

From Multicultural Pluralism to Multicultural Egoism

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Abstract

This study aims to recall the ideas and activities of multiculturalism. In what form is multiculturalism possible today? Is it model, which is trying to establish itself in the societies of Europe? It is a fact that today globalization has covered all social spaces in which globalization processes are manifested depending on the readiness to accept its aspects. The fact is that it happens for this reason at “different speeds.” And, it is a fact that globalization is “shifting” as a global process from the West to the Southeast. The conclusion that can be drawn is that, despite all possible integration policies and ideological postulates, the current model of multiculturalism in Europe has minimized the possibilities and attempts of social dialogues through which we can try to perform, express and discuss deep social and cultural issues and to solve problems.

Keywords: multicultural pluralism, multicultural egoism, globalization.

“To live and letting someone to live is a relatively easy maxim when living on both sides of a clearly marked line.”

Michael Walzer

1. Introduction

This thought of Michael Walzer will be used in this text to outline various processes that occur in our lives, parallel to the positive elements of globalization – on the one hand, this is evidence of how multi-layered Walzer’s thought is.

On the other hand, I will discuss how current the issues are analyzed and summarized. Here, in this analysis, based on this thought, several theses will be derived, which are partly related to the other hand, I will discuss how current the issues are analyzed and summarized as about the mobile person and the limits he faces in his everyday life, as well as the societies he forms, and the fate of modern man in the world – in a globalized world, in which the problems of tolerance are increasingly beginning to gravitate around the problematic situations in and with multiculturalism, transforming from multiculturalism into multi egoism.

2. The social situating of tolerance

The social positioning of tolerance, like globalization itself, does not first occur somewhere else, but in people's heads, as well as the fact that tolerance as a category has been and is the subject of countless analyses and those who have tried to analyze its existence or note its lack, in different individuals, societies or cultures.

The tolerance has many dimensions, but by its very nature, it is always pluralistic, implying consent, freedom, continuity, understanding, equality, etc. It is a segment of achieving interpersonal, group, intergroup, inter-societal and international relations. As well as a statement about the existence or non-existence of this pluralistic tone in the relations between people, groups, societies, and even of the person himself/herself towards himself/herself (Galily, 2023).

This means that tolerance is always an intention that is charged with finding an adequate path to "Otherness" or "Diversity" not to dodge it, but to illustrate it, translate it and make it understandable and accessible, i.e. to adapt it. That is, tolerance appears in different forms: ethnic, religious, national, cultural, etc., but at its core lies its main task, to accept differences as natural and necessary for individualities. These differences are evaluated through intolerance as unique qualitative characteristics that enrich the human species and knowledge.

Tolerance is a priori – the essence of globalization. Today, globalization is everywhere; it is part and parcel of human behavior and existence. Thanks to this idea, today's human population lives in more inclusive and open spaces (Digital-virtual communications can help people communicate with all of their fellow humans without having to consider the notion of physical space). And precisely because of this familiarity, today's man is forced to be globally tolerant at every level (Petkova, Galily, Pilyavsky & Fuchs, 2024).

Thus, the most visible fact of globalization has turned out to be multiculturalism, which in a specific way has been expected by humanity throughout its entire development to date. The process of multiculturalism would be impossible without the rapid processes of globalization.

But the global process of inclusion has allowed suppressed and concealed tendencies in different societies on different continents to surface, allowing us to think about multipolarity and multi-egoism in multiculturalism... What does all this mean?

The simplest explanation of tolerance is tolerating the other person next to you, despite the dislike you feel towards him/her.

This thesis is embedded as a foundation in all human relationships. It is as if today, in our multicultural societies, the Christian principle "To love your neighbor, so that you may be one with him in God," could be translated into the language of modern man as "To bear the other, so that you may live undisturbed." – or as Koprinarov writes "... more tolerance in interpersonal relationships" (Koprinarov, 2010: 139).

The migration processes after the "Arab Spring" have taught Europeans that the presence of immigrants in a certain way in some societies around the world is becoming a problem today. The mobile person today has not proven to be sufficiently prepared for multiculturalism: in all its forms; in all places around the world; and he/she is not ready to defend the pluralism of multiculturalism at all costs in the social spaces in which he/she lives.

It is a fact that today globalization has encompassed all social spaces in which the processes of globalization manifest themselves depending on the readiness to accept its individual aspects. It is a fact that it occurs for this reason at "different speeds." It is a fact that globalization is also "shifting" as a global process from the West to the Southeast. The perception that globalization is a process that is useful only for rich countries and is detrimental to the poor was a leading statement in the last decades of the twentieth century. These perceptions predicted an increasing depopulation of ever larger regions of the world, for economic reasons – huge waves of

immigrants to the Western world, which has already established itself as an economic and political civilization model. But thanks to the incredible development of information technology and capital markets, which served as catalysts for more progressive development in third countries, we are witnessing rapid economic development, transformation and liberalization of markets, as well as increased political interest in what was until recently perceived as poor – the Southeast.

Koprinarov writes: “Expert forecasts are unanimous that this process will accelerate, forming and consolidating new centers of power in the world. According to these forecasts, the economies of the G-20 countries will grow by an average of 3.5% over the next four decades, reaching values from 38.3 trillion US dollars. in 2009 to 160 trillion US dollars. in 2050. However, over 60% of this growth will be the result of the economic expansion of six countries: Brazil, Russia, India, China, Indonesia and Mexico. The GDP of these countries will grow almost twice as fast as that of the other G-20 countries. The share of the six countries in the G-20 GDP will increase from 19.6% (2009) to 50.6% in 2050. At the same time, the most developed countries such as the USA, Japan, Germany, Great Britain, France, Italy and Canada (the so-called G-7), whose GDP is currently about 72.3% of that of the G-20, will not exceed 40.5%. The investment bank Goldman Sachs predicts a “dramatically different world” in 2050 – India’s GDP will be equal to the size of the US economy, while China’s will be twice as large (Koprinarov, 2010: 136).

The changes that are about to occur, both in macroeconomic terms and in microeconomic terms – within the economies of societies themselves – will to some extent balance the standard of living throughout the world – or the difference between the so-called “starving countries” and “rich countries” will at least slightly decrease: “Although not on such a scale, extreme poverty will also decrease in Africa. Therefore, the thesis about the losers and winners from globalization should be reconsidered” (Koprinarov, 2010: 136).

Against this backdrop of numerical realities and forecasts, it is visible that Europe and the Western economic model in general seem to be slowing down. Frequent financial crises and fears of a prolonged recession on the Old Continent, as well as in the USA - with its bad mortgage loans, huge external and internal debt, cause investors who wish to make long-term investments to look for their partners in other parts of the planet. Countries such as India, China, Brazil, Indonesia, etc., in addition to being able to offer huge commodity markets due to their large state population, can offer cheaper labor and most importantly – their population due to the high birth rate in these social spaces is also younger, which is a guarantee that these economies, with appropriate investments made in them, will develop – unlike Europe, which has been experiencing an ever-increasing demographic crisis and aging population for nearly 20 years. The population decline will also have a serious impact on the levels of quantitative purchasing and selling, labor productivity and employment. The EU’s annual reports state that between 2009 and 2030 the EU will lose 20.8 million people or 6.8% of its working-age population, with the number of people over 65 increasing by more than 50% and the number of people aged 17 to 65 decreasing by 7%. Immigration thus appears to be the only thing helping the EU’s population to grow (Bianchi, 2009).

It is no coincidence that we have made this introduction of numbers about the real state of global civil society against the backdrop of increasingly intensifying sporadic crises in the sphere of world perception – the world perception of the other.

In what form is multiculturalism possible today? Is its model, which it tries to impose on societies only for Europe, not in question?

Let us summarize in general phrases the main points in a multicultural model, which in our global societies presents important aspects of human existence in the social space such as:

3. Multiculturalism

1. It appears in its most important perspective as a bearer of tolerance, in all its possible manifestations in the socio-eventual existence of man and other people around him.

2. There is an attempt to understand and accept the specifics of the Other, the awareness of our mutual dependence, which leads to the penetration of different cultures even in the most remote points of the globe.

3. It helps to transform the world into a global village, in which the manifestations of the various forms of human creativity and human scientific thought reach the widest circle of consumers.

4. Multiculturalism opens the paths to the realization of material independence and a dignified life for more people around the world, because its foundations are based on the principle of respect for equality.

Somehow, just as globalization slows down in Europe, perhaps to gather new forces for movement forward, the same is happening with multiculturalism on the Old Continent.

Globalization in all historical periods has tried to impose itself through tolerance towards the Other. And the face of this tolerance most often bore the face of pluralism. It turned out that this face of pluralism presented by multiculturalism managed to find ground on other continents, but in its birthplace in Europe, as it turned out that multiculturalism has been quite problematic since the middle of the first decade of the 21st century. This does not mean that multiculturalism has no place on the Old Continent, quite the opposite. It was assumed that Europe, as the birthplace of the nation-state and modern nationalism from the end of the 18th century, would become their burial place at the beginning of the 21st century. After the changes and the first waves of accession of the countries of Eastern Europe to the European Community in the early 90s of the 20th centuries, the European Union was created.

At the beginning of 1991, Europe showed a supranational face that was in tune with the world trends towards globalization. A face that was commensurate with the maxim: “Unity in diversity” – which has become the logo of the EU. But against the backdrop of increasingly frequent financial crises and bankruptcies, the strict economic and monetary criteria of the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, the economic and social coexistence of the countries of Western, Central and Eastern Europe in the EU is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve. With its request for political and economic unification, the EU has also become a huge multicultural space, in which, along with the traditional population of European countries, Europe has turned out to be a center of attraction for many immigrants from all over the world. Although it has already been noted so far in the text, for the sake of the theses that will be presented later, we will note again that with the enlargement of the EU and the processes of the entry of large masses of immigrants into it, the European Union is becoming an increasingly multicultural and multireligious area in which conflict processes are intensifying. Every year, about 500 thousand immigrants and about 400 thousand refugees arrive in Western Europe, a large part of whom are Muslims, coming mainly from Algeria, Morocco, Turkey and the Middle East. Therefore, in a number of European countries, words such as “Muslim” and “immigrant” are often perceived as equivalent. In the period after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Muslims in Western Europe have grown six times faster than in North America. Their increase is particularly sharp in countries such as Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden, which are characterized by the greatest tolerance, developed social state policy, and liberal attitude towards minorities. However, as a result of the huge waves of immigrants, there is a particularly sharp change in the attitude of the local population towards Muslims.

The birth rate of Muslims in Western Europe is three times higher than that of non-Muslims, and already about 25% of children and young people in the EU are from Muslim families.

As a result, Muslim communities in Europe are much younger overall compared to non-Muslims, whose populations are aging. One third of Muslims in France are under the age of 20, while only 21% of the French population as a whole is of this age; one third of Muslims in Germany are under 18, while only 18% of the German population as a whole is under this age; a third of Muslims in Britain are under 15, while for the British population as a whole only 20% are under that age; a third of Muslims in Belgium are under 15, while for the population as a whole only 18% are under that age.

If the current demographic trend continues, then even without Turkey having joined the EU, the Islamic population in it, according to low estimates, will be at least 15% by 2020, and 30% by 2050, and this could cause emigration of Christians and Jews from Europe. Against this background of figures, today in Europe we are talking about a second, and already a third generation of Muslims, who are less integrated into Western society. The discussions that have unfolded in France,

Spain, Belgium and other countries on the issue of the official ban on wearing the burqa (or hijab) and led to changes of a prohibitive nature in state legislation, are obviously only the beginning of possible public conflicts (Caldwell, 2005).

The fact is that Western European countries feel vulnerable to the unceasing waves of immigrants from all over the world. In this direction, the EU in 2010 signed with Libya a decision on cooperation and combating illegal migration from North Africa to Europe, which would limit the access of a large foreign population to Europe to permanently settle on its territory and include in its economic system and social life, which Europe is not ready to welcome. The agreement was unilaterally terminated temporarily by Libya due to the political and economic problems that occurred there.

On the other hand, the legal elimination of ghettoization would lead to an increase in the levels of distrust and fear, a process that will only deepen the divisions within and between communities, because different communities themselves in most cases seek self-isolation. In such a situation, the culture of political correctness becomes an instrument of social control for the short-term prevention of social disintegration. Having a more politically correct society does not mean that people are becoming more tolerant. The merit of tolerance is that it prevents exclusion and self-isolation, which are natural processes for individual communities, no matter how large they are. Of course, no tolerant society based on liberal principles would ever try to standardize subcultures and impose uniformity.

What are the alternatives for a possible future Europe: to preserve its unity and multicultural pluralistic tolerance; or to become an economically problematic multi-egoistic community? Is it possible for an old national Europe to outlive its nationalistic complexes and regional horizons, and will it really succeed in becoming an ideological and territorial cosmopolitan, as it has been in human history so far? Will the multicultural spirit of the societies of Latin America (e.g., the Colombian Constitution explicitly states that Colombia is a multi-ethnic and multicultural state) and North America (the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution) succeed in combating national egoism and ethnocentrism in Europe (an example is the attack in Oslo on July 22, 2011)?

4. Conclusion

Rhetorical questions that time will answer. We can try to look for possible options for the eventual situating of Europe in the context of the thought of: Rogers Brookbaker: “More importantly, the spectacular reconfiguration of political space along national lines in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia suggests that history – at least European history – is far from moving beyond the nation-state, but is moving back towards the nation-state” (Brookbaker, 2004: 16).

Or as Michael Walzer concludes about United Europe, that after all the vicissitudes a Euro-multiculturalism will still be achieved: “Of course, the member states will still be nation states: no one expects the Dutch or the Danes to accept so many immigrants that they become a minority, one group among many, in their own country. Nevertheless, the states will be obliged to tolerate newcomers (not all of whom will be ‘Europeans’, because any immigrant naturalized in the member states is admitted to all the others) whom they did not choose to accept. They will adapt peacefully to these newcomers and to their cultural and religious practices, family arrangements and political practices (...) It seems that the European Community will bring to all its member states the advantages and tensions of multiculturalism” (Walzer, 2007: 64-65).

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