RELIGION AND POLITICS IN MULTICULTURAL EUROPE

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Some degree of religious-cultural pluralism exists in all European societies, if the term 'pluralism' is used descriptively, not ideologically. Pluralism in a descriptive sense refers to racial, linguistic, ethnic and religious *diversity* in society. 'Multiculturalism', according to the definition of Sasja Tempelman, refers to the *ideological* doctrine that recognizes cultural diversity as a permanent and valuable part of political societies.[1] Thus, one can talk about multiculturalism descriptively by referring to an existing cultural pluralism – society consists of different populations from different cultural traditions –, or to an ideological worldview that normatively considers the latter as positive and valuable.

H. A. Hellyer, who uses the above-mentioned distinction, recognizes that European societies are all *multicultural*, yet some of these societies are more *multiculturalist* than others.[2] Multiculturalist societies treat social pluralism in a positive manner. They celebrate cultural differences "and the possibility of social harmony based upon mutual trust, respect and recognition".[3] They do not want to obliterate or erase or smooth out these differences, but rather to find "ways of living, connecting, relating, arguing, and disagreeing in a society of differences."[4] Concomitantly, multiculturalism refers not merely to the tolerance of cultural diversity but also to the legal recognition of the rights of ethnic, racial, religious, or cultural groups.[5]

The tolerance of differences has never been an objective and an absolute 'good' in itself. At most, the differences are tolerated to a certain degree. Additionally, the 'goodness' of the tolerance of cultural differences, is also

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[1] **Sasja Tempelman**. Constructions of Cultural Identity: Multiculturalism and Exclusion. – Political Studies, 1/1999, p. 17.

[2] H. A. Hellyer classifies country as multicultural, when there is more than one culture, and multiculturalist, when those cultures are treated in a positive manner. **H. A. Hellyer**. Muslims and Multiculturalism in the European Union. – Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, 3/2006, p. 330.

[3] **Bryan S. Turner**. Minorities and Modernity: The Crisis of Liberal Secularism. – Citizenship Studies, 5/2007, p. 129.

[4] **Diana L. Eck**. Prospects for Pluralism: Voice and Vision in the Study of Religion. – Journal of the American Academy of Religion, 4/2007, p. 745.

[5] **Francis Fukuyama**. Identity, Immigration, and Liberal Democracy. – Journal of Democracy, 2/2006, p. 9.

relative for particular social groups. As multiculturalism encourages cultural minorities to maintain their own culture, it seems to benefit cultural minorities more than the majorities. However, multiculturalism should be perceived as a two-way process, which demands positive commitments and compromises from both the cultural majority and minorities.

Cultural minorities are expected to be committed to the host society, to maintain positive sentiments regarding the public culture, and to learn about the local language, history and institutions. On the other hand, the larger society should express a certain level of commitment to the minority cultures, and adapt its institutions to accommodate their identities and practices.[6] Consequently, in a *multiculturalist* society the cultural differences are recognized and supported in *both public and private* spheres. The alternative, the *assimilation* society, expects the minority groups to assimilate to the dominant culture and restricts the toleration of cultural differences to the private sphere alone.[7]

For the representatives of the dominant societal culture, the multiculturalist arrangement of society is obviously a demanding undertaking. Individuals are primarily concerned with their own values and interests. Similarly, social majorities are also primarily concerned with the preservation of their own culture.

Thus, it is not surprising, that also for the most part of European history, loyalty to the culture and religion of the society has been a test of allegiance to society and state. For that purpose, various forms of cultural accommodation and homogenization of the cultural minorities – such as ethnic cleansing, genocide, forced religious conversion and religious compulsion – have been applied.

In general, the European social tradition has been a homogeneous culture and religious conformism. From the beginning of Christian societies in the fourth century until the 18th century, religious pluralism was illegitimate even as an idea. In the 16th century, some territories practiced limited religious tolerance, like France from 1598 until 1685. Yet even such exceptions to the rule of religious-cultural homogeneity were based on pragmatic concerns for social and political stability, not on a genuine appreciation of religious pluralism. Until the French Revolution, European social organization was based on the Westphalian principle of the alliance of church and state and on territorial religious-political conformity.

At the end of the 17th century, European countries were particularly intolerant of religious differences. Unlike most of the continental European countries, after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, England extended religious

6 **Will Kymlicka**. Nation-Building and Minority Rights: Comparing West and East. – Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 2/2000, p. 192.
7 **Hellyer** 2006, p. 332.

toleration to Protestant dissenters, but not to Unitarians, Catholics, Muslims or Atheists. Thereafter, the status of tolerated Protestant dissenters was comparable to the toleration of Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. Both were allowed to worship but could not hold public office, although the dissenters of England could also publicize their views and vote.[8]

In contrast to the European Christian tradition, the Ottoman Empire, and the historical practice of Islamic countries at large, afforded religious auto-nomy to several non-Islamic religious minorities. For instance, until the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire allowed religious autonomy to the adherents of Armenian Orthodoxy, Syrian Orthodox Christians, and Jews. The members of the tolerated religious minorities were considered as a subordinated class and citizens of a second rate. Philip Jenkins equates this aspect of the Ottoman policy of religious minorities with the worst extremes of 20th century European racism.[9] Such a parallel, however, seems faulty in several ways. First, it equates the practice of limited religious toleration with racial policies and places the policies of ethno-religious segregation in the same category with genocide and racial extermination. Secondly, the Ottoman Empire afforded legitimate space for Jewish and Christian traditions at a time when Western European societies practiced practically no tolerance of Islamic culture. The Ottoman Empire allowed the conquered Christian populations to retain their faith. In contrast, the usual policy of Christian conquests – at least in the European geographical area – was to convert subordinated Muslims to Christianity. Thereafter, the Muslim converts to Christianity could even remain suspect of crypto-Islam, which was the case with the Spanish Moriscos who were expelled from the society in 1614. A suitable parallel is the 1915–1916 genocide against ethnic Armenians in the Ottoman Empire where some Christian Armenians converted to Islam in order to avoid death.[10] Yet it is important to note that during the 19th century the toleration of non-Islamic minorities declined in the Ottoman Empire in conjunction with the rising influence of western ideas of nationalism. Thus, it is appropriate to ask the following questions: "To what extent is the

[8] **Antony Black**. The West and Islam: Religion and Political Thought in World History. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 39.

[9] Philip Jenkins relies on the historical experience of the Balkan populations under the Ottoman rule. He concludes that Balkan Christians experienced "…a brutal oc-cupation that can legitimately be compared to later European experiences under the Nazis or Communists. Turkish rule resembled Nazi rule in the creation of a master caste, in this case Muslims, before whom all despised lesser breeds were to cower." **Philip Jenkins**. God's Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 106.

[10] **Heather Rae**. States, Identities and the Homogenisation of Peoples. Port Ches-ter, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 4.

genocide of Armenians an outgrowth of the traditions of the Ottoman Empire? Or was it a policy option "learned from the West"? One cannot provide uncontested answers to the above-mentioned questions. Yet it is very highly likely that the 17th century Ottoman Empire was still closer to the ideal of multicultural society than any European Western Christian society of that time.

The European tradition of a homogeneous social culture should be neither over- nor under-emphasized. Contemporary Denmark has about 200,000 Muslims, which constitutes a visible religious minority unprecedented in Danish history.[11] For centuries, the social culture was either homogeneously Catholic or Lutheran. On the other hand, contemporary Danish policies regarding ethno-religious minorities may be influenced less by the pre-19th century practices of the established church and religious intolerance than by the ideas and practices that have emanated from the French and American Revolutions. Both Revolutions introduced ideas of the separation of religion and politics, and of prioritizing territorial allegiance over doctrinal truth and allegiance to a community of co-believers. By the end of 20th century, these ideas had become hegemonic and taken for granted in Western societies.[12] The resulting pluralist, all-inclusive and increasingly multicultural societies are in strong contrast with the previous historical practices.

The traditions of a homogeneous culture and nationalist cultural homogenization were most profoundly undermined by atrocities such as the genocide of Armenians of 1915–1916 and the racism of the Nazi regime delegitimized the extreme versions. After the Second World War, the popularity of the ethno-nationalistic conception of political community and majority rule declined even more, while the protection of the rights of minorities became increasingly important.[13]

At first, the policies on emerging ethnic and ethno-religious minorities emphasized human rights of the individuals over the group-specific rights. It was perceived that this approach would yield similar results, which earlier helped to reduce the historical religious tensions between Catholics and Protestants. The intra-Christian disputes were solved not by granting group-specific rights to religious minorities but primarily by separating the church

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[11] **Hans Raun Iversen**. Religion in the 21st Century. – Dialog: A Journal of Theology, 1/2004, p. 28.

[12] **Tariq Modood, Riva Kastoryano**. Secularism and the accommodation of Muslims in Europe. – Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship: A European Approach. Tariq Modood, Anna Triandafyllidou, Ricard Zapata-Barrero (eds.) London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 2005, p. 162.

[13] **Hellyer** 2006, p. 329.

and state and protecting the freedom of religion of each individual.[14] It soon became clear, however, that in contemporary societies, the expectation of spontaneous and un-regulated integration of individuals into the public culture is not a sufficient cure for the emerging cultural tensions.

It is very unlikely, that the European countries, which after the Second World invited guest workers from countries of markedly different cultures, were consciously aiming at the creation of multicultural societies. Multiculturalism in Western European societies was an un-intended outcome of several cross-cutting processes. The public debates over the multicultural society started in the 1970s, when the group-rights of the ethnic minorities started to be re-emphasized. The civil rights of individuals were increasingly translated into ethnic rights, and thereafter from ethnic community rights into religious community rights.[15] Such a change in ideas, debates and policies was paralleled by a general transformation of societal norms.

Correspondingly, the public debate over multiculturalism appeared at the same time, when the core populations were undergoing significant secularization, liberalization and individualization. Emerging liberal democratic societies ceased to be ordered according to an authoritative Christian tradition or a particular comprehensive ideology. In the realms of political preferences, lifestyle, values, worldview and religion, more space was yielded to the individual choice of a private individual. Social tensions became conceptualized as conflicts between interest groups instead of religious, racial or class conflicts. Public decision-making concentrated on compromises and the accommodation of divergent group-interests. Concomitantly, in contemporary democracies, the 'opponent' is no longer a heretic or an oppressor, an enemy of a nation or a class.

The majority still matters more than minorities, and local (public) culture enjoys privileges not available to the culture of minority. Yet the liberal democratic society is by nature pluralist, where no one doctrine, ideology, value, group or preference can have a predetermined monopoly of interpreting the truth or good for the rest of the society. In conformity to liberal democracy which functions as a meta-ideology, that forms a basis for the interplay of social groups and political parties, it is natural for liberal societies to consider cultural majorities and minorities as 'relatively equal'.

On the other hand, as mentioned above, the toleration of minorities is never absolute. The pertaining theoretical question is: "To what an extent should the liberal society protect the rights of groups, which are illiberal themselves, whose values and practices are perceived to be in conflict with

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[14] **Will Kymlicka**. Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 3.

[15] **Gerd Baumann**. Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic and Religious Identities. London: Routledge, 1999, p. 2.

the public norms or who are considered in some direct or indirect way to be connected with forces dangerous to the national security?" The practical solutions to these important questions vary among European societies and remain subject to contested public debates. The essentially complex nature of multicultural issues requires more space than available in this chapter. We confine ourselves to selected theoretical issues and general policy patterns that relate religion to multiculturalism in European societies.

The chapter consists of three parts. The first part presents the theoretical discussion over multicultural society from the perspectives of culture, religion and democracy. The second part analyses external and internal civilizational, cultural and religious 'others' from Medieval European societies until the dynamics of European identity in the light of recent waves of European enlargement. The third section compares issues related to multiculturalism and religion in post communist and West European societies.

1. Theoretical Considerations

In this section, multiculturalism in liberal society is approached from three different perspectives – culture, religion and democracy.

1.1. Culture

Commonly, the dominant social group finds it quite natural to consider their own culture as unchangeable and homogeneous. Contrariwise, the social position of minorities, especially that of recent immigrants encourages them to ponder over the need for adaptation of their cultural tradition to the norms and values of public culture. In other words, it is more natural for minorities to consider their culture as capable of transformation and accommodation.

Often it goes unnoticed that the increasing *social multiculturalization* – which refers descriptively to the increase of cultural diversity in a society, and normatively to policy measures that protect the rights of minority groups to maintain their cultural heritage – transforms *both* majority and minority cultures. It is very probable that the extent of transformation is different for majority and minority cultures. Nevertheless, in real societies, some amount of transformation is inevitable for both.

This does not mean, however, that the interested parties are willing to consider their own cultures as capable of change, willing to adapt or accommodate. From the perspective of the host society, the social advance of non-national cultures may be considered as a threat to the core national

societal values, national identity and social cohesion.[16] The national culture is perceived as static, not needing any adaptation and change. Minority cultures, contrariwise, are perceived to be the ones capable of change and are required to do so.

Conversely, the social minorities may have the same arguments regarding their own culture. Their social position contributes to positive sentiments regarding all the positive ideals of multiculturalism – tolerance, the right of minorities to maintain their cultural heritage, equal treatment in public and economic spheres and the rights to collective expression.[17] Correspondingly, they feel that the national culture is already relatively plural and is capable of change. Their own culture, however, needs protection, because it is the foundational basis of their identity.

Thus, both the national majority and societal minorities may have strong preferences of their own. It is highly likely that neither of them is naturally inclined to transform and accommodate their own cultural tradition. Social stability and peaceful co-existence in a culturally plural society requires some degree of cultural adaptation from both. Thus, in the 20th century United States, the final integration of Catholics and Jews to the social mainstream has also transformed the public culture of Americans. Similarly, the integration of Christian minorities to national communities since the 19th century and multiculturalization of the British and Dutch societies during the last decades of 20th century did leave an imprint on the respective societal cultures.

The idea of an unchangeable nature of the cultural tradition also contains a potential danger. Several negative examples from recent history demonstrate that the atrocities and crimes against cultural minorities were preceded by transformations of the cultural perceptions of the social majorities. The Holocaust, the genocides in post-communist Yugoslavia and of Christian Armenians during 1915–1916 followed the rising influence of the ideas that racial, ethno-national identity is inherent in the person and is essentially unchanging.[18]

Moreover, in real societies, majority and minority cultures are rarely homogeneous. The minorities include many individuals who fuse identities or create new identities for themselves.[19] Likewise, multiculturalists are also found among the societal majority.

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[16] **Kymlicka** 2000, p. 183.

[17] The positive ideals of multiculturalism were derived from **Kymlicka** 2000, p. 183.

[18] **Rae** 2002, p. 4.

[19] **Tariq Modood**. Anti-Essentialism, Multiculturalism, and the 'Recognition' Of Religious Groups. –Citizenship in Diverse Societies. Will Kymlicka, Wayne Norman (eds.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 176.

Due to the reasons mentioned above, the analysis of the relations between cultural minorities and majorities should be made cautiously or better still, arguments that assume the unchangeable nature of any involved cultural tradition should be avoided.

1.2. Religion

Religion is most visible in such forms of cultural diversity, where religious cleavage overlaps with ethnic or socio-economic cleavages. For instance, such diversity is strengthened and magnified in England, where the white, traditionally Christian majority differs from the Islamic ethnic sub-culture of Pakistanis.

The second cleavage may be concentrated on ethnicity and language, and less on religion. Thus, the Hungarian minority in Slovakia follows Catholicism like the Slovakian majority. Ethnicity-related divisions may also be manifest within a larger category of a religious minority. Correspondingly, Muslims with Bosnian, Somali, Turkish, Iranian and Pakistani origin constitute to a significant extent *cultural diversity within* the Islamic minorities of European societies.

The third kind of cultural tension manifests itself in the way in which religion is interpreted for the society and politics by groups who formally belong to the same ethnic or religious group. The majority of the citizens of United States are nominal Christians, yet the presidential elections of 2008 demonstrated the social polarization between modernized, secular and liberal Christians against Fundamentalist traditionalists and conservatives. It is likely that the European Muslim minorities have similar internal divisions between secular immigrants with a religious background, traditionally practicing and believing Muslims, and radical-fundamentalists.

Three statements are also due regarding the scholarly analysis of various patterns of religion and multiculturalism.

First, the scholarly analysis over religion and multiculturalism tends to favor secularism and separation of religion from politics.[20] In reality, instead of absolute subordination of politics to religion, or absolute separation of religion from politics, the prevailing pattern of European societies is *relative separation* or a *moderate* form of separation of state and religion (and/or culture).[21] European secularism tends to be ideationally hegemonic and absolute, but moderate in practice. Most Western European societies, except

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[20] **Modood** 2000, p. 187.

[21] According to Tariq Modood the relative separation of culture and state describes the situation where culture and politics are „distinct from each other even though there may be points of overlap". **Modood** 2000, p. 188.

France, follow moderate forms of separation of state and religion. The secularism, which enjoys hegemony in Europe, has historically evolved *via* a compromise with religion and not by the absolute separation of religion and politics.[22] Instead of being neutral towards all religious traditions and treating them all equally, national cultures usually enjoy a legally protected relationship with their historical religious traditions. The public role of traditional religions may be advanced by the status of established religions or of the privileged partners of the government. Liberal-minded discussions over the place of religion among social minorities, however, tend to confine their religiosity to the private sphere. According to this perspective, the state should use its power to encourage individualistic religions, which is the realm of state's neutrality, over those orientated to intervene into the public sphere.[23]

The second scholarly problem is related to the relationship of religion with non-religious spheres and identities such as economics, politics, class and race. Scholars should be careful in not over-emphasizing 'religious' identities in situations, where the spheres and identities of religion and non-religious are enmeshed.[24] Nor should the religious labels be used indiscriminately and differently for the minorities than they are used for the majority. Otherwise the category of 'Muslims' may often include non-believing and non-practicing members of an ethno-cultural community, while the label 'Christian' remains reserved exclusively for individuals with religious affiliation, belief or practice. Broad religious categories should be applied cautiously and uniformly.

Thirdly, like ethnicity, nationality, race or class, religion can also be the basis for either social solidarity or social divisions. Yet unlike the other forms of social conflict, the particular instances of religious-related violence tend to damage the general image of religious politics and result in a normative bias against any religious group. As Tariq Modood has pointedly emphasized, scholars should avoid such biases against religious groups.[25]

Irrespective of the level of social secularization, some form of religion is usually still involved in political processes. Religion remains an effective political tool due to two major reasons. First, the interpretation of religion is subject to innovation and change, which allows it to be accommodated to almost any political, social or private need. Any scholar of religion also knows that religious traditions transform and change, it is the perception of religious identities *as if* ultimate and unchangeable, that often makes them meaningful and useful in conflicts between social groups. Secondly, even if

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[22] **Modood** 2000, p. 189.
[23] **Modood** 2000, p. 190.
[24] **Eck** 2007, p. 745.
[25] **Modood** 2000, p. 194.

some religious traditions have largely lost their supermundane and transcendent emphasis, religion still remains qualitatively different from secular ideologies. As Gerd Baumann has pointedly observed, because religion "can be made to sound as if it determines objective and unchangeable differences between people", it can be effectively used for the more relative, such as, political and economic purposes.[26]

1.3. Democracy

For the social majority, the debates over multiculturalism are relatively easier, when it concerns non-citizens such as refugees or recent immigrants. The latter are naturally considered as different and unequal from citizens. Concurrently, the issues become more delicate as increasing number of individuals of different cultural origin obtain citizenship.

It is also expected that national minorities with a long historical presence within the society cause less cultural tensions than the culturally 'other' immigrants. National minorities do not want to integrate to the social culture. They aim at the preservation of their territorially concentrated communal cultures. Immigrant minorities, however, want to change the institutions and laws of the mainstream society to become more accommodating of cultural differences.[27]

There are two general policy options regarding cultural minorities – integration and multiculturalism.

1. **The integrationalist approach** aims at cultural homogenization by integration of individuals from minorities into the culture of the host society. The increase of naturalized immigrants does not, however, automatically mean that the tensions over cultural differences will decrease. In Western Europe, for example, the disputes over the rights of the cultural minorities arose in parallel with the process of increasing naturalization of the second and third generation of young European Muslims.

Naturalized individuals are no more aliens, and do not have to perceive themselves as such. They may feel quite at home, because in a democracy, all citizens are equal. Consequently, as equals to any other citizen, they are

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[26] **Baumann** 1999, pp. 21, 23.

[27] In contrast to immigrant minorities, the national minorities are territorially concentrated, have historical experience of self-government, and want to maintain their cultural tradition by various forms of autonomy or self-government which enable them to preserve their distinct communities. Recent immigrants typically want to integrate into the social mainstream as full and equal members. **Kymlicka** 1996, pp. 10–11, 14.

free to use all the rights and opportunities available to protect their rights and stand for their values and interests.

The host society may hope that the naturalization of foreigners will result in minorities accommodating to the social culture. This expectation has a solid historical basis, but is usually accomplished only after several generations. The whole process of integration is founded on individuals seeking citizenship, and not on the construction of a multicultural social order, which protects the cultural, ethnic or religious rights of minority communities. Maybe after half a century there will be enough of those, who have adopted the language, norms and values of the dominant culture. Yet in the meantime, the increasing number of integrated and upwardly mobile individuals, and their public presence in society, may facilitate social tensions.

2. **The multiculturalist approach** concentrates on the groups. Normatively, multiculturalism means that "a given country must recognize all ethnic groups who live on its territory, together with their history, culture and language, and that all must be treated as equal in public matters."[28] In Belgium, for example, such a policy is applied regarding Dutch-speaking Flemings and French-speaking Walloons, who are treated equally in every matter of public life.

Multiculturalist policies are easier to apply to national minorities than for immigrant communities.

From the cultural perspective, multiculturalism is in closer accordance with the rights of minorities and is more culturally sensitive than integrationalist policies, yet this approach also has a strong potential to result in increasing social tensions. Instead of social harmony, multiculturalist policies may contribute to the formation of segregated ghettos or intra-social violence.

What kind of policy regarding cultural minorities then would be best suited with a democratic social order? Which of the two polar opposites mentioned above?

In principle, democracy does not require a homogeneous culture in society or cultural neutrality by the state. In practice, Western democracies are capable of embracing cultural differences to a significant extent. At the same time, states have never been culturally absolutely neutral.

Typically, the liberal democracies have protected their common societal culture and common language by being selectively repressive of ethnocultural diversity and minority nationalisms.[29] At times the protection of a social culture has also been pursued by recognition of some minority

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[28] **Eugeen Roosens**. Multiculturalism. – How to Conquer the Barriers to Intercultural Dialogue: Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Christiane Timmerman, Barbara Segaert (eds.) Berlin: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2005, p. 164.

[29] **Kymlicka** 2000, p. 185.

cultures. As a rule, however, this has been applied to national minorities, not regarding immigrant communities. If national minorities have a well-developed sense of distinct nationality, the recent policy of Western democracies is to ensure their loyalty through accepting, not by attacking, their identity.[30]

Cultural neutrality would require the impossible from the state – to be absent from social antagonisms. Even, if the state is perceived to be culturally neutral, this neutrality is manifested in the regulation of intolerance between social groups. Typically, in Western countries, the traditional and larger religious communities have been afforded with rights and privileges not available to smaller and non-traditional religious groups. Yet as a trend, post-industrial societies witness increasing religious pluralism facilitated by the processes of globalization. Consequently, the regulation of religious pluralism in the society is another issue that nation-states just cannot put aside.[31]

Increasing ethnic diversity raises concerns for traditionally dominant ethnic majorities. Likewise, increasing religious diversity raises not only theological, but also social and political concerns for traditional religious communities. The dominant religious tradition may want to use the state to protect their privileged position against perceived competitors. One policy option for that purpose is to define religion in the laws of the state narrowly enough so that the religious practice of minority groups is hindered.[32] Thus, the ban on religious clothing or symbols from public institutions does little harm to Protestants, whose religious practice does not require religious clothing, yet is more harmful to those religious traditions, where religious dress is a constitutive part of the religious identity of lay people.

For political communities, increasing social multiculturalism raises questions about the fundamental nature of the polity and of the social identity. Historically, the latter has always been defined by the opposition to internal or external 'others'. As Western European societies are not haunted by the dead scepter of the Communism, it is easier to find 'others' on a cultural and religious basis, than on the basis of ideology. In post-communist societies, the dominant 'other' is still related to the previous experience of Communist rule.

Thus, there are several multicultural issues that may raise concerns for social majorities. Yet there is no essential controversy between democracy and religious-cultural pluralism. In contrast to totalitarian or authoritarian forms of government, democracy is characterized by social and political

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[30]　**Kymlicka** 2000, p. 188.

[31]　"raising fundamental questions about one's own faith in relation to the religious other". **Baumann** 1999, p. 53.

[32]　**Thomas Banchoff**. Introduction. – Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism. Thomas Banchoff (ed.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 10.

pluralism. Concomitantly, also religious and cultural pluralism do not contradict with democracy. *Vice versa*, religious pluralism can encourage political pluralism and social tolerance. If the state legislates behavior that is unacceptable for a specific religious community, this will test the limits of what religious people find tolerable in the society.[33]

The other essential questions regarding the relationship between democracy and multiculturalism concern compatibility of values (Do democracy and multiculturalism promote the same kind of values?) and forms of democracy (Does the answer to the previous question depend on the type of democracy?)

Equality, toleration, and autonomy are the values usually related to liberal democracy. The pertaining question is, whether multiculturalist policies correspond better to the values of liberal democracy than the integrationalist ones?[34]

Any discussion over democracy has to specify what form of democracy is being talked about. Parliamentary representative democracy may be one of the least supportive of multiculturalism, because it does not facilitate the representation of the values and interests of the minorities. If the religious minorities are represented *via* peak-associations, like trade unions or business corporations, such representation is often considered as different in kind and undemocratic in essence.[35] Unlike labor or business interests, religious minorities can easily be perceived as aliens to the society. Even if individuals of religious minorities are citizens, they are often still expected to abstain from electoral politics.[36] Yet these negative perceptions regarding the democratic participation of religious minorities are *per se* essentially undemocratic.

Social majorities may prefer unorganized and incoherent minorities. Democracy, however, benefits, if the marginal and disadvantaged groups are included into public life.[37] At least from the communitarian perspective of democracy it would be better, if the religious and ethno-religious minorities

[33] **Peter L. Berger**. Pluralism, Protestantization, and the Voluntary Principle. – Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism. Thomas Banchoff (ed.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 19.

[34] **Geoffrey Brahm Levey**. Secularism and religion in a multicultural age. – Secularism, Religion and Multicultural Citizenship. Geoffrey Brahm Levey, Tariq Modood (eds.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 2.

[35] **Modood** 2000, p. 192.

[36] **Modood** 2000, p. 193.

[37] **Modood** 2000, p. 193.

would form cohesive communities, and would thereafter be able to enter into dialogue with state and society.[38]

Lastly, how much multiculturalism is good for democracy? The more the better, would be the normative answer. Too much multiculturalism, however, has its own deficiencies. Increasing cultural pluralism is an opportunity for a "more vibrant civil society and political culture", yet too strong minority bonds, that accompany multicultural societies, may undermine social cohesion, stability and governance.[39] The conflict-potential of strong intra-social bonds increases substantially if the boundaries between religion and ethnicity overlap.[40] The latter is exemplified by the ethno-religious wars that followed the disintegration of Communist Yugoslavia.

Before presenting the contemporary political solutions to these theoretical dilemmas, the main historical examples of cultural 'others', and their function in the construction of European identity will be briefly presented.

2. Civilizational, Cultural and Religious Boundaries of Europe

Europe has never been a state, nation, language or religion.[41] At best, Europe can be identified as a civilization or as a culture. The geographical, religious and political boundaries of Europe can be defined only by some general ideas about European culture or civilization. Concomitantly, the transformation of the ideas of Europe has resulted in the constant flux of geographical and religious borders of Europe during last two millenniums.

Western Christianity has been related to European identity more than any other religion, yet at no point of time has a common version of Christianity unified the whole continent. On the other hand, Europeans traditionally have defined themselves in opposition to Judaism and Islam as the main religious 'others'.[42]

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[38] **Shireen T. Hunter**. Conclusions and Outlook for European Islam. – Islam, Europe's Second Religion: The New Social, Cultural, and Political Landscape. Shireen T. Hunter (ed.) Westport: Praeger, 2002, p. 273.

[39] **Banchoff** 2007, p. 4.

[40] **Baumann** 1999, p. 55.

[41] Europe has never been a single political unit with a distinct political identity, although European societies and states are today perhaps closer to this ideal than ever before.

[42] Also Persians (for Alexandre the Great), Barbarians, Heathens, Mongols, to name a few, have functioned as the 'others' in opposition to whom Europeans have defined themselves.