

Central European University
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Multicultural Pluralism
Towards a Normative Theory of Ethnic Relations

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Budapest, September 2006

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Abstract

Nationalism is an essential characteristic of our contemporary world, but although a vast literature on nationalism studies exists, a thorough understanding of the dynamics of ethnic politics is missing. This dissertation is led by an intention to construct a theoretical framework of majority-minority relations that would be valuable both for the academic circles and for policymakers dealing with ethnic relations. The research undertaken is of a predominantly normative nature, since it aims at answering the questions of justice in ethnic relations, questions that are often overlooked in the relevant literature. I re-formulate the liberal concept of multicultural pluralism, understood as an interplay of values, institutions and processes of multicultural liberalism and egalitarian liberalism as theoretical foundations for group-differentiated rights. As such, the theory of multicultural pluralism is willing to weight the importance of universal laws against the importance of cultural survival, which I claim is a collective goal for communities.

I argue that in order to properly elaborate multicultural pluralism, further conceptualization is needed, and I introduce my quadric model of ethnic politics that moves beyond previous attempts, considering the sometimes pivotal and often neglected role of third-party actors in the ethnic policymaking process. Accordingly, I demonstrate that ethnic politics is characterized and determined by interactions among the following actors: the 'nationalizing state' or 'home-state' of the majority, the minority, the kin-state of the minority, and the actors on the international level. I claim that the adoption of the concept of the quadric nexus is necessary for outlining the interactions among both the domestic and international actors, which in turn would provide a better understanding of ethnic policymaking for both policymakers and academics

The dissertation attempts to demonstrate the viability of the proposed framework by offering a careful evaluation of the legitimacy of different areas of minority accommodation – such as different institutional arrangements or typologies of group rights – against the background of the proposed normative framework of multicultural pluralism. Since ethnic relations are characterized both as intra- and inter-state relations, the dissertation evaluates not only domestic arrangements but also different international instruments of minority rights in order to see whether these fall short of the prescriptions of multicultural pluralism.

I conclude arguing that in the context of multicultural pluralism, minority rights provide for both a process of multicultural appreciation and for the strengthening of the unity of the polity. An emphasis on minority rights need not occur at the expense of national unity or loyalty because instead of being mutually exclusive, group and national loyalties can be mutually reinforcing. The most important promise of today's increased emphasis on pluralism and divided sovereignty is that it provides for a greater discursive space for minority rights and the multicultural pluralist conception of ethnic accommodation that is based not on discretionary domestic policies and ad-hoc compromises to maintain international stability, but on considerations of justice.

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Acknowledgments

I am deeply indebted to and grateful for a number of people without whose support this thesis would have never seen daylight. I wish to thank my supervisor, Nenad Dimitrijevic for his valuable advice as well as his continuous support. I owe him many thanks for our countless discussions, his detailed commentaries, and his thoughtful criticism that helped me better focus my work. I also thank Erin Jenne for the assistance and guidance I received from her writing sections of this dissertation. I am also grateful to Gábor Tóka, who besides giving me useful advice in the early stages of my research, has continuously backed me up and was a good friend during all these years. It was my fortune to be able to present earlier versions of some sections of this thesis at the Department of Political Science, and I benefited a great deal from the critical comments I received from my colleagues at the Central European University, for which I want to thank them all. I also want express my appreciation of the coordinators of my program, Éva and Kriszta who made my life as a student trouble-free.

I would like to thank my parents, for their never-ending love, assistance, encouragement, and unconditional support for me and my work, no matter where it took me. I acknowledge my debt to my sister, Kinga, who read my early drafts and some of my final chapters, and helped better shape many of the ideas of this thesis. I am obliged to extend my gratitude to my friends from whom I have learned a lot during the years we spent together and who made my stay in Budapest such a rewarding experience. Last but by no means least, I cannot thank enough Noémi, my partner and my best friend, who cheered me up, encouraged me, and kept me company throughout the years. She has always been an inspiration for me, and I could have never completed this work without her support and understanding.

I dedicate this work to the memory of my grandparents.