

CULTURES AND IDENTITIES

The Relationship between National Identity and the State

Margaret Moore (University of Waterloo) said that since 1989, political theorists have attempted to move beyond standard human rights (individual rights to liberty), rule of law, and democratic rights, toward considering questions related to national identity and the relationship between cultural identity and the state. They have considered the aspirations of different cultural groups and the relationship between culture and identity to the political and institutional structure of the society.

It has become generally accepted that minorities face a number of disadvantages *vis-a-vis* the majority. For instance, minorities often face disadvantages in the reproduction of their culture and identity. Therefore, they are entitled to group-specific rights designed to ensure equal treatment. These rights are mainly designed to ensure three principles:

1. Collective security of these groups
2. An inclusive public character of the state
3. The state's responsibility to address legitimate insecurities expressed by minorities.

There are 3 types of groups in Canada which are typically thought to be entitled to group-specific rights:

- **Cultural groups.** A product of immigration, these groups are entitled to rights enabling them to overcome any disadvantages they may face in Canada and to rights that ensure inclusive public structures.
- **National minority groups** (i.e., territorially concentrated groups on their historic homeland, or at least the only territory they have).
- **Indigenous groups.**

These rights to collective self-government by national minorities are typically thought to have two bases:

1. **Normative**, which purports that aspirations of national minorities can not be ignored or denied in a liberal or democratic society, if the overwhelming majority of citizens feel that the national minorities (either wholly or practically) belong to a particular political community.
2. **Practical**, which follows from the idea that self-governing powers might be helpful to manage and accommodate cultural diversity within a state. Self-governing powers also give more expression to "nested forms" of identity. Canada is a good example. It is a bi-national or multi-national federal country, and although it has had constant constitutional frictions and difficulties, it has survived nearly 140 years. This means that although Canada is a home to a very young civilization (especially in comparison to the civilization here in Cyprus) it is, relatively speaking, quite an old country.

Margarete Moore concluded by talking about one of the main difficulties related to the