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## Multiculturalism As A Model: Between Idea And Reality

**Petar Atanasov**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper the main issue of analysis is the prosperity of the multicultural model and its sustainability in course of the practice and debates. The reality showed that it is difficult to bit the nation-state and the liberal model of democracy and what are reasons for that. Also, can multicultural democracy be viable? And if not, where the multicultural model can be streamlined? Current trends show that the multicultural democracy is hard to build and sustain. The arguments of the paper are that the multicultural model is not sustainable vis-à-vis the nation-state and the ruling majority within society and that the ideal model of multiculturalism is usually transforming itself into an ethnic democracy. Macedonian example shows that when different cultural groups cannot commonly agree on power-sharing arrangements the model lean towards ethnic democracy.

**Keywords:** model of multiculturalism, ethnic group, ethnic democracy, Republic of Macedonia

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## 1. Introduction

More than a decade ago, when this author began with the analyses of the multicultural dilemmas, one of the initial proposed question that had to be resolved in the theoretical context of political philosophy was linked with the essential question of the politics of recognition, about whether and how the cultural groups should be recognized in the politics (Gutman, 1994). This question was and still is the crucial point concerning the multicultural states and their co-existing political models. The theory about cultural pluralism led to the insight that the the human beings are at the same time natural and cultural creatures and that is why they should be treated equally (Parekh, 2000). The wisdom from the aspect of liberalism was that the person has right to be equally recognized, first and foremost, on the base of his/her universal human identity and potential, not primarily on the base of the ethnic identity. The ethnic identity of the person is not his/her primary identity. Also, in this field, the question which injustices in the society we are considering in relation to various ethnic and cultural groups was very important. The people that are subject to both cultural and economic injustices demand both recognition and redistribution (Fraser, 1998).

According to the presented injustices one can elaborate adequate remedies. Still, the important moment is that very often members of smaller cultural groups suffered from both. Overall, the dilemmas of multiculturalists were whether to prefer issues of equality and particularity, to ask only for recognition of particularity or recognition of the right to redistribution as well, whether to compare or to measure cultures or only the cultural groups, etc. Complex and serious questions were raised that needed answers, urgently, depending on the phase in which the multicultural country was and the attitude of the people.

In the meantime the research had developed in relation with the realities and by testing the normative aspects of the multicultural models. Different countries were examined to check what are the 'facts' and how can cultural conflicts be contained within integrational paradigm of the multicultural system. However, the debate about multiculturalism more and more went around the strength of the state power that needs to be transformed in order to find the place for different cultural groups. The various forms of multi ethnic content in most of the new states have created problems in the context of internal stability of the societies. Acceptance of the multiculturalism as strategic policy developed new forms of democratic governance as a response to the structural dilemma of the nation-state. Concerning the problems of ethnic and cultural diversity, the multiculturalism could be at least enlisted in the framework of the democratic governance if it recognizes the demands of ethnic and cultural groups. But this agenda created much too big problems. It cut through the essence of the monostate. The modern state which lacks common moral and cultural consensus is no more cohesive cultural unit and cannot base its uniqueness on cultural homogeneity of its citizens. It cannot build itself and legitimize through feeling of collective identity, because many of them do not stress their own political identity, but they privilege the strong cultural (ethnic) ties.

The essence of the multiculturalism as a policy is to find a way for decision-making that will be in position to guarantee that the direction towards individual freedoms may be accepted in the politics without sacrificing the collective wishes expressed through emergence of ethnic, religious and the cultural differentiation. It is necessary to move ahead of the, as multiculturalists claimed, insufficient liberal "politics of universalism" towards emerging of "multiculturalism" as replacement for the hegemonic monoculturalism. The challenge, the possibility, was to find "the ties that connect" those that differ, in a united nation of various groups and individuals, without injustices of established hierarchy and hegemonies based on different variables. The goal was to preserve the democratic structural pluralism that is not isolationistic but integrating, precisely through preserving of diversity. The new conditions in the world have challenged new forms of discrimination, as well as renewed cultural nationalism, but many have, also, responded with

developing ideologies and practices of multicultural co-existence. Part of these ideas and practices refer to the multicultural model. In the same time, the processes of cultural globalization are breaking the cultural boundaries and it is hard to defend the idea that the people are culturally homogenous and unique. But when the battle is placed in the political arena the challenges multiply and the multicultural results are more than poor.

## 2. Multicultural model(s)

Despite the fact that only ten per cent of the states around the world are ethnically homogenous and that according to some estimates the potentials of the cultural pluralism is that new 600 states can be created in some period of time, after only two-three decades the multicultural model suffered and lost its sharpness first of all in its delivery phase. It created unsatisfied states (especially nation-states – ethnic and civic) and did not contribute for higher integration of the smaller cultural groups and communities within mainstream societies. Several state leaders of important countries publicly stressed their arguments that ‘this is not working’ and that the ‘multiculturalism is dead’. We are speaking about the statements of Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, David Cameron, Prime minister of Great Britain and Nikolas Sarkozy, former President of France. Their advice to the culturally different groups is to try harder to integrate in their societies. Of course, most of them are talking about immigrants in Germany, France and Britain, but in their countries co-exist different cultural groups for a much longer period of time. And the main problems of integration are: the language, the religion and the possibilities of participation in state institution. The challenges and the remedies are connected with the aspects mentioned in the first paragraph in this paper.

It all started in 1970s. Couple of countries announced publicly that they will engage the model of multiculturalism (Canada, Australia, and Sweden). This was something new as an idea and practice. The events in the USA helped this process to become more clear and practical. Serious theoretical analyses started in 1990s. Many aspects were elaborated and models were offered for implementation of this new ‘ism’. Besides the existing models of civic integration and assimilation, new models were analyzed as possibilities for the states to implement some of the elements of the multicultural idea. The known model of consociational democracy as a form of power-sharing of Arend Lijphart, did not seem like very attractive option for most of the political forces and entangle with the fundamental questions of power, privileges and resources related to the elites. Power sharing has proven to be the only democratic model that appears to have much chance of being adopted in divided societies, which in turn makes it unhelpful to ask constitution writers to contemplate alternatives to it (Lijphart, 2004). It is political order that ethno national elites satisfy their moderate wishes and ideas of ‘separate but equal’. Opposite to this, the multicultural model presupposed that the cultural groups can fully participate without losing its distinctiveness and can be integrated in the state structures which will be transformed for this aim. The multicultural idea was great, but the implementation and delivery failed. It turned into a battle between ‘us’ against ‘them’, into classical sociological division. The radical version of multiculturalism asked for strategies of intervention in political processes, bigger pluralisation of the nation-state in the civic sphere and redressing the historical and current patterns of discrimination and marginalisation. But, there is no multiculturalism mold in one piece, as one whole, nor there are static and final situations. There are only context specific multicultural elements, and one cannot search for universal formula because, so far, no one could find it. Above all, the multiculturalism is in conflict with the nation-state because it is against the idea that one culture should rule and serve the citizens (the biggest ethnic group).

The multicultural model's weak points abound. The reality showed that the main stakeholders are rarely disadvantaged groups. On the contrary, the main actors are usually the ethnic elites. Like in the model of power-sharing arrangements in consociationalism. Multiculturalism puts the cultural group above the individual and makes pressure on the members of the group to blindly follow the ethnic (cultural) canons. It is an approach that freezes the ethnic differences and still does not succeed to eradicate the inequality and discrimination. Consequently, it is burdened with the naïve preoccupation with the cultural on account of structural issues. Focused on culture it cannot address the economy and social problems. Rarely the multiculturalism brings more than a few satisfied ethnic leaders and a lot of voices of grievance of culturally marginalized groups. Recognizing the unequal power relations in one society is not enough to build a model that is culturally plural, inclusive and based on democratic principles. Simply, it is something that propels the processes but breeds inefficiency, non-functionality and segregation. Bigger states like Germany, France and Britain can even support it and improvise. The smaller states have no strength and resources either to build a multicultural society or to sustain it. So, the international conventions and recommendations considering the cultural and minority rights are more reserved for smaller states and weaker societies. For solely reason to prevent conflicts, manage tensions and halt discrimination. That is why academics, experts and policy makers often recommend the multicultural model as a path towards peace, co-existence and equality in deeply divided society, to eliminate massive abuse and discrimination against different ethnic and racial groups.

Namely, for one country the model of multiculturalism (multiethnic democracy) was more than recommended after the conflict of 2001, the Macedonian society. The model was an attempt about the possibilities of co-existence with full or limited participation in state processes among Macedonians, Albanians and other smaller cultural groups in the country. In this paper we will try to argue the following: first, that the multicultural model proved as not sustainable and not viable in the battle with the nation-state and the ruling majority, second, the model of multiculturalism is usually transforming into an ethnic democracy when the actors (leaders of different cultural/ethnic groups) cannot decide on power-sharing arrangements (political models of federation or autonomy), and third, both theses will be argued in the case of Republic of Macedonia.

Before we elaborate the elements of the models, first let us try to define what we think 'multicultural-ism' is. I have read many definitions and rarely some of them capture the idea and the full scale of elements that are necessary in the case we want to construct a model of multiculturalism. The best one for many reasons is the definition offered by Professor Caleb Rosado:

"Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society."

(Rosado, 1997)

This definition is helpful when one wants to experience the philosophy of the idea and the essence of multiculturalism. And it shows how difficult it can be to deliver every element of it in a real model of multiculturalism within society or organization. That the confusion is easy to make, shows the definition of Professor Friedrich Heckmann that includes seven ways of defining it: by changing ethnic composition of the population, normative-cognitive way, multiculturalism as an attitude and a norm, the concept of culture, an attitude that looks upon some aspects of the immigrants' culture, a political-constitutional principle and a critical category, multiculturalism is regarded as a well intended, but illusory concept which (very often) overlooks the necessity for a common culture, language, and identification to enable societal and state

integration and stability. The homogenizing effects of the nation-state are looked upon as an achievement that should not be easily given up. It took many decades for a state to build a nation-state. Sometimes it is as simple as the definition that comes to mind and reality as following: The model of multiculturalism exists when there are officially adopted strategies, policies and programmes for managing the problems with cultural diversities in concrete states, societies or organizations. All the rest is just multicultural. It is simple and it covers all the aspects of the multicultural living and working. The most common examples include either denials and non-recognition of different cultural groups (race, ethnic) or just their mentioning in some state documents without any practical or real meaning or intention. Sometimes there is a model but policy makers are not recognizing it, sometimes there is no model but policy makers are trying to include different element of it in their programmes. Most often the models and the concepts are not clearly distinguished but they are intermingled in other policies and programmes. That is why the models proposed by academic researchers are most valuable analytical tools for researching the multicultural reality. If we side the most known model of John Rex (Rex, 1997), about the separation of the public and the private sphere, the socio-cultural model of multiculturalism, one that deserves the attention is the model of van den Berghe (Berghe, 2002) about the multicultural democracy. This model is also included in the five model typology of Sammy Smootha (Smootha, 2002). Speaking about Smootha typology, the multicultural democracy stand together with consociational and ethnic democracy. While consociational democracy was much elaborated in 1970s, the multicultural and ethnic democracy needs more attention and research.

But what is a multicultural democracy and can it work, were the questions posed by van den Berghe. And he tried answering it: we do not know yet, because as yet no state has clearly and self-consciously applied the model (Berghe, 2002: 438). Writing in positive manner, he stated four conditions for the case: if the state is denationalised, if the multiculturalism is decoupled from policies aimed at reducing educational, economic, social or political disabilities or inequalities between the groups, if the minimalist programme is used (namely, official policies that recognize and protect diversity, but do not celebrate and actively support it), and if the spatial model for it is a city, especially the city-state (for this van den Berghe proposes Luxemburg- or Swiss Canton-size states made up of cities and their surrounding areas, or, at least, massive devolution of central powers to local communities). (Berghe, 2002: 447-8) In sum, the multicultural democracy is antithetical to the notion of a national state (the state must be denationalized, much as it was secularized in most Western-style democracies), the two sets of policies (multiculturalism and positive discrimination) must be pursued independently of each other, the minimalist programme of multiculturalism should stop at the recognition and tolerance of different cultural matrix (celebrating diversity between unequal groups is most likely to increase all differences between them), and the evidence about the spatiality of multicultural model is that the more polyglot cosmopolitan cities attend to be more prosperous, peaceful and pleasant ones, irrespective of size. The model is a western city, which means that a certain level of material wellbeing is a prerequisite for a decent existence of any kind, argues van den Berghe. (Atanasov, 2004) Comparing the multicultural democracy with the ethnic democracy, one can agree that in ethnic democracy, the state privileges the biggest ethnic group, the policies about different cultural groups are unfair compared to the majority group, the recognition of the collective rights is present but there is no equality between the groups and the state resembles to ethnic-state. Actually it is the ethnic nation-state. While the multicultural model tries to make everybody equal, the ethnic model prefers majority's ethnic power and privileges. While the multicultural model tries to keep cultural differences at the non-interference level, the ethnic model make them the rule and absolute. While the multicultural model is trying to be open and inclusive, the ethnic model is exclusionary and discriminatory. While both are enlisted by Smootha as democratic models, the multicultural one is almost idealistic and non-realistic. The ethnic

democracy is attractive alternative to many countries in at least Southeastern and Central Europe. It is about control and deterrence. (Smootha, 2002: 426) These and other arguments will be analyzed in next part of the paper in the case of Macedonian model of cultural co-existence.

### 3. Between multicultural and ethnic – the Macedonian case

The Macedonian state is multicultural and multi-confessional society. According to the 1991 Constitution, the opportunity was given both for recognition of equality, that derived from civic belonging, as well as for recognition of differences in relation to ethnic, cultural, language and religious identity of the diverse groups within the society. In relation to this framework, the Macedonian society fulfilled the criteria of a modern society that promotes equality of all, but also respect of cultural particularities of the minorities. On the contrary, in spite of the initial proclamation of the official state policy for coexistence and integration in the 1990s, the socio-political characteristics of the society were reflected primarily through establishment of ethno-national organizations and associations. The Macedonian society turned into a divided society. The ethnic and cultural differences became factor of confrontations, the politics of recognition did not contribute for development of integrated multicultural society, the politics of differences got dimensions of politics of inequality, the Macedonian society instead of multicultural acquired elements of plural society, and the processes of ethno-political mobilization became factor of cleavages. The elements of socio-cultural variant of multiculturalism, practiced until 2001, with the Ohrid agreement were transformed into a model of separation of powers between diverse ethnic groups, through balancing of individual and group rights as consequence of ethnicization of many spheres within the society.

From today's perspective, concerning the multicultural democracy concept, the four arguments about the prosperity of multicultural democracy cannot apply on the Macedonian case. It will be very hard within fragile democratic context in the country (post-conflict society) to develop a strategy aiming at denationalizing the state, build a multicultural public sphere without complicating the political model and to implement a multicultural democracy as a local democracy, assuming that the society will reach a certain level of material wellbeing as a prerequisite for a stable society. First, it will be difficult for the Macedonian state to denationalize itself. It was just nationalized in 1991. Republic of Macedonia was founded as a national state of the Macedonian people in 1944, and got its full sovereignty in 1991, proclaiming its independence from the Yugoslav Federation. It is almost impossible for the state not to have some kind of implicit or explicit language policy or practice, and language is most commonly associated with ethnicity, argues van den Berghe. The domination of the Macedonian language in the public, within administration and the education is a simple argument due to a nationalist ideology of the state for more than a half century. Then, can the modern, liberal, secular, democratic state give to all citizens equal rights to celebrate their diversity in any way they choose without running the societal fabric. Furthermore, van den Berghe is right when he decouples the multiculturalism from policies aimed at reducing educational, economic, social or political disabilities or inequalities between the groups. The latter should be a matter of practice, not of theory. Again, the answer to this is the public sphere and enabling enough space for Albanians to be recognized as equal community as Macedonians. But that conflicts with the ethnic model of the state. Macedonia is not Switzerland or Bosnia. It has a dominant majority, the Macedonian community. The devolution of power on the local level could give the communities (municipalities) a great share of privileges and responsibilities towards public services, urban and rural planning, protection of the environment, local economic development, culture, local finances, education, and social and health care. As Berghe pointed, 'massive devolution of central powers to local communities' would be sufficient as a space for enjoying the multicultural democracy. At the end of all the processes in the state that includes an

ethnic element, the result is always more distrust among Macedonians and Albanians and sometimes among majority and smaller communities. Tensions are immanent to the ethnic democracy in the way Smmoha defined, permanent protest and struggle of minorities and exercising power and resoluteness on the side of majority.

Multiculturalism as a model in Macedonia as prescribed in the Ohrid Agreement had some positive prerequisites for success (not intentionally) and some elements of the model are institutionalized. But the model that is developing instead of diminishing the importance of the ethnic has strong emphasis on ethnicity. The status of minorities proves that ethnicity pays off. If you are a member of a vibrant and politically active ethnic minority, you would have greater chances to find a proper job, to get more resources for development and to be part of a government coalition which can provide some of your major activists with many privileges. So, the characteristic of our model is surely the presence of ethnic pragmatism and much less multicultural richness. Multiculturalism as a theory is kind of political philosophy that should find more space for equality of different cultural groups. On the contrary, the ethnicity as an instrumental principle 'sell' exclusionary politics. The multiculturalism in its essence is an integrative and an inclusive practice.

Another characteristic of our model is the policy of 'final internal separation'. This is the way of creation of ethnic spaces and parallel life – ethnic municipalities, exclusive languages of education, etc. Multiculturalism as a model requires public sphere and equal participation of different cultural groups. The groups should freely use their cultural arsenal especially language and other cultural markers. In the public sphere there should be communication strategy that shows to members of different cultures how much they are respected and appreciated in the society. Cross-cultural projects should be encouraged and implemented. Similarly, the models of Switzerland and Belgium are multinational models (not multicultural) where everything is separated and everybody lives happily in 'their' cultural spaces – cantons, municipalities, cities, schools, etc. Then, what is the goal of the Macedonian model, the integrative or the exclusive one? This is the missing point by the international community when they intervene in our political and cultural life. It seems that we are approaching the Belgium model that is probably direct outcome of the Ohrid Agreement, (Atanasov, 2011). Currently in Macedonia the model of multiculturalism is fading out. The political leaders are referring to it very rarely. There is declarative respect towards the multicultural groups but there is no will for celebration concerning the Framework Agreement. It proves that the written model is difficult to implement and that Macedonia cannot find its own structures that can successfully manage the problems with the diversity. In current political state-of-affairs no statesman supports the multicultural model overtly.

There are no models that are timeless. So far no state proved that the multicultural model is sustainable. The Macedonian model is working but cannot answer difficult questions. The benefits are only for the ethnic elites. On this account the processes of integration are turned into segregational and segmentary issues. The key moment is the issue of differences (language, religion, culture) and the 'ethnic knots' are burdening and tearing the multicultural efforts by some segments of society (at least in the non-state sphere). Multicultural model intended to make everybody (most of them) equal. In the case of Macedonia the power sharing relations between ethnicities define the mainstream political and social order. In this way the multicultural model lean towards ethnic instead of multicultural democracy. This is so in the cases when there is no agreement on some stable model of power-sharing. For multicultural model what is needed is comfortable majority with the higher level of political culture. In countries of transition such pre-conditions are absent.

The 'Ohrid Agreement' is a success of International community. It bred constitutional and legal mechanisms for protecting the communities that are not in majority. The Macedonian political forces do not think multiculturally, they think with ethnic lenses. The constituted elements are the established collective rights, more just participation in the state institutions and bigger ethnic identity promotion of smaller communities. But most of the 'multicultural' privileges are shared only by one minority ethnicity – the Albanians. The multicultural discourse of the Macedonian and Albanian leaders is just a cover for their 'ethnic dreams', the fulfilment of the national state of Macedonians or subnational state for Albanians. Other communities than Macedonian and Albanian are absent from this 'ethnic' competition. They have no resources for competition. Most of the tensions in regular ethnic 'game' are connected with the usage of the official language, historical rights to the territory, the state symbols and the level of ethnic control of 'state businesses'. The new achievement by the Albanians is the control of the municipalities where they have significant majority. And on the municipality level the ethnic 'battle' continues. Just as an example, the newest disagreement between ethnic campuses is connected with the changing of the primary and high schools names from Macedonian heroes with the Albanian ones in the municipalities that are under control of Albanian minority. These events provoke hot political debates and implant public disputes. Of course, they are by definition ethnically based.

"Ethnic democracy is a democratic political system that combines the extension of civil and political rights to permanent residents who wish to be citizens with the bestowal of a favored status on the majority group. This is democracy that contains the non-democratic institutionalization of dominance of one ethnic group. The founding rule of this regime is an inherent contradiction between two principles – civil and political rights for all and structural subordination of the minority to the majority. "The democratic principle" provides equality between all citizens and the members of society, while "the ethnic principle" establishes explicit ethnic inequality, preference and dominance." (Smooha, 2001)

This kind of system generates ethnic tensions and conflicts. It imposes ethnic rules in the politics against the other ethnic group. Another example is the demand of Albanians for ethnically based government budget. Albanians in Macedonia would like to have proportional resources for cultural projects for their language and culture. Also, on many occasions Albanians insists on proportional ethnic participation in the state institutions, which is mentioned but not defined in the Framework Agreement (equitable participation). The 'citizens' and cultural groups will continue to compete with the ethnic arsenal. In Macedonian case the ideal of creating integrated multiethnic state on society level is lost. Today (2012) creating bigger and richer intersectoral communication and integration seems like a mission impossible. The era of powerful ethnicity as mobilizing factor continues. The ethnic democracy is just another product of this paradigm.

#### 4. Conclusion

In relation to multiculturalism as a model there were always two strong sides: those that are pro and those that are contra. Nevertheless, both sides implicitly agree that the multiculturalism refers more to ideologies than to society, government, economy, specific religions, intellectual system or culture. The nature and the goal of "ism" are precisely ideological. The weakness of both sides is in the observation of vague relations between the multiculturalism as ideology and the multicultural reality of our global society. The question is raised whether glorification of only the ethnic differences is not the beginning of the end of multiculturalism in a way that we recognize it today. In the end, inevitable is the fact that the multicultural reality will stay and will intensify. At least that is confirmed by the current trends. How political models will

adjust towards it is a completely different issue. We need a new world-view that includes respect for other cultures and loyalty of its own. It is difficult task for all academics, political elites and practitioners.

It is clear that the proponents of the multiculturalism are backsliding. It seems that costs too much and brings too little. And there is no demand for it. There are too many critiques. The decision makers in ethnically divided societies think that it is something that is not worth investing in. The models are also subject of changes. For instance, Canada started as a bi-cultural model and changed to multiculturalism, Australia started as assimilationist and turned to multicultural as well. France was assimilationist and today there is strong demand for change. Germany experience demand for change too, after decades of building a differentialist model. (Inglis, 1994) Macedonia in 1991 started as a nation-state model of Macedonian people, with promising civic elements. In 2001 changed to a multicultural model but developed strong ethnic elements. Today this model it's closer to ethnic democracy than to multicultural model. Instead of losing the importance, the ethnic dimensions in Macedonian society are just getting stronger on both sides, Macedonian and Albanian.

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