



# The Multiculturalism of Fear

*Jacob T. Levy*

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The Multiculturalism of Fear argues for a liberal account of multiculturalism which draws on a liberalism of fear like that articulated by Judith Shklar and inspired by Montesquieu. Liberalism should not be centrally concerned either with preserving or with transcending cultural communities, practices, and identities. Rather, it should focus on mitigating evils such as inter-ethnic civil wars, cruel practices internal to cultural communities, and state violence against ethnic minorities. This 'multiculturalism of fear' must be grounded in the realities of ethnic politics and ethnic conflict. It must therefore take seriously the importance which persons feel their ethnic identities and cultural practices to have, without falling into a celebration of cultural belonging.

Levy argues against nationalist and multicultural theories that accord significant moral weight to cultural communities as such. Yet he also insists that the challenges of life in a multicultural world cannot be met without a recognition of the importance that particularist identities and practices have to individual persons and to social life.

The book applies the multiculturalism of fear to a variety of policy problems confronting multiethnic states. These include the regulation of sexist practices internal to cultural communities; secession and national self-determination; land rights; customary law; and the symbols and words used by the state, including official apologies. It draws on cases from such diverse states as Australia, Canada, Israel, India, South Africa, and the United States.

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