The essence and specificity of the state multiculturalism policy

Javid Asadov, *Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (Lublin, Poland)*

E-mail: javid.asadov@mail.umcs.pl

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-5487-1950

Abstract

The main aim of this article is to examine multiculturalism as a specific policy of multi-ethnic states, and its essence and specificity. Multiculturalism can be considered as a policy aimed at preserving and developing cultural diversity in a particular state, as well as a theory or ideology justifying such policy. In the essence of multiculturalism lies the idea of the peaceful coexistence of different groups – ethnic, racial, religious, cultural, and other – within one state. The present study addresses the following research question: how multiculturalism obligations have been considered by state policy? In the course of the research, the answer to this question was achieved by analysing what multiculturalism is, and then – examining several theoretical approaches to this policy. As a result, the author concluded that multiculturalism can be a component of state policy only in states where the government actively promotes and protects the rights and interests of various cultural groups.

Keywords: multiculturalism, pluralism, public policy, tolerance, identity, Europe, Canada, Australia

Istota i specyfika państwowej polityki wielokulturowości

Streszczenie

Głównym celem artykułu jest analiza wielokulturowości jako polityki sektorowej państw wielo-etnicznych, jej istoty i specyfiki. Wielokulturowość może być rozpatrywana jako polityka mająca na celu zachowanie i rozwój różnorodności kulturowej w danym państwie oraz jako teoria lub ideologia uzasadniająca taką politykę. Wielokulturowość opiera się na idei pokojowego współistnienia róż-nych grup – etnicznych i rasowych, religijnych, kulturowych itp. – w obrębie jednego państwa. W ar-tykule podjęto próbę odpowiedzi na pytanie badawcze: w jaki sposób uwzględniana jest specyfika wielokulturowości w polityce publicznej państwa? W toku prowadzonych badań odpowiedź na to pytanie uzyskano, analizując istotę wielokulturowości, a następnie rozważając kilka teoretycznych podejść do tej polityki. W rezultacie został sformułowany wniosek, że wielokulturowość może być

integralną częścią polityki tylko w tych państwach, w których rząd aktywnie promuje i chroni prawa i interesy różnych grup kulturowych.

Słowa kluczowe: wielokulturowość, pluralizm, polityka publiczna, tolerancja, tożsamość, Europa, Canada, Australia

There are many states in the world with a multi-ethnic structure. People in multi-ethnic societies, who believes that they or others have distinct historical identities and ways of being, may coexist within the same political space. Typically, multi-ethnic states are those that are home for more than one ethnic group (Grillo 2014: p. 144). The source of multi-ethnicity for some states is the historical habitation of different peoples in their territories, while for other states it is modern migration processes. No matter what a source of ethnic diversity is, we can certainly say that in the modern world there are almost no state consisting of one ethnic group. However, in almost all states there is a major ethnic group with a major representation in state formation. The imposition of the dominant group's culture or language and the suppression of the independent cultural practices of whole ethnic communities are two examples of discrimination against immigrants or minority groups (Brown 1996: p. 268). It is important to have specific policies to manage this diversity, especially in states with rich ethnic and cultural diversity. The most widespread policies in this regard are assimilation, isolation, integration, and multiculturalism (Rodríguez-García 2010: p. 252). We know from world history that, besides multiculturalism, all other policies to regulate ethno-cultural diversity are old methods. Multiculturalism policy is relatively new approach to solving old problems. However, it is also already considered as old and sometimes even unsuccessful. This fact led to the refusal of this policy by states as the United Kingdom and Germany. The well-known researcher and expert in the subject of multiculturalism Will Kymlicka argues that "anti-multiculturalist rhetoric may simply play into the hands of xenophobes who reject both multiculturalism and interculturalism" (Kymlicka 2012: p. 214).

As we can observe, the subject of multiculturalism is rather problematic, because on the one hand – there is a stance of maintaining various groups' traditions and cultural values, as well as the right of every individual to profess any religion, speak their native language, etc. On the other hand, it is important to create a strong society and state, particularly in states where the ethnic conflicts occur. As a result, since most states are multi-ethnic and have various approaches for dealing with the diversity that exists inside their boundaries, there are several types of multiculturalism policies in the contemporary world.

The aim and methodology of the research

The ideology of multiculturalism, in general, postulates equality of rights and chances for all social groups and communities of people to practice their cultural traditions. The main aim of this article is to examine multiculturalism as a specific policy of the multi-ethnic states, and its essence and specificity. The present study addresses the re-

search question: how multiculturalism obligations have been considered by state policy? In the course of the research, the answer to this question will be found by analysing what multiculturalism is, and then examining several theoretical approaches to this policy.

To address the research question, this article provides a critical overview of the most prominent theories and approaches to multiculturalism that have been written by scholars. To determine the essence, scope, and theoretical approaches of the study, the basic concepts and ideas of such scholars as Will Kymlicka, Brian Barry, Bhikhu Parekh, and others will be discussed in this article. Generally, the review of the scholarly literature will be focused mainly on the development of multiculturalism policy within liberal Western societies and reflected the essence of multicultural policy from liberal approaches. In addition, document analysis and comparative analysis will be used as a qualitative research technique to analyse and evaluate the multiculturalism policies of various states.

Theoretical frameworks and concepts of multiculturalism

The term "multiculturalism" is frequently used to describe society's diversity (Song 2020) and it is a relatively recent phenomenon. This phrase may be used in a broad or narrow sense, depending on the context. In a broad sense, multiculturalism refers to the presence of various ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural groups. In the more restricted meaning, multiculturalism refers to the approach that the state takes towards the various ethnic, religious and cultural groups that already exist within society. Multiculturalism is both a response to the fact that there are many different cultures in modern democracies and a way to compensate for the exclusion, discrimination, and oppression that some groups of people have faced in the past (Eagan WWW). As a political ideology, we might see it as a call for equal treatment. Multiculturalism is all about equality, mutual respect, acceptance, and tolerance between representatives of different nations, religions, cultures, communities, etc. (Barry 2001: p. 124). Tolerance for the many different ways that people live their lives is the foundational principle of the multiculturalist worldview. Social justice, equal opportunities, and democracy are all ideals that the idea of multiculturalism includes.

In contrast to the process of assimilation, the idea of multiculturalism holds that the dominant and minority cultures of a given state should be seen as being on equal level. This helps the integration of these cultures. In this context, Tariq Modood highlighted that multiculturalism might be contrasted with a strategy of assimilation, but should be regarded as a way of integration, given its focus on recognising multiple identities (Modood 2020: p. 2). There are different models of multiculturalism in the modern world due to the fact that most countries are polyethnic, and they have different ways of interaction with the diversity existing within their borders. The influential study by Bhikhu Parekh has shed more light on multiculturalism. This author argues that "almost all modern societies are multicultural, and their cultural diversity derives from a number of sources, such as the process of globalization, the collapse of traditional moral consensus, the liberal emphasis on individual choices, and immigration" (Parekh 2005, Parekh 1997: p. 54).

From the arguments of scholars, we understand that multiculturalism can be a part of government policy only in those states where the government "actively encourages and supports the rights and interests of different cultural groups" (Dumouchel 2015: p. 29). This argument raised another question: which groups exactly are the object of multiculturalism? We can read in the *Stanford Encyclopedia* that: "Contemporary theories of multiculturalism, which originated in the late 1980s and early 1990s, tend to focus their arguments on immigrants who are ethnic and religious minorities" (Song 2020). The basic principles of multiculturalism are true tolerance, true equality, true freedom (Forbes 2019: p. 168). The notion *melting pot*, in which minorities are supposed to adapt to the dominant culture, is rejected by multiculturalism. It has been referred to as *salad bowl* in the United States, and *cultural mosaic* in Canada, rather than *melting pot*. According to some scholars, the most crucial thing for minority groups is to be tolerated by the state (Kukathas 2003: p. 213). Others argue that accepting minorities' differences is not the same as treating them equally.

When multiculturalism is perceived as an ideology, it is essential to emphasise the significance of guaranteeing the rights of individuals belonging to the LGBT community, as well as people with disabilities, women, or members of any other oppressed or marginalised group in any state. Even multiculturalism has faced much criticism for excluding certain communities from its primary goal. Each of these connections between the majority and the minority calls for individualised attention and not in the scope of aim of this article.

Another important aspect to be considered in the analysis of multiculturalism policy is the policy's theoretical foundation. Multiculturalism began to be positioned as a philosophical theory that originated from a debate between proponents of the theoretical tendencies of liberalism and communitarianism. The liberal tradition offered the theoretical basis for multiculturalism. Will Kymlicka, Brian Barry, Charles Taylor, Chandran Kukathas, Michael Walzer, Tariq Modood, Keith Windschuttle, John W. Berry are among the Western scholars, who have studied the challenges of implementing liberal multiculturalism policies in immigrant states and nation-states. The subject of multiculturalism is researched in connection with other topics, such as discrimination, stereotypes, conflicts, and the creation of mechanisms of tolerance.

Philosophically, multiculturalism is a broad concept. In addition to the concept of recognising cultural diversity, multiculturalism is a philosophical theory that is a synthesis of the ideas of liberalism and communitarianism. However, it should be noted that in the framework of liberalism, multiculturalism can be considered from the point of view of classical and modern liberalism. The classical liberal multiculturalism might be regarded as the most tolerable regime. It could be so tolerant that it is willing to tolerate the existence of others who oppose him in its society or, as Kukathas noted, that "classical liberal multicultural society may contain within it many illiberal elements" (Kukathas 2004: p. 14). At the same time, it does not provide any single group or community with special privileges or protection. It does not prohibit anybody from following their own objectives or traditions, but it does not support, fund, or give preference to any aims or traditions. However, there are some liberal theorists, who are unsatisfied with such interpretation

of multiculturalism due to the fact that it does not give adequate guarantees for the expression of values that are considered as essential component of the liberal ideology. A common argument against classical liberal multiculturalism is the belief that liberal state cannot tolerate its citizens' tolerance for non-liberal views. This is the view held by British social philosopher and political scientist Brian Barry (Barry 2001: p. 124). This means that the state must, among other things, assume responsibility for the education of children, so that cultural or religious groups do not indoctrinate the future generation with wrong ideals. Women's rights in the home and cultural minorities' refusal to discriminate against individuals who leave these groups must also be guaranteed by the legislation.

Other liberal thinkers, like Kymlicka, support the so-called "hard" form of multiculturalism in opposition to the "soft" approach. This author believes that the liberal state must actively take steps to provide resources to groups in order to promote their way of life. This entails not just financial support for their activities, but also legal and political protection from discrimination and harsh conditions. At the same time, the state must ensure that all cultural groups respect the fundamental civil rights guaranteed by the liberal system (Kymlicka 1991: p. 140). Even though Barry argues that there is a need to be more active in ensuring that cultural minorities conform to the principles of liberalism, both of these authors reject the call for the state to take a more "neutral" position on minority issues that is aimed by classical liberalism. Furthermore, Kymlicka suggests more stringent policies to ensure the cultural autonomy of minority groups.

Discussing what are often referred to "hard" and "soft" forms of multiculturalism, it is essential to highlight, as Kukathas has noted, *soft multiculturalism*, which does not accept state intervention in the management of minority group relations in society, is based on classical liberalism, while multiculturalism, which advocates active state intervention in the management of those relations, is based on modern liberalism. The general "reason why liberalism does not have a problem with multiculturalism is that liberalism is itself, fundamentally, a theory of multiculturalism. This is because liberalism is essentially a theory about pluralism; and multiculturalism is, in the end, a species of pluralism." (see more: Kukathas 1998: p. 690).

Even though they have significant disagreements about multiculturalism, Kymlicka and Barry both believe that in a liberal society, the values of liberalism must be respected by all communities or subgroups, at least to some extent. Barry believes that the only way for groups to differ from liberal ideals is if they are entirely voluntary groups that unite free adults. Additionally, he is of the opinion that certain illiberal forms of association of such organisations should not be supported by state in any capacity (Barry 2001: p. 240). In contrast, Kymlicka supports the providing assistance to all cultural minorities. This is due in part to the fact that only with such assistance members of cultural minorities will be able to enjoy a certain degree of autonomy, which Kymlicka considers as the most essential component of liberal values.

In the context of cultural independence for national minorities, Kymlicka proposes new kinds of multicultural citizenship, which often include some mix of the six elements listed below: