

The rise and fall of multiculturalism? New debates on inclusion and accommodation in diverse societies

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Ideas about the legal and political accommodation of ethnic diversity have been in a state of flux for the past 40 years around the world. A familiar way of describing these changes is in terms of the rise and fall of multiculturalism. Indeed, this has become a kind of master narrative, widely invoked by scholars, journalists and policy-makers alike to explain the evolution of contemporary debates about diversity. Although people disagree about what comes after multiculturalism, there is a surprising consensus that we are indeed in a post-multicultural era.

My goal in this article will be to explore and critique this master narrative and to suggest an alternative framework for thinking about the choices we face. In order to make progress, I suggest, we need to dig below the surface of the master narrative. Both the rise and fall of multiculturalism have been very uneven processes, depending on the nature of the issue and the country involved, and we need to understand these variations if we are to identify a more sustainable model for accommodating diversity.

In its simplest form, the master narrative goes like this (for influential academic statements of this rise and fall narrative, claiming that it applies across the western democracies, see Brubaker 2001; Joppke 2004; cf. Baubock 2002). There are also many accounts of the decline, retreat, or crisis of multiculturalism in particular countries, such as The Netherlands

(Entzinger 2003; Koopmans 2006; Prins and Slijper 2002), the UK (Back *et al.* 2002; Hansen 2007; Vertovec 2005), Australia (Ang and Stratton 2001) and Canada (Wong *et al.* 2005):

- From the 1970s to mid-1990s there was a clear trend across western democracies towards the increased recognition and accommodation of diversity through a range of multiculturalism policies and minority rights. These policies were endorsed both at the domestic level in various states and by international organisations, and involved a rejection of earlier ideas of unitary and homogenous nationhood.
- Since the mid-1990s, however, we have seen a backlash and retreat from multiculturalism, and a re-assertion of ideas of nation building, common values and identity, and unitary citizenship – even a return of assimilation.
- This retreat is partly driven by fears amongst the majority group that the accommodation of diversity has gone too far and is threatening their way of life. This fear often expresses itself in the rise of nativist and populist right-wing political movements, such as the Danish People's Party, defending old ideas of "Denmark for the Danish".
- But the retreat also reflects a belief amongst the centre-left that multiculturalism has

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failed to help the intended beneficiaries – namely, minorities themselves – because it has failed to address the underlying sources of their social, economic and political exclusion, and may indeed have unintentionally contributed to their social isolation. As a result, even the centre-left political movements that had initially championed multiculturalism, such as the social democratic parties in Europe, have backed away from it and shifted to a discourse that emphasizes ideas of integration, social cohesion, common values, and shared citizenship (For an overview of the attitudes of European social democratic parties to these issues, see Cuperus *et al.* 2003. There are also political perspectives on multiculturalism beyond the populist right and the social-democratic left. For example, the radical left has traditionally viewed multiculturalism as a state-led reformist project that seeks to contain the transformative potential of subaltern political movements and thereby forecloses the possibility of a more radical critique of the capitalist nation-state (Day 2000; Žižek 1997). The French republican tradition, in both its right and left strands, has also generally opposed multiculturalism as an obstacle to its vision of equality and emancipation (Laborde 2009). However, since the radical left and the republicans were never in favour of multiculturalism their opposition does not explain the rise and fall narrative. This narrative presupposes that former supporters of multiculturalism have now lost faith in it, and I believe that it is predominantly amongst the social democrats that one can see this sort of rise and fall).

- The social-democratic discourse of national integration differs from the radical right discourse in emphasising the need to develop a more inclusive national identity and to fight racism and discrimination, but nonetheless distances itself from the rhetoric and policies of multiculturalism. The term “post-multiculturalism” has often been invoked to signal this new approach, which seeks to overcome the perceived limits of a naive or misguided multiculturalism while avoiding the oppressive reassertion of homogenising nationalist ideologies. For references to post-multiculturalism by progressive intellectuals

and academics, who distinguish it from the radical right’s anti-multiculturalism, see Alibhai-Brown (2000, 2003, 2004) re the UK, Ley (2005), Jupp (2007) re Australia, and King (2004) and Hollinger (2006) re the USA.

This, in brief, is the master narrative of the rise and fall of multiculturalism. It helpfully captures important features of our current debates. Yet in some respects it is misleading and may obscure the real challenges and opportunities we face.

In the rest of this article, I will argue that the master narrative (a) mischaracterises the nature of the experiments in multiculturalism that have been undertaken over the past 40 years, (b) exaggerates the extent to which they have been abandoned and (c) misidentifies the genuine difficulties and limitations they have encountered. I then discuss the implications of this debate for the actions of international organisations like UNESCO.

What is multiculturalism?

In much of the post-multiculturalism literature, multiculturalism is characterised as a feel-good celebration of ethno-cultural diversity, encouraging citizens to acknowledge and embrace the panoply of customs, traditions, music and cuisine that exist in a multi-ethnic society. Alibhai-Brown calls this the 3S model of multiculturalism in Britain – samosas, steel drums and saris (Alibhai-Brown 2000). Multiculturalism takes these familiar cultural markers of ethnic groups – cuisine, music and clothing – and treats them as authentic cultural practices to be preserved by their members and safely consumed as cultural spectacles by others. So they are taught in multicultural school curricula, performed in multicultural festivals, displayed in multicultural media and museums, and so on.

This 3S picture of multiculturalism has been subject to many powerful critiques:

- It entirely ignores issues of economic and political inequality. Even if all Britons come to enjoy Jamaican steel drum music or Indian samosas, this by itself would do nothing to address the real problems facing Caribbean and South-Asian communities in Britain – problems of unemployment, poor

educational outcomes, residential segregation, poor English language skills and political marginalisation. These economic and political issues cannot be solved simply by celebrating cultural difference.

- Even with respect to the (legitimate) goal of promoting greater understanding of cultural difference, the focus on celebrating discrete authentic cultural practices that are unique to each group is potentially dangerous and misleading. Firstly, not all customs that may be traditionally practiced in a particular group are worthy of being celebrated or even of being legally tolerated, such as forced marriage. To avoid this risk, there is a tendency to choose safely inoffensive practices as the focus of multicultural celebrations – such as cuisine or music – practices that can be enjoyably consumed by members of the larger society. But this runs the opposite risk of the trivialisation or Disneyfying of cultural difference (Bissoondath 1994), ignoring the real challenges that differences in cultural values and religious doctrine can raise.
- Secondly, the 3S model of multiculturalism can encourage a conception of groups as hermetically sealed and static, each reproducing its own distinct authentic practices. Multiculturalism may be intended to encourage people to share their distinctive customs, but the very assumption that each group has its own distinctive customs ignores processes of cultural adaptation, mixing and *mélange*, and renders invisible emerging cultural commonalities, thereby potentially reinforcing perceptions of minorities as eternally “Other”.
- Thirdly, this model can end up reinforcing power inequalities and cultural restrictions within minority groups. In deciding which traditions are authentic and how to interpret and display them, the state generally consults the traditional elites within the group – typically older men – while ignoring the way these traditional practices (and traditional elites) are often challenged by internal reformers, who have different views about how, say, a good Muslim should act. It can therefore imprison people in cultural scripts that they are not allowed to question or dispute.

According to post-multiculturalists, it is the gradual recognition of these flaws that explains the retreat from multiculturalism and the search for new post-multicultural models of citizenship that emphasise the priority of political participation and economic opportunities over the symbolic politics of cultural recognition, the priority of human rights and individual freedom over respect for cultural traditions, the priority of building inclusive common national identities over the recognition of ancestral cultural identities, and the priority of cultural change and cultural mixing over the reification of static cultural differences.

Is this post-multiculturalist critique accurate and justified? If multiculturalism was fundamentally about celebrating cultural difference in the form of discrete folk practices, then the critique would indeed be justified. However, I will argue that the 3S account is a caricature of the reality of multiculturalism as it has developed over the past 40 years in western democracies, at least as multiculturalism is affirmed and embodied in public policy. To be sure, the 3S picture does accurately describe a certain sort of ethos or sensibility that exists in certain circles in modern societies. Within these circles, being able to enjoy a wide range of cuisines and cultural products from around the world is seen as a sign of sophistication and open-mindedness. But multiculturalism as a set of public policies has never been exclusively, or even primarily, about inculcating such an ethos of cultural consumption. If we focus on multiculturalism as a set of public policies rather than as a particular cultural sensibility, I believe that we will find a very different story from that presented in the post-multiculturalist critique.

In the rest of this article, therefore, I will be focusing on the rise and fall of multiculturalism policies – that is, on multiculturalism as a political project that attempts to redefine the relationship between ethno-cultural minorities and the state through the adoption of new laws, policies or institutions. (Thus, unless otherwise indicated, references to multiculturalism should be understood as references to multiculturalism policies). My focus is on why multiculturalism in this sense arose, what forms it has taken, what effects it has had and what obstacles it faces.

I cannot rehearse the full history of multiculturalism here, but I think it is important to

situate it in its historical context. In one sense, multiculturalism is as old as humanity – different cultures have always found ways of co-existing and respect for diversity was a familiar feature of many empires throughout history, such as the Ottoman Empire. But the sort of multiculturalism that is said to have had a rise and fall is a much more specific historical phenomenon, emerging first in the western democracies in the late 1960s. This timing is important, for it helps us situate multiculturalism in relation to the larger social transformations of the post-war era.

More specifically, multiculturalism can be seen as part of a larger human rights revolution in relation to ethnic and racial diversity (for a more detailed discussion of the linkage between multiculturalism and the human rights revolution, from which these three paragraphs are taken, see Kymlicka 2007). Prior to the Second World War, ethno-cultural and religious diversity in the west was characterised by a range of illiberal and undemocratic relations – including the relations of conqueror and conquered, coloniser and colonised, master and slave, settler and indigenous, racialised and unmarked, normalised and deviant, orthodox and heretic, civilised and primitive, ally and enemy. These hierarchical relationships were justified by racist ideologies that explicitly propounded the superiority of some peoples and cultures, and their right to rule over others. These ideologies were widely accepted throughout the western world, and underpinned both domestic laws (for example, racially biased immigration and citizenship policies) and foreign policies (for example, in relation to overseas colonies).

After the Second World War, however, the world recoiled against Hitler's fanatical and murderous use of such ideologies and the UN decisively repudiated them in favour of a new ideology of racial and ethnic equality. And this new assumption of human equality has generated a series of political movements designed to contest the lingering presence or enduring effects of older hierarchies. We can distinguish three waves of such movements: (a) the struggle for decolonisation, concentrated in the period 1948 to 1965; (b) the struggle against racial segregation and discrimination, initiated and exemplified by the African-American civil rights movement from 1955 to 1965 and (c) the struggle

for multiculturalism and minority rights that emerged from the late 1960s.

Each of these movements draws upon the human rights revolution and its foundational ideology of the equality of races and peoples, to challenge the legacies of earlier ethnic and racial hierarchies. Indeed, the human rights revolution plays a double role here: not just as the inspiration for struggle but also as a constraint on the permissible goals and means of that struggle. In so far as historically excluded or stigmatised groups struggle against earlier hierarchies in the name of equality, they too have to renounce their own traditions of exclusion or oppression in the treatment of, say, women, gays, people of mixed race, religious dissenters, and so on. The framework of human rights, and of liberal-democratic constitutionalism more generally, provides the overarching framework within which these struggles are debated and addressed.

Each of these movements, therefore, can be seen as contributing to a process of democratic "citizenisation" – that is, turning the earlier catalogue of hierarchical relations into relationships of liberal-democratic citizenship, both in terms of the vertical relationship between the members of minorities and the state and the horizontal relationships amongst the members of different groups. In the past it was often assumed that the only way to engage in this process of citizenisation was to impose a single undifferentiated model of citizenship on all individuals. But the ideas and policies of multiculturalism that emerged from the 1960s start from the assumption that this complex history inevitably and appropriately generates group-differentiated ethno-political claims. The key to citizenisation is not to suppress these differential claims but to filter and frame them through the language of human rights, civil liberties and democratic accountability. This is what multiculturalist movements have aimed to do.

The precise character of the resulting multicultural reforms varies from group to group, as befits the distinctive history that each has faced. They all start from the anti-discrimination principle that underpinned the second wave but go beyond it to challenge other forms of exclusion or stigmatisation. In most western countries explicit state-sponsored discrimination against ethnic, racial or religious minorities

had largely ceased by the 1960s and 1970s, under the influence of the second wave of human rights struggles. Yet evidence of ethnic and racial hierarchies remained and continues to be clearly visible in many societies, whether measured in terms of economic inequalities, political under-representation, social stigmatisation or cultural invisibility. Various forms of multiculturalism have been developed to help overcome these lingering inequalities.

We can broadly distinguish three patterns of multiculturalism that have emerged in the western democracies. Firstly, we see new forms of empowerment of indigenous peoples such as the Maori in New Zealand; Aboriginals in Canada and Australia; American Indians; Sami in Scandinavia or Inuit of Greenland. These new models of multicultural citizenship for indigenous peoples often include some combination of the following nine policies. (This and the following lists of multicultural policies are taken from the index of multicultural policies developed in Banting and Kymlicka 2006):

- recognition of land rights and title
- recognition of self-government rights
- upholding historic treaties and/or signing new treaties
- recognition of cultural rights (language; hunting and fishing, sacred sites)
- recognition of customary law
- guarantees of representation and consultation in the central government
- constitutional or legislative affirmation of the distinct status of indigenous peoples
- support and ratification for international instruments on indigenous rights
- affirmative action

Secondly, we see new forms of autonomy and power-sharing for sub-state national groups, such as the Basques and Catalans in Spain, the Flemish and Walloons in Belgium, the Scots and Welsh in Britain, Quebecois in Canada, Germans in South Tyrol, Swedish in Finland and so on. These new forms of multicultural citizenship for national minorities typically include some combination of the following six elements:

- federal or quasi-federal territorial autonomy
- official language status, either in the region or nationally

- guarantees of representation in the central government or on constitutional courts
- public funding of minority language universities, schools and the media
- constitutional or parliamentary affirmation of multinationalism
- accorded an international personality (for example, allowing the sub-state region to sit on international bodies, or sign treaties, or have their own Olympic team)

Finally, we see new forms of multicultural citizenship for immigrant groups, which may include a combination of the following eight policies:

- constitutional, legislative or parliamentary affirmation of multiculturalism at central, regional and municipal levels;
- the adoption of multiculturalism in school curriculum;
- the inclusion of ethnic representation and sensitivity in the mandate of public media or media licensing;
- exemptions from dress codes, Sunday-closing legislation and so on (either by statute or by court cases)
- allowed dual citizenship
- the funding of ethnic group organisations to support cultural activities
- the funding of bilingual education or mother-tongue instruction
- affirmative action for disadvantaged immigrant groups

While there are important differences between these three modes of multiculturalism, each of them has been defended as a means to overcome the legacies of earlier hierarchies and to help build fairer and more inclusive democratic societies.

In my view, therefore, multiculturalism is first and foremost about developing new models of democratic citizenship, grounded in human rights ideals, to replace earlier uncivil and undemocratic relations of hierarchy and exclusion. Needless to say, this account of multiculturalism as citizenisation differs dramatically from the 3S account of multiculturalism as the celebration of static cultural differences. The citizenisation account says that multiculturalism is precisely about constructing new civic and political relations to overcome the deeply

entrenched inequalities that have persisted after the abolition of formal discrimination.

It is obviously important to determine which of these accounts provides a more accurate description of the western experience with multiculturalism. Before we can decide whether to celebrate or lament the fall of multiculturalism or to replace it with post-multiculturalism, we need first to make sure we know what multiculturalism has in fact been. I have elsewhere tried to give a fuller defence of my account (Kymlicka 2007, pp. 63–167), so let me here just note three ways in which the 3S account is misleading.

Firstly, the claim that multiculturalism is solely or primarily about symbolic cultural politics depends on a complete misreading of the actual policies. If we look at the three lists of policies above, it is immediately apparent that they combine economic, political, social and cultural dimensions. Take the case of land claims for indigenous peoples. While regaining control of their traditional territories certainly has cultural and religious significance for many indigenous peoples, it also has profound economic and political significance. Land is the material basis for both economic opportunities and political self-government. Or consider language rights for national minorities. According to official language status to a minority's language is partly valued as a form of symbolic recognition of a historically stigmatised language. But it is also a form of economic and political empowerment: the more a minority's language is used in public institutions, the more its speakers have access to employment opportunities and decision-making procedures. Indeed, the political and economic dimensions of the multiculturalist struggles of indigenous peoples and national minorities are obvious: they are precisely about restructuring state institutions, including redistributing political control over important public and natural resources.

The view that multiculturalism is about the apolitical celebration of ethnic folk customs, therefore, has plausibility only in relation to immigrant groups. And indeed, representations of cuisine, dress and music are often the most visible manifestations of multiculturalism in the schools and the media. It is not surprising, therefore, that when post-multiculturalists discuss multiculturalism they almost invariably

ignore the issue of indigenous peoples and national minorities and focus only on the case of immigrant groups, where the 3S account has more initial plausibility.

But even in this context, if we look back at the list of eight multiculturalism policies adopted in relation to immigrant groups, we quickly see that they too involve a complex mixture of economic, political and cultural elements. While immigrants are (rightly) concerned to contest the historical stigmatisation of their cultures, immigrant multiculturalism also includes policies that are centrally concerned with access to political power and to economic opportunities – for example, policies of affirmative action, mechanisms of political consultation, funding for ethnic self-organisation or facilitated access to citizenship.

All three familiar patterns of multiculturalism, therefore – for indigenous peoples, national minorities and immigrant groups – combine cultural recognition, economic redistribution and political participation. In this respect, the post-multiculturalist critique that multiculturalism ignores economic and political inequality is simply off the mark. (Nevertheless, the fact that multiculturalism policies were designed with an awareness of these inequalities and sought to address them does not show that they have been effective in redressing inequalities. Multiculturalism policies, like all public policies, can have perverse and unintended effects and it is possible that multiculturalism has unintentionally obscured or exacerbated inequalities or weakened the welfare state. However, a major cross-national study of the impact of multiculturalism on the welfare state shows no evidence of such unintended effects (Banting and Kymlicka 2006).

Secondly, the post-multiculturalists' claim that multiculturalism ignores the importance of universal human rights is equally misplaced. On the contrary, as we've seen, multiculturalism is itself a human rights-based movement, inspired and constrained by principles of universal human rights and liberal-democratic constitutionalism. Its goal is to challenge the sorts of traditional ethnic and racial hierarchies that have been discredited by the post-war human rights revolution. Understood in this way, multiculturalism as citizenisation offers no support for protecting or accommodating the sorts

of illiberal cultural practices in minority groups that have also been discredited by this human rights revolution. The same human rights-based reasons we have for endorsing multiculturalism as citizenisation are the same reasons we have for rejecting cultural practices that violate human rights. And indeed, this is what we see throughout the western democracies. Wherever multiculturalist public policies have been adopted they have been tied conceptually and institutionally to larger human rights norms and have been subject to the overarching principles of the liberal-democratic constitutional order. No western democracy has exempted immigrant groups from constitutional norms of human rights in order to maintain practices of, say, forced marriage, the criminalisation of apostasy or cliterodectomy. Here again, the post-multiculturalist claim that human rights should take precedence over the recognition of cultural traditions simply reasserts what has been integral to the theory and practice of multiculturalism.

This in turn points out the flaws in the post-multiculturalists' claim that multiculturalism ignores or denies the reality of cultural change. On the contrary, multiculturalism as citizenisation is a deeply (and intentionally) transformative project, both for minorities and majorities. It demands that both dominant and historically subordinated groups engage in new practices, enter new relationships and embrace new concepts and discourses, all of which profoundly transform people's identities and practices.

This is perhaps most obvious in the case of the historically dominant majority nation in each country which is required to renounce fantasies of racial superiority, to relinquish claims to exclusive ownership of the state and to abandon attempts to fashion public institutions solely in its own national image. In fact, much of multiculturalism's long march through the institutions consists precisely in identifying and attacking those deeply rooted traditions, customs and symbols that have historically excluded or stigmatised minorities. Much has been written about the transformations in majority identities and practices this has required and the backlash it can create.

But multiculturalism is equally transformative of the identities and practices of minority groups. Many of these groups have their own

histories of ethnic and racial prejudice, of anti-Semitism, of caste and gender exclusion, of religious triumphalism and of political authoritarianism, all of which are delegitimised by the norms of liberal-democratic multiculturalism and minority rights. Moreover, even where the traditional practices of a minority group are free of illiberal or undemocratic elements they may involve a level of cultural closure that becomes unattractive and unsustainable under multiculturalism. These practices may have initially emerged as a response to earlier experiences of discrimination, stigmatisation, or exclusion at the hands of the majority and may lose their attractiveness as that motivating experience fades in people's memories. For example, some minority groups have developed distinctive norms of self-help, endogamy and internal conflict resolution because they have been excluded from or discriminated against in the institutions of the larger society. Those norms may lose their rationale as ethnic and racial hierarchies break down and as group members feel more comfortable interacting with members of other groups and participating in state institutions. Far from guaranteeing the protection of the traditional ways of life of either the majority or minorities, multiculturalism poses multiple challenges to them. Here again, the post-multiculturalists' claim about recognising the necessity of cultural change simply reasserts a long-standing part of the multicultural agenda.

In short, I believe that the post-multiculturalist critique is largely off target, primarily because it misidentifies the nature and goals of the multiculturalism policies and programmes that have emerged over the past 40 years during the rise of multiculturalism.

The retreat from multiculturalism?

But this then raises a puzzle. If post-multiculturalist claims about the flaws of multiculturalism are largely misguided, then what explains the fall of multiculturalism? If, as I claim, multiculturalism is inspired by human rights norms and seeks to deepen relations of democratic citizenship, why has there been such a retreat from it?

Part of the answer is that reports of multiculturalism's death are very much exaggerated. Here again, we need to keep in mind the different forms that multiculturalism takes, only some of which have faced a serious backlash. For example, there has been no retreat from the commitment to new models of multicultural citizenship for indigenous peoples. On the contrary, the trend towards enhanced land rights, self-government powers and customary law for indigenous peoples remains fully in place across the western democracy and was recently reaffirmed by the UN's General Assembly through the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007. Similarly, there has been no retreat from the commitment to new models of multicultural citizenship for national minorities. On the contrary, the trend towards enhanced language rights and regional autonomy for sub-state national groups remains fully in place in the western democracies (although there has been a retreat from attempts to formulate the rights of national minorities at the level of international law: see Kymlicka 2007, pp. 173–246). Indeed, these two trends are increasingly firmly entrenched in law and public opinion, backed by growing evidence that the adoption of multicultural reforms for indigenous peoples and national minorities has in fact contributed to building relations of democratic freedom and equality (I survey the evidence in Kymlicka 2007, pp. 135–167). Few people today, for example, would deny that regional autonomy for Catalonia has contributed to the democratic consolidation of Spain or that indigenous rights are helping to deepen democratic citizenship in Latin America.

So it is only with respect to immigrant groups that we see any serious retreat. Here, without question, there has been a backlash against multiculturalism policies relating to post-war migrants in several western democracies. And there is also greater scholarly dispute about the impact of these policies. For example, while studies have shown that immigrant multiculturalism policies in Canada have had strongly beneficial effects in relation to citizenisation (Bloemraad 2006), other studies suggest that immigrant multiculturalism in The Netherlands has had deleterious effects (Koopmans *et al.* 2005; Sniderman and

Hagendoorn 2007) (I discuss these Dutch studies in Kymlicka 2008).

It is an important question why immigrant multiculturalism in particular has been so controversial, and I will return to this below. But we can begin by dismissing one popular explanation. Various commentators have suggested that the retreat from immigrant multiculturalism reflects a return to the traditional liberal and republican belief that ethnicity belongs in the private sphere, and that citizenship should be unitary and undifferentiated. On this view, the retreat from immigrant multiculturalism reflects a rejection of the whole idea of multiculturalism as citizenisation (for example, Brubaker 2001; Joppke 2004).

But this cannot be the explanation. If western democracies were rejecting the very idea of multicultural citizenship, they would have rejected the claims of sub-state national groups and indigenous peoples as well as immigrants. After all, the claims of national groups and indigenous peoples typically involve a much more dramatic insertion of ethno-cultural diversity into the public sphere, and a more dramatic degree of differentiated citizenship than is demanded by immigrant groups. Whereas immigrants typically seek modest variations or exemptions in the operation of mainstream institutions, historically national minorities and indigenous peoples typically seek a much wider level of recognition and accommodation, including such things as land claims, self-government powers, language rights, separate educational systems and even separate legal systems. These claims involve a much more serious challenge to ideas of undifferentiated citizenship and the privatisation of ethnicity than is involved in accommodating immigrant groups. Yet western democracies have not retreated at all from their commitment to accommodating these historic minorities.

Most western democracies are, in fact, increasingly comfortable with claims to differentiated citizenship and the public recognition of difference, when these claims are advanced by historic minorities. So it is not the very idea of multicultural citizenship *per se* that has come under attack. Commentators who argue that western democracies are rejecting multicultural citizenship *per se* typically simply ignore the obvious counter-examples of national minorities

and indigenous peoples – see, for example Joppke (2004) and Barry (2001). The problem, rather, is specific to immigration. What we need to sort out, therefore, is why multiculturalism has proved to be so much more controversial in relation to this particular form of ethno-cultural diversity.

But even that way of phrasing the question is too general. The retreat from immigrant multiculturalism is not universal — it has affected some countries more than others. Public support for immigrant multiculturalism in Canada, for example, remains at an all-time high. And even in countries that are considered the paradigm cases of a retreat from immigrant multiculturalism, such as The Netherlands or Australia the story is more complicated. The Dutch military, for example, which in the 1990s had resisted ideas of accommodating diversity, has recently embraced the idea of multiculturalism, even as other public institutions are now shying away from it. And in Australia, while the former conservative federal government backed away from multiculturalism, the state governments (governed by the Labor party) have moved in to adopt their own new multiculturalism policies. What we see, in short, is a lot of uneven advances and retreats in relation to immigrant multiculturalism, both within and across countries.

So the post-multiculturalists' narrative of a retreat from multiculturalism is overstated and misdiagnosed. Many new forms of multicultural citizenship have taken root and not faced any significant backlash or retreat. This is true of the main reforms relating to both national minorities and indigenous peoples, backed by evidence of their beneficial effects. Even with respect to immigrant multiculturalism, claims of policy failure and retreat are overstated, obscuring a much more variable record in terms of policy outcomes and public support.

I now turn to some possible explanations for the distinctive fate of immigrant multiculturalism. But notice that we cannot start to identify these factors until we set aside the post-multiculturalists' assumption that what is being rejected is multiculturalism as such. What is happening here is not a general or principled rejection of the public recognition of ethno-cultural diversity. On the contrary, many of the

countries that are retreating from immigrant multiculturalism are actually strengthening the institutional recognition of their old minorities. For example, while The Netherlands is retreating from immigrant multiculturalism it is strengthening the rights of its Frisian minority; while France retreated from its brief flirtation with immigrant multiculturalism in education (see Bleich 1998), it is strengthening recognition of its longstanding regional minority languages; while Germany is retreating from immigrant multiculturalism, it is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the special status of its historic Danish minority; while Britain is retreating from immigrant multiculturalism, it has accorded new self-government powers to its historic nations in Scotland and Wales; and so on. None of this makes any sense if we explain the retreat from immigrant multiculturalism as somehow a return of orthodox liberal or republican ideas of undifferentiated citizenship and the privatisation of ethnicity.

In short, contrary to the post-multiculturalists' narrative, the ideal of multiculturalism as citizenisation is alive and well, and remains a salient option in the toolkit of democracies, in part because we now have 40 years of experience to show that it can indeed contribute to citizenisation. However, particular uses of this approach, in relation to particular forms of diversity in particular countries, have run into serious obstacles. Not all attempts to adopt new models of multicultural citizenship have taken root or succeeded in achieving their intended effects of promoting citizenisation.

The crucial question, therefore, is why multicultural citizenship works in some times and places and not others. This is aimed not only at explanations for the variable fate of multicultural citizenship in the west but also at exploring its potential role as a model for thinking about diversity in post-colonial and post-communist societies. Unfortunately, the post-multiculturalist debate is largely unhelpful in answering this question. Since post-multiculturalists ignore the extent to which multiculturalism ever aspired to citizenisation and also over-generalise the retreat from multiculturalism, they do not shed light on the central question of why multicultural citizenisation has flourished in some times and places and failed elsewhere.

The preconditions of multicultural citizenship

In my view, we do not yet have a systematic account of the preconditions for successful multicultural citizenship, and so a certain degree of caution is required when making judgements and recommendations in this area. However, if we explore the varying fate of multiculturalism across different types of groups and different countries we can gain some preliminary indications about the preconditions for a sustainable model of democratic multiculturalism.

The theory and practice of multiculturalism suggests that multiculturalism can contribute to citizenisation but the historical record suggests that certain conditions must be in place for it to have its intended effects. Multicultural citizenship cannot be built (or imposed) out of thin air: certain sources and preconditions must be present. In a recent book (Kymlicka 2007, pp. 87–134) I discuss a number of these conditions, but let me focus here on two: the desecuritisation of state–minority relations; and the existence of a human rights consensus.

Desecuritisation. Where states feel insecure in geopolitical terms and fearful of neighbouring enemies they are unlikely to treat their own minorities fairly. More specifically, states are unlikely to accord powers and resources to minorities that they view as potential collaborators with neighbouring enemies.

In the past this has been an issue in the west. For example, prior to the Second World War, Italy, Denmark and Belgium feared that their German-speaking minorities were more loyal to Germany than to their own country and that they would support attempts by Germany to invade and annex areas of ethnic German concentration. These countries were anxious that Germany might invade in the name of liberating their co-ethnic Germans and that the German minority would collaborate with such an invasion.

Today, this is a non-issue throughout the established western democracies with respect to historic national minorities and indigenous peoples, although it remains an issue with respect to certain immigrant groups, particularly Arab and Muslim groups after 9/11. It is difficult to think of a single western democracy where the state fears that a national minority would

collaborate with a neighbouring enemy and potential aggressor. This is partly because western states do not have neighbouring enemies who might invade them. NATO has removed the possibility of a western country invading its neighbours. As a result, the question of whether national minorities and indigenous peoples would be loyal in the event of invasion by a neighbouring state is moot.

Of course, western democracies do have long-distance potential enemies – such as Soviet Communism in the past, Islamic jihadism today and perhaps China in some future scenario. But in relation to these long-distance threats, national minorities and indigenous peoples are on the same side as the state. If Quebec gains increased powers or even independence, no one in the rest of Canada worries that Quebec will start collaborating with Al-Qaeda or China to overthrow the Canadian state. An autonomous or independent Quebec would be an ally of Canada, not an enemy.

In most parts of the world, however, minority groups are still seen as fifth columns collaborating with neighbouring enemies. This is particularly true where the minority is related to a neighbouring state by ethnicity or religion or where a minority is found on both sides of an international border, so that the neighbouring state claims the right to protect “its” minority. Consider the ethnic Serbs in Bosnia, or Kashmiris in India. If we move outside western Europe, Cyprus and Israel are consolidated democracies that still exhibit this dynamic of viewing their historic Turkish and Arab minorities as potential collaborators with external enemies and, not coincidentally, have been unable to agree on minority autonomy.

Under these conditions, ethnic relations become securitised. Relations between states and minorities are seen, not as a matter of normal democratic debate and negotiation, but as a matter of state security, in which the state has to limit the democratic process to protect itself. Under conditions of securitisation, minority political mobilisation may be banned and even if minority demands can be voiced, they will be rejected by the larger society and the state. After all, how can groups that are disloyal have legitimate claims against the state? So the securitisation of ethnic relations erodes both the democratic space to voice minority demands

and the likelihood that those demands will be accepted.

In most western countries, however, ethnic politics have been de-securitised. Ethnic politics is just that – normal, day-to-day politics. Relations between the state and minority groups have been taken out of the security box, and put in the democratic politics box. This is one essential precondition for multicultural citizenship to emerge and take root.

Human rights protection. A second precondition concerns the security, not of the state, but of individuals who would be subject to self-governing minority institutions. States are unlikely to accept minority self-government if they fear it will lead to islands of local tyranny in a broader democratic state.

This, too, has been a worry in the past in the west, where some long-standing minorities were seen as carriers of illiberal political cultures. And this fear persists in relation to some recent immigrant groups. But at least in relation to national minorities, it is now widely assumed that there is a deep consensus across ethnic lines on basic values of liberal democracy and human rights. As a result, it is assumed that any self-government powers granted to national minorities will be exercised in accordance with the shared standards of democracy and human rights. Everyone accepts that minority self-government will operate within the constraints of liberal-democratic constitutionalism, which firmly upholds individual rights. Where minorities have gained autonomy in the west, their self-governing institutions are subject to the same constitutional constraints as the central government, and so have no legal capacity to restrict individual freedoms in the name of cultural authenticity, religious orthodoxy or racial purity. Not only is it legally impossible for national minorities in the west to establish illiberal regimes but they have no wish to do so. On the contrary, all of the evidence suggests that members of national minorities are at least as strongly committed to liberal-democratic values as members of dominant groups, if not more so. (For discussions of how self-government for national minorities in the west fits within broader liberal-democratic constitutional norms and constraints, see Keating 2001).

The situation with respect to some indigenous groups is more complicated, since they are

sometimes perceived as falling outside the liberal-democratic consensus. But since indigenous self-government rarely involves the exercise of power over non-members, unlike the regional autonomy accorded to national minorities, there is less concern that indigenous self-government may harm the rights of non-members. Moreover, the evidence suggests that indigenous peoples are increasingly accepting broader liberal-democratic principles (Schouls 2003).

This removes one of the central fears that dominant groups have about minority autonomy. In many parts of the world there is the fear that once national minorities or indigenous peoples acquire self-governing power they will use it to persecute, dispossess, expel or kill anyone who does not belong to the minority group. In western democracies this is a non-issue. Where there is a strong consensus on liberal-democratic values, people feel confident that however issues of multiculturalism are settled, their own civil and political rights will be respected. No matter how the claims of ethno-national and indigenous groups are resolved – no matter what language rights, self-government rights, land rights or multiculturalism policies are adopted – people can rest assured that they will not be stripped of their citizenship, fired from their jobs, subjected to ethnic cleansing, jailed without a fair trial or denied their rights to free speech, association and worship. Put simply, the consensus on liberal-democratic values ensures that debates over accommodating diversity are not a matter of life and death. As a result, dominant groups will not fight to the death to resist minority claims. This, too, is a precondition for the successful adoption of multicultural citizenship.

There are other factors that underpin the rise of multiculturalism in the west, including demographic changes, but desecuritisation and human rights are pivotal.

Where these two conditions are absent, multiculturalism is unlikely to emerge, except perhaps as the outcome of violent struggle or external imposition. This raises the paradox that if these preconditions are in place, then the most serious problems of potential violence and conflict are in a sense already solved, and we do not need multiculturalism to solve them. Jan Nederveen Pieterse suggests as much when he says, “The core problem of liberal

multiculturalism is that it provides a solution for which there is no problem and a remedy for which there is no ailment” (Pieterse 2005, p.1271). In his view, multiculturalism cannot work if the harsh circumstances preclude people from viewing their identities as multiple and complementary and, if those circumstances change sufficiently to allow for multiple and complementary identities, then violence and instability are highly unlikely whether or not we adopt multiculturalism. I think Pieterse is right that multiculturalism is not an effective means for ending violence since it is either unworkable (in difficult circumstances) or unnecessary in preventing violence (in fortunate circumstances). What he ignores, however, is that multiculturalism may be necessary for other purposes – in particular, for democratic citizenisation. For that goal, I believe that multiculturalism is often necessary.

These two factors not only help explain the rise of multiculturalism, but also help explain the partial retreat from multiculturalism in some countries in relation to recent Muslim immigrants, who are often seen as both disloyal and illiberal. There are other factors at play as well in the backlash against immigrant multiculturalism, including concerns about illegal immigration and about the economic burden of supporting unemployed immigrants, as well as old-fashioned racial prejudice. (For a more detailed discussion of these factors, see Kymlicka 2004). For many people prejudice is the key factor. But prejudice is found in all countries – indeed, its existence is part of the justification for adopting multiculturalism – and so cannot explain the variation across countries (or over time) in support for multiculturalism. And if we try to understand why this latent prejudice and xenophobia sometimes coalesces into powerful political movements against multiculturalism the answer, I believe, lies in perceptions of threats to geopolitical security, human rights and economic security. Where such perceptions are lacking, as they are in relation to most immigrant groups in North America, then support for multiculturalism can remain quite strong.

If this analysis is correct, it has important implications for the future of multiculturalism in the west. On the one hand, despite all the talk about the retreat from multiculturalism, it

suggests that multiculturalism in general has a bright future. There are powerful forces at work in modern western societies pushing in the direction of the public recognition and accommodation of ethno-cultural diversity. Public values and constitutional norms of tolerance, equality and individual freedom, underpinned by the human rights revolution, all push in the direction of multiculturalism, particularly when viewed against the backdrop of a history of ethnic and racial hierarchies.

These factors explain the ongoing trend towards the recognition of the rights of sub-state national groups and indigenous peoples. Older ideas of undifferentiated citizenship and neutral public spheres have collapsed in the face of these trends, and no one today seriously proposes that these forms of minority rights and differentiated citizenship for historic minorities could be abandoned or reversed. Even such a fierce critic of multiculturalism as Brian Barry (2001) makes no attempt to apply his ideas to the case of sub-state national groups and indigenous peoples. That minority rights, liberal democracy and human rights can comfortably co-exist is now a fixed point in both domestic constitutions and international law. There is no credible alternative to multiculturalism in these contexts.

The situation with respect to immigrant groups is more complex. The same factors that push for multiculturalism in relation to historic minorities have also generated a willingness to contemplate multiculturalism for immigrant groups and, indeed, such policies seem to have worked well under low-risk conditions. However, immigrant multiculturalism has run into difficulties where it is perceived as carrying particularly high risks. Where immigrant groups are seen as predominantly illegal, as potential carriers of illiberal practices or movements or as net burdens on the welfare state, then multiculturalism poses perceived risks to both prudential self-interest and moral principles and this perception can override the forces that support multiculturalism.

On the other hand, one could also argue that these very same factors also make the rejection of immigrant multiculturalism a high-risk move. It is precisely when immigrants are perceived as illegitimate, illiberal and burdensome that multiculturalism may be most needed.

Without some proactive policies to promote mutual understanding and respect and to make immigrants feel comfortable in mainstream institutions, these factors could quickly lead to a situation of a racialised underclass, standing in permanent opposition to the larger society. Indeed, I would argue that, in the long-term, the only viable response to the presence of large numbers of immigrants is some form of liberal multiculturalism, regardless of how these immigrants arrived or from where.

But we need to accept that the path to immigrant multiculturalism in many countries will not be smooth or linear. Moreover, we need to focus more on how to manage the risks involved. In the past, defenders of immigrant multiculturalism have typically focused on the perceived benefits of cultural diversity and intercultural understanding and on condemning racism and xenophobia. Those arguments are sound, I believe, but they need to be supplemented with a fuller acknowledgement of the prudential and moral risks involved and with some account of how those risks will be managed.

The implications for international organisations (IOs)

If this analysis is correct, it has a number of implications for how IOs like UNESCO approach the issue of multiculturalism. On the one hand, the fact that multiculturalism is rooted in the broader human rights revolution provides a clear justification for IOs to promote ideas of multiculturalism. Indeed, given their mandate, one could say that IOs have a responsibility to do so.

Yet the analysis also suggests obvious difficulties in diffusing multicultural citizenship, since the two factors of regional security and human rights protections are absent in much of the world. Indeed, it suggests that international efforts to promote multiculturalism will not only be difficult but perhaps even counter-productive. Where minorities are potential pawns in unstable regional geopolitics or where human rights guarantees are weak or absent, attempts to transplant western models of multicultural-

ism may exacerbate pre-existing relations of enmity and exclusion rather than contribute to citizenisation. Multiculturalism might give greater power and resources to domestic or external political actors who are committed to undermining relations of democratic citizenship.

So caution is called for in this area. If we still have only a sketchy understanding of the preconditions of multicultural citizenship in the west, making generalisations difficult, then this is even truer in relation to the post-communist or post-colonial world. Given the lack of reliable evidence in the area, any provisions and recommendations should be cautious and provisional.

This does not mean that IOs should abandon the promotion of multiculturalism or defer it to some utopian future where all the world's countries have become consolidated liberal democracies united in common geopolitical security arrangements. On the contrary, it is precisely in conditions of regional insecurity and political tyranny that minorities are most vulnerable and most in need of international protection.

It does suggest, however, two important changes in how IOs approach the issue of multiculturalism. Firstly, it suggests the limits of the best practices strategy for promoting multiculturalism. Too often, the main way in which IOs promote multiculturalism is to compile lists of best practices, identifying cases where multiculturalist policies have worked well to promote peace, improve educational or economic outcomes for minorities or enhance political participation. Such lists can help to counter criticism that multiculturalism inherently or inevitably has pernicious effects and can help inspire actors and policy-makers to think more creatively and innovatively. However, such lists typically ignore the crucial question of preconditions.

For example, many IOs approvingly cite Italy's policy towards South Tyrol, with its package of territorial autonomy and language rights for the German-speaking minority, as a best practice for the accommodation of sub-state national groups. And indeed it has been a demonstrable success. But they rarely discuss the preconditions that made this possible. The agreement to establish autonomy in South Tyrol only became possible under the larger rubric of the EU and NATO, which desecuritized the

issue. As long as Austria was seen by Italy as a neighbouring enemy and the German minority in South Tyrol was seen as a potential collaborator with it, Italy refused to consider autonomy. But once Austria became a geopolitical ally under the EU and NATO, the German minority's linguistic and ethnic ties to Austria became non-threatening and, indeed, a potential benefit in an increasingly integrated Europe, and there is now a democratic consensus in favour of autonomy.

This is a success story, but it is misleading to say that it is a model for how other states, in rougher neighbourhoods of the world, should deal with their national minorities. For all we know, perhaps Italy was right to refuse to adopt autonomy for South Tyrol before Austria had become an ally in larger regional security arrangements. We do not know whether adopting autonomy for South Tyrol at a time when Italy and Austria were still potential enemies would have contributed to citizenisation. To invoke the South Tyrol example as the basis for defending autonomy for ethnic Serbs in Croatia, therefore, as the European Commission did in the early 1990s, is at best premature.

Similarly, several IOs have approvingly cited Canada's multiculturalism policy as a best practice for integrating immigrants. And indeed the evidence is overwhelming that the policy has had beneficial effects and has wide public support (Adams 2007). But they rarely discuss the unique set of circumstances that allowed Canada to adopt this policy. The reality is that Canada simply does not face many of the challenges confronting other immigrant countries. Because of its geographical location there is virtually no illegal immigration and hence no fear of losing control over the border. Because of its points system for selecting immigrants, immigrants to Canada tend to be more educated and skilled than immigrants to other countries and so are not perceived as an economic burden. And because of its historic French–English divide, immigrants to Canada are often seen as helping to unify the country and, indeed, are more committed to maintaining the country intact than the fractious historical founding nations (that is, the Aboriginals, British and French). For example, had immigrants not voted overwhelmingly against secession in the 1995 Quebec referendum, the secessionists would have won.

This is truly an exceptional set of circumstances that is not found in any other immigrant country. (For a more detailed discussion of the uniquely propitious circumstances of Canadian multiculturalism and why we should be cautious about viewing it as a model for others, see Kymlicka 2004). And so, while Canada's multiculturalism policy has indeed been a success, it would be misleading to say that it provides a model for how to deal with the challenges facing many other countries where immigration is often illegal or at any rate unselected and is composed mainly of low-skilled immigrants who are then disproportionately unemployed and on welfare. We simply do not know whether the Canadian model works in these very different circumstances.

So the first implication for IOs is that we need to move beyond lists of best practices to look more carefully at the preconditions that enabled these practices to be successful. If we do this we are likely to discover that these preconditions are not present in many countries, including the countries in which we are most concerned to promote multiculturalism. Multicultural citizenisation is often most needed precisely in those countries where the preconditions are most absent.

And this in turn raises a second implication for IOs – namely, the need to distinguish between what is feasible in the short term from what is desirable in the long term. At present many IOs waver between a naive idealism and a harsh pragmatism. They sometimes naively promote western models of multiculturalism without attending to the underlying preconditions, and sometimes abandon minorities to their fate on the grounds that multiculturalism is too risky under the difficult circumstances of many non-western states (I trace this wavering, particularly in relation to the claims of national minorities in post-communist Europe, in Kymlicka 2007, pp. 173–246).

If the international promotion of multiculturalism is to be effective we need to rethink how different forms of multiculturalism fit into larger sequences of political reform. We need to distinguish the minimal standards that can reasonably be expected of all countries, even under difficult circumstances, from the higher standards appropriate to countries in propitious circumstances. In this respect, we might draw

upon ideas of progressive implementation developed in the broader human rights field. It is widely recognised that some of the social rights listed in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights cannot immediately be implemented by some of the poorer countries (for example, access to free post-secondary education). So it is common to distinguish between those social rights that should be immediately and universally applied and those that we seek to achieve over time as the facilitating conditions are put in place. We need a comparable theory of the progressive implementation of multiculturalism, with different minority rights kicking in as the underlying conditions are established.

IOs have sometimes acknowledged the need for such an account, but issues of sequencing remain poorly understood at the international level. Without a plausible account of conditions and sequencing, international efforts at diffusing multiculturalism are doomed to futility.

The task for IOs like UNESCO, therefore, is not only to identify attractive models or best practices of multiculturalism but also to identify the conditions under which those models are viable and to see what can be done to put those conditions in place. Unfortunately, much of what is currently being done by international organisations in this field, whether in relation to

diffusing models of multiculturalism or codifying international standards of minority rights, neglects this issue.

Nor is it easy to remedy this problem, since it requires drawing upon and integrating a range of expertise that is rarely available in individual IOs. It requires linking debates over cultural rights to debates about geopolitical security, debates about economic development and debates over democratisation, all of which are typically handled by different IOs. It is not even clear which IOs have the resources (or the mandate) to engage in the sorts of complex investigations needed to build a systematic theory of the conditions and sequencing of multiculturalism.

The key point, however, is that while earlier efforts at promoting multiculturalism were often naive, the problem is not solved by shifting to new models of post-multiculturalism. As we've seen, the post-multiculturalist critique is largely off target. The problem is not with the models and best practices of multicultural citizenship, of which there are indeed many successful examples, but with the lack of attention to the conditions that enable those models to be successfully implemented – a lack that is found as much in the new work on post-multiculturalism as in the original work on multiculturalism.

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