Jan Pakulski*

AUSTRALIAN MULTICULTURALISM

Abstract

Australian multiculturalism – a policy strategy aimed at facilitating effective social integration of non-British immigrants and managing cultural diversity – was devised in the 1950s and 60s, and adopted as government policy in the 1970s. As a number of recent publications in the European and Australian media suggest, this form of multiculturalism has been misunderstood and confused with ethnic pluralism and assimilationist, 'melting pot' approaches. These confusions seem particularly widespread in Europe. This is hardly surprising considering the scarcity of public clarifications of what multiculturalism is, the strong political backlash against uncontrolled migrations, and the paucity of informed debate about long term strategies of migrant settlement and adaptation. The paper outlines the principles of Australian multiculturalism, identifies its theoretical foundations, and highlights some of the widespread confusions about its meaning, focus and objectives.

Keywords

Multiculturalism, Australia

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As a number of recent publications in the European and Australian media[1] suggest, multiculturalism – seen as a strategy/policy of managing

* **Jan Pakulski**, MA (Warsaw), PhD (ANU), is Professor and Head of Sociology at the University of Tasmania, Hobart, Australia; Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia; and Fellow of the Center for the Study of Poverty and Inequality at Stanford University. Migrated to Australia in 1975. His publications include *Social Movements* (Longman Cheshire, 1991), *Postmodernization* (Sage, 1992; with S. Crook and M. Waters), *The Death of Class* (Sage, 1996; with M. Waters), *Postcommunist Elites and Democracy in Eastern Europe* (Macmillan, edited in 1998 with J. Higley and W. Wesolowski), *Globalizing Inequalities* (Allen and Unwin, 2004) and *Toward Leader Democracy* (with Andras Körösényi, Anthem 2012).

[1] For example, see Auer (2010, 2011) and Lesinska (2011) for public and political debates of multiculturalism in Europe. See also journalistic comments by Greg Sheridan 'How I lost faith in multiculturalism', *The Weekend Australian* 2–3 April 2011; Chris Bowen, 'Why Sheridan and the Immigration Minister parted company on road to multiculturalism', *The Australian*, 16 April 2011; Patricia Karvelas, 'Liberal senator warns against multiculturalism' *The Australian*, 20 May 2011; Greg Sheridan, 'European model a wretched failure', *The Australian*, 11 August 2011; Chris Merritt, 'Goodbye to rights under sharia' *The Australian*, 18 May 2011.

cultural diversity and social integration – has been often misunderstood and confused with ethno-cultural pluralism and assimilationist 'melting pot'. These confusions seem particularly widespread in Europe. This is hardly surprising considering the scarcity of public clarifications of what multiculturalism means, the alarming backlash against uncontrolled migrations, and the paucity of informed debate about long term strategies of migrant adaptation.

I would like to present here, and focus on, the Australian model of multiculturalism. While exotic in the sense of distance, it is very relevant to the European experience, including Poland. Its sociological underpinnings resemble the Jagiellonian model of multi-nationalism, and its main 'founding father' was Jerzy Zubrzycki, an eminent Polish sociologist working in Australia (e.g., Pakulski 2011, Williams and Bond 2013). Moreover, together with the Canadian model, the Australian model of multiculturalism was the first of its kind among advanced societies, and – last but not least – it has proven very successful over four decades of its implementation in Australia. Yet, it is not very well – known (outside the narrow circle of specialists), and it is often confused with a mere approval of, and support for, cultural diversity. This confusion – as recent statements by political leaders in Europe indicate – is widespread also among the academics and media commentators.

As argued below, Australian multiculturalism is a difficult concept and a complex policy-strategy. Moreover, it is seldom accurately presented in public debates, and it is not clear whether or not the original version of this strategy, as formulated in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Canada and Australia, is still regarded as 'official' and accepted by both governments.

I start by outlining briefly the underlying principles of the 'original' (Australian) multicultural strategies, then I point to their 'Polish connection', and finally highlight some of the general confusions about multiculturalism with the intention of clarification rather than evaluation or advocacy.

The principles of Australian multiculturalism

As rightly noted by almost all observers, multiculturalism has many meanings. It refers to: (i) the 'cultural and demographic reality' of increasingly ethno-culturally diverse Europe and Australia; (ii) to the actual policies-strategies embraced by Australian (and Canadian) governments since the late 1970s, policies that promote and sustain high levels of ethno-cultural pluralism; (iii) to the philosophical-normative

underpinnings (often summarised as 'unity in diversity') of these multicultural policies; and (iv) to the sociological theory (modernisation through socio-cultural differentiation) that underlies and informs multicultural policies-strategies. While most critics focus on the first – and the most superficial – meaning (the increasing ethno-cultural diversity), this paper focuses on the other four meanings in reference to a particular version of multiculturalism formulated by a Polish sociologist working in Australia, Jerzy Zubrzycki, known as the 'father of Australian multiculturalism'[2]. It was developed in a number of papers and adopted by successive (both Labour and Conservative coalition) Australian governments as a bi-partisan policy-strategy towards migrant adaptation.

The *core principles and goals* of Australian multiculturalism include[3]:

- *social cohesion* understood as *national integration*, that is, institutional arrangements for allocating resources and resolving conflicts (1977:3);
- equality of opportunity and access (1977:3);
- freedom to chose and maintain one's own *cultural identity* understood as 'the sense of belonging and attachment to a particular way of living' (1977:3); and
- social duty of requirement of shared '*responsibility for, commitment to and participation in society*' (1982:12).

The subsequent documents, especially the 1989 paper titled 'National Agenda for Multicultural Society', underplay the centrality of national integration by multiplying the core goals-principles to eight.[4] Together, these eight principles articulate a somewhat crowded normative

[2] See Williams and Bond (2013). Important contributions were also made by Jean Martin and another Polish-Australian sociologist, Jerzy Smolicz.

[3] As formulated in the 1977 AEAC paper published by the Australian government – the first document that clearly spells out the meaning of Australian multiculturalism –and the subsequent 1982 ACPEA paper, both drafted by Jerzy Zubrzycki and published under his chairmanship.

[4] 'All Australians should have a commitment to Australia and share responsibility for furthering our national interests.

All Australians should be able to enjoy the basic right of freedom from discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion or culture.

All Australians should enjoy equal life chances and have equitable access to and an equitable share of the resources which governments manage on behalf of the community.

All Australians should have the opportunity fully to participate in society and in the decisions which directly affect them.

All Australians should be able to develop and make use of their potential for Australia's economic and social development. All Australians should have the opportunity to acquire and develop proficiency in English and languages other than English, and to develop cross-cultural understanding.

All Australians should be able to develop and share their cultural heritage.

Australian institutions should acknowledge, reflect and respond to the cultural diversity of the Australian community.' (1989:14)

framework for policies-strategies concerning migrant adaptation and ethno-cultural diversity in Australia. While national integration is still at the top of the 1989 list of goals-principles, it is spelled out more vaguely than in previous documents, and its importance is in many ways qualified by the other seven goals-principles.[5]

In its original formulations (as in AEAC 1977 and ACPEA 1982), Australian multiculturalism envisages sustained ethno-cultural diversity in the context of *national unity*, *cohesive society* and *equity*, all secured by the shared ethos of equal opportunities; shared meta-institutions of (common) law, liberal democracy and English language; and by the 'common' duty of social engagement and participation.

Obviously, these original goals-principles form a dynamic national aspiration, an ideal type that can never be fully achieved, but can be approximated to an increasing degree. It has been a *realistic* goal-aspiration, though, in the sense of having firm theoretical foundations, a clear normative backbone, and a strong anchoring in Australian history. Similarly, from the proverbial day one, multiculturalism has been part of the broader liberal-democratic institutional framework contrasted with the past discriminatory 'White Australia' policies and Anglo-Australian 'assimilationism'. The subsequent Australian governments have embraced this tolerant liberal-egalitarian vision, along with policies aiming at a modern, open, diverse and fair Australia.

Three features of Australian multiculturalism are particularly important: its integrative nature, reciprocal character, and respectfulness of the Anglo-Australian majority. These features are also frequently overlooked by critics of multiculturalism, especially in Europe.

Integrative multiculturalism

Australian multiculturalism is strongly integrative. It aims at sustaining *social cohesion and social integration* – and not just celebrating diversity, let alone encouraging social (ethnic or religious) fragmentation. Its original principles, in other words, stress social cohesion and

[5] Thus the 1989 *National Agenda for Multicultural Australia* spells out the principles as including: 'three dimensions of multicultural policy:

- cultural identity: the right of all Australians, within carefully defined limits, to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion;
- social justice: the right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth; and
- economic efficiency: the need to maintain, develop and utilize effectively the skills and talents of all Australians, regardless of background.'

reject ethno-religious separatism. Modern sociology calls this type of institutionalised social cohesion (an outcome-concept) 'social integration' (a process-concept). Social integration works (is high) when components-groups function harmoniously as part of a larger whole – here, a national society. Thus, understood social integration (cohesion) is compatible with socio-cultural diversity, that is, with a wide range of diverse group/community traditions, identities and lifestyles. This is because integration (cohesion) is not identical with homogeneity, uniformity or conformity. On the contrary, one of the distinctive features of social bonds in a modern society is that these bonds unify culturally diverse groups and individuals. Such modern social bonds of 'modern organic solidarity', as Emile Durkheim (1933) famously called them, accommodate diversity. This unity in diversity is stressed by the founding fathers of multiculturalism:

> What we believe Australia should be working towards is not a oneness [understood as homogeneity and conformism – JP], but a unity, not a similarity, but a composite, not a melting pot but a voluntary bond of dissimilar people sharing a common political and institution structure. (AEAC, 1977: 18)

Let us translate this admittedly hermetic phrase into a more colloquial English. It means that social integration does not presuppose homogeneity, similarity and conformity to one set of cultural values and norms – or as the author put it – 'a oneness'. On the contrary, modern social integration/cohesion (social solidarity) rests on difference, complementarity and inter-dependency.[6] Moreover, social integration in a modern complex society presupposes cultural and lifestyle diversity, but it relies on equity, that is, equality of opportunities and absence of discrimination. Such a form of equitarian integration and such a type of modern social bonds, are found in *all advanced societies*. They are regularly generated through functional specialisation, and are reinforced by the ethos of liberal individualism. Thus the progressive social and cultural differentiation and the resulting diversity are not symptomatic of a pathological dissipation of social bonds, but form part of a perfectly normal condition for modernity.

These sociological insights help in understanding the radical (socialist) and conservative opposition to, and criticism of, integrative

[6] Modern societies, Durkheim (1933) argued, are like jigsaw puzzles: their constitutive elements (groups and associations) 'fit in' well only when they are different from each other, and therefore capable of complementing each other in the functional, structural and cultural sense. We value diversity and praise uniqueness of groups and individuals because we rely on complementary and difference for our survival and success.

multiculturalism. The former comes from groups that treat multiculturalism as a struggle against what is seen as a persisting and oppressive (class-like) socio-cultural stratification combined with the dominance of the Anglo-Celtic majority. The latter comes from socio-cultural establishments that see hierarchy as natural, and treat all minority assertions as usurpations. Considerable opposition to multiculturalism (as described above) comes also from traditional rural, small-town and suburban communities, less affected by social modernisation than metropolitan centres. In such less modernised social settings, cultural diversity is less appreciated, and sometimes seen as a threat rather than a valuable asset.

Reciprocal multiculturalism

Another distinctive feature of Australian multiculturalism is its reciprocal character. It implies both the rights and mutual duties/obligations of the majority, as well as those of the ethnic minorities. The rights involve mutual recognition and respect for difference (and the right to distinct 'cultural identity'), equality of opportunity, and the right to assistance in sustaining a chosen cultural identity. The obligation side is perhaps less clearly spelled out. It includes inter-cultural understanding, commitment to and respect for the majority, especially for its historically established meta-institutions (common law, equal rights, liberal democracy and English language). It is a duty, as well as a shared responsibility, to respect these shared meta-institutions. Social isolation and closure – in fact, any form of particularism that does not acknowledge shared responsibility and engagement – are not an option.[7]

[7] The 1989 National Agenda for Multicultural Australia also articulates the reciprocal duties in a clear way:

'[The goals of multiculturalism] apply equally to all Australians, whether Aboriginal, Anglo-Celtic or non-English speaking background; and whether they were born in Australia or overseas. There are also limits to Australian multiculturalism. These may be summarized as follows:

- multicultural policies are based upon the premises that all Australians should have an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia, to its interests and future first and foremost;
- multicultural policies require all Australians to accept the basic structures and principles of Australian society – the Constitution and the rule of law, tolerance and equality, Parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and religion, English as the national language and equality of the sexes; and
- multicultural policies impose obligations as well as conferring rights: the right to express one's own culture and beliefs involves a reciprocal responsibility to accept the right of others to express their views and values.' (1989:8)

There is also a fair degree of confusion about these rights and duties implied by multiculturalism. The majority has the right to be respected for its 'democratic' prevalence and *de facto* hegemony, which is reflected mainly in the affirmation of British-Australian meta-institutions of common law, liberal democracy and common English language. But the majority also has the liberal 'duty of care' towards minorities, and this duty involves not only tolerant acknowledgement (respectful recognition), but also equity and fairness in treatment. This is worth stressing because the duties the majority implied by multiculturalism are often portrayed as passive 'tolerance of' (if not reluctant acknowledgement of) minorities.

As a result of the emphasis on mutual obligations, Australian multiculturalism is often interpreted as a sort of 'social contract' between the majority and the minorities. The majority accepts the minorities and affirms cultural differences in the expectation of minorities being respectful of the majority – of its core values, norms, traditions and meta-institutions that generated the multicultural vision. The rights of the minorities to cultivate different cultural identities and lifestyles are accompanied by duties and expectations of (democratic) respect for the majority and of (reciprocal) social engagement, both in the spirit of respect for the liberal-democratic traditions.

In fact, it is more than that. Multicultural philosophy sees diversity as an asset for all Australians. Such an asset has to be actively sustained through assistance in its preservation – and this requires investing resources in both the integrative assistance and the much less popular assistance in preserving minority cultures, especially their languages.

Again, one must stress that balancing the integrative and culture-sustaining assistance is far from easy. Consequently, multicultural policies have always generated controversies. According to many left-libertarian critics, multiculturalism should become a struggle against discrimination of ethno-racial minorities. For many conservative critics, by contrast, multiculturalism should be, above all, integrative – which often implies swift assimilation.

Respectful multiculturalism

As mentioned above, multiculturalism is also respectful of the majority's rights, especially of the rights reflecting the origin of the major institutions. This is worth stressing because some commentators portray multiculturalism as a hostile rebellion against the Anglo-Celtic majority – an equivalent of a revolutionary challenge to the Anglo-Australian

post-colonial 'ruling class'. This is obviously an interpretive error. The multicultural vision has deep British roots. It reflects, and originates from[8], a powerful stream of British liberal philosophy that underlines tolerant accommodation of differences, openness and concern with individual and group freedoms. It is a 'liberal multiculturalism', as most of the observers stress, embedded in the liberal-democratic political traditions in a similar way as the Australian political system is embedded in the British (including Scottish and Irish) political philosophy and the Westminster model of government (e.g., Levey 2010).

Yet, as mentioned earlier, multiculturalism also has a distinctive Australian flavour, mainly the sense of equity, commitment to 'fair go', and egalitarian mateship. This makes Australian multiculturalism 'naturally' respectful of Australian traditions – after all, it is an intellectual and moral emanation of these traditions. The Anglo-Australian majority is therefore treated as a benign hegemon who warrants and protects multicultural principles and policies. It is seen as a key defender of multiculturalism, rather than an imposer of the Anglo-Australian culture. This mirrors the attitudes of many Anglo-Australians towards their old colonial masters in London, the attitudes largely free of hostility (but also free of deference) because – unlike the USA – Australia has never fought for its political independence, though it has strongly asserted her cultural distinctiveness. [9]

Thus Australian multiculturalism is not – and has never been – a rebellion against the Anglo-Australian majority. It has never been an invitation to, or a licence for, ethno-racial or religious segmentation, division, isolation, let alone apartheid.[10] As stressed by the 'founding

[8] As rightly pointed out by Naraniecki (2010), Jupp (in Jupp and Clyne 2011) and Levey (in Jupp 2011).

[9] Because of this moderate stance and respectful character, one of today's critics, Greg Sheridan, could write in 1996: 'There is nothing in multiculturalism that could cause any worry to any normal person. Multiculturalism officially promoted an overriding loyalty to Australia, respect for other people's rights and Australian law, recognition of people's cultural origins, respect for diversity, the need to make maximum economic use of the skills people bring to Australia and equity in access to government services.'. Quoted after Chris Bowen 'Why Sheridan and the Immigration Minister parted company on road to multiculturalism', The Australian, 16 April 2011;

[10] As the ACPEA paper (1982:2–3) says, 'This [vision of society in Australian multiculturalism] is different from a society based on separate development, in which physical isolation or rigid intergroup barriers result in separate institutional arrangements – such as different legal, political or educational systems – and there is very little common purpose and shared identity.' The paper spells out the meaning of the duty of multicultural integration as 'equal responsibility for, commitment to and participation in society.' (1982:12). It also warns against the danger of group separatism:

'Groups should not separate themselves from the rest of the community in a way that denies either the validity of Australian institutions or their own shared identity as Australians. The pursuit of group interests should not be taken so far that they damage the nation as a whole or unfairly infringe the rights of other groups.' (1982:26)

fathers', 'in a cohesive multicultural society, national loyalties are built on ethnic loyalties.' (1977:16). The 1982 paper and the 1989 'National Agenda' are even more explicit in stressing 'the premises that all Australians should have an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia, to its interests and future first and foremost.'

Distinctive features

The multicultural goal-vision, it must be stressed again, had been contrasted with assimilationism – a strategy that requires and expects migrants to 'melt in' and lose their original identity – as well as with all forms of ethno-cultural stratification, including ethno-cultural apartheid ('separate development'). It also rejected the then popular American strategy of the 'melting pot' that envisioned a gradual assimilation of ethnic minorities to the mainstream 'American culture'. Thus from the proverbial day one, the ethno-cultural assimilation and stratification, including the American 'melting pot', had become the alternatives- rivals to the Australian multiculturalism.

Unlike the American 'melting pot' strategy, the Australian version of multiculturalism *promotes assisted social integration* and allows minorities to retain their cultural identity and lifestyles. But it *rejects* ethnocultural segmentation, especially the formation of 'ghettoised' ethnic urban enclaves or regions. Such a segmentation – be it urban or regional concentration – has been tolerated, in various degrees, by the Canadian and British policies towards minorities. Instead, the Australian version of multiculturalism embraces the vision of national integration and cohesion – unity in (cultural) diversity. The key aspects of this 'unity in diversity' are occupational integration (participation in the labour force), territorial integration (dispersion within the urban structure), political integration (participation in mainstream political institutions and activities), and social integration (participation in social life). Migrants, in other words, are expected to form part of the single Australian society, without losing their cultural distinctiveness and identity (beyond, of course, the necessary functional minimum).

This model of social integration without assimilation envisaged 'horizontal' and 'dispersed' ethno-cultural differentiation as distinct from hierarchical ('vertical') ethno-cultural (often ethno-religious) segmentation. Migrants, in other words, are not discouraged from forming – in fact, they are encouraged to form – culturally diverse groups and communities. These communities are recognised as essential social sustainers of distinct ethnic cultures. The need for such cul-

ture-sustaining associations is not only recognised, but also supported with a broad range of resources. But the emphasis is placed on the *socially adaptive and integrative* role of these ethnic communities. They are expected to play the role of 'social adapters' to the broader society, and not 'social isolators' that breed separatism. Similarly, the Australian government, while supporting ethnic communities of the integrative type, discourages the formation of ethnic parties (even ethno-specific 'party branches'), condemns exclusion and forbids ethno-specific parishes.[11] This reflects a broadly liberal vision of 'ethnic groups with continuity and some measure of autonomy' recommended by the intellectual 'founding fathers' of the Australian multicultural vision, including Zubrzycki, Martin and Smolicz. (1977:5; 1982:12).

Multiculturalism, as these 'founding parents' stress, is about the way in which the government and the Anglo-Australian majority treat diverse ethno-cultural minorities – be it immigrant or established – and about the majority-minority relations. To use a popular cliché, multiculturalism is a vision and strategy 'for all Australians', not just for migrants or 'ethnics'. At its very heart lies a vision-goal of a culturally diverse but well-integrated society and a government that grants equal rights and opportunities to (and imposes the same duties on) all its citizens, regardless of their culture and religion. Such a society, the Australian multicultural vision stipulates, celebrates cultural diversity as an asset rather than a threat to its unity and cohesion. At the same time, it is clearly recognised that the Australian society has been predominantly British in its origins, Anglo-Australian (or Anglo-Celtic) in its cultural background, and liberal-democratic in its ideology and institutional framework (common law, parliamentary democracy, etc.). Diversity of cultural backgrounds and identities does not – and should not –undermine traditional solidarity (mateship). Nor does it undermine a strongly egalitarian, or rather 'equitarian' (promoting equity and 'a fair go'), popular ethos.

The confusions, it seems, concern both the meaning of multiculturalism and the ways it has been implemented. In particular, there are differences in the understanding of balancing of mutual rights and duties of the majority and the minorities. For example, there are wide differences in the perception of the proper role of ethnic structures. Some see them as primarily organisational devices for cultivating ethnic bonds, as well as for sustaining ethnic cultures and identities. Mul-

[11] Though accepting the formation of ethnic 'communities' that spontaneously form around churches and priests, and supporting ethno-specific religious services in ethnic languages, including aged-care services.

ticulturalism implies a slightly different role and emphasis. Minority organisations serve not only as devices for cultural sustenance, but also as integrative mechanisms, as social 'adapters' to a wider society.[12] They are supposed to prevent ethnic closure, open up ethno-cultural communities, and assist in the 'mainstreaming' of their members.[13] Yet striking the 'right' balance between these two roles is difficult and often regarded as controversial.

The European and American confusions

Great Britain has adopted quite different than Australia strategies of dealing with its cultural minorities. They can be described as 'tolerant indifference – a mixture of liberal tolerance of immigration combined with indifference and minimal facilitation. In fact, there is little exaggeration in describing this approach as, in fact, a benevolent neglect. British governments provide no encouragement for cultural retention, no assistance in the identity or lifestyle maintenance, and very little intervention in the settlement *cum* integration process.

Even sharper contrasts can be observed when comparing Australian multicultural policies with the approach of the European societies, such as France or Germany. Both countries have adopted what may be called 'liberal assimilationism.' Migrants there have been tolerated, rather than welcomed, and they have been expected to assimilate culturally: become French and Germans respectively. Importantly, this expectation extends not only to language, but also to their identities and lifestyles. You cannot be 'good French/German' without closely approximating the 'typical French/German', though the typicalities have always been multiple and include some established sub-national variations. In Australia, by contrast, one 'can be a good Australian without being a typical Australian'.

Paradoxically, one may say, assimilationism – even the liberal one – seldom results in effective assimilation, let alone integration. In fact, it typically produces hidden (officially overlooked and denied) ethnic stratification and alienation – the fact clearly recognised by the creators

[12] The ACPEA (1982:30) considers group- and ethno-specific structures 'to be acceptable where they: • do not create a situation where equality of opportunity is seriously at risk; • do not result in an unreasonable economic or social cost to the rest of the Australian community; and • do not infringe individuals' rights to chose their own identities and live accordingly.'

[13] Thus the Polish Association in Hobart – one of the oldest and most successful ethnic organisations in Australia – offers not only the course of Polish language, aimed at cultural sustenance, but also equally popular course of English aimed at cultural integration.

of Australian multiculturalism. Neither the Algerian refugees in France, nor the Turkish 'guest-workers' in Germany, have ever been seen and treated as legitimate 'new nationals'. Unlike migrants in Australia, they have never been systematically assisted in their social integration, let alone helped in sustaining their cultures. They have been reluctantly tolerated as 'guests' (in fact, unwelcomed visitors) and expected either to return to their countries of origin, or to 'blend in'. They often suffer from widespread prejudice and discrimination, and many of them fail to acquire citizenship rights and legal protection.

Finally, the American 'melting pot' strategy and policy combines tolerant integration with a version that insists on, and expects, that all migrants embrace the 'American way of life'. This 'American way of life' has been relatively flexible in the sense of regional variation. But the American ethnic 'melting pot' does not support retention of migrant identities, even in a hyphenated version. Americans expect migrants to 'melt in'. Moreover, there has been no governmental assistance in this process of 'melting in'; this is a matter left for individuals and groups themselves. Equal rights are granted to individuals and accompanied by the ethos of free competition – which results in a dynamic but steep ethno-racial stratification in wealth and status. More recently, there has been a considerable hardening of policies and attitudes towards Arabs, Muslims and illegal migrants from Latin America – an unfortunate consequence of terrorist attacks, security scares, Middle Eastern wars, growing competition for scarce jobs (unemployment) and publicised waves of 'ethnic crime' (drug smuggling). This is worth mentioning here because some commentators point to the US as a 'successful migrant society'. If it is successful, it is a qualified success (e.g., Moynihan and Glazer 1963).

These differences in national policies towards migrants and minorities are seldom recognised and rarely understood. In fact, many critics confuse Australian multiculturalism with its Canadian, British, European and American counterparts, and many misinterpret the absence of multiculturalism (in the Australian sense) with its excess or failure. Thus the British PM, Mr David Cameron and German Chancellor, Ms Angela Merkel, have recently lamented the 'failure of multiculturalism' in their countries – meaning the pathological signs of migrant mal-integration and mal-adaptation. Yet, neither Germany nor Great Britain has ever embraced multiculturalism of a type adopted in Australia. On the contrary, as mentioned above, British governments have traditionally pursued policies of tolerant and benign neglect towards ethno-cultural minorities, and German governments have practiced assimilationism.

What Mr Cameron and Ms Merkel criticised were, in fact, some disastrous consequences of their non-multicultural (largely neglectful and/or assimilationist) policies. Such policies predictably create ethno-cultural stratification and widen ethno-racial and ethno-religious divides. Moreover, as recognised by the 'founding fathers' of Australian multiculturalism, the assimilationist policies sometimes trigger vicious circles of social discrimination, fragmentation and alienation, as well as occasional outbursts of hostile backlash on both sides of the widening ethno-cultural divide: among the majority and minority members. Therefore, the alleged 'failures of multiculturalism' mentioned by Ms Merkel and Mr Cameron simply reveal the failures of liberal assimilationism in Great Britain and Germany, and not the failures of multiculturalism.

Distortions and confusions

While the metaphor of 'social contract' used above helps in highlighting the sense of reciprocity implied by multiculturalism (in its original Australian version), the concept of *partnership* is perhaps more accurate. It highlights the commonality, the shared nature of multicultural goals and purposes. It also underlines the fact that 'unity in diversity' implies a mutual engagement and shared participation in social life – as well as some 'non-negotiable' elements in the multicultural partnership between the majority and the minorities.

To simplify, multiculturalism admits a degree of socio-cultural pluralism, but it rejects the systemic-institutional, political, legal or linguistic pluralism.[14] It envisages cultural and organisational diversity within some limits. It protects the united nation (with multiple traditions but common and overarching national identity and solidarity), the federal Australian state, the single Australian justice system, the common liberal-democratic political principles and practices (the Australian constitution and democracy), and the English language as the only official common language. These 'common' and 'non-negotiable' elements may be called 'meta-institutions' that form a shared 'institutional umbrella'. No element of this common umbrella can be waved in the name of rights to minority rights, cultural identity and diversity.

[14] 'Multiculturalism must be based on support for a common core of institutions, rights and obligations if group differences are to be reconciled. Except for adaptations of tribal law that may be applicable to some groups of Aboriginals, a socially cohesive Australia requires a legal framework that has one set of provisions applying equally to all members of society, regardless of their origin. ... To allow each cultural group freedom to develop its own legal codes, political institutions and practices would threaten the existence of Australia as a cohesive nation.' (1982:15–16)

Again, this seems to be widely understood. Most people understand that Australian multiculturalism has never tolerated national separatism, legal pluralism (in the sense of multiple and incompatible legal systems)[15], and pluralism of official languages. Nor does it condone discriminations and exclusions, even those belonging to 'venerable' (but harmful) cultural traditions. Consequently, multicultural approval has never extended to polygamy, violence or discriminatory treatment, even if some such practices are approved by some cultural traditions or religions. It has always been mindful and respectful of the 'no harm' qualification, as well as the central principle of 'common core of institutions, rights and obligations' (1982: 11).

Yet, there have been attempts at 'pushing the envelope' beyond these limits. Such pushes, coming mainly from religious minorities and advocates of 'radicalisation of multiculturalism', may prove harmful to multicultural consensus and legitimacy. Moreover, the moves beyond the integrative, reciprocal and respectful multiculturalism pose the threat of undermining support not only among the Anglo-Australian majority, fearful of ethnic particularism and separatism, but also among the minorities concerned about equal treatment.

Equally dangerous is a conservative backlash – the tendency for reducing multiculturalism to a superficial form of ethnic food, costume and dance. The pressures in this direction – towards trivialisation of cultural diversity and transforming it into crypto-assimilationism – are as strong as the opposite pressures towards its radicalisation. And they are equally dangerous. The trivialised 'ornamental multiculturalism' castrates ethnic cultures of their 'core values' and strips them of their creative and inspiring potential. Such trivialised 'ethnicity' becomes an embarrassing mask for a de facto assimilation. It should be distinguished, though, from some truncated forms of cultural expression that are partial and folkloristic without losing their authenticity.

A failure or a quiet achiever?

Do these 'drifts' and distortions discredit multiculturalism? This is a question that should precede another fundamental one question: has multiculturalism, in its original Australian version, proven a success in delivering the promised 'unity in diversity'?

[15] Except for some elements of indigenous traditional law recognized in some traditional Aboriginal settlements.

It is legitimate to ask both these questions, especially since more than one generation has been experiencing multicultural Australia. It is also important to start assessing the outcomes of these policies and to ask whether or not multicultural visions and policies encourage, as some critics suggest – but against the intentions of its creators and advocates – dangerous social fragmentation, or even pathological alienation. After all, such pathologies are diagnosed, to varying degree, in all modern societies, including Australia. The second question, though, requires not only a clarification (what are the current multicultural policies?), but also a careful consideration of bases of such a systematic assessment of outcomes.

Some tentative answers can be provided (though I stress that this is NOT an attempt at assessing the social outcomes of multicultural policies). Even without any systematic comparative studies, though, we can safely conclude that the countries that adopted multicultural policies – Australia and Canada – are relatively successful in maintaining high levels of social integration, stability and cohesion, let alone prosperity and social harmony. Australia, in particular, seems to have a relatively low level of ethno-communal tensions, a low level of ethnic concentration and separation, a low level of ethno-specific crime, a high level of ethnic occupational integration and a high level of minority and migrant political engagement and participation (e.g., Jupp et al. 2007; Marcus et al. 2009; Jupp and Clyne 2011). There are no signs of serious ethnic fissures or conflicts in Australian ethnically diverse society, though there are signs of persisting disadvantage and economic alienation of Aboriginal peoples, and symptoms of persisting prejudice against migrants-refugees from South Asia, Middle East and Africa. The latter, though, pre-date multiculturalism and are also diagnosed – often in much stronger form – in societies that have not endorsed multiculturalism. What one can say is that Australian multiculturalism seems to deliver on its promise, though it is not an effective *panaceum* for all ills of ethno-racial and ethno-religious mal-integration.

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Jan Pakulski – ukończył studia magisterskie w Warszawie i doktoranckie na Australijskim Uniwersytecie Narodowym (ANU). Jest profesorem i kierownikiem Wydziału Socjologii na Uniwersytecie Tasmańskim w australijskim Hobart. Członek Australijskiej Akademii Nauk Społecznych oraz Centrum Badań nad Biedą i Nierównościami (the Center for the Study of Poverty and Inequality) na Uniwersytecie Stanforda. Wyemigrował do Australii w 1975 roku. Do jego publikacji należą: Social Movements (Longman Cheshire, 1991), Postmodernization (Sage, 1992; współautorzy: S. Crook i M. Waters), The Death of Class (Sage, 1996; wspólnie z M. Watersem), Postcommunist Elites and Democracy in Eastern Europe (Macmillan, wydana w 1998 wspólnie z J. Higley'em i W. Wesołowskim), Globalizing Inequalities (Allen and Unwin, 2004) oraz Toward Leader Democracy (współpraca: Andras Körösényi, Anthem 2012).

Streszczenie

Australijska wielokulturowość

Australijska wielokulturowość – strategia polityczna mająca na celu ułatwienie integracji imigrantów o korzeniach innych niż brytyjskie i zarządzanie różnorodnością kulturową – została wypracowana w latach 50. i 60. minionego wieku i przyjęta, w latach 70., jako element oficjalnej polityki rządowej. Jak pokazują liczne przykłady z europejskich i australijskich mediów, ta forma wielokulturowości była i jest wielokrotnie mylona z koncepcjami opartymi na ideach kulturowego tygla, asymilacji i pluralizmu etnicznego. Te mylne wyobrażenia wydają się szczególnie rozpowszechnione w Europie. Nic dziwnego, skoro tak mało jest w sferze publicznej działań mających na celu wyjaśnienie zjawiska wielokulturowości czy rzetelnych debat dotyczących mechanizmów osiedlania się imigrantów i ich adaptacji, a tak wiele przejawów ostrego sprzeciwu wobec niekontrolowanych migracji. W artykule przedstawione zostały teoretyczne założenia i główne cechy australijskiej wielokulturowości oraz najczęstsze błędy w rozumieniu jej znaczenia i roli.

Słowa kluczowe

Wielokulturowość, Australia