

The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe: A History, by Rita Chin, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2017, \$34.78 (hardcover), ISBN 9780691164267

The question of what happened to the European dream of harmonious multicultural societies is not new, but has acquired a special urgency in recent years. With nativist and xenophobic rhetoric sweeping through European societies—north and south, east and west—this has become a vital question for European democracy. Rita Chin's history of the crisis of multiculturalism in Europe provides solid bases to start answering it. In a period in which analyses of the rise of far-right populism risk being overly focused on the present, *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe* provides a much-needed historical account of the longer-term contestations around the idea of multiculturalism and the ways in which the widespread consensus on multiculturalism's "failure" came to dominate European public debate. By giving us a clearer understanding of the past, Chin's historical perspective provides essential clues to interpret the predicaments of the present.

The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe recounts the debates about immigration and multiculturalism in the UK, France, Germany, and to a lesser extent the Netherlands and Switzerland from the postwar years up to recent years—but short of encompassing the "refugee crisis" and the rise of far-right populism beyond some general references. As hinted above, the book's main strength lies in its longer-term take on the debate on multiculturalism. Rather than starting from 9/11 or the widely publicized speeches by several European leaders announcing the failure of multiculturalism, Chin shows the more complex and contested history of multiculturalism from the time of postwar migrations. She discusses how resistance and backlash against migrants and the racialized "others" were present throughout the period, gained steam from the 1980s, and then converged into a widely taken-for-granted new consensus that multiculturalism has failed in the 2000s. The 9/11 terrorist attacks and the war on terror (not discussed much in the book) as well as the Rushdie affair in the UK and the debates about headscarves in France (both discussed in detail) accelerated anti-multiculturalist processes whose seeds were already present in the policies and public debates of previous decades.

This focus on continuities allows Chin to tell a more nuanced history of how multiculturalism as an objective fact came to be in (Western) Europe and how multiculturalism as a policy aspiration was applied, misapplied, and resisted in different Western European countries. This long-historical approach overcomes the strictures of the more common "integration models" approach to discussing how different European countries have dealt with their diverse societies. Instead, Chin tells a story of convergence. Although the starting points and the policy approaches might have been different, similar debates took place in countries that are usually categorized as having different integration models, and they culminated in recent years in remarkably similar public debates on diversity. Rather than different models, Chin's book reveals the consolidation of a European anti-multiculturalist consensus.

As *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe* is mostly based on secondary literature, where it shines is not necessarily in the uncovering of new material or an entirely novel interpretation of existing material, but in weaving together strands of events, debates, and policies that many readers would already be familiar with, into a concise and convincing account of how multiculturalism came to be widely reviled in European public discourse. Chapter 1 looks at the first substantial waves of immigration to the case-study countries, focusing on how they were interlinked with colonial histories and labor shortages. Chapter 2 proceeds to look at the issues that emerged with managing multicultural societies, especially after the end of the postwar economic boom in the 1970s. As this is mostly a top-down history of multiculturalism, the focus is on policies and party politics. Chapter 3 evidences the discursive shift from genetic racism to cultural nationalism as the main exclusionary discourse emerging in Europe. While racism remained strong, it was increasingly coated with the respectability of the nation, and in the process a lot of the focus was shifted on Muslims as Europe's main "other." Chapter 4 continues on this topic by looking more in detail at "sexual democracy" and how arguments for women (and in several cases LGBT+) rights were leveraged to demonstrate Islam's incompatibility with European democracy and further marginalize European Muslims.

Chapter 5 confronts the emerging consensus on the failure of multiculturalism, looking at the ways this discourse was articulated in different countries and by different actors. Although perhaps more could have been said about forms of resistance to anti-multiculturalism, Chin provides a multi-faceted account of this consensus, showing how it resonated not only with the conservative right but also with sections of the liberal left. She also includes a short section about progressive critiques to multiculturalist policies from minority perspectives. Adding to the richness of her account, throughout the book Chin also pays attention (although not systematic) to multicultural practices at the local level. In more than one instance she shows how—even through state-level lack of multicultural vision and/or anti-multiculturalism backlash—several local governments embarked on policies that were de facto (and sometimes, defiantly, also in name) multicultural.

The final chapter takes stock of the history narrated in the previous chapters to propose a way forward on how we can discuss (and live) multiculturalism in Europe. Chin's proposition primarily involves recovering the importance of asking the "multicultural question" as a way of reopening the debate that has been shut out by the unquestioning acceptance of the "fact" that multiculturalism has failed. Importantly, she suggests that learning from history means that we must overcome both multiculturalist policies' unquestioned (and ultimately groupist) promotion of "culture" and the anti-multiculturalism's unqualified (and ultimately exclusive) promotion of "individual freedom" as a way of imposing majority dominance. The third pillar of Chin's "way forward" is democracy, but this remains less specified. It is clear that the open debate advocated by Chin can happen only in a democratic setting. However, her intimation that the main problem with the "democratic deficit" resulting from ignoring the real-existing diversity of our societies is the risk of radicalization and terrorism (rather than being bad for democracy per se) might do a disservice to the more nuanced discussion provided by the book.

Although the focus on convergence and on telling a (Western) European history of the crisis of multiculturalism are the strength of the book, they can sometimes become a weakness. Indeed, in order to tell this story as a story of convergence, *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe* often risks brushing off differences between countries and leaving them unexplored. For example, at several junctures in the book it emerges that cultural pluralism has more easily been accepted as a premise in the UK than in other European countries (e.g., on the headscarf debates). This difference is acknowledged, but the reader is left wondering what in the history of Britain vis-à-vis France and Germany can explain it. Also, Chin shows that the UK provided more fertile ground for minority perspectives on multiculturalism to emerge and be publicly articulated (and in fact the book provides no examples of such critiques from other countries). Once again, however, the reasons for this are not explored. The focus on convergence does not need to be undermined by the acknowledgement and discussion of differences and it remains useful to overcome the overly-rigid "integration models" approach that reifies such differences. However, there is also a risk in leaving differences unexplained, as a clearer understanding of them might help identify potential avenues of resistance against the anti-multiculturalist, nativist momentum.

The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe challenges the consensus that multiculturalism is a discredited and at this point useless concept, and usefully reclaims it as a way to create a "critical space" to (re)open the discussion on how diverse societies can be governed. Chin's conclusions are more a call to arms than a clear indication of what the way forward should be, and the questions she poses in the conclusions to her book are perhaps more convincing than her answers. But the questions she asks are vital, she asks them in a challenging and direct way, and her book provides a great starting point to ask them (again) with a more open mind. This makes *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe* essential reading for both those who are new to the debates on multiculturalism and those who are not but want to challenge their thinking about it.

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