Globalisation and integrating European societies: the multicultural versus liberal concept

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Abstract
Presently, the constantly changing shapes of European societies are by-products of the Christian past, an upsurge of international migration, democratic rule and of liberal tradition rooted in religious tolerance. Boosting globalisation processes imposes additional challenges on European societies, striving to protect their diversity. This struggle is especially clearly visible in the case of minority communities who try to resist melting into the mainstream culture.

European countries’ legal systems and cultural policies respond to these efforts in many different ways. Respecting identity politics-driven group rights seems to be the most common approach, resulting in the creation of a multicultural society. However, the outcome of respecting group rights may be remarkably contradictory to both individual rights growing out from the liberal tradition, and to the reinforced concept of integration of immigrants into host societies. This paper discusses globalisation-prompted identity politics in the context of both individual rights and integration of European societies.

Key words: globalisation, liberalism, multiculturalism, integration

Introduction
Globalisation processes have significantly changed the socio-economic and cultural image of the world. The intensification of international migration has led to an increasing ethnic and cultural diversification of societies, especially in rich destination countries. Western European states host a constantly increasing number of immigrants, and a substantial share of them originate in cultural environments that do not share common values with host societies. Diverse world and social life perceptions of people sharing the same territories leads to discordances that introduce social instability, a shrinking sense of safety and provokes heated debates about future shapes of changing societies. A need to work out a new model of integration of societies becomes more and more clear, both in the countries that already witnessed social anxieties and in those, where future economic development is likely to trigger or strengthen immigration (see Vertovec, Wessendorf 2005).

The multicultural concept of society, as a remedy to the said need, has been adopted by several Western European countries, with the United Kingdom and the Netherlands being the most apparent examples. However, not very much attention is paid to the fundamental differences between multiculturalism as an ideology and the centuries-long liberal tradition of European societies that to a significant extent was based on tradition at least partly contradictory to values that form the multicultural model of society. The main aim of the present paper is to confront the multicultural and liberal approaches to society and point out the inevitable consequences of adopting one of these models in the context of globalisation processes and integration of European societies.

Models of integration revisited
Accomplishing social integration seems to be one of the most basic assumptions adopted by European states, quite often not even formulated explicite, but taken for granted. Then the debate moves to the choice of a model of integration that should be employed in particular circumstances to achieve the goal that had been defined.

Monoculturalism as a model of full integration using the concept of adopting all rules of social coexistence of host society by immigrants, gained a lot of criticism to date and was rejected as improper: “... assimilation ideology has been recognised as inconsistent with the principles forming the basis of a democratic state (...)” (Łodziński 2007, 9). The models of the transmuting pot and the melting pot and their derivatives are perceived in Europe as purely American, therefore not appropriate for the European reality. The relatively young Leitkultur (reference culture) model that gained a lot of attention and discussion in Germany, where it was created (see Tibi 1998), already managed to unite opponents and gain strongly negative reputation. Many suggested that the concept became a victim of political correctness of the German political scene (Fukuyama 2006).

Therefore, the only concept that has had good press to date is multiculturalism. Already in 1991 the Council of Europe in one of its documents presented a vision of a multicultural European society defined by concepts such as social integration, equality of citizens (equal chances for immigrants were emphasized), respect for cultural differences and prohibition of discrimination of immigrants in any form. Also numerous researchers in their works appreciated this model, e.g. having described Dutch society as multicultural without being assimilative (Lijphart 2002) or creating ear-catching slogans like many cultures, one state (Bertossi 2007).

However, multiculturalism is not a univocally defined concept, but rather a collection of concepts derived from three main approaches. The first meaning of multiculturalism is a demographic and descriptive one, which is commonly understood as a description of ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious differentiation of societies. The second has clearly ideological and normative meaning, implying state ideology concerning the maintenance of cultural diversity in a society. The last is a programme and political meaning, usually developed as a set of state policies heading towards the creation of a unified institutional system respecting cultural differences and offering equal access for all members of the society (Inglis 1996; Tiryakin 2003; Łodziński 2007).

**Multicultural policies: expectations and results of implementation**

The expectations towards a successful implementation of the multicultural concept are high. Kymlicka (1995) believes that it is a promising formula for social coexistence and enumerates its advantages. Among the most important there are the capacity of avoiding social and ethnic conflicts, balancing social chances of host society and immigrants, and providing the latter with a chance to maintain their culture. In general, after an interesting and concise definition by a world-famous philosopher, multiculturalism may be outlined as “...a framework for coexistence of separate cultures rather than a transitional mechanism for integrating newcomers into the dominant culture” (Fukuyama 2006, 14). However, when it comes to defining operational shape of multiculturalism as a formula, many questions arise. It was interestingly commented by Jan Olbrycht, a member of the European Parliament, who said that the European multiculturalism is in the stage of “...concept creation while building process is already on”, Olbrycht 2009).

The confrontation of the high expectation towards multiculturalism with the results of multicultural policies adopted in several European states is disappointing. Impermeable city ghettos inhabited by immigrant communities, their high unemployment rates, low social position, permanent dependence on social services and disproportional criminality reveal that programmes implemented to date do not meet expectations. The Netherlands, where internal
multiculturalism was successful in the integration of people of various denominations (catholics, protestants, others) for centuries, in the last decades of the 20th century faced a shift towards external multiculturalism, connected with high inflow of immigrants, and the creation of a pillarised society, which can hardly be explained as integration (Czubiński 2009). Such situations call for a redefinition of multiculturalism as an idea, and trigger controversial, but reasonable comments like “multiculturalism is a complex of tensions” (Miczka 2009).

The situation in the Netherlands is to an extent similar to what has been observed in Great Britain. However, the understanding of multicultural society and approaches to this issue have changed over the last decades. This evolution has interestingly been commented by Vertovec (2005), who recognized four stages of its development. The first he called pre-multiculturalism, with much attention paid to anti-discrimination of immigrants in the public sphere. It was followed by high-multiculturalism, understood as public recognition of immigrants and support for their organizations and activities. Then anti-multiculturalism occurred on the basis of growing feeling that the cultural diversity of British society expanded too much. Post-multiculturalism, calling for alternatives to multiculturalism and for social cohesion is the latest stage (Vertovec 2005).

In almost any Western European country, and also overseas, there are plentiful examples of policies, legal regulations and social norms that promote social cohesion in various forms, although not always such label appears. Some examples of such situations have been collected in Table 1. In many cases they are directed to allow for cultural differences, usually rooted in religious differences. Quite often minority rights are protected, and immigrant communities are encouraged to participate in social, economic and political life of their host country to a larger extent. However, some of the examples shown below may also prove, that vigorous promotion of either minority or immigrant community limits their participation in the host society under the guise of protection of their customs and tradition; more or less formal acceptation of school duty violation in the UK or Germany may serve as an example. Also limitation of school choice to French-speaking schools, aimed at the protection of the French language in Quebec, prevents immigrants from entering the language mainstream in Canada.
Table 1. Examples of social cohesion manifestations in selected countries

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<th>Examples of social cohesion manifestations</th>
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| The Netherlands        | - each company hiring over 35 employees must report about its ethnic structure (since 1994)  
                        | - job offers should be placed in minority-read press as well  
                        | - equal treatment clause should supplement job offers  
                        | - state help in language courses and vocational trainings for immigrants (since 1997) |
| United Kingdom         | - an act enabling organisation of vocational training for underrepresented minorities (since 1974)  
                        | - Northern Ireland: [1] each company hiring over 10 employees must report about its religious structure; [2] each company hiring over 250 employees must continuously monitor religious structure of its employees (since 1989)  
                        | - accused immigrants from Muslim countries fall under codes of their country of origin (since 2006)  
                        | - Pakistani parents are (de facto) allowed to send their children abroad during the schoolyear |
| Poland                 | - special electoral rights for minorities are granted  
                        | - the Tatar community may bury their dead without coffins |
| Germany                | - Muslim ritual cattle slaughter is allowed  
                        | - Roma children are (de facto) excluded from school duty in several Länder |
| Denmark                | - Kosher and Halal butchering is allowed |
| Canada                 | - in Quebec, immigrants and Francophones are not allowed to send their children to an English-speaking school |
| United States of America | - “cultural defense” in criminal law (presentation of cultural evidence in criminal cases where both the defendant and his victim are from the same culture)  
                          | - affirmative action (university admission bonus credits) |

Sources:

**Multiculturalism and liberalism: group rights and individual rights confronted**

In most cases minorities and immigrants appreciate the adoption of rights that enable them to follow their habits and traditions, and demand more, especially formal group recognition. It is quite a natural consequence of the adoption of multicultural policy, understood as a respect for multiple groups co-forming the society. This follows *communautarisme* philosophy, holding that each person belongs to a group and is shaped by its culture, therefore a society is not a group of individuals, but a set of groups. Applied *communautarisme* allows each group (community) to use its own rules as long as they fall within the limits of public law. The existence of minority groups requires protection of their group rights with the use of anti-discrimination law, often commented as positive discrimination. However, preventing group discrimination usually creates multiple social categories, where members of the mainstream group do not possess the same rights as minorities do. Hence, “…discrimination is a tool of fighting discrimination”, as Szlachta has put it (2009). Therefore, multicultural policies emphasizing recognition of groups, clearly go...
hand-in-hand with identity politics, aiming at the protection of group rights, especially in the case of groups presumably underprivileged in certain characteristics.

All in all, multiculturalism as a policy issuing rights to groups results in the fact that different people abide by different legal codes. Ebbe and Nielsen (2009) call it multilegalism, developed as no equality below the law. In this context, Fukuyama (2006, 15) argues, that everybody deserves being “...treated equally as individuals, not as members of cultural communities”, while Laegaard (2009) poses an interesting question, whether differences of legal treatment of different members of the same society mean respect for difference or lack of respect for equality. Regardless of what is the answer to the last question, a clear contradiction between group rights and equality of citizens arises.

The legal inequality of citizens seems to be contradictory to one of the most basic provisions of the European tradition. Contemporary Europe is a product of its Christian past, democratic rule (equality and freedom of citizens) and of liberal tradition rooted in religious tolerance. Liberal concepts of society as an alternative to the monarchical-clerical concept of the state (see e.g. Jeliński 2003) were founded on the equality of citizens, equal worth and dignity of individuals, and the primacy of individual rights and personal liberty.

A confrontation of the liberal tradition, where individuals and their rights are the most important reference, with multiculturalism holding that group rights and respect for difference are primary concepts, shows that it is impossible to respect both liberalism and multiculturalism at the same time. Some researchers search for a Third Way, and it is usually found in the so called liberal culturalism. It aims at combining liberal principles of respect for individuals that are granted universal human rights (which is expected to allow equal participation) with specific rights created by the state for selected groups to allow promotion of their culture and identity and survival of minority cultures (Kymlicka 2001; Łodziński 2003). However, the most basic problems have not been solved yet. Isn’t it that groups living alongside one another do not live together, but form a pillarised society that has not succeeded to date (e.g. the Dutch case)? How to protect group members against the group (e.g. how to ensure freedom of leaving the group)? How to ensure the integration of society, when groups want to protect themselves against unification, create lobbies and fight for protection of their group rights? In many cases successful group protection leads to “overculturalization” of groups, and later on to exclusion, homogeneity and segregation (see Kerkkanen 2008).

Setting the fundamental goals

Another important question should be posed, whether the feeling of inclusion and integration is the goal for members of immigrant communities or minority communities. Research done by Klvaňová (2009) provides interesting theoretical support for the answer, that this is not always the case. At the same time, integration of societies is widely declared as constituting one of the main goals of contemporary European states. Conducting integration against the will of those who oppose it will never be fully successful, but granting them with group rights in the name of their protection against unification means supporting their struggle against integration.

On the contrary, if integration is the goal, then individual rights should be protected. With the lapse of time, individuals gradually lose symptoms of being strangers and groups they used to belong to lose their cultural distinctiveness. Hence globalisation, at least in its uniformizing dimension (Szmyd 2006), becomes successful. Therefore, the liberal concept of society, globalisation processes and integration efforts mutually support one another, while the multicultural concept of society opposes them.
Conclusions

The liberal concept of society, founded on a profound respect for individual rights and equality under the law inevitably results in a gradual loss of cultural distinctiveness of minority groups. It leads to the integration of society along its mainstream culture and may be perceived as the success of globalisation in its uniformizing dimension. On the contrary, the multicultural concept of society, built around the protection of group rights, leads to multilegalism. It facilitates maintaining cultural distinctiveness, but finally leads to the creation of a pillarised society. Integration fails to succeed, and it may be interpreted as a failure of globalisation. Searching for a third way seems to be creating delusions.

Consequently, before answering the question whether we want to follow the liberal or multicultural model of society in European states, another question should be posed and answered: whether we want to accomplish well integrated, culturally relatively homogenous societies built upon centuries-old values, or whether we want to achieve relatively poorly integrated, but culturally rich societies built upon diverse values. Only after having answered this question, discussion about the adoption of the liberal or multicultural model should follow.

References


