



Doctoral School of International Relations

PROPOSITIONS

for the Ph.D. study of

The Theoretical and Practical issues of Multiculturalism in the Case of Australia by Ágnes Tolnai

Consultant:

Dr. Zsolt Rostoványi DSc

Head of Institute, university professor and dean

Budapest, 2008

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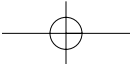
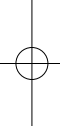
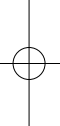


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I. Research precedents and topic choice

The objective of my research is to study one of the existing methods of managing conflicts between ethnic groups in multicultural states. The review and evaluation of the theoretical and practical elements of multiculturalism as a potential answer of the government to the problems arising from the coexistence of ethnic groups within multicultural states may reveal valuable explanation as to why certain states succeed while others fail in pursuing different policies. Either we choose to examine states where two or three nationalities live together or those whose population is made up of a majority and several minority groups due to mass immigrations, in both cases one can discover governmental reactions that are in favour of supporting multiculturalism.

At the time of globalization and the closely related migration explosion it is highly appropriate to look into the social-ethnic problems arising within ethnically increasingly diverse states and to spell out what they have in common as well as at what points and why they differ.

If we glimpse at our continent, it is evident that the events of the 1990s that took place in the Balkan, the ethnic tensions present in France, Great-Britain, Germany and Spain all invoke the desire for a conflict-free coexistence of ethnic groups. Thus, the theoretical and practical research of the problem of multiculturalism may bring about the deeper understanding of our own European problems. However, this study will focus on describing and analyzing the practice of multiculturalism through investigating a non-European country.

When talking about multiculturalism and multicultural policies, we can make an example of two states in particular, namely Canada and Australia. These two countries have been a declared multicultural state

since 1971 and 1973 respectively, which appears not only in the composition of their population but also as an organizing principle in decision-making, the public policy processes and the private sphere. Both countries have a fundamental interest in maintaining multiculturalism. Both the peaceful resolution of social conflicts and the organization of the economy take place through multiculturalism, while its institutional and public policy background has been continuously being built and improved since the 1970s.

Nevertheless, in the case of Australia some increasingly pressing questions have arisen lately. To what extent is a right-wing government able to identify itself with a left-wing system of ideas? And doing so, how much does its distinct political image suffer? Finally, within what frames may the government introduce changes and channel in right-wing values if it aims at retaining its characteristic image (and naturally, its voters)? In Australia, however, the problems of accepting multicultural values are also present outside the world of politics, it has become an issue for the average citizen as well. In the 21st century, the country has seen demonstrations directed against the aboriginals and Muslim immigrants as well as the spreading power of an openly racist party in legislation. The reactions of both the private and public sphere reflect the fact that the model of multiculturalism needs reshaping, even though neither sphere denounces multicultural policies, in fact, they do intend to preserve them.

Therefore, the twofold subject of my PhD research is to discover a model of multiculturalism which may provide answers to the questions above and to devise a criteria system which provides a valuable tool to complete the existing theoretical models bringing us closer to a deeper exposure of the problems of the Australian model. With this object in

mind, I am searching for an ideal model which makes the improvement of deficiencies possible in addition to revealing the difficulties and their specific features indicated by the public and private spheres.

There is one question yet to be answered, though. Why did I choose to investigate Australia instead of the other professedly multicultural state, Canada?

In my view, nowadays, the issue of the coexistence of cultural-ethnic communities appears in two different ways. On one hand, it is present in consociational states where the maintenance of the delicate social balance has a long history stretching back into the past. In these states cultural-ethnic communities that had lived within different hierarchies or in separate territories came to interact as a result of the adjustment of frontiers or the intervention of colonizing powers. This led to the disruption of the centuries-old balance between the dominant group and minorities. For example, in the case of Central-African countries colonization itself changed the previous balance of powers due to the fact that neglecting the delicate issue of social balance, the colonizing powers made a particular group of their choice the basis of their rule. Having acquired political and economic dominance this way, these groups were striving to retain their positions in the period following the declaration of independence of their countries but that ambition was of course irreconcilable with the newly introduced democratic organizing principles. The adjustment of boundaries also resulted in the loss of ethnic balance in particular territories placing previous minority groups into dominant position.

Since in the case of consociational states our study should focus on the historical past, the subtle nature of specific historical characteristics makes the creation of an ideal model less plausible. In this case the for-

mer colonies should be arranged in separate groups including the separate subgroups of former British, Dutch and Portuguese-Spanish colonies. We would also need to study the continents separately since the social and economical conflicts from civil wars to discrimination took a different form in Latin-America, Africa or Asia.

Another issue pertaining to the coexistence of different cultural-ethnic groups is the organization of immigration societies. Immigration societies include Canada, the United States, Australia and New-Zealand. What they have in common is the fact that the invasion of European conquerors had brought about a dramatic decrease in the size of the native population due to persecution and genocide. After that, the settlers emerged as the dominant group, i.e. the group which is able to permanently retain political and economic power. However, from the second half of the 19th century the waves of immigration into these territories were not restricted to people arriving from the mother countries. The period marked the arrival of the first immigrants from Asia, Latin-America and Europe. Their number showed a significant increase between the two world wars and that trend further strengthened in the post-war era. The social, political and economic challenges posed by these immigrants provoked differing reactions on the part of these target states.

The US melting pot could be interpreted as a specific form of assimilation rather than the practice of multiculturalism, therefore we should exclude it from our studies in the course of the search for an ideal model. New-Zealand on the other hand emerged as a bicultural state following the Treaty of Waitang of 1840 delineating the political and economic power relations between the native Maoris and the British settlers. Later, this bicultural policy was, however, abandoned by intro-

ducing a new immigration policy free of discrimination in 1974, but multiculturalism has not appeared as a declared governmental policy as opposed to Australia or Canada. As far as Canada is concerned, Joseph Raz himself, the theoretician studying Canadian multiculturalism, excludes that country from the group of immigration states claiming that the theory of multiculturalism is valid only for consociational states and cannot be used to describe immigration societies.

According to this typology, the professedly multicultural Australia is closer to the United States, but it left its assimilative politics behind during the 1970s and by establishing the institutional and public policy background of multiculturalism it has developed its own model in a society where the dominant group lives among immigrants from all over the world and where the immigrants arriving from the same country do not constitute separate groups that are big enough to give birth to a consociational state.

Thus, in the case study on the development, nature and challenges of Australian multiculturalism I intend to look into the relationship between the theoretical models and everyday social, cultural and political practice. On the other hand, I also wish to discover those elements of the model that are problematic in Australia and find out whether there are factors to be studied in order to provide answers to these problems. Therefore, my priority is to set up an ideal model that can contribute to bring the model of multiculturalism of immigration societies to perfection.

According to the hypothesis of the present treatise, multiculturalism – in contrast with Joseph Raz's claim – does exist in immigration states, moreover, it has proved to be viable on the long run. Nevertheless, it is not a static phenomenon, but one which keeps adapting to the ever

changing social, economic and political conditions through its permanent adjustment. Thus, I assume that this model is a dynamic one that is capable of recognizing changes, reacting to those changes and is able to predict which factors are going to bring about changes under the influence of upcoming social, political or economic events that are bound to happen.

II. Research methods

The aim of the analysis is to reveal the depths of interpretation of multiculturalism and to create a unified model by comparing multicultural models. In order to back up my hypothesis, I draw on the works and findings of theoreticians studying multiculturalism and then I compare their findings and proposed models with the practice of Australian multiculturalism.

In the course of the theoretical study of the models of multiculturalism, I analyse and compare the relating significant works of such authors as Michael Walzer, Joseph Raz, Will Kymlicka, Bhikhu Parekh, Jacob T. Levy, Charles Taylor, Jürgen Habermas, Brian Barry, Alain Tuoraine, Nancy Fraser and John W. Berry.

Having reviewed their theories, I search after those points which were highlighted by all of them being specified as the determining element of their multicultural models. Hence it follows that the relationship of state and society, the role of culture, the features of the common culture, the question of identity, the characteristics of a common identity as well as the problems in determining a common language are discussed in separate chapters. An independent chapter is dedicated to analyse the possibility of mapping multiculturalism into public policies. Here I focus on positive discrimination since it is suitable to bring one or more groups into a more favourable position compared to that of others. In certain cases – that I underline – this is absolutely justified, while in some situations its permanent nature will make some groups too dominant causing a distortion in group balance. The chapter also pays special attention to the issue of illiberal cultures since in immigration societies people of highly diverse culture and religion encounter each other both in the private and public

sphere. Their interaction in the public sphere calls for the need to shape their behaviour according to a unified system of principles and patterns. However, if their culture or religious beliefs represent conflicting views, it will inevitably incur a coexistence charged with conflicts unless they manage to arrive at some sort of solution. By clashing the claims of theoreticians, the topic of this subchapter is one of the most important elements of the multicultural model, i.e. the ability to live together, followed by the issue of educational policy. All researchers agree that an education with a multicultural approach may significantly contribute to the resolution of problems arising from living together. Therefore, in this part my priority is to study how the multicultural teaching material and syllabuses are developed including their criteria system and results. I try to identify a deterministic relation among the specific elements of the models mentioned above but this type of correlation is not always present. It markedly appears in the relation of education policies and other examined elements, but with the education policy lifted out, the remaining elements of the models only have a stochastic link to each other.

However, not even the most ideal model prevails free of problems. Each society will invariably have members who are not able to accept social changes, who are unsatisfied with the direction and performance of economy or politics. There are always countertrends within each society that will reach decision-makers either peacefully or in more violent ways. The conflicts emerging at the meeting points of different cultural communities of immigrant states may serve as a breeding ground for racism and neo-populism. Fear or ignorance of other cultures may lead to wrong conclusions that in turn result in the exclusion of a considerable part of society. The street fights between immigrants demanding a better life and the police in France, the illegal American immigrants threaten-

ing to call a strike, the riots of Australian aborigines or the demonstrations of Anglo-Saxon Australians against Muslim immigrants are all part of our everyday life in the 21st century. That is why it is of extreme importance to look into the theoretical bearings of these phenomena and compare them to practical experiences.

Having summarized the findings of the theoretical models, I go on to study the practical issues of the multicultural policies in Australia through reviewing the changes in immigration policy, the close links between economic and immigration questions as well as the multicultural programmes launched by the government. I separately analyse the features of citizenship, the English language and the legal system that have been defined as the cornerstones of Australian multicultural policy. At the end of the case study I focus on the development of the Australian identity through demonstrating the changing emphasis in foreign policy.

After reviewing the Australian practice, I outline my own model in which I clash theory with its practical implications. In addition to that, I highlight those points which – completing the existing theoretical models – might contribute to a deeper exposure of problematic issues and improve the multicultural model of immigration societies, thus that of Australia.

In the course of the analysis of the theoretical models and the case study, I used primary and secondary sources. In the case of theoretical models, I compared the developed models by studying the original works, neglecting the use of secondary and tertiary sources. My priority was to follow and analyze the ongoing debates between the selected authors. The Australian case study was based on primary, secondary and tertiary sources. The primary sources include government documents and reports, the positions of the advisory bodies to the government and statistical data. The source of origin of the statistical data was the Australian

Bureau of Statistics. Besides qualitative methods, the analysis of government practices also requires quantitative ones. In addition to the relating provisions of law and government documents, it is essential to study the comparable sequences of data in order to understand social and economic changes. The connection of social and economic issues, however, requires a glance at the economic policy objectives and the conditions under which they are accomplished. These objectives and the social consequences of the methods used to achieve them have catalyzed and are still catalyzing the transformation of multiculturalism.

I gained access to the primary sources through the Internet due to the websites of Australian offices that store a wide range of data and information. The use of secondary and tertiary sources plays a crucial role with regard to economic, immigration and foreign policy issues. Nevertheless, the relating literature on Australia is not always available in Hungary. Besides the library of the CEU, I relied on the database of EBSCO which provided access to international journals, especially Australian ones. However, it was necessary to collect some further related works that were not available in Hungary. Due to that fact, some volumes referred to in the bibliography can be found only as tertiary sources in the inventory of Hungarian libraries.

The complex nature of the topic required the review of a wide range of literature, while the overwhelming amount of specialized works allowed focusing only on the most striking elements and restricted the analysis to the findings of the most relevant theoreticians. Naturally, the range of questions raised by the thesis may be widened further, but given the size of the dissertation, in order to make full use of the restricted space I relied on the synthesis of the findings of my previous articles avoiding having to repeat the detailed analyses published in them.

III. The result of the treatise

1. According to the hypothesis of the study, multiculturalism – as opposed to the claim put forward by Joseph Raz – does exist in immigrant societies. Moreover, it proves to be viable on the long run.

Raz argues that the immigrants within these societies do not intend to preserve their own culture. According to him, tolerance is nothing more than one of the answers given by liberalism to cultural differences which supports the minority way of life only as long as it avoids coming into conflict with that of the dominant culture. Placing indiscrimination or the individual's fundamental human rights in the limelight is not completely suitable either to design the ideal social model to be followed by multi-ethnic countries. Due to its specific nature, multiculturalism is the only way through which it is possible to ensure the survival of separate, viable cultures. This calls for the individual's self-definition as a member of a certain community since it is that community which serves as a basis for the socialization of the person and provides them with choices. Thus, it is culture that determines the person's identity. Of course, when several cultural communities and cultural identities live next to one another, conflict is inevitable. Nevertheless, these types of conflicts are an essential part of multiculturalism which professes the pluralism of values and therefore considers each different cultural form equivalent regardless conflicts. Even with inherent conflicts, the different cultural communities and their members mutually respect and appreciate one another, and that presses oppressing or illiberal cultures to change their customs and life style. This also involves guaranteeing the right to individuals to freely leave their culture or cultural community. Since change and evolution is inherent in every culture, this is not an irrelevant expectation.

Raz's multicultural idea is consistent with the specific features of the Australian model where several cultural identities exist within the same and time, and where the pluralism of values is manifest. The mutual respect and appreciation of each other is common practice and the individuals are free to live within their own culture. Furthermore, this allows individuals to make a free choice as to which community they wish to belong to and in which community they intend to practice their culture. All these conditions prevail in a country which Raz ab ovo excluded from among the societies that are capable of achieving multiculturalism.

He argues on the ground that immigrants' choice to emigrate cannot be enforced in immigration societies. Raz assumes that the migrants in immigration societies have left their culture behind. By renouncing their culture, they cast it aside considering it to be undesirable, unviable. But the migration motivations of immigrants are more complex than that.

They base their decision primarily on economic grounds. They strive for a safer and better life that they cannot expect to find in their country of origin. They wish to achieve their aims through the employment possibilities and salaries offered by the host country. In the course of that process they necessarily have to accept the rules of the economic life of the host country which entails the official language to be used at work, the culture of economic organizations as well as work culture. They have to adapt to the legal and political system as well. In other words, the recipient country expects them to assimilate to a certain extent i.e. to integrate themselves into the public sphere. In Australia that integration means the acceptance of multicultural values and the relating rights and obligations. Such declared rights include the following: 1. cultural identity i.e. each Australian has the right to cultivate their own cultural heritage, language and religion, 2. social justice i.e.

each Australian has the right to equal treatment and opportunities regardless their race, ethnicity, culture, religion, sex or place of birth, and 3. economic efficiency that takes advantage of cultural diversity. These rights are set against the obligations of the members of the Australian society such as the respect for the constitution, the acceptance of the rule of law, tolerance, the acknowledgment of equality (between the two sexes as well), parliamentary democracy and the acceptance of the English language as the language of the nation and finally, the respect for the freedom of speech and religion.

The rights and obligations characteristic of the public sphere do not require the individual to turn their back on their culture, they only oblige them to accept the values of the common culture. In the private sphere detached from the public world immigrants do not need to give up their culture, they are free to practice it as they like.

Thus, in multicultural societies the economic motives of immigrants are not in conflict with their freedom to exercise their cultural rights. For this reason the multicultural model can be interpreted not only in the case of consociational states, but it is possible to extend it to include immigration societies as well.

2. Social tensions readily evolve at the crossroads of migrants and the dominant society. Due to the specific nature of immigration, the relief from under these tensions requires an effort on the part of both the economy and the state. Economy might provide an answer in the area of distribution as a result of the self-induced processes in regional development and better employment while the state may bring about a solution by introducing a multicultural approach in areas of cultural conflicts. Dealing with only one of them cannot be an expedient exper-

iment since it will leave either the distributional or the cultural side of the problems unresolved.

The success of the Australian models lies in a twofold solution. The introduction of multiculturalism into public policy areas starting in the mid-1970s was co-ordinated with the ongoing design of immigration policy considering current economic demands. However, twenty years later economic performance became increasingly fluctuant causing the racist issues prevailing until the end of the 1960s to re-emerge. That phenomenon raises the question: which factors were ignored by the Australian multicultural model? Why did their ignorance lead to social and economic conflicts?

Therefore, turning the multicultural model over, I included further dimensions in the research resulting in a ten-factor model. The factors under review are as follows: historical experience, the interpretation of human rights, the roots of identity, education material, the operation of democracy, the political community, citizenship, the official language, the common culture as well as the power of concomitant phenomena. Among them the newly introduced factors involve historical experience, concomitant phenomena, the interpretation of human rights, democracy, citizenship and the political community.

Historical experience, the experiences distilled during the coexistence of ethnic communities determine the willingness of these communities to co-operate. With serious historical grievances behind, it is very difficult to improve their relationship, they need to completely revise how they could live together in the years to come. Their relation may be loaded with conflicts, for example due to a situation where a particular community had a dominant position over the others i.e. when it wanted to rule them and influence their lives by pursuing assimilative politics.

However, if the dominant community showed respect for the rights, cultural identity and values of the minority communities, that is they were guaranteed a cultural autonomy of some extent (either in the private or public sphere), then multicultural transition may take a completely different course. In other words, the priority is not to rectify previous grievances but to essentially restructure the autonomy cherished so far.

Since multiculturalism itself can be interpreted as a novel answer, it presents a potential solution which brings about peaceful circumstances compared to the previous situation and establishes ethnic and social harmony. For this reason we have to assume that the historical past was laden with conflicts which prompted a search for possible answers and the solution presented itself in the form of multiculturalism. In the case of Australia, the racist and assimilative nature of politics pursued by white Australia corresponds to this hypothesis meaning that multicultural policy is born in a milieu characterized by serious conflicts where the search for a way out is in progress. The elimination of the previous practice has had a negative effect only on a narrow stratum of society – primarily the voters of the racist One Nation Party. The conflict has not completely disappeared, though. It comes to life the moment that the members of the former dominant society feel threatened by the immigrants on account of economic, cultural, political or social reasons.

The concomitant phenomenon of multiculturalism is also present in Australia. The question is how its management fits into the multicultural model. According to the liberal-democratic creed, it is part of the freedom of expression, so its restriction is prohibited. Moreover, as a result of the specific educational contents and the level of social tolerance raised to a maximum it can appear only in a relatively weak form. The example of Australia, however, contradicts to the usual strength of

that phenomenon that normally arises from the nature of the multicultural model. In Australia we witness its free and powerful manifestation. Consequently, in this respect the power of that particular phenomenon shows that the level of social tolerance could not be fully influenced by public policies. Thus, the designers of multicultural policies have to reckon with quite an unpredictable factor which sometimes gains or loses strength.

In the case of the interpretation of human rights upon contrasting the universalist and relativist approach, the multicultural model is built up according to the notions of the former one. Nevertheless, we cannot afford to be extremely universalist or relativist when judging the practice of human rights. Only the conditional acceptance of the relativist position that is the individual study of each case and the exact exploration of the particular circumstances provide for the chance not to preclude those cultures from the model that are in favour of the liberal-universalist approach. Translating that into the case of Australia means that as opposed to the universalist approach to human rights on the part of the liberal Anglo-Saxon culture, immigration has resulted in the emergence of cultures that have a dissident opinion of human rights. Therefore, in order to prevent conflicts, it is of crucial importance that the acceptance of democracy and the Australian legal system constitutes one of the bases of Australian multiculturalism. Nevertheless, those “who are not yet accepted by society” cannot benefit from these advantages and face exclusion. Thus, the interpretation of human rights cannot hinder the accomplishment of multicultural policies but it does influence the nature of policies realized in practice and its relation to the theoretical model. The operation of democracy can be approached in several ways as well. The division of political systems into democracies and dictatorships

renders the classification of countries with combined authoritarian and democratic elements more difficult. The democratic institutional systems, the pluralism of values and interests, the freedom of speech are all essential parts of multiethnic societies. It is through these means that each ethnic community is able to connect itself to the political community on equal terms and to articulate and represent its own interests. In Australia the political community itself is constantly being shaped under the influence of new cultures. However, democratic values cannot be touched by these changes. The acceptance of the legal system and the liberal-democratic values are a prerequisite for becoming integrated into the political community. But democracy also induces problems: due to the assurance of the freedom of expression and the manifestation of pluralist values, it does not hinder the activities of parties that represent extreme racist ideas. The appearance of such a party, on the other hand, may stir the till then dormant tensions within the society for want of an appropriate answer from the state or the government. The issue of the political community involves the crucial role of cohesive forces. The political community models of some theoreticians do not include the common culture and establish the coherence of the political community through the institutions and their organizing principles. But this approach is no longer valid in the case of the Australian political community. Politics in Australia, which consciously separates the political community and the private sphere, requires the strengthening of the cohesive elements of that community, therefore, parallel to the Australian identity, it is improving and reshaping the Australian culture and the common culture and identity of the political community through its multicultural programmes.

The symbolic manifestation of that effort is citizenship. Integration into a political community establishes not only the boundary between citizens and non-citizens but it also strengthens the relationship between the members of ethnic communities who – regardless their ethnic differences – belong to the same community of citizens. Besides tangible economic advantages, obtaining Australian citizenship expresses that one belongs to the multicultural Australia where a different cultural, religious or ethnic background does not serve as a ground for discrimination, neither in positive nor in negative terms. In addition to the official language, this symbolic content of Australian citizenship is one of the integrative factors of the political community.

The past historic experience and its concomitant phenomena stand in close relation to each other. They determine the widespread success of multicultural policies. The issue of human rights is to be interpreted in a different way in the case of the members and future members of society. Democracy, citizenship and the definition of the political community are factors that form the cornerstones of Australian multicultural politics itself, through which – as it is underlined by government sources – the success of that politics could be ensured. They connect the immigrants to the members of the dominant community defining them within a new, big Australian community. Therefore, the most crucial issue raised by the case of Australia is to what extent the constructed identities of the political community of multicultural societies are able to follow social changes. The Australian answer is the permanent control of changes through the reshaping of immigration policies while constantly maintaining a set of rights and obligations to be enforced in the public sphere.

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