



Protecting Multiculturalism: Muslims, Security, and Integration in Canada

By John S. McCoy

Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018. 292 pp., Paper. £27.99 (Paperback).
ISBN 9780773552791.

Reviewed by K. Onur Unutulmaz
Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations, Social Sciences University of Ankara

The opinions expressed in this review represent the views of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the TRT World Research Centre.

Multiculturalism, in the sense of co-existence of multiple ethnicities, religious beliefs, languages, and cultures, has become an undeniable characteristic of all Western countries as well as many others around the globe. Multiculturalism (with a capital M), in the sense of a political perspective or ideology on how to manage such diversity, however, appears to have been declared as 'utterly failed', or even 'dead'. John McCoy's book starts with this premise and argues that while the European leaders, who once championed Multicultural policies, are rushing to announce its failure in a context of 'securitisation' of migration and minorities powered by a visible 'anti-Islamic' social movement, state Multiculturalism is intact and successful in its 'birthplace', Canada.

The book is a timely and valuable addition to the literature on Multiculturalism, drawing on an extensive review of this large literature (not merely on the Canadian context), various public opinion polls and other statistics, as well as primary data collected through a series of interviews with Canadian Muslims and other key informants. As the title aptly demonstrates, the study has a normative standing point as it not only tries to empirically demonstrate that state Multiculturalism in Canada has remained intact in the face of this widespread narrative of 'crisis of Multiculturalism', through proving to be an effective policy in managing diversity in a super-diverse liberal democracy, but also makes the argument that state Multiculturalism is the most dignified and fair way forward for multicultural Canada, if not for all comparably diverse Western democracies.

To answer its main question, i.e. whether Canadian state Multiculturalism, often praised for its success but recently increasingly criticised for its shortcomings, stood the stress test of the contemporary 'crisis of Multiculturalism' most evident in Europe, the author first starts with an analysis of the specific type of racism that he identifies to be underlying the securitised current context in Europe. He suggests that "rather than viewing racism as a misinformed set of prejudices and beliefs, racism should be understood as an ideology" (p.15). Drawing on some earlier work, he uses the concept of 'xenoracism' defined as "a form of racism that denigrates and reifies people before segregating and/or expelling them, xenophobia that bears all the marks of the old racism. It is racism in substance but

'xenoracism in form" (p.16). Using this concept, the author suggests that xenoracism against Muslim minorities, who in fact include diverse ethnicities, languages, and cultures, is the driving force of the securitization and the moral panic that manifest themselves in the crisis of Multiculturalism narrative, and that push many Western states towards more assimilationist measures clothed as integration and cohesion policies. Because of this premise, the author turns a specific gaze at the Muslims in Canada as the most significant target of xenoracism and their experiences on the one hand, and at state multiculturalism, integration and assimilation, and security as the specific policy domains, on the other in seeking the response.

In the following consecutive chapters, the book delivers on its promise to first provide a good framework and context on Muslims and xenoracism in Canada, followed by three analytical chapters in which state Multiculturalism, integration and assimilation, and lastly, security domains in Canada in the face of the crisis of Multiculturalism narrative.

So, what is the book's verdict? Is Canada an exception to this strong narrative, that state Multiculturalism has failed, and it is now dead, which significantly shapes the political discourse as well as actual policies in many Western countries? In short, the author says yes, with a degree of self-admitted optimism and idealisation and some significant caveats concerning the current and prospective risks. Analytical and empirical support to this overall conviction comes in three main instalments: in the first instance (Chapter 5), the author evaluates whether Canadian state Multiculturalism as a major policy is successful, at least in a comparative sense, and whether it is an exception to the crisis in its Western peers. Here, the reader is provided with a somewhat idealised account of the history and present situation of the Canadian state Multiculturalism, followed by five reasons why the author believes that Canada is an exception: (i) there is significant public support for Multiculturalism; (ii) Multiculturalism has become part of Canadian national identity, and this creates a more welcoming environment for newcomers; (iii) Multiculturalism attracts more newcomers to citizenship and civic life; (iv) Multiculturalism is codified into (and thus safeguarded by) the Constitution; and, (v) Canadian Muslims themselves have a favourable view of state Multiculturalism. Not only does the author do a very respectable job in supporting each of these arguments with empirical evidence, but he also

considers the main arguments made by opponents of state Multiculturalism concerning the various shortcomings and pitfalls of the policy. While responding to and refuting some such arguments, including that (i) Multiculturalism creates separateness, (ii) it opens a space for radicalism and extremism to flourish, (iii) it is inadequate in addressing inequality and racism, and (iv) even despite Constitutional safeguards, the former Conservative government undermined the policy; the author also concedes certain points manifesting that the analysis is sober and far from naïve expectations of an activist. Crucially, he makes the argument that Canadian state Multiculturalism works, despite growing pressure from populist and nationalist political discourses, but its success should not be taken for granted. To the contrary, significant steps need to be taken to protect it.

In the next two analytical chapters respectively on 'integration and assimilation' (Chapter 6), and 'security' (Chapter 7), the book again engages in an analysis of Canadian Multiculturalism with respect to these two issue areas, focusing on Muslims and with a comparative perspective with other Western contexts. Overall, these two chapters further support the main argument that Canada stands as a successful exception. Multiculturalism in Canada is presented to have achieved better outcomes in terms of integration, not only of long-term residents but also of newcomers, compared to Western European countries or the US. Similarly, while conceding some significant caveats and admitting some backward movement particularly under the former Conservative leadership and more recently in the post-9/11 period concerning counter-terror measures, the analysis on securitisation also suggests that it has remained much more limited in the Canadian context compared to its European counterparts. This argument is made in an even more accentuated manner concerning the 'societal securitisation', and the author suggests that the Canadian society, younger generations even more so than the older ones, have embraced Multiculturalism and this prevents securitisation within wider segments of society as observed elsewhere.

There are a number of issues that need to be raised concerning the book and its main argument. Firstly, as the author puts it, "some will think this assessment optimistic, even wildly so" (p. 209). While, as suggested above, it would definitely be unfair to the book to suggest it is too naïve or 'wildly optimistic' considering

the well-elaborated analytical arguments and abundance of empirical evidence, it does appear that the normative stance of the author in favour of state Multiculturalism had an impact on the overall narrative and interpretations of empirical data. In other words, the assessment does appear optimistic. Secondly, as it also mentioned above, the analysis and evaluation of the 'success' of Multiculturalism in the Canadian context are conducted in comparison to the Western European and American cases. It might be argued that the overly securitised contexts in some Western European countries might be producing a too low of a bar for comparing the 'Canadian success'. Suggesting that 'societal securitisation is not as high in Canada as it is in Britain' does not mean that it is not 'high' or 'dangerously high' in Canada. The same point can be made, for instance, for residential segregation, the experience of racial/religious discrimination in daily life, or higher levels of unemployment amongst Muslims. As the author concedes in many cases that such issues exist in Canada, and some of them tend to grow in recent years, the evaluation of the success of the policy appears more subjective. Of course, by their very nature, such evaluations will contain a significant degree of subjectivity and require contextualised interpretation. But comparing favourably to a 'bad case' does not necessarily demonstrate a case is 'good', just that it is 'better' and, as suggested, the bar set by various European countries where openly xenophobic and anti-Islam political parties draw such significant support is not particularly high.

Lastly, the author himself raises a very significant question that needs to be considered in assessing its main argument. He asks whether the argued difference in the Canadian case stems from its exceptionality or its uniqueness. This is a very important question because if it is the former, i.e. Canada is exceptional in terms of its handling of very similar problems faced by various Western peers, then, Canada is doing something right that others are doing wrong, in which case Canadian state Multiculturalism can be recommended to other countries facing the similar challenges of diversity. If it is the latter, i.e. Canada is unique, and that is why state Multiculturalism works here much better than it worked elsewhere, then, this book's theoretical contribution is more limited, mostly confined to the Canadian case, and perhaps Multiculturalism really failed in other contexts. Here, the author gives some of the reasons why Multiculturalism has worked in Canada

as well as it did. He talks about the fact that Canada is a relatively 'young' nation, for instance. This has meant that, in relative terms, it went through a more recent nation-building process, and national identity was more malleable in the Canadian case. He further suggests the national identity was not ethnically-based. It included the concept of 'nation of immigrants', and soon it acquired Multiculturalism as an inherent part of itself. And lastly, the author also suggests the migrant stock of Canada was qualitatively different than those of many European countries in that they have adopted more selective migration policies much earlier and ended up with wealthier, more skilled, and higher-educated immigrants. There is no doubt that all these factors have contributed significantly to success, however great or small, of Multiculturalism in Canada. The more crucial question is whether it is these unique characteristics of Canada that *made Multiculturalism work*. If so, while the debate over whether Multiculturalism is the way to go in Canada can continue with this book as a strong argument in favour, the argument in favour of applying Multicultural policies in other contexts does not gain much from it.

The book needs to be commended for its vigorous approach to empirically and analytically supporting its arguments while incorporating the subjective views and experiences of the group under focus, the Canadian Muslims. Also, the literature on management of diversity, often described as the integration of immigrants and minorities, has been overwhelmingly receiving studies moving away from the Multiculturalist standpoints towards integration and cohesion-based ones. In other words, the crisis of Multiculturalism narrative the author discusses in his book appears to be increasingly dominating the academic literature in addition to the political discourses. In such a context, the book makes a significant argument in favour of state Multiculturalism, not merely concerning its normative desirability or superiority compared to other approaches to the integration of immigrants and management of diversity, but also concerning its effectiveness and practical success. Overall, readers interested in state Multiculturalism in Canada are definitely recommended to read this well-written book.