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# MULTICULTURALISM: SUCCESS, FAILURE, AND THE FUTURE

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By Will Kymlicka

# MULTICULTURALISM: Success, Failure, and the Future

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February 2012

## Acknowledgments

This research was commissioned by the Transatlantic Council on Migration, an initiative of the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), for its seventh plenary meeting, held November 2011 in Berlin. The meeting's theme was "National Identity, Immigration, and Social Cohesion: (Re)building Community in an Ever-Globalizing World" and this paper was one of the reports that informed the Council's discussions.

The Council, an MPI initiative undertaken in co-operation with its policy partner the Bertelsmann Stiftung, is a unique deliberative body that examines vital policy issues and informs migration policymaking processes in North America and Europe.

The Council's work is generously supported by the following foundations and governments: Carnegie Corporation of New York, Open Society Foundations, Bertelsmann Stiftung, the Barrow Cadbury Trust (UK Policy Partner), the Luso-American Development Foundation, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, and the governments of Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden.

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Suggested citation: Kymlicka, Will. 2012. *Multiculturalism: Success, Failure, and the Future*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.



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## Executive Summary

Ideas about the legal and political accommodation of ethnic diversity — commonly termed “multiculturalism” — emerged in the West as a vehicle for replacing older forms of ethnic and racial hierarchy with new relations of democratic citizenship. Despite substantial evidence that these policies are making progress toward that goal, a chorus of political leaders has declared them a failure and heralded the death of multiculturalism.

This popular master narrative is problematic because it mischaracterizes the nature of the experiments in multiculturalism that have been undertaken, exaggerates the extent to which they have been abandoned, and misidentifies not only the genuine difficulties and limitations they have encountered but the options for addressing these problems.

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*Talk about the retreat from multiculturalism has obscured the fact that a form of multicultural integration remains a live option for Western democracies.*

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This report challenges four powerful myths about multiculturalism.

- First, it disputes the caricature of multiculturalism as the uncritical celebration of diversity at the expense of addressing grave societal problems such as unemployment and social isolation. Instead it offers an account of multiculturalism as the pursuit of new relations of democratic citizenship, inspired and constrained by human-rights ideals.
- Second, it contests the idea that multiculturalism has been in wholesale retreat, and offers instead evidence that multiculturalism policies (MCPs) have persisted, and have even grown stronger, over the past ten years.
- Third, it challenges the idea that multiculturalism has failed, and offers instead evidence that MCPs have had positive effects.
- Fourth, it disputes the idea that the spread of civic integration policies has displaced multiculturalism or rendered it obsolete. The report instead offers evidence that MCPs are fully consistent with certain forms of civic integration policies, and that indeed the combination of multiculturalism with an “enabling” form of civic integration is both normatively desirable and empirically effective in at least some cases.

To help address these issues, this paper draws upon the Multiculturalism Policy Index. This index 1) identifies eight concrete policy areas where liberal-democratic states — faced with a choice — decided to develop more multicultural forms of citizenship in relation to immigrant groups and 2) measures the extent to which countries have espoused some or all of these policies over time. While there have been some high-profile cases of retreat from MCPs, such as the Netherlands, the general pattern from 1980 to 2010 has been one of modest strengthening. Ironically, some countries that have been vociferous about multiculturalism’s “failure” (e.g., Germany) have not actually practiced an active multicultural strategy.

Talk about the retreat from multiculturalism has obscured the fact that a form of multicultural integration remains a live option for Western democracies. However, not all attempts to adopt new models of multicultural citizenship have taken root or succeeded in achieving their intended effects. There are several factors that can either facilitate or impede the successful implementation of multiculturalism:



- ***Desecuritization of ethnic relations.*** Multiculturalism works best if relations between the state and minorities are seen as an issue of social policy, not as an issue of state security. If the state perceives immigrants to be a security threat (such as Arabs and Muslims after 9/11), support for multiculturalism will drop and the space for minorities to even voice multicultural claims will diminish.
- ***Human rights.*** Support for multiculturalism rests on the assumption that there is a shared commitment to human rights across ethnic and religious lines. If states perceive certain groups as unable or unwilling to respect human-rights norms, they are unlikely to accord them multicultural rights or resources. Much of the backlash against multiculturalism is fundamentally driven by anxieties about Muslims, in particular, and their perceived unwillingness to embrace liberal-democratic norms.
- ***Border control.*** Multiculturalism is more controversial when citizens fear they lack control over their borders — for instance when countries are faced with large numbers (or unexpected surges) of unauthorized immigrants or asylum seekers — than when citizens feel the borders are secure.
- ***Diversity of immigrant groups.*** Multiculturalism works best when it is genuinely *multicultural* — that is, when immigrants come from many source countries rather than coming overwhelmingly from just one (which is more likely to lead to polarized relations with the majority).
- ***Economic contributions.*** Support for multiculturalism depends on the perception that immigrants are holding up their end of the bargain and making a good-faith effort to contribute to society — particularly economically.

When these facilitating conditions are present, multiculturalism can be seen as a low-risk option, and indeed seems to have worked well in such cases. Multiculturalism tends to lose support in high-risk situations where immigrants are seen as predominantly illegal, as potential carriers of illiberal practices or movements, or as net burdens on the welfare state. However, one could argue that *rejecting* immigrant multiculturalism under these circumstances is in fact the higher-risk move. It is precisely when immigrants are perceived as illegitimate, illiberal, and burdensome that multiculturalism may be most needed.

## I. Introduction

Ideas about the legal and political accommodation of ethnic diversity have been in a state of flux around the world for the past 40 years. One hears much about the “rise and fall of multiculturalism.” Indeed, this has become a kind of master narrative, widely invoked by scholars, journalists, and policymakers alike to explain the evolution of contemporary debates about diversity. Although people disagree about what comes after multiculturalism, there is a surprising consensus that we are in a post-multicultural era.

This report contends that this master narrative obscures as much as it reveals, and that we need an alternative framework for thinking about the choices we face. Multiculturalism’s successes and failures, as well as its level of public acceptance, have depended on the nature of the issues at stake and the countries involved, and we need to understand these variations if we are to identify a more sustainable model for accommodating diversity.

This paper will argue that the master narrative 1) mischaracterizes the nature of the experiments in multiculturalism that have been undertaken, 2) exaggerates the extent to which they have been abandoned, and 3) misidentifies the genuine difficulties and limitations they have encountered and the options for addressing these problems.



Before we can decide whether to celebrate or lament the fall of multiculturalism, we need first to make sure we know what multiculturalism has meant both in theory and in practice, where it has succeeded or failed to meet its objectives, and under what conditions it is likely to thrive in the future.

### **The Rise and Fall of Multiculturalism**

The master narrative of the “rise and fall of multiculturalism” helpfully captures important features of our current debates. Yet in some respects it is misleading, and may obscure the real challenges and opportunities we face. In its simplest form, the master narrative goes like this:<sup>1</sup>

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*Since the mid-1990s ... we have seen a backlash  
and retreat from multiculturalism.*

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From the 1970s to mid-1990s, there was a clear trend across Western democracies toward the increased recognition and accommodation of diversity through a range of multiculturalism policies (MCPs) and minority rights. These policies were endorsed both at the domestic level in some states and by international organizations, and involved a rejection of earlier ideas of unitary and homogeneous nationhood.

Since the mid-1990s, however, we have seen a backlash and retreat from multiculturalism, and a reassertion of ideas of nation building, common values and identity, and unitary citizenship — even a call for the “return of assimilation.”

This retreat is partly driven by fears among the majority group that the accommodation of diversity has “gone too far” and is threatening their way of life. This fear often expresses itself in the rise of nativist and populist right-wing political movements, such as the Danish People’s Party, defending old ideas of “Denmark for the Danish.” But the retreat also reflects a belief among the center-left that multiculturalism has failed to help the intended beneficiaries — namely, minorities themselves — because it has failed to address the underlying sources of their social, economic, and political exclusion and may have unintentionally contributed to their social isolation. As a result, even the center-left political movements that initially championed multiculturalism, such as the social democratic parties in Europe, have backed

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1 For influential academic statements of this “rise and fall” narrative, claiming that it applies across the Western democracies, see Rogers Brubaker, “The Return of Assimilation?” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24, no. 4 (2001): 531–48; and Christian Joppke, “The Retreat of Multiculturalism in the Liberal State: Theory and Policy,” *British Journal of Sociology* 55, no. 2 (2004): 237–57. There are also many accounts of the “decline,” “retreat,” or “crisis” of multiculturalism in particular countries. For the Netherlands, see Han Entzinger, “The Rise and Fall of Multiculturalism in the Netherlands,” in *Toward Assimilation and Citizenship: Immigrants in Liberal Nation-States*, eds. Christian Joppke and Ewa Morawska (London: Palgrave, 2003) and Ruud Koopmans, “Trade-Offs between Equality and Difference: The Crisis of Dutch Multiculturalism in Cross-National Perspective” (Brief, Danish Institute for International Studies, Copenhagen, December 2006). For Britain, see Randall Hansen, “Diversity, Integration and the Turn from Multiculturalism in the United Kingdom,” in *Belonging? Diversity, Recognition and Shared Citizenship in Canada*, eds. Keith G. Banting, Thomas J. Courchene, and F. Leslie Seidle (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2007); Les Back, Michael Keith, Azra Khan, Kalbir Shukra, and John Solomos, “New Labour’s White Heart: Politics, Multiculturalism and the Return of Assimilation,” *Political Quarterly* 73, No. 4 (2002): 445–54; Steven Vertovec, “Towards post-multiculturalism? Changing communities, conditions and contexts of diversity,” *International Social Science Journal* 61 (2010): 83–95. For Australia, see Ien Ang and John Stratton, “Multiculturalism in Crisis: The New Politics of Race and National Identity in Australia,” in *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West*, ed. I. Ang (London: Routledge, 2001). For Canada, see Lloyd Wong, Joseph Garcea, and Anna Kirova, *An Analysis of the ‘Anti- and Post-Multiculturalism’ Discourses: The Fragmentation Position* (Alberta: Prairie Centre for Excellence in Research on Immigration and Integration, 2005), [http://pmc.metropolis.net/Virtual%20Library/FinalReports/Post-multi%20FINAL%20REPORT%20for%20PCERII%202\\_.pdf](http://pmc.metropolis.net/Virtual%20Library/FinalReports/Post-multi%20FINAL%20REPORT%20for%20PCERII%202_.pdf). For a good overview of the backlash discourse in various countries, see Steven Vertovec and Susan Wessendorf, eds., *The Multiculturalism Backlash: European Discourses, Policies and Practices* (London: Routledge, 2010).



away from it and shifted to a discourse that emphasizes “civic integration,” “social cohesion,” “common values,” and “shared citizenship.”<sup>2</sup>

The social-democratic discourse of civic integration differs from the radical-right discourse in emphasizing the need to develop a more inclusive national identity and to fight racism and discrimination, but it nonetheless distances itself from the rhetoric and policies of multiculturalism. The term *post-multiculturalism* has often been invoked to signal this new approach, which seeks to overcome the limits of a naïve or misguided multiculturalism while avoiding the oppressive reassertion of homogenizing nationalist ideologies.<sup>3</sup>

## II. What Is Multiculturalism?

### A. Misleading Model

In much of the post-multiculturalist literature, multiculturalism is characterized as a feel-good celebration of ethnocultural diversity, encouraging citizens to acknowledge and embrace the panoply of customs, traditions, music, and cuisine that exist in a multiethnic society. Yasmin Alibhai-Brown calls this the “3S” model of multiculturalism in Britain — saris, samosas, and steeldrums.<sup>4</sup>

Multiculturalism takes these familiar cultural markers of ethnic groups — clothing, cuisine, and music — and treats them as authentic practices to be preserved by their members and safely consumed by others. Under the banner of multiculturalism they are taught in school, performed in festivals, displayed in media and museums, and so on. This celebratory model of multiculturalism has been the focus of many critiques, including the following:

- It ignores issues of economic and political inequality. Even if all Britons come to enjoy Jamaican steeldrum music or Indian samosas, this would do nothing to address the real problems facing Caribbean and South Asian communities in Britain — problems of unemployment, poor educational outcomes, residential segregation, poor English language skills, and political marginalization. These economic and political issues cannot be solved simply by celebrating cultural differences.
- Even with respect to the (legitimate) goal of promoting greater understanding of cultural differences, the focus on celebrating “authentic” cultural practices that are “unique” to each group is potentially dangerous. First, not all customs that may be traditionally practiced within a particular group are worthy of being celebrated, or even of being legally tolerated, such as forced marriage. To avoid stirring up controversy, there’s a tendency to choose as the focus of multicultural celebrations safely inoffensive practices — such as cuisine or music — that can be enjoyably consumed by members of the larger society. But this runs the opposite risk

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2 For an overview of the attitudes of European social democratic parties to these issues, see René Cuperus, Karl Duffek, and Johannes Kandel, eds., *The Challenge of Diversity: European Social Democracy Facing Migration, Integration and Multiculturalism* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2003).

3 For references to “post-multiculturalism” by progressive intellectuals, who distinguish it from the radical right’s “anti-multiculturalism,” see, regarding the United Kingdom, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, *After Multiculturalism* (London: Foreign Policy Centre, 2000), and “Beyond Multiculturalism,” *Canadian Diversity/Diversité Canadienne* 3, no. 2 (2004): 51–4; regarding Australia, James Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and regarding the United States, Desmond King, *The Liberty of Strangers: Making the American Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), and David A. Hollinger, *Post-ethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism*, revised edition (New York: Basic Books, 2006).

4 Alibhai-Brown, *After Multiculturalism*.





of the trivialization or Disneyfication of cultural differences,<sup>5</sup> ignoring the real challenges that differences in cultural and religious values can raise.

- Third, the 3S model of multiculturalism can encourage a conception of groups as hermetically sealed and static, each reproducing its own distinct practices. Multiculturalism may be intended to encourage people to share their customs, but the assumption that each group has its own distinctive customs ignores processes of cultural adaptation, mixing, and *mélange*, as well as emerging cultural commonalities, thereby potentially reinforcing perceptions of minorities as eternally “other.” This in turn can lead to the strengthening of prejudice and stereotyping, and more generally to the polarization of ethnic relations.
- Fourth, this model can end up reinforcing power inequalities and cultural restrictions *within* minority groups. In deciding which traditions are “authentic,” and how to interpret and display them, the state generally consults the traditional elites within the group — typically older males — while ignoring the way these traditional practices (and traditional elites) are often challenged by internal reformers, who have different views about how, say, a “good Muslim” should act. It can therefore imprison people in “cultural scripts” that they are not allowed to question or dispute.

According to post-multiculturalists, the growing recognition of these flaws underlies the retreat from multiculturalism and signals the search for new models of citizenship that emphasize 1) political participation and economic opportunities over the symbolic politics of cultural recognition, 2) human rights and individual freedom over respect for cultural traditions, 3) the building of inclusive national identities over the recognition of ancestral cultural identities, and 4) cultural change and cultural mixing over the reification of static cultural differences.

This narrative about the rise and fall of 3S multiculturalism will no doubt be familiar to many readers. In my view, however, it is inaccurate. Not only is it a caricature of the reality of multiculturalism as it has developed over the past 40 years in the Western democracies, but it is a distraction from the real issues that we need to face. The 3S model captures something important about natural human tendencies to simplify ethnic differences, and about the logic of global capitalism to sell cosmopolitan cultural products, but it does not capture the nature of post-1960s government MCPs, which have had more complex historical sources and political goals.

## B. *Multiculturalism in Context*

It is important to put multiculturalism in its historical context. In one sense, it is as old as humanity — different cultures have always found ways of coexisting, and respect for diversity was a familiar feature of many historic empires, such as the Ottoman Empire. But the sort of multiculturalism that is said to have had a “rise and fall” is a more specific historic phenomenon, emerging first in the Western democracies in the late 1960s. This timing is important, for it helps us situate multiculturalism in relation to larger social transformations of the postwar era.

More specifically, multiculturalism is part of a larger human-rights revolution involving ethnic and racial diversity. Prior to World War II, ethnocultural and religious diversity in the West was characterized by a range of illiberal and undemocratic relationships of hierarchy,<sup>6</sup> justified by racist ideologies that explicitly propounded the superiority of some peoples and cultures and their right to rule over others. These ideologies were widely accepted throughout the Western world and underpinned both domestic laws (e.g., racially biased immigration and citizenship policies) and foreign policies (e.g., in relation to overseas colonies).

<sup>5</sup> Neil Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada* (Toronto: Penguin, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> Including relations of conqueror and conquered, colonizer and colonized, master and slave, settler and indigenous, racialized and unmarked, normalized and deviant, orthodox and heretic, civilized and primitive, and ally and enemy.



After World War II, however, the world recoiled against Hitler's fanatical and murderous use of such ideologies, and the United Nations decisively repudiated them in favor of a new ideology of the equality of races and peoples. And this new assumption of human equality generated a series of political movements designed to contest the lingering presence or enduring effects of older hierarchies. We can distinguish three "waves" of such movements: 1) the struggle for decolonization, concentrated in the period 1948–65; 2) the struggle against racial segregation and discrimination, initiated and exemplified by the African-American civil-rights movement from 1955 to 1965; and 3) the struggle for multiculturalism and minority rights, which emerged in the late 1960s.

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

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

The precise character of the resulting multicultural reforms varies from group to group, as befits the distinctive history that each has faced. They all start from the antidiscrimination principle that underpinned the second wave but go beyond it to challenge other forms of exclusion or stigmatization. In most Western countries, explicit state-sponsored discrimination against ethnic, racial, or religious minorities had largely ceased by the 1960s and 1970s, under the influence of the second wave of human-rights struggles. Yet ethnic and racial hierarchies persist in many societies, whether measured in terms of economic inequalities, political underrepresentation, social stigmatization, or cultural invisibility. Various forms of multiculturalism have been developed to help overcome these lingering inequalities.

The focus in this report is on multiculturalism as it pertains to (permanently settled) immigrant groups,<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> There was briefly in some European countries a form of "multiculturalism" that was not aimed at the inclusion of permanent immigrants, but rather at ensuring that temporary migrants would return to their country of origin. For example, mother-tongue education in Germany was not initially introduced "as a minority right but in order to enable guest worker children to reintegrate in their countries of origin" (Karen Schönwälder, "Germany: Integration Policy and Pluralism in a Self-Conscious Country of Immigration," in *The Multiculturalism Backlash: European Discourses, Policies and Practices*, eds. Steven Vertovec and Susanne Wessendorf [London: Routledge, 2010], 160). Needless to say, this sort of "returnist" multiculturalism — premised on the idea that migrants are foreigners who should return to their real home — has nothing to do with multiculturalism policies (MCPs) premised on the idea that immigrants belong in their host countries, and which aim to make immigrants



but it is worth noting that struggles for multicultural citizenship have also emerged in relation to historic minorities and indigenous peoples.<sup>8</sup>

### C. The Evolution of Multiculturalism Policies

The case of immigrant multiculturalism is just one aspect of a larger “ethnic revival” across the Western democracies,<sup>9</sup> in which different types of minorities have struggled for new forms of multicultural citizenship that combine both antidiscrimination measures and positive forms of recognition and accommodation. Multicultural citizenship for immigrant groups clearly does not involve the same types of claims as for indigenous peoples or national minorities: immigrant groups do not typically seek land rights, territorial autonomy, or official language status. What then is the substance of multicultural citizenship in relation to immigrant groups?

The Multiculturalism Policy Index is one attempt to measure the evolution of MCPs in a standardized format that enables comparative research.<sup>10</sup> The index takes the following eight policies as the most common or emblematic forms of immigrant MCPs:<sup>11</sup>

- Constitutional, legislative, or parliamentary affirmation of multiculturalism, at the central and/or regional and municipal levels
- The adoption of multiculturalism in school curricula
- The inclusion of ethnic representation/sensitivity in the mandate of public media or media licensing
- Exemptions from dress codes, either by statute or by court cases
- Allowing of dual citizenship
- The funding of ethnic group organizations to support cultural activities
- The funding of bilingual education or mother-tongue instruction
- Affirmative action for disadvantaged immigrant groups<sup>12</sup>

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feel more at home where they are. The focus of this paper is on the latter type of multiculturalism, which is centrally concerned with constructing new relations of citizenship.

8 In relation to indigenous peoples, for example — such as the Maori in New Zealand, Aboriginal peoples in Canada and Australia, American Indians, the Sami in Scandinavia, and the Inuit of Greenland — new models of multicultural citizenship have emerged since the late 1960s that include policies such as land rights, self-government rights, recognition of customary laws, and guarantees of political consultation. And in relation to substate national groups — such as the Basques and Catalans in Spain, Flemish and Walloons in Belgium, Scots and Welsh in Britain, Quebecois in Canada, Germans in South Tyrol, Swedish in Finland — we see new models of multicultural citizenship that include policies such as federal or quasi-federal territorial autonomy; official language status, either in the region or nationally; and guarantees of representation in the central government or on constitutional courts.

9 Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

10 Keith Banting and I developed this index, first published in Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka, eds., *Multiculturalism and the Welfare State: Recognition and Redistribution in Contemporary Democracies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Many of the ideas discussed in this paper are the result of our collaboration.

11 As with all cross-national indices, there is a trade-off between standardization and sensitivity to local nuances. There is no universally accepted definition of multiculturalism policies and no hard and fast line that would sharply distinguish MCPs from closely related policy fields, such as antidiscrimination policies, citizenship policies, and integration policies. Different countries (or indeed different actors within a single country) are likely to draw this line in different places, and any list is therefore likely to be controversial.

12 For a fuller description of these policies, and the justification for including them in the Multiculturalism Policy Index, see the index website, [www.queensu.ca/mcp](http://www.queensu.ca/mcp). The site also includes our separate index of MCPs for indigenous peoples and for national minorities.



Other policies could be added (or subtracted) from the index, but there was a recognizable “multiculturalist turn” across Western democracies in the last few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and we can identify a range of public policies that are seen, by both critics and defenders, as emblematic of this turn. Each of the eight policy indicators listed above is intended to capture a policy dimension where liberal-democratic states faced a choice about whether or not to take a multicultural turn and to develop more multicultural forms of citizenship in relation to immigrant groups.

While multiculturalism for immigrant groups clearly differs in substance from that for indigenous peoples or national minorities, each policy has been defended as a means to overcome the legacies of earlier hierarchies and to help build fairer and more inclusive democratic societies.

Therefore, multiculturalism is first and foremost about developing new models of democratic citizenship, grounded in human-rights ideals, to replace earlier uncivil and undemocratic relations of hierarchy and exclusion. Needless to say, this account of multiculturalism-as-citizenization differs dramatically from the 3S account of multiculturalism as the celebration of static cultural differences. Whereas the 3S account says that multiculturalism is about displaying and consuming differences in cuisine, clothing, and music, while neglecting issues of political and economic inequality, the citizenization account says that multiculturalism is precisely about constructing new civic and political relations to overcome the deeply entrenched inequalities that have persisted after the abolition of formal discrimination.

It is important to determine which of these accounts more accurately describes the Western experience with multiculturalism. Before we can decide whether to celebrate or lament the fall of multiculturalism, we first need to make sure we know what multiculturalism has in fact been. The 3S account is misleading for three principal reasons.<sup>13</sup>

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First, the claim that multiculturalism is solely or primarily about symbolic cultural politics depends on a misreading of the actual policies. Whether we look at indigenous peoples, national minorities, or immigrant groups, it is immediately apparent that MCPs combine economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions. While minorities are (rightly) concerned to contest the historic stigmatization of their cultures, immigrant multiculturalism also includes policies that are concerned with access to political power and economic opportunities — for example, policies of affirmative action, mechanisms of political consultation, funding for ethnic self-organization, and facilitated access to citizenship. In relation all three types of groups, MCPs combine cultural recognition, economic redistribution, and political participation.

Second, the claim that multiculturalism ignores the importance of universal human rights is equally misplaced. On the contrary, as we’ve seen, multiculturalism is itself a human-rights-based movement, inspired and constrained by principles of human rights and liberal-democratic constitutionalism. Its goal is to challenge the traditional ethnic and racial hierarchies that have been discredited by the postwar human-rights revolution. Understood in this way, multiculturalism-as-citizenization offers no support for accommodating the illiberal cultural practices within minority groups that have also been discredited by this human-rights revolution. The same human-rights-based reasons we have for endorsing multiculturalism-as-citizenization are also reasons for rejecting cultural practices that violate human

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<sup>13</sup> For a more detailed defense of this account, see Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys: Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), chapters 3–5.



rights. And indeed, this is what we see throughout the Western democracies. Wherever multiculturalism has been adopted, it has been tied to larger human-rights norms and has been subject to the overarching principles of the liberal-democratic constitutional order. No Western democracy has exempted immigrant groups from constitutional norms of human rights in order to maintain practices such as forced marriage, criminalization of apostasy, or cliterodectomy.

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And this in turn points out the flaws in the claim that multiculturalism denies the reality of cultural change. On the contrary, multiculturalism-as-citizenization is a deeply (and intentionally) transformative project, both for minorities and majorities. It requires both dominant and historically subordinated groups to engage in new practices, to enter new relationships, and to embrace new concepts and discourses — all of which profoundly transform people’s identities.<sup>14</sup>

One way to think of this is to recognize that the human-rights revolution is a two-edged sword. It has created political space for ethnocultural groups to contest inherited hierarchies. But it also requires groups to advance their claims in a very specific language — namely, the language of human rights, civil-rights liberalism, and democratic constitutionalism.

This is obvious in the case of the historically dominant majority group in each country, which is required to renounce fantasies of racial superiority, to relinquish claims to exclusive ownership of the state, and to abandon attempts to fashion public institutions solely in its own (typically white/Christian) image. In fact, much of multiculturalism’s “long march through the institutions” consists precisely in identifying and attacking those deeply rooted traditions, customs, and symbols that have excluded or stigmatized minorities. Much has been written about this process, not only the transformations in majority identities and practices it requires but the backlash it can create.<sup>15</sup>

But MCPs are equally transformative of the identities and practices of subordinated groups. Many of these groups have their own histories of ethnic and racial prejudice, anti-Semitism, caste and gender exclusion, religious triumphalism, and political authoritarianism — all of which are delegitimized by the norms of liberal-democratic multiculturalism.<sup>16</sup>

For all such people, multiculturalism offers both opportunities and challenges. These policies provide clear access points and legal tools for nondominant groups to challenge their status. But there is

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14 “Nothing has changed more over thirty years of identity politics than the identities of men and women, immigrants and old-timers, indigenous and non-indigenous persons, Muslims and Christians, Arabs and Westerners, Europeans and non-Europeans, cultural minorities and majorities, heterosexuals and homosexuals” (James Tully, “The Challenge of Reimagining Citizenship and Belonging in Multicultural and Multinational Societies,” in *The Demands of Citizenship*, eds. Catriona McKinnon and Iain Hampsher-Monk [London: Continuum, 2000]).

15 For a discussion of “white backlash” against multiculturalism in Britain and Canada, see Roger Hewitt, *White Backlash and the Politics of Multiculturalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Hansen “Diversity, Integration and the Turn from Multiculturalism in the United Kingdom.”

16 There are groups who wish to contest their subordinate status vis-à-vis the dominant group while still asserting superiority over other groups. Some East Asian groups in Canada, for example, vocally protest against any racism they suffer, yet they show higher levels of racism than white Canadians in relation to Aboriginal Canadians. Some upper-caste Hindu immigrants from India decry the fact that whites have not fully accepted them, yet they try to avoid contact with lower-caste immigrants from their home country. Some North African men object to discrimination in the job market, yet refuse to hire women or to work for women. One could extend this list indefinitely.



a price for this access: namely, accepting the principles of human rights and civil liberties, and the procedures of liberal-democratic constitutionalism, with their guarantees of gender equality, religious freedom, racial nondiscrimination, gay rights, due process, and so on. In other words, subordinated groups can appeal to MCPs to challenge their illiberal exclusion, but those very policies also impose the duty on them to be inclusive.

### III. Multiculturalism in Practice

So far this report has focused on multiculturalism's aspirations. But are MCPs working in practice? Have they in fact successfully contested ethnic and racial hierarchies and created more democratic relations of citizenship? One safe, if unsatisfying, answer is to say that we don't yet have enough evidence.<sup>17</sup> This partly reflects the difficulty of disentangling the effect of MCPs from other causal factors, such as changes in immigrant selection rules or labor market regulations.<sup>18</sup> Still, while recognizing the incompleteness of the evidence, we can point to some intriguing results from recent research.

#### A. The Canadian Success Story

One of the few studies that has tried to isolate the effect of MCPs was conducted by Irene Bloemraad (2006), who compared the integration of Vietnamese immigrants in Boston and Toronto.<sup>19</sup> An interesting feature of this comparison is that the two groups are essentially similar in their pre-arrival characteristics — they arrived at the same time with roughly the same levels of education, wealth, language skills, and so on. And yet the Vietnamese have integrated into the political sphere more effectively in Toronto than in Boston, and Bloemraad argues that Canadian multiculturalism is a central part of the explanation. Canada's proactive MCPs have sent a clear message that Vietnamese political participation is welcome, and have also provided material and logistical support for the self-organization and political representation of the community. Bloemraad's study also showed a similar result for the Portuguese community in the two cities: here again, the Portuguese are more politically integrated in Toronto than in Boston, despite arriving with similar characteristics.

This is one example of a more general finding that we might label the Canadian comparative success story. Canada was the first Western country to adopt an official multiculturalism policy toward immigrant-origin ethnic groups, and it remains the only country in which multiculturalism is enshrined in the constitution. If MCPs have perverse or unintended effects, they should therefore show up first and most clearly in Canada. And yet studies have shown otherwise:

- Immigrants in Canada are more likely to become citizens,<sup>20</sup> to vote and to run for office,<sup>21</sup> and to be elected to office than immigrants in other Western democracies,<sup>22</sup> in part because voters

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17 This indeed is the conclusion reached by several recent reviews, which insist that the effects of MCPs remain largely unknown. See Alexandre Marc, *Delivering Services in Multicultural Societies* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2009).

18 As Jeffrey Reitz puts it, while academic discussions of multiculturalism have been extensive, "there is no real evaluation. The information base for such an evaluation is simply not there." See Jeffrey Reitz, "Assessing Multiculturalism as a Behavioural Theory," in *Multiculturalism and Social Cohesion: Potentials and Challenges of Diversity*, eds. Raymond Breton, Karen Dion, and Kenneth Dion (New York: Springer, 2009), 13.

19 Irene Bloemraad, *Becoming a Citizen: Incorporating Immigrants and Refugees in the United States and Canada* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

20 Ibid.

21 Paul Howe, "The Political Engagement of New Canadians: A Comparative Perspective," in *Belonging? Diversity, Recognition and Shared Citizenship in Canada*, eds. Keith G. Banting, Thomas J. Courchene, and F. Leslie Seidle (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2007).

22 Michael Adams, *Unlikely Utopia: The Surprising Triumph of Canadian Pluralism* (Toronto: Viking, 2007).



in Canada do not discriminate against such candidates.<sup>23</sup>

- Compared to their counterparts in other Western democracies, the children of immigrants have better educational outcomes,<sup>24</sup> and while immigrants in all Western societies suffer from an “ethnic penalty” in translating their skills into jobs, the size of this ethnic penalty is lowest in Canada.<sup>25</sup>
- Compared to residents of other Western democracies, Canadians are more likely to say that immigration is beneficial<sup>26</sup> and less likely to have prejudiced views of Muslims.<sup>27</sup> And whereas ethnic diversity has been shown to erode levels of trust and social capital in other countries, there appears to be a “Canadian exceptionalism” in this regard.<sup>28</sup>

While Canada’s comparative success in these fields is widely recognized, skeptics question whether multiculturalism plays any significant role in it. Critics sometimes argue that Canada’s record of integration is explained by other factors, such as the fact that Canada’s immigrants tend to be more highly skilled than immigrants in other countries and that there is a relatively open labor market. In other words, immigrants bring with them higher levels of human capital and can more easily employ that human capital in the labor market in Canada than they can in other countries. On this view, the presence of MCPs contributes nothing to the successful integration of immigrants in Canada, and may in fact impede it.<sup>29</sup>

While the selectivity of Canada’s immigration policy is important, it’s worth noting that many of the studies cited — including Bloemraad’s — control for the skill level of the immigrants. In her study, the Vietnamese integrate better in Toronto than in Boston despite having identical pre-arrival skill levels. Indeed, Canada’s comparative success is not primarily at the level of the most highly skilled immigrants, who are likely to do well wherever they land. Rather, it is in relation to less-skilled immigrants that the “citizenship gap” emerges most clearly between Canada and the United States.

Moreover, a number of recent studies have helped to clarify the positive role that MCPs can play within broader processes of immigrant integration. This research suggests that MCPs operate at two broad levels: individual identity and institutional design.

At the individual level, surveys indicate that multiculturalism provides a locus for the high level of mutual identification among native-born citizens and immigrants in Canada. In most countries, native-born citizens with a strong sense of national identity or national pride tend to be distrusting of immigrants, who are seen as a threat.<sup>30</sup> But in Canada, which has officially defined itself as a multicultural nation, multiculturalism serves as a source of shared national identity and pride for native-born citizens and immigrants alike. Studies show that in the absence of multiculturalism, national identity is more likely to

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- 23 Jerome Black and Lynda Erickson, “Ethno-racial Origins of Candidates and Electoral Performance,” *Party Politics* 12, no. 4 (2006): 541–612; and Karen Bird, “Running Visible Minority Candidates in Canada: The Effects of Voter and Candidate Ethnicity and Gender on Voter Choice” (paper presented at conference on Diversity and Democratic Politics: Canada in Comparative Perspective, Queen’s University, Kingston ON, May 7-8, 2009).
- 24 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Where Immigrant Students Succeed: A Comparative Review of Performance and Engagement in PISA 2003* (Paris: OECD, Program for International Student Assessment, 2006), [www.oecd.org/dataoecd/2/38/36664934.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/2/38/36664934.pdf).
- 25 Anthony Heath, “Crossnational Patterns and Processes of Ethnic Disadvantage,” in *Unequal Chances: Ethnic Minorities in Western Labour Markets*, eds. Anthony Heath and Sin Yi Cheung (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- 26 Focus Canada, *Canadian Identity: Bilingualism, Multiculturalism and the Charter of Rights* (Toronto: Environics, 2002).
- 27 Focus Canada, *Canadians’ Attitudes toward Muslims* (Toronto: Environics, 2006).
- 28 Abdolmohammad Kazemipur, *Social Capital and Diversity: Some Lessons from Canada* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009); Allison Harell, “Minority-Majority Relations in Canada: The Rights Regime and the Adoption of Multicultural Values” (paper presented at the Canadian Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Ottawa ON, May 27-29, 2009), [www.cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2009/Harell.pdf](http://www.cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2009/Harell.pdf).
- 29 See, for instance, David Goodhart, “Has Multiculturalism Had Its Day?” *Literary Review of Canada* 16, no. 3 (2008): 3–4.
- 30 John Sides and Jack Citrin, “European Opinion about Immigration: The Role of Identities, Interests and Information,” *British Journal of Political Science* 37 (2007): 477–505.



lead to intolerance and xenophobia.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, Canada may be the only Western country where strength of national identity is positively correlated with support for immigration, a finding that is difficult to explain except by reference to multiculturalism.<sup>32</sup>

A similar dynamic has been found in studies of trust and social capital. Whereas Robert Putnam has found that social capital declines as ethnic and racial diversity increases in the United States,<sup>33</sup> the same pattern has not been observed in Canada,<sup>34</sup> particularly among the younger generations who were raised under the multiculturalism policy.<sup>35</sup> For them, diversity has been normalized.

A recent international study has also confirmed the constructive role that multiculturalism plays in enabling healthy processes of individual acculturation.<sup>36</sup> Many studies have shown that immigrants do best, both in terms of psychological well-being and sociocultural outcomes, when they are able to combine their ethnic identity with a new national identity. Scholars often call this an “integration orientation,” as opposed to either an “assimilation orientation” (in which immigrants abandon their ethnic identity to adopt a new national identity) or a “separation orientation” (in which immigrants renounce the new national identity to maintain their ethnic identity). Defenders of multiculturalism have long asserted that MCPs can encourage and enable an integration orientation — indeed, this is known as the “multiculturalism hypothesis.”<sup>37</sup> Members of immigrant minorities will be more likely to identify with a new national identity if they feel their ethnic identity is publicly respected.<sup>38</sup>

At the institutional level, we also have evidence of the role that multiculturalism plays in creating more inclusive and equitable public institutions. For example, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) study that established Canada’s comparative advantage in educating immigrant students emphasized that a crucial factor in this success was the presence of specific policies to address issues of cultural and linguistic diversity in the school population — policies that, in the Canadian context, have emerged under the rubric of multiculturalism.<sup>39</sup> These policies help to explain why the children of immigrants do better in Canada than in other Western democracies even when controlling for the skills, education, and income of their parents.

Similarly, multiculturalism has been shown to play an important role in making Canada’s political process more inclusive. As Bloemraad’s study shows, MCPs have encouraged and enabled the Vietnamese community to participate more quickly and more effectively in mainstream Canadian institutions. In particular, the MCPs have facilitated the self-organization of the community and created 1) new cadres of community leaders who are familiar with Canadian institutions and practices, 2) new

31 For further discussion of the way multiculturalism facilitates rather than impedes mutual identification in Canada, see Varon Uberoi, “Do Policies of Multiculturalism Change National Identities?” *Political Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (2008): 404–17; and Victoria Esses, Ulrich Wagner, Carina Wolf, Matthias Preiser, and Christopher Wilbur, “Perceptions of National Identity and Attitudes toward Immigrants and Immigration in Canada and Germany,” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 30, no. 6 (2006): 653–69.

32 Richard Johnston, Keith Banting, Will Kymlicka, and Stuart Soroka, “National Identity and Support for the Welfare State,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 43, no. 2 (2010): 349–77; and Leslie Laczko, “National and Continental Attachments and Attitudes towards Immigrants: North America and Europe Compared” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Sociology Association, Saskatoon, June 3-5, 2007).

33 Robert Putnam, “*E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century*,” *Scandinavian Political Studies* 30, no. 2 (2007): 137–74.

34 Kazemipur, *Social Capital and Diversity*.

35 Harell, “Minority-Majority Relations in Canada.”

36 John W. Berry, Jean S. Phinney, David L. Sam, and Paul Vedder, *Immigrant Youth in Cultural Transition* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006).

37 John W. Berry, Rudolf Kalin, and Donald M. Taylor, *Multiculturalism and Ethnic Attitudes in Canada* (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1977).

38 The International Comparative Study of Ethnocultural Youth, studying over 5,000 youth in 13 countries, has confirmed that countries with MCPs encourage the development of this integration orientation, with better resulting outcomes. See Berry et al., *Immigrant Youth in Cultural Transition*.

39 OECD, *Where Immigrant Students Succeed*.





mechanisms of consultation and participation, and 3) a more welcoming environment.

In short, it appears that Canada's comparative success is not entirely attributable to the selectivity of its immigration intake. Several recent studies suggest that Canada's MCPs also play a positive role in promoting integration, participation, and social cohesion, both through individual-level effects on attitudes, self-understandings, and identities, and through society-level effects on institutions.

## B. The European Experience

Whether similar positive results have been achieved — or could be achieved — in other countries is more difficult to determine. We do not have many reliable cross-national studies that attempt to isolate the effects of MCPs. However, it's worth noting that Bloemraad herself has attempted to test the effects of MCPs internationally, and her recent study of diversity and social capital in 19 countries shows that MCPs have a positive impact on political participation and social capital.<sup>40</sup> Even if we exclude Canada from the sample, MCPs remain positively associated with participation and social cohesion. Earlier cross-national studies show that multiculturalism has a positive effect on reducing prejudice,<sup>41</sup> that children are psychologically better adapted in countries with MCPs,<sup>42</sup> and that MCPs may strengthen rather than weaken redistributive solidarity.<sup>43</sup>

It should be emphasized again how fragmentary this evidence is: future research is almost certainly going to qualify the conclusions. And this evidence is only about general trends, not universal laws. Even if MCPs are associated with better outcomes internationally, they still may have had perverse effects in particular countries, on particular issues. This indeed is the view of Ruud Koopmans, who has argued that MCPs in the Netherlands have had detrimental effects on the integration of immigrants in that country.<sup>44</sup> This claim is intensely disputed by a number of other Dutch scholars, who think that Koopmans is blaming multiculturalism for ills that are in fact due to other policies entirely (for example, labor market policies).<sup>45</sup> But even if it is true, as Koopmans argues, that MCPs have had perverse unintended effects in the Netherlands, the cross-national evidence suggests that this is a Dutch anomaly and not the general trend regarding the effects of MCPs. If we cannot conclude from the Canadian case that MCPs are always

- 40 Christel Kesler and Irene Bloemraad, "Does Immigration Erode Social Capital? The Conditional Effects of Immigration-Generated Diversity on Trust, Membership, and Participation across 19 Countries, 1981-2000," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 43, no. 2 (2010): 319-47.
- 41 Steven A. Weldon, "The Institutional Context of Tolerance for Ethnic Minorities: A Comparative Multilevel Analysis of Western Europe," *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 2 (2006): 331-49.
- 42 Berry et al., *Immigrant Youth in Cultural Transition*.
- 43 Banting and Kymlicka, *Multiculturalism and the Welfare State*; and Markus Crepaz, "If You Are My Brother, I May Give You a Dime! Public Opinion on Multiculturalism, Trust and the Welfare State," in *Multiculturalism and the Welfare State: Recognition and Redistribution in Contemporary Democracies*, eds. Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
- 44 Koopmans, "Trade-Offs Between Equality and Difference: Immigrant Integration, Multiculturalism and the Welfare State in Cross-National Perspective," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36 no. 1 (2010): 1-26; and Evelyn Ersanilli and Ruud Koopmans, "Do Immigrant Integration Policies Matter? A Three-Country Comparison among Turkish Immigrants," *West European Politics* 34, no. 2 (2011): 208-34. Another work that blames MCPs for poor integration outcomes in the Netherlands is Paul Sniderman and Louk Hagendoorn, *When Ways of Life Collide: Multiculturalism and Its Discontents in the Netherlands* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).
- 45 In the Dutch case, immigrants have in the past had relatively open access to a generous welfare state, yet faced a relatively closed labor market. In any country, this combination is likely to create a perception amongst some native-born citizens that immigrants are a burden, are undeserving and lazy, and who take more from society than they give. Multiculturalism is not the cause of this problem, which rather lies in the structures of the welfare state and the labor market, but Koopmans argues that under these circumstances, MCPs can exacerbate the problem, reinforcing an "us" versus "them" mentality, and discouraging the sorts of measures that are needed for more effective integration. Bloemraad expresses doubt that MCPs are really an exacerbating factor in this causal story; see Bloemraad, "The Debate Over Multiculturalism: Philosophy, Politics, and Policy," *Migration Information Source*, September 2011, [www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=854](http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=854). For related doubts about Koopmans' analysis, see W. G. J. Duyvendak and P. W. A. Scholten, "The Invention of the Dutch Multicultural Model and its Effects on Integration Discourses in the Netherlands," *Perspectives on Europe* 40, no. 2 (2011): 39-45.



and everywhere a success, we equally cannot conclude from the Dutch case that MCPs are always and everywhere a failure. The evidence to date suggests a general, though not universal, positive effect.<sup>46</sup>

In short, multiculturalism in the West emerged as a vehicle for replacing older forms of ethnic and racial hierarchy with new relations of democratic citizenship, and there is some significant, if not yet conclusive, evidence that it is making progress toward that goal.

## IV. The Retreat from Multiculturalism

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

### A. Rhetoric versus Reality

Part of the answer is that reports of the death of multiculturalism are exaggerated. The Multiculturalism Policy Index ranks the strength of immigrant MCPs across 21 OECD countries at three points in time: 1980, 2000, and 2010, and the clear trend has been toward the expansion of MCPs over the past 30 years, including in the last ten (see Appendix 1). There are some high-profile exceptions: there has been a significant reduction in the Netherlands, and modest ones (from a low base) in Denmark and Italy. But the last decade has also seen a strengthening of MCPs in a number of countries, including Belgium, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden. In other countries, the scores have increased marginally or remained stable. Overall, the record of multicultural policies in Europe is one of modest strengthening. As Appendix 1 indicates, the average score for European countries rose from 0.7 in 1980 to 2.1 in 2000 and 3.1 in 2010. Other independent efforts to measure the strength of MCPs in Europe have arrived at the same conclusion.<sup>47</sup>

This may surprise many readers, given that talk of multiculturalism is so unfashionable in political circles. But the retreat may indeed be more a matter of talk than of actual policies. Certain politicians in Britain and Australia, for example, have decided not to use the “*m* word” — instead favoring terms like *diversity*, *pluralism*, *intercultural dialogue*, or *community cohesion* — but these changes in wording have not necessarily affected actual policies and programs on the ground. In Derek McGhee’s words, speaking of Britain, “In many ways this retreat from an open hostility to multiculturalism is, on examination, an exercise in avoiding the term *multiculturalism* rather than moving away from the principles of multiculturalism altogether.”<sup>48</sup> In their recent overview of the situation across Europe, Steven Vertovec and Susan Wessendorf similarly concludes that while the word multiculturalism “has mostly disappeared from political rhetoric,” replaced with a “pervasive emphasis on so-called integration,” this “has not emerged with the eradication, nor even much to the detriment, of actual measures, institutions, and frameworks of minority cultural

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46 It is worth noting that there is also growing evidence for the positive impact of MCPs for indigenous peoples and substate national groups; see Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys*.

47 Koopmans’ index of Indicators of Citizenship Rights for Immigrants (ICRI) includes both an individual equality/nondiscrimination dimension and a multiculturalism dimension, with 23 different indicators for the multiculturalism dimension. Developed independently, the consistency between his ICRI results and the MCP results helps confirm the trend we both observe. Ruud Koopmans, Ines Michalowski, and Stine Waibal, “Citizenship Rights for Immigrants: National Opportunity Structures and Cross-National Convergence in Western Europe, 1980-2008” (paper presented at the 18th annual International Conference of European Studies, Barcelona, June 20-22, 2011).

48 Derek McGhee, *The End of Multiculturalism? Terrorism, Integration and Human Rights* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 2008), 85.



recognition . . . Policies and programs once deemed ‘multicultural’ continue everywhere.”<sup>49</sup>

Our data strongly confirm this analysis.<sup>50</sup> The data also demonstrate that the rhetorical backlash is not limited to countries that have practiced an active multicultural strategy. Chancellor Angela Merkel’s announcement that multiculturalism has “utterly failed” is puzzling, since the approach has not actually been tried in a significant way in Germany. Official policy at the national level has been hostile to institutionalized pluralism, and multicultural initiatives have emerged primarily in cities with large immigrant populations. Merkel’s critique of multiculturalism is therefore a red herring, but as Karen Schönwälder notes, it serves a political purpose: “By creating an imaginary picture of a multicultural past,” conservative political leaders “can present their own policies as innovative.”<sup>51</sup>

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*The retreat may indeed be more a matter  
of talk than of actual policies.*

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There are no doubt many reasons why political leaders in Europe have chosen to rhetorically portray themselves as opponents of a “tired” and “naïve” multiculturalism, and as champions of a more “innovative” and “realistic” approach. But we must not confuse rhetoric and reality, and our index reveals that the retreat from multiculturalist rhetoric is not matched by any comparable retreat from multiculturalist policies. Talk of a “wholesale retreat”<sup>52</sup> from MCPs is, therefore, misleading.

## **B. Proliferation of Civic Integration Policies**

Yet something clearly has changed at the level of public policies. The main policy change has not been the abandonment of MCPs, but rather the proliferation of “civic integration” policies, typically in the form of obligatory language and country-knowledge requirements.

These requirements have been imposed at different stages of the immigration process — initial entry, renewed residency, and naturalization — and have been implemented through a range of tests, courses, and contracts. Sara Goodman has developed a statistical index of such civic integration policies across Europe (CIVIX), and it shows a dramatic change from 1997, when such policies were largely absent, to 2009, when such policies were much more prevalent (see Appendix 2). According to the CIVIX scale, the average EU-15 country score was only 0.56 out of a possible 7.0 in 1997 but had risen to 2.3 by 2009.

So we see an interesting trend: a modest strengthening of MCPs and a more dramatic increase in civic integration requirements. The persistence of MCPs alongside new civic integration policies implies that the two can somehow coexist. But what precisely is the relationship between MCPs and the shift to civic integration?

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49 Vertovec, and Wessendorf, *The Multiculturalism Backlash*, 18, 21.

50 It is worth noting that there has been no retreat from the commitment to multicultural citizenship for either indigenous peoples or national minorities. On the contrary, the trend towards enhanced land rights, self-government powers, and customary laws for indigenous peoples remains fully in place across the Western democracies, and has been reaffirmed by the UN General Assembly through the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007. Similarly, the trend towards enhanced language rights and regional autonomy for substate national groups remains fully in place in the Western democracies. These two trends are increasingly entrenched in law and public opinion, backed by growing evidence that they have contributed to building relations of democratic freedom and equality. Few people today would deny that regional autonomy for Catalonia has contributed to the democratic consolidation of Spain, or that indigenous rights are helping to deepen democratic citizenship in Latin America.

51 Schönwälder, “Germany: Integration Policy and Pluralism in a Self-Conscious Country of Immigration,” 162.

52 Joppke, “The Retreat of Multiculturalism in the Liberal State: Theory and Policy,” 244.



Civic integration emphasizes the importance of immigrants' integrating more fully into mainstream society and advances a number of core principles, including the following:<sup>53</sup>

- The key role of employment in integration
- Respect for basic liberal-democratic values, such as liberty, democracy, human rights, equalities (such as gender equality), and the rule of law
- Basic knowledge of the host society's language, history, and institutions
- The necessity of antidiscrimination laws and policies

There is no inherent incompatibility between civic integration and MCPs, as defined here. Certainly, the experience of countries outside of Europe, such as Canada and Australia, confirm that view. Both countries have adopted MCPs, and both have long had robust integrationist strategies for immigrants.

The Canadian model is best described as “multicultural integration.” The multiculturalism component of the incorporation regime is quite broad, reflecting most of the elements in the Multiculturalism Policy Index: the recognition of multicultural diversity as a core feature of Canadian life in the constitution, in legislation, and in the curricula used in schools; the requirement in the mandates of broadcasters that they reflect cultural diversity in their programming; exemptions from official dress codes; the acceptance of dual citizenship; grants to ethnic groups; and affirmative action (“employment equity” in Canada) for disadvantaged immigrant groups.

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*The persistence of MCPs alongside new civic integration policies implies that the two can somehow coexist.*

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Canadian policy has also long placed a heavy emphasis on integration, including the sorts of policies that are now commonly found in European civic integration programs. This integrationist ethos was reflected in the multiculturalism program itself, whose original goals (as promulgated in 1971) included not only support for cultural diversity but also assistance for minorities to overcome barriers to wider engagement, promotion of intercultural exchange, and support for immigrants to acquire one of Canada's official languages “in order to become full participants in Canadian society.” The integrationist impulse is powerfully reinforced by the immigration program itself and the settlement services offered to newcomers. The federal and provincial governments provide adjustment assistance and extensive language training programs both at the basic level and at more advanced levels for immigrants having trouble acquiring occupation-specific language skills.<sup>54</sup> In addition, Canada has a longstanding tradition of encouraging newcomers to learn about the history, traditions, and political institutions of the country. Applicants for citizenship must pass a written test of their ability to speak English or French and their knowledge of Canadian history, geography, political institutions, and traditions. There are also citizenship oaths and ceremonies.<sup>55</sup>

The Canadian model also privileges the protection of liberal democratic principles and antidiscrimination mechanisms. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms represents a muscular form of liberalism, which is enshrined in the constitution and trumps ordinary legislation, including the *Multiculturalism Act*. The charter, together with federal and provincial human-rights commissions, has protected newcomers from discrimination at the hands of majorities. For example, its guarantee of freedom of religion has helped

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53 Adapted from Christian Joppke, “Beyond National Models: Civic Integration Policies for Immigrants in Western Europe,” *Western European Politics* 30, no. 1 (2007): 1–22.

54 Federal expenditures on these programs have grown dramatically over time, tripling in the past decade to an estimated \$1 billion in 2010–11.

55 Knowledge of either English or French as a requirement for naturalization dates back to the *Naturalization Act of 1914*.



members of minority religions in several landmark cases concerning religious dress. At the same time, the individual rights and equality rights embedded in the charter counter the danger that multiculturalism might run amok. The charter circumscribes the range of cultural traditions that can be deemed legitimate, helping to ensure that accommodation of differences does not slide into a justification for discrimination or a denial of basic equalities, such as gender equality.<sup>56</sup>

The Canadian regime thus combines multiculturalism and civic integration. But two elements are critical to this combination. First, the instruments of integration are primarily voluntary. Language training and integration programs are provided by governments free of charge, and there is no linkage between participation in them and continued residency or access to social benefits. The only formal leverage is the written citizenship test required for naturalization. Second, the national identity that newcomers are invited to join celebrates diversity. The adoption of bilingualism and multiculturalism in the 1960s and 1970s represented a state-led redefinition of national identity, the culmination of an effort to deemphasize the historic conception of the country as a British society and to build an identity more reflective of Canada's cultural complexity. The adoption of a new flag, one without ethnic symbols, was a reflection of this wider transition.

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*It is perhaps revealing that countries that are adopting the most coercive forms of civic integration have never embraced the multicultural strategy.*

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The Australian case also reveals the compatibility of MCPs and civic integration: Australia has always emphasized learning English as the national language and respecting liberal values as core parts of its multiculturalism. James Jupp, who played a pivotal role in defining Australia's multiculturalism policy, has argued that multiculturalism in Australia "is essentially a liberal ideology which operates within liberal institutions with the universal approval of liberal attitudes. It accepts that all humans should be treated as equals and that different cultures can co-exist if they accept liberal values."<sup>57</sup> Thus, the two countries that were the earliest adopters and remain the most ardent supporters of MCPs have always had strong integration policies, focusing on learning the national language and shared liberal values.

#### I. A Shift from "Rights" toward "Duties"

The data suggest that there is no inherent incompatibility between multiculturalism and civic integration, and this combination has indeed been central to two of the most enduring cases of MCPs. Yet it should be equally clear that not all forms of civic integration are compatible with multiculturalism. The reality is that civic integration policies are themselves very diverse in content and form, and in some cases the shift to civic integration is a rejection of multiculturalist principles and policies.

Two potential sources of conflict can be identified. One issue concerns the level of coercion involved, or put another way, the relationship between rights and duties. Some countries have developed voluntary approaches that emphasize immigrants' right to integrate and provide supportive programs for them to do so. But other countries have made integration a duty, establishing mandatory programs and denying immigrants access to social rights or residency renewals if they fail to pass certain thresholds of integration.<sup>58</sup> This more illiberal version of civic integration cannot be combined with a strong

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56 Pearl Eliadis, "Diversity and Equality: the Vital Connection," in *Belonging: Diversity, Recognition and Shared Citizenship in Canada*, eds. Keith G. Banting, Thomas J. Courchene, and F. Leslie Seidle (Montreal: Institute for Research in Public Policy, 2007).

57 Jupp, "The New Multicultural Agenda," 40.

58 Intermediate levels of compulsion are also emerging. In Sweden, for example, immigrants receiving social benefits can have their benefits reduced or eliminated if they do not participate in integration programs, but participation is not linked to



multicultural strategy, particularly if it is only or primarily immigrants whose rights are subject to tests of fulfilling duties. It is perhaps revealing that countries that are adopting the most coercive forms of civic integration have never embraced the multicultural strategy, such as Denmark, or have dismantled previous multiculturalism programs as part of the restructuring process, such as the Netherlands. By contrast, those countries that have shifted most significantly in a pro-multicultural direction in recent years, such as Sweden, Finland, Spain, and Portugal, have resisted more coercive forms of civic integration.

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*It should be equally clear that not all forms of civic integration are compatible with multiculturalism.*

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We are witnessing a more general shift in the “rights versus duties” continuum in social policy.<sup>59</sup> The traditional view underlying the postwar welfare state — articulated most influentially by T. H. Marshall — was that citizens need to have unconditional rights before they are able to fulfill their civic duties. Today, however, in several areas of social policy across the Western democracies (e.g., activation programs and employment policies), there has been a shift toward the idea that citizens have to fulfill certain duties before they can claim certain rights (e.g., “workfare”). If indeed such policies are imposed on all citizens, then they are not inherently anti-immigrant or antidiversity (although some of us are likely to view them as an erosion of basic liberal or social-democratic values). But the shift from rights to duties raises a danger that those groups deemed “unworthy” of being treated as rights-bearing individuals — in particular, nonwhite, non-Christian immigrants — will be targeted. Insofar as perceptions of the unworthiness of immigrants underpin coercive integration policies, then a coercive integration strategy negates a multicultural affirmation of diversity.

## 2. Changing Definitions of National Identity

A second issue concerns the definition of the national culture that immigrants are integrated into (coercively or voluntarily), and how open it is to the visible maintenance and expression of difference. In Germany and France, for example, an immigrant may be refused naturalization if he or she is deemed to have an excessive attachment to his or her home country or religion. In these cases, national identity is implicitly presented as having a zero-sum relationship with immigrants’ prior identities. Immigrants are not invited to add a new identity to their old ones. Rather, they must relinquish the old. This implicit assumption that prior identities should be relinquished, or at least subordinated and hidden for public purposes, is reflected in a number of ways. Examples include the prohibition of dual citizenship and the stringency of naturalization tests. While most countries require that citizenship applicants pass a language test, some countries set the bar much higher than others, requiring immigrants to acquire close to native-born proficiency in language and cultural knowledge. Such policies are arguably aiming at full assimilation, while preventing incompletely integrated immigrants from gaining citizenship. By contrast, other countries set the bar much lower, requiring only a good-faith effort on the part of the immigrant, and far less than native-born proficiency, on the assumption that immigrants with varying levels of mixed and dual identities can nonetheless become good citizens.

Citizenship tests in Denmark and Canada illustrate this difference.<sup>60</sup> Both countries use citizenship tests

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either residency or the acquisition of citizenship.

59 Karin Borevi, “Dimensions of Citizenship: European Integration Policies from a Scandinavian Perspective,” in *Diversity, Inclusion and Citizenship in Scandinavia*, eds., Bo Bengtsson, Per Strömblad, and Ann-Helén Bay (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 19–46.

60 See Silvia Adamo, “Northern Exposure: The New Danish Model of Citizenship Test,” *International Journal on Multicultural Societies* 10, no. 1 (2008): 10–28. For a broader attempt to measure the ethnic exclusiveness of naturalization policies, see E.A. Koning, “Ethnic and Civic Dealings with Newcomers: Naturalization Policies and Practices in 26 Immigration Countries,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 11 (2011): 1974–94.



to promote a national identity and a national language. But the Canadian citizenship test, both implicitly and explicitly, assumes that many immigrants will want to be multicultural citizens who combine a strong ethnic identity with a strong Canadian national identity, whereas the assimilationist Danish test seeks to exclude such would-be multicultural forms of citizenship. In this sense, citizenship tests are not inherently incompatible with multiculturalist commitments. On the contrary, citizenship tests are simply one more domain in which countries exhibit their commitment (or lack of commitment) to multiculturalism.

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*While the shift to civic integration is an important development, it is misleading to equate this with a retreat from multiculturalism.*

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Whether a program is coercive or voluntary is a separate issue from whether the national identity is closed versus open. France may not have mandatory civic integration classes, but it has an assimilationist conception of national identity. Conversely, one could imagine a country that has coercive integration classes, but which has an open conception of national identity. (Some British proposals to add new tests for residency permits would make the integration process more coercive, while retaining a relatively open conception of national identity.) This question of identity concerns the *content* of civic integration classes or of citizenship tests, rather than whether they are voluntary or mandatory.

While the openness of national identities is difficult to measure, it is arguably more important than the level of coercion when assessing the (in)compatibility of civic integration policies with MCPs. Highly coercive integration policies are illiberal; as such they should be offensive to any liberal-minded person, even one who does not particularly embrace multiculturalism. By contrast, assimilationist and exclusionary conceptions of national identity are offensive to multiculturalists, and this is independent of whether the means used to promote that national identity are coercive or voluntary. If we think of Canada as endorsing a “liberal multiculturalism,” then coercive integration policies would violate the “liberal” part of the story, and assimilationist conceptions of national identity would violate the “multiculturalism” part of the story. The idea that immigrants have to renounce earlier identities, and/or that they have to achieve the same level of proficiency as the native born in the local language and culture before being welcomed to participate in society, is directly at odds with any meaningful form of multicultural citizenship.

In short, while the shift to civic integration is an important development, it is misleading to equate this with a retreat from multiculturalism. Civic integration policies differ along many dimensions, including in their relationship to multiculturalism. Some countries (such as Denmark, Germany, and Austria) have adopted an antimulticultural form of civic integration — one that is coercive and assimilationist. But since these are countries that never embraced multiculturalism in the first place, their new policies can hardly be considered as a retreat from multiculturalism. By contrast, other countries with longstanding MCPs (e.g. Sweden) have adopted forms of civic integration policies that are more voluntary and pluralistic. And this model of multicultural integration seems to be the one to which other countries — such as Finland — are moving. We lose sight of these profound differences — and important policy options — if we assume prematurely that civic integration entails a retreat from multiculturalism.

### 3. Convergence or Divergence?

And this in turn raises questions about the claim that there is a “convergence” on civic integration in Europe. This claim has been popularized by Christian Joppke, who argues not only that there has been a wholesale retreat from multiculturalism in Europe, but that “in response to the integration crisis, distinct



national models of dealing with immigrants are giving way to convergent policies of civic integration and anti-discrimination.”<sup>61</sup> The evidence discussed here suggests a very different picture. The data show no evidence for convergence either on MCPs or on civic integration policies. On the contrary, European countries display greater divergence today than 15 or 30 years ago in both policy domains. As measured by our MCP Index, the divergence in multiculturalism scores — the standard deviation — has increased from 1980 to 2010.<sup>62</sup> This result is confirmed by Koopmans’ index of Indicators of Citizenship Rights for Immigrants, which also shows a growing standard deviation from 1980 to 2008 along the multiculturalism dimension.<sup>63</sup> And according to Goodman’s Civic Integration Index, the divergence in civic integration scores has increased from 1997 to 2009.<sup>64</sup>

Amid this growing divergence, we can see certain patterns emerging. At one end, we have countries that adopt what Goodman describes as “prohibitive” citizenship strategies,<sup>65</sup> based on coercive and assimilative civic integration policies. Not surprisingly, the countries that she categorizes in this way (e.g., Germany, Austria, Denmark) are also countries that score very low on our MCP Index. At the other end, we have countries that adopt what Goodman describes as “enabling” citizenship strategies, based on voluntary and open civic integration. Not surprisingly, these are also countries that have increased their MCP score since 2000 (e.g., Sweden, Finland). (Outside of Europe, Canada and Australia also fit this enabling category, and also score high on MCPs.) In between, we have a range of countries with intermediary forms and levels of both civic integration and MCPs.

In short, all of the talk about the retreat from multiculturalism and the convergence on civic integration obscures the fact that a form of multicultural integration remains a live option for Western democracies, both in the New World and in Europe. I stress this option, not simply for the sake of analytical completeness, but because I think it is an option that warrants serious consideration, on both normative and empirical grounds.

From a normative point of view, the combination of enabling civic integration and multicultural accommodation is the option most in line with fundamental liberal values of freedom and fairness. There are valid justifications for the state to promote civic integration, including promoting a common language and national identity. But these policies risk being oppressive and unfair to minorities if they are not supplemented by MCPs. (Conversely, there are valid justifications for minorities to claim multicultural accommodations, but these policies may become unreasonable and destabilizing if they are not supplemented by civic integration policies.) The combination of civic integration and multiculturalism is mutually, normatively reinforcing: each helps to both justify and constrain the other.<sup>66</sup>

Of course, many critics of multiculturalism accept that multiculturalism is normatively desirable in principle, but argue that it has failed in practice. As Koopmans puts it, while there are “legitimate normative reasons” for multiculturalism, “we cannot simply assume that what is normatively justifiable will also be practically efficient,”<sup>67</sup> and indeed he argues that it has been counterproductive. But as discussed earlier, it is far from clear that multiculturalism has “failed” in practice. On the contrary, on many of the crucial indicators, it appears that countries with the combination of enabling civic

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61 Joppke, “The Retreat of Multiculturalism in the Liberal State.”

62 For the 16 European countries, the standard deviations increased from 1.03 in 1980 to 1.76 in 2000 to 2.00 in 2010.

63 The standard deviation on Koopmans’ multiculturalism dimension in 1980 was 0.19; by 2008 it had risen to 0.30 (Koopmans, Michalowski, and Waibel, “Citizenship Rights for Immigrants,” table 5).

64 Sara Goodman, “Integration Requirements for Integration’s Sake? Identifying, Categorizing and Comparing Civic Integration Policies,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36, no. 5 (2010): 753–72. Per Mouritsen also disputes the convergence hypothesis in “On the Liberal Plateau? Civic Integration Policies in North Western Europe” (Paper presented at the conference on Multiculturalism and Nordic Welfare States, Aalborg University, Denmark, March 21–23, 2011).

65 Ibid.

66 For a fuller defense of the idea that liberal-democratic principles support robust national integration policies supplemented and constrained by robust MCPs, see Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

67 Koopmans, “Trade-Offs Between Equality and Difference,” 5.





integration and MCPs are doing comparatively well, as measured by levels of political participation, prejudice and far-right xenophobia, and trust and social cohesion.

## V. Conclusion: The Future of Multicultural Citizenship

This report challenges four powerful myths about multiculturalism:

- First, it disputes the 3S account of multiculturalism as the uncritical celebration of diversity, and instead offers an account of multiculturalism as the pursuit of new relations of democratic citizenship, inspired and constrained by human-rights ideals.
- Second, it challenges the idea that multiculturalism has been in “wholesale retreat,”<sup>68</sup> and instead offers evidence that MCPs have persisted, even strengthened, over the past ten years.
- Third, it rejects the idea that multiculturalism has failed, and instead offers evidence that MCPs have had positive effects.
- Fourth, it disputes the idea that the spread of civic integration policies has displaced multiculturalism or rendered it obsolete. The report instead offers evidence that MCPs are fully consistent with certain forms of civic integration policies, and that indeed the combination of multiculturalism with an enabling form of civic integration is both normatively desirable and empirically effective in at least some cases.

In light of these arguments, the ideal of multiculturalism-as-citizenization should remain a salient option in the toolkit of democracies, worthy of serious consideration by policymakers.<sup>69</sup> However, it must be acknowledged that there are major obstacles to the multiculturalist project: not all attempts to adopt new models of multicultural citizenship have taken root, or succeeded in achieving their intended effects of promoting citizenization.

The crucial question, therefore, is why multicultural citizenship works at some times and in some places and not others. We do not yet have a systematic account of the preconditions for successful experiments in multicultural citizenship, and so a certain degree of caution is required when making judgments and recommendations in this area. The theory and practice of multiculturalism suggests that MCPs can contribute to citizenization, but the historical record suggests that certain conditions must be in place for it to have its intended effects.<sup>70</sup>

The first is “desecuritization.” Where states feel insecure in geopolitical terms (fearful of neighboring enemies) they are unlikely to treat their own minorities fairly. More specifically, states are unlikely to accord powers and resources to minorities that they view as potential collaborators with neighboring enemies. In the past, this has been an issue in the West, particularly in relation to national minorities.

68 Joppke, “The Retreat of Multiculturalism in the Liberal State,” 244.

69 To say that multicultural citizenship remains a salient option is not to say that we must or should advocate for the word *multiculturalism*. As is noted earlier, the “m word” is now virtually taboo in some countries and it may not be worth the effort to fight that semantic battle. What matters, in the end, is whether the underlying principles and policies of multiculturalism-as-citizenization are taken seriously, and in my view, those principles and policies can be enacted without the using the “m word.” They could instead be adopted under the heading of “diversity policies” or “intercultural dialogue” or “community cohesion” or even “civic integration.” On the other hand, perpetuating the demonizing of multiculturalism may simply play into the hands of xenophobes. To state that multiculturalism is against human rights, for example, is not just bad history and bad social science, it also risks licensing and legitimating antidiversity views. It may not be possible to defend multicultural citizenship without countering some of the myths that surround the term “multiculturalism.”

70 For a more detailed analysis of these conditions, see Will Kymlicka, “Marketing Canadian Pluralism in the International Arena,” *International Journal* 59 (4): 829–52; and Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys*.



For example, prior to World War II, Italy, Denmark, and Belgium all feared that their German-speaking minorities were more loyal to Germany than to their own country and would support attempts by Germany to invade and annex areas of ethnic German concentration. These countries worried that Germany might invade in the name of liberating their coethnic Germans, and that the German minority would collaborate with such an invasion.

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*The ideal of multiculturalism-as-citizenization should remain a salient option in the toolkit of democracies, worthy of serious consideration by policymakers.*

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Today, as a result of the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), this is a nonissue throughout the established Western democracies with respect to national minorities (or indigenous peoples). It is difficult to think of a single Western democracy where the state fears that a national minority would collaborate with a neighboring enemy and potential aggressor.<sup>71</sup> Unfortunately, it remains an issue with respect to certain immigrant groups, particularly Arab/Muslim groups after 9/11. Where minorities are perceived as security threats, ethnic relations become “securitized.” Relations between states and minorities are seen not as a matter of normal democratic debate and negotiation, but as a matter of state security, in which the state has to limit the democratic process to protect itself. Under conditions of securitization, minority political mobilization may be banned, and even if minority demands can be voiced, they will be rejected by the larger society and the state. After all, how can groups that are disloyal have legitimate claims against the state? So, the securitization of ethnic relations erodes both the democratic space to voice minority demands, and the likelihood that those demands will be accepted, and this diminishes any potential for multicultural citizenship.

A second precondition is human-rights protection. This concerns security — not of the state, but of individuals who would be subject to self-governing minority institutions. States are unlikely to accept minority autonomy if they fear it will lead to islands of local tyranny within a broader democratic state. In the past, this too has been grounds for opposition to according greater rights to both national minorities and indigenous peoples, who were seen as carriers of illiberal political cultures. While this fear has essentially disappeared in relation to historic minorities — no one fears that the Scots or Catalans will attempt to restrict fundamental human rights in the name of cultural authenticity, religious orthodoxy, or racial purity — it remains a pervasive fear in relation to some recent immigrant groups; here again, Muslims are often singled out. Indeed, as many commentators have observed, much of the backlash against multiculturalism is fundamentally driven by anxieties about Muslims in particular, and their perceived unwillingness to integrate into liberal-democratic norms.

These two factors are applicable to all forms of multiculturalism — whether for indigenous peoples, national minorities, or immigrant groups. But there are also factors that are specific to the case of immigrant multiculturalism:<sup>72</sup>

**Control over borders.** Multiculturalism is fundamentally about the treatment of immigrants after they have settled, rather than about who is admitted in the first place. However, multiculturalism for settled immigrants is more controversial in circumstances where citizens fear that they lack control over their borders, and hence lack control over who is admitted. Where countries are faced with large numbers (or unexpected surges) of “unwanted” immigrants — either unauthorized immigrants or asylum seekers — it often generates a backlash against multiculturalism. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that

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71 Cyprus and Israel still exhibit this dynamic of viewing their historic Turkish and Arab minorities as potential collaborators with external enemies, and coincidentally have not been able to agree on minority autonomy.

72 For a more detailed discussion of these factors, see Kymlicka, “Marketing Canadian Pluralism in the International Arena.”



multiculturalism has had an easier time in countries such as Australia and Canada, where immigration is overwhelmingly the result of state selection, with few unauthorized entrants. Having a sense of control over one's borders, and hence the capacity to determine who enters and in what number, has several consequences. First, it reduces fear of being swamped by unwanted migrants — it, therefore, lowers the temperature of debates, and makes citizens feel secure that they are in control of their own destiny. Second, in most Western countries there is a strong moralistic objection to rewarding migrants who enter the country illegally or under false pretences (i.e., economic migrants making false claims about escaping persecution). Such migrants are seen as flouting the rule of law, both in the way they first enter the country, and often in their subsequent activities (e.g., working illegally). Most citizens have a strong moral objection to rewarding such illegal or dishonest behavior. Moreover, such migrants are often seen as “jumping the queue,” taking the place of equally needy or equally deserving would-be migrants who seek entry through legal channels. There is also a prudential objection to providing MCPs for unauthorized immigrants, since this may encourage more illegal migration.

**Homogeneity or heterogeneity of immigrants.** Multiculturalism arguably works best when it is genuinely *multicultural* — that is, when immigrants come from many different source countries, rather than coming overwhelmingly from a single source country. In Canada, for example, immigrants are drawn from all corners of the world, and no single ethnic group forms more than 15 percent of the total immigrant intake. In the United States, by contrast, because of the income disparity with its far less wealthy neighbor, 50 percent of immigrants come from Mexico; similarly, North Africans dominate the immigrant intake in Spain or France. This has many consequences for the integration process. In a situation where immigrants are divided into many different groups originating in distant countries, there is no feasible prospect for any particular immigrant group to challenge the hegemony of the national language and institutions. These groups may form an alliance among themselves to fight for better treatment and accommodation, but such an alliance can only be developed within the language and institutions of the host society, and hence is integrative. In situations where there is a single dominant immigrant group originating in a neighboring country, the dynamics may be very different. The Arabs in Spain or Mexicans in the United States do not need allies among other immigrant groups. One could imagine claims for Arabic or Spanish to be declared a second official language, at least in regions where they are concentrated, and these immigrants could seek support from their neighboring home country for such claims — in effect, establishing a kind of transnational extension of their original homeland into their new neighboring country of residence. This scenario may sound fanciful, but native-born citizens may nonetheless see it as a risk, one that has to be firmly prevented by restricting immigration and opposing multiculturalism.<sup>73</sup>

**Economic contribution.** Multiculturalism — at least in the citizenizing form described earlier — is seen as part of a package of mutual rights and responsibilities, in which the state makes good-faith efforts to accommodate immigrants, and immigrants make good-faith efforts to integrate, so as to coproduce new relations of democratic citizenship. Support for multiculturalism therefore depends on the perception that immigrants are holding up their end of the bargain, and making a good-faith effort to contribute to society. The most visible manifestation of this, in most countries, is their economic contribution, and so a threat to multiculturalism arises whenever immigrants are perceived as avoiding work and instead living off the welfare state. In many cases, of course, immigrants have contributed more to the welfare state than they have taken out — this has historically been the pattern in the United States and Canada. And even when they are disproportionately unemployed or living on assistance, the explanation is often a lack of opportunities and not a lack of good-faith effort. Nonetheless, native-born citizens have both a moral and prudential objection to the idea of extending multiculturalism without tangible evidence of a reciprocal effort on the part of immigrants. And so, it is vital to the success of multiculturalism that the state provide visible means for immigrants to manifest this good-faith effort, including through economic contributions. In some northern European countries, it appears that governments show more concern about facilitating

73 For an example of this sort of fear, invoking the facts about the contiguity and numerical dominance of Hispanic immigrants in the United States, see Samuel P. Huntington, “The Hispanic Challenge,” *Foreign Policy*, March 1, 2004, [www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2004/03/01/the\\_hispanic\\_challenge](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2004/03/01/the_hispanic_challenge).



immigrants' access to the welfare state than about facilitating their access to the labor market. This has been called a form of "generous betrayal:" sustainable multiculturalism requires the opportunity for reciprocal contributions.

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*That minority rights, liberal democracy, and human rights can comfortably coexist is now a fixed point in both domestic constitutions and international law.*

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There are doubtless many other factors that shape the potential for multicultural citizenship, including old-fashioned racial prejudice. For many people, the latter is the key factor. But, of course, prejudice is found in all countries — indeed its existence is part of the justification for adopting multiculturalism — and so cannot explain the variation across countries (or over time) in support for multiculturalism. And if we try to understand why this latent prejudice and xenophobia sometimes coalesces into powerful political movements against multiculturalism, the answer lies in perceptions of threats to geopolitical security, human rights, border control, and economic reciprocity. Where such perceptions are lacking, as they are in relation to most immigrant groups in North America, then support for multiculturalism can remain quite strong.

If this analysis is correct, it has important implications for the future of multiculturalism in the West. On the one hand, despite all the talk about the retreat from multiculturalism, it suggests that multiculturalism, in general, has a bright future. There are powerful forces at work in modern Western societies driving toward public recognition and accommodation of ethnocultural diversity. Public values and constitutional norms of tolerance, equality, and individual freedom — underpinned by the human-rights revolution — all push in the direction of multiculturalism, particularly when viewed against the backdrop of a history of ethnic and racial hierarchies. These factors explain the ongoing trend toward the recognition of the rights of substate national groups and indigenous peoples. Older ideas of undifferentiated citizenship and neutral public spheres have collapsed in the face of these trends, and no one today seriously proposes that minority rights and differentiated citizenship for historic minorities should be abandoned or reversed. That minority rights, liberal democracy, and human rights can comfortably coexist is now a fixed point in both domestic constitutions and international law. There is no credible alternative to multiculturalism in these contexts.

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

On the other hand, one could also argue that these very same factors make the rejection of immigrant multiculturalism a high-risk move. It is precisely when immigrants are perceived as illegitimate, illiberal, and burdensome that multiculturalism may be most needed. Without proactive policies to promote mutual understanding and respect, and to make immigrants feel comfortable within mainstream institutions, these factors could quickly create a racialized underclass, standing in permanent opposition to the larger society. Indeed, in the long term, the only viable response to the presence of large numbers of immigrants is some form of liberal multiculturalism, regardless of how these immigrants arrived, or from where. But we need to accept that the path to immigrant multiculturalism in many countries will not be smooth or linear. Moreover, we need to better focus on how to manage the risks involved. In the



past, defenders of immigrant multiculturalism have typically focused on the perceived benefits of cultural diversity and intercultural understanding, and on condemning racism and xenophobia. Those arguments are sound, but they need to be supplemented with a fuller acknowledgement of the prudential and moral risks involved, and with some account of how those risks will be managed. A fuller exploration of how civic integration policies can work together with multiculturalism may be a crucial step in this process.

## Appendices

### Appendix I. Immigrant Multiculturalism Policy Scores, 1980-2010

	Total Score (out of a possible 8)		
	1980	2000	2010
Canada	5	7.5	7.5
Australia	4	8	8
Austria	0	1	1.5
Belgium	1	3	5.5
Denmark	0	0.5	0
Finland	0	1.5	6
France	1	2	2
Germany	0	2	2.5
Greece	0.5	0.5	2.5
Ireland	1	1.5	3
Italy	0	1.5	1
Japan	0	0	0
Netherlands	2.5	5.5	2
New Zealand	2.5	5	5.5
Norway	0	0	3.5
Portugal	1	2	3.5
Spain	0	1	3.5
Sweden	3	5	7
Switzerland	0	1	1
United Kingdom	2.5	5.5	5.5
United States	3	3	3
<b>European average</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>3.1</b>
<b>Overall average</b>	<b>1.29</b>	<b>2.71</b>	<b>3.52</b>

*Note:* Countries could receive a total score of 8, one for each of the following eight policies:

(a) constitutional, legislative, or parliamentary affirmation of multiculturalism at the central and/or regional and municipal levels and the existence of a government ministry, secretariat, or advisory board to implement this policy in consultation with ethnic communities; (b) the adoption of multiculturalism in school curriculum; (c) the inclusion of ethnic representation/sensitivity in the mandate of public media or media licensing; (d) exemptions from dress codes; (e) allowing of dual citizenship; (f) the funding of ethnic group organizations or activities; (g) the funding of bilingual education or mother-tongue instruction; and (h) affirmative action for disadvantaged immigrant groups.

*Source:* Multiculturalism Policy Index, [www.queensu.ca/mcp](http://www.queensu.ca/mcp).



## Appendix 2. Civic Integration Index (CIVIX) Scores (1997-2009)

	1997	2009	Change
Sweden	0.0	0.0	0.0
Belgium	0.5	0.5	0.0
Ireland	0.5	0.5	0.0
Italy	0.5	0.5	0.0
Finland	0.5	1.0	0.5
Greece	1.0	1.0	0.0
Luxembourg	0.5	1.0	0.5
Portugal	0.5	1.0	0.5
Spain	1.0	1.0	0.0
France	0.5	3.5	3.0
Austria	0.5	4.5	4.0
Netherlands	0.5	4.5	4.0
United Kingdom	0.5	4.5	4.0
Denmark	0.5	5.0	4.5
Germany	1.5	6.0	4.5

Source: Sara Goodman, "Integration Requirements for Integration's Sake? Identifying, Categorizing and Comparing Civic Integration Policies," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36, no. 5 (2010): 753-72.



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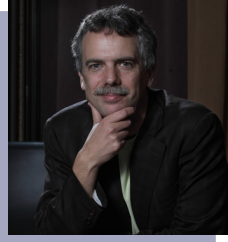
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## About the Author



**Will Kymlicka** is the Canada Research Chair in Political Philosophy in the Philosophy Department at Queen's University in Kingston, Canada, where he has taught since 1998. His research interests focus on issues of democracy and diversity, and in particular on models of citizenship and social justice within multicultural societies. He has published eight books and over 200 articles, which have been translated into 32 languages, and has received several awards, most recently the 2009 Premier's Discovery Award in the Social Sciences.

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Born and raised in Canada, he was educated at Queen's and Oxford University, and held positions at various Canadian, American, and European universities before moving to Queen's. He is also a recurrent visiting professor in the Nationalism Studies program at the Central European University in Budapest.

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