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MULTICULTURALISM AND INTERCULTURALISM: BETWEEN THE COEXISTENCE AND INTERACTION OF CULTURES

Abstract

This paper analyzes multiculturalism as the dominant theoretical and practical model for managing cultural differences in contemporary societies, and interculturalism as its critique and possible alternative. Starting from the fact that contemporary societies are characterized by pronounced cultural diversity, the paper outlines the basic premises of multiculturalism, with particular emphasis on issues of identity, minority rights, and the relationship between individual and collective rights. It further examines the main criticisms of multiculturalism, especially those related to its tendency toward passive coexistence of cultures, the lack of genuine interaction, and its limited capacity to overcome social inequalities and conflicts. It is noted that multiculturalism, although significant as a normative framework for the recognition of diversity, has a limited scope in practice, and the focus is placed on the concept of interculturalism. The basis of interculturalism is dialogue, exchange, and the permeation of cultures, which strengthen social cohesion and foster mutual understanding between different cultural groups. It is concluded that interculturalism is a

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more dynamic, functional, and suitable model for contemporary societies, especially in the context of globalization and intense identity transformations.

Key words: *multiculturalism, interculturalism, cultural identity, cultural diversity, social cohesion, intercultural dialogue*

JEL classification: Z13, Z10, D74

Introduction

Contemporary societies are characterized by a high degree of cultural diversity, shaped by intensive migration, globalization, and transformations in social relations. In such circumstances, managing cultural differences and establishing stable relations among various ethnic, religious, and cultural groups have become key issues in contemporary social theory. In that context, multiculturalism has established itself as a dominant normative and political model that starts from the idea of recognition and equality of diverse cultural identities.

In addition to multiculturalism being an attractive normative framework for recognizing diversity, it has been exposed to numerous criticisms in recent decades. Criticisms refer to its internal contradictions, especially regarding the relationship between individual and collective rights, as well as its limitations in overcoming social inequalities and conflicts. Instead of contributing to better interaction and integration, multiculturalism is often reduced to a model of passive coexistence of cultures. There is a lack of deeper mutual penetration and understanding, which may lead to social fragmentation and a weakening of social cohesion.

Given the aforementioned limitations, the concept of interculturalism, which emphasizes dialogue, exchange, and mutual enrichment among cultures, is increasingly important in contemporary theoretical discussions. Unlike multiculturalism, which emphasizes recognizing differences, interculturalism emphasizes actively connecting with and overcoming them through communication and cooperation.

The subject of this paper is the analysis of multiculturalism as the dominant model for managing cultural differences, and the consideration of interculturalism as its critique and possible alternative. The aim of the paper is to highlight the key theoretical and practical shortcomings of multiculturalism and to argue for the importance of an intercultural approach in modern societies. Special emphasis was placed on the relationship between cultural coexistence and interaction, as well as on the role of intercultural dialogue in strengthening social cohesion.

The contribution of the work lies in systematizing relevant theoretical approaches and in moving from the model of passive tolerance to that of active cultural interaction, especially in societies facing intense processes of globalization and identity change.

1. Multiculturalism: theoretical framework and key dilemmas

The concept of multiculturalism preceded that of cultural pluralism. Although very close (terminologically, in the original meaning), these terms are not synonyms. Cultural pluralism implies an open (tolerant) relationship between national cultures, but not between subnational cultures, which is a characteristic of multiculturalism. "There are grounds for the claim that cultural pluralism is a problem of developing countries, while developed countries face the challenges of multiculturalism as a phenomenon of modern times" [1, p. 227]. Of course, there are exceptions to this "rule": Japan, although an economically and technologically highly developed country, is rather a monocultural community characterized by a high level of cultural uniformity and a strong sense of belonging to the nation. A similar feeling of national consciousness is also present in Germany [9, p. 114-115]. Nevertheless, we can say that multiculturalism, defined as the heterogeneity and pluralism of cultures within a nation, is characteristic of many industrially developed countries. Historical phenomena in the 20th century, such as wars, totalitarian regimes, and economic globalization, led to large-scale migration and created societies composed of diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic groups [16, p. 12].

Multiculturalism is "based on the idea of equal dignity of different culturally defined groups and communities that establish coexistence in one democratic society, as well as on the belief that every human being has the right to grow within his own culture (and not to impose on him a cultural identity characteristic of the majority in the society in question)" [14, p. 222]. According to the French political analyst Andrey Semprini, multiculturalism is an ideal of harmonious coexistence among different ethnic and cultural groups within a pluralistic society. Multiculturalism essentially raises three issues: diversity, minority rights vis-à-vis the majority, and identity and its recognition [11, pp. 147-149]. "The problem of identity currently represents the most important aspect of multiculturalism" [16, p. 18]. A multiculturalist freely chooses their collective identity and stands for equality and full equality of different social groups and lifestyles. Multiculturalists believe that nurturing different collective identities facilitates the integration of immigrants and their local cultures into a common social system. They also argue that conflicts caused by ethnic, racial, and religious intolerance can be more easily resolved if shifted from the political to the socio-cultural sphere [16, p. 29]. A multicultural society must provide conditions in which each culture has the right to freely express its identity, while the individual has the right to choose to join the group to which he feels the greatest affinity. As the state must not favor one model of life at the expense of another, no group can be legitimate and another not; homosexuals, members of other races, feminists, or ethnic minorities become politically equal groups on a multicultural terrain. Apart from the requirement to respect basic civil rights, these groups must be recognized as social groups with specific identities, experiences, and perspectives. Consequently, political institutions should respect differences by recognizing the group identity of, say, ethnic communities and the values and cultural demands of their groups. This clearly shows that the central issue of multiculturalism is, in fact, cultural differences/diversity and tolerance [16, p. 15-16].

According to modern legal theorists, multiculturalism is a special achievement of unity and diversity, that is, universal and special. "The multicultural model of 'unity of diversity' in its social being

contains multi-ethnicity and multi-raciality. In essence, diversity among peoples, cultures, and religions is evident. People living side by side, cultures lasting side by side, and religions practicing side by side, created a universalism of diversity" [7, p. 2].

Formulas of coexistence, common existence, equality and mutual tolerance, intercultural cooperation, and coexistence in practice are characteristic of North American culture. Multiculturalism, cultural assimilation, and many other cultural "inventions" were present at various stages of the design of American society [1, p. 226]. But it is clear that multiculturalism is set as an imperative in almost all countries of the modern democratic world. "There are countries where discrimination against national groups, i.e., indigenous peoples and minorities, has been present for a long time, such as Canada, Brazil, Mexico, or Australia, but the situation was not much better in some socialist countries either. In some countries, there were bloody events, when minorities within a majority tried to define their identity and subjectivity, for example, in Chechnya, the former Yugoslavia, Kashmir, and Sri Lanka. Even in Europe, national and ethnic groups, i.e., peoples, for example, Catalans and Basques in Spain, Catholics in Northern Ireland, Corsicans in France, demand the right to international recognition of their subjectivity and to autonomy, i.e., self-government, even an independent state" [7, p. 15-16].

Specific historical and demographic circumstances - the presence of indigenous peoples, the importation of slaves from West Africa, different religious groups among the first settlers, the Anglo-Saxon origin of the economic and political elite, and the role of immigration in the settlement of the country- favored multiculturalism (initially) to be most associated with the United States of America. In such circumstances, the well-known American idea of the "melting pot" emerged, according to which immigrants were expected to assimilate into a single American nation [15, p. 276]. In that pot as a common denominator for summarizing the diverse ethnic experience of the American continent, everyone must try their chance and realize their part of the American dream that every member of the white middle class dreams of [11, p. 21]. "The ideology of the well-known

"American dream" rests on the realization of material well-being, which is not possible without private initiative as the core of the American national being... The melting pot was overflowing with the ideas of the traditional elite and its assimilationist understanding of American society in which everyone will eventually lose or abandon those ethnic characteristics that distinguished them from the American motherland" [1, p. 226-227]. Nevertheless, as Nikola Božilović warns, American society represents a specific union in which on a common territory different peoples, races and religions are mixed, and the greatest danger is to cleanse the ethnic groups of their ethnic essence [1, str. 227].

Despite the successive waves of immigration, despite the rhetoric of the melting pot, despite the existence of a significant black minority and indigenous peoples, the soul of America remained white, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant (WASP). Despite everything, America was a non-democratic and non-multicultural country. The facts show that only the Anglo-Saxons had full rights in it [7, p. 4]. As an illustration of the above, we can cite the fact that in 1960, 94 percent of both Protestant and non-Protestant student populations at American universities were white.

As a result of everything, since the 1960s and 1970s, and more intensively in the last two decades of the 20th century, there have been "demands for the preservation of their own identity by ethnic groups, which were believed to have been "melted" a long time ago. This opens discussions about the monolith of the "American dream" and the fundamental misunderstanding between the monocultural white majority, averse to change, and multicultural ethnic minorities, eager to change their own, more or less unenviable position" [15, p. 276].

"America, therefore, has always been something else in reality in relation to the rhetoric of its political representatives and in relation to its constitutional determinations..... There is an obvious gap between what is written in the American Constitution and its application..." [7, p. 4]. American "liberal thought defended a free civil society, but it did not come to life in reality..." while "the monocultural liberal position defended itself by referring to

principles of general importance. Supporters of multiculturalism, on the other hand, publicly announce the ideological character of those principles and criticize the absence of realism in liberal theory. Establishing a multitude of inequalities, they challenge the operational aspiration of American society that serves only to mask the continuation of the project of a positivist society whose goal is to maintain a system of controlled power, which is held in its hands by the white, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant elite" [11, p. 19]. According to Semprini, political institutions derived from Western culture and their most prominent dignitaries are not genuinely interested in promoting diversity. Samuel Huntington (Samuel P. Huntington) in his book *Who Are We? (The Challenges to America's National Identity)* "proclaims a mission to save the 'American soul' by reaffirming unity and community, rather than diversity, as the predominant American values." Like numerous other critics, he declares multiculturalism an anti-Western ideology and openly attacks it for deconstructing American cultural and political identity by promoting and strengthening racial, ethnic, cultural, and other subnational identities, primarily in the educational sphere. The desired American vision of multiculturalism is coexistence in a melting pot" [15, p. 278].

According to Božilović, multiculturalism (as an idea and a practice) is not a homogeneous and monovalent phenomenon. In America, fierce battles between pluralistic and particularistic multiculturalism are taking place. "While the proponents of the first advocate for a richer common culture, others insist that no common culture is possible or desirable, that is, that racial and ethnic minorities should not be part of American culture at all. There is a thesis about the "Eurocentricity" and white coloring of American culture. Particularism is based on the ideology of ethnic division and the movement of black nationalists, and pluralists emphasize the motto "American culture belongs to all of us" [1, p. 227].

The controversies in American society, as well as the difficulties in establishing a complete multicultural society, are therefore obvious. Therefore, multiculturalism (as a concept and practice) has been criticized for several reasons. While some criticize it from the

positions of assimilationism and racism, others point out that the concept of multiculturalism also contains cultural relativism, which negates universal values in the history of mankind. There are also critics who believe that multiculturalism, with its insistence on cultural diversity and group identity, is directly opposed to the theory of individualism on which the idea of a liberal-democratic nation-state rests. In this sense, there is a conflict between advocates of collective identities and those who defend individualism, namely, between multiculturalists and monoculturalists. According to monoculturalists, the biggest threat to modern democratic societies lies precisely in the attempt to redefine the concept of the subject and the rights that belong to him based on the "humanistic" definition. "Starting from the objectivist definition of the individual as an autonomous, rational and morally responsible being who is "his own master", monoculturalists believe that the individual cannot develop his intellectual and moral abilities, unless he frees himself from the kind of collective identities, determinations based on ethnicity, race, gender, religion, which only hinder him in his efforts to become an autonomous person" [16, p. 29]. This view of the individual is contrary to the multicultural insistence on recognizing the particular values of different cultures and sees collective identity as an obstacle to integration into the national community.

In the public space, two policies clashed: "the politics of equal civil rights" and "the politics of difference": "While the politics of dignity seeks to promote non-discrimination among all citizens in a way that is 'blind to difference', the politics of difference often redefines non-discrimination by demanding differentiated treatment based on individual and cultural uniqueness" [5, p. 314]. According to the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, neutrality is not possible when some strive to preserve cultural distinctiveness and others to promote individual interests. Taylor seeks to prove that individualism and multiculturalism are not irreconcilable sides. He highlights the notion of dialogism in the process of identity creation: an individual's identity is constituted through contact with the Other, through exchange, comparison, and differentiation. According to him, an individual's awareness of his individuality is deeply shaped

by his social experiences. The dialogic theory of identity rests on several important assumptions: first, individual identity is viewed as an empty structure that is built in the process of upbringing and education; secondly, the experience of diversity is the basis for the development of one's own identity and a prerequisite for the possibility of "free choice"; and finally, the theory of identity based on this justifies the demands for public recognition of the identity of minority groups because it emphasizes the importance, the "evaluation" of the Other for the formation of the identity of the individual/group [12]. Taylor remains in the vicious circle of self-renewal of liberal society, which would both remain liberal and respect diversity, that is, it tends to reconcile "equal recognition" of liberalism and "special recognition" of multiculturalism [13].

It is evident, however, that the essence of multiculturalism is the conditioning and determination of personal identity by the culture of the group/community to which the individual belongs. Respect for the human rights of individuals is inseparable from respect for collective identities. In other words, "multicultural logic says that if we do not allow the free expression of cultural differences of each community or lifestyle, we cannot achieve equal treatment of all individuals. Defined in this way, with ambitions to become a global social ancestor, multiculturalism represents the opposite of the idea of the nation-state; therefore, "the ideal form of social organization in the age of economic globalization, which often also carries the epithets' post-national' and 'post-modern era" [16, p. 14].

Critics of Marxist and feminist perspectives often view multiculturalism as an ideology of global capitalism. They claim it does not change dominance, power, or social wealth, nor does it redefine cultural and social space. Multiculturalism is only a more effective way to manage differences, not affirm them. It is seen as the ideal form of global capitalism. By using the slogan of respecting cultural differences, it implements cultural imperialism. The world is "suffocating" in Western cultural products, while local, "ethnic" cultures survive as separate pieces, stripped of historical value and presented as stereotypes [16, p. 30-31].

The essence of many criticisms lies in the overemphasis on celebratory forms of multiculturalism. The celebratory focus highlights some non-essential manifestations in the spheres of culture, art, and religious festivals, while, on the other hand, important forms of discrimination carried out in schools and other social institutions are neglected [11, p. 157-158].

Milica Živković studied multiculturalism in Canada and Australia. She points out that discrimination still exists. The main goal of multiculturalism—full and equal participation of all minority groups in social life—is hard to achieve [16, p. 17]. After much research, she concludes multiculturalism is a strategy for managing diversity, placing conflicts and inequalities in a virtual world of symbols and representations. By skillfully manipulating symbols, multicultural theory and politics construct diversity, assigning content and management rules later. This model replaces reality with a euphoric story and skillfully uses symbols to shape identity and diversity [11, p. 118].

Nations have a rich arsenal of symbols and representations that actively participate in the construction of social reality, and when necessary, can successfully replace reality. As an example of the use of symbols in constructing the myth of multiculturalism, the author cites the opening ceremony of the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney. The celebration was dedicated to the Aborigines to show how the Australian people successfully eradicated racism and recognized the role of the indigenous people in their history: nine hundred indigenous people performed a performance symbolically called "Awakening", and the athlete of aboriginal origin, Cathy Freedman, lit the Olympic flame and conveyed to the world the image of the final reconciliation of "black" and "white" Australia. The fact that the living conditions of Aborigines in Australia are still difficult - the life expectancy of Aborigines at the beginning of the 21st century, as a result of poor living conditions, is twenty years shorter than the life of the Anglo-Saxon majority, as well as the fact that Aborigines have not yet achieved full ownership rights over the land they have lived in for several tens of thousands of years - was simply ignored, because the symbolic representation successfully replaced reality

[16, p. 19-20]. Bearing this in mind, it is not surprising that "appreciation of diversity can suddenly turn into armed intervention, especially when cultural diversity is such that it must be given a lesson on liberal multicultural tolerance. The impression is that, despite the multiculturalist rhetoric, the monocultural nature of society is difficult to change: as in the past, it determined the conditions of assimilation, and then integration, some economic and social elite determine the conditions under which one becomes a citizen of the new multicultural society today" [16, p. 6, 33-34]. real value and presented as stereotypes [16, p. 30-31].

It is an undisputed fact that many modern societies are multicultural. This means that different national and ethnic groups exist and operate in various countries of the world. The former Yugoslav society was also multicultural, so great crimes were committed by some people against others. According to Semprini, the basic problem is the lack of interaction between groups and the lack of exchange of life experiences, lifestyles, and other social values [11]. For these reasons, the Yugoslav society "broke at the national seams". Therefore, for a multicultural society to succeed, differences between groups should be seen as the supreme values of a society, not as a problem [7, p. 5]. As long as multicultural communities are based on the simple coexistence of diversity, "the peculiarities of cultures as closed, static, homogeneous and exclusive entities, without intercultural communication, tensions and conflicts between peoples as their carriers are possible. In this sense, criticizing the ideology of radical cultural pluralism, i.e. maximalist multiculturalism, Slobodan Divljak points out that "an approach to culture that views the process of interaction of one culture with others and the practice of learning from others as a threat to its 'integrity', and not as a chance for one's own enrichment" [4, p. 43-44, 46].

Frank Wong points out that we should strive for a "community of international cultures in which differences will be a source that will enrich it." In intercultural communion, therefore, different groups animate one another toward a common goal. There is an orientation towards a community of "greatest common denominator", in which

differences are enriched and lead to a fuller understanding of universal truths. In such a community, different clothing, accents, music, and habits, as well as different presentations of one's own personality, are viewed with interest and curiosity rather than revulsion and suspicion. In these situations, different cultures are seen not as dehumanized stereotypes but as "interesting deviations" that we try to understand, thereby deepening our understanding and our humanity [17, p. 45].

2. Interculturalism as a critique and alternative to multiculturalism

It seems, therefore, that "considering the possibilities of innovating the scope and content of multiculturalism, we are making a mistake, because it cannot be expanded beyond what it is - a cultural model that respects differences and enables groups to preserve and develop their cultural identity in peace. It can only be replaced by interculturalism" [15, p. 280].

Interculturalism is therefore a critique and an alternative to multiculturalism. Many authors prioritize interculturalism as an active concept of cultural permeation. D. Koković writes that multiculturalism implies a concept of society in which several cultures coexist on equal terms, and interculturalism leads to a society in which several cultures are in a phase of dialogue and where a "new cultural synthesis" is sought. According to Koković, multiculturalism is almost unachievable due to its static nature, because it overlooks real human contact. Interculturalism, on the contrary, overcomes such rigidity and is expressed as a policy oriented towards people and the affirmation of minority cultures [10, p. 313-314]. As Indić emphasizes, the essence of interculturalism "is knowing and understanding other cultures and establishing positive relations of exchange and mutual enrichment among diverse cultural components within one community (state or community of several states, or the whole world)" [8, p. 245]. In a multicultural society, there is no continuous cultural interaction through which cultural elements and styles diffuse between different collective and individual identities. Differences merely coexist without genuine

interaction or mutual permeation [6]. "Minority groups are passively tolerated, but not accepted by the majority group. In contrast, an intercultural society is a society where different groups live together, exchange life experiences, and respect each other's different lifestyles and values" [2, p. 9]. "Intercultural society means a society in which we live and create not next to each other, but with each other and for each other. At the center of intercultural requirements is the valuing of diversity. The experience of diversity and encounter with others enables the individual to develop his own identity by comparing it with other identity models and leading him to self-realization that getting closer to the other does not mean moving away from oneself. Interculturalism includes uniqueness in diversity, balanced and high-quality representation of all ethnic factors in one society" [15, p. 281].

Concluding Remarks

Contemporary societies seek solutions to their international problems by resorting to interculturalism, that is, to its ideology and philosophy. The Council of Europe adopted the White Paper on intercultural dialogue, in which it came to the conclusion that the best model of managing interethnic and intercultural relations must be based on three foundations: 1) rejection of multiculturalism, which is associated with separation and is harmful to social cohesion, 2) rejection of assimilation and violation of individual rights, and 3) promotion of interculturalism as a middle way model of equality and equality [3].

Interculturalists emphasize that the multicultural model existed in many countries around the world until the early 20th century, and that in the last decade of the 20th century it was replaced by the intercultural model within national states. According to them, the first decades of the third millennium are precisely the time frame for the revival and existence of the intercultural model of society. "The revival of interculturalism aims for a quality community in which the constituent national-ethnic groups would be neither fully integrated nor fully assimilated. Each national group would retain its specificities and self-awareness, but the degree of homogenization of

society would be stronger than with multiculturalism" [7, p. 8]. The intercultural model would overcome divisions, since any division based on differences represents a crime against uniqueness, that is, against universalism and cosmopolitanism. The wealth-in-differences formula is a model for undivided societies. Different cultures and people should not live next to each other; they should live with each other. Because interculturalism accepts influences and permeations. Everyone wins in that and in such a process. When one culture influences another, it enriches both cultures without assimilating either. It is a path that cannot be followed by diversity without unity, nor unity without differences. Through the model of intercultural society, universalism and diversity are being re-examined and discussed [7, p. 8-9]. It is a path that is particularly desirable in the Balkans, which has always been at the intersection of major world roads, where the ideas, customs, cultures, traditions, and religions of the Hellenic world and the Roman Empire, Byzantium, the Ottoman Empire, the Orthodox East, the modern West, etc., permeate and shape the Balkan peoples. Balkan societies require dialogue and the development of cultural and educational policies that promote respect for cultural diversity and foster an intercultural society. In other words, "contemporary Balkan society is facing a transformation from multicultural to intercultural". At the same time, as the authors suggest, we should not lose sight of the fact that this path is long and arduous... Therefore, real-sociological objectivity orders the human community not to be so easily satisfied with a tolerant "coexistence in differences", but to constantly strive for multidirectional interaction of cultures and those collectivities that construct a multi-ethnic society [15, p. 281-282].

Future research should empirically verify the intercultural model in specific social contexts.

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MULTIKULTURALIZAM I INTERKULTURALIZAM: IZMEĐU KOEGZISTENCIJE I INTERAKCIJE KULTURA

Apstrakt

Rad se bavi analizom multikulturalizma kao dominantnog teorijskog i praktičnog modela upravljanja kulturnim razlikama u savremenim društvima, kao i razmatranjem interkulturalizma kao njegove kritike i moguće alternative. Polazeći od činjenice da su savremena društva obeležena izraženom kulturnom raznolikošću, rad ukazuje na osnovne postavke multikulturalizma, sa posebnim osvrtom na pitanja identiteta, prava manjina i odnosa između individualnih i kolektivnih prava. U radu se analiziraju ključne kritike multikulturalizma, koje se odnose na njegovu sklonost ka pasivnoj koegzistenciji kultura, nedostatak stvarne interakcije i ograničen domet u pravazilaženju društvenih nejednakosti i konflikata. Zapaža se da multikulturalizam, iako značajan kao normativni okvir priznavanja različitosti, ima ograničene domete u praksi, te se fokus stavlja na koncept interkulturalizma. Osnovu interkulturalizma čine dijalog, razmena i prožimanje kultura, što dovodi do jačanja društvene kohezije i razvija međusobno razumevanje među različitim kulturnim grupama. Zaključuje se da je interkulturalizam dinamičniji, funkcionalniji i pogodniji model za savremena društva, posebno u kontekstu globalizacije i intenzivnih identitetskih transformacija.

Ključne reči: multikulturalizam, interkulturalizam, kulturni identitet, kulturne razlike, društvena kohezija, interkulturni dijalog

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