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ARE WE FACING POST-MULTICULTURALISM? AN ATTEMPT AT AN ANALYSIS

Violetta Gul-Rechlewicz*

ABSTRACT

Problems referring to multicultural societies stand at the core of today's social and political debate across the world. The immigration policy is changing not only in the Americas or Australia, but also in European countries which regularly implement changes with respect to their immigration and integration policy. Multicultural societies undergo a crisis, while the very idea of functioning in a culturally diversified world is sometimes perceived as unreal. Contemporary multiculturalism seems to be adopting a different, redefined form which is more demanding and critical both towards the minority and the indigenous majority. Can we therefore state that present-day societies are nowadays functioning already in the era of post-multiculturalism, or are they experiencing a different form which is only taking its shape now? Can we under the current circumstances speak of the end of multiculturalism? Will the ever more present term 'post-multiculturalism' join our debate for good, thus shaping the new look of Europe and the world? The author of the article is trying to evaluate this still evolving idea.

Key words: Multiculturalism, crisis, integration, immigration policy, ethnic minorities

Introduction

A social and political debate about multiculturalism, both in its descriptive and normative meaning, has been going on almost all over the world for quite some time now. It has turned into a particularly heated discussion after September 11, 2001. Problems referring to multicultural societies stand at the core of today's debate held by academics, media and politicians themselves (Okólski, 2013, pp. 21-24, Okólski, 2012). The immigration policy is changing not only in the Americas or Australia, but also in European countries which regularly implement changes in their strategy aimed at ethnic minorities. In almost every country, anti-immigration parties are becoming more visible,

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gaining more and more support among voters. Government programmes are being formed which restrict the influx of immigrants or cut off those already settled from the social benefits previously granted to them. With the implementation of subsequent amendments to their immigration policy, the governments of the United Kingdom or the Netherlands are trying to reduce a new wave of immigrants from Bulgaria and Romania. A strict immigration policy is also being introduced with respect to refugees temporarily residing in the countries that have granted asylum to them. An alarmingly high percentage of asylum seekers are forced to return to their country of origin due to stricter regulations, often against their will. Frequently, their country of origin is Afghanistan or Iraq (Chodubski, 2013, pp. 29-34).

Given the current circumstances, it is possible to speak of the end of multiculturalism? Will the ever more present term *post-multiculturalism* join our debate for good, thus shaping the new look of Europe and the world?

Contemporary multiculturalism seems to be adopting a different, redefined form which is more demanding and critical both towards the minority and the indigenous majority. Can we therefore state that the present-day societies are already functioning in the era of post-multiculturalism, or are they experiencing a different form which is only taking its shape now?

The author of the article is trying to evaluate this still evolving idea.

1 Definition of *multiculturalism* – descriptive and normative

When approaching the term *multiculturalism* one has to bear in mind the dual character of its definition. This semantic duality is in fact so distinct that in some languages (e.g. in Polish) it is expressed by the means of two separate terms applied accordingly in the respective contexts. While the fact that the same term is used to describe various multicultural aspects ensures that no mistake can be made in naming the phenomena in question, in the English-speaking environment or English literature it always needs to be clear from the context which meaning of *multiculturalism* is currently discussed.

The term *multiculturalism* is used to describe multiple aspects and situations. However, whenever social or political references are made its meaning, and thus also its definition, may differ depending on the context. In his work *Politologia [Politics]*, **Andrew Heywood** suggests that cultural diversity of societies may be defined both in descriptive and normative terms. Based on this, he proposes his framework approach to the term of *multiculturalism* which

encompasses both the descriptive and normative context. According to him, *multiculturalism* can, on the one hand, be understood descriptively when it refers to the phenomenon of communal diversity arising from racial, ethnic or language differences. On the other hand, it can be understood normatively when it describes a positive endorsement of communal diversity by supplying legal guarantees (standards) promoting the approval of those who are different from the majority (Heywood, 2006, p. 150). As **Małgorzata Kułakowska** correctly points out, “*this solution [i.e. descriptive vs. normative] seems to be rather troublesome, as sometimes it is difficult to unequivocally conclude from the context which multiculturalism is meant at the given moment – the one that refers to the reality or the one that approves of the reality, or even in its very essence calls for a common approval of this reality*” (Kułakowska, 2009, p. 136)¹. At the same time, **Michał Buchowski** approaches this duality of *multiculturalism* rather sparingly by describing the both contexts and phenomena transparently and very matter-of-factly. He claims that “*in its descriptive meaning, multiculturalism expresses the existence of many cultures and [people’s] awareness of this phenomenon, while its other meaning has been coined as a normative response to this phenomenon (...)*” (Buchowski, 2008, p. 24). It shows, therefore, that the definition of the term *multiculturalism* depends on the context and may either be used for the purposes of describing the given situation or providing legal norms to support it.

Yet another definition of *multiculturalism* has been provided by **Jerzy Nikitorowicz**, who points out its interdisciplinary character. He understands the term in a very broad context, i.e. as an idea of a global village, multitude of cultures, cultural diversity, government policy aimed at elimination of social tensions connected with the fact of *multiculturalism*, as a movement, a doctrine, a philosophy of pluralism which describes actions of minorities towards their emancipation or their fuller participation in the social, political or cultural life (Nikitorowicz, 2009, pp. 279-280).

The aim of this brief, and by no means exhaustive, description of the idea of *multiculturalism* understood either as a phenomenon (i.e. descriptively) or as a norm (i.e. normatively) is to draw attention to the complex nature of the term, especially due to the fact that later in the article further analytical attempts will be undertaken with respect to its both meanings.

¹ Unless indicated otherwise all the translations in the article come from the author of the article.

The theoretical discussion devoted to the phenomenon of *multiculturalism* was originally shaped by foreign scholars – philosophers such as, primarily, **Will Kymlicka**, **Charles Taylor** and **Brian Barry**. This group includes both the supporters (Kymlicka, Taylor) and opponents (Barry) of the idea. When characterising *multiculturalism*, Kymlicka says that it is about “ensuring the non-discriminatory application of laws, but changing the laws and regulations themselves to better reflect the distinctive needs and aspirations of minorities (Kymlicka, 2012, p.8). As Kymlicka claims, with the term covering a wide range of the state policy, its definition should also take into account the level of the so-called recognition and public support for ethnic minorities, so that they can express their identity and carry out their practices indicative of their cultural background (Hunger, 2014). **Charles Taylor**, a representative of the conservative understanding of culture, perceives *multiculturalism* as a kind of an attempt to correct the classic, “inhospitable to difference”, liberalism which has never been “a neutral ground on which people of all cultures can meet and coexist” (Taylor, 1992, p. 62).

Taylor also assumes that the co-existence within a multicultural society requires an attitude of openness to otherness and a willingness to learn about it. In his vision of *multiculturalism*, “the recognition of difference” referring to the area of the legal definition of ethnic minorities, along with granting them a number of group rights in order to protect their culture, should in the end lead to the understanding and assessment of the cultural heritage of the minority by the majority (Taylor, 1992, p. 67). According to **Taylor**, all human cultures which “*have enlivened whole societies through significant periods have something important to say to all human beings*”(Taylor, 1992).The prime value of cultures, as Taylor postulates, constitutes in his opinion a starting point for intercultural relations.

Another point of view is adopted by **Brian Barry**, a British critic of the idea of *multiculturalism*, who defines it in terms of a regressive and anti-egalitarian phenomenon (Barry, 2001, p. 12). Barry defends universalism and sees in the multicultural “ideology” a threat to the fundamental values defended by liberalism (Barry, 2001)². Critics of this idea, with **Barry** at the helm, are concerned about the risk of re-orientation in the area of multicultural diversity.

² Brian Barry is known among others for his defence of liberalism against the criticism of multiculturalists.

They claim that economic justice is being forgotten in favour of the defence of culture and identity, while the policy “of preserving your own identity” is weakening the potential multiracial and multi-ethnic solidarity. By focusing on the so-called “cultural justice”, we are moving away from the so-called “economic justice”. (Song, 2010)

Based on these findings, another problem arises when it comes to reaching a uniform definition of *multicultural society* and thus of a smooth transition from the area of theory to the area of practice, which would allow for developing a proper direction for the state policy towards minorities.

In a heterogeneous society **Will Kymlicka** distinguishes two segments of ethnic minorities. Next to the immigrant community, he points to the – often marginally treated – minority of indigenous population, i.e. indigenous (autochthonic) peoples³ (Muciek, 2013, pp. 135-136, Ratajczak, 2011, Podgórska, 2013, pp. 173-174). **Tariq Modood**, a contemporary guru in the area of *multiculturalism*, next to these groups also enumerates the ones which recognise themselves for example based on their religious identity (Modood, 2008, p.550). **Ian Buruma**, on the other hand, draws attention to the problem of internal diversity of immigrants themselves, among whom clear animosities may be observed resulting from their attitudes and awareness, e.g. deeply religious populations from the Arab countries and rather secularised representatives of the Turkish diaspora (Buruma, 2008, pp. 27-28).

A certain terminological “confusion” arises in relation to the phenomenon of *multiculturalism* also due to ethnically homogenous multigenerational families in which the subsequent generations grow up in culturally and civilisationally different living conditions (Buruma, 2008). The last of them, representing the third generation, stands at a certain cultural crossroads between the culture “imported” from the country of their ancestors and the culture of the country in which they were born. This is the most difficult form to determine your own identity and a terminological dilemma – which category should this person belong to; are they “ours” or “alien” (Scheffer, 2010, pp. 513-517).

Michał Buchowski, already referred to above, focuses on social contacts in terms of cultural diversity and asks whether families living next to each other and practising a different religion (Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodox

³ For example, the Inuit people in Greenland or Canada (the Nunavut region), the Sami people in Scandinavia, or the Bretons and Occitans in France (Ratajczak, 2014).

Christianity) can be classified as a multicultural conglomerate or not? Can we already speak here of *multiculturalism* or not yet? It seems that an attempt to answer this question should start with the analysis of the very term *culture* (Kuřakowska, 2009, pp. 137-138). "Culture" (lat. *cultus agris*) – identified with civilisation – is a term having multiple meanings and subject to a complex scientific interpretation. "Culture", therefore, consists of material and immaterial "products" – spiritual or symbolic. They may be thinking and/or behaviour patterns. "Culture" can be seen as a static image comprising of relatively stable and permanent set of norms and customs characteristic to a certain ethnic group⁴, popularised by Hofstede as „programming of the mind” (Hofstede, 2000, pp. 30-42), or recognised as marked by some dynamics. This dynamics is particularly associated with a progressive cultural globalisation which can lead to the transformation of both cultures: foreign and local.

The work of Taylor (Taylor, 1992) and Kymlicka (Will Kymlicka, 1995) arose in parallel to these controversies. Crucial to the development of social theory, they underline the point that even the umbrella term “culture” cannot be associated with an essentialist understanding of commonality or nation. At its core, culture is interactional and constructivist, a sphere of symbols and practices in which also ethnic and religious differences must be permanently negotiated. This conception of culture has developed in contrast to many influential positions, such as that of Samuel P. Huntington who has long advocated a more conflict-oriented “clash of civilizations”.

Part of the problem is that there is an array of competing definitions of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism can mean many different things: a demographic condition, a set of institutional arrangements, objectives of a political movement or a set of state principles etc. (Vertovec 2010, pp. 83-95, Leggewie 2014).

This inconsistency in the description of the phenomenon of *multiculturalism*, presented here in a simplified form, is the reason why the determination of its essence is both problematic and ambiguous. Thus, it is also difficult to refer in a uniform way to *multiculturalism* as an idea. Based on the earlier findings,

⁴ For example, Charles Taylor is a proponent of conservative understanding of culture, according to which one can be a member of only one culture, the one in which one has been raised, thus rejecting the possibility of a secondary valuable acculturation. At the same time, Taylor points to the ability of diverse communities stemming from different cultures and representing different visions of the common good to function together (Kuisz, 2014).

multiculturalism can be understood as a normative response to cultural diversity, a political ideology or a philosophical trend, which in fact still does not exhaust the topic in the sense of terminology.

Multiculturalism, understood both descriptively and normatively, is present in interdisciplinary research circles, thus winning the interest of philosophers, anthropologists, historians, political scientists and sociologists. Because of that it seems justified to adopt a broader spectrum when looking into the phenomenon and idea of *multiculturalism*.

Following the diverse definitions presented above, for the purpose of the article it is assumed that *multiculturalism* in its descriptive meaning refers to a state of society characterised by the lack of ethnical, religious or linguistic homogeneity, while in its normative meaning it denotes the idea based on which the state develops its own policy towards the culturally heterogeneous society, built upon the recognition of freedom, equality and tolerance, in the name of the current liberal democratic principles.

2 Dilemmas related to multiculturalism – are we heading towards post-multiculturalism?

The very concept of multiculturalism as an idea was born in Canada during the term of office of Prime Minister **Pierre Trudeau**, who in 1971, in the government programme covering the issues of ethnic minorities, placed the respective note referring to tolerance and equality of cultures. The aim of Trudeau's policy was primarily to try to settle the conflict between the Anglo-Saxon and French culture, and to change the mentality of the citizens of Canada towards immigrants (Śliz, Szczepański, 2011, p.16). Following the Canadian solutions regarding the integration of immigrants, the United States and Australia, at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, initiated the discourse in the spirit of multiculturalism, expressing their willingness to implement the necessary changes in their immigration policy. The concept of multiculturalism was also supported by European countries, which turned the vector of their current policy towards minorities, at that time still relatively similar to that of traditional multicultural countries (Chodubski, 2013, pp. 27-31).

American writer **Horace Kallen** was the first to address the vision of multiculturalism in an organised manner by describing the idea in a philosophical context. The essence of the problem, as he claimed, was the concept of the "melting pot" of the 20th Century American society. **Kallen** was

therefore against the “americanisation” of immigrants whose presence was to lead the country towards the model of “(...) *the co-operative state in terms of cultural diversity, a federation, or finally, a community of national cultures (...)*” (Sadowski, Niziolek, 2012, p.115, Kallen, 1956).

The term “melting pot” must have caused a certain discontent among the elites, particularly that the world was at that time trying to deal with “the sin of colonialism” by radically changing its attitude towards ethnic minorities in order to improve its image. Pointing out this problem, **Will Kymlicka**, as a moderate supporter of multiculturalism, connected primarily to the inability of multicultural societies to identify the limits of such diversity. Thus, approaching the society as an “ethnic federation” must have, in a way, naturally evoked resistance of a part of the population (Kymlicka, 2012, pp. 8-10). Nevertheless, the idea of a multicultural society seems to have been a generally accepted one for many years.

The issue of extending a legal and political protection over ethnic minorities appeared in Western Europe over 40 years ago as a protest against discrimination and application of practices standing in the opposition to the vision of the liberal democratic state. It contributed to a still ongoing debate on the evolution of multicultural societies, on the degree of ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity, and their legitimacy in the modern world. The debate includes an analysis of facts and myths associated with multiculturalism, successes and failures of immigration policies of the countries concerned, as well as of problems related to the integration of minorities and the level of their acceptance by the host (indigenous) society. It is a discourse which involves almost all circles, which indicates an attempt to explain what multiculturalism actually is, whether it has met the expectations imposed on it, and if it has not then why, and finally, under what social and political conditions does it have a chance to function in the future.

The 1970s are considered to be the beginning of the development of the community idea of different cultures functioning next to each other. This trend continued in Western Europe more or less to the mid-1990s, both with respect to the formation of national policies on minorities and the creation of a new strategy by international organisations in the spirit of respect for the rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities (Godlewska, Lesińska-Staszczuk, 2013, pp. 12-16). At the same time, another trend appeared which aimed, at least partially, at the resignation from a homogeneous ethnic social structure of states in favour of a heterogeneous one, thus accepting cultural diversity within

its borders. The twilight of this concept was observed in the mid-1990s, when the idea of multiculturalism was for the first time ostracised socially and politically (Gul-Rechlewicz, 2013a, pp.88-91). Then, another idea of nation-building was adopted based on common values, uniform identity and informed citizenship. The following slogans: “civic integration”, “social cohesion”, “common values”, or – eventually – “common citizenship” have all gained social approval (Gul-Rechlewicz, 2013b, pp. 168-169).

Thus, the idea of the integration of minorities to assimilate newcomers into the receiving society has been questioned. This was initiated mainly by radical right-wing circles which have widely managed to convince a part of the electorate to their views. It resulted in the presence of anti-immigrant parties in local (state) parliaments and later even in the European Parliament, as it is the case also with the parties of a different ideological orientation than the one referred to above. (Spegel, Karnegy, 2014, Collins, 2014)

Anti-immigrant attitudes are, however, not only the domain of extreme right-wing circles. The centre-left ones also criticise the presence of immigrants, in whom they see the source of economic and social recession of the state. It is worth pointing out that the centre-left political movements (i.e. European social democratic parties), which initially supported the idea of multiculturalism, are now firmly distancing themselves from the rhetoric advocating for the current form of multicultural co-existence, albeit without forgetting about the achievements of democracy, i.e. equality, freedom, fight against discrimination and manifestations of racism (Bohman, 2013, pp. 13-15).

A breakthrough in thinking occurred due to unexpected tragic events, both globally and locally in some European countries. A clear departure from the doctrine of multiculturalism is observed (Kymlicka, 2012, p. 19). Emphasis is now put on the concept of a common nationality shared by representatives of different cultures (Gul-Rechlewicz, 2013b).

On the one hand, the discussion focused on the problems of contemporary multicultural societies upholds the very sense of their existence in the present, even if slightly modified form, while on the other hand, it points to a failure of immigration and integration policies in the global context. However, in terms of the phenomenon and idea of multiculturalism, the both directions encompass a number of significant elements having a substantial impact on the final result of the policy implemented, with both positive and negative connotations.

This issue is raised among others by **Will Kymlicka** who points to a number of serious errors with respect to integration policies. Firstly, he notices the need

for considering the multicultural existence within the social policy, rather than the national security policy, as the latter makes a peaceful co-existence difficult, given the stereotypical references to September 11. Secondly, he stresses the issue of human rights which should be inherent to all social groups, regardless of their ethnical or religious background. The problem arises when the state perceives certain groups as opposed to the liberal democratic rules. A consensus is then difficult. Support for multiculturalism is, after all, based on the assumption of a common commitment towards human rights protection in the line of ethnic and religious divisions.

The current vision of multiculturalism constitutes a critical look at the “mistakenly and naively understood” policy of co-existence of nations in the culturally diverse world, as well as a real risk of nationalist movements dangerous for democracy (Kymlicka, 2012, p. 4, p. 15).

Until recently, multiculturalism has been interpreted as an “attractive addition”, “a distinguishing feature of tolerance” or an element of one culture “enriching” another culture. On the one hand, it is treated too schematically and is too directly described by the means of a sequence of simple associations differentiating the representatives of separate, alien cultures (Alibhai – Brown, 2000, p. 47), while on the other hand, it is subject to criticism as an unnecessary, harmful celebration of the status quo which, in fact, has little in common with liberal democratic values.

Evaluating the contemporary multiculturalism, **Will Kymlicka** highlights a few important issues that allow to address the – seemingly – just idea in a critical way. Allowing for a certain dose of simplification, they all boil down to a social, political and economic exclusion of ethnic minorities, which in turn results, among others, in problems related to unemployment, housing segregation, inadequate language skills, low level of education among immigrants or their political marginalisation. The criticism of such state of affairs refers not only to a more or less successfully implemented policy of immigration and integration, but it also covers often hermetically closed, static groups of ethnic minorities that are rigidly bound to their traditions, culture, religion, and which very reluctantly, if at all, allow any form of change in their habits⁵ (Lagerlof, Leman, Bengtsson, 2011, pp. 18-25).

⁵ The radical Muslim circles who, in contrast to Muslim reformers, perceive the picture of the so-called “good Muslim” differently, are becoming particularly problematic.

Kymlicka points to the need for a new model of multiculturalism which would function beyond the political symbols of cultural identification, rigid cultivation of traditions, unthinking acceptance of the ancestors' culture, shifting towards respecting human rights and freedoms, or static reification of cultural differences in favour of the recognition of the evolution of one's own culture and the possibility to mix some of its components with another culture. At the same time, he calls for the participation of ethnic minorities in the social, political and economic life with putting the emphasis on building a new identity and an informed citizenship (Kymlicka, 2012, pp. 15-17). **Kymlicka** argues that Western democracies have created a caricature of multiculturalism based on superficial differences connected with ethnic diversity, thus turning away from the real problems faced by culturally heterogeneous societies for years. He stresses that the current problems related to multiculturalism are more complex. They require an in-depth historical analysis, also with focus on the political goals of the host countries whose long-term actions towards ethnic minorities may not always have been well thought through, the effects of which can be seen today.

One of the criticisms raised by the idea of moving away from multiculturalism is the issue of closing representatives of different cultures, in the name of cultural pluralism, in ethnic niches, which was to result in their "integration while preserving their own identity" (Matusz-Protasiewicz, 2008, pp. 135-140). Consequently, such policy has led to the strengthening of cultural conservatism on the part of minorities (particularly those of the Muslim origin), which resulted in a resistance against changes and an open society advocating for liberal democratic values, and capable of a critical evaluation of all traditions in general.

According to **Ian Buruma**, liberal democracy, however, can be reconciled with Islam. It is, as he says, a certain "necessity" because "regardless whether someone likes it or not, Muslims live in Europe. (...) *They will not abandon their religion, so we have to learn to live with them – and with it* (Iszkowski, 2007). In **Buruma's** opinion, the ideology according to which people from different cultures can live in separate communities, without being interested in each other or criticising one another, is wrong. We should, however, try to create a new model of a liberal democratic community which should gradually replace the culturally diverse communities functioning "separately" next to each other. As **Buruma** stresses, "Muslims are a minority in Europe. Even if they all were Islamists, which does not have much in common with the actual situation, they still could not pose a threat to the sovereignty, established laws and

enlightenment values. What can harm these values is the reaction of the non-Muslim majority. Fear of Islam and immigrants may lead to the adoption of illiberal laws” (Iszkowski, 2007).

Yet another point of view is, among others, represented by **Amartya Sen**, who, when referring with scepticism to the peaceful functioning of representatives of different cultures next to each other, raises the issue of common, simply necessary, cultural and religious grounds of a multicultural society whose groups are supposed to exist with each other, and not next to each other. Otherwise, according to **Sen**, the society can be neither productive, nor economically efficient (O’Hanlon, 2008). Neither can it function in a democratic format. In his critical analysis of the multicultural model of society, **Stephen Castles** speaks among others of the naturalisation of immigrants as a priority in creating/amending the policy of integration of heterogeneous societies (Castles, Davidson, 2000, pp. 159-161).

These polarised positions show the diversity of attitudes towards the shape of today’s societies and policies of the integration of culturally diverse diasporas in their host society within the single organism of the state. In view of that, **Tariq Modood’s** diagnosis regarding the consensual future of culturally and ethnically diverse societies seems to be correct. He believes that the present multicultural societies are in need of a reformed multiculturalism, which should aim at “civic integration that respects [people’s] right to difference” instead of “integration while preserving their own identity” (Modood, 2011, pp. 7-10).

Conclusions

Multiculturalism has been a deeply debated term within European political discourse and academic discussions. In the political sphere, multiculturalism is gradually seen as a failed project that encourages inter-group segregation, whereas academic discussions have focused on the institutional frameworks to be employed in order to advance cultural equality, integration and positive intergroup relations.

From global discussions in politics and the media, it would seem that many agree that multiculturalism has failed. It seems to be because of perceptions of increased racist hostilities and “declined” cultural tolerance as much as perceptions of “increased” cultural tolerance. At the same, time academic discussions debate whether multiculturalism is helpful to greater equality and cohesion or to greater dissimilarity and segregation.

While normative and academic conceptualisations of multiculturalism help us develop frameworks for equal participation in culturally diverse societies, these conceptualisations are somewhat idealistic and tend to overlook the dynamics, tensions and meanings associated with multiculturalism as it is actually lived.

Regarding the growing uneasiness on multiculturalism across European and other, especially Western states, it is imperative to develop a deeper understanding of how multiculturalism “looks” in practice in order to advance appropriate policies that are based on people’s real experiences.

It seems that as long as the law is respected by everyone, citizens will not need a uniform hierarchy of values. Until the inalienable rights and values in the form of the leading culture and identity, as guaranteed by liberal democracies, constitute an undisputed meeting platform for various social, religious and ethnic groups, we will be able to speak of the victory (with its certain symptoms) in the spirit of multicultural co-existence.

Common citizenship acceptable for representatives of culturally diverse diasporas constitutes nowadays a global priority. The idea of multicultural co-existence, according to which “aliens” are supposed to integrate, is unlikely to be successful in its current form. As practice shows, the attempt to assimilate them into an indigenous society is not a good solution, either.

It seems that in the light of these considerations, the choice of a new citizenship should be a fully informed one and should be connected not only with rights, but also with obligations, while cultural relativism should be replaced with new rules of the reforming idea of multiculturalism. Otherwise, a real risk exists that the misunderstood “integration while preserving their own identity” can result in parallel societies functioning next to each other, but following their own laws, without feeling the need to adapt to the standards of the host country.

The biggest challenge for multiculturalism today are its social and political aspects. At the beginning of the 21st Century it is no longer possible to speak of withdrawal from multiculturalism. In the meantime, the current immigration policy seems to be based on the fear and uncertainty of “aliens”, and on the nostalgia for an idealised past perceived through the prism of strong bonds of identity and solidarity. Nativist social references are almost as old as immigration itself. Therefore, in the face of economic crisis and terrorist threats (see: Muslim immigrants), the change in the vector of social support for immigrants is not surprising.

The debate involving both descriptive and normative issues connected with multiculturalism continues. It is not an easy task to clearly define a model of

society consisting of groups with different backgrounds and following different, sometimes conflicting, normative systems.

Multiculturalism is based on the fundamental thesis of equality of all cultures. It could, however, be argued that such thinking may lead to a certain contradiction. In the face of cultural and religious diversity, mutually exclusive value orders and rules cannot be recognised as equal. Thus, questions arise about civilisational belonging and national identity, as well as about reflections on the borders, the very essence of tolerance and the dimension of civil rights and obligations.

In short, there is much more to be said about the many European divergences, their causes and consequences, and much more to be debated between multicultural and post-multicultural world histories. But multiculturalism in world history has now met a formidable challenge. Its ascent is no longer uncontested.

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