

Ethnicity, Ethnic Minority and Self-Determination: An Examination of Conceptual Linkage

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Abstract

The concepts of ethnicity, ethnic minority and self-determination have gained such a vital importance as an integral part of ethnic and minority politics of the contemporary world. The major objective of this paper is to identify the conceptual linkage and relations between “ethnicity”, “ethnic minority” and the minorities’ claims for “self-determination” through an extensive analysis of the existing definitions, interpretations and criticisms to the above concepts. The analysis of these concepts reveals that the concept of ethnicity, ethnic minority and self-determination are interconnected each other and have gained prime importance in the politics of minority groups for ethnic identity construction, self-determination claims and ethno-nationalist discourses.

Key Words: Ethnicity, ethnic minority, ethnic group, self-determination, conceptualization

1. Introduction

The concepts of ethnicity, minority, and self-determination have an interconnected relationship and play vital roles in the contemporary discourses of ethnic conflict and ethnic politics. They are controversial and often understood differently by different parties in different contexts. They evoke different responses too. The main focus of this paper is to conceptualize the above concepts with the existing definitions, theoretical arguments and criticisms. For this, an extensive analysis of the relationships between the concepts “ethnicity”, “ethnic minority”, “majority-minority (or state-minority) relations”, and minority’s claims for “self-determination” is made to understand the interconnected linkages. Further, a specific focus has been given to the historical context of the claims for self-determination by the minorities. The nature of analysis of these concepts is descriptive and interpretive. Also, this paper has adopted only the secondary data for its analysis.

2. Concept of Ethnicity

Ethnicity is a pivotal and broader concept covering variety of factors such as race, language, color and culture in social and political theories revealing practically pertinent in the post-colonial era. These markers of social distinctions have become the basis of ethnic group’s identity and play specific roles in their political process. The ethnicity is constructed on one or more of the primordial features such as religion, language, race, or caste. In many plural societies, these features were used as the inherent unifying element of ethnic groups. Ethnicity is a term that has been used increasingly since the 1960s to account for human variation in terms of culture, tradition, language, social patterns, and ancestry. It refers to the fusion of many traits that belong to the nature of any ethnic group: shared values, beliefs, norms, tastes, behaviors, experiences, and consciousness of group, memories and loyalties. Therefore, a person’s ethnic group is such a powerful identifier because it cannot be denied, rejected or taken away by others (Ashcroft et.al, 2000).

Ethnicity is defined as thought and action stemming from identification with a community of putatively shared ancestry that exceeds the scale of face-to-face community (*gemeinschaft* in German). Cultural markers like language, religion, customs and phenotype (or “race”) are used by *ethnies* to demarcate their boundaries, so ethnic groups need to possess at least one diacritical marker (Note 1). However, the changing nature of the criteria poses difficulties in defining “ethnicity.” Indeed, there is still not a working definition to “ethnicity” and the concept has been used in variety of ways depending upon the various purposes for which the group has been identified. Therefore, not every ethnic group will possess all the possible traits, but all will display various combinations of them to varying degrees. Kellas (1998:6) defines ethnicity as “state of being ethnic or belonging to an ethnic group.” Hutchinson & Smith (1996:8) treat ethnicity as “a social and cultural resource for different interests and status groups.”

Eriksen (2002:12) finds ethnicity as an aspect of social relationship between agents who consider themselves as culturally distinctive from members of other groups with they have a minimum of regular interaction. Therefore, ethnicity to come about, the group must have a minimum contact with each other, and they must entertain ideas

of each other as being culturally different from themselves. Ethnicity thus refers to both the aspect of gain and loss in social mobilization as well as the meaning in the creation of identity. In this way, ethnicity has a political, organizational and as well as symbolic aspects. Most researchers such as Eriksen (1993), Harff & Gurr (2004), Ghai (2004) and Wolf and Weller (2005) who have worked extensively on ethnicity have come to the conclusion that ethnicity is not primordial in the sense that the emotive power of ethnic distinctions inevitably leads to political conflicts and demands for rights.

Based on the above definitions, it is found that ethnicity need not be considered as a primary affiliation with given territorial or other claims. On the one hand, “ethnicity” bears the stamp of essentialist thinking; on the other hand, it works as a way to connect with the literature and culture and invites problems too. In cultural politics, contrast to class, interest, and ideological politics, for all “ethnicity” ultimately has some form of cultural difference, such as nationality, nationalism, language, religion, region, community, kinship, clan, caste; all of which, along with “race” are themselves cultural constructs. The hypothesis developed by Pieterse linking the concept of ethnicity with majority-minority relations gets important with regard to the conceptualizing ethnic and minority politics. Accordingly, the majority politics is designated “political” and minority politics is termed “ethnic”, i.e. ethnicity is minority nationalism (Peterse, 2004). This hypothesis aims to examine the issues of majority and minorities and the process of ethnicizing politics. However, in academic discourse, especially in social sciences, perspectives on ethnicity have in recent years been increasingly problematizing and open-ended and made it as an elusive concept. Ethnicity fades into race, nationalism, multiculturalism, identity politics, and community. Its significance and dynamic nature are circumstantial, conjectural and contingent. This induced the researcher to describe it as subjective, flexible and dependent upon circumstance and situation until the middle of 20th century (Khanna, 2011). However, later, the views were changed. Some viewed ethnicity in an ascriptive sense and others viewed through primordialistic lenses. For premordialists, primordial qualities such as, common language, a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history, and allegedly inherited characteristics common to members of a group make them ethnically different group (Poluha, 1998:32; also see: Bayar, 2009:1639-1659). Some, especially instrumentalists define “ethnicity” as contextual, fluid and a function of structural conditions in society.

Besides, ethnicity can be seen as a form of identity and only becomes relevant when people feel excluded and as a means of managing it. As Fessha (2008:27), indicates, ethnic consciousness is a frequent result of oppression by the state or the majority community, then ethnic identity is mobilized by political agents to demand greater concessions and share in power and authority (Fessha, 2008:27). So, ethnicity, as an instrument has also often been associated with separatist movement and usually harnessed by minority groups who see autonomy and separation as a mean to end oppression. In this context, the concept ethnicity closely associates with ethnic minority.

3. Ethnic Minority

Ethnic minorities are usually defined in contradiction to major groups with whom they coexist in political systems, as groups which experienced systematic discrimination and domination because of their numerical inferiority and a host of historical and sociological factors, and have taken political action in furtherance of their collective interests. Therefore, almost as a rule, as Osaghae (1998) indicates, minorities who are not subjected to domination or discrimination, and instead constitute dominant and hegemonic groups, such as whites in colonial Africa and Asia, the Afrikaner whites in apartheid South Africa, the Tutsi in post-1994 Rwanda and the Fulani in Nigeria are excluded from the category of proper minorities.

No proper definition for minority has yet been widely accepted by the researchers, but a common-sense definition of a numerically smaller, non-dominant group distinguished by shared ethnic, socio, religious or linguistic attributes is developed. As Kasatkina (2003) indicates, ethnic minority is a term that is widely used in legal and political discourse where it is rather descriptive even though it often goes without a definition. However, the broad definitions of minority offered by the scholars are varies in categories of minorities, differentiated in terms of the politically relevant identities they assume: ethnic, religious, cultural or linguistic identities or combinations of these elements; access to power or political leverage; scope or arena of activities; interest articulation at national, state or local levels; and historical relations with other groups. In other words, beneath the blanket references, ethnic minorities differ historically, politically, socially, geographically and economically differentiated minorities (Osaghae, 1998:3). Minorities can also be differentiated by mixed criteria of geography, location in state power relations, and other defining characteristics.

In trying to reach a consensus in conceptualizing, it is possible to delineate some common criteria for “ethnic

minority”, namely, (i) a distinct, but non-dominant group—there must be an element of unity within the community to the extent that a non-minority member could not easily acquire the minority identity, (ii) a specific homeland—commentators often regard minorities as associated with a specific homeland. However, this can be a damaging factor for groups such as the Roma in Yugoslavia who do not have this association, (iii) numerical inferiority—this requirement appears to be uncontroversial when defining minorities. The maximum number that can constitute a minority is clearly established as less than 50 percent of the total population of a state, (iv) excluded categories—there has been a general expectation among commentators and states that the rights conferred by Article 27 of the Declaration of the Rights of Minorities (1992) are only available to “citizens” or “nationals” of the particular state. Therefore, many state restrict to provide many basic rights, even the rights listed on the UN lists to those groups who were not been given “citizenship” status. As a result, certain groups are unable to claim protection, (v) the problem of loyalty—the issue of the loyalty of minorities to the state has been raised by several commentators, and (vi) community unity—there is an obvious requirement that the members of the group itself do not wish to be assimilated.

3.1 Ethnic Group

The conceptualization of ethnic minority also needs the understanding of ethnic group and the relationship between ethnic majority and ethnic minority. The term “ethnic group” is generally understood in social science literatures to designate a population which is largely and biologically self-perpetuating; shares fundamental cultural values; realizes in overt unity in cultural forms; makes up a field of communication and interaction; has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order (Barth 1998:10-11). Based on the above view, understanding the term “ethnic group” has come to mean something like a people. However, it is, like other concepts, very much contested one to define. Many scholars have defined “ethnic group” with its connections to a particular culture—cultural aspects. However, putting boundaries to groups, especially ethnic boundary is found as a very common problem in ethnic study.

In the academic domain, different researchers and writers have used the term “ethnic groups” in different sense and defined them differently. Schermerhorn, in his seminal work on “Comparative ethnic relations” defined ethnic group as “a collectivity within a larger society, having a real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements that are viewed as the epitome of their peoplehood such as kinship, patters, physical contiguity, religious affiliation, language or dialect form, tribal affiliation, nationality or any combination of these” (Schermerhorn 1970:12). Smith (1991:21) defines it as “a type of cultural collectivity, one that emphasized the role of myths of descents and historical memories, and that is recognized by one or more cultural differences like religion, customs, language, or Institutions.” According to Cohen, ethnic group is “an informal interest group whose members are distinct from members of other groups within the same society in that they share a measure of ‘compulsory institutions’ like kinship and religion, and can communicate among themselves relatively and easily” (Cohen, 1969:04). His definition emphasizes the fact that ethnic group predominantly refers to ancestral relation or religion. Besides, according to Harff and Gurr (2004:03) ethnic groups like Kurds and Miskitos of Central America, and the Turks in Germany are “psychological communities” whose members share a persisting sense of common interest and identity that is based on some combination of shared historical experience and valued cultural traits—beliefs, language, way of life, a common homeland. They are often called identity groups. A few, like Koreans and Icelanders, have their own internationally recognized state or states. Most of them however, do not have such recognition, and they must protect their identity and interests within existing states. Many ethnic groups coexist amicably with others within the boundaries of the established states. The Swedish minority in Finland, for example, has its own cultural and political institutions, which are guaranteed by an international agreement signed between Sweden and Finland in 1921. Until 1960s, they did not have serious dispute with the Finnish people or government (Harff & Gurr, 2004:03).

Based on the above definitions and characteristics, ethnic group can be conceptualized based on three popular domains. First, a culture-bearing unit, sharing of a common culture. So, the classification of persons and local groups as members of an ethnic group must depend on their habits of exhibiting the particular traits of the culture. Second, a form of social organization, concentrating on what is socially effective and ethnic groups are seen as a form of social organization. This classifies a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, determined by his or her origin and background. Third, an identity criterion—since belonging to an ethnic category implies a certain kind of person, having that basic identity; it also implies a claim to be judged, and to judge oneself, by those standards that are relevant to that identity

The ethnic groups whose status is of greatest concern in international politics today are those that are the targets of discrimination and that have organized their members for political action to promote or defend their interests. A survey conducted in 2001 identified that there were 275 sizable groups based on the targets of discrimination or organized for political assertiveness or both (Harff & Gurr, 2004:03). Most of the countries have at least one such ethnic group and in a few countries like South Africa and Bolivia comprise half or more of the population. When the Soviet Union was dissolved into fifteen independent Republics at the end of 1991, the political demands of ethno-nationalists like the Latvians, Ukrainians, and Armenians were met. Since then, however, at least thirty additional ethnic groups in the new Republics have made new political demands (Harff & Gurr, 2004:04). This shows the continuing potential of minority identity formation within existing nation-states.

A recent study called “Minorities at Risk” directed by T.R Gurr shows that about 80 percent of the politically active ethnic groups in the 1990s were placed in a disadvantaged position because of the historical or contemporary discrimination. Forty percent of these groups (111 out of 275) surveyed face discriminatory policies and practices harmful to their material well-beings. For example, almost all indigenous people in the America have high infant mortality rates due in part to limited pre-and post-natal health care, and the Tamil youth in Sri Lanka have long been discriminated against the university admission policies that favor the majority Sinhalese (Note 2).

Ethnic groups are rarely equal in terms of power, legitimacy, or economic resource. However, ethnic groups in certain countries under different circumstances and from different psychological points of view are seemed to have been treated unequally, and usually attempt to improve their conditions. Since the 1960s, an increasing number of ethnic groups have begun to demand for more rights and recognition and demands that are now recognized as the major source of domestic and international conflict in the post-cold war world. The protagonists in the most intense ethnic conflicts want to establish their autonomy or independence, as is the case with many Kurds. Other ethnic conflicts arise from efforts by subordinate groups to improve their status within the existing boundaries of a state rather than to secede from it.

3.2 Majority-Minority or State-Minority Relations

As Eriksen states (1993:121-122), like other concepts used in the analysis of ethnicity, the twin concepts of minority and majority are relative. A minority exists only in relation to a majority and vice-versa, and their relationship is contingent on the relevant system boundaries. In the contemporary world, these system boundaries are nearly always state boundaries. A majority-minority relationship therefore changes if state boundaries are redrawn. The point to be stressed is that the groups which constitute majorities in one area or country may be minorities elsewhere. A majority group can also become a minority when it comes under the territory in a larger system (Eriksen, 1993).

Ghai (2004:01) indicates that there is no single model, normatively, in law, or in theory and in practice, which defines the relationship of the state to its minorities. The general theory of constitutional law embodies few norms which compel the state towards a specific regime for minorities. As with liberalism, the theory of Marxist state did not accommodate minorities as a separate and distinct constitutional category, but Lenin’s pragmatic solution to the problem is found in his theory of the “national question”, subsequently followed by China in a diluted form, and did provide for various forms of autonomy for “titular” ethnic groups dominant in particular localities—a transitional device.

Since some form of cultural and ethnic variations are out of place for the nationalists, ethnic variation is frequently defined by dominant groups as a problem and as something one has to “cope with”. Downright genocide and enforced displacement are the most brutal methods employed by the states in their dealing with minorities. However, these methods have become less common since the Second World War, notwithstanding violent attempt made at “ethnic cleansing” in former Yugoslavia (Eriksen, 1993:122). As Eriksen (1993) further explains that states generally follow one or several of the following three main strategies in dealing with minorities today:

1. The state may insist on the assimilation of entropy—resistant elements. Although such policies of assimilation are often believed as a mechanism to help their target group to enjoy equal rights and to improve their social status, they often tend to inflict, suffering and loss of dignity of the minorities to feel that their own tradition is of no value.
2. The state may opt for political domination, which frequently implies the segregation on ethnic grounds. This entails the minority being physically separated from the majority, and frequently justified by

referring to the presumed cultural inferiority of the former. Ideology of the segregation often hold that it is harmful to “mix cultures” or races, and are concerned with boundary maintenance.

3. The other main option for the state is to transcend ethnic nationalist ideology and adopt an ideology of multiculturalism, under which citizenship and full civil rights need not imply a particular cultural identity, or a decentralized federal model providing a high degree of local autonomy.

Similarly, minorities may also respond to state domination in many ways. Eriksen (1993:123-124) identifies the following three principles of options which were advocated by Alfred Hirschmann (1970) in his book *'Exit, Voice, Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States.'* The first option is to assimilate. This has been a common process, whether actually chosen or not. In some cases, it is nevertheless impossible for an ethnic minority to choose assimilation. Blacks in the United States (US) have not been assimilated largely, because the skin color (“race”) is an important marker of ethnicity in the United States. The second option for minorities consists in acquiescing in their subordination, or in other ways trying to co-exist peacefully with the nation state. They may sometimes negotiate for limited autonomy in, say, religious, linguistic or political matters. In other cases, such groups may reproduce their boundaries and identities informally. The third option for minorities is to exit or secession which is always incompatible with state policies. Groups which favor secession and full independence are always ethnic communities.

As Majeed (2002:01-03) explains, the state system in the twenty-first century is hardly stable and is difficult just for nationalism to be a guarantor of citizen’s aspirations and achievements. When the identity of an ethnic group or a minority is not recognized it becomes more assertive and tries to transform into an entity different from national identity. The question of a minority-identity is not just a matter of one’s choice but the label of others as well. While minorities try to establish their ethnic identity, the majority inadvertently strengthens the minority separatism by constantly reminding them in innumerable ways that they are a minority.

4. Minorities and Self-determination

The concept of self-determination has a close association with minorities, especially with ethnic minorities. As Liyanage (2005) explains, in many contemporary ethnic conflicts, minority nationalist movements employ the concept of “self-determination” to claim political legitimacy to their campaigns as well as goals. All people have the rights to self-determination. However, the right to self-determination in positive international law does not apply to all the people, especially minorities and ethnic or communal groups living within independence state. Self-determination has been one of the most prevalent causes of international and inter-state crisis since the middle of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. It has been renewed in importance subsequent to the fall of Berlin wall in 1989, the unification of Germany and the end of the Cold War. It is defined as free choice of one’s own act without external compulsion, and especially as the freedom of a given territory to determine their own political status or independence from their current state. In other words, it is the right of the people of a certain nation to decide how they want to be governed without the influence of any other country. The latter is a complex concept with conflicting definitions and legal criteria for determining which groups may legitimately claim the right to self-determination. The New Encyclopedia Britannica (1997:619) defines self-determination as “the process by which a group of people, usually possessing a certain degree of national consciousness for their own state and choose their own government.” Struggles for autonomy and secession have been the source of tremendous human sufferings and destruction in Africa, Europe and Asia.

As a political-theoretical concept, the right to self-determination of nations and minority groups has been one of the most controversial issues in political and legal theory as well as the discourse of political and human rights (Liyanage, 2005). Self-determination is a basic principle for realizing the freedom to control one’s own life. It serves as a prerequisite for achieving positive human conditions for a decent life and self-fulfillment. The desire to rule one’s own self and to control one’s own life is essential for human existence. Though it has challenges to face under certain circumstances, self-determination symbolizes the aspiration of individuals or well defined group to create, fashion and rule themselves and not to be dominated by others (Jeong, 2000) Individual human beings are endlessly looking for various group identities to satisfy their aspirations and needs for a form of social being. Most importantly, the quest for self-determination is achieved through group action in a community.

Besides, the goal of self-determination is compatible with the participatory political and economic system that protects the rights of individuals and group identity. Autonomy is an ethical imperative to be fulfilled in the pursuit of a right to organize fully representative and democratic political entity (Jeong, 2000:224). The goals of self-determination are directed towards the liberation from oppression and deprivation. It is often expressed in the claims of self-conscious territorial communities that they rule themselves. Theoretically it can be said that

granting self-determination to all would remove a major cause of an inter-communal conflict. However, this optimistic projection of self-determination as a force for peace has been called into question by the frequent clashes between rival ethnic communities. Bringing the self-determination concept under the umbrella for providing prosperity and justice to all is beyond reality because it is a difficult goal to achieve in many ethnically divided societies.

4.1 Historical Context of Self-determination Claims

The origin and the spread of the concept self-determination have been historically linked to the processes of modern state and nation formation in Western Europe (Liyanage, 2005). At this juncture, it is necessary to go back to the epoch of nationalistic movements in Europe. The principle of self-determination was developed with the emergence of nationalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Hannum, 1990). Since the French Revolution, the idea of self-determination has spread throughout the world, unifying peoples into nations. In the 20th century, social crisis and institutional collapse following the destruction of multi-ethnic empires facilitated the resurgence of ethnic and national identity. With the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires during World War-I, territory of the former empires required new sovereign: the principle of self-determination became the obvious vehicle for the re-division of Europe by the various powers. Independence was granted to linguistic and other cultural minorities dissatisfied with political boundaries that were drawn across the landscapes of disintegrating Austro-Hungarian on Ottoman empires as well as the European segments of Russia. The victorious countries used the principle of self-determination to legitimize the division of defeated countries with the creation of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Finland, Poland, and the Baltic States (Hannum, 1990; Jeong, 2000).

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and the Woodrow Wilson were the two principal advocates that the principle of self-determination be established as the general criterion for the liberation of nations (Liyanage, 2005:122). In 1914, Lenin wrote “it would be wrong to interpret the right to self-determination as meaning anything but the right to existence as a separate state” (Lenin, 1914). In the work—*The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nation to Self-determination*, Lenin argued that the demand for self-determination belonged wholly and exclusively to the sphere of politics. The right of nations to self-determination implies exclusively the right to the independence in the political sense, the right to free political separation from the oppressor nation (Lenin, 1914:146). When the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia in November 1917, they called for Russia’s immediate withdrawal of as a member of the Allies of the World War-I. They also supported the right of all nations, including colonies, to self-determination. According to Lenin, the principle of self-determination has three components, namely, (i) the right of small ethnic or national groups for political separation against oppressor nation; (ii) the right of people not to be forcibly annexed by the military victorious powers; and (iii) the right of the people in colonies for independence and for the formation of independent states (Liyanage, 2005:123). In World War-I, Allies accepted self-determination as a peace aim. In his “Fourteen Points” of December 1918—the essential terms for peace—Woodrow Wilson, the then President of the United States of America listed self-determination as an important objective for the post-war world, which dealt with specific territorial settlements. Classical self-determination, in the Wilsonian sense, is of two dimensions in character; the search for full independence and sovereignty by a community at the expense of the existing state, and the right to form a government and administration according to the community’s wishes. Several of his “Fourteen Points” dealt with specific territorial settlements, including the creation of independent states out of the remnants of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. Three of his subsequently enunciated four “principles” also concern self-determination or territory: “peoples and provinces must not be bartered about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were chattels or pawns in a game”; territorial questions were to be settled ‘in the interests of the populations concerned’; and ‘well-defined national elements’ were to be given ‘the utmost satisfaction that can be accorded without introducing new, or perpetuating old, elements of discord and antagonism’ (quoted by Hannum (1990:28).

During the 1920s and 1930s there were some successful movements for self-determination in the beginning of the process of decolonization. In 1941, Allies of the World War-II signed the Atlantic Charter and accepted the principle of self-determination. In January 1942 twenty-six nations signed the Declaration by United Nations, which accepted those principles. The ratifications of the United Nations Charter in 1945 at then end of the World War-II placed the right of self-determination into the framework of international law and diplomacy (Note 3). However, the “principles” of self-determination is mentioned only twice in the Charter of United Nations, both times in the context of developing “friendly relations among nations” and in conjunction with the principle of “equal rights of peoples”. Self-determination is not mentioned in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, before the moral and political imperative of decolonization, the vague “principle” of self-

determination soon evolved into the “right” to self-determination. This evolution culminated in the adaptation by the UN General Assembly in 1960 of the Declaration of Granting Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Hannum, 1990). Thereafter, the redrawing of new international boundaries with recognition offer the quintessential test of the “slippery slope” potentially rooted in the implementation of classical self-determination towards possible full scale independence. Interestingly, over the course of history, communal and ethnic empires gave way to larger, multi-ethnic empires, which, in turn, were again destroyed by nationalism and re-introduced self-determination. During the cold war, self-determination was seen primarily in the context of decolonization, influencing the movement of the non-align states. In the 1980s and particularly in the 1990s regionalization, trans-border context of decolonization, and empowerment of communities with global real-time technologies and the internet has begun to challenge the traditional position of the nation state and national central authorities. Since the early 1990s the legitimization of the principle of national self-determination has led to an increase in the number of conflict within states, as sub-groups seek greater self-determination and even full secession. The international reaction to these new movements has been uneven and often dictated more by politics than principle.

4.2 Minorities and Self-determination in the International Context

One of the most important dimensions in any discussion related to self-determination concerns the role of minorities, their protection, their relative situation in the state with regard to other (also related) communities, as well as their possible development. A discrepancy seems to exist in the awareness of established legal instruments and international treaties concerning the protection of national minorities. The identity and the ability to be recognized as a minority by the central authorities and, if necessary, also by outside states and other organizations, and the role of a minority in the world polity as a function of increasing global interdependence and the resulting challenge to state and sovereignty.

The minority entitlement for self-determination, in itself a difficult and controversial topic, however it is increasingly being analyzed in terms of the internal demographic organization of a state rather than in terms of secession or independence (Ghai, 2004). The UN general assembly has resolved many years ago that autonomy is a manifestation of self-determination. The greater involvement of the UN or consortia of states in the settlement of internal conflicts has also helped develop the concept of self-determination as implying autonomy in appropriate circumstances, as in Bosnia, Eastern Europe and Kosovo (Quoted by Ghai, 2004:29-30). However, the emergence of new states as a result of the collapse of communist order in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans, has removed some taboo against secession, and the international community seems to be inching towards some consensus that extreme oppression of a group may justify secession. This position has served to strengthen the internal aspects of self-determination, for a reason of the fact that a state can defeat the claim of separation if and when it respects political and cultural rights of minorities.

Under extreme conditions, self-determination is compatible with secession, and therefore, ultimately with the nationalist state. It is also so with a multi-national state in which the minority enjoys the right to self-government in considerable measures. If a minority is inclined towards integration, it is consistent with the liberal state. It is unlikely to be consistent with nationalist state much as it depends on the minority in question, for self-government, can unlock doors for it only if it can bring itself within the type of minority entitled to self-government, that in a “national group”, a “people.” Once that can be successfully done, self-determination can be a powerful foundation for negotiations with the majority by the minority on its relationship with the majority and state (Ghai, 2004).

5. Conclusion

The concepts of ethnicity, ethnic minority and self-determination are interconnected each other and they play important role in ethnic and minority politics around the world. Ethnicity, as a pivotal concept covering variety of similar concepts such as race, religion, language, color and culture in social and political theories revealing practically pertinent in the post-colonial history. Ethnicity also has a close connection with minority groups for their identity construction and self-determination claims. Self-determination has become a basic principle for realizing the freedom to control one’s groups own life. It serves as a prerequisite for achieving positive groups conditions for a decent life and self-fulfillment. But this expectation became unfulfilled or discriminated by other or majority groups, mostly with the sponsorship of state apparatus, minorities mobilize for their group rights protections in the name of self-determination. To present an integrated framework of ethnic political mobilizations, ethnicity should become politically salient. Ethnicity alone need not generate conflict; but once it

is situated in a particular type of social or plural diversity, it may assume potential significance. This is partly because, with scarcity being a major constraint in politics, ethnicity becomes a crucial criterion for regulating political conflict and distributing public goods in plural societies. An ethnic group transforms itself into a political group to compete with other ethnic groups when ethnic consciousness is heightened to a phenomenon of the politicization of ethnicity. Essentially, minorities' political mobilization for self-determination occurs when they feel marginalized or discriminated by the majorities or state and confront against political authorities leading to be violent or non-violent including varied riots, public demonstrations and hunger strikes. Different interconnected factors such as ethnic group identity, group cohesion, group discrimination, political environment, use of violence by government, economic status of government, and external factors—determine the minorities' mobilization for self-determination and related issues.

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Notes

Note 1. Indeed, the word "ethnic" derives from the Greek expression *ethnikòs* and from the Latin term *ethnicus*, both used to define "people" and "nation". The former Christians applied the term to identify "pagans" or more extensively people belonging to the nation of the non-believers. In its earliest English use, the word "ethnic" referred to culturally different "heathen" nations, a sense that has lingered as a connotation. Some contemporary uses of the term identify it with national groups in Europe, where with some exception, such as Bosque, the link between ethnicity and nationality has appeared justified. For more details, see, Ashcroft et al, 2000; Colla, 2009.

Note 2 For more details on the project, visit: www.minoritiesatrisk.com

Note 3 For details of the Charter, visit: www.un.org/en/documents/charter/