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BOOK REVIEW: POLITICAL SECESSIONISM & ETHICAL THEORIES - ALLEN BUCHANAN AND HIS CRITICS

Tomáš Rakonczay*

ROSŮLEK, P.: *Politický secesionismus & etické teorie – Allen Buchanan a jeho kritici. (Political Secessionism & Ethical Theories – Allen Buchanan and his Critics)*. Brno : Barrister & Principal, 2014. 171 p. ISBN 978-80-7485-037-0.

The study of political secession is gaining impetus in these turbulent times. Ongoing events in Ukraine – the Novorossia project and annexation of Crimea; Catalan and Scottish independence referendum in 2014 or the case of South Sudan in 2011; all these provide valuable data for scholars striving to shed light on this political concept. Inquiry from various angles is being conducted by political scientists, economists, philosophers and sociologists, at the same time, giving rise to spectrum of various interpretations, theories and paradigms. This includes **Dr. Přemysl Rosůlek**, docent at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of West Bohemia with solid academic background (research fellowships at Nuffield College, Oxford; Lisbon, Skopje or Sofia just to name a few). **Dr. Rosůlek's** field of academic interest embraces topics such as identity theory, nationalism and political communication, while publishing works mostly in relation to Czech Republic, the Balkans and Iran. His latest work: *Political Secessionism & Ethical Theories: Allen Buchanan and his Critics* (2014), the subject of this review, aims to fill the gap in the discourse dealing with moral dimension of secession within the milieu of Czech political philosophy.

Brief glimpse indicates professional graphic design with regards to book's paper back cover, the conveyed message is straightforward and reflects on written content concisely. The text itself is logically well structured, rich on paragraphs and heavy on the footnotes side, which is acceptable though, taking into account the scope of the work. Technical quality is also enhanced with visually appealing and easy to comprehend infographics allowing for better

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understanding of investigated topic. However, a misleading flaw occurs - the book title used in section "Introduction" does not correspond with the one used on book cover, only the secondary title does. Hopefully, this will be addressed in the next edition.

Focal point of the publication is the endeavour to answer the following research questions: "*Is Allen Buchanan's remedial right theory of secession morally justifiable?*", "*Which one of these [presented] theories is morally justifiable?*" and "*Is it possible to superordinate ethical principles of Allen Buchanan's remedial right only theory of secession to norms of national self-determination theories of secession and plebiscitary theories of secession?*" (Rosůlek, 2014, p. 12) The research itself is qualitative in nature and methodology applied consists of hermeneutical approach and comparative political theory. Author subjects both methods to critical thinking, stating their pros and cons, while linking them to the research context.

Given the capacity of the scrutinised concept, not omitting content beyond morality debate, **Dr. Rosůlek** employs 'divide and conquer' approach. Inherent architecture of the work's core is comprised of four parts. First and second part of author's effort is oriented towards decontestation of presented political concept. "*Prior to formulation of own exact definition of secession understood as break away of territorial part from existing state it is not only necessary to contextualize secession, followed by division into typologies, but also to understand its patterns.*" (Rosůlek, 2014, p. 40) And he delivers, drawing a clear line between political secession, separatism, irredentism and exclusion, while tackling areas of legality, legitimacy and self-determination. Contemporary typology has also its place here. The latter of these two parts deals with explanatory theories of secession and their respective trajectories. Works of scholars such as **I. D. Duchacek**, **C. Young**, **A. D. Smith**, **D. L. Horowitz** and others are examined. Fundamental features of the resulting definition of political secession connected to legitimacy dimension, namely: (1) legitimacy of (anti-)secessionist axiom; (2) legitimacy of the right to secede, including constitutional right; (3) legitimacy of territorial dimension; (4) ethics of international law and (5) state recognition ethics represent the anchor points of comparative perspective.

Third and backbone part, the comprehensive mapping of normative theories of secession - remedial right only theories, theories of national self-determination (ascriptivist theories) and plebiscitary theories - follows above set categories. The used coding of the data, is in my opinion, represents a crucial positive, otherwise the content would be overwhelming. **A. Buchanan**, **D.**

Miller, M. Moore, H. Beran and **D. Philpott** and their accounts are the main protagonists here. Final part revolves around author's comparison and evaluation of presented arguments across all three normative theories and is consistent with set criteria. Research questions are answered with sound logic including added value of author's insights. Reviewed publication *Political Secessionism & Ethical Theories: Allen Buchanan and his Critics* by **Dr. Přemysl Rosůlek** investigates the clash between remedial right only theories and primary right theories on moral grounds. To conclude, reading this work was a rather pleasant experience. There is no doubt that the targeted audience dwells within academia, but on the other hand, taking into account the complex processing of the topic and overall technical side of this piece, I believe it is well suited for any curious mind.