

Whether this volume is of value to economists and their students of (international) migration and ethnicity is not possible for a non-economist to judge. For the student of migration and ethnicity from another disciplinary perspective it has considerable value in directing attention to issues and literature that might otherwise be overlooked if they were not brought together in a volume such as this. But whether that is justification for the effort in its creation is doubtful, especially given the price: if I had not been invited to review it I would certainly not have bought it, would probably not have suggested its purchase to my university library – indeed would probably have been unaware of it. There has to be a quicker and cheaper way to keep the scholarly community up-to-date.

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Will Kymlicka, Eva Pföstel (eds) (2014). *Multiculturalism and Minority Rights in the Arab World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 320.

Over the last five years, the Arab world has undergone significant transformations. The Arab Spring, which began in 2011 with the escape of Tunisian president Zine el Abidine Ben Ali to Saudi Arabia, not only led to profound changes in the political sphere in many countries of the Middle East and North Africa (hereafter MENA), but also shook the fundamentals of social divisions and questioned the existing methods of regional management of cultural and religious diversity. At the same time, the Arab revolutions attest to the failure of Arab governments to deal creatively with the problems of societal pluralism, including issues of minorities. As a consequence, many previously ignored or taboo political and social issues were brought up and publicly debated. The recently published book *Multiculturalism and Minority Rights in the Arab World*, edited by Will Kymlicka and Eva Pföstel, is very useful at a time when the international community is closely observing frequently turbulent transformations of the states and societies in the MENA

region. In some sense it follows Kymlicka's efforts to assess how Western ideas on the management of ethnic/religious diversity influence and relate to other social and political contexts.¹ However, it also goes further, by aiming to explore how 'identity politics' functions and how minority rights are understood and debated in the region.

Some of the key questions the editors and contributors address in the book are the ones which touch upon the main concepts used in the region to describe issues of ethnic diversity, and models or historic precedents invoked as examples of success or failure. They also ask what hopes or fears drive Arab societies' response to minority claims and what criteria are used to distinguish fair from unfair accommodations, or progressive from regressive claims, or deserving from undeserving minorities. The reviewed volume aims not to catalogue the various laws and policies that have been adopted in relation to minorities in different Arab countries, but rather to provide in-depth assessment of the cultural frameworks and normative assumptions that shape how state–minority relations are debated, and to identify which options are thereby opened up or foreclosed. It does not fully achieve this ambitious goal, among other reasons due to the complexity of the problems at stake, lack of comparative conclusions and wider implications, especially in the light of transformations instigated by the Arab Spring.

Similarly to earlier assessments of multicultural arrangements in other parts of the world co-edited by Kymlicka, the book starts with an introductory chapter that not only clearly sets out the main goals of the publication but also points to the key issues and problems in the theoretical and empirical studies of ethno-cultural diversity in the Arab world, understood in the book as largely overlapping with the 22 member states of the Arab League.² One of the important dimensions of the regional cultural heterogeneity is, of course, directly related to the fact that the Middle East is the birthplace of the three global monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Hence, one of the types of diversity taken into account in the book is a religious heterogeneity which most commonly relates

to people of the region who are Arab but not Muslim (under this category fall *inter alia* several Arab Christian communities (including the Copts, Maronites, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Protestants) as well as various Muslim sects, notably the Shi'a, Alawis, Druze, and Isma'ilis). The second type of minorities discussed in the book are those composed of Muslims who are not Arab (in particular the Kurds, Amazigh/Berbers, Turkomans, and Circassians, as well as Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants in the Gulf). Lastly, the volume also takes into account the third type of minority groups in the region, who are neither Arab nor Muslim (e.g. the Jews, Armenians, Assyrians, Southern Sudanese and Indian, Filipino and Nepalese immigrants in the Gulf). Importantly, the editors emphasise that they do not treat these identities as fixed but rather as cultural residues that give people at least a provisional sense of belonging and which can be reservoirs for politicisation.

Kymlicka, one of the important intellectual contributors to the global discourse on multiculturalism adopted in recent decades by various international organisations (e.g. the UN, EU, UNESCO) and formulated in several international declarations on minority and indigenous rights,³ acts in the volume in his capacity of an analyst who assesses the influence of the international norms on the Arab states. Together with other contributors to the book he reflects on whether minority politics, which are viewed with distrust (if not outright repression) in the region, can serve as a vehicle for a general transformative politics supporting a broader democratic transformation and challenging older authoritarian, clientelistic, or patriarchal political tendencies. One of the overall conclusions reached in the text is that the Arab states have very skilfully managed to divorce minority accommodations from broader social and political change. Some of the key barriers to the new minority politics aptly identified in the book are the legacies of the Ottoman millet system⁴ and the colonial rule, as well as imperatives of postcolonial state-building. Their impact lies in being interconnected and serving as a sufficient reason for the hostility to minority politics in the region. The most

interesting element seems to be the legacy of the millet system inherited in the region after 500 years of Ottoman rule, which for some contributors plays a very constructive role in development of more inclusive citizenship and minority rights systems, while for others it is one of the major obstacles to development of modern societies in the region.

The reviewed volume is divided into two parts: one examining the issues of minority rights from broad historical and theoretical perspectives and the other providing detailed case studies. The first part begins with a chapter by Janet Klein on how the discourse on minorities and the category itself have been constructed in the region over the last two centuries, and in particular during the late-Ottoman period and in the post-Ottoman realities. She clearly shows how colonialism contributed to the creation of certain groups as 'minorities' (while excluding others from this category), as well as how it fed the processes through which some groups came to be branded as threats to regional nations and their national unity. One such group is the Kurds, spread throughout the Iranian, Iraqi, Syrian and Turkish territories, to whom the author devotes particular attention. While Klein makes the reader aware of the burdens of history that complicate efforts to address minority issues in the region today, the next contributors, Joshua Castellino and Kathleen Cavanaugh, emphasise the potentially positive contributions that the legacy of the Ottoman millet system can offer instead. In contrast to some of the outspoken critics of the millet-type order, who view it as inconsistent with modern conceptions of equal citizenship, national unity and democratic accountability, Castellino and Cavanaugh instead emphasise the potentially positive contributions that the legacy of the millet system can offer. They argue that the millet legacy, which above all enabled many groups to maintain their autonomy, can serve as an instructive lesson not only for protecting various minority groups, but also for building more inclusive national identity and more representative public institutions. At the same time, they stress that it can do so only if concerted dialogue at a national level takes place between the various communities that constitute the

state. This vision, however, seems over-optimistic, taking into account the fact that so far the region has only one country – Tunisia – where such dialogue takes place and which is truly democratic. The fact that it is one of the most culturally and religiously homogenous countries of the Arab world has clearly played some role in this.

The next contributor to the volume, Zaid Eyad, in a somehow more realistic manner draws the readers' attention to the contemporary situation of minorities in the Arab world and the regional models and methods of management of cultural diversity. He analyses various ways of this management, including the traditional and modern Islamic model, liberal multiculturalism and consociationalism, pointing out their limits in the regional context. In his view, the optimal model for the region should draw on the three models: the contemporary Islamic theorising on the idea of the religion-neutral state and territorial citizenship, the multicultural acknowledgment of the different intersecting affiliations and forms of identification, and the consociationalist emphasis on grand coalition and proportionality principles. While such a mixed approach seems to overcome the shortcomings of each of its constituent models, its empirical feasibility is a different matter. It seems that for numerous reasons including the politicisation of religion by state and non-state actors in the region and difficulties in fulfilling sometimes minimal liberal-democratic principles it would be very hard to carry it out. In the following chapter, Corrao and Maffettone convincingly argue that liberalism should be prior to multiculturalism, and that many Arab states have not yet achieved the minimal liberal-democratic threshold, and thus the multicultural discourse makes little sense to many of their citizens.

The second part of the book, exploring more empirical case studies, begins with the chapter by Jacob Mundy on one of the most protracted territorial disputes in Africa today, concerning Western Sahara. His analysis of how Moroccan authorities and Sahrawi nationalists present the conflict leads him to the conclusion that problematising the conflict as an 'Arab problem' needing a specific 'Arab solu-

tion' fails to elucidate the fact that the Arab world is already deeply penetrated by global power structures, and hence the solution must also span both local and global contexts. The following contribution, by one of the book's editors, Eva Pföstl, concentrates on another minority group from North Africa – the Amazigh (Berber) minority. It explores the group's growing importance in Algerian politics and its potential to be truly transformative *vis-à-vis* the Algerian state. Pföstl rightly emphasises the key role that transitional justices can play in the restructuring and democratic transformation of the largest African country. She defines transitional justice as an instrument of broad social transformation that rests on the assumption that societies need to confront past abuses. This instrument seems absolutely crucial, not only in countries with substantial ethnic-cultural-religious minorities (e.g. Algeria, Egypt, or Morocco, analysed earlier), but also in more homogenous ones, for instance Tunisia, where the transitional justice executed by L'Instance Vérité & Dignité (Truth and Dignity Commission) in the majority of cases concerns members of the Islamist opposition persecuted and imprisoned during the rule of Bourguiba and Ben Ali. Alas, as with territorial autonomy in Western Sahara, transitional justice is often viewed in the Arab world (including Algeria) as an alien and dangerous importation.

A book on multiculturalism and minority rights in the Arab world would be incomplete without a chapter on the large group of migrant workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries⁵ that do not fit the typical model of a minority. Nicholas McGeehan's contribution to the volume aptly describes the population of at least 10 million immigrants in the Gulf (above all from such countries as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and the Philippines) and the system that regulates their employment. His analysis focuses on the treatment of foreign workers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where mistreatment of workers in the labour intensive sectors, including construction, has been significantly better documented than the same practices in other countries of the region. Apart from showing how *kafala*, or the sponsorship system,

facilitates the exploitation of foreign labourers in the region, he also searches for the underlying reasons that maintain this system. In his view, shared by many other researchers, the persistence and the significance of domestic slavery in the region explains some of the most serious cases of exploitation of mainly manual workers. The notions of citizenship and multiculturalism so far have little applicability to the case of immigrants in the Gulf; however, something that should be added to the chapter is that they have great significance in the case of, for example, Bahrain's Sunni–Shia power struggle.

The Palestinians are an ethnic group that has dominated the media news from the region and pre-occupied international attention for more than half a century. In the next chapter, Hassan Jabareen describes how some Palestinians became Arab Israelis – a minority in Israel – as well as how they were introduced into the new polity and how their citizenship was created and constrained. He clearly shows the way the terms of state loyalty shape Arab-Israelis' rights and how the ongoing Israeli–Palestinian conflict affects their position in Eretz Israel. Although they make up 20 per cent of Israeli society, their impact on the processes of decision-making remains very limited. Jabareen argues that relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel remain defined by a 'friend–enemy' polarity that undermines not only the national rights of the Arab minority but even their basic individual citizenship rights. What is not made very clear in the text is that the level of this polarity is a direct result of the Israeli policy towards Palestinians in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza in a given moment, which then has its own repercussions on Palestinians in Israel. The author, on the other hand, shows vividly that the more the Arab Israelis use their 'right talk,' the greater the antagonism between them and the Jewish majority.

The reviewed book concludes with two chapters that touch upon issues including the extremely complicated situation in Iraq after 2003, when Saddam Husain was toppled by the US troops, and where a decade later local jihadists started to form strategic alliances which culminated in the formation of the

Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in June 2014. The first one analyses the process of the federalisation of Iraq and compares it with developments in Sudan over that last decade. Its author, Brendan O'Leary, proposes looking for answers to why Sudan broke up and Iraq has continued to hold together (although today large parts of it are under ISIS control) in the differences between the two Arab majorities, Iraqi and Sudanese. In his view, the internal divisions amongst Arabs in Iraq created political possibilities for minorities that were not present in Sudan. From today's perspective, we know that these divisions also contributed to the emergence of ISIS. The second chapter – concentrating on Iraq – analyses the situation of Assyrian-Chaldeans in the country. However, this last chapter of the book, by Joseph Yacoub, is much broader in character, touching upon some of the key issues addressed by the volume, which is the perception of multiculturalism and treatment of minorities in the region. He very aptly notes that the Arab world has been anxious about concerns of ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities ever since the establishment of rigid and ultra-centralised nation-states following World War I. Some change in the Arab perceptions of multiculturalism and minorities was visible in the recent revisions to the Arab Charter of Human Rights (its first version was created in 1994 to be updated in 2004 and came into force in 2008 when seven member of the League of Arab States ratified it. As of the end of 2014 it had been ratified by thirteen Arab states). Nevertheless, the Arab Spring has caught up the region in issues long denied, which has resulted in its substantial destabilisation. He is right to stress that a change in the Arab world in the areas of democracy and liberation can come only if various concerns of its minorities are properly addressed.

The volume edited by Kymlicka and Pfösl is a very good starting point for anybody interested in the issues of multiculturalism and minority rights in the Arab world. It has some fine observations, many detailed descriptions of different minority groups in the region and useful conceptual elaborations. At the same time, the complexity of identity politics in the

region that comprises multiply geographies disrupts any singular analysis of minority rights and makes it impossible to fit into any volume. Some examples of the important issues that the books fails to address (mainly due to its limited size) are elaborations of the situation of the largest Christian minority in the region – the Egyptian Copts – or the place of Palestinian refugees and their right of return in regional politics. Moreover, the reviewed book is not as neatly organised as the one which started Kymlicka's comparative effort (Kymlicka, Opalski 2002), and more uneven with some repetitions. In spite of these minor shortcomings it is definitely a must-read for anybody seeking a better understanding of the complexities of this turbulent part of the world.

Notes

¹ This assessment started most significantly with the publication of *Can Liberal Pluralism be Exported? Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe* (Kymlicka, Opalski 2002) and followed with the publication of *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa* (Berman, Eyoh, Kymlicka 2004) and *Multiculturalism in Asia* (Kymlicka, He 2005).

² Except such countries as Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania and Somalia, where Arabic is an official language but not a social majority language.

³ Some of the most important are: the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992), the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995) and UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001).

⁴ The millet system refers to the system of management of cultural diversity in the Ottoman Empire characterised by the existence of separate legal courts pertaining to personal law under which minorities were allowed to rule themselves (in cases

not involving any Muslim) with fairly little interference from the central government.

⁵ Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman.

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