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# Introduction – Transethnic Coalition-Building: Definitions, Practices and Possibilities

David J Smith*
*University of Glasgow*

The four articles making up this Special Issue of JEMIE are based on papers presented at the conference 'Transethnic Coalition-building within and across States', held at Uppsala University on 7-9 January 2015. This conference was made possible by a grant from the Riksbanken Jubileumsfond, an independent foundation in Sweden promoting research in the Humanities and Social Sciences, as well as additional funding provided by the main organizing partners – Uppsala Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies (UCRS), the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), the Centre for Russian, Central and East European Studies (CRCEES) of the University of Glasgow and The Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Acknowledgements and thanks are due to all of the funders and organizers, as well as to everyone who took part in an event that brought together forty-one academic and practitioner speakers and sixty-five participants in total from twenty countries.[1]

For the purposes of the conference call, 'trans-ethnic coalition-building' was broadly defined as initiatives undertaken by different actors (local, national and international-level, governmental and non-governmental) to establish and maintain institutional frameworks that mitigate conflicts and encourage intercultural dialogue and cooperation between spokespersons for different ethnicities both within and across states. Participants were asked to reflect upon the factors that drive interaction across ethnic boundaries, the status and competence of relevant institutions and the practices and outcomes that derive from such cooperation. The four articles contained herein address all of these themes, as well as

* Professor of Baltic History and Politics (Central and East European Studies). Between 2012 and 2014, Prof. Smith was Visiting Researcher at the Uppsala Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies. Email: David.Smith@glasgow.ac.uk.

suggesting avenues for further research based on a conference that raised as many new questions as it answered.

When it comes to addressing multiple ethnicity-based claims within a single state, one can point to a spectrum of approaches based on varying distributions of power between groups. These range from consociational systems with formalized power-sharing arrangements, to settings in which one ethnicity clearly enjoys political predominance and demands advanced on behalf of others are managed through a top-down process of elite co-optation and control. In between these two poles stand a variety of approaches, which can be described as forms of low-level power-sharing. The Special Issue analyses arrangements sitting at various points on this scale, within a collection of articles that comprises case studies of two Balkan countries, a regional survey of practices in former Soviet states and a general taxonomy (deploying multiple examples from across Europe and beyond) of transethnic coalitions.

The first country case study, by Marina Andeva, examines Macedonia, and the participation of ethnic minority political parties in electoral and governmental coalitions in the country since 1991. Particular attention is given to developments following the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA), drawn up following a short-lived armed conflict between the state and insurgents drawn from the numerically large Albanian minority. Though generally considered to embody three of the four elements contained in Lijphart's model of consociationalism (segmental autonomy at municipal government level; proportionality; and veto right), OFA does not make any formal provision for an executive grand coalition. The practice, however, (both pre- and post-2001) has been towards the formation of coalition governments including one or the other of the largest ethnic Albanian parties, which have until now campaigned for parliament on the basis of separate electoral lists. Andeva's analysis of these arrangements highlights the continued debates surrounding the effectiveness of OFA. While it has succeeded in maintaining peace between the main ethnic segments, the agreement was originally intended to serve as a platform for further democratization and integration of society. In this respect it has arguably been less successful, for although public opinion surveys routinely convey a desire to move beyond ethnic politics and focus on broader issues such as economic development, the structures in place encourage voters to opt for ethnic parties campaigning on a nationalist agenda. In light of this, Andeva argues that the practice of building pre-electoral coalitions between Macedonian parties and those

representing smaller ethnic minorities should be extended to encompass the Albanian parties, which currently enter coalition negotiations only after elections have taken place.

Svetluša Surova's study of Serbia shifts the analytical focus to autonomy, and the National Minority Councils (NMC) established under the terms of a general 2002 law on national minorities and further, more specific legislation adopted in 2009, at a time when an alliance of Hungarian parties from Vojvodina had become part of a ruling coalition holding a narrow majority within the Serbian parliament.[2] The National Minority Councils constitute an example of non-territorial autonomy, as they represent collectives of persons formed on the basis of individual citizens voluntarily enrolling on a national electoral register and electing bodies with competences extending to the territory of the state as a whole. The relevant legislation was adopted as part of post-Milosevic democratic turn that saw a reversion to former Yugoslav practices, including the restoration of the status previously enjoyed by the province of Vojvodina. While autonomy is often defined as 'self-rule' rather than 'shared rule', it is debatable to what extent one can draw a clear-cut distinction between the two concepts.[3] In the Serbian case, NMCs are defined both as representative organs of national minorities and as consultative and advisory bodies to the state authorities. Insofar as they can participate in decision-making on minority-related issues, they can serve as channels for dialogue and cooperation between minority and majority ethnicities. This is the standpoint adopted by Surova, who examines in detail the operation of the Slovak NMC first elected in 2010.

The initial constitutional and legislative framework in Serbia offered far-reaching scope for dialogue and cooperation with state, regional and local authorities, including the right of NMCs to submit proposals, initiatives and opinions to the National Assembly and Government as well as to other state bodies and special organizations. The aforementioned state authorities were also obliged to request an opinion from NMCs when it came to decision-making on areas falling within the purview of the latter (culture, education, information and official use of minority languages and scripts). These provisions have since been modified by a 2014 ruling of the Serbian Constitutional Court, which restricted the scope of contacts with state authorities while confirming the consultative and non-legally binding character of such interactions. While this ruling has restricted possibilities for trans-ethnic coalition-building on the basis of NMCs, Surova concludes that the framework in place is still relatively sound, and continues to provide a broad range of possibilities for constructive cooperation. Moreover, the devolved powers granted to Vojvodina mean that this ethnically

diverse region (where minority political parties are represented in government) retains right to adopt its own statute in this area. The article, however, again raises the question about the efficacy of autonomy arrangements *per se*, in the absence of supplementary forms of 'shared rule' at the level of the state or regional government.[4]

In both of the two aforementioned case studies, the focus is primarily on the binary relationship between a single ethnic minority and the state of which it forms part. Andeva's article, it is true, discusses coalition-building practices by a range of minority groups in Macedonia, but mainly to show how the smaller amongst these have been denied space by political arrangements designed primarily to regulate the relationship between the numerically large Albanian minority, the state and its (before 2001 politically dominant) ethnic majority. This is a point picked up by Marina Germane in her wide-ranging overview of different forms of coalition-building, which highlights the persistence of ethnic hierarchies within states and illustrates the difficult position faced by smaller minorities which find themselves caught between two larger competing cultures. This was the case, for instance, for Jewish communities living in inter-war Czechoslovakia, Latvia and Romania. More broadly, Germane notes that the existing literature has tended to investigate 'vertical' relationships between particular minorities and states, and has thus been dedicated to studying *ethno-national*, rather than *interethnic* relations. This in turn reflects the continued predominance of the nation-state model as an organizing analytical framework for research in this field.[5]

The persistence of ethnic hierarchies has not, however, precluded numerous (though far less-studied) examples of *horizontal* cooperation between different ethnic minorities, both within and also across the borders of individual states. In the remainder of the article Germane provides the reader with a helpful typology, which covers both intra and interethnic coalitions operating at local, state, regional and international levels and which offers many interesting pointers to further research in this area. Within this typology, a distinction is also drawn between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' minority coalitions – 'in other words, between those organized on the initiative or under the auspices of the nation-state or international organizations, and those of grassroots origin, organized on minorities' own initiative'.[6] Although it is widely assumed that grassroots coalitions are more 'authentic' and have greater legitimacy, the article notes that state-sponsored minority coalitions can also be used to address structural inequalities across different sectors of society. Acknowledging and engaging with issues of 'groupism' and the possible reification of ethnicity, Germane underlines the importance of studying ethnic coalitions in order to achieve 'a better

understanding of the persistence of organizations based upon ethnic membership, the reasons behind their creation, their goals, their modes of operation, and the impact of their activities on politics within the nation-state and internationally'.[7] The author further argues that to simply dismiss ethnic solidarities as illegitimate and irrational risks occluding their potential and in many cases actual contribution to equal participation and democratization processes within ethnically diverse societies.

Numerous themes within Germane's analysis are further explored in the article by Alexander Osipov, which switches the focus to what are described as 'trans-ethnic organizational settings' existing within post-Soviet countries. By this term, the author refers to non-governmental organizations, autonomous parts of the public sector or organized practices founded on the basis of multi-ethnicity and tasked with the promotion of inter-ethnic accord and communication between ethnicities and public authorities. Osipov goes on to consider a range of settings, from de facto statehood resting on the very idea of multi-ethnic coalition (Transnistria), through official or semi-official Assemblies of Peoples (found in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia) to consultative bodies, cultural festivals and voluntary umbrella organizations uniting spokespersons for different ethnicities. Common to all of these arrangements are patronizing involvement of the state, which would seem to place them firmly within the realm of 'top-down' minority coalitions. Moreover, beyond symbolic recognition they offer little in the way of assets or opportunities for the ethnic groups involved and, as the author observes, are not inconsistent with 'nationalizing state' policies or regimes of ethnic control. These transethnic organizational settings have nevertheless proved durable, finding broad support amongst ethnic elites and encountering little dissension at grassroots level, within a context that cannot be characterized as resting on explicit state compulsion. According to Osipov, this state of affairs only appears puzzling if one treats ethnicity as a property of substantive groups possessing collective agency, and pursuing interests predicated on preserving a given identity and maximizing the resources available for this purpose. If one instead treats ethnicity as a form of social categorization and representation, the durability of the aforementioned trans-ethnic organizational settings can be explained by reference to still hegemonic understandings of ethnic diversity inherited from the Soviet period. These have allowed for the generation of publicly acceptable narratives combining explicit official recognition of multi-ethnicity, securitization of ethnic issues (with state-sponsored inter-ethnic dialogue as a remedy to potential conflicts) and 'banalization' of ethnic claims (which are confined to the sphere of culture and thereby excluded from 'real' politics). At the same time,

trans-ethnic organizational settings have served as a mechanism for the incorporation and co-optation of ethnic spokespersons into the system of government. In Osipov's view, these arrangements can be situated within the broader theoretical framework of 'neopatrimonialism' applied to post-colonial and post-communist societies. His conclusion, though, also considers the extent to which (following his general theoretical framework) legitimating practices of officialization, securitization and banalization might also be deemed applicable to other more liberal and less authoritarian contexts.

All in all, the collected articles offer a wide-ranging and stimulating discussion of the multi-faceted phenomenon of transethnic coalition-building. It is hoped that this will provide a basis for further research in this area.

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[2] On the establishment and operation of the NMCs, see Tamás Korhecz, 'Non-territorial autonomy in practice: the Hungarian National Council in Serbia', in Zoltán Kantor (ed.), Autonomies in Europe: Solutions and Challenges (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2014), pp.151-164.

[3] For a discussion of autonomy along these lines, see John Coakley's introduction to the forthcoming special issue of *Ethnopolitics* (15 (1) 2016) on 'Non-territorial autonomy and the government of divided societies'.

[4] On this point, see David J Smith, 'Estonia: a model for interwar Europe?', *Ethnopolitics*, 15 (1) 2016.

[5] On this point, see also Marina Germane, 'The fifth element. Expanding the Quadratic Nexus?', Ethnopolitics Papers No. 24, May 2013. www.ethnopolitics.org/ethnopolitics-papers/EPP024.pdf

[6] Germane in this issue, pp.61-62.

[7] Germane in this issue, p.70.

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# Minorities in Coalition-Building: the Case of the Republic of Macedonia

Marina Andeva*

*University American College Skopje*

While the Balkan countries and some European countries have had issues with recognizing and supporting the different ethnic communities living within their borders, Macedonia has, since its independence, recognized the existence of different communities as a given fact. Since gaining independence, it has constitutionally guaranteed all citizens freedom of association for the 'accomplishment and protection of their political, economic, social, cultural and other rights and beliefs,' (Article 20 of the Constitution from 1991), as well as free expression of national belonging (Article 8 of the Constitution). Many political parties were formed representing different minorities; some of those parties have won seats in the Parliament, local council and positions of Mayor in different municipalities, and a few of them have entered government coalitions. Many pre-election coalitions have included minority political parties and every government coalition has consisted of parties representing ethnic minorities. Until 2002 this mainly applied to the parties representing Albanians; from 2002 onwards, there have been coalitions formed of parties that represent practically all nationalities in the country. This paper illustrates how and to what extent minorities' political parties have entered into electoral and government coalition-building in the Republic of Macedonia, as well as the coalition dynamics through the years and the main challenges encountered by minorities in ensuring an effective voice in politics.

**Keywords:** Republic of Macedonia; minorities; elections; coalition-building; government coalitions

The primary aim when accommodating ethnic group diversity is to design a state organization structure that is capable of accepting diversities through different mechanisms and instruments (Andeva & Marichikj, 2013: 172). In the process of doing so, the Republic of Macedonia was under a amount of pressure to develop a framework that would fit the needs and rights of its minorities. Following political changes in the early 1990's, the country

* Assistant Professor, School of Political Science, University American College Skopje. Email: marina.andeva@uacs.edu.mk.

entered a process of social transition, and as a newly independent state, faced a denial of its identity from without as well as amended identity definitions from within (Dodovski, 2012:92). Ethnic Macedonians, being the constituent nationality of the state, were living out a dream of a free and independent Macedonia. Through the years to come, the country faced a number of challenges in its transition from a mono-ethnic nation-state to a multicultural state in which ethnic Macedonians share the state with other constituent members.

As statistics confirm (Table 1), the Republic of Macedonia has an interethnic structure composed of one dominant group (the Macedonian ethnic community) and one large minority group (the Albanian national minority). [1] As such, the structure reflects a relationship between Macedonians and Albanians, and at many times through the years has shown signs of a relationship between the state and the Albanian national minority as the biggest minority group in the country (Frckoski, 2005). There is an evident cultural difference between these two nationalities, with Christian Orthodox religion and the Macedonian language on one side, and mostly Muslim religion and Albanian language on the other. A distinct line of conflict between these two groups was manifested through the struggle of cultural rights such as education in the mother tongue, use of symbols of the ethnic group, establishments of cultural groups, media in the mother tongue, etc. This cultural conflict does not occur independently, but rather hand in hand with political processes in the country. In such a context, minorities' political participation in Macedonia can be seen from two different angles: from one side, the nature and type of participation by the Albanian national minority, and from the other, the struggle of smaller minority groups for more effective involvement in the decision-making processes in the country.

Table 1. Population structure according to declared ethnic affiliation, by censuses.[2]

| | **1961** | **1971** | **1981** | **1991** | **1994** | **2002** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TOTAL** | 1406003 | 1647308 | 1909136 | 2033964 | 1945932 | 2022547 |
| **Macedonians** | 1000854 | 1142375 | 1279323 | 1328187 | 1295964 | 1297981 |
| **Albanians** | 183 108 | 279 871 | 377 208 | 447 987 | 441 104 | 509 083 |
| **Turks** | 131 484 | 108 552 | 86 591 | 77 080 | 78 019 | 77 959 |
| **Serbs** | 42 728 | 46 465 | 44 468 | 42 775 | 40 228 | 35 939 |
| **Roma** | 20 606 | 24 505 | 43 125 | 52 103 | 43 707 | 53 879 |
| **Boshniaks** | - | - | - | - | 9 829 | 17 018 |
| **Vlachs** | 8 046 | 7 190 | 6 384 | 7 764 | 8 601 | 9 695 |

Party coalition formation in the western democracies has been the subject of numerous studies, mainly focusing on government coalitions (Riker, 1962; Pridham, 1986; Laver and Schofield, 1998). In recent years, focus has been made also on pre-electoral coalition formation (Golder, 2006). Studies on party pre-election coalitions in the Republic of Macedonia have been carried out as well, analysing pre-electoral coalition formation and the factors influencing it with an emphasis on the ideological compatibility of the interested parties, their number (i.e. the size of their expected coalition), the electoral strength of the potential coalitional parties, the ideological polarization of the party system and the disproportionality of the electoral rules (Dimovski 2011; Dimovski, 2014)[3]. With specific relation to the case of Macedonia, Bieber (2008) contributes to the literature of minorities in electoral systems and in governments while comprehensively analysing the countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe, offering highlights from the Macedonian case. Friedman (2005) has also conducted an analysis of the minority representation and electoral system in Macedonia by examining the results of parliamentary elections from independence until 2002. More focused studies on the participation of minorities in the political life of Macedonia and specifically the concerns of political parties representing minorities has also been carried out by Taleski (2008: 136), and in a more comprehensive approach focusing on minority participation in Government by Robotin (2003).

There is a lack of single studies specifically directed to the phenomenon of coalition-building and minorities' participation in such a process in the Republic of Macedonia in the existing body of literature. Consequently, this article attempts to give a first insight on the subject matter and to trigger interest in the topic for future research endeavors. It will attempt to give an insight into the minority rights framework in the country and focus specifically on minorities' political participation, by illustrating their participation in coalition-building and representation in the Macedonian parliament and government though the years. It begins with a general overview of the key historical facts related to the development of the legal framework for minorities' protection. In the second section of this article, minorities' participation in electoral coalition-building is presented, offering data and figures since the first parliamentary elections in the country; the focus on minorities entering into coalitions to form governments is made in the third section of this article. The concluding remarks underline the situation of the minorities and their expected options to enter into pre-election coalitions.

## 1. Minorities' protection before and after 2001

The history of Macedonia is characterized by gradual steps towards developing a multicultural model of democracy. With the Anti-fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia (ASNOM), Macedonia has gained constituency as a Macedonian nation state. The French concept of nation state is present in the ASNOM documents (ASNOM, 2004: 41-52), viewing Macedonia as a democratic country for the people (*narod*) where the term *people* comprises all the citizens in its territory. According to some constitutional law scholars in Macedonia, the concept of nation state (*demos*) does not have its pure form as in France; rather, in ASNOM it comprises the category "national minorities", which gives the minorities all the rights of free life in the state (Skaric, 2007: 249-263). In the context of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, ethnically plural Macedonia developed political, educational and cultural institutions, and enjoyed relatively free (although economically challenging) circumstances as a semi-ignored "step-child" republic (Reuter, 1993: 28-38). In this historical period, the beginning of the multicultural Republic of Macedonia was developed. The 1974 Yugoslav Constitution set up a three-tiered identification system for its member republics: the first was nations (*narod*),; the second consisted of nationalities (*narodnosti*) with kin-states in the SFRY, and the third tier was comprised of ethnic groups with neither of these but who were considered ethnically distinct. Communist Yugoslavia resembled a state based on elite accommodation with elements of coercive consociationalism built into the system (Banac, 2009: 461-478). The new structure offered important symbolic satisfaction to the various ethnic groups in the newly constituted state (Schöpflin, 1993: 181). The Albanian community participated in Macedonian public, political and economic life, regardless of having no institutionally recognized autonomy within Macedonia; there were less public protests about the status of Albanians in Macedonian than was the case with Albanians in Kosovo and Serbia (Adamson and Jovic 2004, 297). According to Adamson and Jovic (2004), the context in which Macedonian and Albanian identities had been defined, however, changed with the rise of Slobodan Milošević in Serbia, and the crisis of the Yugoslav communist ideology throughout the country. In the Constitution of the federal Yugoslavia from 1974, all nationalities and communities had the right to use their own language in the Parliament, public administration and in judicial proceedings, and were free to express their nationality, race and religion.[4] The biggest ethnic community in the Socialist Federal Republic of Macedonia, the Albanian community, enjoyed self-representation rights

in terms of full participation in the Parliament and enjoyment of the language rights in certain areas (as stipulated in the federal constitution).

In September, 1991, a new independent Republic of Macedonia was formed[5] with a 'titular nation' emphasis in the civic constitution's preamble.[6] The Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet were declared the Republic's official language and no provisions were made for minority languages' use in Parliament, or for any group's right to political representation. The ethnic Albanian community and its leadership developed specific demands for equality in group terms: formal recognition of the Albanian language as the official language of public authorities in Albanian-settled regions and in the Assembly, and constitutive status for the Albanian community, with veto powers. They consistently called for a better definition of their position and their rights, resulting in political manifestos and calls for a referendum on the cultural and territorial autonomy of western Macedonia (Andeva, 2013:215)[7]. According to Frckoski (2002: 133-146) one of the crucial points for gaining independence was resolving the questions of identity dilemmas in creating a Macedonian nation of citizens with different ethnic identities, and the dynamics and dilemmas over the majority-minority relations and the Macedonian nation plan. After the establishment of independence, the international community and experts were actively involved in mediation efforts between the Macedonian and Albanian ethnic communities. One such example is the effort of the International Commission for inter-ethnic relations in forming a Working Group (led by Geert-Hinrich Ahrens)which had regular sessions between the representatives of the Macedonian government and the Albanian political parties, in which many questions[8] were discussed concerning the rights of the Albanian ethnic community in the country. Those same raised questions were later transformed into four main arguments and included in the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001.[9]

In the 2001 ethnic conflict, self-determination versus human rights emerged as the critical dichotomy. 'Human rights' were presented as basic requirements, shifting the main discourse towards demands for collective/ethnic rights and an ethnically-based power-sharing settlement for the Albanian national minority. The Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) (as 2001 conflict-resolution document) brought to light a new model of minority protection in Macedonia. The framework was composed of the OFA and the subsequent constitutional amendments and laws which brought significant changes:

1) ended an ethnic conflict;

2) changed the minority rights legal corpus (introduced equitable representation of persons belonging to all communities in state organs and in other public bodies at all levels and language rights)[10];

3) development of a decentralized Government and revised municipalities' boundaries (significant increase of competences of municipalities for the purpose, mainly, of increasing the level of autonomy of ethnic communities which are in majority in such municipalities);

4) introduced special parliamentary procedures (double-majority voting or right to veto for the minority communities in the Parliament); and

5) reformed education and use of minority languages.

Amendments to the constitution included an explicit acknowledgement of the country's Albanian, Turkish, Vlach, Serbian, Roma, and Boshniak minorities in the Preamble, replacing the term "nationalities" with "peoples". The constitutional amendments furthermore guaranteed free expression of identity extended to free use of symbols, guaranteed protection of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity to all communities, establishment of institutions, associations for expression, and development of identity. [11]

## 2. Minorities in electoral coalition-building

Coalition-building in Macedonia can be subject to many forms of analysis. It can be analyzed through pre-electoral coalitions, coalition-building during the formation of the government, coalition formation during the functioning of the established government, and coalitions at the end of the term (Dimovski, 2011). Such an analysis, specifically as concerns minorities' participation, requires a detailed and comprehensive study. This article narrows the subject matter down to pre-election coalition-building (in parliamentary elections) and government coalitions. However when arguing about the modalities of political participation of minorities in Macedonia, a distinction should be made not only between participation in pre-electoral coalition-building or government coalitions, but also between political participation of the Albanian political parties and the political parties of the smaller minority groups in the country (Roma, Turks, Serbs and Boshniaks). In the Macedonian case, the political

participation of smaller-in-size minorities in the parliament was always guaranteed through the pre-elections coalitions. As pre-electoral coalition formation literature points out, single parties often are facing the inability to command a majority of support (this is the case with small political parties, thus in the Macedonian case with the political parties formed by small minority groups); consequently if they want to exercise executive power they are forced to enter in different forms of coalition (Golder, 2006: 193). Political parties can either enter into pre-electoral coalitions, or compete alone in elections and subsequently form coalitions to enter into government.

Coalitions of political parties were present at the first multi-party elections and in the formation of the first plural Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia, and it later became a common practice. Developments in the field of coalition-building in the country in the past 20 years have largely conformed to the majority of the features of party coalitions inherent in the developed western parliamentary democracies (Dimovski, 2011), however with certain particularities, such as the frequent changes to the electoral system in short time periods. Since gaining independence, Macedonia has had eight cycles of Parliamentary elections. In 1991 and 1994 the parliamentary elections were organized in a two-round majority system, while in 1998 there was a mixed system featuring two-round majority and proportional voting, and from 2002 a system of proportional voting with six electoral units was established. D'Hondt proportional representation electoral system was introduced as early as 1996, both for the election of the Parliament and of the Councils of the municipalities, and it was a part of mixed majority-proportional system for parliamentary elections of 1998, becoming the sole base for parliamentary elections in 2002.[12] The arguments in favor of the OFA and 'power-sharing' were mainly critical of a majoritarian model as insensitive and even unjust toward minorities.(Maleski 2005). Maleska (2013) fairly points out that in assessing any power-sharing transformation it is essential to compare it to its alternatives. The question of what alternatives there were for Macedonia after the 2001 conflict remained. Smaller minority parties (of Turks, Roma, Serbs and Boshniak) pushed for greater proportionality. This mixed (majoritarian/proportional) model was changed to a purely proportional one before the 2002 elections, as a result of the principle of proportionality in the Ohrid Framework Agreement (Maleska, 2014). Consequently, there was a significant increase in the number of competing parties[13], as well as the MPs belonging to the Albanian, Turk, Roma and other communities.

In the first parliamentary elections in 1990, 18 political parties, one social organization, 43 independent candidates and six coalitions involving nine political parties

were present (Dimovski, 2011). Few minority political parties entered into more than one pre-election coalition (in various electoral units).[14] At the second parliamentary elections (1994), also by majority representation, six election coalitions were formed from nine parties. Two minority parties were involved in coalitions: the Party for Democratic Action (Muslim) and the Democratic Party of the Turks. In the third parliamentary elections, held in 1998, MPs were elected under a mixed majority-proportional system and 85 seats were won by majority and 35 by the proportional system. In an election under the majoritarian system 21 political parties acted independently and 14 political parties formed five coalitions. Minority parties involved in those coalitions were the Party for Full Emancipation of Roma, Democratic Party of Turks, the Democratic Progressive Party of the Roma in Macedonia and the Party for Democratic Prosperity of the Albanians. Five coalitions also took part in the elections which were held under the proportional system, with a total of 15 political parties. Here, in addition to the four previously mentioned coalitions, a coalition was formed with the Party for Democratic Prosperity of Albanians as minority political party. These elections had 10 electoral coalitions, with a total of 29 political parties. The pre-election coalition of VMRO-DPMNE won absolute majority and was able to form a government. The government coalition was joined by the Albanian political block PDPA-NDP, later renamed as DPA.

In the 2002 parliamentary elections,conducted under the pure proportional system without legal threshold, the Republic of Macedonia was divided into six districts with an approximately equal number of voters registered in each constituency; 20 MPs from each district were elected. Seven election coalitions were formed in which several minority parties were included: the Democratic League of Boshniaks, the United Party of Roma, the Democratic party of Serbs, Democratic party of Turks, Democratic Union of Vlachs, the Party of the Vlachs in Macedonia, the Democratic Union of Serbs in Macedonia, the Democratic Muslim Party, the Party for Democratic Movement of the Egyptians in Macedonia, as well as the Democratic Party for Orthodox Unity of Serbs and Macedonians. The government was formed from the biggest coalition and the newly formed Albanian block, the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI). In the next elections in 2006 the election model was kept, and six pre-election coalitions were formed. The Democratic Party of the Turks, the Union of Roma, and the Democratic Union of Vlachs entered into the coalition named “For Macedonia together”. The Party for the Movements of Turks in Macedonia, the Union of Roma, the Party of Vlachs, the Boshniaks Democratic Party, the Party for Democratic Forces of Roma in Macedonia and the Party for Integration of Roma entered into the coalition “VMRO-

DPMNE". The Albanian political parties, the Democratic Alliance of Albanians and New Democratic Forces, formed their own coalition, as well as the Democratic Union for Integration with the Party of Democratic Prosperity. In the sixth parliamentary elections (first early parliamentary elections), two election coalitions were present:

1) "Sun-Coalition for Europe" (with the Democratic Union of Vlachs as a minority political party entering in the coalition); and

2) A coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE with more minority parties included.[15]

The second coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE won the majority of seats in Parliament (63), and formed a coalition government with one Albanian political party (DUI), a party which was not included in the pre-electoral coalition. In the seventh parliamentary elections in 2011, two coalitions were formed by 37 political parties (out of 53 running the elections) (Dimovski, 2014:68). The first was led by VMRO-DPMNE and called "For better Macedonia",[16] and the second was led by the political party SDUM (Social-democratic Union of Macedonia) and called "For your future".[17] Both coalitions included several minority political parties. The first coalition formed a government with one Albanian political party (DUI), which was not included in the pre-electoral coalition.

In the last parliamentary elections in 2014 (second early parliamentary elections), two great coalitions and two small coalitions were formed. The first big coalition was led by SDUM, and the other by VMRO-DPMNE. In the first, five minority political parties were included (exactly the same composition of the coalition as in the 2011 elections),[18] whereas in the second coalition ten minority political parties were included (with the majority from the Roma national minority).[19] One small coalition (called "GROM") included the Serbian Progressive Party of Macedonia. Albanian minority political parties acted independently at the elections.[20] In the Parliamentary elections (2014-2018) the Coalition VMRO-DPMNE, composed of several parties representing ethnic communities in the country,[21] won 61 seats and its government coalition partner from the Albanian national minority was DUI. The coalition led by SDUM won 34 seats. Table 3 gives an overview of number of seats won by parties of minority communities in the parliament in all parliamentary elections in Macedonia.

Table 3. Distribution of minorities' mandates in the Assembly (1991 – 2018)[22]

| Parties | 1991-1994 | 1994-1998 | 1998-2002 | 2002-2006 | 2006-2008 | 2008 - 2011 | 2011-2014 | 2014-2018 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PDP - Party for Democratic Prosperity (Albanian) | 17 | 13 | 10 | 2 | 3 | | | |
| DPA – Democratic Party of the Albanians | | 4 | 10 | 7 | 11 | 5 | 8 | 7 |
| NDP – Peoples Democratic Party (later National Democratic Revival) (Albanian) | 5*+1 | | | 1 | | | 2*** | |
| PCER - Party for Full Emancipation of the Roma | 1 | 1 | | | | | 1 | |
| Democratic Union Of Albanians | | 1 | | | | | | |
| SR – Union of Roma | | | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| DPT - Democratic Party Of Turks In Macedonia | | 1 | | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| DPS - Democratic Party Of Serbs In Macedonia | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| DUI - Democratic Union For Integration (Albanians) | | | | 15 | 13 | 18 | 14 | 20 |
| Democratic League of Boshniaks | | | | 1 | | | 1 | |
| OPE – United Party of Roma | | | | 1 | | | | |
| PEI - Party For European Future** | | | | | 1 | 1 | 3 | |
| PDTM - Party for the movement of Turks in Macedonia | | | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | |
| SDAM - Party for Democratic Action in Macedonia (Boshniaks) | | | | | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| SRPM – Serbian Progressive Party | | | | | | | 1 | |
| PDAM – Party of Democratic Action (Boshniak) | | | | | | | 1 | |
| New Democratic Forces (Albanian) | | | | 1 | | | | |
| United Party for Emancipation (Roma) | | | | | 1 | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Democratic forces of Roma | | | | | 1 | | | |
| New Democracy (Albanian) | | | | | | 4 | | |
| Movement for National Unity of Roma | | | | | | | 1 | |

* shared seats between PDPM - Party for Democratic Prosperity in Macedonia and NDP
** founded as multiethnic party however MP representative declared as Torbesh.
*** when renamed in National Democratic Revival

In most of the parliamentary elections, Albanians were elected mostly from the list of ethnic Albanian parties acting independently in the elections. Members of other minority communities entered into the parliament either as members (leaders) of ethnic parties placed on a list of established pre-electoral coalitions with Macedonian parties or on the lists of basically Macedonian parties as party-members. Otherwise, there was no guaranteed representation of the smaller communities in the parliament and there is no possibility for their parties to win a seat acting individually, which reduces their relative importance in the political life and makes their representation dependent on the strategies of other political actors. Attempts have been made to open a procedure to amend the legislation in order to guarantee 10 seats in the parliament for smaller communities, but both failed,[23] revealing that the issue of major concern is the preservation of the decisive position and relative strength of ethnic Albanian MP-s in cases of double majority voting (Spirovski, 2012: 6). This indicates that smaller communities were not supposed to be a factor in the overall structure of power sharing arrangements, despite the "multi-ethnic" Framework Agreement. The new, post-conflict constitutional design, although formally intended to serve multi-ethnic purposes, reduces itself to the creation of two political entities along ethnic lines, namely Macedonians and Albanians, which are predetermined by the size of the ethnic communities.

## 3. Minorities' coalition-building in governments

Recognizing that it is crucial to include minorities to ensure state stability is a distinctive mark of Macedonian politics. Since the first democratic multiparty elections in 1990, the participation of political parties representing the Albanians in Macedonia has been maintained in the government (Frckoski 1998: 74). All governments elected by the Macedonian Parliament since independence have been coalition governments, in which one of the parties of the Albanian community acted as a coalition partner. Other ethnic groups (10% in total) do

not participate in such power sharing arrangements, although they do find their place in the over-size government coalitions frequently; thus, this "voluntary" executive power-sharing is perceived as a feature of integrationist theories and it could be accepted as such in Macedonia until 2001 (Spirovski, 2012:4). According to Spirovski (2012:3), in Macedonia three out of four elements of the original Lijphart's consociationalism are evident:

1) segmental autonomy, although at the level of municipal self-government;

2) proportionality, both in the electoral system (PR d'Hondt) and in representation in public bodies and; and

3) veto right[24].

There is no mandatory constitutional requirement for executive grand coalition and there have not been "grand" coalitions in Macedonia, since not all significant parties of all significant minority groups were represented. The only grand coalition, including opposition parties at that time, was created in 2001 during the conflict and lasted only for a couple of months (13 May – 23 November) (Spirovski, 2012). In theory, grand coalitions are not necessary in an ethnically diverse society, as the inclusion of minorities can be insured through other means, such as a combination of proportional representation and strong veto rights and super-majorities on certain issues (Bieber & Keil, 2009).

Executive coalitions formed on a basis of proportional representation of ethnic segments appeared as a top issue, both political and constitutional, after the election in 2006. There is, however, no constitutional guarantee for such an action. When, for example, in 2006, the winning (Macedonian) party formed a Government with an Albanian party that did not win the largest number of votes among Albanian parties, this issue was seriously put into question. By the close of July 2006, President Branko Crvenkovski had given Nikola Gruevski a mandate to form a new government. In order to accomplish that, Gruevski had to commence the process of coalition-building, presumably with one of the ethnic Albanian parties. The Albanian Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), which was part of the outgoing government, was eager to remain in government as a coalition partner of the new regime. However, the Democratic Party of the Albanians (DPA), which had once been part of a ruling coalition exiled in 2001, made clear that it was the natural partner instead (Former Yugoslav Rep. of Macedonia Review, 2010).

Ever since 1992, apparently, closer links between certain Albanian and Macedonian parties have been established, that could hint at possible coalitions. It has been a matter of political strategy involving mutual interests in deciding the question of whether the government must be formed by the winning Macedonian and winning Albanian parties, as representing the two ethnic entities.. During the term 2002-2006, the Macedonian party Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDUM) formed a coalition government with DUI (party emerging after the armed conflict) (Dimeski, 2014:27). The Democratic Party of Albanians and VMRO-DPMNE, as coalition partners in the government in the previous term (1998 – 2002), remained in opposition. According Spirovski (2012: 12) since 2002 VMRO-DPMNE has been overtly challenging the legitimacy of DUI as emerging from and comprising of members of the paramilitary KLA, so that a coalition with its traditional partner among Albanian parties, DPA (11 seats) in 2006 was not a surprise. Nevertheless, DUI claiming to be the true representative of the Albanians by winning 18 seats in the parliament, made a request to be included in the government. Consequently, in 2007, negotiations took place between VMRO-DPMNE with DUI, resulting in the so-called "May Agreement", after the dissolution of the Parliament and the first premature elections in 2008 took place.. Spirovski (2012: 13) notes that such arrangements and developments having a dualistic nature where evidently a third segment is missing enter in the consociational logic and validityof dualistic executive coalitions, such as is the case with Northern Ireland and Belgium. Then as well for instance, such executive coalitions are also to be found in the Italian autonomous province of South Tyrol (Andeva, 2013).

Bieber (2008), points out that a clear majority-minority relationship in coalitions means that the impact of minority parties on government policies can be limited, with minority parties often controlling less important, non-sensitive ministries. In the case of Macedonia, this could be the case only for the political parties of smaller minority groups. Important and but not very sensitive ministries (such as security) have been offered to the Albanian political parties for obvious reasons, especially after 2001. In reference to the departments of the Government, the distribution follows certain proportional quota, including for the deputy-ministries. Shasivari (2001: 33) points out that besides the fact that in the period between 1991 and 2001, the Albanian parties participated in the five Macedonian governments, the systems do not take the form of power-sharing but rather an attempt to include the Albanian elite. In 1991, from 23 ministerial posts, the main Albanian party (PDP) held the posts of deputy prime minister, labour ministry and a minister without portfolio. In

the period 1992-1998, there were five Albanian ministers holding portfolios for economy, labour, development, culture, transport and finance (with no security or internal affairs portfolios). In the period 1998-2002, five Albanian ministers (VMRO-DPMNE in coalition with DPA) were assigned in less important ministerial posts than in the previous government. For the government from 2002 to 2006, in a government of 18 members, five ministerial portfolios, including health, justice, communication and education (SDUM and DUI coalition) were assigned to minority communities. In the period 2006-2008, 4 ministerial portfolios for health, education, culture and ecology were given to the PDA party from the VMRO-DPMNE and PDA coalition. In 2008-2011, four ministerial portfolios for economy, labour, health, local self-government, ecology and one deputy prime minister (OFA implementation) were assigned to the DUI political party (VMRO-DPMNE and DUI coalition). In the past government for the period 2011-2014, five ministerial posts for defense, justice, economy, local self-government, and environment and physical planning, and two vice president posts for implementation of OFA and European Affairs were given to the Albanian coalition partner (DUI), and two ministry posts without portfolios were given to the Turks and Roma community. The representation for minorities in the current government (2014-2018) is composed of eight ministerial posts assigned to Albanian minority, one position as minister without portfolio for Turks and a position as minister without portfolio for Roma. Deputy ministry positions were assigned to four Albanians and one to Roma. Needless to say, ministers assigned to minorities (in the case of Albanians) are accountable to their party leaders, rather than to the Prime Minister.

## Conclusions

Koinova (2011) argues that Macedonia advanced minimally in the area of respect for human and minority rights despite high EU involvement in the country after 2001. Nevertheless, the power sharing arrangements of 2001, and the subsequent developments in the political life in Macedonia, succeeded in conserving peace. The implementation of the OFA and the development of the model for minority protection requires less attention to be given to the dialogue between the two ethnic communities, and more to the small minority groups. Smaller minorities remain dependent on pre-election coalition pacts with the two larger Macedonian parties. The absence of strict representative quotas for communities in the government or parliament allows greater freedom for non-institutionalized, but nonetheless cooperative politics. The Republic of Macedonia has survived on its way to independence and, despite

many rises and falls, has managed to keep a balance in the distribution of political power established by OFA. According to Sulejmani (2011: 65) the agreement has changed the context and the concept of the state, from a state which addressed the historical injustices to Macedonian people and the creation of a national state of the Macedonian people into a multiethnic state, where communities primarily Albanian, will play a key role in its survival.

Before every parliamentary election in Macedonia, the political discussions are focused towards interethnic coalitions and why the major parties never perform the same way before elections as they do afterwards. Experts point out that this is an unsustainable situation that must be changed in order for the state to go in the right direction, towards political, democratic, economic and social progress. Anything else, they say, will contribute only to increasing radicalization of the political scene (Trpkovski, 2014). According to Pickering (2009: 571) in ethnic party systems that lack multi-ethnic parties, as is the case in Macedonia, cross-ethnic cooperation is most likely to emerge from ethnic parties willing to cooperate across ethnic lines. Different forms of interests' advocating and political representation have been created mostly along existing ethnic cleavage lines, and that is characteristic for the Macedonian society (Jovevska, 2001).

There is always a winning party of Macedonian ethnicity and a winning party from the ethnic Albanian bloc, as there are two winners in the elections. Thus there is a segregation of the electorate, along ethnic lines, parallel battles as the Macedonian and Albanian parties argue among themselves,. There is also a moderate hypocrisy among voters who in public opinion polls always state that they are not interested in ethnopolitics but rather in economic prosperity and growth, however at elections they vote by pulling out the “ethnic card” (Trpkovski, 2014). Pre-election coalition-building has been exercised mostly by smaller (minority) political parties in the case of the Republic of Macedonia; before each election, political parties of smaller minority groups form coalitions with the biggest political parties VMRO-DPMNE or SDUM, on one side, while on the other the two biggest Albanian political parties run the elections separately. Pre-election coalition should be seen as a fair offer to the voters, and a possibility for them to choose if they want to accept it or not, while the post-election (government coalitions) depends entirely on the will of the parties to agree, and not on the will of the electorate. According to Golder (2006:194), pre-electoral coalitions can have positive effects in elections with a proportional representation model, because they can allow voters to identify government alternatives at election time, increasing democratic transparency; this also increases the legitimacy of the coalition governments and makes their

policy mandates stronger. As Golder (2006) points out, (as in the case of smaller minority groups in Macedonia), pre-electoral coalitions have a significant impact on the election outcomes, increasing their success in respect to those acting independently, however they could easily fail due to weak coordination of their common programs and policies before the electorate, leaving them with no choice but to follow the programs and policies of the political party leading their chosen coalition.

**Notes**

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[1] According to the last census in 2002, alongside ethnic Macedonians, the Albanian nationality as a community constituted 25.17 % of the total population of the Republic of Macedonia. The Turkish community in the last census reported 3.85 %, the Roma 2.66%, Vlachs 0.48%, Serbs 1.78%, Boshniaks 0.84% and other nationalities 1.04% of the total population. See State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia at http://www.stat.gov.mk/OblastOpsto_en.aspx?id=31.

[2] Data retrieved from Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Macedonia, 2009, Republic of Macedonia State Statistical Office, Census 2002, at http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/godisnik2009/03.%20Naselenie.pdf

[3] Dimovski's work focuses mainly on the factors influencing the pre-electoral coalitions formation, with an emphasis on the ideological compatibility of the interested parties, their number, i.e. their size of the expected coalition, the electoral strength of the potential coalitional parties, the ideological polarization of the party system and the disproportionality of the electoral rules

[4] Art. 154 of the Constitution from 1974 deems equal all citizens of the federation no matter their nationality, race, religion and language. Arts 170 and 171, Art. 214, Arts. 243, 246 and 246 give language rights for all nationalities within the federation. It is guaranteed the use of language in the Parliament, public administration and judicial proceedings.

[5] In April 1992, it became a member of the United Nations under the provisional name of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).

[6] The 1991 Constitution, as a first pillar, established Macedonia as a unitary and civil state. The provisions that at that time provided protection for minorities/nationalities are Article 7 (use of nationalities' language in the units of local self-government), Article 8 (free expression of nationality) and Article 48 (nationalities' rights). The Constitutional Preamble asserted

"…the historical fact that Macedonia is established as a national state of the Macedonian people, in which full equality as citizens and permanent co-existence with the Macedonian people is provided for Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Romas and other *nationalities* living in the Republic of Macedonia."

[7] See also more about the calls for autonomy in Bugajski, J. *Ethnic politics in Eastern Europe: a Guide to Nationality Policies, Organizations, and Parties*. New York: Centre for Strategic and International studies, 1995.

[8] The so-called mission was actually composed of series of (International Commission on former Yugoslavia-sponsored) talks with government representatives and political parties both from the Macedonian and Albanian ethnic communities. The idea behind it was to work out on recommendations for improvement on concrete issues pending between the two ethnic communities (sides). These same recommendations would be taken up by the government and found acceptable by the Cabinet, put into practice in conformity with legal procedures and provisions. Talks were held between 1992 and 1996 with strong emphasis on the several issues achieved: Albanian language secondary school classes; agreement on census in 1994 and establishment of an international expert group; one TV channel broadcasting in minority language; use of Albanian alphabet in ID cards and registration; increased participation of Albanians in government and other state institutions (police). Met with many difficulties on the way, the Working Group led by Ahrens tried to defuse the situation at that time, acting on two fronts: the Macedonian-Albania and the intra-Albanian conflict (1993) (Ahrens, 2007: 427-453). In 1996 the Working Group lost its momentum, due to the entire international mediation effort directed toward Bosnia and Hercegovina.

[9] Interview with Prof. Ljubomir Danailov Frckoski, conducted in May 2011. Prof. Frckoski was actively involved in the sessions.

[10] The Albanian language (spoken by at least 20% of the population) also became an official state language, in accordance with law. Amendments also introduced several provisions for the use of the Albanian language, such as in personal identity documents and in local self-government units by the public authorities. (Amendment V of Const. Art. 7)
[11] The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia guarantees to all citizens the freedom of association for 'accomplishment and protection of their political, economic, social, cultural and other rights and beliefs', as well as the free expression of the national belonging. (Amendment VIII of Const. Art. 48).
[12] The country has a closed party list system without threshold with six multi-member constituencies.
[13] From 19, in the first round in 1990 to 23 in 1998; in 2002 there were 55 competing political parties.
[14] Roma minority with the Party for Full Emancipation of the Roma (PCER) entered into a coalition with the Socialist party of Macedonia and PDP - Party for Democratic Prosperity (Albanian) with the Peoples' Democratic Party (Albanian).
[15] The following parties entered in this coalition: Democratic Party of Turks, Democratic Party of Serbs, Union of Roma, Party of the Vlachs of Macedonia, Party for Full Emancipation of Roma, Party for Integration of Roma, Boshniaks Democratic Party, Democratic Union of Roma.
[16] Democratic Party of the Turks, Democratic Party of the Serbs, Union of Roma of Macedonia, Party of the Vlachs of Macedonia, and the Party for Integration of Roma.
[17] Movement for National Unity of Turks in Macedonia, Serbian Progressive Party in Macedonia, Party for full Emancipation of Roma, Party for Movements of Turks in Macedonia, Democratic Union of Serbs in Macedonia, Democratic Union of Vlachs in Macedonia and PEI (Party for European Future declared as multiethnic party with strong support of the Torbesh ethnic community).
[18] Party for Movement of the Turks in Macedonia (PMTM), Party for the Full Emancipation of Roma (PFER), Serbian Stranka in Macedonia (SSM) Democratic Union of Vlachs in Macedonia (DMVM), and Sandzak Ligue (SL)
[19] The parties were the following: Democratic Party of the Serbs in Macedonia, Union of Roma of Macedonia, Party of the Vlachs from Macedonia, Party for Integration of Roma, Democratic Party of the Turks of Macedonia, Democratic Forces of Roma, Democratic Boshniaks Party, United Party for Equality for Roma, Democratic Party of Roma and United Roma from Macedonia.
[20] Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA), Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) and National Democratic Revival – NDP.
[21] Democratic Party of Serbs in Macedonia, Union of Roma of Macedonia, Party of the Vlachs in Macedonia, Party on Integration of Roma, Democratic Party of the Turks in Macedonia, Democratic Forces of Roma, Democratic Boshniak party, Democratic Party of Roma, United Roma from Macedonia.
[22] Data retrieved from the published mandates of each parliament available on the official web site of the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia at http://sobranie.mk/.
[23] Propositions to amend the Constitution in favour of introducing guaranteed seats in the Parliament for smaller minorities in Macedonia were blocked by Albanian political parties (DUI and New Democracy). These parties argued that these propositions are in contradiction with the principles of OFA agreement, the Badinter principle and the ethnic balance and representation in the Parliament. See Markovski, Gradmir. "ДУИ и НД газат по европски правила" [DUI and ND against European rules], *Vecer*, May 16 2010, Makedonija at http://vecer.mk/makedonija/dui-i-nd-gazat-po-evropskite-pravila
[24] Minorities do not enjoy full veto rights; however they have a right for a double voting on laws that concern their interests. Parliamentary adoption of laws relating directly to minorities must follow this principle, requiring a majority vote of deputies representing ethnic minorities. The aim of this principle is to protect ethnic minorities in parliamentary decision-making, meaning that laws with a significant impact on ethnic minority communities may not be adopted by a simple majority but require a 'double' majority, including a majority among political representatives of the minority. The Badinter majority or principle is used also for adopting legislative acts in the units of local self-government.

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# Exploring the Opportunities for Trans-Ethnic Cooperation Within and Across Serbia Through the National Minority Councils

Svetluša Surová*

*Comenius University in Bratislava*

This paper examines opportunities and possibilities for national minority councils (NMC's) to serve as a channel for dialogue and cooperation between national minorities, governmental authorities and non-governmental organisations within the Republic of Serbia and across this state. The main objective of this paper is to review the constitutional and legal framework of trans-ethnic cooperation in Serbia. In order to achieve this, I am analysing the constitutional and legal status of NMC's, and their competences and role in the trans-ethnic cooperation in Serbia and across it. The model of trans-ethnic cooperation and its functioning in practice is analysed especially within the case study of the Slovak NMC in Serbia. The previous framework of cooperation was restricted by the decision of the Serbian Constitutional Court in 2014. Remaining opportunities and possibilities for NMC's in trans-ethnic cooperation are not fully used in practice. There is no systematic cooperation of the Slovak NMC with other organisations of ethnicities within and across Serbia. Trans-ethnic cooperation is not so common and is conducted usually on an ad hoc basis. Nevertheless, the existing institutional and legal model for trans-ethnic cooperation is relatively good. NMC's can and should be active agents fostering trans-ethnic cooperation in and beyond Serbia.

**Keywords:** trans-ethnic cooperation, national minority councils (NMC's), National council of Slovak national minority, constitutional and legal framework of trans-ethnic cooperation.

National councils of national minorities (NCNM) or national minority councils (NMC's) or national councils (NC's) are representative organs of national minorities as collectives in Serbia and they are legally designed to be partners and advisory bodies of state authorities. NMC's are

*External Lecturer at Department of Political Science, Faculty of Philosophy. Email: svetlusa.surova@gmail.com. I would like to thank Mrs. Anna Tomanová- Makanová, the head of Slovak national council of the Slovak national minority in Serbia, for the interview.

special bodies of self-government in the fields of culture, education, information and official use of minority languages and scripts. These special bodies participate in decision-making processes or decide on the issues related to these fields, and they can establish institutions, business companies and other organisations in the fields mentioned. As such NMC's can serve as a channel for dialogue and cooperation between the ethnicities that they represent and state governments, local authorities, non-governmental organizations, international organizations and other actors.

Serbia is a multi-ethnic (Appendix A, pp.22-23), multi-faith and multilingual country. More than twenty different ethnic communities live in Serbia. The total population of Serbia without Kosovo and Metohija[1] is estimated to be 7 186 862[2]. The largest ethnic group is Serbian, constituting 83,3 % of total population. Of the ethnic minorities, the largest group is Hungarian (3,5 %), followed by Roma (2,1%) and Bosniaks communities (2%). Other ethnicities constitute less than 1% of total population.[3] The dominant religion in Serbia is Orthodox Christian (84,6%), followed by Catholic (5%), Islam (3%), Protestant (1%) and other religions[4]. The official and most widely used language is Serbian; about 88 % of people use it as a mother tongue. The official script is Cyrillic. Other recognized and traditionally used minority languages and scripts in Serbia are: Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Bunjevac, Vlach, Hungarian, Macedonian, German, Romani, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovak, Ukrainian, Croatian and Czech (Council of Europe 2015). In the Autonomous province of Vojvodina (APV) six languages are in official use, namely Serbian, Hungarian, Slovak, Croatian, Romanian, and Ruthenian[5]. Currently, there are twenty one registered national councils of national minorities in Serbia[6]. These national minorities established their councils in the following chronological order: Hungarian, Croatian, Ruthenian, Slovak, Romanian, Ukrainian, Roma, Bunjevci, Bosniak, Bulgarian, Greek, Macedonian, Egyptian, Vlach, German, Slovenian, Czech, Albanian, Askhali, Jewish, and lastly Montenegrin.

In this paper I explore the opportunities for trans-ethnic cooperation within and across Serbia through the NMC's. Since there are no earlier scientific studies examining trans-ethnic cooperation in Serbia and there is a very little expertise literature that covers this topic in some aspect (Surová 2006i, Surová 2006ii, Surová 2012, Surová 2014),[7] I decided to do exploratory research. According to McNabb (2015: 96), exploratory research can be conducted with the objective of carrying out a preparatory examination of issues in order to gain insights and ideas, or to gather information for immediate application to an administrative problem. The reasons to conduct exploratory research are to investigate the issues or topics with the purpose of developing

notions and ideas about underlying nature of investigating phenomena. The main objective of exploratory research is to obtain as much information as possible, in little time and with minimal expenditure of money. Therefore, exploratory research cannot serve as an "in-depth look into all the factors related to a political phenomenon" (McNabb, 2015: 96). This paper is based on a conference paper prepared for the conference 'Trans-ethnic Coalition-building within and across States' organised in Uppsala in January 2015. Data for the paper were gathered through a literature review, an interview and a case study. As mentioned earlier, there is no scientific literature on trans-ethnic cooperation through NMC´s within and beyond Serbia. The only reference to relations of councils with republic, regional, local and international organisations and institutions could be found in the last publication of Provincial Protector of Citizens – Ombudsman of Autonomous Vojvodina on the work of NMC´s, which was published in the end of 2014. This publication deals with the work of NMC´s in the last four years and doesn't focus solely on trans-ethnic cooperation.

For that reason, I decided to analyse the Serbian constitutional and legal model of trans-ethnic cooperation and to identify basic institutional predispositions for this cooperation. The research method applied in this study is neo-institutionalism. This approach is concerned with the impact of the institutions upon individuals, but also with the interaction between institutions and individuals. The term 'institutions' here means formal constitutions and organizational structures as well as informal rules of political behaviour. Neo-institutionalism refers more broadly to regular and repeated patterns of behaviour (Lowndes, 2010). The focus of neo-institutionalism is on values and power relationships that are embodied in institutions, as well on institutional design and the opportunities and obstacles that confront it. This paper also builds on the neo-institutional notion that political institutions play an autonomous role in shaping political outcomes and the idea that the "organization of political life make a difference" (March and Olsen in Lowndes, 2010: 63). The core features of this approach depart from previous ideas along six analytical continua: from a focus on organizations to a focus on rules; from a formal to an informal conception of institutions; from a static to a dynamic conception of institutions; from submerged values to a value-critical stance; from a holistic to a disaggregated conception of institutions and from independence to embeddedness (Lowndes, 2010).

Neo-institutionalism is understood by scholars as an organizing perspective and not casual theory. It is considered as a broad, variegated approach to politics (Hall-Taylor, 1996; March-

Olsen, 2005, Lowndes, 2010, Lowndes, 2013), which holds that institutions as a variable can explain most of political life, and therefore institutions are the factors that require explanation. For the analysis of trans-ethnic cooperation through NMC´s, neo-institutionalism appears to be a relevant and adequate approach. Constitutional and legal framework are important in this issue, as they set up formal rules for trans-ethnic cooperation. Equally important are informal rules. The institutional model of trans-ethnic cooperation can be seen as an institutional arena, where the rules of the game are established by both formal and informal rules. In this arena, the players are different and numerous actors representing state authorities, national minorities, civil society etc. The aim of this paper is to analyse the Serbian arena in which trans-ethnic cooperation takes place, and the formal and informal rules that have impact on this cooperation through NMC´s.

In order to better understand how the institutional model of trans-ethnic cooperation functions in practise and to identify opportunities as well as obstacles that are confronting this model, a qualitative method was also applied in this research. A semi-structured interview, combining close-ended and open questions (all together 66 questions), was conducted with Anna Tomanova Makanova, president of National Council of the Slovak National Minority (NCSNM). The questions concerned the cooperation of NCSNM with the republic organs, relations with the organs of the autonomous province and unit of local self-government and international and regional cooperation, as well as the modes, frequency and issues of this cooperation.[8] All the questions were built upon the previously analysed Serbian constitutional and legal model of trans-ethnic cooperation. The main goal of the interview was to investigate the single case of the Slovak council, with regards to what extent the existing institutional possibilities and opportunities for trans-ethnic cooperation through NMC´s are realised in practise.

The main objective of this paper is twofold: to analyse institutional models of trans-ethnic cooperation through NMC´s within and across Serbia, and to examine to what extent the constitutional and legal framework works in practice. The research questions concerning trans-ethnic framework of cooperation are:

1. What is the current constitutional and legal status of NMC´s?
2. What kind of competencies and roles do NMC´s have in this model?
3. What kind of model for trans-ethnic cooperation is established in Serbia?

Questions relating to the practical side of trans-ethnic cooperation through Slovak councils are:

1. With which organisations and institutions is this council cooperating?
2. What are the main modes of this cooperation?
3. How often does this cooperation take place?
4. What are the main issues of cooperation?

Based on my research I argue that the current constitutional and legal framework, even though it was restricted recently, still offers relatively good possibilities and opportunities for NMC´s for trans-ethnic cooperation on all the levels of state power in Serbia as well across it. Secondly, institutional predispositions for trans-ethnic cooperation are not maximally exploited in practice. Thirdly, even though the rules for trans-ethnic cooperation are set up by the constitution and laws, in practice systematic, regular trans-ethnic cooperation doesn't exist. Trans-ethnic cooperation through NMC is conducted usually on an ad hoc basic. Fourthly, NMC´s should be more active in using constitutional and legal predispositions for trans-ethnic cooperation within and across Serbia.

In the first part of the paper, I analyse the constitutional and legal status of NMC's, their competences and role in the trans-ethnic cooperation with governmental authorities on all levels of state power, and their cooperation with other organisations representing different ethnicities in and beyond Serbia. This part also elaborates on restrictions in the legal model of trans-ethnic cooperation after the Serbian Constitutional Court revoked certain provisions of the Law on National Councils of National Minorities. In the second part of the paper I look into the modes, frequencies and issues of trans-ethnic cooperation through the Slovak National Council while analysing the potentials and limitations of the Serbian model in practice. The conclusion offers a summary of the findings and concluding remarks.

## 1. Constitutional and legislative framework of trans-ethnic cooperation

Firstly, I will discuss the constitutional and legislative framework of trans-ethnic cooperation through the NMC's in Serbia and across it. The main scope of the analysis examines the Constitution of Serbia (2006),[9] the Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National

Minorities (2002)[10] and the Law on National Councils of National Minorities (2009)[11]. The other laws and documents relevant to minority rights and competences of NMC's are also reviewed[12]. The contemporary framework is examined within the perspective of the decision of the Constitutional Court of Serbia[13], which declared certain provisions of the Law on National Councils of National Minorities unconstitutional and repealed them. The main focus is on the NMC's and their status, competences and role in cooperation with republic organs, organs of the autonomous province, organs of the unit of local self-government, and on the cooperation with international and regional organizations and institutions. Before I discuss the existing trans-ethnic model of cooperation through the NMC's, I will briefly introduce the historical development of the minority councils in the Serbian constitutional and legal system.

### *1.1 Historical background of development*

As a result of the disintegration processes that started in the beginning of the 1990s on the territory of the Socialistic Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), new independent republics were established. Serbia was the last republic of the former SFRY to gain independence, which it did in 2006 after the break up of the Serbia and Montenegro union. These disintegration processes culminated with a unilateral declaration of independence of the Serbian Autonomous region Kosovo and Metohija in the year 2008. Since the dissolution of SFRY many constitutional and institutional changes have taken place in Serbia. At the beginning of the 1990s Serbia was a part of the Yugoslav federation (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 1992-2003), and later it was a member of the state union Serbia and Montenegro (2003-2006). In 2000 major political changes occurred. Slobodan Milošević's regime was finally changed and democratic powers under the name of Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) came to power. After the democratic changes, reform processes started. The priority of the democratic government was the issue of the status of national minorities in the country. This process had both external and internal dimensions.

The external dimension of the reforms was related to the renewal of the country's memberships in international organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and the Council of Europe (CoE), as well as to the process of signing and ratifying international documents, namely the Framework Convention on National Minorities (Framework Convention) in 2001 and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Charter) in 2005, both documents of the Council of Europe. Serbia started negotiations with neighbouring countries about minorities'

status and bilateral agreements were signed. At the state level, the process of building constitutional and institutional framework for the protection of the rights of national minorities and improving their status began. In this respect, the introduction of the federal Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities (2002)[14], which regulated the legal status of national minorities at that time in FRY, was very important. It was the first special minority law in FRY, in which constitutional norms were elaborated,[15] along with basic solutions of international agreements concerning the rights and freedoms of national minorities, to which FRY become a contracting party.[16]

Furthermore, this law brought the institution of National Minority Councils (NMC's) into the Yugoslav legal system for the first time in 2002. New mechanisms were established for the effective participation of minorities in decision-making processes in the government and state administration. For this purpose, the law envisaged a Federal Council on National Minorities (FCNM), National Councils of National Minorities and a Federal Fund for National Minorities (FFNM). According to this law, the main objective of the minority councils is to maintain, protect and develop the national, ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural distinctiveness of the national minorities. For the first time, national minorities obtained the right for self-government in the fields of official use of language and script, education, informing and culture in the legal system of Yugoslavia. Through minority councils, national communities should participate in decision-making processes in the above-mentioned areas or make decisions and establish institutions from this area (Article 19, paragraph 7).[17] Part of the authority in the fields of education, culture, informing and official use of the languages and scripts of national minorities could be delegated to the NMC according to federal law (Article 19, paragraph 10). The purpose of creating the Federal Fund for National Minorities was to support social, economic, cultural and general development of national minorities. The law guaranteed minority councils the right to address issues regarding the violation of minority rights to the relevant courts. Together with the Federal Council, minority councils could file complaints with the Federal Constitutional Court in cases of apparent violations of constitutional rights and liberties of minorities.[18] The Federal Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities introduced many new elements into the Yugoslav legal system, including the definition of the term of national minority, collective rights, and NMC's as self-governing and consultative bodies for national minorities. The shortcomings

of the law were primarily its problematic implementation in practice, due the discrepancy between federal and republic constitutions and laws (Surová, 2007).

National minority councils became a constitutional category in the legal system of Serbia after adopting a new Constitution of the Republic of Serbia[19] in 2006. The Serbian constitution recognizes NMC's as special bodies that members of national minorities can set up in order to accomplish their rights to self-government in culture, education, information and official use of language and script. The new constitution grants national minorities additional individual or collective rights that other citizens do not have. Collective rights of national minorities should allow their members to participate in decision-making processes or to make decisions in areas of self-government directly or indirectly.[20] Similarly, the Law on National Councils of National Minorities, adopted in 2009, defines NMC's as representative bodies and the bodies that should participate in decision making processes or decide on the issues related to minority fields. Defined constitutionally and legally as representative organs of national minorities, as well as consultative and advisory bodies of state authorities, NMC's can be a channels for dialogue and cooperation between minorities and state organs and other governmental institutions as well as non-governmental organisations, bodies of other ethnicities, and international and regional actors. In the following sections I will analyse constitutional and legal opportunities and possibilities for trans-ethnic cooperation through NMC's within and across Serbia, focusing firstly on the republic level, secondly on the provincial and local level, and thirdly on the international and regional level.

### *1.2 Institutional model of trans-ethnic cooperation at the republic level, the provincial and local level, and the international and regional level*

NMC's as representative and self-governing bodies of national minorities as well as consultative and advisory bodies of state authorities cooperate in their daily work not only with the state authorities but also with non-governmental organisations, bodies of other ethnicities, and international and regional actors in the fields relating to their jurisdiction. The Serbian constitutional and legal system regulates the basic legislative rules by which this cooperation should be governed. On the republic level, NMC's have the right to submit their proposals, initiatives and opinions regarding issues under their jurisdiction to state bodies and special organisations. On the other hand, state bodies and special organisations shall request an opinion

from the NMC's before consideration and adoption of decisions on the issues of education, culture, information and official use of minority language and script. Furthermore, NMC's can submit an initiative to the Government to repeal the regulations of state bodies and special organisations which are not in compliance with the provisions of the Law On National Councils and other laws and regulations related to national minorities.[21]

Firstly, in the adopted Law on the Protection of Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities in 2002, it was not determined to which state bodies and special organisations NMC's can refer. The absence of definitions or clarifications of the terms used in the law created complications in the implementation of legal provisions and guaranteed rights for NMC's in practice. Only recently, at the beginning of 2014, did the Constitutional Court explain the terms used in the law. Further, the court clarified with which state authorities NMC's can and should cooperate. The general phrase "state bodies and special organisations" should, according to the Serbian Constitutional Court, be understood exclusively as organs of state administration[22]. The Law on State administration[23] stipulates that state administration consists of ministries, administrative authorities within ministries (integrated authorities) and special organizations. Secondly, before the Constitutional Court decision, it was not clear from the wording of the law whether state bodies and special organisations had a legal obligation to ask for an opinion from NMC's, or if they had the freedom to decide whether they would or would not ask for an opinion from NMC's. The Constitutional Court made the clarification that the obligation of the competent organ of the state administration consists of asking an opinion of NMC's and conscientiously considering the findings in their opinion. Recent explanations of the Serbian Constitutional Court (2014) specified and elaborated some provision of the Law on National Councils of National Minorities (2002). Regulation of the cooperation of NMC's with state bodies and special organisations is too general in its content. There are still a large number of open questions relating to trans-ethnic cooperation. What exactly does it mean to "conscientiously consider" the opinions of NMC's? In what way should this process be followed? Should state bodies and special organisation give feedback to the NMC's? What happens if the state bodies and organisations do not "conscientiously" consider the initiatives of the NMC's? There are no legal sanctions prescribed in the case that these provisions are not implemented in practice.

At the level of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina or provincial level, as well at a local level, NMC's can address their suggestions, initiatives and opinions to provincial organs and

organs of the unit of local self-government. The issues in which NMC's can refer to regional and local authorities are more broadly established than on the republic level. The right of NMC's to contact autonomous and local authorities is stipulated in a broader sense, since it concerns the issues of national minorities' status and their preservation, which covers many aspects and not only the four areas in which national councils have their explicit jurisdiction by the Law on National Councils.

The Serbian Constitution and laws embrace provisions regarding the international and regional cooperation of NMC's. National councils may co-operate with international and regional organisations, organisations and institutions in the native countries, and other national councils or similar bodies of national minorities in other countries[24]. At the international and regional level, NMC's can participate in the area of drafting, implementation and protecting of minority rights in bilateral agreements between the kin-state and the state where minorities live. This participation involves negotiations or consultations on the issues that directly relate to minority rights. Representatives of the NMC's can also participate in the activities of mixed intergovernmental bodies established to supervise the implementation of bilateral agreements in the protection of a national minority's rights.[25] Even the bilateral agreements[26] that Serbia has with its neighbouring countries explicitly require the participation of the representatives of national minorities in the work of intergovernmental commissions, which monitor the implementation of the agreements. In addition, national minorities can take part in the conclusion of international agreements in the process of gaining access to international or regional agreements related to the status and minority rights through the Republic Council for National Minorities[27].

In 2014, established formal rules based on Serbian laws, policies and standards in minority rights were clarified and explicated but also restricted in the area of trans-ethnic cooperation through the NMC´s. In the next section I elaborate on the most important changes regarding the institutional arena for trans-ethnic cooperation.

### *1.3 The limits of trans-ethnic cooperation model: changing the rules of the game*

Before the decision of the Serbian Constitutional Court from 16th January 2014, which declared certain provisions of the Law on National Councils of National Minorities unconstitutional and repealed them, NMC's had greater legal possibilities for cooperation with state authorities at the republic level. Until 2014, NMC's could also submit their proposals, initiatives and opinions

regarding the issues under its jurisdiction to the National Assembly and the Government as well as to other state bodies and special organisations. Repealed provisions were prescribing the obligation of the mentioned state authorities to request an opinion from the NMC's in the case of consideration or decision making on issues related to culture, education, information and official use of minority language and script. The procedure for this cooperation should have been prescribed by the rules of particular organs involved. These provisions were declared unconstitutional. According to the Constitutional Court, the repealed provisions were limiting the autonomy of the parliament and government in their jurisdiction and work deriving from the constitution and laws. It was also stated by the court that the obligation of the parliament and government to ask for an opinion from NMC's in areas of their competences limits and conditions the right for legislative initiative[28].

Other provisions regulating the cooperation of NMC's with the state bodies and special organisations remain in force, while in the scope of ministries work are areas in which the national minorities exercise their collective rights. The opinion of the court is that the rights of national minorities can be effectively implemented through the mutual cooperation of NMC's and line ministries, because this cooperation provides possibilities for minorities to be involved in the creation of the laws and other legal acts directly affecting them. The question of the legal nature of the cooperation between NMC's and state authorities is relevant here as well. The position of the Constitutional Court also clarifies this important question by emphasising the consultative (advisory) nature of NMC's opinions, proposals and initiatives. Initiatives from NMC's are not legally binding for the state authorities. Nevertheless, state organs are obliged to ask opinions from NMC's and have to properly consider it, as was already mentioned in previous sections. In addition, initiatives of the NMC's with regards to government, such as a proposal to repeal or nullify the regulation of other organs of state administration, are not legally binding either. They should serve only as a signal to the government.

Similarly, the Constitutional Court declared a few provisions concerning the regional and local cooperation of NMC's unconstitutional as well. The nullified provisions prescribed an obligation to the bodies of the autonomous province and the bodies of the local self-government units to consider the suggestions, initiatives and opinions of the National Council and to undertake adequate measures[29]. At the republic level, before the constitutional decisions it was not clear if the government, parliament, state bodies and organisations were obliged to contact the

National Councils while considering or deciding on issues under National Council jurisdiction. In contrast, the autonomous province and local self-government units were legally bound to do so and even to undertake their actions accordingly, until the court nullified these provisions. The repealed provisions stipulated the obligation of the bodies of the autonomous province and the local self-government units to ask for an opinion of the NMC's before the adaption of general documents in the area of national council jurisdiction[30]. These provisions were declared unconstitutional and nullified for reasons of autonomy and independence, guaranteed to the organs of the autonomous province and organs of the unit of local self-government by the Serbian constitution and laws.

In spite of this fact, the autonomous province can arrange its relations with the NMC's in its own statute. Relations with the unit of local-self government are set in a more detailed way in the Law on Local Self-Government and they raise some important questions. The Law on Local Self-Government prescribes a duty to the local unit to require an opinion of NMC's in the area of official use of minority language on its territory when changing the names of streets, squares etc. Further, in the ethnically mixed units of local self-government a council for interethnic relations consisting of representatives of both the Serbian nation and national minorities should be established.[31] The council for interethnic relations considers the questions of realization, protection and promotion of national equality. If the representatives of a national minority have established their own NMC, then they are appointed on the proposal of NMC. There have been many cases when the organs of local self-government had established councils for interethnic relations but they did not ask NMC's suggestion on representatives for minorities in it. A local inter-ethnic council can address its proposals and opinions to the council of local self-government, which is obliged to comment on them in the next session or at latest within 30 days. These kinds of detailed specifications of the relations of the interethnic council and organs of self-government unit appear reasonable. Similarly, as on the republic level, the cooperation of NMC's and organs of the autonomous province and organs of the unit of local self-government is stipulated too generally and broadly in the law. More detailed specification about the cooperation and its nature is needed at a provincial and local level too.

In a similar manner, cooperation of the NMC's at the international and regional level was constrained by the decision of the Serbian constitutional court. The restrictions concern areas and partners of cooperation. Firstly, the constitutional court limited cooperation of NMC's at the

international and regional level to those organisations that are dealing with the protection and promotion of human and especially minority rights, and whose jurisdiction is directly connected to the implementation of the collective rights of national minorities. Furthermore, the constitutional court determined in detail the nature of trans-ethnic cooperation. It should take the form of mutual contacts, visits, exchanging experiences, realization of mutual projects etc. Secondly, international and regional cooperation of the NMC's has to be in accordance with the constitutional framework of Serbia, as well as in compliance with the official Serbian foreign policy, and has to respect territorial integrity and the legal order of Serbia. Thirdly, the court nullified provisions that guaranteed the right of NMC's to cooperate with the state organs of their kin-states. The reason for this was explained as a conflict with the competence of the Serbian state, as cooperation with the organs of other states is international and interstate cooperation and is part of Serbian foreign policy. According to the constitutional court, the actors of international cooperation can only be states as subjects.

The decision of Serbian Constitutional Court put limits on trans-ethnic cooperation through the NMC´s in Serbia. Not only did this decision restrict certain possibilities of NMC´s to cooperate at a republic, provincial, local, international and legal level, it also reduced the overall standard of minority rights protection in Serbia. Even in spite of this, there are still a large number of constitutional and legal predispositions and opportunities for trans-ethnic cooperation, which NMC's can utilize in practice. The next section describes how the Slovak Minority Council in Serbia embraced the institutional possibilities for trans-ethnic cooperation in Serbia and across it.

## 2. Trans-ethnic cooperation of the National Council of the Slovak National Minority

### *2.1 Trans-ethnic cooperation of NCSNM on republic level*

The Slovak Minority Council (SMC) was relatively active in the period between 2010-2014, submitting proposals, initiatives and opinions concerning the issues of status, identity and rights of the Slovak national minority especially in the fields of education, culture, information in the Slovak language and the official use of Slovak language and script. Most initiatives were submitted to the Ministry of State Administration and local self-government under whose

jurisdiction the council belongs. SMC did not submit any initiatives to parliament or government although there was a legal possibility to address issues to these organs. At the republic level, SMC cooperated mostly with the Office for Human and Minority Rights in the Serbian Government. This cooperation was evaluated by the respondent as the best one. The Serbian government, ministries and special organisations initiated cooperation and they requested opinions from SMC in all fields of the council's competence. Even though SMC was following the implementation of the minority laws in practise, the council did not use its legislative right to propose nullification of the general acts of state organs and special organisations which were not in accordance with these laws.

Trans-ethnic cooperation at the republic level between SMC and state authorities was, according to the respondent, better in past, before the period 2010-2014. In the previous period there was a special ministry for human and minority rights. Currently NMC's belong under the competence of the Ministry of State Administration and Self-Government and they cooperate closely with the Office for Human and Minority Rights in the Serbian Government. SMC cooperates at the republic level with state authorities, but not regularly. For example, SMC was included in the legislative work of the Office for Human and Minority Rights, participating in working groups created to bring in changes in the Law on National Councils of National Minorities[32]. Nevertheless, there are no systematic or regular meetings with particular ministries. SMC mostly cooperates with the Office for Human and Minority Rights. Moreover, the outcome of the cooperation is questionable. In most of the cases, the suggestions of the council were not accepted. For example, a forum called Coordination of National Councils of National Minorities (hereinafter Coordination) was created to serve as a medium for meetings and cooperation between minority councils representing different national minorities in Serbia. Through Coordination, minority councils operate together on minority issues and execute joint actions. Coordination follows the implementation of minority laws in practice. Representatives of minorities have repeatedly addressed proposals to the Government (to finally establish a Republic Council for National Minorities), as well as to competent ministries in the fields of education, culture and information, but without success. The proposals of Coordination were not accepted. Likewise, suggestions from the minority councils to establish a coordination forum as a legal entity were unsuccessful in past years.

### *2.2 Trans-ethnic cooperation of NCSNM on provincial and local level*

Similar to the republic level, SMC was active in trans-ethnic cooperation at a provincial and local level. SMC submitted initiatives, proposals and opinions regarding the status and protection of the distinctiveness of the Slovak national minority to organs of APV and to organs of the unit of local self-government. Cooperation concerned all four fields of council competence. At the provincial level, most initiatives were submitted from the fields of culture and information. At the local level, the council addressed issues mostly from the area of education and culture. Both organs, the provincial and local, took these initiatives into consideration in most of the cases. Accordingly, initiatives of SMC were taken into account and provincial and local authorities in most cases undertook adequate measures in the areas concerned. According to the respondent, satisfaction is higher with the cooperation with provincial organs than the local ones. It must be emphasized that the respondent identified two types of units of local self-government. The first type comprises the units in which the Slovak language is in official use. The second type of unit of local self-government is where the Slovak minority language and script are not in use. With the first type of units was cooperation better than with the units in which the Slovak language and script was not in official use. Even though cooperation is relatively good on the provincial and local level, it is not conducted in any systematic or regular way, only when some issues pop-up or when some of the involved party asks for collaboration.

### *2.3 Trans-ethnic cooperation of NCSNM on international and regional level*

On an international and regional level, SMC cooperated with international and regional organisations, state organs in kin-state, other organisations and institutions in kin-state, national minority councils in other state, similar organs of national minorities in other states, and other organizations and institutions very actively. Trans-ethnic cooperation in the international and regional arenas through the SMC was very common. The issues of cooperation concerned the areas of education, culture, information, official use of language and script of national minorities, maintenance of minority distinctiveness, questions about status, identity and rights of national minorities, and similar areas. SMC cooperated mostly in the areas of education and culture on an international and regional level. The most frequent cooperative partners for SMC were the Organisation for Co-operation and Security in Europe (OSBE) and the Council of Europe (CoE). Besides these, representatives of SMC participated in the work of intergovernmental organs, a

role that involves the supervision of the implementation of bilateral agreements on the protection of national minority rights. Furthermore SMC was consulted in the process of negotiating bilateral agreements with its kin-state, and was involved by the state organs and institutions in the regional and international cooperation regarding national minority rights protection.

SMC was relatively active in trans-ethnic cooperation with the state organs and organisations at all levels of state power – republic, provincial, and local. SMC also cooperated actively at the international and regional levels in the fields of education, culture, information on the Slovak language, and official use of the Slovak language and script. Cooperation between SMC and other governmental and non-governmental entities and actors is not conducted on regular basis. Ad hoc communication is common for trans-ethnic cooperation through the SMC, with the all partners defined by constitutional and legal framework. SMC did not use all possibilities of the constitutional and legal framework of trans-ethnic cooperation within and across Serbia. Trans-ethnic cooperation for the Slovak council was best with the organs of Vojvodina province and better with the units of local self-government in which the Slovak language and script were in official use. It seems that some competences and rights of minority councils and legal terms and phrases are not very well understood by the Slovak council, which influences the realization of competences and rights in practice and has a direct effect on the quality of SMC's work. SMC could be even more active in relation to state authorities on all levels and with the international and regional actors, especially in those areas where they have the right to undertake initiatives and not to wait to be called from the competent organs.

**Concluding remarks**

Based on the analysis of the constitutional and legal framework of trans-ethnic cooperation through the NMC's, it can be stated that NMC's have legal status and competences to serve as a channel for dialogue and cooperation with the state authorities and nongovernmental actors, both in and beyond Serbia. NMC's are representative, advisory and partner bodies of state authorities with the competencies in four areas, namely education, culture, information, and official use of language and scripts. Within these areas as well as in the issues concerning minority status and protection, NMC's can refer their opinions, proposals and initiatives to the state authorities on the republic, regional and local levels in Serbia. Moreover, NMC's can

cooperate with international and regional organisations and institutions in the area of protection of human and minority rights, specifically concerning implementation of the collective rights of national minorities. Furthermore NMC's can cooperate with non-governmental organisations locally and internationally.

The analysis of the trans-ethnic model of cooperation through the NMC's in Serbia, with a particular focus on the status, competences and role of NMC's in relations to republic organs, organs of autonomous province and unit of local self-government and international and regional organisations, has shown that there is a relatively good general framework of trans-ethnic cooperation in and beyond Serbia. Nevertheless, there are still too many open questions and issues which should be further elaborated and resolved. First of all, legal documents regulating trans-ethnic cooperation contain a lot of inadequate and incorrect words. Legal terms and phrases used therein are not defined or specified. A lack of conceptual and terminological clarity can impede and complicate the realization of the provisions in practice. Secondly, in many aspects, legal documents directly or indirectly concerning NMC's and their competencies are not harmonised and coherent. In some cases legal documents are not only inconsistent but also contradictory. This fact causes difficulties in the implementation of certain rights in practise as well. Thirdly, many legal documents from other areas than education, culture, information and the official use of language and script of a national minority do not contain the term National Council of National Minority.[33] Fourthly, the decision of the Serbian Constitutional Court, which declared some clauses entirely or in part unconstitutional and repealed them, significantly reduces the competencies of NMC's in general and partially in the area of relations with state authorities and organs of the kin-states. NMC's can no longer refer to the Serbian parliament or government regarding the issues of their jurisdictions. Organs of regional and local authorities are no longer obliged to ask for the opinion of NMC's before decision making or conducting general activities in the area concerning national minorities. On an international and regional level cooperation of NMC's has been limited only to issues of human and minority rights, while cooperation with the organs of minorities' kin-state has been abolished. It is highly questionable whether the Serbian Constitutional Court was following the constitutional clauses which stipulate that "provisions on human and minority rights shall be interpreted to the benefit of promoting values of a democratic society..."[34] and that an "attained level of human and minority rights may not be lowered."[35] In the decision-making process regarding legal compliance of certain provisions of the Law on

National Councils of National Minorities with the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia and in courts' explication and reasoning of this decision, a very restricted approach was applied towards the interpretation of the Serbian constitution and general rights as well as minority rights guaranteed by this constitution. Many rights, competences and opportunities for effective trans-ethnic cooperation of NMC's were restricted by the Constitutional Court's decision, or were rendered legally null and void.

Even in spite of this fact, it can be argued that there is a relatively good constitutional and legal framework of trans-ethnic cooperation in Serbia, which constitutes a broad range of opportunities and possibilities for NMC's to cooperate with different state authorities as well non-governmental actors in and beyond Serbia. Nevertheless, discrepancy between the institutional model for trans-ethnic cooperation and the practical side of this phenomenon is too wide. Cooperation should not be restricted to the legal rights of NMC's to address certain issues with state authorities. These initiatives should also be taken into account by these authorities, in order to speak about meaningful and effective trans-ethnic cooperation. In addition, no regular, systematic trans-ethnic cooperation exists in practice. Usually this cooperation is on an ad hoc basis. Despite all the constraints and challenges that national minorities and NMC's face in practice, NMC's should be more active and initiative in fostering trans-ethnic cooperation in order to fully utilize institutional possibilities for this cooperation and to reinforce the status and rights of minority communities in Serbia and beyond.

**Notes**

[1] Or lately designated only as Kosovo. Designation as Kosovo is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

[2] Republički zavod za statistiku. 'Popis stanovništva, domaćinstava i stanova 2011. u Republici Srbiji'. Republički zavod za statistiku. http://pod2.stat.gov.rs/ObjavljenePublikacije/Popis2011/Popisni%20atlas%202011.pdf

[3] Republički zavod za statistiku. 'Popis stanovništva, domaćinstava i stanova 2011. u Republici Srbiji. Stanovništvo. Nacionalna pripadnost. Podaci po opštinama i gradovima'. Republički zavod za statistiku. http://pod2.stat.gov.rs/ObjavljenePublikacije/Popis2011/Nacionalna%20pripadnost-Ethnicity.pdf

[4] Republički zavod za statistiku. 'Popis stanovništva, domaćinstava i stanova 2011. u Republici Srbiji. Stanovništvo. Veroispovest, maternji jezik i nacionalna pripadnost. Podaci po opštinama i gradovima'. Republički zavod za statistiku. http://pod2.stat.gov.rs/ObjavljenePublikacije/Popis2011/Knjiga4_Veroispovest.pdf

[5] Statut Autonomne pokrajine Vojvodine. "Službeni list APV", br. 20/2014, član 24.

[6] Ministarstvo državne uprave i lokalne samouprave. 'Izvod iz registra nacionalnih saveta nacionalnih manjina'. Ministarstvo državne uprave i lokalne samouprave. http://mduls.gov.rs/latinica/dokumenta-nacionalni-saveti-manjina.php. Retrieved: May 5, 2015.

[7] Pokrajinski zaštitnik građana Autonomne pokrajine Vojvodine. 'Četiri godine nacionalnih saveta nacionalnih manjina'. 2014; Pokrajinski obmudsman. 'Položaj žena u nacionalnim savetima nacionalnih manjina u Srbiji'. Pokrajinski ombudsman: Novi Sad, 2014; Centar za regionalizam. 2014. Monitoring transparentnosti u radu nacionalnih saveta nacionalnih manjina. Centar za regionalizam: Novi Sad: 2014; Petar Teofilović. 2011. Savet za međunacionalne odnose i lokalni zaštitnik građana u multietničkim sredinama. Centar za ištraživanje etniciteta: Beograd, 2011.

[8] Interview with Mrs. Ann Tomanová Makanová, head of National Council of the Slovak National Minority in Serbia, on 27.12.2014. The interview was conducted via telephone with computer assistance.

[9] Ustav republike Srbije, Službeni glasnik RS, broj 98/2006.

[10] Zakon o zaštiti prava i sloboda nacionalnih manjina "Sl. list SRJ", br. 11/2002, "Sl. list SCG", br. 1/2003 - Ustavna povelja i "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 72/2009 - dr. zakon i 97/2013 - odluka US (Law on Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities, "Official Journal of the FRY", No. 11/2002, "Official Journal of Serbia and Montenegro", No. 1/2003 -the Constitutional Charter and "Official Gazette of the RS", No. 72/2009-other law and 97/2013- the Decision of the Constitutional Court).

[11] The Law on National Councils of National Minorities- the Law on National Councils, Article 2.
Zakon o nacionalnim savetima nacionalnih manjina. "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 72/2009, 20/2014 - odluka Ustavnog suda i 55/2014.

[12] Zakon o osnovama sistema obrazovanja i vaspitanja, "Službeni glasnik RS", br. 72/09, 52/11 i 55/13; Zakon o učeničkom i studentskom standardu, "Službeni glasnik RS", br. 18/10 i 55/13; Zakon o visokom obrazovanju, "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 76/2005, 100/2007 - autentično tumačenje, 97/2008, 44/2010, 93/2012 i 89/2013; Zakon o udžbenicima i drugim nastavnim sredstvima, "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 72/2009; Zakon o srednjem obrazovanju i vaspitanju, "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 55/2013; Zakon o kulturi, "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 72/2009, Zakon o radiodifuziji, "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 42/2002, 97/2004, 76/2005, 79/2005 - dr. zakon, 62/2006, 85/2006, 86/2006 - ispr. i 41/2009; Zakon o javnom informisanju, "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 43/2003, 61/2005, 71/2009, 89/2010 - odluka US i 41/2011 - odluka US; Zakon o državnoj upravi, "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 79/2005, 101/2007 i 95/2010; Zakon o utvrđivanju nadležnosti Autonomne pokrajine Vojvodine, "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 99/09 i 67/2012- Odluka Ustavnog suda (Law on Establishing the Competences of the Autonomous Province "Official Gazette of the RS", No. 99/09 and 67/2012- the Decision of the Constitutional Court); Statut Autonomne pokrajine Vojvodine, "Sl. Glasnik APV", br. 20/2014 (Statute of the AP of Vojvodina "Official Journal of the APV", No. 20/2014; Zakon o lokalnoj samoupravi, "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 129/2007 i 83/2014 - dr. zakon.

[13] Odluka Ustavnog Suda RS br. IUz-882/2010, kojom su utvrđene neustavne odredbe Zakona o nacionalnim savetima nacionalnih manjina, "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 20/2014.

[14] Zakon o zaštiti prava i sloboda nacionalnih manjina "Sl. list SRJ", br. 11/2002, "Sl. list SCG", br. 1/2003 - Ustavna povelja i "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 72/2009 - dr. zakon i 97/2013 - odluka US.

[15] Ustav FRJ, "Sl. glasnik FRJ", br. 1/92.

[16] Mainly the principles of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, ratification in 1998, acceding in 2001.

[17] The state bodies and the bodies of autonomous province or the unit of local self-government should ask for an opinion of National Councils when making decisions in the areas of their jurisdiction (Article 19, paragraph 8) and National Councils can refer to the state bodies with a questions that influence the rights and status of the national minorities (Article 19, paragraph 9) of the Zakon o zaštiti prava i sloboda nacionalnih manjina "Sl. list SRJ", br. 11/2002, "Sl. list SCG", br. 1/2003 - Ustavna povelja.

[18] In the case of violations of minority rights, individual minority members, and also the National Councils, can claim damages with relevant courts (Article 23, paragraph 1 and 2 of the Zakon o zaštiti prava i sloboda nacionalnih manjina "Sl. list SRJ", br. 11/2002, "Sl. list SCG", br. 1/2003 - Ustavna povelja.

[19] Ustav Republike Srbije, "Službeni glasnik RS", broj 98/2006.Constitution of Republic of Serbia, Official Gazette, No 98/2006.

[20] Article 75, paragraph 2 and 3 of Constitution of Republic of Serbia, Official Gazette, No 98/2006.

[21] Zakon o zaštiti prava i sloboda nacionalnih manjina "Sl. list SRJ", br. 11/2002, "Sl. list SCG", br. 1/2003 - Ustavna povelja i "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 72/2009 - dr. zakon i 97/2013 - odluka US, član 25.

[22] Odluka Ustavnog Suda RS br. IUz-882/2010, kojom su utvrđene neustavne odredbe Zakona o nacionalnim savetima nacionalnih manjina, "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 20/2014, 13. Ocena odredaba člana 25. Zakona.

[23] Zakon o državnoj upravi, "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 79/2005, 101/2007 i 95/2010, article 1 defines the state

administration as a part of the executive branch of the Republic of Serbia performing administrative tasks derived from the powers and responsibilities of the Republic of Serbia (Article 1, paragraph 1).

[24] The Law on National Councils of National Minorities- the Law on National Councils, Article 2.
Zakon o nacionalnim savetima nacionalnih manjina. "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 72/2009, 20/2014 - odluka Ustavnog suda i 55/2014, član 27, sekcija 1.

[25] Article 27, paragraph 2 and 3 of the Law on national councils of national minorities (Zakon o nacionalnim savetima nacionalnih manjina. "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 72/2009, 20/2014 - odluka Ustavnog suda i 55/2014.

[26] Sporazum između Srbije i Crne Gore i Republike Mađarske o zaštiti prava mađarske nacionalne manjine koja živi u Srbiji i Crnoj Gori i srpske nacionalne manjine koja živi u Republici Mađarskoj; Sporazum između Srbije i Crne Gore i Republike Makedonije o zaštiti srpske i crnogorske nacionalne manjine u Republici Makedoniji i makedonske nacionalne manjine u Srbiji i Crnoj Gori; Sporazum između Savezne vlade Savezne Republike Jugoslavije i Vlade Rumunije o saradnji u oblasti zaštite nacionalnih manjine; Sporazum između Srbije i Crne Gore i Republike Hrvatske o zaštiti prava srpske i crnogorske manjine u Republici Hrvatskoj i hrvatske manjine u Srbiji i Crnoj Gori.

[27] Article 28 of the Law on national councils of national minorities.

[28] Odluka Ustavnog Suda RS br. IUz-882/2010, kojom su utvrđene neustavne odredbe Zakona o nacionalnim savetima nacionalnih manjina, "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 20/2014, deo 13, Ocena odredaba člana 25. Zakona.

[29] Article 26, paragraph 2* of the Law on national council of national minorities.

[30] Article 26, paragraph 3* of the Law on national council of national minorities.

[31] Član 98 Zakona o lokalnoj samoupravi, "Sl. glasnik RS", br. 129/2007 i 83/2014.

[32] 'Zbog odluka USS Džudžević traži reakciju saveta', Tanjug, FoNet, 22. januar 2014.

[33] For example the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination does not recognize the right for NMC's to submit complaints to the court in order to protect members of national minorities from discrimination.

[34] "…pursuant to valid international standards in human and minority rights, as well as the practice of international institutions which supervise their implementation." Ustav republike Srbije, Službeni glasnik RS, broj 98/2006, član 18, sekcija 3 (Constitution of Republic of Serbia, Official Gazette, No 98/2006), English version available on: http://www.srbija.gov.rs/cinjenice_o_srbiji/ustav_odredbe.php?id=217.

[35] Ustav republike Srbije, Službeni glasnik RS, broj 98/2006, član 20, sekcija 2.

## Appendix A

### Table 1: Ethnic structure of the population of Republic of Serbia based on the results of census in 2011

| Population | Serbia |
|---|---|
| Total population | 7186862 |
| Serbian | 5988150 |
| Albanians | 5809 |
| Bosniaks | 145278 |
| Bulgarians | 18543 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Bunjevci | 16706 |
| Vlachs | 35330 |
| Goranci | 7767 |
| Jugoslav | 23303 |
| Hungarians | 253899 |
| Macedonians | 22755 |
| Muslim | 22301 |
| Germans | 4064 |
| Roma | 147604 |
| Romanians | 29332 |
| Russians | 3247 |
| Ruthenians | 14246 |
| Slovaks | 52750 |
| Slovenians | 4033 |
| Ukrainians | 4903 |
| Croats | 57900 |
| Montenegro | 38527 |
| Others | 17558 |
| Did not wanted to declare themselves | 160346 |
| Declared themselves in the regional sense | 30771 |
| Unknown | 81740 |

Source: Republički zavod za statistiku. 'Popis stanovništva, domaćinstava i stanova 2011. u Republici Srbiji. Stanovništvo. Nacionalna pripadnost. Podaci po opštinama i gradovima'. Republički zavod za statistiku. http://pod2.stat.gov.rs/ObjavljenePublikacije/Popis2011/Nacionalna%20pripadnost-Ethnicity.pdf

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Zakon o ratifikaciji sporazuma između Srbije i Crne Gore i Republike Makedonije o zaštiti Srpske i Crnogorske nacionalne manjine u Republici Makedoniji i Makedonske nacionalne manjine u Srbiji i Crnoj Gori. "Službeni list SCG"- Međunarodni ugovori, broj 6/2005.

Zakon o ratifikaciji sporazuma između Srbije i Crne Gore i Republike Hrvatske o zaštiti prava srpske i crnogorske manjine u Republici Hrvatskoj i hrvatske manjine u Srbiji i Crnoj Gori. "Službeni list SCG"- Međunarodni ugovori, broj 3/2005.

Zakon o ratifikaciji sporazuma između Savezne vlade Savezne republike Jugoslavije i Vlade Rumunije o saradnji u oblasti zaštite nacionalnih manjina. "Službeni list SCG"- Međunarodni ugovori, broj 14/2004.

Zakon o ratifikaciji sporazuma između Srbije i Crne Gore i Republike Mađarske o zaštiti prava Mađarske nacionalne manjine koja živi u Srbiji i Crnoj Gori i Srpske nacionalne manjine koja živi u Republici Mađarskoj. "Službeni list SCG"- Međunarodni ugovori, broj 14/2004.

'Zbog odluka USS Džudžević traži reakciju saveta', Tanjug, FoNet, 22. januar 2014.

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# Minority Coalition-Building and Nation-States

Marina Germane*

*Birkbeck College, University of London*

This paper examines ethnic minorities' coalition-building within and across nation-states – a phenomenon largely neglected by the existing literature on ethnic relations and by migration and diaspora studies alike. Besides discussing different types of existing minority coalitions at the local, state, and international levels, this papers evaluates how accounting for the relational interplay among ethnic minorities could possibly contribute to our understanding of interethnic relations and democratization processes, and suggests possible directions for future research, while using a number of examples, both in historical and contemporary settings, from Western and Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa in order to illustrate the main points.

**Keywords:** Minorities; interethnic relations; coalition-building; nation-states; transnationalism.

It has been observed previously that 'to some extent, much of the social sciences have become a prisoner of the nation-state' (Beck & Sznaider 2006: 5). Ethnic studies have not escaped the trap of methodological nationalism either: although a vast body of literature has been dedicated to ethnic relations within and across nation-states, with the contributions ranging from political science and political theory to sociology, social anthropology, philosophy, legal theory, and economics, much of the past and on-going debates are constrained by limiting the focus of investigation to the binary relations between a particular minority and a state-possessing ethnic majority. And in this sense, one may say that ethnic studies are dedicated to studying *ethno-national*, rather than *interethnic* relations, locking them within the analytical coordinates of the nation-state.

*Associate Research Fellow, The Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism, School of Social Sciences, History, and Philosophy. Email: marina.kru@btinternet.com.

Stable majority-minority relations are paramount to peaceful coexistence, and to both domestic and international security. Most nation-states, however, are home to multiple ethnic communities; this internal diversity is ever-growing thanks to accelerating migration processes. Each of these communities, besides having vertical relations with the state-possessing ethnic majority, is also horizontally linked with other non-dominant ethnic groups present. Within the nation-state, these complex relations among different ethnic minorities have a profound impact on each minority's relations with the eponymous nation and on the overall state of ethnic relations. Indeed, the very presence of different ethnic minorities within the same national unit, with their different ethnic and racial compositions, different cultural and religious practices, different points of origin, different times of arrival, as well as varying settlement and integration patterns and different histories of relations with the eponymous nation, deeply affects the field of majority-minority relations. For new ethnic groups arriving in a country, the history of their predecessors' integration, with its successes and its failures, and the way it is perceived by the majority (which may not necessarily be the same thing) will inevitably influence their own experience.

Although Donald Horowitz (1985) distinguished between ranked and unranked ethnic relationships, defining a situation in which each group has a full complement of statuses (in other words – social class and ethnic origin do not coincide) as unranked, he also conceded that these are ideal types, that in real life this distinction is often blurred, and that ethnic hierarchies are a persistent phenomenon. This latter point is also supported by social identity studies measuring social distance (Tajfel 1974, 1981; Tajfel and Turner 1979) – indeed, ethnic groups contained within a nation-state are perceived by both insiders and outsiders in a hierarchical order, which can be determined by even a casual observer within a relatively short period of time (in Europe, for example, the predominant pattern is for North Europeans to be on top, followed by South Europeans, then by other ethnic groups, with the Roma inevitably being at the bottom). When a new immigrant group is presented with an existing pecking order, its chances of fitting into it are, to a very large extent, affected by all kinds of associations, past and present. If there are, indeed, two or more unranked groups present at the top of the hierarchy, lower-ranked minorities find themselves in a tricky situation. Ezra Mendelsohn, in his brilliant book on the history of Jews in Eastern Europe, made a poignant observation that 'to be caught between two competing cultures is always a dangerous situation for a minority' (Mendelsohn 1983). He described the plight of the Jews in interwar Czechoslovakia, who were under enormous pressure to 'choose' between the German and

Czech languages; and of Romanian-Jewish relations in Transylvania, which were so adversely affected by the Jews' cultural affiliation with the Magyars. Another striking example were the Jews of interwar Latvia, who were repeatedly accused of promoting both the German and Russian cultures, both of which happened to be the cultures of former oppressors of the eponymous nation. Thus, even as isolated communities, minorities can suffer discrimination by association (cultural, religious, ideological, linguistic, or 'region of origin' affinity, real or imagined) with another minority that has 'displeased' the host nation as either a former oppressor or as an overly active competitor for the ownership of the state. Minorities may also not seek direct contact or association with another minority, but simply 'jump on the band-wagon' and use this minority's existing achievements (in negotiating with the majority group, or in securing special status) as precedents in their own bargaining strategies.

This impact becomes even more profound when it transcends the nation-state's borders, as most non-dominant ethnic groups are also involved with their kin-states, ethnic kin in other countries, and, increasingly, also international organizations. Different ethnic groups from the same country of origin often live side by side in the diaspora (consider, for example, ethnic Turks and Turkish Kurds living in Germany); being taken out of the political context of their home country, and encountering new ethnic diversity in the country of destination inevitably changes the dynamics of intergroup relations not just in the diaspora, but also, eventually, back at home (the so-called 'boomerang effect'). Nevertheless, for a long time, migration and diaspora studies used to concentrate solely on the aspects of migrants' integration into the host society (Martins 1974).[1]

In a similar vein, attempts at remedying ethnic conflicts in deeply divided societies assume a strictly binary mode (for example, power-sharing arrangements and bi-nationalism), while other, numerically smaller ethnic groups present are completely overlooked and unaccounted for; overshadowed by the 'principal conflict', these ethnic minorities lack both recognition and political representation, turning into what Gupta (2008) aptly named 'hidden communities'. Lately, there have been examples when the principal challengers of an existing political order either adapt their platforms to articulate demands not just on behalf of their own ethnic group but also on behalf of others (the Kurdish Movement in Turkey, for example, claims to seek autonomy not just for Kurds, but also for other non-dominant ethnic groups in Turkey), or to portray themselves as diversity-tolerant and immigration-friendly (e.g., the Scottish National Party), as well as branching out to cover other issues, like gender equality and environmental sustainability. However, the effects of entrenched binary conflicts on other

non-dominant ethnic groups present – from outright neglect and political marginalization to attempts at representation and inclusion – remain largely unstudied.

The preponderance of the nation-state and the nation as the main units of analysis is only part of the possible explanation for this persistent oversight. The other part is the long-standing paradigm of viewing non-dominant ethnic groups as deeply segregated communities – a viewpoint that can be traced as far back as Mill's *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861). Besides his famously accurate foresight about the fragility of democratic politics in a nation-state fraught with ethnic diversity, Mill also seems to be responsible for a long-persistent stereotype in the field of ethnic relations, namely that any meaningful cooperation among different ethnic groups is impossible, and that they would be always locked in a squabble while seeking favours of their 'common arbiter', the state:

> …Each [nationality] fears more injury to itself from other nationalities than from the common arbiter, the state. Their mutual antipathies are generally much stronger than jealousy of the government. That any one of them feels aggrieved by the policy of the common ruler is sufficient to determine another to support that policy. Even if all are aggrieved, none feel that they can rely on the others for fidelity in a joint resistance; the strength of none is sufficient to resist alone, and each may reasonably think that it consults its own advantage most by bidding for the favour of the government against the rest. (Mill 1958 [1861]: 231)

For decades to come, ethnic minorities would continue to be regarded as inevitable adversaries of the state (and of each other), unable to rise over their narrow sectarian interests in the interests of common good, and therefore as progenitors of conflict. The ultimate fiasco of the minority protection system put in place by the League of Nations, and the subsequent horrifying events of the 1930s and the Second World War reaffirmed this point of view. But although both ethnicity and the nation-state were implicated in that tragic turn of events, the introduction of the influential civic-ethnic dichotomy (Kohn 1944) that juxtaposed 'good' and 'bad' nationalisms by attaching strong normative tags, with 'civic' denoting progress and liberalism and 'ethnic' representing backwardness and oppression, partly exonerated nationalism, but left ethnicity high and dry. The focus shifted from ethnic activism and minority rights, which had briefly flourished during the interwar period, to individual human rights, with the latter supposedly encompassing the former; ethnic minority integration into allegedly civic nation-states became a universal prescription, while ethnically-based collective action on behalf of minorities was regarded with deep suspicion by social scientists and

policymakers alike – a suspicion that was only reinforced by the breakup of the former Yugoslavia and the accompanying ethnic cleansing.

However, the myth of ethno-culturally neutral civic nation-states has since been refuted, and the allegedly antagonistic relationship between ethnic affiliation and modernization rigorously reassessed (Kymlicka 1995a, 1995b, 1999, 2001; Kaufmann 2000; Kuzio 2001, 2007; Roshwald 2001, 2006, 2008; Nimni 2010). And although liberal theory continues to struggle in order to reconcile civic universalism and ethnic particularism (a debate closely linked to that on individual and communitarian values), these are no longer seen as necessarily mutually exclusive but, quite possibly, complementary (Gutman 1996; Soysal 2000). The process of European integration, accompanied by the inevitable devolution of power, and the growing role of international organizations have significantly contributed to changing perceptions: minority rights have not just reappeared on the international agenda, but, according to Soysal (2000: 6), 'collective identity has been redefined as a category of human rights'.

Insufficient minority participation in the political life of nation-states remains a widespread concern. But persistent ethnic hierarchies within nation-state societies, however informal, hinder minorities' activism. For an individual belonging to a minority group, it may seem easier to become civically and politically active through an ethnic organization because of perceived equal standing. Although other divisions, such as class, education, professional and economic achievement, political convictions, gender, and sexual orientation, are present within ethnic groups just as they are present in larger society, extant studies demonstrate that many, if not all, can be trumped by ethnic solidarity, particularly during a period of ethnic mobilization. In other words, in becoming civically and politically active through the medium of an ethnic organization, a minority individual may experience less discrimination and face the lowest possible entry barrier. Varshney (2002) observes that in the presence of ethnic hierarchies and prejudice, ethnic associations are among the most effective in the fight for equality in employment, education, and politics.

Ethnic organizations have thus been recognised as a necessary precondition for minorities' political participation in the democratic life of the nation-state by many (Almond and Verba 1963; Putnam 2000). Putnam (2000) distinguishes between two different types of social capital generated through membership of exclusive (such as *intra*ethnic) and inclusive (such as *inter*ethnic) voluntary organizations, namely *bonding* in the case of the former, and *bridging* in the case of the latter. While some scholars value interethnic (bridging)

organizations as more important to societal peace (Varshney 2002), others stress that there can be no 'bridging' without 'bonding' (Tillie and Slijper 2007). In their study of the political participation of immigrant ethnic groups in Amsterdam, they reformulated Putnam's distinction between *bonding* and *bridging* social capitals (as a distinction between *ethnic* and *non-ethnic* social capitals, with the former being generated through membership of a mono-ethnic organization, and the latter through membership of a mainstream, or multi-ethnic organization). They discovered that, somewhat unexpectedly, both kinds of social capital were equally important for political participation: 'Contrary to the current tendency to consider a strong ethnic community and/or identity as frustrating the process of integration, the results here indicate the exact opposite: a strong ethnic community seems to be a necessary precondition for successful integration, at least as far as political participation is concerned.' (Tillie and Slijper 2007:255)

At the same time, existing studies show that membership of ethnic organizations does not always lead to further civic and political integration (Strömblad and Adman 2010), i.e. not all members of an ethnic organizations will 'graduate' from the concerns of their own ethnic groups to wider policy issues affecting the whole society; moreover, exclusive ethnic organizations based on illiberal premises contribute to segregation and societal discord. But there is also plenty of available historical evidence that ethnic minorities are, in fact, perfectly capable of identifying common interests and overarching goals and uniting in their pursuit, and that majority-minorities relations are not necessarily a zero-sum game. Indeed, the majority of ethnic minority organizations adopt the liberal values of their host societies; instead of simply indulging in ethnic particularism, they 'make appeals to the universalistic principles of human rights and connect themselves to a diverse set of public spheres'. This way, they 'participate in and contribute to the reification of host society and global discourses' (Soysal 2000: 10). The growing number of interethnic organizations at local, state, regional and global levels, and the proliferation of short- and long-term coalitions among different ethnic minorities within and across nation-states speak for themselves.

Coalition-building between different ethnic groups, which is the main focus of this paper, is paramount for this transition from the particularistic to universal. Firstly, coalition-building between different ethnic and racial groups rules out the ascriptive ethnic membership that some ethnic organizations employ, and which presents a legitimate concern for liberal democracies. Secondly, when previously isolated, inward-looking minorities start seeking cooperation with other ethnic groups, when they cross ethnic and racial boundaries, they also

start focusing on domestic issues of anti-discrimination and equality, rather than on simply maintaining their own cultural identity and on the politics of the kin-state – this inevitably leads to their better integration into larger society. Thirdly, multi-ethnic and multiracial coalitions help to identify structural inequalities and issues that are endemic to ethnic relations within national units; when they transcend national borders, they signal that an issue cannot be resolved at the national level, and has wider, regional or international implications.

But despite the shifting perspectives on both the relationship between ethnic particularism, universal values, and European integration (Soysal 1994, 2000; Keating 2004; Csergo and Goldgeier 2004; Gupta 2008), and the primacy of the nation-state as the main unit of action (for example, Keohane and Nye (1971) contend that a good deal of politically significant societal intercourse takes place outside of governmental control), as well as significant advances made by transnationalism studies, the phenomenon of ethnic minority coalition-building within and across nation-states remains largely unstudied, its origins unexamined and its contribution to democracy-building processes overlooked.[2]

The remaining part of this paper briefly examines the history of minority coalition-building (which, contrary to the popular misconception, has a long pedigree). It then describes different types of existing minority coalitions according to their varying origins, membership, sources of funding, and the widely divergent claims that they put forward, illustrating this diversity through numerous examples of minority coalitions from around the world. The following section evaluates the relations between minority coalitions and both the nation-state and international organizations, as these relations are, unsurprisingly, instrumental to minority coalitions' longevity and endurance. And, finally, the concluding section, besides addressing possible pitfalls in studying minority coalitions, assesses its importance to our understanding of ethnic relations and democratization processes.

## 1. History of minority coalition-building

Minority coalition-building is by no means a recent phenomenon – the first attempts at building such coalitions predate World War One. Among the earliest examples of *intra*ethnic[3] coalition-building, the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* (AIU; established in 1860 in Paris) must be mentioned. The goal of this organization was the improvement of the situation of Jews in South-eastern Europe and the Middle East, mainly through establishing a network of schools in Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, and Palestine, but also through Jewish rights

advocacy at the international level. The AIU was closely aligned with the French government, as well as with British and American Jewish communities, and actively lobbied the governments (and, later, the League of Nations) aiming to replace the traditional Jewish practice of *shtadlanut*, or intercession, with a concerted international strategy. The AIU took part in the Paris Peace Conference, although by that time its power and prestige were declining, in part due to constant rivalry with the Zionists, who deemed the AIU policies too moderate and 'assimilationist'. (Laquer 2003; Fink 2004; Rodrigue 1990).

An early example of *inter*ethnic coalition-building on the international stage is the Union of Nationalities (*Union des Nationalites*) that was based in Paris from 1914 to 1919. The goal of the Union, which was founded by a French journalist and a Lithuanian lawyer in exile, was to give a platform to non-dominant nationalist movements (in theory, the reach was supposed to be global; in practice, the Union's activities centred on Central and Eastern Europe).

Minority coalition-building flourished in Central and Eastern Europe during the interwar years, both at the state and international levels. Among the European minorities newly created by the Treaty of Versailles, the Germans and the Jews were the most proactive, often forming informal alliances and spearheading movements for minority rights in the nation-states. These ultimately short-lived – and often uneasy – German-Jewish alliances of the interwar period present perfect case studies of the travails of minority coalition-building. Indeed, the Prague-based Jewish intellectual Max Brod (1844-1968) invented a poignant term for this particular cooperation, *Distanzliebe*[4]. The apogee of interwar minority coalition-building was the European Congress of Nationalities founded in Geneva in 1925, with a view to providing a platform for non-dominant ethnic groups and lobbying the League of Nations on their behalf. This first 'transnational minority NGO' was composed of twenty-seven groups of ten nationalities based across twelve different states, and at its peak could claim to represent 27 million people (Housden 2007, 2013). The eventual metamorphosis of the Congress into a tool of expansionist nationalistic German politics by the mid-1930s did not just tarnish the reputation of the Congress, but also inflicted lasting damage on the whole idea of the transnational minority movement.

As already mentioned above, in the aftermath of World War Two the focus shifted from minority rights to individual human rights. Nevertheless, The Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), founded in 1948, portrayed itself on many occasions as the successor to the inter-war European Nationalities Congress. FUEN was established with the

aim of protecting and promoting the identity, language, culture, rights and 'own character' of the European minorities, and representing their interests at a regional, national and, in particular, European level. FUEN incorporates 90 member organizations in 32 countries as of 2014, and has participatory status at the Council of Europe and consultative status at the United Nations.

As observed by many commentators (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972; Horowitz 1985; Young 2004), interethnic cooperation burgeoned at the early stages of anticolonial movements in Africa, South America and South East Asia, only to break down into interethnic strife with the arrival of independence or shortly after: the Luo-Kikuyu alliance in Kenya, the Progressive Party uniting Africans and East Indians in Guyana, the Sinhalese-Tamil unity in Ceylon all belong in this category. The Malaysian Alliance Party, uniting Malays, Chinese, and Indians, lasted for twelve years after independence and seemingly promised to break the pattern – until the Chinese riots broke out in 1969.

The civil rights movement in the United States is a major landmark in the development of interethnic relations, inspiring a number of interracial and interethnic coalitions not just in the US, but also in other countries where discrimination on racial grounds was a salient issue. The most prominent alliance on the US soil was between the African American and the American Jewish communities – the proportion of Jews who were engaged in the struggle against racial segregation exceeded that of any other white ethnic group (Aronsfeld 1970; Salzman, Back and Sorn 1992; Adams and Bracey 1999; Bauman and Kalin 2007).

Jewish minority activism deserves, perhaps, a separate note; it is impossible to underestimate the impact of Zionism – an unprecedented, in its scope and ambition, national project of a universally oppressed minority – on the general movement for minority rights in the 20th century. The doctrine of Zionism strengthened Jewish collective identity and political consciousness, and united Jewish communities around the world in a common pursuit, prompting these communities to actively engage in a whole range of domestic and international issues, successfully implementing robust lobbying strategies, and making other minorities take notice. In addition, Jewish minority activists formed strategic partnerships with other ethnic groups both at domestic and international levels, as illustrated by the above-mentioned examples of the German-Jewish alliance of the interwar era, and the alliance of Black Americans and Jews in the United States during the civil rights movement.

Although the Black-Jewish alliance of the civil rights movement was remarkable in its nature, impressive in its achievements, and had a long-lasting effect on minority coalition movements far from the borders of the USA, it was also not long-lived. Disagreements between the two communities on affirmative action plans, on the politics of the state of Israel, as well as the rise of Black Power in the mid-1960s and the emergence of Black anti-Semitism effectively destroyed the alliance.

The collapse of the Soviet Bloc leading to the emergence of a new group of nation-states (and, inevitably, new national minorities) and the subsequent explosion of ethnic conflicts brought minority rights back to the fore, culminating in the adoption of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for National Minorities in 1995. The uneasy process of its ratification, not at all dissimilar to the protracted negotiations on minority treaties between the League of Nations and the then-new European states, not only highlighted the still uneasy relationship between nation-states and their minorities, but, serving as an overarching goal, stimulated minority activism and concerted interethnic action. The enlargement of the European Union, with its sharp focus on equality and anti-discrimination, and a vast, actively promoted pan-European network of civil rights organizations further contributed to the process. Recently, backlashes against increasing labour migration and asylum-seeking, and the rise of Islamophobia have prompted united statements and actions of protest by different ethnic organizations across many countries. One of the most recent examples of interethnic cooperation, in the light of the latest developments in Ukraine, is the collective stance taken by the Confederation of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Ukraine, VAAD, and the organization of Crimean Tartars *Mejlis* against the Russian aggression in Ukraine.[5]

## 2. Types of existing minority coalitions

As already mentioned above, the most important distinction between minority coalitions is based on their *membership criteria*, i.e. *intra*ethnic (uniting organizations representing the same ethnic group) and *inter*ethnic coalitions (uniting organizations representing different ethnic groups), or, again, in Putnam's (2000) terminology, *bonding* and *bridging*. Both can be formal or informal, and formed at local, state, regional, or international levels.

Both *intra*ethnic and *inter*ethnic coalitions thus may become *transnational* once they start crossing state borders. According to Kekk and Sikkink (1998), this 'externalization of contention' takes place when channels between the states and domestic actors are blocked,

and the latter bypass the state searching for international allies in order to bring outside pressure back on their states ('the boomerang effect').

Table 1: Examples of *intra*ethnic and *inter*ethnic minority coalitions.

| Ethnic Affiliation | Local | State | Regional | Global |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intraethnic | Indian Workers Association Southall (est. 1958)<br><br>Zimbabwe Association in Birmingham (est. 2001) | Council of the Jewish Communities of Latvia (est. 1995)<br><br>American Hungarian federation (est. 1906) | European Jewish Congress (EJC) (est. 1986)<br><br>Hungarian Standing Conference (MÁÉRT) (est. 1999) | International Romani Union (est. 1971)<br><br>World Jewish Congress (est. 1936) |
| Interethnic | Ayrshire Minority Ethnic Communities Association (AMECA) (est. 2007)<br><br>Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance (REMA) ( est. 2003) | Indian-Jewish Association UK (est. 1996)<br><br>Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDISEP) est. 1985)<br><br>Pastoralist Indigenous Forum (PINGOs) of Tanzania (est. 1994) | European Congress of Nationalities (1925-1938)<br><br>Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) (est. 1949)<br><br>Pan-African Congress (1900-1994)<br><br>Central American Indigenous Council (est. 1995) | World Congress of Finno-Ugric People (est. 1992)<br><br>International Indigenous Women's Forum (est. 1995) |

Secondly, minority coalitions can be distinguished by their *provenance*; this way we can distinguish between the *top-down* and *bottom-up* minority coalitions – in other words, between those organised on the initiative or under the auspices of the nation-state or international organizations, and those of grassroots origin, organised on minorities' own initiative:

Table 2. Examples of *top-down* and *bottom-up* minority coalitions.

| TOP-DOWN | BOTTOM-UP |
|---|---|
| The People's Association of Singapore (est. 1960)<br><br>The People's Assembly of Kazakhstan (est. 1995)<br><br>The European Roma and Travellers Forum (est. 2004 under the auspices of CoE) | Latvian Association of National Cultural Societies (LNKBA; est. 1988)<br><br>The Confederation of Indigenous People of Bolivia (est. 1982)<br><br>Indonesian Antidiscrimination Movement GANDI (est. 1998) |

Although it may seem logical to assume that grassroots minority coalitions are more authentic and carry more legitimacy (and indeed minority coalitions under the patronage of the state are frequently used for channelling ethnic mobilization into the safe confines of ethno-cultural activities, ultimately leading to the trivialization of ethnicity), state-sponsored minority coalitions are also used to address structural inequalities across different sectors of society (like in the case of Black and Ethnic Minority networks, also called BME or BAME, in the United Kingdom). State-sponsored coalitions are also used in an attempt to determine the appropriate representation of various ethnic groups when their leadership is internally contested.

Another distinction that may be drawn among minority coalitions is that of policy-neutral (i.e., aimed either at promoting cultural activities of a particular ethnic group/-s – most song, dance, and literary societies fall under this category – or claiming to 'strengthen ties' and 'foster friendship' between different cultures) and policy-specific minority coalitions. Policy-specific minority coalitions address different sectors of public policy, i.e. housing, health, education, gender, and age.

Table 3. Types of Policy-specific minority organizations.

| Organization | Type | Level | Public Policy Sector | Declared goal/description of activities |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Odu-Dua Housing Association, London (est. 1986) | Interethnic | Local | Housing | Provision of affordable housing for Black and Ethnic Minorities |
| Bath Ethnic Minority Senior Citizens Association (est. 1993) | Interethnic | Local | Health/Age | A Luncheon Club, information and advice service for Caribbean, Asian and Chinese elders. |
| Macedonian Interethnic Association (MIA) (est. 1996) | Interethnic | State | Health/Age | HIV/AIDS/STDS prevention among young people through information and awareness campaigns. |
| Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest (AIDISEP; est. 1985) | Interethnic | International | Climate Change | Preservation of the Amazonian rainforest. |
| World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Jews (est. 1980) | Intraethnic | Global | Gender/Sexual Orientation | Challenging homophobia and sexism within the Jewish community and aiming at achieving equality and security for LGBT Jews worldwide. |
| Pan-Asian Women's Association (PAWA) (est. 2009) | Interethnic | Regional | Gender/Education | Advancement of Asian women, in particular through strengthening girls' education in Asian countries. |

Professional alliances is yet another category of existing minority coalitions; these coalitions, as a rule, are confined to a single country's borders, most likely because of country-specific professional charters, and are particularly well developed in the United Kingdom and the United States. Organizations of this type often give a dual rationale for their existence, i.e. claiming to aid both the professionals and their target audience at the same time. For example, The National Coalition of Ethnic Minority Nurses (NCEMNA; UK; est. 1998) both provides support to ethnic nurses and endorses best nursing practices and medical research for ethnic minority populations.[6] The Ethnic Minority Lawyers' Division of the Law Society (EMLD; UK; est. 2015) aims to support ethnic minority solicitors on their career path

and to extend outreach to the ethnic minority populations they represent.[7] Similarly, the Society of Black Lawyers (SBL; UK; est. 1969) promotes equality and diversity within the legal profession while campaigning for minorities' access to legal system and justice.[8] The Asian Pacific American Librarian Association (APALA; USA; 1981) provides professional support to Asian Pacific American library workers and extends library services to Asian Pacific communities.[9] This duality reflects a widespread belief – not just among the minorities themselves, but also on the part of wider society as well – that an ethnic minority experiencing discrimination and lack of access to public services can be aided best by its co-ethnics. There are research studies that support this point of view (see, for example, Varshney 2002).

There is no universal agreement on definitions, but we may also distinguish between *short-term* and *long-term* minority coalitions (the latter are also often designated as *alliances*). Distinctions made by Horowitz (1985) between *coalitions of convenience* and *coalitions of commitment*, or, in an alternative formulation, *disjointed coalitions* and *shared-core coalitions* by Watts (1996: 41) are closely linked to the longevity of coalitions.[10] At times, coalitions also fall apart when they outlive their usefulness for a specific task as a result of the successful elevation of the issues initially perceived as narrow 'minority problems' to an altogether different level where they are recognised as problems affecting society as a whole, like in the case of CARD (see the case study below). Further comparative studies on ethnic minority coalitions would be useful in determining other possible factors affecting their stability.

This distinction can be applied to both minorities' social activism through voluntary organizations and to ethnic political coalition-building, i.e. ethnic minority parties forming coalitions with other minorities creating minority blocs within national parliaments and at the European Parliament, as well as forming coalitions with majority parties; or using their voting power to make bargains with the majority. Political coalition-building is a separate field of investigation that cannot be addressed within the confines of this paper; besides, there is an abundance of existing literature on ethnic voting. At the same time, this intersection between minority voluntary associations and ethnic political coalition-building seems to be a promising field of further investigation in its own right.

In any case, divisions among different types of ethnic minority organizations and coalitions demonstrate a high degree of fluidity and malleability: as mentioned above, *intra*ethnic organizations often serve as building blocks for *inter*ethnic coalitions; coalitions

of convenience become coalitions of commitment and then fall apart; and 'top-down'-organised minority organizations are transformed into true grassroots movements that in turn help bring about profound policy changes at the governmental level. The following example of a multi-ethnic, interracial alliance in the UK in the 1960s, with its multiple transformations, transnational connections, and the achieved long-lasting impact on related public policies provides a perfect illustration of such adaptability.

### 3. Case study: Committee Against Racial Discrimination, UK

The West Indian Standing Conference (WISC), an umbrella organization with the aim of promoting the interests of Afro-Caribbean minorities in Britain, was formed in 1959, in the wake of the Notting Hill riots. The standing conference was founded upon the initiative of the High Commission for the West Indies, which was pursuing a dual goal: to mollify the social unrest in the Caribbean caused by high rates of unemployment, in particular among ex-army servicemen, and to smooth the Afro-Caribbean immigration experience in the UK, where those immigrants were being met with growing hostility. Facing persistent racial discrimination and isolated from their white peers, those labour migrants were often contemplating possible return to their countries of origin and were focused on politics back at home rather than in their host country. A small number of advocacy organizations of local white activists petitioning on their behalf, without migrants' own participation, often turned for help to the High Commission, hence the Commission's involvement. The initial meetings of the Standing Conference took place at the Commission's premises. During the first two years of its existence, the Standing Conference was largely steered by the High Commission, who stressed the necessity of 'establishing good relations among races' and 'racial harmony' in the hope of pacifying the potentially militant tendencies of its charges both in the West Indies and in Britain. (Goulbourne 1990; Josephides 1990; Shukra 1998)

In 1962, after the break-up of the West Indies Federation, the High Commission folded. As a result of this collapse, of the dwindling prospects of going back home, and, perhaps more importantly, with the introduction of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act which curbed immigration and was widely perceived as an 'anti-colour' piece of legislation, the focus of the Standing Conference changed dramatically. Instead of concentrating on politics in the home countries while striving for 'racial peace' under white leadership, the Standing Conference shifted its attention to fighting discrimination in Britain. As a result, it

was transformed from an inward-looking ethnic community under state patronage into an active grassroots organization managed by ethnic minorities themselves.

The Indian Workers Association (IWA) dates back to 1938, when its first organization was established in Coventry. It was created in order to promote the welfare of Indians in Britain and to support the independence movement back home, with which the Association kept close ties (it was upon the advice of Jawaharlal Nehru himself that all local organizations were brought together into the Indian Workers Association of Great Britain in 1958). While initially the IWA concentrated on politics in India, and on social and cultural activities in Britain (both of these activities, it needs to be said, were accompanied by constant internal strife), the Immigration Act of 1962 made the IWA turn its attention to British politics instead. (Josephides 1990; Shukra 1998)

Also in 1962, two new interethnic organizations came into being: the Birmingham-based Coordination Committee Against Racial Discrimination (CCARD), a federation including the Pakistani Workers' Association and the West Indian Association; and the Conference of Afro-Asian-Caribbean Organizations in London (CAACO).

All of the aforementioned organizations joined forces in 1964 to create the CARD, or the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination. Inspired by Martin Luther King's visit to London, CARD envisioned itself as a multi-ethnic, multi-racial body independent of all political parties, lobbying for a broad anti-discrimination legal framework. Apparently, attempts were made to involve the Jewish community, who had a reputation for successful lobbying (the cooperation between the Black and the Jewish communities in the US could have been an inspiration as well), and certain Jewish lobbyists were approached for consultations, but the matter did not advance further. As bitterly reflected in the WISC's mission statement, 'The WISC soon realised that the Jewish community was staying away because the focus of the white racist bigots had moved from the Jewish community to people who were contained in the castles of black skin.'[11]

The most prominent figure in the CARD leadership was David Pitt, the first black Labour party candidate to stand for election in 1959 (at that point - unsuccessfully); he would later become a life peer in the House of Lords as Baron Pitt of Hampstead. Pitt agreed, without consulting other leaders, to join the statutory government board The National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants. The IWA and WISC accused him of selling out to the government and of using his position in CARD for recruiting West Indian voters to the

Labour Party; in the end, both organizations disaffiliated, and by 1967, CARD had all but ceased to exist.

CARD is widely regarded as an attempt to create a civil rights movement in the United Kingdom. And although its lifespan was even shorter than that of its American counterparts, it remains a remarkable example of minority coalition-building across ethnic and racial lines that had long-term consequences for racial relations and for the campaign against racial discrimination in the UK. For one thing, CARD was largely credited with the final passing of the 1965 Race Relations Act, which in turn gave rise to the Race Relations Board – a national body that would later be transformed into the Commission for Racial Equality. (Heineman 1972; Josephides 1990; Shukra 1998; Warmington 2014)

The example of CARD clearly demonstrates that there is no 'preferable', or 'optimal' model of the organization of minority coalitions. Both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' models are equally instrumental, and they play different roles at different stages of coalition-building. Moreover, as weak domestic and international actors lacking basic resources, without at least some support from both nation-states and international organizations, minority coalitions will always struggle both at home, and especially at the international arena. This is explored further in the following section.

## 4. Minority coalitions, nation-states and international organizations

It has by now become apparent that although a variety of interethnic and interracial minority coalitions come to life on a regular basis, and although many of them manage to make a serious impact on both domestic and international policies, the majority of them simply do not last very long. It would be misleading, however, to attribute their relatively short lifespan and fragility exclusively to the previously mentioned divergence of minority interests and the intense competition among them, although these undoubtedly play a role. These can result in the lack of an equal footing, real or perceived, between the coalition partners. Such was the case, by the admittance of many participants, of the Black-American and Jewish cooperation during the civil rights movement in the USA. For example, the Jewish author Albert Vorspan, one of the leaders of American Reform Judaism, recalled: 'We Jews did a great deal *for* black people, and this is precisely the point. …In the fight for equality for blacks, we were the superior people. This was no relationship of peer to peer, equal to equal, powerful group to powerful group.'[12] The same sentiment was succinctly expressed by

another civil rights activist, the black American author Julius Lester: 'Jews consider themselves liberals. Blacks consider them paternalistic'.[13]

But by far the most significant stumbling block in the way of ethnic minority coalitions is their overall lack of resources, both financial and institutional. Minority organizations are, by their very nature, weak domestic and international players. In terms of funding, membership fees can scarcely cover overheads (if at all), and most minority organizations have to rely on private and public donations, state and kin-state support where available, as well as on the backing of international organizations in the form of project, conference, and travel grants. This basic lack of funding does not just weaken minority organizations and coalitions by necessarily limiting their scope of action; it also puts them at risk of undue ideological influence and manipulation on the part of their financial donors; as well as threatens the equal standing of coalition members. The international organizations, such as the European Union, United Nations, Council of Europe and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe are, at least in theory, best positioned to provide financial and other assistance to minority coalitions while preserving impartiality and abstaining from exercising undue influence.

Minority coalitions do not depend on nation-states and international organizations for funding alone; in order to survive, they also need to be acknowledged and thus 'legitimised' by the nation-state and international society, the latter being of paramount importance. Nation-states can, for various reasons, refuse to recognise minority organizations and coalitions, and they often do so in practice – but in that case, minorities still have the recourse of internationalising this domestic contention (this internationalization of domestic discontent is, in fact, one of the primary drivers of transnational coalitions). Being refused recognition by international organizations puts much harder pressure on minority coalitions; although, judging by the ultimately positive experience of FUEN, who could not get a 'seat at the table' at either United Nations or Council of Europe for decades, while being simultaneously shunned by some of the nation-states, minority coalitions are capable of withstanding this kind of double pressure, albeit at a significant cost while struggling to preserve internal unity and ideological integrity.[14]

Acknowledgement (or lack of it) by international organizations also redefines the relations between transnational coalitions and their respective states. Tarrow (2001) sees international institutions as 'coral reefs' that help to form horizontal connections among transnational activists with similar claims. According to him, international institutions

‘provide political opportunities for weak domestic social actors, encouraging their connections with others like themselves and offering resources that can be used in intranational and transnational conflict’ through four mechanisms, namely brokerage (i.e., connecting otherwise unconnected actors), certification (acknowledgement of the identities and legitimization of activities), modelling (adoption of norms and forms of collective action demonstrated elsewhere), and institutional appropriation (usage of an institution’s resources and/or reputation by affiliated groups) (Tarrow 2001).

According to Gupta (2008), the EU interacts with transnational movements in a variety of ways, ‘ranging from patron to adversary’. Gupta, building on Tarrow’s work, identifies five key mechanisms of this interaction (brokerage, certification, de-certification, resource transfer, and displacement) that ultimately ‘alters the terms on which movements and states meet’, while stressing that it can have both positive and negative consequences for those movements who chose to take advantage of it. (Gupta 2008)

Yet other scholars draw our attention to the ways the project of European integration alters the strategies and ideological claims of both nationalist and minority movements, making them less likely to threaten democratic stability (Csergo and Goldgeier 2004; Keating 2004). Soysal (2000) observes that Muslim groups in Europe, while claiming an aim of furthering particularistic identities and solidarities, appeal to the universalistic principles of human rights, thus ceasing to be purely self-referential and reflecting ‘larger scripts of rights and personhood’. She posits that ‘the particularistic identities and claims we encounter today are inevitable outcomes of the universalistic principles to which we firmly adhere’ (Soysal 2000: 10).

## 5. Studying ethnic minority coalitions: conclusions

The examples above demonstrate that minority coalition-building within and across nation-states dates back at least to the 19th century, and has continued, since, to proliferate around the globe. It is also abundantly clear, that, contrary to Mill’s bleak predictions, ethnic minorities have proven themselves capable of not just identifying the overarching goals and strategic opportunities for cooperation and forming successful coalitions within and across states, but also of joining forces on purely ideological grounds for the sake of, in the words of Carole Fink (2004), ‘defending the rights of others’.

The sheer diversity among different types of ethnic minority organizations and their alliances, their ubiquitous presence, as well as the diversity of policy issues they seek to address against a variety of constitutional setups and legal backgrounds, the impact of their activities on changing the status quo of ethnic relations at both the nation-state and international levels, their contribution to the processes of equal participation and society democratization, as well as the aforementioned transformation of their strategies and ideological claims in response to the project of European integration would seem to make them a compelling object of study. Nevertheless, ethnic minority coalitions remain largely ignored by ethnic, migration, and diaspora studies alike, partly because of the persistent paradigm of studying ethnic relations in a binary majority-minority mode within the rigid methodological constraints of the nation-state; and partly due to the stubborn negative stereotypes surrounding ethnically-based collective action.

But does studying minority coalition-building bring along the dangers of the 'essentialization' and 'reification' of ethnicity, of which we have been recently repeatedly warned? Can it be charged with 'groupism', which Brubaker describes as a 'tendency to treat ethnic groups, nations, and races as substantial entities to which interests and agency can be ascribed' (Brubaker 2004: 8)?

Without disputing the numerous traps a researcher can fall into by failing to distinguish between individual and collective types of agency, or by disregarding representation and accountability issues, or mistaking other types of collective action, such as class action, for a purely ethnic phenomenon – traps that can be best avoided by awareness and by using proper methodological tools – the author does not believe that studying ethnic coalitions must necessarily lead to the reification of ethnicity, but rather to a better understanding of the persistence of organizations based upon ethnic membership, the reasons behind their creation, their goals, their modes of operation, and the impact of their activities on politics within the nation-state and internationally.

As for groupism, groups, just like ethnicity, have been getting a lot of bad publicity of their own – the most persistent charges being 'deindividuation' and 'groupthink' (Buys 1978). But as tartly observed by Brown (1988), most pressing issues of modernity, from environmental problems to racism and international conflicts, involve groups of some kind, and if the social sciences hope to make a contribution to the resolution of these problems, this will not come 'from the insights derived from a psychology of the isolated individual but from the informed application of group processes' (Brown 1988: viii).

Ethnic organizations and coalitions remain an incredibly popular mode of organised social action around the world, and a powerful social force. Milton Esman once made an excellent observation that while one might deplore the activation of ethnic solidarities and wish they would disappear in favour of respect accorded to an individual, 'there is little to gain by assuming an Olympian stance that dismisses ethnic solidarities as illegitimate and the concerns and behaviour of its participants as absurd and irrational (Esman 1994: 266). Ethnic activism around the world, if anything, is on the rise – quite contrary to the numerous predictions of its imminent demise due to the processes of modernization, globalization, and European integration. More importantly, as discussed above, these very processes fundamentally alter both the aims of ethnically mobilised movements, and the strategies they employ to achieve them. Minority organizations based on ethnic affiliation do not necessarily, and certainly not at all times, pursue exclusively ethnic goals – most of the time, in fact, they use ethnic mobilization in order to activate, to quote Soysal (2000) yet again, those 'larger scripts of rights and personhood' that are intrinsic to liberal democratic societies. *Intra*ethnic minority coalitions, as discussed above, are particularly important for this transition from ethnic particularism to universal values. Giving them the cold shoulder simply out of fear of reifying and essentialising ethnicity, while ignoring their actual contribution to equal participation and democratization processes in ethnically diverse societies, seems like a folly. Rather, paraphrasing a famous philosopher, ask not what it is called, but what it is for.

**Notes**

[1] The more recent transnationalist approach to migration takes into account 'multi-stranded social relations' linking together migrants' 'sending' and 'receiving' societies, while recognizing that migrants may also turn to supranational and international bodies in order to advance their interests (Bauböck 2003; Faist, Fauser and Reisenauer 2013).
[2] With the notable exception of North American scholarship, where these relationships are usually defined on an interracial basis, and are often studied against urban settings (Phillips 1991; Sonenshein 1993; Rich 1996; Jones-Correa 2001).
[3] Although a predominantly Jewish organization, AIU had an open membership policy – Alexandre Dumas *fils* was famously a member.
[4] As quoted in Mendelsohn (1983: 136).
[5] 'EAJC Representatives Speak on Ukrainian Situation in Germany', Euro-Asian Jewish Congress, http://eajc.org/page84/news44433.html
[6] 'About NCEMNA', National Coalition of Ethnic Minority Nurses Association, http://www.ncemna.org/about.htm . Retrieved April 29, 2015.
[7] 'Law Society Launches Ethnic Minority Division', the Law Society, http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/news/press-releases/law-society-launches-emld . Retrieved April 29, 2015.
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[9] 'About APALA', Asian Pacific American Librarians Association, http://www.apalaweb.org/about . Retrieved April 29, 2015.

[10] A rough working definition of the *coalition of convenience* would be 'a short-term pursuit of a common goal, or a joined response to a common threat (real or perceived), for purely strategic reasons, and without sharing an ideological base'. A *coalition of commitment*, on the other hand, would be when parties pursue a common goal, have overlapping interests, and share a basic ideological platform.
[11] 'Mission Statement', West Indian Standing Conference, http://www.wisc.btck.co.uk/MissionStatement . Retrieved April 29, 2015.
[12] As quoted in Aronsfeld, C. C. (1970: 10)
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] Nowadays, FUEN has participatory status at the Council of Europe and consultative status at the United Nations, as well as is a member of European Civil Society Platform of the European Commission and a participant in its Fundamental Rights Platform. For earlier FUEN history, and its difficult path toward recognition, see Kühl 2000 and Hoch-Jovanovic 2014.

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# Trans-Ethnic Organizational Settings: Roads to Explanation

Alexander Osipov*

*ECMI, Germany*

The article analyses trans-ethnic organizational settings (TOS) – multi-ethnic non-governmental organizations, autonomous parts of the public sector or recurrent organized practices designed for the promotion of inter-ethnic accord and communication between ethnicities and public authorities. Most of these low-profile power-sharing arrangements have been established in the post-Soviet countries, and they range from a statehood resting on the very idea of multi-ethnic coalition (breakaway Transnistria) to official or semi-official 'assemblies of peoples' (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia) and coordinative bodies for minority NGOs (Belarus and some provinces of Ukraine). The constant features of all these settings are the patronizing involvement of the state and the principle of inter-ethnic cooperation which justifies and guides all the related activities. The author investigates why TOS as a rule exhibit durability and a high level of popular support combined with a lack of explicit state compulsion and resistance from minority rank-and-file despite the fact that TOS provide virtually no assets and opportunities to ethnic groups involved. Several mutually compatible explanations rest on discarding the view of ethnic groups as internally cohesive social entities and independent actors, and can be looped into two categories, namely discursive accommodation and institutional cooptation of ethnic activism.

**Keywords**: multi-ethnicity, activism, hegemony, securitization, banalization, neo-patrimonialism, patronage

Viability and internal cohesion of multi-ethnic societies are issues of global importance from both a theoretic and a practical standpoint. Most scholars prefer to place the primary focus on the relations between collective or corporate entities (often labeled as 'communities') acting

* Alexander Osipov is Senior Research Associate at the European Centre for Minority Issues. Email: osipov@ecmi.de.

and speaking on behalf of certain ethnicities.[1] 'Participation in public life' is, as a rule, confined to the 'voice' that ethnicities may be endowed with in public domain, and constitutes the core of minority studies and minority politics.

Most of the ideas fitting in the dominant paradigm of 'inter-group' or 'majority-minority' relations and seeking practical solutions are tagged as 'power-sharing' which generally means that '…in multiethnic societies divided into different linguistic, religious, or national communities, power-sharing institutions and procedures turn political opponents into cooperative partners, by providing communal leaders with a guaranteed stake in the democratic process' (Norris, 2008: 3).

Over the time, there is an incremental reconsideration of the boundaries and the content of this thematic area. 'Power-sharing is often promoted by the international community and involves a broad assortment of practices' (Traniello, 2008: 31). First, it is being gradually acknowledged that cooperation across ethnic dividing lines is important beyond the scope of narrowly understood government and politics (Norris, 2008: 5). Second, a growing number of scholars in fact follow the appeal of Carmen Kettley and acknowledge that existing practices are even more important and deserve more attention than comprehensive but rarely fully functional normative models (2002). From this perspective, it makes little sense to draw a clear dividing line between 'self-rule' and 'shared rule' or in assessing advantages of 'segmental autonomy' over 'coalition-based' institutions (Van Parijs, 2000) since real practices can combine features of the both.

Third, checks and balances on ethnic grounds are important in non-democratic environments, along with polities based on democratic participation. The variety of organizational frameworks or practices based on the interaction of ethnicity-based collective agents are variously termed in academia and politics as 'participation', 'integration', 'intercultural dialogue',[2] 'reconciliation' and so forth, and the concrete approaches reflect the context and emphasize different aspects of the issue.

Despite contextual and terminological peculiarities, the sustainability and effectiveness of such inter-ethnic settings pose a significant research and practical interest. From the former standpoint, it is important to understand the motives of ethnic activists seeking alliances beyond their own constituencies and the conditions for such interactions; from the latter, it is worthwhile to know what kinds of institutional designs and what circumstances can bring

about the desired outcomes, such as a clear choice in favour of political stability and social cohesion.

There are other, more specific circumstances that may also stimulate scholarly and practical interest towards the cooperation of individuals and organizations positioning themselves as agents of ethnic groups. On the one hand, there is the widely spread suspicion towards segregated institutions which sustain, reinforce and institutionalize ethnic cleavages (Barry, 2001; Sniderman and Hagendoorn, 2007); from this point, inter-ethnic coalitions may represent a promising solution even in an already internally divided society. On the other, durable coalitions and their organizational underpinnings may provide some clear content for the still nebulous concepts of 'intercultural dialogue' or 'interculturalism' (Meer and Modood, 2012).

In this respect, analytical attention shall be primarily focused on the organizations and recurrent practices of inter-ethnic cooperation that demonstrate long-lasting stability and legitimacy. Such phenomena exist, and interestingly, there is an array of formal organizations and/or recurrent organized activities that have manifested themselves over the last two decades. Most of them, which I will hereafter call 'trans-ethnic organizational settings' (TOS; hereafter taken in plural), are concentrated in post-Soviet countries. They demonstrate three invariable features:

(1) patronizing involvement of the state;

(2) the principle of inter-ethnic cooperation which justifies and guides all the related activities;

(3) involvement of ethnic spokespersons or ethnicity-based organizations as the major actors.

It should be stressed that they not be confused with effectively multi-ethnic organizations, which disregard or transcend ethnic divisions in their activities and promote non-ethnic solidarity.

## 1. TOS – a variety of manifestations

TOS range from a statehood resting on the very idea of multi-ethnic coalition to recurrent collaborative activities of NGOs. In detail, the spectrum includes:

- statehood based on the idea of inter-ethnic coalition (unrecognized Transnistria);

- consultative and representative multi-ethnic assemblies with mandatory institutional membership as a part of state apparatus (Kazakhstan, Belarus);
- semi-official consultative and representative multi-ethnic assemblies - NGOs orchestrated and controlled by governments (Russia, Kyrgyzstan);
- multi-ethnic consultative bodies (Russia, Moldova, Ukraine as well as Croatia, Serbia, Romania);
- voluntary organizational coalitions of ethnic NGOs encouraged by official authorities (Ukraine, Georgia);
- recurrent joint activities of multiple ethnic NGOs or individuals acting on behalf of groups (festivals, exhibitions, conferences, mass-media).

### *1.1 Transnistria*

Transnistria is a strip of land basically on the left (eastern) bank of the river Dniester/Nistru. From 1940 it was a part of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic, a constituent unit of the Soviet Union. Nowadays in terms of international law it is a part of Republic of Moldova; in fact it is an unrecognized state called Transnistrian Moldovan Republic (TMR) and a territory beyond control of the central government. TMR was established as a result of a domestic conflict which emerged in 1989 due to the 'nationalizing policies' of the Moldovan government (Roper, 2001: 106-107; Kolstø and Malgin, 1998; Troebst, 2003: 438–440). The predominantly Russian-speaking elites and the population of that part of Moldova protested against the government's plan to make Moldovan/Romanian the only state language of the republic. In September 1990, the protests escalated, resulting in the establishment of the Transnistrian Republic as independent from Moldova but still a part of the USSR; after the Soviet Union's breakdown and armed clashes with Moldovan police and armed forces, TMR proved its viability as a *de facto* independent albeit internationally unrecognized state. International mediation and lengthy negotiations with Moldovan central government on Transnistrian reintegration have brought about no significant outcome (Burian, 2012: 29–39; Lisenco, 2012: 43–47; Popescu, 2013).

The approximately 500,000-strong population of TMR[3] is multi-ethnic, and no ethnicity prevails numerically. Each of the three major ethnic groups, namely Moldovans, Ukrainians and Russians, constitutes around 30 per cent of the population; the rest belongs to smaller groups such as Bulgarians, Tatars, the Gagauz, Roma, Jews and so forth. Despite the ethnic

eponym in the name of the republic,[4] TMR from its very outset represented itself as an entity established on the basis of multi-ethnic citizenry and 'internationalism' contrary to the ethno-national fundamentals of Moldova (Blakkisrud and Kolstø; Cojocaru, 2006; Troebst, 2003). Accordingly, the Transnistrian problem cannot be adequately described in terms of ethnic conflict because the dividing lines in Moldova do not go along ethnic or linguistic boundaries (Troebst, 2004; King, 1999: 147, 179; Kolstø, 2006: 730).

The 1996 Constitution of TMR (Article 8) refers to 'relations between national [ethnic] communities' that are to be regulated by the state on the basis of their 'equality' and 'respect towards their rights and interests'.[5] The Constitution and the Law on Languages establish Russian, Moldovan and Ukrainian as three equal official languages. Multi-ethnicity of Transnistria is emphasized in the state symbols as well as official and other public ceremonies such as holiday celebrations, in school and university curricula and textbooks, and in museum expositions and publicly sponsored cultural performances (Biaspamiatnykh et al., 2014: 178-80). Indirectly the multi-ethnicity is reinforced through official multilingualism, particularly broadcasting in Moldovan and Ukrainian along with Russian, compulsory teaching of the official languages in schools, and the right to communicate with the official authorities in each of the official languages (Biaspamiatnykh et al., 2014: 179). However, no one either in or outside TMR denies that Russian dominates the entire public sphere and the other two official languages as well as minority languages are gradually being extinguished (Hammarberg, 2013: 35).

Although the state symbolically recognized the constitutive role of the three major 'communities', power-sharing manifests itself symbolically. Persons belonging to the three major groups are represented in the legislature and the executive; they may speak out as members of their respective 'communities' only on random occasions, particularly when they act as members of the major ethnic NGOs (Biaspamiatnykh et al., 2014: 180). Ethnicity-based parties are not allowed; the three communities are represented by country-wide associations of Moldovans, Ukrainians and Russians (Protsyk, 2012: 179). The three associations are not vested with any official functions, but they are in part funded from the state budget and receive other assets from the government. This means they are totally loyal to the authorities and as a rule perform as legitimate spokespersons of their 'nationalities'; their members are among the parliamentarians, top officials and leading businesspeople of TMR (Biaspamiatnykh et al., 2014: 180; Protsyk, 2009).

### *1.2. Government-led coordinative bodies*

The largest and most significant cluster of TOS is the so-called 'assemblies of peoples'. Organizations bearing the same name of 'assembly' sometimes function in different ways. The Assembly of People of Kazakhstan (hereinafter - APK; before 2007 - the Assembly of Peoples of Kazakhstan) is a special body created by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, who is *ex officio* the APK chair (Baybasheva, 2008: 33; Dave, 2004: 83-100; Shaimerdenova, 1997: 16). The status of the Assembly is protected by the Kazakh Constitution (Article 44) and it operates under a special law.[6] The Assembly is composed of 350 members who are representatives of ethnic and civil society associations, various state officials and public figures acting in their personal capacity.[7] Each province of Kazakhstan also has its Small Assembly of People which also operates under the heads of regional administrations. Candidates to the main APK are nominated by those provincial Small Assemblies upon recommendations of ethnicity-based NGOs and other civil society organizations, and are then appointed by the President of Kazakhstan. Officially, the major objectives of APK are to elaborate proposals for public policies that take into account the interests of all ethnic groups, and also to facilitate and promote social dialogue to preserve the unity of the people of Kazakhstan. The agenda and working plans for APK are officially defined by its chair.

The Belarusian Consultative Inter-Ethnic Council (CIEC) functions under the Plenipotentiary on Religious and Nationalities Affairs, who is a member of the Belarusian government appointed by the President.[8] Being an official body composed of appointees, CIEC resembles the APK, but unlike the Kazakhstani Assembly, CIEC includes only heads of national minority associations. It is stipulated that one ethnic group has only one representative council and the Plenipotentiary's office makes the appointment only when all NGOs speaking on behalf of a certain group have agreed on their common nominee. In addition, organizations represented in CIEC commit themselves to regard all decisions of the Council as binding. In addition to making recommendations to the government of Belarus on ethnic issues, CIEC plans and coordinates joint activities of the national-cultural societies and makes decisions on the distribution of public grants and subsidies for ethno-cultural projects of the non-governmental sector.

### *1.3. Pro-official interethnic coalitions*

The Assembly of Peoples of Russia (hereinafter – APR) is a nation-wide non-governmental organization established in 1998.[9] The very idea of the Assembly as a kind of inter-ethnic parliament and even an annex to the supreme legislative body was discussed since the early 1990s (Drobizheva, 2003: 29; Guboglo, 1999: 117-118), and was even mentioned in the 1996 Concept of State Nationalities Policy of the Russian Federation. Despite its pretentious name, APR is simply a voluntary association with no public powers or functions, although it works in close cooperation with the government. APR also receives public support, including funding, and is often referred to by high-ranked public officials as an important tool in the management of ethnic relations in Russia.

There are also dozens of 'peoples' assemblies' in a number of Russian regions. Many of them appeared before the federal APR (for instance, in Yakutia in 1994, and in the Saratov province - in 1997)[10], and for the most part the creation of those organizations was initiated by the regional governments.[11] At present, all regional 'assemblies' are considered regional branches of APR, but not all regional offices of APR are named 'assemblies'. According to the APR website, the organization includes over 70 regional offices; all regional assemblies are also non-governmental organizations, which includes representatives of ethnic ('national-cultural' in Russian terminology) societies.[12] Nominally all the 'assemblies' claim to represent ethnic groups, but until recently the lengthy debates about the ways to achieve 'genuine' and 'legitimate' representation have generated no satisfactory output. As a rule, governing bodies of the assemblies are formed at their congresses, and delegates of the latter are selected under mixed and complicated principles.

The Assembly of People of Kyrgyzstan has been established in 1994 under the country's President's auspices as a non-governmental organization; to date it is composed of 28 nation-wide minority associations under the principle 'one minority – one member', and four multi-ethnic social organizations. The organization defines its major goals as consolidation of Kyrgyzstan's people through inter-ethnic dialogue, facilitation of cultural activities, and co-ordination of minority communities' public initiatives. Although the Assembly is a non-governmental association, several ministers (ministers of culture, education, youth affairs; Director of the Public Management Academy under the President; Director of the State Cadre Service and Chair of the Language Board) are considered members of its Council *ex officio*.[13]

### *1.4. Consultative bodies*

Another group is constituted by consultative bodies on ethnic issues. Moldova has a national Coordinative Council of National Minorities – a consultative body on minority issues composed of around 100 ethnic NGOs under the governmental Bureau for Inter-ethnic Relations.[14] The Council of National Minorities of Georgia functions under the auspices of the Public Defender (Ombudsman).[15] Several territories of Ukraine (such as the Odessa or Chernivtsy provinces) and constituent regions of the Russian Federation have established minority consultative councils under their governments or executive bodies in charge of ethno-cultural affairs. They all are composed of appointed representatives of ethnic NGOs plus governmental officials dealing with ethnic issues. As a rule, these bodies are expected to provide consultancy for the executive, but as a rule they are also expected to arrange for joint events of NGOs (such as conferences, festivals and exhibitions mostly held under the banner of 'inter-ethnic dialogue') and to coordinate NGO activities.

To sum up, due to the ways TOS are functioning and are publicly justified as organizations, there is neither a clear dividing line between TOS composed of minority organizations and TOS comprising individuals serving as minority spokespersons, nor a clear difference between, on the one hand, consultative bodies providing for the communication between the governments and minority activists, and, on the other hand, councils authorized to coordinates minorities' activities.

### *1.5. Recurrent activities*

Recurrent joint activities carried out on behalf of different ethnicities independent of certain consultative or coordinative bodies also take place; the most prominent is the Republican Festival of Nationalities' Cultures arranged by the government of Belarus since 1996.[16] The festivals are held in early summer in Hrodna every two years. A festival in a strict sense – that is, as a large standalone event involving thousands of participants and guests – is the tip of the iceberg; it is preceded by an almost two-year long process of competitions among folklore groups and selecting procedures. The competitions are carried out in four rounds (at local, district, provincial and national levels) and four nominations are held throughout the entire country, arranged by the Ministry of Culture and regional departments of culture. The main rationales of the whole process are the promotion of nationalities' cultures in Belarus and the harmonization of ethnic relations through positive representation of cultural pluralism. It is noteworthy that the organizers do not distinguish between 'minorities' and 'immigrants', or

even between the 'majority' and all the rest – all ethnicities and cultures are treated on equal footing. Minority cultural festivals are also organized by the government of Moldova on an annual basis, and also by some regional administrations in Ukraine and Russia.

### *1.6. Voluntary umbrella organizations*

One could also add to the list voluntary umbrella organizations of different minority NGOs, which also exist – or used to exist – at national and provincial levels. Usually they are short-lived; among the few exceptions is the Georgian NGO coalition - the Association 'Multinational Georgia'.[17] One of the first coalitions of this type, the Association of National Cultural Societies of Latvia was established in 1988 and is still functional to date. Although these umbrella organizations are independent, their actual affiliation with or the patronizing involvement of mainstream parties or official bodies can be also traced. 'Multinational Georgia', although often critical of the government, generally seeks to work in close association with the consultative body under the Ombudsman's office. The Association of National Cultural Societies of Latvia was established before the Soviet Union's breakdown, under the auspices of the major oppositional movement at that time – the Latvian Popular Front – which was seeking a counterbalance to the anti-nationalist, pro-Moscow movement of the Russian-speaking population of the constituent republic of the USSR.[18] Currently the Association is officially under the patronage of the Latvian Cultural Ministry. Umbrella organizations of this type claim to be a vehicle for interethnic dialogue and representation of ethnic minorities before the authorities and the mainstream societies at large.

## 2. What is puzzling about TOS?

If one assumes that activities on behalf of an ethnic group embody group agency and are driven by rational choice of group members who seek to maximize the gains their own group can achieve, then the listed settings and practices look contradictory.

Multi-ethnic settings provide somewhat dubious access to material resources. While the APK, the Assembly of Kyrgyzstan and CIEC are publicly funded, Russian assemblies depend on private donors, and to a lesser degree on governmental subsidies, while public subsidies are selective and not guaranteed. In Russia, direct contributions of public authorities are mainly confined to the provision of free of charge or low rent premises for minority organizations (usually at the regional level there are special public institutions called 'House

of Peoples Friendship' or 'House of Nationalities'), or involve TOS as junior partners in the preparation of cultural events (such as festivals, exhibitions and conferences). Private financial sponsorship is irregular and often takes place at the initiative of or under pressure from public authorities.

In other words, the governments do not distribute any significant funding[19] through TOS on a regular basis. In cases when it does occur, the people and organizations posing as ethnic community representatives either don't make decisions on the money distribution (the APK, which is a governmental unit, spends the budgetary funds for itself) or receive insignificant and insufficient funding for the maintenance of their functioning (as with the Belarusian CIEC). One of the few success stories is the Assembly of Peoples of Tatarstan in Russia, which functions on the basis of the state institution 'House of Peoples of Tatarstan' and gets public funding through this channel. The Assembly of Peoples of Tatarstan runs language courses (Nabiullina, 2012: 287; Sagitova, 2011: 504). The establishment and maintenance of cultural and educational subsidiaries is a rare exception. The Assembly of Peoples of Russia contributed to the making of a non-governmental House of Peoples' Friendship in Moscow in the early 2000s, which comprised of a museum, a theater and a library (Dom, 2006). This endeavor was funded by private donors, and by 2009 funding had faded away.

The next issue is representation and participation in public decision making. The largest amount of power has been formally granted to the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan. APK selects nine MPs, members of the Parliament's lower chamber (out of 107), and takes part in drafting laws and executive regulations which concern minorities or ethnic relations (Musabaeva, 2011; Zhakaeva, 2009). The role of the Belarusian CIEC is particularly noteworthy. Among other things, it makes decisions about the distribution of public subsidies for the projects of national-cultural societies, and also makes recommendations on granting tax exempt status to ethnic NGOs. Although formally the final decisions on both issues are to be made by the Plenipotentiary on Religions and Nationalities Affairs, CIEC recommendations are always fulfilled. Beyond these cases, there are no examples of important legislative or political initiatives coming out of 'assemblies' or similar TOS; nor have there been any advocacy or protest campaigns. There have been no examples of TOS involvement contributing to a change in the government's stances. There is also no evidence of bargaining between the governments and TOS; rather, TOS activities as a rule on the surface look like

rituals of consent with the governmental policies (keeping in mind that Transnistria is a *de facto* statehood itself).

One can say that people and organizations participating in TOS can really gain some symbolic representation of their ethnicities in public space; other benefits are not visible while formal and informal restrictions imposed by the patronizing state authorities must limit or deny the opportunities which the constituencies may otherwise possess. Surprisingly enough, although the post-Soviet TOS impose limitations on ethnic activities, there has been virtually no dissent and public criticism of the assemblies, consultative bodies and similar settings on the side of ethnic activists, or any attempts to quit and create alternative organizational settings. Moreover, all the TOS enjoy a high degree of legitimacy within their societies and receive almost exclusively positive comments in mass-media and academic publications (Abdulatipov, 2007; Turetskii, 2009).

To sum up, the post-Soviet TOS, despite their presumably impracticability for ethnic activists in terms of maximizing gains for their respective groups, exhibit durability, a high level of popular support and the lack of resistance and criticism from minority rank-and-file. The easiest explanation would be the authoritarian environment in Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, and minority-unfriendly regimes of 'ethnic control' in other post-Soviet countries. This explanation seems legitimate but insufficient, because in the early 1990s, in a more liberal environment, minority activists in Russia and Kazakhstan demonstrated the same modes of behavior in the meaning that they swore allegiance to the official nation-building agendas and were seeking subordination to governmental patronage in the same way. In other cases, one may expect that there might be criticism on a part of minority activists toward unconditional collaboration with the governments.

Transnistria also represents a striking example. TMR is ruled by an authoritarian regime (Caspersen, 2011: 79–80; Lisenco, 2012: 43; Protsyk, 2009; Troebst, 2003); however, some scholars argue that it would be more correct to refer to it as a 'hybrid' or as a combination of authoritarian and democratic techniques of governance, with some degree of political competition and a high turnover of elite members (Protsyk, 2009; 2012). The case of so-called Latin-script Moldovan schools demonstrates that resistance, at least in a non-political sphere, is possible. The Transnistrian legislation acknowledges the Moldovan language only with Cyrillic script as an official language, while public usage of Moldovan with another script (i.e. the language as it is used in Moldova) is prohibited and punishable in terms of law

(Biaspamiatnykh, 2014: 178). In the early 1990s, some of the Moldovan-language schools and a large group of the pupils' parents opted for teaching with Latin script. Eight Latin script schools with approximately 1,200 pupils have survived to date as private and sometimes officially non-recognized educational institutions. These schools, their principals and the pupils' parents experienced various forms of intimidation and administrative pressure, but they have withstood (The Moldovan-Administered, 2012). Nevertheless, these schools remain the only example of resistance in the ethno-cultural sphere, as evidenced by the gradual extinction of all languages other than Russian – although the existing 'rules of the game' allow the Transnistrian elite members to raise linguistic issues without encroaching on the fundamentals of the TMR politics. This does not happen except for individual public grievances of non-Russian elite members.[20]

## 3. Ways of explanation

The phenomena can be explained under the condition of discarding a mute assumption currently dominating all currents and branches of ethnic studies. The said assumption can be briefly described as the existence of collective ethnic agency ultimately underpinning all activities represented as ethnicity-motivated. This means that there must be 'genuine' community interests predetermined by the need to preserve the group 'identity' (taken as given) and to maximize resources (including political participation) available for the group. To phrase it in a simplistic way, ethnic activism may either develop in the pursuit of 'correct' group needs or be 'false', imposed by an exogenous force or egoist individual strategies. 'Genuine' activism has advantages over the 'false' activism, and must ultimately overcome due to the change of political circumstances or competition of leaders and their stances within the group. When this prediction does not come true (as in this case, given that post-Soviet TOS are at odds with collective needs of ethnic groups in terms of resource maximization), this raises questions.

If one assumes that ethnicity means a way of social categorization and representation, the phenomena of TOS can be interpreted from two mutually compatible perspectives which can be conditionally called discursive accommodation and institutional cooptation. There are two major approaches, but the discursive one comprises three elements, and thus one may talk about four roads to explanation.

### *3.1. Explanation: discursive frames*

Discursive accommodation means the generation of publicly acceptable narratives that provide for non-conflictual communication between the rulers and the ruled, and that marginalize alternative visions of the situation. In other words, the issue is about a regime of hegemony in terms of Gramsci (Gramsci, 1971). Representation and justification of TOS may be viewed as part and parcel of the official multi-ethnicity in the post-Soviet space. The mainstream discourses portray the given societies as combinations of ethnic culturally distinct groups placed within some certain 'fair' social order, and this assumption does not preclude 'nationalizing' policies and regimes of 'ethnic control'.

To date, public authorities in all post-Soviet countries as a rule explicitly recognize the multi-ethnicity of their populaces. This recognition remains the core of the mainstream and thus legitimate discourses on ethno-national issues in the post-Soviet countries, although the nuances and contexts of this recognition vary. Sometimes the official wording goes far beyond merely general formulations on equal rights and minority protection, and includes acknowledgement of different communities as social entities possessing distinct identities as well as the right to 'development' and to participation in public life. A few cases, such symbolic recognition, are stipulated in constitutional provisions. The 1993 Russian Constitution refers to the country's people as 'multinational' (the Preamble) and also includes such tropes as 'national development' (in the meaning of ethno-cultural development, Article 72 (f)) and 'peoples' rights' with regard to the preservation of languages (Article 68, part 3) and to small indigenous peoples (Article 69). The Belarusian constitution of 1994 (Article 14) refers to 'relations between national [ethnic] communities', which are to be regulated by the state on the basis of their 'equality' and 'respect towards their rights and interests'. The 1992 Constitution of Turkmenistan mentions 'equality between social and national [ethnic] communities' (Article 11). More often references to communal 'right' or group development are scattered over pieces of sectoral legislation, in by-laws or official conceptual outlines of ethnic policies. For example, the Concept of Nationalities Policy of Moldova adopted by the national law No. 546-XV from 19 December 2003 contains such notions as 'interests' and 'development' of 'ethnic and linguistic communities'. The Ukrainian Declaration of Nationalities' Rights of 1 November 1991 stipulates that the 'state guarantees' of 'equal political, economic, social and cultural rights' are granted to all 'peoples, ethnic groups and citizens resident on its territory' (Article 1).

Public consumption of mainstream narratives requires 'officialization' in terms of Bourdieu, i.e.:

> …the process whereby the group (or those who dominate it) teaches itself or masks from itself its own truth, binds itself by a public profession which sanctions and imposes what it utters, tacitly defining the limits of the thinkable and the unthinkable and so contributing to the maintenance of the social order from which it derives its power. (1990: 108)

Officialization brings about a certain degree of simplification and distortion of the social knowledge; some portion of ignorance turns out to be a precondition for non-conflictual existence in a complex social environment. TOS appear to be a suitable and visible model, which simultaneously secures and demonstrates the desirable inter-ethnic accord and cooperation of ethnic groups without encroaching on the existing social and political order. In this regard, assemblies, consultative bodies and joint events cannot but be widely perceived as legitimate elements of the social landscape. This officialization is the first method of legitimization.

The second method of legitimization is the securitization of nationalities' affairs or focusing on interethnic dialogue as a remedy for ethnic conflicts. Mass fears and security issues can be instrumentalized as a tool of governance, particularly by discrediting options presumably not securing a sufficient protection from the announced threat (Buck-Morss, 2000; Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, 1998; Huysmans, 2006). As in many parts of the world, ethnic issues are routinely viewed and portrayed in terms of threats, primarily as a source of conflicts (Horowitz, 1985; Roe, 2005). Placing emphasis on this perspective is relatively easy due to the numerous ethnic clashes that occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s or lasting to date. Accordingly, oppression of allegedly destabilizing forces and, on the contrary, facilitation of inter-ethnic dialogue are advertised as the only right strategy. Any organizational framework providing for the said 'dialogue' would be regarded as legitimate, while all criticisms would be marginalized. This models model manifests itself in the most sharp manner in Transnistria which is always portrayed by its government firstly as a besieged fortress whose garrison cannot afford any internal clashes or discords, and secondly, that multiethnic TMR poses a positive contrast to unstable Moldova which managed to unleash a civil war on its territory a quarter of century ago (Caspersen, 2011: 85-87; Kolstø, 2006, 730-731).

The third method of legitimization could be referred to as taming or domestication of potential or actual ethnic claims. TOS are established on the presumption that they are preoccupied with cultural affairs and intercultural dialogue, and that is interpreted as non-interference of minorities in 'real' politics. Respectively, they, on the one hand, allow bracketing out all the agendas that are uncomfortable for the stakeholders or generating tensions; on the other hand, they provide for the 'banalization' of ethnic relations or confine them to ritual and low-cost forms of cultural representation, participation in public life and ethnic reconciliation. '... The term banalization refers to the representation of ethno-cultural differences within a nation as relatively superficial variations on a common, trans-ethnic theme rather than as sources of deep internal cleavages.' (Roshwald , 2007: 367)

> 'I do not mean to be dismissive of the salutary aspects of what I have termed cultural banalization. The atmosphere of inclusiveness and tolerance it generates and sustains is palpable. It allows individuals and communities to take open pride in their various heritages without being made to feel that this detracts from their patriotism.' (Roshwald , 2007: 370)

### *3.2. Explanation: institutional cooptation*

The other basic explanation rests on the structural opportunities which TOS open up. One can assume that TOS being socially acceptable (or being a mechanism of hegemony in other words) also serve as a mechanism for the incorporation and cooptation of ethnic spokespersons into the system of government (Lustick, 1979; Pettai and Hallik, 2002).

One may argue that the organizational forms described earlier are not authentic models of representation and self-organization of ethnic groups, since they are guided and controlled by authoritarian governments (as in Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan) and/or governments pursuing 'ethnic control' (Lustick, 1979) (as in the cases of Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova). This objection becomes irrelevant if one questions the very notion of 'authentic' self-organization or representation. It is worth remembering here that the role of state coercion shall be also questioned in the light of the fact that in most countries of the former USSR within the last two decades, most ethnic activists strive to be loyal to their governments and to accept all their offers, no matter how authoritarian the political regime may be. Given the lack of opposition and alternatives to such modes of behavior, one may assume that this model of interaction with authorities is legitimate and is as a rule endorsed by those who wish to take part in social activities on behalf of minorities.

If one discards the very idea of ‘real’ group interests and ‘genuine’ group representation, then one can talk about ethnicity as a mode of framing ethnic activism or certain organizational arrangements. From this angle, a TOS may be regarded as an informal asymmetrical agreement between the state authorities and ethnic spokespersons which envisages mutually suitable channels and scenarios of communication, and which brackets out potential controversies. People wishing to pose as ethnic spokespersons may do so under certain conditions within a multi-ethnic statehood (Transnistria), or appointed coordinative body (the APK), or a ‘governmental NGO’ (such as Russian ‘assemblies of peoples’), or a consultative body of minority issues totally loyal to governmental agendas. The government achieves a totally predictable and controllable organizational framework legitimate in the eyes of the broader society (see above). On their side, ethnic spokespersons acquire a officially recognized high status and direct communication with public authorities, plus some other organizational and material assets. Besides, ethnic spokespersons refrain from potentially troublesome issues – either under a legitimate pretext of preserving ‘stability’ and ethnic accord or because such issues are beyond the given discursive horizons. Thus the key condition for the deal is that both sides should stick to narrow agendas of cultural activities and interethnic dialogue. The agenda and the very organizational settings appear to be the only opportunity offered by the government; other options are in fact excluded or marginalized.

Such arrangements as TOS – asymmetric and vertical exchanges of resources to loyalties – fully fit in the theoretic framework of ‘neopatrimonialism’ which serves as a promising explanatory tool for the analysis of post-colonial and post-communist societies. This term (Bach, 2011; Bratton and van de Walle, 1994; Eisenstadt, 1973; Theobald, 1982) generally denotes

(1) a type of social systems and political regimes based on a combination of patronage and clienteles, established and utilized by office holders, with legal-rational bureaucratic rule and

(2) a theoretic framework designed for the analysis of these phenomena and the societies where there are nested.

Within this neopatrimonial framework, ethnic activists are subject to governmental patronage as a social group and can engage in clientele relations as individuals in exchange for their performance as loyal agents of the state bureaucracy or mainstream politicians

(Erdmann and Engel, 2007: 107). Along with this, they can also establish their own clienteles, helping other individuals as public figures to benefit from their privileged relations with public authorities. One can also say that in this framework one kind of capital (ethnic spokespersonship as cultural capital) is converted into social capital stemming from alliance with the government (On the types of capital see Bourdieu, 1986).

**Conclusion: TOS in multiple social contexts?**

One may also ask whether the experience of the former Soviet republics or in other former socialist states could be reproduced in other, more liberal and less authoritarian contexts with similar effects.

If 'interethnic dialogue' and broader ethnic policies are regarded as modes of framing and as relations between certain organizations and individuals rather than groups *per se*, one can legitimately assume that similar institutional settings, systems of resource exchanges and modes of legitimation may take place in a broad range of environments where minds are colonized with the ideas of ethnic collective agency. It would be a mistake to assess the issue of legitimacy of TOS from the point of whether they were imposed 'from above' or initiated 'from below'. This perception reflects in some way a 'republican' vision of ethnicities as aggregates of individuals thinking in a similar way because of their 'identity' and respective 'genuine' interests, and thus as able to adopt and implement collective decisions through democratic procedures. If these premises are discarded then one can talk about a broader range of perspectives in settings and legitimizing a variety of institutional settings.

The three ways of legitimation, namely officialization, securitization and culturalization, coupled with banalization of ethnic relations, can be instrumentalized in almost all modern societies. Respectively, there are certain incentives and opportunities for ethnic spokespersons to engage in alliances and patronage exchanges with the governments and mainstream political parties. Finally, there are no reasons to expect that similar hegemonic mechanisms do not apply in liberal-democratic environments. TOS are viable and legitimate in 'hybrid' regimes; who can object their presence in other circumstances, and why?

One can also expect that the organizational forms in question apply not only in the field of symbolic politics. In reality, TOS can implement ethno-cultural and educational projects,

and their affiliation with state institutions can in theory raise their capacities. These types of organizations offer flexible and thus potentially efficient schemes of public participation.

Multi-ethnic coalition-type organizations like 'assemblies' look to be a promising organizational form. In theory, they can help to overcome ethnic barriers and to encourage leaders and activists of different ethnicities to co-ordinate and reconcile their interests and stances. In addition, multi-ethnic organizations can provide minority organizations with additional recourses such as legal aid, support staff and premises, and such co-operation in certain instances may be more efficient than separate investments of each individual organization.

**Notes**

[1] For a number of reasons, which are beyond the scope of this article, other perspectives such as individual strategies of accommodation, social adaptation across dividing lines on the basis of informal networking and bargaining, and non-articulation and muting of ethnicity-based claims or their transformation are too often sidelined or neglected.
[2] See White Paper, 2008.
[3] Estimates done in accordance with the 2004 population census carried out by the Transnistrian *de facto* authorities; see Naseleniye 2005.
[4] TMR portrays itself as the only guardian of the 'true' Moldovan identity, which is allegedly being gradually eliminated in Moldova in the course of its rapprochement with Romania (see Munteanu and Munteanu, 2007).
[5] The Transnistrian legislation is taken from the official TMR legal database <http://president.gospmr.ru/ru/zakon>.
[6] The texts are available at the official website of the Assembly: http://www.assembly.kz/pravovaya-baza-ank.html.
[7] For the description of the APK and of the regional assemblies see the APK's official website: http://www.assembly.kz/pravovaya-baza-ank.html.
[8] See the official website of the Belarusian Plenipotentiary on Religious and Nationalities Affairs: http://www.belarus21.by/ru/main_menu/nat/consultation_centre.
[9] See the Charter, Programme and a description of the Assemblies history at its official website: http://anrussia.ru/; also Assambleya, 1999.
[10] Information about the regional assemblies was until June 2014 available at the APR's old website: Deyatelnost regionalnukh otdelenii ANR, at http://www.anrorg.ru/Regions/Reg_Index.htm (accessed on 12 May 2014).
[11] For example see Decree of the President of the Republic Sakha (Yakutia) No.39 of 3 February 1997 'On Holding the Second Assembly of Peoples of Sakha (Yakutia)'; Resolution of the Administration Head of Cheliabunsk Oblast No. 711 of 3 December 1996 'On the Assembly of Peoples of Cheliabinsk Oblast'; Decree of the President of the Republic of Bashkortostan No.UP-493 of 18 August 2000 'On Holding the Assembly of Peoples of Bashkortostan'; the texts are stored in the legal database 'Consultant+'.
[12] Deyatelnost regionalnukh otdelenii ANR [Activities of APR regional branches]. http://www.anrorg.ru/Regions/Reg_Index.htm. Retrieved May 12, 201.
[13] The information about the Assembly's structure and activities is available at its official website at http://www.assembly.kg/.
[14] The information about the Council is on BRI's official website http://www.bri.gov.md/index.php?pag=sec&id=91&l=ru.
[15] See http://www.ecmicaucasus.org/menu/fora_cnm.html.
[16] Respublikanskii Festival Natsionalnyh Kultur. The webpage at the regional Department's of Culture website http://kult.grodno-region.by/ru/fest/nac_kult

[17] Public Movement ‘Multinational Georgia‘. Official website: http://pmmg.org.ge/index.php?m=7&lang=Eng.
[18] Latvian Association of National Cultural Societies. Official website: https://ankolen.wordpress.com/
[19] Since the funding schemes of the largest TOS are not transparent, one can only make estimates on the grounds of the activities actually carried out.
[20] One of the few cases is public mentioning of the Moldovan language’s destiny in Transnistria by Grigory Marakutsa, the former chair of the TMR de facto parliament at the inauguration of Evgeniy Shevchuk, the new president of TMR, on December 30, 2011; see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hJvULErMc8I (from 39 to 43 min).

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# Book Review: Multiculturalism and Minority Rights in the Arab World

Sonja Wolf*

*European Centre for Minority Issues*

**Review of: Multiculturalism and Minority Rights in the Arab World, by Will Kymlicka and Eva Pföstl (Eds.). Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.**

This volume provides a compilation of 11 chapters by 13 authors, covering contemporary debates on minority policies in the Arab world within the context of the historical legacy as well as recent transformative movements of the region. It aims at filling the knowledge gap concerning the appropriateness of the international discourse on minority rights and its basic norms for the Arab world. The absence of Arab voices from the international discourse, duly noted in the introduction by Will Kymlicka, is understood to be a result of the historical legacy of minority issues in the region paired with the specific vocabulary applied in the international arena and is extensively discussed throughout the chapters of the book.

The chapters of this volume are arranged in two parts; the first dealing with the theoretical and historical perspectives on minority issues in the Arab world, and the second providing more contemporary insights through case studies. In chapter 2 Janet Klein opens the debate by giving a historical overview of the development of the discourse on minority issues in the Arab world with a special focus on the Kurds. She argues that the terminology applied today by the international community is closely connected to both the millet system of the Ottoman Empire and the heritage of colonialist and post-colonialist power structures, linking it to notions of inferiority and challenges of legitimacy. By outlining these issues, Klein aims to help create a more supportive discourse in which a new framework for the understanding

* Sonja Wolf is Project Assistant at the European Centre for Minority Issues. Email: wolf@ecmi.de.

and debating of minority issues can be built. Joshua Castellino and Kathleen Cavanaugh take a similar approach in chapter 3, providing a view on the historical legacy of the minorities discourse in the Arab world that emphasises the lessons that can be learned for the development of the discourse today, and with it the transitions currently taking place in the region. They conclude that these transitions are nuances of democratic processes and therefore need to be appreciated by those who interfered in the first instance of nation-making in the region. The recent and current social unrests in the Arab world are also part of the considerations of Zaid Eyadat in chapter 4, who examines the prevalent paradigms of the minority discourse in the region both historically and currently, and points out how their inadequacies foster social unrest. He proposes an alternative model, combining the positive elements of Islamic, consociational and multicultural systems in order to advance the rights of minorities without challenging the legitimacy of the states in the Arab world. In the last chapter of this theoretical section, Francesca Maria Corrao and Sebastiano Maffetone examine the differences in discourses of minority rights and liberal multiculturalism between the western powers and the Arab world. They argue that liberal democracy is a precondition for multiculturalism, and therefore propose an approach of multicultural liberalism rather than liberal multiculturalism in order to make multiculturalism acceptable in both the western and the Arab context.

In Chapter 6 Jacob Mundy analyses the way in which minority-majority conflicts are framed and problematised in the Arab world by analysing the Western Sahara conflict in local, regional and international frames. He argues that a culturally legitimate power-sharing solution to the conflict within the limits of the international models is based on the construction of a common narrative and therefore untenable. Instead, only a re-imagination of both the understanding of sovereignty of the conflicting parties as well as the international system can offer a perspective to solve the conflict. A similar argument is provided in chapter 7 by Eva Pföstl, analysing the situation of the Amazigh movement of Algeria and its potential to be an example of transformation for the Arab spring. She proposes a process of transitional justice that includes the Amazigh movement and the adoption of a model of federalism based on multinational and multilingual identities, and argues that this would require a re-thinking of strategies both from the Amazigh movement as well as Algerian state authorities.

Nicholas McGeehan's chapter 8 is concerned with the legal framework for migrant workers in the United Arab Emirates and its exploitative effect, arguing that the framework in

place results in great inequality between the migrant workers and their national or expatriate employers which effectively facilitates slavery. He concludes that the United Arab Emirates not only entirely disregard their responsibility towards migrant workers residing on their territory, but also human rights and minority group rights in general. In the following chapter Hassan Jabareen examines the history of the Palestinians as a minority in their own motherland, and finds the source of the ongoing tensions between Palestinians and Israelis in the way in which the Israeli state came to be, paired with the way in which Palestinians began their rights discourse. Jabareen argues that a lack of common ground on issues of equality and a constant perception of threat through the Palestinians keep the tensions between the two peoples high, and concludes that a reconciliation process is needed in which equal rights are at the core.

Brendan O'Leary deals with the federalisation processes in Sudan and Iraq from a comparative perspective in chapter 10 and argues that the outcome of both processes – the secession of South Sudan and the federalisation of Iraq – are rooted in the strategic decisions of the respective minority leaders, paired with the dynamic of regional and global interests, as well as the reactions of the respective central government. He concludes that multicultural federal systems are indeed possible in Arab states if they are in the interest of the affected parties and the regional and global orders are supportive of them in the individual case. Joseph Yacoub paints a less positive picture in the final chapter of the book, in which he examines the changing perceptions of multiculturalism in the Arab world, analysing the Arab Charter on Human Rights and the situation of the Assyro-Chaldeans in Iraq. He argues that while both the Arab Charter and the Iraqi constitution recognise minority rights and allow for a multicultural approach in theory, in reality these are far from being implemented.

Overall the book provides an interesting and insightful selection of cases of minority issues across the Arab world in which the causes for ethnic tensions are analysed and solutions are proposed for individual cases. The main theme of the book and recurring question throughout the chapters is that of the adequacy of the international minority discourse for minority issues in the Arab world. In several chapters it is pointed out that strategic decisions of both minority leaders and state actors are influenced by the regional and international orders in place and that alternative models are restrained by the global discourse, as they usually do not find the necessary political support. However, the examples provided display more or less failed traditional western models rather than real alternatives. While this

might demonstrate that the western models are not necessarily applicable in the Arab world, it does not prove the international discourse to be unsupportive of alternative approaches. Nevertheless, it becomes clear throughout the book that the western-shaped global discourse is largely ignorant to Arab voices and that input from this side is urgently needed in order be acceptable in the region. From the assessment of various chapters of this book it seems that minority issues are entering the mainstream debates in the Arab world slowly but steadily, giving hope that Arab voices will not be absent from the global minority discourse much longer.