

between Eastern Europe/USSR and the Middle East,” Geneva, 22-23 February 2018.

- 8 See e.g. the subtle changes Westad made from idem, *Global Cold War* to idem, *The Cold War. A World History*, New York 2017, which is somewhat more agnostic about the weight of decolonization in Cold War developments. See also e.g. P. Duara, *The Cold War as a Historical Period. An Interpretive Essay*, in: *Journal of Global History* 6 (2011), p. 457-480.

**Rita Chin: *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe. A History*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press 2017, 363 p.**

Reviewed by  
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In this book, Rita Chin tries to understand what is behind the statement, frequently made by politicians across Western Europe especially since 2010, that multiculturalism has failed. In order to do so, she suggests that it is necessary to trace how multicultural societies emerged in Europe in the first place.

Chin’s study places the beginning of multicultural Europe at the emergence of the post-World War Two political and social order with the first large-scale immigration of people of non-European origin. Following the introduction in which Chin situates her analysis in the context of ongoing political debates on immigration and diversity, the authors takes the reader on a huge interestingly journey through histories of immigration, the politics and economics that have shaped the different

phases of these histories as well as the political and larger public discourses whereby political actors have conceptualized immigration, nationhood, diversity and multiculturalism. Focusing on the UK, France, Germany and to a lower degree the Netherlands, Chin shows how immigration emerged from the different historical scenarios of these countries after World War Two forging two basic patterns: one in which imperial and colonial histories shaped routes of migration, institutional pathways of recognition and nascent forms of coexistence (Britain, France and the Netherlands); and another one in which immigration resulted from the need for labor (Germany). In many cases, politicians’ attitudes towards questions of migration and integration had to do with their location within the political spectrum, with left-leaning politicians usually favoring policies that promoted immigrants’ rights and conservatives arguing for tight immigration controls and promoting discourses that championed national cohesion and warned against national fragmentation. However, skillfully moving between different political and levels, historical periods and regional subnational scenarios, Chin shows that this was not always the case and that there was variation. In particular, leftist politicians’ support for migration was sometimes qualified by concerns over workers’ rights and social justice. Left-liberals, in turn, have become over the last decades more hesitant to support migration as discourses about the lacking support of migrants, in particular Muslims, for liberal values and rights became more entrenched.

While the book provides a welcome historical contextualization for many of the

ongoing social scientific debates on migration and offers a host of interesting data, it does little to bring more clarity into the often convoluted debate on multiculturalism. Chiefly, Chin fails to provide some working definitions and permanently shifts between descriptive, political and normative uses of the term multiculturalism. Thus, she describes processes of institutional change – changes in citizenship regimes, the granting of certain rights to immigrants etc. – as multiculturalism, but treats polemical discourses on immigration and multiculturalism in the same way. But what does it actually mean when German chancellor Merkel declares multiculturalism as a failure although, as Chin also notes, the country never had an official policy of multiculturalism? The consequences of such pronouncements are surely different from those resulting from changing laws. However, the author repeatedly confuses these levels, failing to distinguish between multiculturalism as a political buzzword and a combat concept, and multiculturalism as a lived reality or a legal regime.

These confusions lead her to unconvincing conclusions, e.g. that multiculturalism was already beginning to be dismantled before it was even installed. In addition, throughout the book the author identifies moments or periods in which the politicization of immigration and multiculturalism was advanced, entrenched, fully established, or again on the rise. But it rarely becomes clear how these periodizations are helpful in understanding the problem, and more often they seem somewhat arbitrary. In the later part of the book, the narrative is that Western Europe is constantly moving towards a right-wing, anti-immigra-

tion position. While the evidence supports that argument, it does not really live up to the complexity of social science debates on that issue.

There is one broader problem in the book that is more directly related to its topic. In several chapters, Chin suggests that racialized political thinking was banned from European political practices and vocabularies after World War II and the Holocaust but that it returned in the guise of an increasing emphasis in public discourse on the cultural distinctness of immigrants. The idea is that there has been a rise of the argument that immigrants are inherently and permanently different, not because of their biology but because of their “culture” and religion and that this difference provides unsurmountable obstacles to their integration into Western societies. In other words, according to Chin’s reading the discourse on the presumed incompatibility of Western modernity and immigrant cultures, in particular Islam, excludes immigrants in forms that are similar biologically based racisms. In fact, she even suggests that Merkel’s dismissal of “multiculturalism” provides the ground for “social apartheid”.

Not only is this wrong and there is no evidence for it. This argument also collides with her claim that immigrants have the right to cultural difference and thus are to some degree culturally different. It is unclear whether cultural difference is actually an element in a discursive strategy deployed by nationalist, anti-immigrant politicians, or something existing and in need of recognition and regulation. The problem is that Chin does not distinguish between the nationalist notion that cultural differences exist but are undesirable,

the political strategy to exaggerate them, and the claim that they would – rightfully – exist weren't they suppressed. The underlying problem is that, except for the section on "secular Muslim women", immigrants have no voice in this book. It presents the notion of a "unified Islam" as an essentializing, orientalist trope of Western political discourse and ignores the fact that

this is actually a project pursued by Muslims across the world. The reliance on the voices of Western political commentators limits the book's remit to "talk about multiculturalism" whereas the lived reality of it remains muted. The book's value lies, in my view, therefore in the detailed description of moments of immigration history rather than in the narrative it offers.