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**Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys – Navigating the New international Politics of Diversity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007, 320 p.**

If I would have to chose only three characteristics to describe the effect Will Kymlicka's book *Multicultural Odysseys* had left on me, those would have been: highly analytical, dense with information and strongly opinionated. This book offers the reader a good and qualified insight into the contemporary meaning of the term *liberal multiculturalism*, as well as into the dynamics between the international organizations, nongovernmental organizations and the sovereign nation states as the main actors involved with the issues of minority rights. Liberal multiculturalism is the key term Kymlicka uses in his book and for him it "rests on the assumption that policies of recognizing and accommodating ethnic diversity can expand human freedom, strengthen human rights, diminish ethnic and racial hierarchies, and deepen democracy" (p. 18). Kymlicka himself being a strong proponent of this kind of multiculturalism makes me find the book strongly opinionated. He clearly expressed his conviction "that liberal multiculturalism is the best hope for building just and inclusive societies around the world, and that its diffusion cannot be achieved without the assistance of international organizations" (p. 25). His opinions, of course, are backed by strong arguments and a vast body of facts.

The introduction of the book starts off by drawing the reader's attention to the fact that the state-minority rights have been 'internationalized' which make multiculturalism globalized on two levels. Multiculturalism is firstly being promoted and globalized on the level of political discourse and, secondly, on the legal level – by the promotion of international legal declarations. In his interpretation, multiculturalism is an 'umbrella term' which promotes the non-dominant ethnocultural groups if they are either 'new' (such as immigrants and refugees) or 'old' minorities (national minorities and indigenous peoples). All policies promoting multiculturalism have in common the promotion of rights for these groups, and such promotion of rights goes beyond a mere protection of basic civil and political rights that liberal-democratic states guarantee to all individuals. For Kymlicka, the aim for the future would be a global diffusion of different models of multiculturalism. As he says, the aim of his study is to "identify some of the moral dilemmas and political complexities raised by international efforts to diffuse multiculturalism" (p. 16). Kymlicka finds the concept of multiculturalism promoted by the international organizations to be morally progressive and being built on top of the existing human rights.

From this point I will briefly look into the separate parts of Kymlicka's book, which follow the introduction. The main body of the book consists of three parts: "The (Re) Internationalization of State-Minority Relations", "Making Sense of Liberal Multiculturalism" and "Paradoxes in the Global Diffusion of Liberal Multiculturalism".

"The (Re) Internationalization of State-Minority Relations" deals with the development of the idea of multiculturalism through history. For Kymlicka, application of liberal multiculturalism is the only way for societies (mostly Eastern and post colonial) to protect human rights. In this part of the book, Kymlicka describes the growth of several ethnic policies in Western societies, contrasted to those that used to be applied in the former communist states, among which many had problems with ethnically motivated violence in the aftermath of the fall of communism. These experiences made the international community seek for liberal multiculturalism as a reasonable tool of preventing this kind of violence. While the problem of the former communist East was ethnic violence of the pre-existing peoples and ethnic groups, Kymlicka sees new challenges such as terrorism and mismanaged multiculturalism as the problems of Western societies. Kymlicka's book aims to answer three fundamental questions: "(i) how do we combine generic and targeted minority rights, (ii) how do we combine short-term conflict prevention with long-term promotion of the highest standards of liberal multiculturalism, and (iii) how do we combine the pursuit of ethnocultural justice with the protection of geopolitical security?" (p. 298). While there was not a clear-cut answer, Kymlicka does see internationalization of multiculturalism and keeping it as a hot topic in the international arena as a way to achieve progress in this area. That is why he focuses on the role of the international and intergovernmental organizations, which are formed either at the global (UN and related organizations) or at the regional level (such as OSCE or the EU). Purpose of these is to promote certain standards of behavior by using a variety of "carrots and sticks" at their disposal. In Kymlicka's opinion the 1990s were crucial for the power shift in the state-minority relations. "This change in the international discourse of what a normal state looks like is not merely rhetorical. It has implications for the legitimacy of minorities as political actors" (p. 43).

In the second part, "Making Sense of Liberal Multiculturalism", Kymlicka is presenting us with the reasons why liberal multiculturalism works in the West and what were the conditions for its elevation. Kymlicka admits that it was only thanks to specific conditions in the West that the liberal multiculturalism was able to come to life. There were five of these conditions and they were: (i) increasing rights consciousness, (ii) demographic changes, (iii) multiple access points for safe political mobilization, (iv) desecuritization of ethnic relations, and finally (v) consensus on human rights by the majority. Those were, however, not possible without certain preconditions that came

about thanks to the specific chain of historical events that took place in the West, and those preconditions were: democratic consolidation, human rights revolutions and geo-political security. Kymlicka in fact claims that the processes of national majority domination which is vivid today in the Post-Communist and Post-Colonial countries were nothing more but a late copy of the same processes which had occurred in the West some decades and centuries before: "Virtually every Western democracy has pursued this ideal of national homogeneity at one point or another ... every Western democracy has ought to define itself as a mono-national state" (p. 64). There are three types of minorities identified by Kymlicka who are affected by the minority policies: national minorities (that was already present throughout history), indigenous peoples and migrants (immigrants and refugees). In this part Kymlicka argues that the multicultural policies of the Western societies had helped the pacification of ethnic tensions and ethnic policies in those societies, and suggests it as an example to be followed by others.

The third part, "Paradoxes in the Global Diffusion of Liberal Multiculturalism", is dealing with problems in ethnic policies and more vividly with the outbreaks of ethnic wars and violence that have occurred in the postcolonial world and in the countries of the former Communist Bloc. The international organizations had been deeply involved into the state-minority relations in these countries, especially over the last two decades. Kymlicka sees the problem that the Western model could not just be transplanted into the societies, which did not have the same, or even similar historical development as West, nor their social structure. Kymlicka identifies certain new phenomenon in the Eastern Europe, particularly the 'minoritized majorities' (p. 185), when majorities continue to perceive themselves as if they are still weak and victimized minorities, and also continue to act accordingly. As a consequence of such thinking and acting, they continue to live in existential fear. For this and many other reasons, which make these societies specific in their own geographies and time, Kymlicka is trying to find different formulas for the diffusion of liberal multiculturalism into these societies. In trying so, he goes deeper into formulating rights for different groups in a variety of contexts, and finding a set of universally acceptable principles or "more general aspects of liberal multiculturalism – its underlying ethos – principles or strategies" (p. 24). So far the international organizations were mostly trying to promote tolerance and prevent violence, which is in Kymlicka's view only a precondition for the slow rooting of liberal multiculturalism. Limited by the practically achievable goals, sometimes by doing so, the international organizations had contradicted certain values of liberal multiculturalism. This had created a situation where it seems that the promoters of liberal multiculturalism lack principles and apply double standards.

The concluding pages, “The Way Forward?” represent a summary of the topics discussed in the book and Kymlicka’s rather pessimistic prognoses for the future proliferation of liberal multiculturalism as it is deeply contested in the international arena. Kymlicka finds it naïve of the West to think that the post-colonial and post-communist countries would “peacefully move towards significant minority rights through their own domestic democratic processes” (p. 296). He exclaims that ‘we’ should either move to the pre-1990s policy or somehow move from the dead-end. In doing so, Kymlicka suggests that there are two kinds of policies that should be applied – the short term and long term policies. Short-term policy would be to expect a certain minimum of standards, where the poor states would have to explain what they are doing for the fulfillment of these; the long-term policy would be a global diffusion of multiculturalism. In proposing so, Kymlicka is aware that the top down (West to East and South) approach is not feasible, and for that reason he suggest the formation of regional organizations which would better develop the appropriate categories of minorities then if the Western ones would have just been copied, and they would be better in formulating the “norms and discourses of minority rights” (p. 308). Kymlicka concludes with the observation that the 1990s push for minority rights had passed, and that it would be unrealistic to expect the post-colonial and post-communist societies to significantly change their policies from the inside.

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Giving Kymlicka’s book an epithet of being Orientalistic (in Edward Said’s definition of the term) would be too biased and unfair; however I would say that Professor Kymlicka is walking on a sharp edge with his conclusions. This is most vivid in the second part of the book, where Kymlicka seems to put an equation mark between the West and the idea of liberalism, putting it on a morally superior pedestal in comparison to other societies and cultures. In my opinion, in this book the same standards are not being applied to the Western societies and to the developing countries of the global South (or the post colonial world, to use Kymlicka’s words), as well as to the East European societies which coincide with the countries that use to be the Cold War enemies of the West. I must note that both these categories of states were in one form or the other in a political conflict with the Western countries, which Kymlicka sees as the model states for different forms of applying liberal multiculturalism. In my opinion it could be somewhat naïve to think that these countries would not use liberal multiculturalism for advancing certain agendas, which go beyond pure humanistic interest. Professor Kymlicka makes it quite obvious and unhidden that he sees his definition of multicultural liberalism as a superior model, which should be copied into other societies, or if not copied

then remodeled with its essence remaining unchanged. At this point I must say though that Kymlicka makes it clear that all the societies are not the same and that their cultures had a different development, which bears some political and practical problems in application of liberal multiculturalism into them. I must admit that Kymlicka is well aware of this line of critique and that is why he did draw attention to this problem on several occasions in his book. Another problem with Kymlicka's argument, in my opinion, is his rather positivistic view of the development of liberal multiculturalism. It had come about as a result of political and historical progress of Western societies and its spreading is seen as an ultimate positive goal for the future. However, Kymlicka is very much aware liberal multiculturalism did receive a lot of resistance, mostly by the states. On the very last pages of the book, Kymlicka suggests that global diffusion of different forms of liberal multiculturalism is highly unlikely going to occur in a foreseeable future.