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PATTERNS OF MULTICULTURAL AND INTERCULTURAL PRACTICE: EAST AND WEST

In this article, the patterns of multiethnic cohabitation encountered in selected societies in Western and Eastern Europe will be put into context and compared. This will involve consideration of the institutional as well as the grass-roots dimension of these societies' multicultural experience. Reference will be made to the cases of Britain and France, on the one hand, while the experiences of Vojvodina in Serbia and Transylvania in Romania will be highlighted, on the other. Another aim of this article will be to assess the applicability of Western models for managing ethnic relations in East European societies. What will be demonstrated is that while in the West multiculturalism functions as an institutional practice, built upon the premises of segregation, in certain East European societies *intercultural* (as opposed to multicultural) cohabitation is experienced as a bottom-up mass phenomenon. Western multicultural models can therefore offer partial answers to 'Eastern' questions but can not be applied in their totality within East European contexts.

MULTICULTURALISM: THEORETICAL DEFINITION

The case for multiculturalism is rooted in the rights of minority groups to cultural membership and recognition. As part of this discourse, individual rights are often treated as conterminous with collective ones. The aim of proponents of multiculturalism is to prevent friction and establish a common good within diverse societies based on the equality of citizenship and the endorsement of civic values on cultural equality. Thus they argue for a greater degree of self-development and self-realization for minority groups than is provided for under present institutional arrangements.

For the purposes of this article, I have drawn a distinction between the communitarian trend endorsed by Anglo-Saxon proponents of

multiculturalism and the constitutional approach of Continental theoreticians. The former tend to emphasize the need of individuals to cling to their immediate cultural environments and place importance on the recognition of the equal contribution of all cultures to the evolution of mankind.¹ The latter give greater significance to the universal value and equality of citizenship, stripped of ascription and hierarchy.² In line with these principles, they attribute greater value to territoriality than to ethnic descent.

Before proceeding to the empirical discussion, a crucial detail should be singled out: many 'new' minority groups in the West differ from the indigenous populations not only on ethnic, but also *racial* grounds. In technical terms, a race can be perceived as a genetically distinct subpopulation of a given species. However, race acquires meaning to the extent that it is socially constructed as a power structure. Physiological differences do not constitute a race *per se*. It is when these differences are institutionalized in the public sphere and employed in order to set groups apart or provide the justification for the domination of one group over another that race becomes important. Therefore, a crucial difference between race and ethnicity is that the former has its origins in assignment, in the classifications that 'others' make. As empirical reality has demonstrated in the West, the combination of physiological and cultural differences, stereotypes of racial inferiority and competition over social benefits can provide the basis for pronounced social segregation.

MULTICULTURALISM IN PRACTICE: BRITAIN AND FRANCE

This section will discuss multiculturalism as institutional practice and social experience in Britain and France. The choice of these two cases is not random, since there exists a key difference between British and French multicultural policies. In the British case, the New Labour government has been receptive to the implementation of multicultural policies like those espoused by the communitarian school of multiculturalism. In the French case, the implementation of multiculturalism for the political accommodation of immigrant groups is contested by the principles of the republican legacy.

The groups that will be researched are the South Asian Muslims in Britain and the Maghreb Arabs in France. These are the largest new

minority groups in the two states and both have entered into conflict with the mainstream majority over a variety of issues. What will be demonstrated is that the multicultural experience in both states is largely built upon the premises of segregation and, especially in Britain, interlinked with socioeconomic catalysts.

The New Multiethnicity in Britain: The Institutional Dimension

According to the 2001 census, the ethnic minority population had increased to 4.6 million. Half of the total minority population were Asians of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or other origin. The highest concentration of ethnics is observed in Greater London and the West Midlands. In this subsection, I will focus on institutional policies with regard to education and preservation of cultural identity.

Since the mid-1980s, the character of Britain as a multiethnic and multiracial society has been affirmed and the focus of the education system shifted towards

...educating all children, from whatever ethnic group, to an understanding of the shared values of our society and the appreciation of the diversity of all cultural backgrounds inherent in it.³

By 1989, at least 54 of the 108 local education authorities had multicultural policies and an additional 20 had such policies under review or in preparation.⁴

The success of the multicultural alternative in Britain was helped by a decentralization process that affected the structure of the educational system. As a result, the ethno-culturally heterogeneous regions were granted more autonomy in developing educational policies. In the long term, multicultural policies spread as national policymakers and local councils exchanged proposals about running schools in multiethnic regions. Though the events of 9/11 took their toll on relations between South Asian Muslims and the mainstream population, the majority of education policymakers and practitioners still remain convinced that assimilation is not the right method for dealing with diversity. Moreover, a number of mosques operate throughout Britain and Islamic religious practices (e.g.

Ramadan, the month of fasting) as well as dress codes are respected at the workplace in the ethnically heterogeneous areas.

Finally, British legislation regards the management of relations between the mainstream population and immigrant groups not only from an interethnic but also an *interracial* perspective. The amended Race Relations Act (2000) extended the prohibition of racial discrimination to public bodies exercising their public functions, while incitement to racial hatred legislation was also introduced.

The Grass-Roots Dimension

The aim of these provisions is to relax barriers and provide common ground for the coexistence of different cultures in a pluralist society. This objective, though, seems far from realized in contemporary Britain. On the contrary, the situation that prevails in certain ethnically diverse parts of Britain can be summarized in the dictum: 'good fences make good neighbours'.

Segregation along ethnic/racial lines is subject to the rigid stratification of British society in class layers. The Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants of the 1950s and 1960s were employed mostly as unqualified labour and as such settled mainly in areas designated for inner-city redevelopment (e.g. the western and northern districts of Greater Leicester, the southeast districts of metropolitan London).

The class factor is interweaved with racial distance: the emergence of Bangladeshi and Pakistani business networks, set up according to the extended kin principle, serves as an indication of the South Asians' social mobility. In addition, modern communication channels and faster and cheaper travel has enabled immigrant communities to maintain closer links with their homelands. These two factors have helped shape a new sense of 'Asian pride' in the predominantly Bangladeshi or Pakistani urban quarters. In this case, segregation combined with social mobility has rendered many British Muslims what Roger Ballard terms 'cultural navigators': individuals with the ability to move efficiently within the mainstream sphere but, at the same time, maintaining a pronounced allegiance to their immediate backgrounds.⁵

In as far as Asian Muslims and British Whites are conscious of the spaces within which they should move, the 'good fences make good neighbours' principle, with its institutional infrastructure, does provide

some inter-communal stability. Nevertheless, where impoverishment, competition for social benefits, the incompetence of the local administration and the mutual persistence of negative stereotypes combine in space, not even the medium of segregation can provide a workable solution. This became obvious in the racial riots of summer 2001 in South Yorkshire.⁶

A recent catalyst that puts relations between Asian Muslims and Whites to the test is the globalization of Islamic terrorism. A more radical strain of the 'Asian pride' revival has orientated quite a few second generation British Muslims towards militant Islam. This became evident in the summer 2005 bombings in London as well as the recruitment of a certain number of second generation British Muslims by militant groups in the Middle East. At the same time, Islamophobia seems to be on the increase among Britain's mainstream population, especially since 9/11.⁷

The New Multiethnicity in France: The Institutional Dimension

According to the 1999 census, France's population included 3.26 million immigrants and other foreigners, of whom some had acquired French citizenship. In this subsection, I will focus on the institutional arrangements for immigrant groups in the fields of education and preservation of cultural identity.

In contrast to Britain, French multicultural policies were limited in scope and their appeal to immigrant communities was low.⁸ As a result, since the early 1970s, little attention has been paid to the issues of ethnic and cultural diversity, and educational policies have had the implicit or explicit goal of turning immigrants into Frenchmen. An additional catalyst that doomed the multicultural initiatives to failure is the centralized character of the French educational system.

French objections to the Anglo-Saxon multicultural model are rooted in the secular values inherited from the Revolution and the late 19th- and early 20th-century struggles over religion in school. French policymakers fear that the communitarian approach of multiculturalism could lead from the recognition of the right to difference to a difference of rights.⁹ They argue, therefore, that France's 'universal' education policy acts as a safeguard for a state that is attempting to maintain a relationship with individual citizens rather than corporate groups.

French legislation acknowledges the racial dimension of inter-group relations between the mainstream population and some immigrant groups. Nevertheless, anti-racist legislation relies upon a conception of racism in which the law punishes the offender for disregarding the universal value of every human being and not a particular culture or community.¹⁰

The Grass-Roots Dimension

The French state is not keen on a corporatist approach to the accommodation of inter-communal relations. It prescribes a model in which the proprietor of political rights is the individual citizen and not any sort of collectivity based on religious or ethno-cultural grounds. This does not mean, however, that there are no similarities between the French and the British cases.

The pattern of minority settlement in French urban centres is as segregated as in Britain. In Paris, Marseille and elsewhere, the Algerians and Moroccans settled in collective housing for workers (*foyers*) in industrial suburbs. The ability to maintain closer links with their homelands as well as the relative mobility of the Maghreb Arabs has helped shape a sense of 'Arab pride', analogous to the British 'Asian pride'.

In France, this phenomenon is subject to a case-specific peculiarity. French policymakers have tried to deal with the complexities of the new multiethnic reality through informal channels and re-utilization of colonial policies: civic and religious associations operate as mediators between Northern African communities and the state. While formally accepting republican values, these interest groups express communitarian identities and have undertaken activities such as Arabic language training and Islamic religious education to a satisfactory degree.

As is the case in Britain, a more radical strain of the Maghreb identity revival has embraced militant Islam. Two good examples are given by the involvement of Zacharias Moussaoui in the 9/11 attacks and the anti-Semitic activities of Islamic extremists.¹¹ The response of the mainstream population to the radicalization of a certain segment among France's Muslim community is seen in the increase of Islamophobia.¹²

THE EAST EUROPEAN INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCE: THE CASES OF VOJVODINA AND TRANSYLVANIA

In the previous section I demonstrated that multiculturalism in Britain and France functions in terms of an institutional practice. Regardless of whether officially endorsed as state policy (e.g. Britain) or applied via informal channels (e.g. France), the multicultural experience in these two states is based on similar premises: it is founded upon segregation along ethnic lines, subject to the impact of the racial factor and primarily concerned with the integration of 'new' minority groups. This section will highlight the experience of the ethno-culturally diverse regions of Vojvodina in Serbia and Transylvania in Romania.

It is my argument that the cohabitation of different groups in these regions becomes manifest in terms of an *intercultural*, not a multicultural, discourse. Before proceeding to the empirical discussion, a theoretical definition of interculturalism should be given. In order to comprehend fully the categorical distinction between multiculturalism and interculturalism, one should focus on the Latin prefix *inter*, which denotes separation as well as *reciprocity*.

Interculturalism differs from multiculturalism in terms of social experience. The former is applicable in societies, where interaction between different groups manifests itself as a grass-roots phenomenon, irrespective of ethnic, racial or religious markers. Within such contexts, the phenomenon of parallel lives is not pervasive and social interaction is conditional upon catalysts such as territoriality, the adoption of common values and a shared historical heritage. With specific regard to Central and Eastern Europe, interculturalism is situated within the midst of a multi-ethnicity that resulted from a series of migrations, wars and various exchanges that brought into contact different groups, with their customs, traditions and institutions.

In this section, the institutional framework for minority groups as well as the grass-roots dimension of inter-communal relations in Vojvodina and Transylvania will be placed in context. Particular attention will be paid to the cases of the ethnic Hungarians (Vojvodina, Transylvania) and the Croats (Vojvodina), two groups whose relations with the mainstream majorities have not always been harmonious.

Institutional Provisions

Throughout the 1990s, the rights of the national minorities¹³ in the Republic of Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)¹⁴ were regulated by various documents. Specific provisions were included in the Yugoslav and the Serbian Constitution. Nevertheless, as long as neither of the two entities had a special law on national minorities, the constitutional rights of minorities were codified in Serbian statutes. In fact, the application of minority-related legislation was not free of shortcomings.¹⁵ The situation began to improve in the post-Milošević era, however, as a result of **a.** the introduction of a special law on the rights of national minorities, and **b.** the restoration of certain competencies to the provincial administration.

In terms of the new law, on February 27, 2002, the government of Serbia and Montenegro introduced a 'Law for the Protection of the Rights and Liberties of National Minorities'.¹⁶ In a foreword to the law, national minorities are defined as

those groups within the population of Serbia and Montenegro that possess characteristics such as language, culture, national or ethnic membership, origin or religious faith that differentiate them from the majority of the population, and the members of which face problems with the preservation of their collective identity, including tradition, culture, language or religion (Article 2).

Article 11 entitles members of national minorities to use their languages and alphabets in official situations within their municipality or locality if they form 15 percent of the local population. Under the same demographic condition, Article 13 provides for education in the language and about the culture and history of the national minority in question.

Article 15 entitles members of national minorities to found private educational or cultural institutions and stipulates that the state is able to offer exemptions from taxation or other sorts of financial incentives. The most notable innovation of the law is the clause on the formation of a Council for National Minorities, made up of representatives of the minorities, in the Serb-Montenegrin parliament (Article 18). This Council is recognized as a legal subject and is responsible for supervising the official use of minority languages and alphabets in education and public information, as well as the cultural projects organized by national

minorities. It is also authorized to initiate procedures in the Serb-Montenegrin Court of Justice where there is evidence that the constitutional rights of individuals belonging to national minorities are under threat (Article 23). Finally, it prohibits any legal measures that might jeopardize the individual and collective rights of national minorities or alter the ethnic structure of minority-populated settlements (Article 22).

Throughout, the law is in accord with the guidelines of the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* drafted by the Council of Europe.¹⁷ For example, the designation of the minority rights codified in the law as individual and collective alike complies with Article 13, paragraph 2, of the convention. Moreover, the legal and judicial provisions regarding the prohibition of acts of discrimination, forcible assimilation and other steps that might jeopardize the rights and freedoms of individuals belonging to national minorities are consistent with Articles 4 (paragraph 1), 5 (paragraph 2) and 6 (paragraph 2) of the convention. This is equally true of clause on: **a.** the provision of education, at all levels, in the language of the national minorities; **b.** the teaching of subjects relevant to the minorities' culture and history; **c.** the establishment of private institutions by individuals belonging to national minorities (Article 12, paragraphs 1 and 2; Article 13, paragraph 1; Article 14, paragraph 2). Some cases, such as the clause on the state's readiness to offer fiscal exemptions for the establishment of private institutions by persons belonging to national minorities, even go a step beyond the provisions of the convention: the convention does not oblige the state to offer any financial incentives for the realization of such projects (Article 13, paragraph 2).

In addition to these, certain provisions for Vojvodina's minorities have been codified in the provincial legislation. The 2002 '*Omnibus*' law¹⁸ whereby Vojvodina authorizes the state institutions in the province to: **a.** guarantee the official use of the recognized languages and alphabets;¹⁹ **b.** appoint a supervisory board charged with carrying out inspections to ensure the implementation of this clause (Article 18, paragraphs 1 and 2). Article 7 (paragraph 3) provides for the funding of minority cultural projects from the provincial budget, while Articles 12 and 13 authorize the Vojvodinian state institutions to issue educational programs and textbooks in minority languages. It can be argued that the provisions of the Serb-Montenegrin, as well as the provincial, legislation have provided an appropriate framework for the adequate protection of the national minorities' individual/collective rights and freedoms.

The Grass-Roots Dimension

These legal provisions are consistent with a number of prerogatives of the proponents of multiculturalism. This is the case with: **a.** the recognition of minority rights as individual and collective alike; **b.** the willingness of the state to finance cultural and other projects undertaken by minorities; **c.** the application of positive discrimination towards the improvement of the social status of individuals belonging to marginalized communities. Nevertheless, essentially what differentiates the pattern of multiethnic cohabitation in Vojvodina from those in Western multiethnic societies is the way that it is experienced as a social reality.

It would be of particular use in this work to concentrate on the findings of public surveys carried out in Vojvodina over the past 5 years. These surveys were performed by statistical agencies and academic institutions. The public survey *Istraivanje javnog mnjenja: Autonomija Vojvodine*, run by the Novi Sad 'SCAN' agency in 2000-01, observed a positive position among Vojvodinians with regard to: **a.** the official use of minority languages and their alphabets (Table 1); **b.** relations between Vojvodina's national minorities and their national homelands (Table 2); **c.** institutional guarantees for national minorities.²⁰

The results of this survey serve as further evidence that Vojvodina is home to ethnic group cultures and, beside these, a common cultural substratum. This can be seen in the form of Vojvodinian *regional* identity. It is precisely this regional identity that is one of the main factors influencing the presence of common denominators. Regional identity establishes common values, developed as significant or existential by diverse ethnic groups. In this case, the part played by similar living conditions, historical links and mutual reliance, as well as the common prospects for the future, should be taken into account.

This notion of intercultural cohabitation manifests itself in various forms in Vojvodinian daily life and experience. Inter-marriage among different groups remains common in urban as well as rural settlements. In most cases, catalysts, such as the workplace or the neighborhood, still seem to take precedence over ethno-cultural or religious cleavages.²¹ Furthermore, in certain ethnically diverse rural communities the locals often celebrate religious and other '*seocke*' ('village') feasts together, regardless of their ethnic affiliation and regardless of whether these festivities are Eastern Orthodox or Roman Catholic.²²

This is not to say that Vojvodina is anywhere near the American 'melting pot'. The province's ethnic communities have preserved a degree of integrity insisting on their distinctive identities. In Vojvodina, this becomes obvious, at the popular level, through the persistence of auto-stereotypes (images of the self) and hetero-stereotypes (images of others). All group stereotypes represent oversimplified views of the characteristics of ethnic groups. In the social sciences, what is oversimplified can not be regarded as valid. At the popular level, though, it seems that the persistence of mutual stereotypes has somehow facilitated the preservation of the distinctiveness of the national communities in Vojvodina.²³

Finally, the impact of the ethnic conflicts in other parts of the former Yugoslavia for inter-group relations in Vojvodina should not be neglected. As empirical research demonstrates, many Serbs and Montenegrins are not particularly keen on choosing ethnic Croats as partners, and vice-versa.²⁴ In addition, clashes in mixed settlements between young Hungarians and Serbian refugees from Bosnia and Croatia gives an indication of how competition for social benefits can also provide a source of friction in Vojvodina. Nevertheless, such instances are of minor significance, when compared with the racial troubles in Western Europe, and constitute a challenge to Vojvodina's physiognomy as a space where territoriality takes precedence over ethnicity.

Transylvania: Institutional Provisions

The legal framework for the protection of minority rights in Romania rests on different premises in comparison with the Serb-Montenegrin case. In the latter case, the maintenance of institutions, such as Vojvodina's provincial assembly, has provided space for the formulation of regionalized alternatives for managing ethnic relations (e.g. the '*Omnibus*' law). In Romania, on the contrary, policymakers are keener on a classical liberal approach to minority issues. As is the case in France, minority rights do not constitute a different category from other civic rights and are allocated on an individual basis within a unitary state's structure.

According to the *Constitution of Romania (1990)*, minorities are granted the right to 'preserve, develop and express their ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious identities' (Article 6.1).²⁵ Nevertheless, the measures of protection are restricted by Articles 6.2 and 16.1, which dictate that no positive discrimination should be applied on the grounds of ethnic

affiliation. Article 32.3 concedes minorities the right to education in their mother tongue but, at the same time, the only language enjoying official status is that of Romanian (Article 13).²⁶ Finally, the notion of collective rights is not accepted. The terminology used, with respect to minority rights, is rights of '*persons belonging to national minorities*' (e.g. Article 6).

Two representative institutions for minorities are the Council of National Minorities and the Department for the Protection of National Minorities. The former is mainly an advisory body responsible for expressing its point of view on laws and draft laws that have a direct or indirect impact on the life of the minority communities.²⁷ The latter is an office that promotes the decisions taken by the Council of National Minorities within the public administration.²⁸ The establishment of regional offices of the Department for the Protection of National Minorities (in Arad and Cluj-Napoca for Transylvania) signifies an attempt to initiate systematic contact between local authorities and central government for the management of ethnic relations. To date, however, the activities of the regional offices have been limited to the organization of periodic meetings at the request of local minority representatives. It seems, therefore, that the successful coordination between central and local authorities on the regulation of minority issues, as well as the harmonization of the jurisdiction of the aforementioned bodies with the constitutional prerogatives, can only be achieved through the issuing of a special law on national minorities.

As far as minority language education is concerned, the Law on Education provides for the study of the history and culture of the respective minority in the municipalities and localities where it forms a considerable part of the population. Nevertheless, the law also dictates that Romanian history (or *History of the Romanians*) and geography should be taught compulsorily in Romanian, even in educational institutions where the working language is not the official one. This has generated a certain amount of controversy between minorities and the state, especially with interest groups operating within the Hungarian community.

The Grass-Roots Dimension

Despite the deficiencies highlighted here, the Romanian legal framework provides a good basis for the elaboration of more detailed

proposals on managing ethnic relations. However, as in Vojvodina, of essential importance in Transylvania is the impact of multiethnic cohabitation as part of social experience. Still, a qualitative difference between the two cases should be made clear.

In contrast with Vojvodina, regional identity, as a concept that provides a common substratum for diverse ethno-cultural identities, is absent in Transylvania, where the pattern of bi-communal interaction between Romanians and Hungarians is conditioned by the competition between the two groups at the symbolic level. This state of antagonism is engineered by interest groups within each community and communicated from the top down. In this context, the ethnic Hungarian elites draw the material for their discourse from the Hungarian historical legacy in Transylvania, as well as the necessity to reverse the 'historical injustice' their group experienced during the Ceausescu era. The Romanian elites, on the other hand, juxtapose a discourse that aims at the affirmation of Transylvania's Romanian identity and build their argument upon the 'historical injustice' perpetrated on their community during the years of Hungarian dominance. This state of competition has manifested itself through symbolic activities, such as ritual public events, national celebrations and commemorations, demonstrations and counter-demonstrations. Nevertheless, with the exception of the political mobilization in the early 1990s, this symbolic competition has not resulted in violence or the threat of violence.

With regard to the grass-roots dimension, a variety of catalysts have reduced the social and cultural differences between Romanians and Hungarians, namely: **a.** social mobility (which relaxed the barriers of residential and socioeconomic segmentation); **b.** the 'ethnically blind' operation of modern institutions in the public domain (e.g. the systems of public and financial administration, the social welfare services); **c.** the increasing number of mixed marriages.²⁹ Moreover, the process of Romania's accession to the EU has reduced the significance of the politicization of ethnicity at an elite level, and this has been felt at the grass-roots level too. In fact, public surveys carried out in Transylvania over the past 5 years hint at the popular affirmation of: **a.** the positive state of social interaction between Romanians and Hungarians (Table 3); **b.** the relations between Transylvania's minorities (namely the Hungarians) and their national homelands;³⁰ **c.** the prevalence of 'ethnic blindness' in the employment sector (Table 4).

Consequently, a similarity emerges, by default, between the cases of Vojvodina and Transylvania. In both contexts, it seems that as a result of a chronic socialization process groups with different origins have adopted common behavioural patterns as well as a common system of values. This is a social reality that remains visible to this day in Transylvania, irrespective of the role of regional elites in the amplification of ethnic conflict. Within this matrix, and in so far as it does not escalate to violent confrontation, the symbolic competition between Romanians and Hungarians assumes a similar function to that of the persistence of mutual stereotypes in Vojvodina. It operates as a medium through which different groups manage to preserve a sense of collective integrity in the course of their interaction with each other. It could therefore be argued that the implementation of more regionalized alternatives for the management of ethnic relations in Transylvania would function as an additional mechanism for safeguarding ethnic harmony in the region.

EAST AND WEST: THE COMPARISON

In the previous sections, I clarified the ways in which the patterns of multiethnic cohabitation encountered in certain West and East European societies differ from each other. While in the West multiculturalism is an institutional top-down practice, in the East intercultural understanding is primarily a mass phenomenon communicated from the grass-roots level up.

In this section, I will summarize the essential differences between the patterns of group interaction occurring in the cases discussed. This will entail a mostly grass-roots approach. Then, a more theoretical and institutional approach will concentrate on adaptive and maladaptive examples of applying Western models for managing ethnic relations in East European societies.

Mapping some essential differences

An obvious difference between the West and the East European examples discussed is their historical background. However, since historical background constitutes an overly 'objective' difference, I have chosen not to expand on it. Instead, I will concentrate on the more

sociological dimension of inter-group relations within West and East European environments and the ways these interact with the institutional and political contexts. Particular attention will be paid to minorities' perspectives on mainstream society. This will be followed by a discussion of the extent to which certain variables specific to Western multiethnic societies (e.g. the impact of race) can be detected in their East European counterparts.

In Transylvania and Vojvodina, the advent of modernity became visible in the politicization of ethnicity. With a specific focus on minority groups, they shaped their collective identities through a chronic process of interaction with their 'national homeland', the state where they reside, and its institutions. This process has resulted in the persistence of politicized identities among Transylvanian, as well as Vojvodinian, Hungarians to this day.³¹

By way of contrast, neither British nor French Muslims are interested in the politicization of their identities. What both groups seem to opt for are micro-spaces within which they are able to cherish their cultural particularities. At the same time, both seem to maintain a pre-modern sense of community which becomes manifest through an emphasis on religion and extended kin relations. One might presume that the absence of political mobilization among British Asians and French Arabs renders the propensity for inter-group tension lower, in comparison with Transylvania and Vojvodina. However, a more critical consideration of the empirical reality in the two contexts proves otherwise.

In the late 1990s, the existence of an intercultural substratum helped create, among other things, a common ground for the ethnic Hungarian and Serbian elites in Vojvodina. This process culminated in the participation of both the VMDK and the VMSZ in the Democratic Opposition of Serbia against Milošević's Socialists (2000). In Transylvania, on the other hand, the common expectations of Romanians and Hungarians in respect of Romania's integration into European structures acted as an additional catalyst in the UDMR's and 'mainstream' Romanian parties' joining forces in the current government.

Meanwhile, segregation and the simultaneous increase of Islamophobia have generated insecurity among British as well as French Muslims, especially since 9/11. This has directed Muslim interest groups in both states towards a renewed emphasis on their Islamic heritage as a mechanism of socio-psychological security. As already mentioned, this has often acquired a radical dimension. Under these circumstances, the

parallel emphasis on extended kin relations among British Asians and French Arabs propagates an organic perception of community in which the ethno-cultural group is viewed as an extended family itself. This, in turn, can facilitate the communication of radical trends and ideas.

The interrelation between a communitarian social ethos and group radicalization might be better understood by referring to a particular Southeast European example: the Kosovan Albanian case. In the late 1990s, the radicalization of this community occurred not merely as the outcome of Serbian hegemonic policies and the mobilizing potential of certain circles within the 'parallel elites'.³² It was also affected by a sociological factor: the prevalence of a highly communitarian ethos among Kosovan Albanians. Within this context, political attitudes and preferences were largely conditioned by the obligation of the individual to appear loyal to: **a.** the extended kin; **b.** the local community; **c.** the ethnic group as such. This catalyst, among other things, accounted for the high degree of political homogeneity among Kosovan Albanians and, during the radicalization process, their unequivocal support for the Kosovo Liberation Army.

Setting aside the obvious differences in the different political contexts, the analogies between the behavioral patterns of Kosovan Albanians and the Muslim communities in Britain and France become clear. Both examples demonstrate how, under special circumstances, the combination of pre-modern notions of community with ethnic segregation and a feeling of exclusion from the mainstream is able to contribute to the radicalization of a given group. Conversely, as demonstrated in Vojvodina and Transylvania, the existence of positive perspectives for inter-communal relations at grass-roots level is able to facilitate a *modus vivendi* between elites, even under adverse political and socioeconomic circumstances.

Finally, race, as a catalyst for inter-communal friction in the West, appears to be absent in East European contexts. One might cite the case of the Roma as a legitimate example of racial discrimination. At a first glance, the argument appears to be valid. The Roma are a group distinguishable by reference to their phenotype. They are frequently the target of negative stereotyping and, from the Romany perspective, victims of institutional racism throughout Eastern Europe. However, a more detailed examination reveals some basic differences between the case of the Roma and that of the new minorities in the West.

Although the new minorities in France and Britain are not keen on their political mobilization as such, a relatively large number of individuals

of Pakistani or Arab background still participate in the mainstream parties. These candidates normally enjoy the electoral support of most of their co-ethnics and operate as the voice of their communities in local and central government. At the same time, all new minorities attend the state-run education system and not a few South Asian and Maghreb Arab entrepreneurs are successful in the financial arena.

By way of contrast, political participation is limited and illiteracy remains widespread in Roma communities.³³ Furthermore, there is no standardized version of Roma identity and the persistence of a highly patriarchal ethos among Roma seriously impedes the effectiveness of the positive discrimination measures targeted at this group. This is particularly true in the case of the non-attendance of primary schooling by many Roma girls due to parental insistence that they stay at home to perform household duties.³⁴

It is at this point that the substantial difference between the case of the British Asian or French Arab Muslims and that of the Roma becomes evident. In the first case, the combination of a homogeneous group consciousness with a satisfactory degree of engagement in mainstream politics and a generally educated population has enabled the communities in question to fight back against instances of discrimination by mainstream society. In the Roma case, on the other hand, the persistence of retrogressive attitudes within the group limits the possibilities for it to acquire an articulate consciousness, in spite of the often legitimate Roma grievances regarding negative discrimination by the mainstream population. Consequently, the interpretation of the Roma question in Eastern Europe through the spectrum of racial discrimination in Western societies is not advisable.

The Applicability of Western Models to Eastern Questions

As is becoming clear, the communication of intercultural understanding from the mass level upwards can bridge disagreements between elites, even when not under the most promising circumstances. On the other hand, where segregation, mutual prejudice and socioeconomic antagonism find common ground, conflict becomes imminent despite the general state of political and social stability. In this subsection, the prospects for application of Western multicultural models in East European contexts will be assessed.

One of the main purposes of this article is to distinguish between adaptive and maladaptive cases of application. The adjective 'adaptive' refers to cases in which the proposals made by proponents of multiculturalism in the West might prove beneficial to the management of inter-group relations in Central and Eastern Europe. On the other hand, the adjective 'maladaptive' denotes cases in which the often misunderstood application of Western models could prove detrimental to stability in East European multiethnic societies. In order to comprehend the usefulness of the adaptive cases, it is best to make an empirical reference to the maladaptive ones first. Particular attention will be paid to the East European contexts discussed.

A favorite criticism made by proponents of multiculturalism is the reluctance of nation-states to accommodate diversity by providing self-government to minorities. According to Kymlicka, self-government requires

...the explicit recognition of national (minority) groups through such things as language rights, land claims, an asymmetric distribution of powers and the redrawing of political boundaries.³⁵

Although he falls short of prescribing the formation of self-government institutions as a norm for managing minority issues, Kymlicka clearly inclines towards this solution. By means of a brief reference to the cases of the Kurds in Turkey and the Basques in Spain, he stresses how '...attempts to subordinate separate identities to a common identity have often backfired', and points out that '...self-government arrangements diminish the likelihood of violent conflict, while refusing or rescinding self-government rights is likely to escalate the level of conflict'.³⁶

This current of thought among Western proponents of multiculturalism has had an impact on documents drafted by East European minority activists, albeit not being explicitly mentioned. In Vojvodina, both the VMDK and the VMSZ insist on a tripartite concept of autonomy for ethnic Hungarians consisting of: **a.** personal autonomy;³⁷ **b.** territorial autonomy;³⁸ **c.** local self-administration.³⁹ A similar concept has been proposed by the UDMR in Romania (*Cluj Declaration*, October 1992). Similarly, the Transylvanian Hungarian elites insist on personal and local autonomy; but instead of 'territorial autonomy' they prefer the relatively more moderate term 'regional self-administration'.⁴⁰ Both Vojvodinian and Transylvanian Hungarian elites have been cautious in dispelling any

suspensions of irredentism among the Serbian and Romanian majorities. Moreover, their demands for Hungarian-language education and preservation of cultural identity are in most cases legitimate. Still, the concession of ethno-territorial autonomy would be a maladaptive example of applying Western proposals in East European contexts.

In contrast to the ethno-racial segregation in Western societies, the cohabitation and interaction among populations of different origins in mixed settlements remains a living reality in Vojvodina and Transylvania. While making predictions is not recommended in the social sciences, the following assumption can safely be made in the event that ethno-territorial autonomy were to be applied in Northern Bačka or the Szekler region: sooner or later, it would generate grievances among local Serbs or Romanians who would either choose ghettoization or, worse, move away from these territories, while Hungarians from other parts of Vojvodina or Transylvania might express a desire to move to the autonomous region. In the long term, this process could lead to the formation of 'ethnically clean zones' and the disappearance of intercultural cohabitation from either context.

Though this may appear to be a hypothetical scenario, it can be confirmed through reference to empirical reality. In Bečej (Northern Bačka), for instance, we are currently witnessing the formation of two separate zones: the Serbian and the ethnic Hungarian zones.⁴¹ This is the result of the recent clashes between young Serb refugees and local Hungarian youths. While these phenomena are of low significance, they serve as a warning in terms of the possible implementation of the ethno-territorial medium and the institutionalization of ethnic separation.

An adaptive attempt to apply Western proposals in East European environments would consist of emphasizing the principle of territoriality, as prescribed by Jürgen Habermas, with reference to the specific needs of the region or regions in question. In Vojvodina and Transylvania, this could take the form of the introduction of regionalization as a medium for the management of inter-communal relations. Two interesting proposals have been prepared by the two Novi Sad-based social scientists Jovan Komšić and Dejan Janča. Komšić and Janča introduce the concept of the 'sub-region', i.e. an association of municipalities within a larger region. Apart from dealing with issues more effectively and 'on the spot' at the local level, an additional contribution of sub-regions would be to '...enable ethnic minority groups living in a compact territory to cherish their cultural

identity more adequately and play an active part in the development of the broader region'.⁴²

The medium of the sub-region could provide a reliable alternative to the ethno-territorial demands of the Hungarian elites in Vojvodina and Transylvania. Under the condition that similar associations of municipalities are set up within the same region, the focus would clearly shift from the ethnic to the territorial. This could have a double benefit. On the one hand, the civic character of sub-regions consisting of minority-populated municipalities would be emphasized, thereby alleviating the mistrust of the mainstream population. At the same time, the sub-region could provide a forum for minority communities that could be less easily monopolized by political actors operating within the community.

Janča and Komšić argue that the proper function of entities such as sub-regions relies upon the devolution of powers and the establishment of self-government institutions at the regional level. What they both propose is the endowment of regions with bodies, such as a regional assembly, according to the principle of subsidiarity. A regional assembly should enjoy legislative, executive and partly judicial powers.⁴³ Nevertheless, what could impede the implementation of the regionalist alternative in Vojvodina or Transylvania is the persistence of pro-centralist tendencies among Serbian as well as Romanian policymakers.

Still, these recommendations, as well as the application of positive discrimination and the establishment of representative institutions for minorities, offer partial solutions. What is really needed in the case of Central and Eastern Europe is the development of domestic models for managing ethnic relations. As Western social scientists have structured their multicultural models through empirical reference to their societies, East European social scientists should formulate their 'anti-models' through reference to East European contexts where intercultural understanding remains a social reality. Vojvodina and Transylvania are not the only regions where this is true. The Romanian Banat, Istria in Croatia and the Transcarpathian Region in the Ukraine represent yet more examples where intercultural understanding seems to have withstood ethnic friction and adverse political and socioeconomic circumstances. However, drawing up guidelines for the formulation of such models will be left to another article.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

The case for multiculturalism is rooted in the rights of minority groups to cultural membership and recognition. Multiculturalism aims to establish a common good in diverse societies based on the equality of citizenship and the adoption of civic values on cultural equality. Despite this, multiculturalism in the West mainly functions in terms of an institutional practice. Irrespective of whether it forms a part of the state's agenda (e.g. Britain) or is implemented via informal channels (e.g. France), the Western multicultural experience usually has a number of common points of reference: it involves social segregation along ethnic lines, is conditioned by the racial catalyst, and primarily concentrates on the integration of 'new' minority communities.

By way of contrast, in East European societies such as those of Vojvodina and Transylvania, intercultural cohabitation is the result of a chronic socialization process among populations with different origins. Within such contexts, intercultural understanding is primarily a mass phenomenon communicated from the grass-roots upwards towards the elite level. As demonstrated in the cases of Vojvodina and Transylvania, this is able to bridge the gap between mainstream and minority elites, even under adverse political circumstances. The state of political stability in Western societies, on the other hand, is often not sufficient to combat the 'lethal' combination of racial prejudice, socioeconomic antagonism and administrative incompetence at the regional level.

The creation of institutional guarantees for minority rights would represent an additional step towards safeguarding stability in East European multiethnic societies. The recommendations of Western proponents of multiculturalism should also be considered. However, a distinction should always be made between adaptive and maladaptive cases of application. Finally, it is essential that domestic models be developed for dealing with ethno-cultural diversity in Central and Eastern Europe.

NOTES

- 1 Kymlicka 1995: 84-83, Taylor 1994: 25-7, 65-8.
- 2 Habermas 1994: 130, 139.
- 3 Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons 1985: 316.
- 4 Bleich 1998: 85.
- 5 Ballard 1994, Menski 2003: 10-12.
- 6 *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team Chaired by Ted Cattle* 2001: 9-12, 15.
- 7 For a full listing of manifestations of hate for Britain's Muslim community immediately after 9/11, see European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (Britain) 2001.
- 8 In 1989-90, only 17.3 percent (i.e. 60,000) of eligible students attended the mother-tongue teaching programs. For more on this issue see Bleich 1998: 87.
- 9 Taguieff 1987: 328-29. The author contends that the recognition of the 'other', as prescribed by the proponents of multiculturalism, can only be hierarchical.
- 10 For a discussion of French anti-racist legislation, see European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (France 2) 2004: 9-14.
- 11 In 2002, 924 of the total of 1,305 racist threats and acts were directed against the Jewish community. Besides the marginal far-right groupings, Islamic extremists were the alleged perpetrators of a significant number of these acts. For more on this issue, see European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (Brussels) 2004: 26.
- 12 For more on this issue, see European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (France) 2001.
- 13 The term 'national minorities' usually indicates a higher legal status in comparison to the designation 'ethnic minorities'. In this text, however, both terms will be used alternately.
- 14 It should be born in mind that this piece of work was written prior to the Montenegrin referendum of May 2006.
- 15 For examples of the inadequate protection of minority rights in Vojvodina during the 1990s, see Korhec 1998: 22-3, United Nations Economic and Social Council 1996: 17.
- 16 For a text version of the law see *Slubeni List SRJ* 2002.
- 17 For more on this issue, see Council of Europe Publishing House 1995.
- 18 The '*Omnibus Zakon*' was drafted by the executive council of the assembly of the autonomous province of Vojvodina (Novi Sad) on December 14, 2001. It was officially approved by the Serbian parliament in Belgrade on February 4, 2002. For a text version of the '*Omnibus Zakon*', including an explanatory section, see <http://www.vojvodina.com/prilozi/omnibus.htm>.
- 19 The minority languages with a recognized legal status in Vojvodina are Hungarian, Slovakian, Romanian, and Ruthenian.

- 20 Puzigaca and Molnar: 15.
- 21 Lazar and Koković 2005: 7.
- 22 Interview with a sociologist at the University of Novi Sad; November 14, 2005; interview with representative of the Serbian Orthodox Church; Novi Sad, March 18, 2001.
- 23 The group stereotype about Serbs is that they are open and joyful people but not very punctual. The Hungarians, on the other hand, are regarded as precise, gentle and hard-working people but not particularly exciting. However, no specific stereotypes exist about the Romanians, the Slovaks or the Ruthenes. It might be of interest to add that despite the ethnic hatred resulting from the recent conflicts in the former Yugoslavia certain positive stereotypes about Croats and Slovenians (e.g. they are considered to be gentle and clean in terms of hygiene) have not changed significantly in Vojvodina. Finally, the Vojvodinians as a whole tend to regard themselves as more cultured and progressive than the inhabitants of Serbia proper. Some information about these issues was disclosed to the author in the course of his field research in Vojvodina (interview with sociologist; interview with historian at the University of Novi Sad; March 13, 2001).
- 24 Lazar and Koković 2005: 7, 8.
- 25 For more on this issue, see *Constitution of Romania (1990)*, at: <http://domino.kappa.ro/guvern/constitutia-e.html>.
- 26 In addition, Article 148 forbids any constitutional revision in so far as the state's official language is concerned, and Article 1.1 defines Romania as a unitary *national state*.
- 27 In this body, each organization of citizens belonging to national minorities and with a seat in parliament has 3 representatives. The main areas of jurisdiction of the Council of National Minorities are: **a.** submitting for approval to the Minister for National Minorities the distribution of funds, allocated by the state budget, to the citizens' organizations belonging to national minorities; **b.** submitting proposals for the elaboration of draft laws and other such acts within its jurisdiction; **c.** examining through special commissions draft laws and government decisions affecting the rights and duties of persons belonging to national minorities. For more on this issue, see International Peace Information Centre 1999: 25.
- 28 The Department for the Protection of National Minorities is administered by a Minister for National Minorities and is mainly responsible for: **a.** drawing up draft laws and other acts within the field of its activity; **b.** approving draft laws and other acts affecting the rights and duties of persons belonging to national minorities proposed by the Council of National Minorities; **c.** monitoring the implementation of domestic and international regulations on minority issues; **d.** promoting and organizing programs on the preservation and development of the ethno-cultural, linguistic and religious identity of persons belonging to national minorities. For more on this issue, see *Ibid.*: 24.

- 29 According to an estimate by the Centre for Research on Ethnic Relations (The Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca), approximately 1/3 of Transylvanian Hungarians are married to Romanians. Information about this issue was disclosed to the author in the course of his field research in Transylvania (Interview with the Director of the Centre for Research on Interethnic Relations, The Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca; November 30, 2005).
- 30 Research Center for Interethnic Relations 2000: 49.
- 31 The political parties that represent ethnic Hungarian interests in Vojvodina are the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Vojvodina (VMDK) and the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina (VMSZ). It might be useful to add that the smaller Democratic Union of Croats in Vojvodina (DSHV) has also been active in the province since 1991.
- 32 'Parallel elites' is the designation used in order to denote a variety of political groupings that operated within Kosovo's Albanian community in the 1990s and were not recognized by the Serbian state. It should be added that apart from the fragmentation of Kosovo's political landscape along ethnic lines a state of ethnic segregation between Serbs and Albanians has persisted since the formation of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.
- 33 In Vojvodina, approximately 80 percent of the Roma population is illiterate, semi-literate or functionally illiterate. For this data, see Petsinis 2003: 10-11. In Romania, as a whole, 44 percent of Roma males and 59 percent of females are unable to read (1993 figures). On this issue see Biro and Kovacs, et al, 2001: 268.
- 34 For information on the frequency of this phenomenon in Vojvodina, see Petsinis 2003: 11. On Romania, see Biro and Kovacs, et al, 2001: 268. Kymlicka 1995: 71.
- 35 *Ibid.*: 185. It should be noted that a number of specialists in ethno-nationalist conflict have expressed similar positions. For examples of this, see: Hannum 1990, Horowitz 1985.
- 37 Personal autonomy addresses the fields of culture, education and public information with the aim of preserving the ethno-cultural identity of the Hungarian minority. This notion also entails the formation of an ethnic Hungarian 'assembly' in Vojvodina with the responsibility of taking care of the aforementioned areas.
- 38 Territorial autonomy refers to the self-government of the municipalities where Hungarian concentration is particularly dense. This would involve the merging of the predominantly Hungarian municipalities in Northern Bačka into a Hungarian autonomous region, a 'special status' entity with separate administration. The VMSZ proposal goes one step further than that of the VMDK and names 9 municipalities that should form the 'Hungarian Self-governing District' (i.e. Ada, Bačka Topola, Bečej, Čoka, Kanjiza, Mali Idoš, Subotica, Kneževac and Senta). The proposed seat of the autonomous region is Subotica.

- ³⁹ Local self-administration is to be exercised in rural communities with a predominantly Hungarian population, along the Serbian-Hungarian border. This arrangement should allow these communities to associate with the local administration in the Hungarian communities across the border. For more information on the proposals of the two parties see: VMDK 1992, VMSZ 1996.
- ⁴⁰ According to the UDMR leadership, "...the forms of autonomy and self-government which appear in Recommendation No.1201 of the Council of Europe would assure a convenient frame for the Hungarian minority in Romania to cultivate its national identity". Although not explicitly stated, the demand for self-government seems to be centred on those areas where Hungarians form the local majority (e.g. the Szekler region). For more on this issue, see UDMR 1993: 18.
- ⁴¹ Information on this issue was disclosed to the author in the course of his field research in Serbia (Interview with sociologist, University of Belgrade; November 18, 2005).
- ⁴² Janča 2000: 34 and Komšić 2001: 162, 172.
- ⁴³ Janča 2000: 34 and Komšić 2000: 172.

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