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MULTICULTURALISM  
AND EUROPEAN  
INTEGRATION



Although multiculturalism has existed as a phenomenon since the beginning of the development of global culture, it has only recently become a topic of theoretical debate and an object of social research.<sup>1</sup>

Multiculturalism became an issue with the growing emancipation of previously marginalized national and ethnic minorities and immigrant communities and was heralded as an effective tool against cultural assimilation by the dominant majority culture. As such, the issue of multiculturalism arises as a theoretical and practical problem primarily in Western Europe, Canada and Australia where it is established as a model for preserving the cultural identity of the newly arriving immigrant communities, mostly through education.

On the other hand, the “birth of a nation” in the United States based on the “melting pot” principle, came about through the genocide of native American Indians and the racist oppression of colored and other immigrants, particularly those who were racially and culturally distant from the dominant WASP group.<sup>2</sup> From the melting pot doctrine, the dominant Anglo-Saxons contrived assimilation and amalgamation as policy paradigms for the purpose of dealing with minority communities. Under assimilation, minority communities were expected to gradually lose their distinctiveness and acquire the values and behaviour patterns of the majority. Implicit in the ideological version of assimilation was the view of the superiority of Anglo-Saxon culture.<sup>3</sup>

However, even in the U.S., multiculturalism has recently transformed social consciousness and has become the basic characteristic of “political correctness” and “cultural sensitivity”.<sup>4</sup> Under the influence of these changes the old definition of the American nation as the “melting pot” has been replaced by a new metaphor – the “mixing bowl”, or “salad bowl”. It implies that there are various ingredients (cultures) in a big bowl (state), which never lose

their original identity and never fully blend to form one substance. This euphemistic multiculturalism has introduced new “politically correct” terms for Americans: “African-American”, “Asian-American”.<sup>5</sup>

The problem of multiculturalism in the Postcommunist world is quite different.

The breakdown of Communism, the dissolution of the former Soviet and Yugoslav states, the formation of new, independent states and the building of a democratic order – these major social transformations in the life of society have changed many tenets of the social structure within which the problem of multiculturalism should be investigated and understood. This means that the position of multiculturalism in the age of communism and of post-communism in Central Europe, particularly in the regions of the former U.S.S.R. and the former Yugoslavia is essentially changed. However, the change from a totalitarian to a democratic system necessarily implied changes in the nature of multiculturalism. In multinational states like ex-Yugoslavia and the ex-U.S.S.R., multiculturalism was strangled under a totalitarian monoculture. The collapse of that system released many centrifugal forces in some regions of those multinational states, but also created some necessary preconditions so that the problem of multiculturalism could be faced freely at all levels: from international and national to sub-regional and local levels.

The problem of multiculturalism in all its aspects – cultural, political, economic, conceptual, educational, etc. – seems to be one of the major concerns in any investigation of social structural changes. This is even more true of societies, like Croatia and other new nation-states, and, more generally, of societies that have only recently started to build (and rebuild) their principal social, economic, and cultural institutions according to the new principles of a democratic order.

Communism has been characterized by the ideological urge to form supranational states, like Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, in order to provide equality and unification among different societies. The functioning of these quasi-multicultural states was only possible through the use of a repressive political apparatus. Communism provided both: an ideological umbrella and a direct instrument of control and hegemonic domination. Taking into account a certain social inertia, it is very important to explain the means and functions of national manipulation within these supranational states, as to be able to draw conclusions and comparisons for, and from, the present-day situation.

In the communist context, multiculturalism was understood as something occurring only within Yugoslavian and Soviet state borders, and the structure of these artificial multinational states was preferred as the only possible framework for multiculturalism. Other rich intercultural relations, which during the past centuries had built deep foundations for different forms of multiculturalism, were severed by the Iron Curtain and ignored by the official ideological discourse. This is the reason why multiculturalism was understood only within Yugoslavian or Soviet borders. On the other hand, the present-day concept of multiculturalism in the postcommunist states, such as Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic... is based on the stronger civilizational, social, ethnic and historical links with other nations of Central Europe and its concept of multicultural regionalism. The breakdown of communism and the political independence of these countries make a radical reconceptualization of multiculturalism possible.

Changes in the nature of multiculturalism in the Postcommunist world correspond with Samuel Huntington's paradigm, which he calls the clash of civilizations. Huntington predicts that the fundamental source of the global conflict in the next century will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic, but in the first place cultural. That means, "the clash of civilizations will dominate global politics", and the "fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future".<sup>6</sup> However, the global conflict between ideologies, according to Huntington, ended with the Cold War, i.e., with the historical breakdown of Communism. The clash of ideologies - social, political, philosophical, and world-view systems - of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was historically preceded by national conflicts, which were the basic global conflicts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As the ideological conflict was not the first global conflict in world history, it will not be the last one. The future global conflict of the next 21<sup>st</sup> century will be, according to Huntington, the clash of civilizations.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, through its technology, and its ideas of Marxism and liberalism, Western civilization has reached the peak of its power and become the master of the world. At the same time, however, as a form of resistance to Western influence, a return to the roots is taking place among non-Western civilizations. This includes recent trends toward a turning inward and "Asiation" in Japan and "Hinduism" in India, then the failure of Western ideas of socialism and nationalism and hence "re-Islamization" of the Middle East, and finally a debate over

liberal Westernization versus an Orthodox Christian Russianization of Russia.

The end of ideologically defined states of Central and Eastern Europe has reactivated traditional ethnic and religious identities. Differences in culture and religion create differences over policy issues. Geographical propinquity gives rise to conflicting territorial claims, such as in the former Yugoslavia. Decreasingly able to mobilize support and form coalitions on the basis of ideology, particular states will increasingly attempt to mobilize support by appealing to a common religion and civilization identity. In that sense, Bosnian-Moslems have tried to mobilize support from the international Islamic community, while Serbs found sympathy and support in Russia and other East European Orthodox Nations.

Huntington takes the war in the former Yugoslavia, particularly the war in Bosnia, as an argument and evidence that the clash of civilizations has already begun. Religion, i.e., confession is one of the most important factors of national and cultural differences between conflicting sides in the former Yugoslavia. This is the reason why Huntington finds the beginning of the future global civilizational conflict precisely in the war in ex-Yugoslavia. It is obvious that cultural differences between various civilizations will be increasingly important in the coming decades. The cultural differences between Croatia and Slovenia, as parts of the Central European and Mediterranean culture, on the one hand, and Serbia, which belongs to the East European, Orthodox, Byzantine and Balkan culture, on the other, are really basic and fundamental. Those differences were the essential reason for the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia, as a historically unnecessary, artificial state, without any chance of being established as a lasting and prosperous democratic community.

The communist regimes in the U.S.S.R. and Central Europe did not fall because of nationalism. They were ruined by a multiplicity of historical circumstances, with nationalism merely filling the vacuum left by the absence of other serious ideological and political trends. It is only to a small extent that classical nationalism caused uncertainty, risk, and conflict during the early years of post-communist national independence.

The authoritarian administrative command mechanisms which kept the communist model functioning and the very model have been completely discarded by Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic, by the Baltic states as well as by Slovenia and Croatia, the most developed republics in the former Yugoslavia. These countries may be

said to have identified quite definite tendencies of transformations, which clearly bring them closer to the West and create a new geopolitical situation in Central Europe. A similar situation, burdened with lasting foreign-policy implications, arose in the former Yugoslavia, where the more advanced Slovenia and Croatia initiated the federation's dismantling and turned towards the West, not only to solve their ethnic issues but also to internally accelerate their socio-economic reforms.

The complex form of multiethnicity in most new states constitutes not only a problem of internal integration but also an essential element of geopolitical uncertainty in the region as a whole and in the strategic perspectives of individual states.

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Russia has been involved in an unending debate between Slavophiles and Westernizers. While the "Westernizers" have seen Russia as a part of Europe, the "Slavophiles" comprehend Russia as the spiritual guardian of the "Third Rome", destined to create and lead a new, more spiritual, non-European, pan-Slavic civilization. This trend reflects widespread xenophobia and "anti-Westernism". In that sense, the Russian political scientist, Emil Pain concluded "Russian nationalism in its mass manifestations is nothing but degenerating Soviet consciousness".

Although nationalism is not the basic source of the collapse of communism or the disintegration of the former communist multinational states, it is nevertheless a very serious problem in all postcommunist states. Nationalism may be instrumentalized in two ways. First, from within, for the sake of the particular goals of a certain élite, particularly the ruling élite. This ruling élite often presents its own particular interests as the common national interests, just as the old communist *nomenclature* used to do before, presenting its own interest as the common interest of the working class.

There is also the second way of instrumentalizing nationalism. It is instrumentalization from without: the claim that certain societies, particularly the postcommunist societies, are nationalist as such; and their striving for national freedom, independence and sovereignty is seen as nothing but mere nationalism.

Ethnopolitical relations in the postcommunist world of Central Europe are complex and far from uniform. The newly independent states strive for equality with the leading nations of the world; nationalities and ethnic groups strive for their national and ethnic self-determination and self-expression.

The former Yugoslavia was an artificial association of peoples, each with centuries-old problems. The South Slavs had every right to regard themselves as ethnically related but historically distinct ethnic entities with different traditions and cultures. After the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia and the establishment of the sovereign Croatian state, Croatia is now seeking the way to European integration processes by restoring traditional multicultural ties based on historical links with the Mediterranean and Central European countries. For centuries, Croatia was in union with the Habsburg monarchy. On the other hand, the southern parts of Croatia, such as Dalmatia and Istria were under Venetian rule and cultural influence. The independent Republic of Dubrovnik developed within the ambit of the Mediterranean culture as well. With such legacy, as well as in terms of its interests, Croatia is now trying to find its place in the Western, i.e., Central European and Mediterranean, multicultural circle.

However, the idea of multiculturalism and Huntington's civilizational paradigm are usually seen as quite different, even as opposite approaches. In that sense, certain ideological stereotypes are used, particularly by Huntington's opponents who usually label his paradigm as conservative, reactionary, racist, and Eurocentric, compared to the multicultural paradigm that is progressive, liberal, tolerant, pluralistic, etc. Namely, multiculturalist criticism of Huntington's pro-Western exclusivism, Eurocentrism, even racism is also a product of ideological misinterpretation. On the contrary, Huntington has sharply criticised Western hegemony and imperialism.

There is a delusion, which is broadly spread, in Western civilization. This is a delusion about a universal world civilization, which shares mutual common acceptable human values. Which values? Democracy, liberty, rule of law, equality, social and political pluralism, individualism – all those values belong to the Western civilization. However, the concept of a universal civilization is a distinctive product of Western civilization, which helps justify Western cultural dominance of other societies. Universalism is the ideology of the West for confrontations with non-Western cultures. The non-Westerns see as Western what the West sees as universal.

However, non-Westerners do not see human rights and democracy as universal human values but as distinctive Western values, which have been used, as the source of Western hegemony. Concerning these values, hypocrisy and double standards are a lasting characteristic of Western behaviour, i.e., gaps between Western principles and



Western action. Examples: Democracy is promoted but not if it brings Islamic fundamentalists to power; non-proliferation is preached for Iran and Iraq but not for Israel; human rights are an issue in China but not in Saudi Arabia; aggression against oil-owning Kuwaitis is massively repulsed but not against non-oil-owning Bosnians. The war in Kosovo, committed by NATO with the purpose of preventing Serbian genocide against Kosovo's Albanians, is an exception which proves the rule. The Kosovo war is proclaimed as the first war in human history that was not fought for the selfish interests of a belligerent side, but for the sake of human rights.

Huntington is against multiculturalism only in the United States because it must, as the Western core state, preserve vital interests of the Western civilization. But, on the other hand, he pledges for global multiculturalism. From this point of view, the New World order must be reshaped in a way to admit equal rights to each civilization.

Like Huntington, some other scholars have a similar ambivalent approach to the problem of multiculturalism. They believe in the principle of multiculturalism, but are not happy with the methods and approaches used by multiculturalists to achieve their objectives. Amitai Etzioni claims that there is no dialogue between those who favour multiculturalism and those who oppose it because the camps are polarized. He suggests that an approach that appeals to values shared by all, without giving up on the political mobilization of previously disadvantaged groups, is much more likely to serve the quest for social justice. Therefore, "the key to forwarding the canonical debate surely is not attack and counter attack, but rather the search for mutual understanding, respect, recognition of differences and the quest for unifying forces".<sup>7</sup>

Some authors believe that multiculturalism is a fashion, a fad that will come to pass. Lewis Feuer likens multiculturalism to similar movements in ancient Greek civilization when the Roman-Hellenic culture swept through the Mediterranean region. Then, as now, "a hundred or so Christian anti-intellectual sects arose, each claiming that their theological revelations encapsulated a truth higher than that of the Greek science practiced at the library and museum in Alexandria". The multicultural movement has parallels with the Greek era, according to Feuer, because it comes at a time when American-English language, its literature, its motion picture art, and its democratic political culture have engulfed the world. Since the "cultural relativists" did not survive scientific and rigorous inquiry in Greek civilizations, the call for multiculturalism today will

also wither and eventually die off.<sup>8</sup> However, not only have those “cultural relativists” disappeared throughout history, but the ancient Greeks and Romans together with their civilizations which are “buried in the sands of time” have also disappeared.

Finally, some difficult theoretical and practical problems concerning the clash of civilizations and cultures have also occurred among liberal thinkers who undoubtedly supported ideas of multiculturalism, pluralism and toleration. Multiculturalism becomes a problem for liberals when conflicts between groups about values or their interpretation cannot be conformably accommodated within a particular society. Two such examples relate to education and the limits of free speech. It is agreed that all children should achieve certain minimum standards of education and that free speech is an important value, which should be protected by the law. However, on the other hand, Muslims living in the European multicultural community are concerned that the education of Muslim girls should reflect their place in Muslim society rather than the values of secular liberalism. While Muslims have been outraged that “free speech” should permit the vilification of the most sacred beliefs of an already socially disadvantaged group, as Salman Rushdie did in his novel *Satanic verses*, liberals have been similarly scandalized that many Muslims have been prepared to support the *fatwa* which condemns a man, the same Salman Rushdie, to death for writing a novel.

The practice of toleration is indispensable to any modern society marked by ethnic pluralism, and especially to a multicultural society. The ideal of toleration has traditionally been one of liberalism's principal values. The debate on the Rushdie case has shown the limits of toleration. Can the idea of multiculturalism justify the *fatwa* against Rushdie, who is, by the way, a British citizen? If not, is liberalism, as argued only to be tolerant towards cultural and religious communities which are in substantial part microcosmos of the larger liberal society; i.e., those which are themselves liberal, or in other words, those which have been transformed through assimilation and absorption in a liberal Westernized community?<sup>9</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Etienne Verne, “Multicultural Education Policies: A Critical Analysis”; in: *Multicultural Education*, Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, OECD, Paris, 1987, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> Joel S. Kahn (1995) *Culture, Multiculture, Postculture*. London: SAGE Publications. “Cultural pluralism ... discourse of cultural alterity,

multiculturalism ... replace the 19<sup>th</sup> century language of civilization, the temporal anteriority of the other, and the emancipation of human beings as autonomous subjects... (15) 19<sup>th</sup> century ideas of America as a cultural “melting pot”: urban society as a racial hierarchy, headed by a white Anglo-Saxon majority in which racial inferiors had as their only option conforming to the values of that majority” – “assimilationism” was the policy of “Americanization”. (106-7).

- <sup>3</sup> Michael A. Burayidi (Ed.) (1977) *Multiculturalism in a Cross-National Perspective*, University Press of America, Inc., Lanham, p. 18.
- <sup>4</sup> Joel S. Kahn (1995) *Culture, Multiculture, Postculture*, London: SAGE Publications. Randolph Bourne: “America's national character lay not in the legacy of Anglo-Saxon institutions, but in the future creation of a multicultural society.” (109)
- <sup>5</sup> *Multiculturalism Issue*, “<http://www.mindspring.com/angleym>”
- <sup>6</sup> Samuel P. Huntington (1993) *The Clash of Civilizations? A Foreign Affairs Reader*, New York. (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- <sup>7</sup> Amitai Etzioni (1991) “Social Science as a Multicultural Canon”, *Society*, Nov/Dec, p. 16.
- <sup>8</sup> Lewis S. Feuer (1991) “From Pluralism to Multiculturalism”, *Society*, Nov/Dec, pp. 19-22.
- <sup>9</sup> See John Horton, Ed. (1993) *Liberalism, Multiculturalism and Toleration*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

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