

Minority Coalition-Building and Nation-States

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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 paper 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.

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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 bandwagon' 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 *intraethnic*) and inclusive (such as *interethnic*) 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 *intraethnic*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 *interethnic* 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. *intraethnic* (uniting organizations representing the same ethnic group) and *interethnic* 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 *intraethnic* and *interethnic* coalitions thus may become *transnational* once they start crossing state borders. According to Keck 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 *intraethnic* and *interethnic* minority coalitions.

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

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)	Latvian Association of National Cultural Societies (LNKBA; est. 1988)
The People's Assembly of Kazakhstan (est. 1995)	The Confederation of Indigenous People of Bolivia (est. 1982)
The European Roma and Travellers Forum (est. 2004 under the auspices of CoE)	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, *intraethnic* organizations often serve as building blocks for *interethnic* 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. *Intraethnic* 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 *films* 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.

⁸ ‘Our Mission’, Society of Black Lawyers, <http://www.blacklawyer.org/mission>. Retrieved April 29, 2015.

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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