
4

Does multiculturalism pose new threats to the welfare state? Soroka, Johnston and Banting, and Miller, address important and contested issues within this broad question. In light of what I take to be the focus of this Francqui Prize Conference — and Philippe Van Parijs own concerns — I want to address the authors' contribution to a somewhat narrower question, namely whether multicultural *policies* (MCP in the broad sense explored by Banting and Kymlicka) pose *additional* threats to the *redistributive* institutions and programs characteristic of welfare states.

The authors explore alleged claims that multiculturalism threatens or breaks existing causal mechanisms crucial to the long term stability of the welfare state:

Common national culture → common identity → (interpersonal or political) trust → support for redistributive programs

Soroka, Johnston and Banting provide much needed empirical research on the relation between individual attitudes regarding diversity in a multicultural society and support for redistributive welfare arrangements, including those that pose moral hazard, — in the case of Canada. In addition to the methodological stringency of the research, I particularly want to stress the distinctions and connections they explore between interpersonal trust and political trust in government — for instance, that it is not obvious that political trust is best conceived as (or created by) generalized interpersonal trust. The role of institutions in creating and maintaining trust — a long standing concern of political philosophers — deserves close attention also

Do multicultural policies erode trust in redistributive programs? Questions for Miller and Soroka, Johnston & Banting

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when exploring the impact of multiculturalism on the welfare state, especially regarding MCP and redistributive institutions.

Soroka, Johnston & Banting's overall finding seems to be that ethnic diversity is not a strong threat to trust and welfare arrangements. Yet ethnic context, especially geographically overlapping populations, has some impact on interpersonal trust. And there are clear correlations between interpersonal trust and support for welfare programs. Among the interesting hypotheses they hint at, is that MCP may continue to pose little of a threat to redistributive policies if the welfare institutions are carefully crafted. For instance, they note that the expenditures are lower in Canada than in Europe, less mean-tested than in the US, and that the institutions secure rapid economic integration of immigrants. All these features may remove grounds for suspecting abuse, hence facilitating widespread trust that the arrangements are not abused.¹

David Miller explores implications of multiculturalism in the sense of individuals regarding themselves as belonging to distinct cultural communities. Multiculturalism poses a challenge to Rawlsian normative theories of distributive justice under pluralism. These theories require citizens to share a sense of justice: each individual must be prepared to act on principles P toward all other persons within domain D. The real challenge as he sees it is not whether there is or can be sufficient overlapping consensus across such communities regarding P, the terms of fair coexistence, for there seems to be room for such consensus on the substantive content of a sense of justice. Instead, the main challenge is that members of each cultural community will only include their fellow community members within D, instead of including the whole citizenry. The lack of a shared national identity in this sense hinders trust in the general compliance with redistributive arrangements.

Four observations on the two stimulating papers may identify areas for further research:

The definitions of "culture" and "identity" are somewhat underdeveloped, making it at times difficult to grasp the argument and assess the evidence cited. For instance, some of the evidence adduced draws on studies of ethnic groups or "visible minorities", where the extent of shared culture and the impact of unjust discrimination may make the findings inappropriate for the causal arguments made.

Miller's command of the empirical cross-cultural research on norms is a great asset in this field. However, his measured optimism regarding the existing overlapping consensus on social justice norms should perhaps be even more measured. He cites studies on the

¹ For elaboration of such considerations, cf. Bo Rothstein. (1998).

weight of need, merit and equality in one-shot acts of distributing goods, across “individualistic” and “collectivistic” societies. Leaving aside my worries concerning whether prominent normative theories fit well into either of these categories, it is not clear that these findings shed light on the extent of actual agreement regarding the distributive principles for institutional allocation of certain goods — particularly since the relative weighting of the three principles in different areas of application seem to differ drastically.

It is not clear in Miller’s paper that the challenges to the actual existence of, or maintenance of, a shared sense of justice only arise under multiculturalism: they would seem to exist within any population with subsets sharing philosophical/religious views or conceptions of the good life. Wouldn’t the same — possibly flawed — response be available, namely that yet the significance of such membership for the individuals’ sense of a meaningful life is unproblematic as long as it does not prevent a sense of justice regarding shared social institutions among the citizenry as a whole? Is the worry that such constraints sap all significance from such communities? Again, the challenge would not be new, it seems, since similar worries have been raised by communitarians?

While we may agree about the causal chain sketched above, it remains to be argued more convincingly that the requisite trust cannot be maintained by other means that a “national culture”, which would seem to be one of Miller’s central claims. Firstly, each person may well share in several, overlapping cultures, including some based on ethnicity, religion, profession, region, and shared institutionalized practices. Indeed, one might argue that most people “will see themselves as straddling two or more cultural groups”. Therefore, the content of a requisite shared (political) culture deserves close attention. Secondly, there may be other mechanisms for securing the requisite trust in general conditional compliance than membership in a common culture. The roles of institutions in this regard deserve further attention. This also suggests that “culture” must be defined more precisely (for elaboration, *cf.* Follesdal (2000)).

These observations do not detract from what I regard as important and plausible implications of the findings and arguments presented by Soroka, Johnston, Banting and by Miller regarding multicultural policies, namely the role of institutions in creating and maintaining necessary forms of trust among citizens. This concerns both the policies addressing multiculturalism and those regarding redistribution. We should consider the need to create trust when crafting multicultural policies, for instance worry about setting up special institutions for groups if the result is to prevent day to day interaction and hence understanding and respect, among ordinary

citizens and elites. And we must consider carefully whether to economize on trust when crafting redistributive arrangements.

R E F E R E N C E S

- [1] Follesdal, A. 2000. "The Future Soul of Europe: Nationalism or Just Patriotism? On David Miller's Defence of Nationality", *Journal of Peace Research*, 37, 4: 503-18.
- [2] Rothstein, B. 1998. *Just institutions matter: The moral and political logic of the universal welfare state*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.