." The author is generally optimistic about the potential of multiculturalism, but cautions that as a response to the further

integration of Europe, globalization, and the rise in Islamic extremism opposition to the ideas of multiculturalism in Europe is likely to be observed.

In the class I am planning to teach, I will use multiculturalism as a “general working term” and will preliminarily define it as a “policy within the scope of liberal philosophy that seeks maximum accommodation of differences in religious, cultural or ethnic origin in a stable and morally defensible way, in private as well as in public spheres” (Loobuyck, Patrick. *Ethnicities* 5(1), 2001). A somewhat similar definition is given by Willet Cynthia (1998), who defines multiculturalism as a political, social, and cultural movement that has aimed to respect a multiplicity of diverging perspectives outside of dominant traditions.

Another aspect of multiculturalism that merits discussion is how multiculturalism became an official policy of a number of states, because of its connection with the idea of justice and human rights. Parekh (2000), for example, speaks about multiculturalism as a normative response to the cultural diversity and way to create a good just societies. Being part of the debates of those issues, multiculturalism as an official policy is getting adopted by more and more states. Of course there is certain resistance and criticism of both the idea and policy of multiculturalism, as it was mentioned above. One of the main criticism of cultural pluralism (and cultural relativism) is the idea that such policy leads to disunity of a society (Schlesinger A., N. Glazer) In *Oxford Analytica* (2006) article, entitled 'Europe Backs Away From Multiculturalism' the author posts a question if the institutional move toward cultural pluralism is in fact “a long unrealized cultural nationalism” or whether it is “a patronizing gesture of an intellectual class that continues to exploit the underclass in the service of its own self-fashioning?”

Another criticism of multiculturalism originates in the debates about cosmopolitanism. Seyla Benhabib (2006) states that universal ethic norms are “intrinsically valid and in the long run likely to be accepted and shall be included in the national legislations”. She regards national solidarity to be very exclusive and so contradicting to the universal values. As a result, it will inevitably collide with the values, requirements of democratic authority. David Hollinger (2006) distinguishes pluralism and cosmopolitanism: while pluralism is oriented on preserving the borders, cosmopolitanism values ethnic diversity and is defined by “recognition, acceptance, and eager exploration of diversity” (1995: 84) but at the same time is free from any particularistic loyalty. Generally speaking, debates on cosmopolitanism involve discussion of the same issues as debates on multiculturalism, trying to give them further reconsideration and reinterpretation.

For the class on multiculturalism that I am currently preparing, I am planning to include movies and documentaries in the syllabus to demonstrate to students how multiculturalism is part of public and/or political discourse. This may work especially well for students at the undergraduate level. Many different movies deal with the problem of migration, adjustment to the new cultural environment, issues of race, prejudices. The main question that is posed in these films is the issue of identity: how to built one’s original identity and culture in a new environment, what makes an identity of an immigrant of any generation. The answer that many of these films present tends to stress reconciliation of two cultures which makes the identity of characters and helps them to live happier lives. Good examples of movies that could be used for discussion of multiculturalism in the United States) is the movie *Spanglish* (USA, 2004). The title itself shows that cultures are always a mixture of different identites. The closing line of the movie, however, stresses the idea of “kaleidoscope” of cultures rather than the idea of a melting pot. As an answer to mother’s question, who is a Mexican immigrant to the United

States living in Los Angeles, “Is what you want for yourself...to become someone very different... than me?” the daughter finally states that her “identity rests firmly...and happily on one fact: I am my mother's daughter”. Similar idea is expressed in the movie *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (USA, 2002), and many other films.

Several other films might be useful teaching tools: *What's Cooking?* (UK/USA, 2000) is another good example of a popular idealistic view of multiculturalism. It is a series of stories of four different families representing four different cultures (an Hispanic, a Vietnamese, an African American, and a Jewish one) all preparing for Thanksgiving dinner, considered a true American holiday. *The Namesake* (USA, 2006) explores ways of adjustment to a new culture of two generations of immigrants (from India), deals with the problems of reconciliation of two cultures and issues of search for one's own identity. *Crash* (USA, 2004) tells the story of a group of people of different cultural origin (African-American, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic, and Middle East), demonstrating that the ethnic differences such as race, linguistics, religion, and culture between people continue to exist and remain salient in the United States.

As examples of films on of multiculturalism in Europe *East is East* (UK, 1999) and *Head-On* (Germany, 2004) are noteworthy. They both with the issue of multiculturalism in a similar manner. *East is East* explores the Pakistani–British culture clash that occurs in the early 1970's England. *Head-On* (German title: *Gegen die Wand*) deals with identity quest of two Germans of Turkish origins. Other films by Fatih Akin could also be added to this list.

It would also be interesting to contrast these American and Western European films with the somewhat different representation of multiculturalism in Soviet movies dealing with the issue. These include *Circus* (USSR, 1936), *They Met in Moscow* (USSR, 1941; Russian title: Swineherd and Shepherd), and *A Girl with the Guitar* (USSR, 1958), which all celebrate the kind

of diversity that was possible only in the Soviet Union. As tools of state propaganda, these films represent an idealistic view of cultural and ethnic diversity: they were meant on the one hand to praise socialism and the country, but on the other to educate the audience, develop their feeling of solidarity and loyalty.