MATTERS OF CONTROL: INTEGRATION TESTS AND NATURALISATION REFORM IN WESTERN EUROPE

Abstract

It is unfortunate, but true, that in the new millennium there has been a shift away from multiculturalism and the politics of difference towards integration and assimilation and a gradual ‘thickening’ of political belonging. While the Populist Right has pursued an Islamophobic and anti-migrant discourse with a renewed dynamism, governments frequently comment on the alleged weaknesses of the multicultural model and the advantages of thicker, communitarian notions of community, as attested by the revision of naturalisation law and policy in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and elsewhere. In this paper I review integration policies in Europe, seek to account for the diffusion of integration tests and argue that the fashionable language of integration and/or tempered assimilation are politically dated and normatively deficient approaches to diversity. I furnish the basic tenets of an alternative pluralist mode of inclusion based on respectful symbiosis and the ‘letting be’ of groups of migrant origin. In the final section of the paper, I explore an alternative to naturalisation that is more consonant with the pluralist mode of incorporation and consider possible objections to my argument.

Keywords: citizenship, integration, naturalisation, multiculturalism, nationalism.

1. EPISTROPHE

Processes of homogenisation, which characterised the building of modern nation states and which were the norm until the 1970s, became increasingly difficult to defend in the 1980s and 1990s.
The articulation of essentialist conceptions of national identity and pressures upon ethnic and racial groups to assimilate into the system and culture of the host society were criticised for their oppressive consequences and exclusionary effects. The hybrid identities of second and third generation migrants, the development of diasporic cultures of transplantations and transnational linkages did not only call into question the binary codes on which group identities were perceived to have been formed, but they also projected a vision of community in which cultural differences could be peacefully negotiated and profitably accommodated. The parallel trends of internal differentiation and cultural globalisation, coupled with European integration and processes of decentralisation, gradually induced transformations of national identities in Europe and elsewhere, and opened up the possibility of creating more open, inclusive and reflexive communities. But they were also accompanied by new challenges, such as the valorisation of difference, group closures and deeply conservative reactions.

The New Right in Europe, for instance, embraced difference as a means of ‘purifying’ national community by excluding the ‘racial’ other. Non-national residents have the right to be different, but in their own home state, since hybridity and multiculturalism undermine the alleged ethnic and cultural homogeneity of the host national communities. Accordingly, racism mutated to what Taguieff (1994: 124; Balibar and Wallerstein 1991) has termed cultural differentialist or mixophobic racism. Conservatives on both sides of the Atlantic have also attacked the idea of group-differentiated citizenship on the grounds that it leads to separatism and generates mutual mistrust and conflict. The perceived withdrawal of communities into ethnic and racial ‘islands’ has been viewed to be a threat to the political and cultural integrity of the state, particularly in the US and France (Vertovec 1995). In Western Europe, uncritical readings of Islam as being antithetical to western culture and democracy have led to the re-introduction of policies for ‘social cohesion’, ‘integration’ and ‘assimilation’, including the official promotion of national identity, official lists of national values, language prohibitions in public transport, schools universities and hospitals, compulsory language courses and tests for migrants, naturalisation
ceremonies and oaths of loyalty. In this respect, the trend towards de-ethnicisation and the thinning out of national identities that scholars identified at the turn of the century has been reversed (Joppke and Morawska 2003; Carrera 2006: 8-9).

As the discourse on integration and the promotion of social cohesion displaces multiculturalism and the politics of recognition, integration courses and tests spring and become ingrained in West European polities.¹ These are not confined to naturalisation; they are also associated with entry (in the Netherlands, the UK, Germany and Denmark), permanent residence (e.g. in the Netherlands, Austria, Denmark, France, Germany and the UK), family reunification (in the Netherlands, Germany) and access to social benefits (in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Finland and Denmark). Whereas in the past integration policy was more aligned to (a liberal) citizenship policy and non-discrimination, and was thus contrasted to a restrictive migration policy, integration and migration issues have now become more closely associated. Tougher integration policies are thus used as means of discouraging further migration and restricting the entry of migrants.

In the UK, the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 ‘thickened’ naturalisation policy by including ‘integration’ requirements, such as ‘sufficient knowledge about life in the United Kingdom’, in addition to language proficiency. It also modernised the current oath of allegiance and introduced a citizenship pledge to be taken during citizenship ceremonies. Such reforms were, allegedly, needed in order to end the current ‘mail order’ approach to the acquisition of British nationality, to give symbolic significance to the acquisition of citizenship and to enhance the integration of migrants. As the White Paper stated (Home Office 2002a: 34), citizenship ceremonies ‘can have an important impact on promoting the value of naturalisation and immigrant groups welcome them’. The requirements of sufficient knowledge of English and

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¹ Compare R. Baubock et al., Acquisition and Loss of Nationality, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 1996.
knowledge about life in the United Kingdom (Part 1(1), Home Office 2002b), on the other hand, have been seen as instrumental in fostering and renewing the social fabric of our communities and rebuilding a sense of common citizenship’ (Home Office 2002a: 10). Linguistic and knowledge about life in the UK tests have now become mandatory for those seeking to settle in the UK and for newcomers. National officials are quite keen to complete what they see as ‘the citizenship revolution’, by requiring migrants to demonstrate good behaviour and a willingness to integrate. Espousing the language of ‘good citizenship’, the former Communities Secretary, Ms Ruth Kelly, and the Immigration Minster, Mr Liam Byrne, have proposed a points system for citizenship acquisition which would require migrants to accrue credits by meeting residency requirements, bringing new investment in the UK, passing English tests, demonstrating knowledge of life in the UK, undertaking civic work and living in a law abiding way (*The Guardian*, 5 June 2007). From this it follows that ‘anti-social behaviour’ or criminal behaviour would result in reduction of credits.

In the Netherlands, integration courses and tests serve as a migration tool, aimed at discouraging migration under the guise of facilitating the insertion of migrants into the society. Following the entry into force of the 1998 Newcomer Integration Act, migrants were obliged to attend integration courses, that is, language and ‘social orientation’ courses, and non-completion resulted in administrative fines or reductions in social benefits. Integration courses/tests for new arrivals are now compulsory and funded mostly by the applicant. In addition, following the 2007 Integration Act, an individual’s failure to pass a test within a certain period can result in a fine and the loss of entitlement to permanent residence or the non-renewal of a temporary residence permit. These tests have also become deterritorialised since the 2005 Act on Integration Abroad; migrants have to undergo a basic linguistic and civic orientation test in the country of origin in

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2 The linguistic competence requirement already existed under the 1981 British Nationality Act, but it was rarely enforced in practice.
order to gain permission to enter the Netherlands. The same applies to spouses seeking family reunification, thereby indicating a discursive shift away from the principle of protection of family life towards restrictive family migration policymaking. In addition, integration procedures have become more stringent and their personal scope has been broadened to include settled migrants who entered the country since 1998. It is interesting, however, that migrants from Australia, Canada, the EU, New Zealand, Norway and the US are excluded from the ambit of these provisions, thereby giving rise to legitimate criticisms that ‘integration’ is being used as a means of filtering the flow of population, restricting the entry of migrants and of promoting an official mono-culturalism.

In Germany, integration tests, containing both language and civic orientation courses, function as both migration and citizenship tools, since they form part of existing naturalisation requirements and have now become compulsory for newcomers. Indeed, under the Residence Act 2004 (Section 44.a(1)), a failure to comply with them may result in administrative fines, non-renewal of a temporary residence permit, non-acquisition of a permanent residence permit, a reduction or loss in social benefits and even in deportation. Following a proposal about the extension of such tests into the family reunification realm at the ‘second integration summit’ on 12 July 2007, the undertaking of language tests by spouses seeking family reunion in the country of origin has now become mandatory. In Austria, Denmark and France, on the other hand, ‘integration contracts’ between the migrant and the host country entail language and socio-cultural orientation courses and vocational training. ‘Integration contracts’ are mandatory and their duration ranges between one and three years.

All these developments attest the sidelining of multiculturalism. Western governments believe that community relations would improve by introducing a thicker notion of national belonging, rather than by promoting processes of citizensisation (Tully 2002), that is, the transformation of subjects into full participants in self-government. Because ‘too much diversity’ is perceived to result in either segregation or fragmentation, allowing the flourishing of diversity
within an overarching national culture or assimilation are the preferred modes for migrant incorporation. But such approaches tend to rely on a contestable understanding of multiculturalism and treat abstract notions such as national values and national culture as unproblematic. By accentuating the importance of ‘social cohesion’ and migrants’ voluntary identification with national values, they also tend to remain silent on the structural obstacles and inequalities that hamper migrant incorporation and the development of feelings of belonging.

2. INTEGRATION THEN AND NOW

Historically, states have responded differently to ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity. Distinctive historical experiences, ideological orientations, political cultures as well as the social class and national origins of migrants feature among the determinants of different policy frameworks. Notwithstanding the existence of policy divergence and the different historical contexts of migration processes, it is generally the case that difference, be it ethnic, racial, cultural or religious, has been seen as a nuisance and/or a problem for social integration. Not only has there been a strong legacy of discrimination in many states which has placed non-white ‘foreigners’ and residents outside the scope of the community (Martin 1985), but minority groups have generally been under immense pressure to conform to the norms defined by the majority communities.

Drawing on, and comparing, the merits and weaknesses of a range of state responses to cultural diversity and of their implications, the canonical view in the literature in the 1980s and 1990s was that the pluralistic or multicultural mode of incorporation fares better than the older modes assimilation, integration and liberal proceduralism. Assimilation requires minority communities to renounce their particular ethnic or cultural identity and to embrace the culture of the majority community. In the early 20th century, Park and Burgess (1921: 735) defined assimilation as ‘a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the
memories, sentiments and attitudes of other persons and groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common life’. This process of fusion and amalgamation was captured by the traditional portrait of the US as a melting pot in which old traits would be eradicated and replaced by a new national identity. Becoming an American thus required the casting off of foreign languages, traditions and values and the embracing of the American way of life. France, too, has embraced assimilation designed to maximise national cohesion and to enhance the French national identity.\(^4\) Echoing the French model of a colour-blind approach to diversity, the High Council on Integration (1999: 19; see also Favell 1998) stated that French policy must ‘obey a logic of equality’ - not a ‘logic of minorities’. Migrants are thus moulded into French citizens via processes of socialisation, compulsory primary education and military service. By so doing, they gain the acceptance of the ‘core’ society.

Integration, on the other hand, tolerates differences in so far as they are confined to the private realm. In the public realm, minorities are required to embrace the nation’s ideals and to identify with the common culture of citizenship, as defined by the majority community. This invariably tends to be Anglo-Saxon and Christian in the UK. As Connolly (1996: 66) has observed, national pluralism consists of a national trunk rooted in the soil of Christianity, ‘with numerous limbs branching out so far as their connection to the trunk allows’. The proceduralist mode, according to Parekh (1998; 2000), requires a formal, neutral framework upon which some kind of minimal agreement has been secured. This mode is characterized by the cautious recognition of group identities, the arrested development of diversity and the promotion of civic national belonging. Like the language of integration, ‘the proceduralist view offers an incoherent account of the unity of the state and leaves diversity to the precarious mercy of the dominant culture’ (Parekh 1998: 80).

In contrast to the modes mentioned above, the pluralistic mode does not condition political belonging on cultural conformity or ‘like-mindedness’. It is characterised by a relaxed and inclusive attitude towards migrants, who are seen as citizens in waiting. The pluralist mode also recognizes that migrant groups require recognition and support in order to achieve parity with the dominant population in the socio-economic and educational fields and to become equal and full members, thereby sketching a vision of society in which different communities ‘interact with each other in a spirit of equality and openness’ (Parekh 1998, 2000). In such a plural community, belonging is defined in terms of being together in a common adventure and sharing responsibility for institutional design and democratic dialogue. In other words, it is premised on all members’ commitment to an (open-ended) future, in the sense of working together towards creating institutions that accommodate differences and respond to common needs, while preserving and respecting the multifaceted and distinctive identities of its members. Young (2000) makes the point that multicultural politics imposes a duty on all citizens to enter into communicative engagement with one another, and puts forward suggestions as to how minority constituencies can be heard and recognised as legitimate partners. The participation of all members in such a ‘community of concern and engagement’ (Kostakopoulou, 1996, 2001; see also Honohan, 2001) cannot but have a profound impact on their identities and culture, in the sense of making them more critical towards their own culture and more open towards others.

It is, perhaps, pluralism’s emphasis on standing back from one’s own culture and reflecting on it that have generated strong reactions against multiculturalism and diversity. Critics on both the right and the left of the political spectrum worry that multiculturalism leads to an essentialised vision of culture and the creation of bounded, homogenous communities, having little interaction among themselves. The image of ‘a society of multiple enclaves’ and the risk of political fragmentation feature centrally in such critiques, which more often than not downplay the commonalities among the various communities, shared citizenship practices and hostile attitudes towards ethnic groups. In Britain, for instance, the riots in Oldham, Burnley and
Bradford in summer 2001 were seen as signifiers of the existence of divided communities, the members of which led parallel lives and ‘an almost complete segregation based on race’ (Community Cohesion, Home Office 2001) and the 7/7 bombings in London were viewed as a clear testimony of the failure of multiculturalism, which the Government sought to address by pursuing an active integrationist policy. This entailed, among other things, the highlighting of the importance of embracing British values, patriotism and British identity and the thickening of citizenship via the introduction of more stringent naturalisation requirements. Officials argued that migrant citizens and residents had a duty to embrace British values, which include respect for the laws, parliamentary and democratic structures, the traditional values of mutual tolerance, respect for equal rights and mutual concerns, respect for different nations and cultures (Home Office 2004: 15), despite the fact that overwhelming majority of the population have never contested the normative power and functionality of such principles (Rattansi 2007: 166).

Similarly in France, the violent clashes between the police and disaffected youth in French suburbs in November 2005 were seen as a manifestation of the problem of integration, despite the fact that racism and socio-economic exclusion, and not religious identity, fuelled their actions. Young people of migrant origin demanded to be recognised as full French citizens and urged the government to act to close the gap between the abstract commitment to universal values, such as liberty and equality, and the reality of discrimination, exclusion and poor employment prospects. Whereas one could hardly discern in this rebellion a clash between one set of values over another, the discontent of second and third generation migrants, owing to their non-acceptance by the white society, was quite visible.

It is interesting that in the new civic integration discourses and policy initiatives integration is framed as a ‘two way’ process or a tacit contractual agreement between migrants
and the host society, from which a number of obligations and sanctions flow. In particular, migrants have an obligation to respect the values, culture and traditions of the host society which, in turn, promises to endow them with protection against arbitrary expulsion and deportation and equal treatment in the socio-economic and cultural spheres. Albeit its simplicity and popular appeal, the contemporary framing of integration as a two way process is problematic for a number of reasons. First, whereas in the past integration required the host society’s pro-active approach to facilitate settlement and to adapt to the presence of newcomers, the emphasis has now shifted to the migrant who has the responsibility to integrate and to prove his/her commitment to the host society (Home Office 2008; Lord Goldsmith 2007; Joppke 2003, 2007). This creates the impression that migrants have been the defaulting party, and must now redress this by being willing and ready to integrate or by renewing theirs efforts to ‘earn’ permanent residency rights and citizenship (Home Office 2008). Secondly, by shifting the focus of attention form the host society to the migrant and from the legitimate claims for equal treatment and inclusion that migrants might have to their duties and responsibilities to play a full role in society and to integrate, the frame conceals that for long migrants have been contributing and sharing the collective burden without at the same time enjoying the full benefits of membership, non-discriminatory treatment and recognition as fully respected members. This discoursive articulation effectively brackets structural constraints and durable prejudices and conceals the hierarchy and power that is endemic in migration and citizenship policies. This becomes unravelled when one examines the sanctions that follow possible non-performance; namely, non-renewal of residence permits, deportation, unsuccessful naturalisation and fines, which reduce the income of low income groups. The conditionality that accompanies the ‘two way process’ of integration as well as its extension abroad, before migration, reveals that integration is not only a mode of control and an expression of a politics of containment of difference, which characterised

the assimilationist policies of the 1960s and 1970s, but also a means of migration control designed to reduce unwanted migration. In other words, the ‘two way process’, in reality, is a ‘one way’ process, as it focuses on the migrant only, but it, simultaneously, disregards his/her point of view.

The third shortcoming of the civic integration discourse is its essentialist and racialised dimensions. Not only minority and majority communities are portrayed as monolithic and unchanging and nationalist narratives become rejuvenated, but also ‘political and media debate around integration and other issues relevant to ethnic minority groups has shifted from a more technical debate, in which different areas of disadvantage were examined and addressed, to a more general debate on cultures and values of different groups and, ultimately, on the inherent moral worth and mutual compatibility of such cultures and values’ (Council of Europe 2008, 35). Islam is often portrayed to be antithetical to human rights, democracy and free expression and Muslim citizens and residents’ critique of the Iraq war and their demands for the exercise of free religious expression are not seen as signs of successful insertion into society but are interpreted as manifestations of cultural and religious disaffection. In this respect, the European Commission against Racism and Xenophobia is deeply concerned about these developments, not only because they have allowed for racist and xenophobic expression to become, sometimes, quite explicitly, a more usual occurrence with public debate itself, but especially because of the impact that the new political and public debate has had on public opinion and on the actions of ordinary citizens’ (Council of Europe 2008, 34).

But how can one account for the spread of the discourse on and politics of social cohesion and integration? Should such a diffusion be seen as a manifestation of discursive isomorphomism leading to convergence in policies and practices (Joppke 2007)? Or should it be seen as a process of translation of ideas and frames of meaning in particular political contents and in ways that suit particular historical conjunctures and party political expediencies? The former perspective detects a general redefinition of the management of diversity in Europe (i.e., from
multiculturalism to assimilation), thereby leading to policy convergence and highlights the role of imitation, that is, of ad hoc borrowing of policy tools by national executives in different countries who may have a similar understanding of the nature of the problem they are supposed to be addressing. The latter perspective puts more emphasis on experimentation, the creative emulation of ideas and their adaptation to specific national contexts. In addition, while the former approach would point towards the articulation of a coherent discursive frame to which specific policy prescriptions are attached, the latter leaves room for the identification of incoherences and contradictions in the frame and the articulation of a layered discourse as national actors select scripts and combine ‘old’ and ‘new’ ideas in innovative ways in order to respond to policy concerns. By shedding light onto specific discursive fields and the translation of ideas in specific national policy frames, the latter perspective thus open up space for discontinuities, local alterations and, more importantly, for critical interventions.

3. ON LETTING BE

In the light of the above mentioned shortcomings of the present discourse on integration and assimilation, an alternative approach is needed. It seems to me that the key to promoting harmonious relations among communities and nurturing human capital is not to seek impose an artificial unity or an ideal homogeneity, based on either values or judgement or, indeed, language. Instead, the key is to develop a non-racialised frame of community that welcomes migrants and treats them fairly because it recognises that migrant incorporation is a long-term and multifaceted process that takes place ‘while people are getting on with their lives and are doing things’, that is, as they become enmeshed in social life and form interdependent relations.

Empirical research has demonstrated the importance of the context of reception for the settlement and incorporation of newcomers, their socio-economic mobility and for the formation of perceptions and attitudes towards the host society and its institutions (Rumbaut 1994; Alba
In addition, migration processes, notwithstanding the specific socio-political contexts, have taught us that migrants and their descendants nourish and transform the host society with their creativity, ceaseless determination and hard work and over time become indistinguishable from the autochthonous population on linguistic and socio-economic grounds, provided that they do not encounter persisting discrimination and structural disadvantages. There exists strong evidence of linguistic assimilation, which for the second generations is universal, of acculturation and a proactive approach to retain ethnic ties, customs and languages which are often fading away (Zhou 1999). Indeed, even for first generation migrants, the process of ‘learning the ropes’, ‘fitting in’ and ‘communicating in a new language’ is not a particularly lengthy one. This is because residence and one’s participation in a web of socio-economic activities result in what may be termed the ‘sociogetic’ effect, that is a centripetal dynamic connecting an individual to society and the gradual development of a feeling of ‘being at home’ in the host country. In the host country, prospective and existing citizens appreciate the synergies, knowledge, and richness opened up by their being together and their transformative interactions and collisions.

In this respect, forcing a process that will eventually happen via the adoption of state-programmes that impose undue costs on newcomers and create a less than welcoming environment can have the perverse effect of undermining migrants’ incorporation and may delay or even discourage the development of forms of allegiance towards the new society and its system. Such programmes cannot but replicate contested ethnocentric presumptions of past assimilationist policies since they frame integration on the basis of a juxtaposition of irreconcilable cultural differences between insider and outsider groups that threaten the traditional national identity - and not in terms of dynamic relationship that evolves over time (Rumbaut 1999: 185). This view is shared by the European Commission against Racism and Xenophobia (2008, 19, 34) which has noted that the imposition of sanctions is not the most appropriate or effective approach in matters of integration and that, regrettably, ‘cultures have been strongly stereotyped and values automatically and arbitrarily assigned to one or another group’.
Although the above mentioned scenario captures the most essential dimensions of migrant experience, there are some important exceptions and qualifications. Non-white migrant have almost always faced hostility and discrimination. Barriers to their socio-economic activity, residential segregation, stereotyping and negative attitudes on the part of the majority community have often hampered their incorporation. This has much to do with what I term frame-dragging, that is, the existence of cognitive frames and discourses of nativism, biological or cultural racism and nationalism. Despite their many differences, these discourses tend to depict it as natural to associate with one’s own and to have an antipathy towards ‘outsiders’. Frame-dragging can be seen in old discourses about ‘mongrelisation’, that accompanied the entry of Southern and Eastern Europeans in the US (Higham 1988) and ‘alien nation’ (Brimelow 1995) and in new discourses about the ‘swamping of Britain’ and ‘Islamification’. Frame dragging makes the sociogetic effect less weighty and relevant, as it entails the belittling of the entanglements and actual contributions and sacrifices made by non-white citizens and residents, who are told that their own lives’ work and their parents/grandparents’ multifarious contributions lead to the weakening of the fabric of society.

By avoiding essentialism and the unhelpful dualism of conformity v. cultural incommensurability, the ‘letting be’ approach has the distinct advantage of opening up space for the continuing cooperation of the various constituencies and for mutual respect for and affirmation of diversity. Aiming at a respectful symbiosis among groups, the letting be approach does not seek to control, subjugate, affirm a hierarchy, judge the other as inferior (e.g., less democrat, less liberal, less civilised, less sincere). Instead, it evokes a different modality of power, the power to be free from unnecessary regulation to get on with things, to take part in practices of cooperation and to evolve within a constantly changing environment. By shifting the emphasis away from national identification to participation in practices of cooperation, the letting be approach does not expect people to unlearn the old and embrace the new in order to become accepted in their new home, to prove that they are worthy of membership and to ‘earn their
rights’. Instead, it encourages them to take part in common socio-economic, political and cultural activities and to become stakeholders and co-citizens. In other words, the letting be approach envisions a community in which members see the other as co-other, that is, equal to, and alongside, themselves. As Connolly (1996: 57) has eloquently put it, ‘is it possible to imagine a multicultural pluralism where the centre itself is more pluralised? To imagine, for instance, multicultural differences and interdependencies across several overlapping dimensions, where no single source of morality inspires everyone and yet where the possibility of significant democratic collaboration cross multiple lines is very much alive? Is it possible to imagine a multicultural regime in which a floating majority, if and when it exists, becomes less anxious to fundamentalise what it is?’

Such issues are, invariably, overlooked by accounts that portray diversity as a threat to social cohesion. The latter narratives assume a deficiency in minority groups and demand their compliance with the terms prescribed by the hegemonic groups, while leaving the structures and discourses that keep them apart unchanged. Accordingly, the legitimate concerns of minority groups, including their frustration about continuing discrimination and racism, more often than not are portrayed as expressions coming from disloyal and troublesome minorities who must ‘learn to respect the laws, codes and conventions as much as the majority’ (Crick Report 1998: 18). This is not to say that questions, such as how to go about nurturing the ties that bind multiethnic democratic polities, how to promote interpersonal trust and to encourage full political participation by all citizens, irrespective of their ethnic background, have easy answers. Debates about the role of religion in the public sphere and the issue of religious education, for instance, highlight the importance of reconciling legitimate concerns about promoting capacity for citizenship and civic engagement with the need to avoid the institutional privileging of one

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religion over others.\footnote{On the recognition of religious groups, see Tariq Modood, ‘Anti-Essentialism, Multiculturalism and the Recognition of Religious Groups’, \textit{The Journal of Political Philosophy}, Vol. 6, No. 4, 1998, pp. 378-99.} And other often-cited examples of multicultural challenges, such as the Salman Rushdie, the French foulard (translated as headscarf) and the Danish cartoons cases show just how easy it is for different interpretative communities to adopt intransigent positions and to fuel divisive politics.

The key difference and, in my opinion, the appeal, of the letting be approach is that it is premised on a social engagement model with dynamic learning in action for newcomers, settled and autochthonous members. It recognises that people become naturally entangled within the webs of socio-economic and political life by living within the territorial confines of a state, participating and contributing to social life and therefore does not require them to prove their commitment to society by engaging in performative acts, such as citizenship ceremonies and public declarations of allegiance, demonstrating their ‘willingness to integrate’ and passing probation tests. Instead, it welcomes minority constituencies as participants enjoying equal status, protection and opportunities in the workplace, society and politics and recognises that conversations across lines of difference require a reciprocity of understanding, that is a mutual understanding of each other’s perspective and a commitment to ‘a journey toward broader horizons through a process of reciprocal learning’ (Dallmayr 2001: 346; compare also Honig 2001). But what kind of policy transmutations could follow the letting be approach?

4. ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES, POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND OBJECTIONS

If my argument that belonging to a community is best nurtured by institutional inclusion and full participation in society and politics, rather than by integration tests, language proficiency tests or citizenship quizzes, is correct, governments could facilitate the adaptation of newcomers by
providing information about the institutions and practices of the host society in information packs and CD ROMs which could be distributed at airports or be available in post-offices. Free and non-compulsory tuition in the language of the host state could also aid the process of the adaptation of migrants, thereby providing a favourable context of reception. Such courses could be provided by local government, non-governmental organisations and community groups or be funded by central government.

Similarly, although naturalisation has been intimately linked with nationhood, it is possible to envisage revisions of naturalisation policy which incorporate multiculturalist ideas. Baubock (1994: 73 -114), for instance, has advocated the ‘egalitarian’ strategy of making the transition to the higher status of citizenship an entitlement, thereby reducing the discretionary power of the authorities of the host state and Rubio Marin (2000) has defended the policy of granting automatic and unconditional grant of national citizenship to resident migrants. The main advantage of both these proposals is that they make citizenship more inclusive without challenging the relevance of nationality. However, little attention has been paid to nationality’s long-term influence on naturalisation policy. Given the weight of its past and its symbolic significance, ‘thin’ naturalisation is likely to continue to be rooted in and be configured by ethnicity. It will also be susceptible to periodic ‘thickening’. Politicians interested in re-election might be tempted to introduce additional and stricter requirements and to promote a renewed interest in the constitution of ethnic identity and the community’s rich repertoire of historical memories. The re-ethnicisation of naturalisation in the UK and the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe are cases in point.

An alternative policy option would be to replace naturalisation with a system of civic registration, which would condition admission to full political membership on two requirements only; namely, domicile and the absence of serious criminal convictions (Kostakopoulou, 2006).

8 In this respect, it can be argued that integration tests not only raise questions about the fairness and liberal character of polities, but also hinder central investment with the aim to develop long term services for migrants.
Generally speaking, such a model would transcend the nationality model of citizenship by placing the centre of gravity on democratic norms and the social engagement model identified in section 3 above. Aspiring citizens would be seen as partners and co-venturers. Accordingly, they would not have to swear an oath of allegiance to the Crown or the constitution, display a good command of the constitutional history and the language of the host state and most probably, albeit not necessarily, to renounce all foreign allegiances. Instead, they would have to meet a residence requirement and show that they are not likely to put the host community at risk by engaging in criminal activities.

The former requirement reflects the fact that residence generates entitlements, owing to peoples’ participation in a web of social interactions and the sense of ‘rootedness’ associated with home ownership, business ownership, employment, participation in civil associations, family ties and schooling. The ‘sociogetic’ effect of residence thus makes resident non-nationals stakeholders in the running and the future of the community, thereby strengthening their claims for political inclusion. Such claims cannot be successfully resisted by appeals to democracy, since democracy requires inclusion (Dahl 1989) and the input of the governed in the rules and policies that govern them. The latter requirement, on the other hand, ensures that an applicant does not represent a genuine and sufficiently serious threat to the host society. True, most countries stipulate that applicants for naturalisation must have no criminal record and/or ‘a good character’, and the latter can be subject to many interpretations. Historically, the test of ‘good character’ succeeded religious tests in naturalisation laws. The British naturalisation laws of 1740 and 1761, for instance, contained religious tests and the 1740 law in particular prohibited the naturalisation of Catholics. The first US naturalisation law of 1790 replaced the religious test with a test of good character as a prerequisite for US citizenship (Ueda 1980). However, much depends on how strictly or liberally this requirement is interpreted. Although relatively minor offences and past convictions can by used to exclude people under the present system, under the civic registration
approach an applicant would be refused political membership if (s)he represented a genuine and sufficiently serious threat to the requirements of public policy (Kostakopoulou 2006).

Critics may object, here, that the civic registration model does not address the needs of aspiring citizens by omitting requirements, such as acquisition of knowledge about the host society, familiarity with its forms of life, and knowledge of its institutions and collective history. After all, education in history, civic culture and the organising principles of the host society are designed to facilitate the integration of applicants into the fabric of society and the employment market, and to promote citizenship capacity. A pragmatic case could also be made for civic integration requirements on the basis that they equip migrants with the skills they need in order to compete in the workplace and to take part in social life. However, such pragmatic concerns prompting a paternalistic intervention on the part of the state do not explain the obligatory character of integration tests and the sanctions that are attached to them. Nor do they furnish good reasons for their application to trajectories before migration and the selection of migrants in countries of origin. In addition, it is not easy to discern how citizenship capacity is enhanced by asking applicants questions, such as, which two telephone numbers can be used to dial the emergency services and whether a television licence is required for more than one television in a home in the UK, or what did Johannes Gutenberg invent and who was the doctor that discovered the cause of cholera and tuberculosis in Germany. Furthermore, this line of reasoning rests on the subjective, and flawed, assumption that foreign nationals are, invariably, ignorant and incapable of exercising wise political judgements, even though their exposure to a different history, political system and civic culture at home equips them to make comparative political judgements and to reflect on the institutions and traditions of the host society. Naturalisation itself is generally perceived to be an enlightening opportunity, despite the facts that in our global village most newcomers already know something about the institutions and practices of the host country, and

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even if they do not, they are likely to acquire such knowledge within a very short period of time. The workplace, the market, schools and community groups are sites of political education. And I would argue that reading newspapers of the host and home countries and books, watching television, and participating in discussions with co-ethnics and nationals are more effective media for the acquisition of knowledge about the country and its political culture than taking part in naturalisation tests.

It is certainly the case that civic integration requirements could be justified on the basis of liberal nationalism. Liberal nationalist scholars, such as Miller and Kymlicka, for instance, would endorse such requirements, since states are nation-states and nations are viewed to be culturally distinct political communities. According to this perspective, it is both natural and desirable that governments take initiatives designed to promote national identity and culture by requiring migrants to learn the national language and the nation’s history and culture, provided, of course, that the latter are ‘soft’, do not discriminate and respect the equal moral status of individuals and diversity. Another, more civic- or republican-oriented, variant of this argument would put emphasis on civic involvement and the need to prepare newcomers for shared citizenship. It might be said that knowledge of the history and culture of the host society enables newcomers to understand the rules that govern public life, interact with institutions in the public sphere and to exercise responsible citizenship. Civic integration programmes thus build citizenship capacity by enabling newcomers to effectuate their rights and obligations and to display their commitment to the host society. In this respect, the sense of nationality that is being promoted is neither an illiberal nor an unreasonable one, since the primary objective is to promote social inclusion, employment, social cohesion and to give migrants and the families better life chances. As Joppke (2003) has argued, with the exception of language, states have imposed liberal impositions on newcomers.

In response, it may be argued that the above lines of reasoning display a remarkable ahistoricism by bracketing not only the historical association of the emergence of civic
integration programmes with the rise of right-wing populism and national communitarianism (Christian Democrat and Conservative Liberal demands in the Netherlands in the mid-1990s and Mr D. Blunkett’s efforts to renationalise British citizenship in 2001), but also the disjuncture between official justifications invoking republican ideals and liberal values and concrete realities. The latter refers to obligatory and coercive character of integration tests, the present trend towards ‘tougher’ measures, such as the proposal for probationary citizenship in the UK, the desire to limit unwanted migration and to restrict family reunification by requiring ‘integration’ abroad, the reversal of the liberalisation of naturalisation policies and, above all, to government’s attempts to rejuvenate nationalism by revaluing national citizenship and affirming national particularism.

But could the same be said about language class and linguistic tests? After all, from a republican point of view, a common language is necessary for democratic deliberation and testing migrants’ linguistic ability cannot but facilitate their integration into the public institutions. Undoubtedly, competence in the language of the host society enhances participation in society and public life. But this does not imply that lack of linguistic competence makes political participation impossible. After all, the sources of political information are multiple, variable and, quite often, multilingual. Nor does it follow that individuals will not be able to make a contribution to the economy and society. Indeed, empirical evidence drawn from historical migrations and settlements reveals that newcomers with no (or very basic) knowledge of the host language have contributed effectively to the host society and that the shift to the language of the host society is an empirical fact (see Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Lopez 1999). It is interesting to note, here, that before 2 April 2007 there existed no general requirement that people who wish to settle in the UK must be able to speak English.¹⁰

¹⁰ However, there was a language requirement for a person who wished to become British citizen (Schedule 1, Paragraph 1(1)(c) of the British Nationality Act 1981). Under the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, the language requirement also applies to those who apply for naturalisation as spouses of a British citizen or a British Overseas Territories citizen.
Having said this, I do not wish to deny the fact that fluency in the host language increases employment opportunities and facilitates social incorporation. Migrants themselves are acutely aware of this and often do not need encouragement in order to register for language classes. States may also decide to offer free tuition in the host language to all residents, regardless of legal status or their intentions with regard to citizenship. Such initiatives aid the process of settlement and build connections between newcomers and existing members. In contrast the imposition of linguistic tests to which penalties are attached is likely to promote reactive ethnicity. Having said this, one must bear in mind that European Union legislation has consistently provided that mobility of labour in the European internal market cannot be restricted via the imposition of language tests, unless such tests are required by the nature of the employment post. This is because linguistic tests often serve as a means of direct discrimination and exclusion by denying Community nationals equal access to employment.

This divergence between European Union and national legislations reveals that civic integration programmes have stemmed out of host communities’ deep anxieties about cultural difference and the fragility of ‘integration’. Newcomers must be ready and willing to ‘integrate’ by speaking the host language at home and in public and acquiring knowledge about the country’s history and traditions. They need to be seen to ‘make the choice’ to conform to the majority community’s (partial) notion of national identity, even though, in reality, the development of feelings of belonging is linked to the respect they receive from the host community and the opportunity to become participants in the shaping of its future - and not their proven fluency in the language of the community by written tests.

11 People respond to the discrimination and hostility of the host society by drawing a protective boundary around the group and perceiving themselves as belonging elsewhere. On reactive ethnicity, see Alejandro Portes, ‘Conclusion: Towards a New World’, Ethnic and Racial Studies, 1999, Vol. 22(2), p. 465.
In the light of the foregoing discussion, it may be concluded that the homogenising impulses of nationalism have not faded way. Integration and assimilation have re-emerged as the most suitable antidotes to the alleged failures of multicultural co-existence in contemporary plural states. Major reforms in citizenship and migration laws and policies are naively premised on the idea that integration courses, mandatory tests and a top-down policy of homogenising acculturation will produce some magical effect on the settlement of citizenship and community relations. ‘Integration’ thus becomes a solution to alleged failures in border control, a device for the selection of migrants and an exercise in domination - instead of being seen as an issue of citizenship, non-discrimination and investment in human capital. What is needed is a radically revised approach based on a better understanding of how the context of reception, official discourses and the symbolic politics of national identity shape not only the individual destinies of migrants, but also community relations and the future of society.

REFERENCES


