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Special Issue: the Concept of Ethnocracy

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EDITORIAL WELCOME

Special Issue on Ethnocracy

This Special Issue of *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Journal* focuses on the domination of social and political relations by *ethnocracy* – rule or would-be rule by an ethnic group or *ethnos*, as distinct from *Democracy* or rule by the *demos* of all the people. Ethnocracy encompasses state regimes and associated political movements and parties that discriminate systematically in favour of a particular ethnic group (or groups) and against others. When we proposed the Special Issue in late 2014 ethnocratic practices were as prevalent as they had ever been; and now two years later they appear to be on the increase with an ethno-populist upsurge and the election or threatened election of governments pursuing ethnocratic agendas. From India to the USA, from Russia to Hungary, leading politicians openly discriminate against ethnic ‘others’ to attract support from ‘their own’ ethnic groups; across the European Union and in other liberal democracies they increasingly scapegoat ‘immigrants’ to hide their own inadequacies and further their political objectives. Now, more than ever, it is critical that the dynamics of ethnocracy are more clearly understood. This Issue documents the logics of ethnocracy in a variety of different contexts, posing questions about how it develops and how it can be challenged.

Ethnocracy may be formal with discrimination enshrined in law (as in Apartheid South Africa), or it may be more informal with apparent or formal equalities masking very unequal realities (as happened in Northern Ireland). As discussed later in more detail, the concept was most notably developed by the Israeli geographer Oren Yiftachel to analyse Israel-Palestine and Jewish-Palestinian relations; and this Special Issue develops it further in other national contexts, including Sri Lanka, Latvia and Estonia, Fiji and Australia, and in the urban contexts of Jerusalem and Beirut. The different cases of ethnocracy point to its varied forms and degrees of severity, ranging from...
everyday petty or not-so-petty discrimination to state-sponsored military assault, its practices generally characterized by exclusion and violence actual or incipient.

The Issue originated in a public lecture delivered in November 2014 by James Anderson during a research visit to the University of Technology Sydney. The lecture has been developed into the refereed ‘lead article’ where he advances a number of arguments which the other contributors were invited to consider, explore or reject, whether in whole or in part. He argues that the idea of Ethnocracy can be extended and applied to different types of political context beyond the national state and urban governance for which it was developed in Israel-Palestine. So in addition to National and Urban ethnocracy, there are Imperial, ‘Post-Conflict’ and ‘Post-National/Religious’ ethnocracies, and each of the five types has its own distinct dynamics.

*Imperial* ethnocracy extends ‘back’ to earlier roots in traditional empires and their politicization of different ethnicities, defined in religious, linguistic or wider cultural terms (e.g., in the Ottoman, British and French empires in the Balkans and Middle East). Its dynamics sometimes involved three-way relationships between the imperial power, indigenous peoples, and also 'settlers' (as in the British Empire in Ireland, Palestine, South Africa and Australia). Then, looking ‘forward’, the concept has direct relevance in supposedly post-conflict national contexts, where lethal conflict has (mostly) been stopped but the conflict typically continues along the same ethnic lines (as in Bosnia, Northern Ireland, and Sri Lanka). Fifthly, and more tentatively, the concept might possibly be useful in post-national contexts where national objectives have been at least partly displaced by transnational religion as the major motivator in its own right, radical Islam and fundamentalist Christianity the most obvious examples.

Contributors respond in various ways to these ideas. Oren Yiftachel debates the present condition of ethnocratic theory, and reflects on the possibilities for further extensions as ‘offsprings’ of ethnocracy, demonstrating the rich insights the concept can bring. Following Yiftachel’s commentary, there are refereed articles that reflect in detail on the practice of ethnocracy in widely different situations. Nirmanusan Balasundaram discusses Sri Lanka, highlighting the continuing ethnocratic dynamics of an ostensibly ‘post-conflict’ society. Konstantin Kastrissianakis focuses on the fractious urban history of Beirut, as a site of ethnocratic conflict along religious lines. Timofey Agarin takes us to a dramatically different context, in the Baltic States, yet one also riven with ethnic majoritarianism and geopolitical rivalry. Haim Yacobi focuses on the urban context of Jerusalem\(\text{al-Quds}, debating the differences and similarities between ethnocracy and urban apartheid. Sanjay Ramesh documents the oscillation
between post-colonial ethnocracy and democracy in Fiji. Andrew Jakubowicz highlights the reappearance of ethnicised immigration debates in Australia, and the reciprocal counter-assertion and reassertion of ethnic exclusion which this is generating.

To borrow a phrase from the Irish republican and Marxist, James Connolly, ethnocracies create their own ‘carnival of reaction’. Across all the cases discussed, the dynamics of the carnival stem from the exercise or attempted exercise of exclusionary power, typically wielded in authoritarian ways. Understanding the dynamics is essential for defending and extending meaningful democratic relations.

James Goodman and James Anderson (Guest Editors)
November 2016
LEAD PAPER

ETHNOCRACY: Exploring and Extending the Concept

James Anderson
Queens University Belfast

Abstract
Ethnocracy means ‘government or rule by a particular ethnic group’ or ethnos, sometimes contrasted with democracy, rule by the demos or the people in general. The concept was primarily developed as national ethnocracy for regimes in contemporary national states which claim to be ‘democratic’. It was mainly pioneered by the Israeli geographer Oren Yiftachel to analyse the ethnically-biased policies and asymmetrical power relations of Jews and Palestinians in Israel/Palestine, but it needs to be further developed in other geographical settings and in different types of political context. Yiftachel himself extended it ‘down’ to city level and a specifically urban ethnocracy, and we can further explore how cities and city governance can sometimes moderate national state ethnocracy. Going beyond the national and the urban, and the particularities of the Israeli case, we can also enrich the concept by extending it to three other types of context each of which has its own specific dynamics: firstly, ‘back’ to imperial ethnocracy which often preceded and gave birth to national ethnocracy; secondly, it can be extended ‘forwards’ to the (usually mis-named) ‘post-conflict’ or power-sharing stages of ‘peace processes’, to what we might call shared or ‘post-conflict’ ethnocracy; thirdly, and more speculatively, it can be extended to contemporary religious-political conflicts which are at least partly transnational in character, to what could be called religious and ‘post-national’ ethnocracy. These five
main types of ethnocracy and their inter-relationships can help tie together different features of ethnic and ethno-national conflicts. However questions remain: about, for instance, ethnicity and its sometimes problematic components; about where and how to draw the boundary between ethnocracy and democracy; and about rival concepts such as milder ‘ethnic democracy’ and harsher ‘apartheid’.

Introduction

Ethnocracy basically means ‘government or rule by an ethnic group’ or *ethnos*, and more precisely rule by a particular ethnos in a multi-ethnic situation where there is at least one other significant ethnic group. Ethnicity and group self-awareness can be specified in terms of religion, imputed ‘racial’ features, language, and/or a shared history and culture more broadly defined, components which vary and sometimes in problematic ways.

Ethnocracy is often contrasted with democracy or rule by the *demos*, ‘the people’ in general in a given area or territory – *demos* originally denoted a place-based community, so democracy was spatial or geographical from the start. It too can be problematical – for instance ‘the people’ in Athens’ fabled democracy did not include women or slaves, and some people are still routinely excluded because of their youth or other reasons; decisions taken by simple majority vote can leave nearly half ‘the people’ dissatisfied; and if this is systematically repeated it becomes ‘majoritarian’ democracy or a negation of democracy (not the demos deciding but the same ‘50+%’ of voters). Nevertheless, despite such problems, democracy is seen as preferable to ethnocracy and indeed to most if not all the other alternative types of rule, though some of these overlap or mingle with democracy and ethnocracy.

These alternatives include autocracy (rule by a single dictator or tyrant as in Ancient Greece), aristocracy (… by big land lords as in feudalism), plutocracy (… by the rich), meritocracy (… by people chosen on merit), bureaucracy (… by officials), or technocracy (… by technocrats or technical experts who ‘know best’). There is indeed the growing complaint that our democracies are being turned into plutocracies (most obviously in the US) and more widely into technocracies, bringing the threat that present-day ethnocracies may face democratic deficits on several fronts simultaneously.

Ethnocracy was generally applicable to traditional empires where a coherent ethnic group conquered and spread its rule over culturally diverse populations, though significantly the concept did not apply to the later Roman Empire which granted citizenship to its inhabitants irrespective of their ethnicity or location within the empire. It still loosely applies to tribe-based politics, but it has been developed from a general imprecise label into
an analytical concept, initially for understanding national state regimes. Ali Mazrui in *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda: The making of a military ethnocracy* (1975, p. 4), defined ethnocracy more precisely as ‘a distributive system which allocates or divides political power primarily on the basis of ethnicity and kinship real or presumed’, and he used the concept to analyse the nature of General Idi Amin’s dictatorship.

However, it was primarily developed for analysing national ethnocratic regimes in contemporary national states which claim to be ‘democratic’. This was pioneered by the Israeli geographer Oren Yiftachel to analyse Israel’s ethnically-biased policies and the asymmetrical power relations between Jews and Palestinians. Particularly in *Ethnocracy: Land and identity politics in Israel/Palestine* (2006), he analysed the various ways in which the Jewish *ethnos* has trumped the *demos* of all the people, when in Israel ‘proper’ (pre-1967 borders) about 20% of the population are Muslim and Christian Arabs or Palestinians, with of course many more in the illegally ‘occupied’ Palestinian territories. Brave in my opinion to call his country an *ethnocracy* when the national state claims that Israel is ‘the only democracy in the Middle East’ and when this is perhaps the ‘legitimising narrative’ of its national government when criticised for its mistreatment of Palestinians. Moreover, Yiftachel extended the concept ‘down’ from the national level to the sometimes milder *urban* ethnocracy of cities and city government, along with colleagues like Haim Yacobi (in, for example, his *The Jewish-Arab City: Spatio-politics in a mixed community*, 2009). Drawing on urban theory and the distinctive ‘politics of urbanism’, we can elaborate more fully on state-city differences and why cities can sometimes moderate national ethnocracy.

We can also question how ethnocracy relates to perhaps alternative or rival concepts and categories, such as the more extreme-sounding *apartheid* on one side and the milder *ethnic democracy* on the other. Or are these better subsumed as variants of ethnocracy? When the states claim to be democratic (as most now do), there are questions too about where and how to ‘draw the line’ between democracy and ethnocracy: when, for instance, does democratic decision-making by simple majority voting spill over into majoritarianism and systematic discrimination against an ethnic minority; or how would we recognise if ethnocracy was actually ended, especially where it is mostly informal or *de facto* rather than *de jure* and explicit in state laws? Set the ‘democratic’ bar too low and anti-democratic discrimination goes unchallenged; set it too high and perhaps most contemporary democratic states would become defined as ethnocracies which rather dilutes the concept or renders it vacuous.
It can be explored in other national and urban contexts beyond the particularities of Israel-Palestine, in cases such as Belgium, Bosnia or Northern Ireland, for instance; or in this Special Issue, as well as Jerusalem, the cases of Australia, Beirut, Estonia, Fiji, Sri Lanka (as indeed Yiftachel – 2006, pp. 20-33 – shows with short excursions to Sri Lanka, Estonia and Australia). But more importantly, the concept can also be enriched by going beyond the *national* and the *urban* to other types of socio-political situation and each of these has its own distinctive dynamics. I suggest three further extensions. Firstly, we can extend it ‘back’ to *imperial* ethnocracy, which often preceded *national* ethnocracy, and which, despite having fewer, if any, pretensions to democracy, could paradoxically be less oppressive than successor national ethnocracies which claim democratic status. Secondly, more speculatively and briefly, we can extend it ‘forwards’ to the (usually mis-named) ‘post-conflict’ or power-sharing stages of ‘peace processes’, to what we can call *shared* or ‘*post-conflict*’ ethnocracy, and here democracy – or rather preventing or reducing damaging majoritarian democracy – is a central concern. Thirdly, it can be extended (some might think over-extended) to contemporary religious-political conflicts. Religion, with its well-developed institutions and transnational or universalist ethos, is often much more than a mere ethnic or ethno-national marker, and in what we might call *religious* and ‘*post-national*’ ethnocracy it can move centre-stage as ‘the’ motivator or goal in its own right. So the politics, like the religion, may aspire to be at least partly *trans*national in character. So-called ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ is the clearest example; it is also literally *post*-national to the extent it emerged from the wreckage of ‘Arab nationalism’; and here democracy may be conspicuously absent.

These five variants of ethnocracy – *national, urban, imperial, ‘post-conflict’* and ‘*post-national/religious*’ – and their inter-relations help tie together different aspects of ethno-national conflicts involving contested states and divided cities\(^1\). The inter-relations vary: national and urban ethnocracies generally coexist in the same space and dealing with both together can point up the urban dimensions of ethno-national conflict and how cities have shaped the conflict (as well as vice versa). In contrast, relations between imperial and national ethnocracies are historically sequential with the former often though not always giving birth to the latter. ‘Post-conflict’ ethnocracy typically follows a conflict where national

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1 A version of this article was given as a public lecture at the University of Technology Sydney in November 2014. My interest in ethnocracy started a decade earlier researching ethno-nationally divided cities – see Acknowledgements for more details.
ethnocracy was an important cause; and similarly ‘post-national’ ethnocracies may have roots in imperial and national variants. In this historical perspective, and assessing ethnocracy’s inherently conflict-generating, destabilising and changeable character, we need to see the concept in fluid and flexible terms. Unless constrained by internal forces, or more likely internal forces with crucial external support, ethnocracy is prone to intensification – becoming more extreme, more authoritarian and less democratic. It seems deluded ethnocrats have the rallying cry ‘If you’re in a hole, keep digging’!

**National Ethnocracy**

In our current era of national states, the dominant form of ethnocracy is *national*, in sovereign states and moreover states which usually claim to be ‘democratic’: like Israel, and Northern Ireland before the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday ‘power-sharing’ Agreement, and in other situations where claims to be a ‘democracy’ are even more questionable, like Apartheid South Africa. It is often assumed or implicit that ethnocracy applies *only* to contemporary national states with an element of democracy, but our understandings of the concept are sometimes over-determined by particular cases and this is too narrow. The concept applied to Idi Amin’s dictatorship over the national state of Uganda; and, as argued below, it can usefully be extended to forerunner imperial ethnocracies where democracy was weak or non-existent.

Oren Yiftachel (2006) honed his understanding in the particular context of Israel, which, like most contemporary ethnocracies, does indeed have a nominally-democratic regime, though not in the territory occupied since 1967, while within Israel ‘proper’ it systematically discriminates in favour of the dominant ethnos rather than ruling even-handedly on behalf of the *demos* of all the citizens. With liberal democracy now a global ‘norm’, ethnocratic regimes usually depend on ‘democracy’ claims for their legitimation, with subordinated groups having some, generally more limited, access to democracy.

Here it is important to stress that where formal democracy occurs in ethnocracies it is not merely ideological camouflage or ‘window-dressing’: on the contrary, in the current era the dominant ethnos typically *demands* democracy, actively wants it – at least for itself. Thus these national regimes are not simply authoritarian: they typically have parliamentary assemblies and periodic elections, for instance, and perhaps a (sometimes ostensibly?) independent judiciary, and a (supposedly?) free media. These can give the appearance of ‘ordinary democracy’ but they hide a ‘deeper structure’ which is profoundly anti-democratic in that the democracy applies only or mainly to politics within the dominant ethnos, not to the *demos* of all the people in the state territory. Rule is mainly or solely by members and representatives of
that ethnos, it is they who are in charge, making the major decisions: ethnos and demos are conflated but the ‘democracy’ is disproportionately and sometimes exclusively available to the favoured ethnos. And it is this political cleavage between the ethnic groups which defines the character of the state as ethnocratic rather than democratic.

National ethnocracy basically works by (con)fusing the nation-state ideal of the people’s ‘right to self-determination’ in their own territory with ethnic ‘self-determination’ in territory which is ethnically shared. As Yiftachel (2006) points out, typical features include an essentialising, general and all-encompassing ‘ethnicization’ of society – seeing it as a hierarchy of ethnic groups; and using a variety of political, cultural, social, economic, moral and legal frameworks to determine the distribution of power and resources disproportionately in favour of the dominant ethnos. But this ‘ethnicization/hierarchization’ can spread ‘out of control’, extending or spilling over into exacerbating divisions within the dominant ethnicity, a further source of instability (e.g., the ‘ethno-class’ divisions within Israeli Jews between the Ashkenazim of European origin who established Zionism and for long dominated the state, as against the generally lower class Mizrahim of ‘oriental’ origin, though since the 1970s the latter have got a greater share of state-power through more extreme right-wing Likud governments).

Labour and housing markets are major arenas for ethnocracy. Even where officially ‘open’ without any legal restrictions they tend to be segregated and stratified in terms of ethno-nation and ethno-class: indeed they are key arenas for de facto ethnocracy which is an important element even where ethnocracy is de jure, enshrined in law as in Israel, and they dominated in the Northern Irish case which was very largely de facto (though resting on a legal territorial framework designed to give a permanent Protestant majority – see below). For the working class dependent on state-provided housing, who got housed where depended on religion; and in the labour market workers were subject to segregation in terms of quite intricate job gradations (even within the same workplace) in terms of the pay, the reliability and the conditions (e.g. dirtyness or health hazards) of different jobs. In most cases the Protestant/unionist workers benefited, at least in relative terms (often the only terms recognised), while the workers as a whole were divided and put at a disadvantage. For example, dockers were segregated between those working on cross-channel boats which sailed to/from Britain on a daily basis and hence provided very regular employment,

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2 A recent example of damaging divisions within the dominant ethnos is the Israeli police discriminating against Jews of Ethiopian origin. (Guardian 31 August 2016)
and dockers who worked on deep-sea cargo boats where employment was more spasmodic. Not difficult to guess which were the Protestant and which the Catholic dockers.

‘Ethnic Democracy’ or ‘Apartheid State’?
Officially Israel sees itself as a ‘Western liberal democracy’, though sometimes with an acknowledgement of ‘flaws’ in the treatment of Palestinians (even within Israel ‘proper’, never mind the ‘occupied’ territories of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza). Trying to come to terms with the harsh realities, other more critical Israeli analysts saw systematic ethnic bias and prefer the designation pioneered in 1990 by Sammy Smooha, ‘ethnic democracy’ (Yiftachel 2006, p. 87). This could fit another official characterisation of Israel as ‘Jewish and democratic’, intended to be read as unproblematic, but Smooha (2002) explicitly recognizes that Israeli democracy is limited, ambiguous and ‘second-rate’. Nevertheless he puts what we will see are questionable arguments: that it is ‘robust and stable’, and that Israel retains an overall democratic framework which guarantees basic civil rights and allows minorities to make incremental gains through democratic and peaceful struggle. He affirms its designation as a democracy, albeit an ‘ethnic’ rather than a ‘liberal’ one but a democracy not an ethnocracy.

Some analysts prefer the term ‘ethnic democracy’ because it is less critical of a regime (in some cases their own country), and it can be argued that it is appropriate where ethnocracy is comparatively mild, the discrimination not very severe. However, it cannot cover other contexts where democracy may be unimportant or non-existent, such as imperial ethnocracy; and in national ethnocracies it is an oxymoron where there is the anti-democratic reality of systematic majoritarian discrimination against an ethnic minority or minorities. In the Israeli case ‘democratic state’ is contradicted by a ‘Jewish state’ which systematically discriminates de jure against resident Palestinians. And that includes all the Palestinians under Israeli military rule in the West Bank as well as in ‘Israel proper’, for Israel-Palestine in reality is now a single state – already Israel’s ‘single-state solution’ – despite its fragmentation into separate, legally distinct territories reminiscent of Apartheid South Africa (a fragmentation which has undermined and now blocks the possibility of an independent Palestinian state and the so-called ‘two-state solution’). Therefore, and because of the political opprobrium attached to it, some analysts prefer to characterise Israel as an ‘apartheid state’ instead of using the more ‘academic’ concept of ethnocracy. However, the two terms are not mutually exclusive; ‘apartheid’ with its connotations of rigidly separate and grossly unequal development
(implemented by the minority white population in the case of South Africa) is best treated as a more limited sub-category of ethnocracy to signal a particularly harsh form of it.\(^3\)

As for ‘ethnic democracy’, the designation ‘Jewish and democratic’ would be akin to demanding a ‘Protestant and democratic Northern Ireland’, another unacceptable contradiction in terms which would cause outrage. Ireland was partitioned in 1920 with the border drawn so as to give Northern Ireland a built-in ‘2 to 1’ Protestant majority/Catholic minority, and in 1969 its ‘majoritarian democracy’ or ‘dictatorship of the majority’ led to the three decades of low-intensity warfare – ‘the Troubles’ – for which the official antidote is now formalised consociational power-sharing, or ‘post-conflict’ ethnocracy (below) (see McGarry and O’Leary 1995). A statement by its first Prime Minister that Northern Ireland had ‘a Protestant parliament for a Protestant people’ did indeed cause outrage at the time and is still quoted in outraged tones over ninety years later. With ethno-national division and systematic exclusion its over-riding feature, ethnocratic Northern Ireland barely qualified as a democracy, ethnic or otherwise, and certainly not a ‘Western liberal’ one (despite the ‘Catholic nationalists’ having full voting rights).

‘Ethnic cleansing’, expansion and conflict-generation

According to Michael Mann in *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining ethnic cleansing* (2005; the main title could perhaps more usefully refer to modern ethnocracy in general rather than only to ethnic cleansing), the removal of native Arabs from ‘Israel’ was most murderous in the late 1940s. It happened partly under nominal British Empire rule before the Zionist movement established its own independent national state: its regime was thus ethnocratic from ‘before the start’, and indeed intentionally so from Zionism’s beginnings at the end of the 19\(^{th}\) century (see Anderson 2013, p. 206). But some national ethnocracies (e.g. the Turkey of the Young Turks; arguably, a democratic element is not necessary to qualify as an ethnocracy – Idi Amin’s dictatorship or autocracy was an ethnocracy. Apartheid is best seen within the wider context of ethnocracy which is more analytically useful and flexible especially when extended to other situations beyond the national (and a similar argument applies to ethnocracy *vis à-vis* the more limited ‘ethnic democracy’).
newly-independent Sri Lanka in the 1950s) were initially democratic in inspiration but can then slide into authoritarianism and ‘murderous ethnic cleansing’ (and indeed face accusations of genocide, as of Armenians and Sri Lankan Tamils⁴); though again some ethnocracies are established without significant violence (e.g., in Estonia vis-à-vis its sizeable Russian-speaking population after 1990).

But Yiftachel notes that the establishment of Israel did involve ‘a massive ethnic cleansing’ – the 1947-48 Nakba or Palestinian catastrophe – in which over 700,000 Muslim and Christian Palestinians were removed into exile, many terrorised into leaving by selective massacres by the paramilitaries of Irgun led by Menachem Begin (later the founder of Likud), and the Stern Gang (whose leader Yitzhak Shamir also became a Likud Prime Minister). The Palestinians were killed or for the most part driven out according to pre-prepared ‘Plan D’ (or Dalet) and were replaced by Jewish settlers from Europe, and also from Arab countries (see Pappe 2007, pp.39-40, pp.86-126; Anderson 2013, pp.207-8).

Yiftachel also sees settler ethnocracies as premised on ethno-national expansion. This certainly fits the case of Israel and its territorial expansion, initially across Israel ‘proper’ and then in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza after their 1967 ‘occupations’. But we need to be careful not to overgeneralise. Ethnocracy is not necessarily driven by a ‘settler society’, nor does it necessarily include ethnic cleansing, at least not of the murderous sort – post-1990 Estonian ethnocracy is a case in point where the ‘settlers’ are in fact members of the Russian-speaking and arguably relatively oppressed minority. Conversely, Northern Ireland does have a ‘settler society’ in some ways comparable to Israel’s at least at an ideological level (see below, and Anderson 2013) but the unionist regime was not territorially ‘expansionist’ in any real sense, and in general was more intent on defensively retaining what it had⁵, rather than expanding or deepening its ethnocracy. So ‘ethno-national expansion’, at least in a territorial sense, is not a necessary feature of ethnocracy. On the other hand it does occur in many cases. There is no ‘settler society’ involved in the Sri Lankan conflict in that both the northern

⁴On Sri Lankan genocide, see Balasundaram in this issue. In general, however, Mann’s (2005, p.17) term ‘murderous ethnic cleansing’ is preferable. ‘Genocide’, although a legal term, is problematic, requiring proof of intentionality to kill a particular group, and involving the question of whether it can apply to only a part of the group, and how large a part that has to be. It clearly applies to the Nazi genocide of Jews and also Roma, but not to the ‘murderous ethnic cleansing’ of Palestinians which primarily aimed to remove not kill them (see Pappe 2007, p.3).

⁵The central issue/mechanism was countering the generally higher Catholic birth-rate and retaining the ‘2 to 1’ Protestant majority by using employment discrimination to force disproportionate numbers of Catholics to emigrate to find work.
Tamil and the dominant Sinhalese communities have co-inhabited the island for at least two millennia. Yet the post-war expansion of Sinhalese settlement into Tamil areas, often on land taken over by the army for supposedly security reasons, has been both an outcome of ethnocracy and an ethnocratic instrument to further weaken the Tamils politically. For example, it drove a ‘wedge’ of Sinhalese settled territory between the Tamils in the Jaffna and the Trincomalee regions (interestingly with advice from the Israelis, past masters in the use of territoriality for political purposes)⁶.

Yiftachel rightly characterises ethnocratic regimes as inherently conflict-generating: they give and ask for trouble, and hence are inherently unstable. Left to themselves they are prone to intensification, becoming more rather than less ethnocratic, ‘digging’ a deeper ‘hole’ for themselves: conflict generates a reaction and further conflict in a downward and often violent spiral. For example, Israel’s Zionist nationalism and the supporters and also the opponents, of the regime have all become increasingly ‘extreme’ over time. In Sri Lanka the ethnocracy of the majority Sinhalese escalated steeply to all-out war against the northern Tamil population with massive oppression and loss of life, but from relatively mild and almost trivial beginnings some fifty years earlier - largely instigated by an ambitious but thwarted Sinhalese politician, Mr. Bandaranayake who used pro-Sinhalese bias in order to become Prime Minister.

In the downward spiral even the ethnocratic regime itself can lose effective control through what can sometimes seem like self-inflicted political stupidity. In Northern Ireland the Protestant majority Unionist government generally defined all the Catholics as ‘disloyal’ supporters of a ‘United Ireland’, but by the 1960s this traditional objective actually had very little real support even in Catholic nationalist heartlands (a friend from nationalist West Belfast said only 5% of his secondary school class had supported it). Yet despite this, the regime persisted with its blanket assumption that Catholics were ‘disloyal traitors’, and after five decades of ethnocracy and then failed reforms (seen as ‘too little, too late’) that would become a ‘self-fulfilling’ prophesy, proof for many that Northern Ireland was ‘unreformable’, when the three decades of low-intensity warfare – the

⁶In February 2015, shortly after the Mahinda Rajapaksa government was replaced by Maithripala Sirisena promising reforms, I interviewed and got a wealth of information from twelve Tamils – politicians, journalists, business and professional people - mainly in Jaffna in northern Sri Lanka but also in Colombo. Despite the ‘Tamil Tigers’ secessionist war ending in defeat in 2009, the Sri Lankan Army continues as an ‘army of occupation’ in the Tamil north and for reasons that have little to do with ‘security’ but everything to do with consolidating ethnocratic oppression and exploitation. The army is involved in commercial enterprises; much of the land it confiscated has not been returned to the rightful owners.
‘Troubles’ – erupted in 1969. Political stupidity aside, the ethnocracy had a strong class dimension in keeping the working class divided and Protestants away from socialism, but most sections of society, nationalist and unionist, lost out. Ironically, perhaps none lost out more than the once relatively privileged Protestant workers who often failed to adapt to de-industrialisation and the new (un)employment circumstances.

**Countering ethnocracy**

Halting or breaking the downward spiral – reducing ethnocracy, reducing instability, increasing democracy – usually depends on the inevitable internal opposition getting external help and support in the form of effective pressures to force reforms. This often fails to materialise, or in sufficient measure. It happened to some extent in the case of Estonia with an easing of ethnocratic policies towards the minority Russians (many of whom did not have Estonian citizenship), under pressure from international human rights organisations and as a condition for Estonia being granted EU membership in 2004 (though pressure seems to have diminished again since membership was gained and the EU’s external leverage was reduced). It happened with Northern Ireland’s 1998 Good Friday Agreement, particularly through support and pressure from the European Union and the USA. But even in this comparatively fortunate case, external help took a long time to have effect and changing ‘internal affairs’ from the outside still has its limitations. It has still not even begun in Israel-Palestine where the main external player, the US, has the means but not the will to insist on meaningful reforms (and another important player, the EU, lacks both means and will). In Sri Lanka it has happened only to a very limited extent: the Tamils were defeated militarily and could exert less pressure themselves; but the victorious regime of Rajapaksa was deemed by the US and India to be too friendly towards China and was replaced by the less-overtly ethnocratic regime of Sirisena; in reality, however, it was not very different and now there is less external pressure to reform ethnocracy because the perceived geopolitical threat from China has diminished, at least for the time being.  

On the other hand, the tensions or contradictions of ethnocratic regimes and their inherent instability point towards how ethnocracy might be

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7The Tamil interviewees welcomed Rajapaksa’s overthrow, but were not sufficiently confident about future developments to have their names made public. They were sceptical about Sirisena’s ability to deliver a meaningful reduction of ethnocracy because of his continued reliance on Sinhalese votes, and the continued presence of the effectively Sinhalese Army in Tamil territory. We visited a Tamil family living on infertile sandhills because its farmland remained confiscated six years after the war ended. To date the scepticism about Sirisena’s reforms seems fully justified.
weakened or transcended by internal forces. Rather than simply (unthinkingly?) accepting the dominant terms of reference of ethnic or ethno-national protagonists, the relative importance of their ‘foregrounded’ ethnic divisions can be questioned. ‘Backgrounded’ or neglected social divisions which cross-cut and under-cut them can instead be encouraged by, for example, mobilizing around what some would argue are more important class, gender, and ecological issues. These are typically down-played and often actively obscured in ethnocracies, but this can lead to popular discontent and public protests against ethnic politics and its politicians, as happened in 2014 with urban riots in Croat and Bosniak parts of Bosnia largely around economic and unemployment issues. In Lebanon ethnocracy is now being confronted by a new left alliance, ‘Beirut Madinati’, which is organising not around ethnic issues but people’s living conditions, health and safety, affordable housing, environmental sustainability and social justice.

Looked at comparatively – at different national cases and at the same case getting better or worse over time – the methods and degrees of ethnocracy can vary widely on spectrums from ‘authoritarian’ to ‘democratic’, and de jure to de facto. Ethnocracy is relatively easy to recognise and assess where de jure, explicit in state laws, as in Israel or Apartheid South Africa; sometimes less easy to recognise or ‘prove’ where it operates de facto or informally in civil society. Thus in Northern Ireland ethnocracy was (or is?) almost entirely de facto (even in its pre-1960s heyday there were no laws explicitly discriminating in favour of Protestants, they were favoured more subtly)\(^8\); and tracing its decline is complicated and contested. Direct intervention from London from 1969, and especially its imposition of ‘Direct Rule’ closing down the local assembly in Belfast in 1972, set the scene for gradually – some would say very gradually – dismantling the structures of ethnocracy (e.g. removing local authority control of housing allocation; outlawing forms of ethno-national discrimination in the labour market). But at the same time the British Ministry of Defence set up the Ulster Defence Regiment which armed one section of the community – the unionists – for its battle against the IRA and

\(^8\)However, non-explicit de facto ethnocracy is often obvious, as when Goan Christians find the supply of beef has been reduced and prices have rocketed because of the actions of the Indian Hindu Nationalist government – the Christians are beef-eaters while Hindus supposedly are not (Goan Herald 24 March 2015). It seems the ‘BJP’ regime of Narendra Modi is beginning to turn the world’s largest democracy into an ethnocracy. Sometimes, however, the biases are ‘hidden’ within the state apparatus and only emerge later, as when recently released British state papers for Northern Ireland in the 1980s confirmed suspicions that supposedly ‘neutral’ British civil servants were strongly pro-unionist: they believed they had ‘to depend on unionists’ to run Northern Ireland – see imperial ethnocracy, below (Irish News 31 August 2016).
in effect against the nationalist population more widely. One part of the state can be anti-ethnocratic while another is ethnocratic. However, by 1998 and the power-sharing Agreement, ethnocracy had undoubtedly been substantially reduced, though discrimination has been so embedded in local society over centuries that detailed research would be needed to identify when or if it has ended (perhaps it is now simply ‘shared’ – see below).

Similarly, in de jure terms we can easily conclude that Israeli ethnocracy has significantly more democratic content than Apartheid South Africa – hardly difficult, not least because the ruling ‘whites’ were a clear minority of the total population (and the designation ‘white and democratic’ would have been a totally unconvincing oxymoron). However when we turn to de facto geopolitics, or the social realities of labour markets, things are not quite so simple. Firstly, Israel as a geopolitical ally and supporter was indirectly implicated in Apartheid South Africa (as in Sri Lankan ethnocracy). Secondly, whereas the economy of Apartheid South Africa was totally dependent on the labour of the black majority and there was never any question of ‘ethnically cleansing’ or excluding them (except to the nearby phoney, separate ‘Homelands’ within South Africa), Israel in contrast consciously replaced whatever small dependence it once had on the cheap labour of Palestinians, employing new settlers instead, and latterly using temporary or unenfranchised migrant workers (increasingly a potentially important new ‘third party’ inserted into ethnocracies). From an Israeli economic viewpoint the Palestinians are dispensable (see Piterberg 2008). This trumping of economics by demographic considerations is unusual because oppressed minorities are typically seen as ripe for exploitation, and it goes some way to explaining the severity of Israeli ethnocracy.

Urban Ethnocracy
The extension of the concept to ethnically-divided cities and city government generally applies within the context of national state ethnocracy (see Bollens 2007). But the dynamics are different and outcomes crucially depend on the relations between state and city. On the one hand, urban centres can have considerable scope or relative autonomy to modify or moderate the national ethnocracy and associated conflict. The demographic ‘balance of forces’ in a particular city may be radically different (e.g. either more or less favourable to the minority) than that at state level; but in general the capacity to moderate stems from the specifically ‘urban’ character of cities. And so in

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9Scott Bollens has carried out several detailed studies of urban governance in national ethnocracies. Urban ethnocracy also occurred in imperial ethnocracy but that is not dealt with here.
Northern Ireland various power-sharing arrangements were pioneered in city and local governments long before they ventured onto the ‘national’ stage of the regional government assembly. On the other hand, city autonomy can be severely curtailed or nullified, especially when at the mercy of states which believe they are fighting for their own survival. Cities have always to be seen in their national and indeed wider international contexts, and they can either reduce the severity of ethnocracy and conflict or exacerbate it, depending largely on national circumstances and wider interference or support.

It is in the character of cities, and sometimes especially capital cities, to attract conflict: they are prime symbolic and material targets for violent attack, prizes to be won in the conflict of ethnically-divided societies. Few prizes come bigger than Jerusalem, central to three major world religions and the putative and disputed capital for Israeli Jews and for the Palestinians. But all cities are also relatively easy to disrupt (e.g. can be brought to a standstill by strategically placed car bombs, real or hoax). Antagonistic urban groups living at relatively high densities and in close proximity can make for intense and on-going conflict. Yet, other urban features point in the opposite direction – unless there is full scale conventional warfare and the city is subject to ‘urbicide’ (Coward 2004). This ‘killing’ or total destruction of a city is however often an exaggeration or in reality quite exceptional for ‘divided cities’ in ethnocratic conflicts (notwithstanding the all-too-frequent images of urban devastation from Gaza, Iraq or Syria). In most cases, the contending forces are, or have resident supporters, in the same shared city. For it to function reasonably ‘normally’ as a city there has to be at least some minimal social interaction and co-operation across and between the city’s different parts, activities and communities; and most of the city’s residents most of the time have a strong vested interest in that continuing – longing for ‘normality’, i.e. non-conflict, is often a popular refrain. This ‘urban functional imperative’ to co-operate can often undercut or at least modify ethnic divisions and conflict, and the message from urban ethnocracy is often relatively encouraging compared to its national counterpart. It is not coincidental that Northern Ireland power-sharing started at city level; nor that the anti-ethnocratic Lebanese Beirut Madinati alliance is city-based.

While generally applying to cities within national ethnocracies, urban ethnocracy is a distinctly different type, not simply ‘national ethnocracy writ small’, just as cities are a qualitatively different type of entity from states. Urban ethnocratic regimes generally encourage ethnic segregation, but they have less control than states over issues such as economic development, migration, and private sector profit-driven housing provision (an ironic example is middle class Palestinians paying above
average prices to move into new Jewish ‘colonial neighbourhoods’ which were intended to further Jerusalem’s Judaisation – see Yacobi and Pullan 2014). The relative ‘openness’ of urban housing and employment to economic market criteria can in some circumstances weaken ethnic priorities or allow a comparatively milder ethnocracy – as arguably occurred in what by today’s standards seems a very harmonious Jerusalem under Mayor Teddy Kollek, from 1965 until he was replaced by a right-wing Likud mayor, Ehud Olmert, in 1993 (see Dumper 1997).

As Yiftachel (2006, pp.189-190) puts it, the ethnocratic city

‘… offers a more open and porous spatial ethnic arena, where some of the ethnocratic boundaries and hierarchies may be undermined .... on the one hand, it is an officially open and accessible space, on the other, it is segregated, controlled, and hierarchical....it is increasingly part of a globalizing culture and economy characterised by international migration, development bursts, and discourses of human rights, civil society, and democracy.... Yet...it is a product of the nationalist, expansionist logic of purified ethnic space.... urban informality becomes a common planning strategy in such settings, allowing both orderly and modernist planning to proceed while containing the tensions and preserving the control over the unplannable elements in these cities.’

Here he is referring to ethnocratic urbanisation which has given rise to informal or illegal urban developments (e.g., unauthorised squatting, undocumented workers, unlicensed trade). However, these features – ‘grey areas’ or ‘gray space’ – are in fact more general to cities in the ‘developing world’ which are not ethnocratic, and they are not necessarily replicated in Western ones which are. But they do point to the importance of urban planning and land-use controls as tools of ethnocratic city management (see Bollens 2007). The features of ‘informality’ are prominent in the particular case of Israeli urban planning where a technocratic veneer masks a minimization of Palestinian power through the gerrymandering of municipal borders, and a strategy where illegalities are condoned or even facilitated as a way of containing ‘the ungovernable’. The actual result is unserviced and deprived communities where planning agencies and tools ostensibly supposed to promote social amenities and welfare are in fact used to contain and oppress the marginalised.

The distinctiveness of urban regimes is partly explained by Yiftachel in terms of the logic of capital accumulation as a driver of urban transformation vis-à-vis the logic and the limitations of ethnocratic control. That is a useful distinction but it does not fully account for the distinctiveness
of ‘the urban’. After all, the logic of capital applies throughout the whole of society and to the state, not only to cities. Rather, the city differs from the state partly in terms of its formal government being subordinate to national state government, but also – as an element of that – what we can call its ‘partial de-politicization’. There is in capitalism a partial, institutionalised separation of ‘politics’ from ‘economics’, and one expression of it is a ‘division of labour’ between state and city. While the state monopolises the so-called ‘high politics’ of sovereignty, security and the exercise of legitimate violence, the modern city’s usual focus is more on economic, social and cultural issues and their associated ‘low politics’.

Seeing like a city not like a state

We can elaborate further on this by drawing on urban theory and the distinctive ‘politics of urbanism’ to discuss state-city differences more fully and how cities can sometimes moderate national ethnocracy. At the same time we have to recognise that ethnocracy itself can reduce the distinctiveness of urban politics and reduce their moderating effect.

However, first it helps to see urban politics in so-called ‘normal’ (i.e. non-ethnocratic) circumstances as fundamentally different from state politics, as Warren Magnusson argues cogently in his *Politics of Urbanism: Seeing like a city*, 2013. The contrast he draws is between a state politics of basically singular sovereignty in a more-or-less bounded national territory, compared to the essentially unbounded character of the city and its city-to-city networks (which often cross the territorial borders of the state). Specifically urban politics relate not to a single source of authority (like ‘the’ state) but to multiple sources, mainly economic and cultural as well as the conventionally political. And thereby the city opens up possibilities for comparatively greater flexibility and moderation in the exercise of ethnocracy.

To summarise his main points, Magnusson makes a persuasive case that:

‘urbanism is ultimately uncontainable, and that means that its politics always exceed the regulatory efforts of the highest authorities …. urbanism and statism are always at odds, since statism ... is inspired by the ideal that everything can be contained or controlled by a higher authority ….. To see like a city is to focus on what happens between people, what enables urban life, what questions arise within it, what solutions are developed, what conduct develops and to what effects. To see the political in these terms is to refer back to these practices rather than to the ones by which people are ostensibly “ruled”. The question of rule is secondary, because it only arises as a threat or a possible solution – in a context in which
people are always engaged in making their own lives work, under conditions in which they are thrown together by their own aspirations or by the immediate necessities of life… If the state emerges in response to the problem of sovereignty, the city has different origins and a different political order is immanent in its own rationalities. If the state requires a monopoly of legitimate authority to persist as a state, the city as city does not. The city depends on the intricate pattern of government and self-government...and hence on multiple authorities in different but not necessarily inconsistent registers. The effect of the city is to hold sovereignty in suspense, defer its application, and perhaps render it redundant… One might argue that what typifies the city is not the imposition of an overarching authority, but the multiplication of challenges to existing authorities of all sorts… the city … is not organized on the sovereignty principle, but instead on the principle of self-organization which in turn implies a multiplicity of authorities operating under conditions of rivalry and interdependence.’ (Magnusson 2013, p.24, p.34, p.109, p.117, p.118)

This very interesting perspective\(^\text{10}\) points to the punchline that the city should be a major, even the major, site for attempting to transform ethnocracy and ethno-national conflict, as important as the state and in different, sometimes complementary ways.

Unfortunately however things are not quite that simple. The punchline has to be qualified because ethnocracy itself reduces what makes urban politics distinctive from state politics and hence reduces the city’s moderating effect. Ethnocracy tends to negate what in non-ethnocratic circumstances is the modern city’s ‘partial de-politicisation’ with respect to sovereignty – indeed this negation can be seen as one of the defining characteristics of the ethno-nationally divided city. Holding ‘sovereignty in suspense’, deferring or rendering it ‘redundant’, hardly applies to the highly-politicised city caught up in conflict about statehood. Far from sovereignty issues being removed from city to state level, they are often central to ethno-nationally divided cities, and right down to conflicts at neighbourhood level (for example, fights for local territory in Belfast are intense because they act as proxies for the struggle over national territory). This type of (‘high’) politicisation is indeed one important way of distinguishing the ethnocratic city from so-called ‘normal’ cities or modern ones in general.

\(^{10}\text{It is an anarchistic ‘anti-state’ perspective, and it can be argued that it seriously underplays the role of states in over-seeing if not dictating urban policies. Nevertheless it captures the fact that power in cities is much more de-centred, and the basic ways in which ‘ordinary’ or ‘normal’ urban politics are qualitatively different from those of the state.}\)
Nevertheless, cities are generally very important as sites for potentially moderating or reducing ethnocracy. The associated conflicts, like contemporary populations, are now largely urbanised. The urban features identified by Magnusson, particularly the city’s ‘multiple authorities’ and the ‘multiplication of challenges to existing authorities’, continue to exist under ethnocracy.

Here Jennifer Robinson’s (2006) concept of ‘ordinary cities’ is useful, and in two respects. Firstly, she argues against the limiting, debilitating compartmentalisation of urban studies, divided up into different world regions or cities in ‘developed’ as distinct from ‘developing’ countries: the former tend to be privileged as the focus or source of urban theorising while the latter are relegated to residual categories. Instead all cities should be understood as ‘ordinary’, all have innovative potential, especially as all now interact with more global forces. This has clear relevance for urban ethnocracy for it can and does occur in cities across the globe – across the conventional ‘compartments’.

Secondly, compartmentalising has the strong implication that cities have to be understood and explained primarily in terms of their particular ‘compartment’ and factors particular to it. Instead they should all be treated as ‘ordinary’ in the first instance, all subject to the same or similar general processes, and at least partly understandable in terms of the same general insights. Thus ‘ethnocratic cities’ can be seen as ‘ordinary’, subject to many of the same general or ‘ordinary’ urban processes (e.g. (de-)industrialisation, (sub)urbanisation, gentrification, marketization and so forth) as many other, non-ethnocratic cities. And this especially needs to be remembered in cities riven by ethnic and national conflicts where there is a tendency to try and ‘explain everything’ in terms of the conflict, as caused by it or by the ‘other side’ (it sometimes seems as if ‘nothing normal’ ever happens in these conflict-divided places). Sometimes the real explanation is more mundane, to be found in ‘ordinary’ urban processes. At the same time, however, it is undoubtedly true that ethnocratic cities are shaped by (and shape) ethnic conflict, and to that extent they have to be seen as ‘extra-ordinary’. Their reality is both more complex and more interesting: they are simultaneously ‘ordinary’ and ‘extra-ordinary’ and they have to be understood in terms of how the two facets interact.

Imperial Ethnocracy
If urban and national ethnocracies clearly coexist in the same time-space, relations between imperial and national variants are more complex, combining coexistence and historical sequence. While national ethnocracies mostly stem from imperial ethnocracies, and traditional empires were
eventually superceded by national states, imperialism and nationalism in fact overlapped and interacted with each other over two centuries, from the French Revolution to the post-World War II era, and each took on characteristics of the other (see Anderson and O’Dowd 2007). In studying ethno-nationally divided cities in contemporary ethnocracies, we found that nearly all of them originated at the insecure and often contested frontiers of traditional imperial ethnocracies (e.g. Trieste in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Mostar in the Ottoman, Danzig in the Prussian, Belfast and Montreal in the British, while the Muslim Uyghur city of Kashgar in China’s Xinjiang province – literally ‘New Frontier’ – is a contemporary ‘throw-back’). In frontier regions (e.g. in the Balkans, the Middle East) imperial control was often over-extended, or brutal methods substituted for efficiency, and /or there were interventions by rival imperialisms (e.g. Spain and France in Ireland; Austria-Hungary in the Ottoman Balkans; and the 19th century British almost everywhere). The ruling imperial powers typically politicised ethnic groupings, sometimes governing through them (e.g. in the Ottoman millet system where religious leaders became the political leaders of their communities); and imperial ‘divide and rule’ strategies based on a hierarchization of competing groups (as in Ireland) often spawned and exacerbated later ethno-national conflict.

Belgium and its capital Brussels are a rare exception to this historical sequence. There were no region-based differences of religion (most Belgians were at least nominally Catholic), but instead a general opposition of ‘progressive’ liberals to ‘religious’ conservatism. Here language-based regional differentiations and eventually national ethnocracies only emerged in the late 19th century over half a century after state freedom from the Austrian Habsburg Empire had been engineered, largely by external powers. Belgium’s ethno-national linguistic differentiations had no real political precedents in the Empire (who cared what the non-enfranchised majority of the people spoke?), even though the Empire had favoured French as its language of administration, followed by the upper classes irrespective of which region they lived in (see Hepburn 2004, pp. 136-140). Despite romantic theories of nationalism making language central, it mostly became important as a practical political issue and ‘marker’ only with the introduction of compulsory primary education in the later 19th century, for that immediately raised the issue of which language or dialect should be used in schools and by extension in society generally.

Another, perhaps only partial, exception to national ethnocracy having imperial roots is Sri Lanka where the British tended to favour generally better

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11 See Acknowledgements below.
educated northern Tamils over the majority Sinhalese for state administration jobs. But it was at most a weak ethnocracy; the Sinhalese and the northern Tamils were broadly united in opposing British rule; and national Sinhalese ethnocracy only really started becoming a serious factor in the 1950s about a decade after national independence.

In some cases (e.g. Palestine, Ireland, and Australia, though not Sri Lanka or Lebanon) the imperial and subsequent national ethnocracies are further complicated by substantial ‘settler colonialism’. This produces its own dynamics in three-way relations between ‘settlers’ and ‘natives’ (e.g. between Zionist Jews and Muslim or Christian Palestinians), and thirdly the ruling ‘metropolitan’ or imperial power. It would be misleading to simply project back the contemporary two-way relationship (e.g. between Zionists and Palestinians) or play down (if not ignore) imperial ethnocracy. It, after all, was generally the key agency in creating both the settler colonialism and the later national ethnocracy. Imperial ethnocracy had its own overall ethnic biases, contrary to its commonly projected self-image of ‘honest broker’, though this ideology did have some partial basis in reality. The three-way relations involved ‘divide and rule’ strategies where imperial control depended on playing off ‘settlers’ and ‘natives’ against each other, mostly favouring the former though occasionally the latter; and this undoubtedly had a moderating effect, compared to the simpler and often harsher two-way ‘settler-native’ juxtaposition in the national ethnocracy which followed (despite the latter’s much greater lip service to democracy). This applied to a lesser extent in Australia because the indigenous people posed much less threat to the state than did the contending forces in Palestine or Ireland for instance, and there was therefore less need to partially accommodate them. But is it not significant that it was Australia’s own national federation which from 1901 formalized the ‘white Australia policy’ and the forced assimilation of so-called ‘Aborigines’?

In pre-1948 Palestine with its very substantial, active in-migration and a Zionist settler society, and earlier in Ireland with historical migration and now a ‘quasi-settler’ ideology or mentality among many Northern Ireland Protestants, the British imperial power played an absolutely key role in Jewish and Protestant populations achieving separate statehood. Thanks to the British, both achieved it despite being demographic minorities. They were favoured partly because Palestinian nationalism (initially at least) and Irish nationalism (mainly Catholic in composition) were seen as the greater threat to the British status quo. ‘Dictatorships of the majority’ in a democracy are bad enough but courtesy of the empire and non-democratic imperialism,
Palestine and Ireland got demographically improbable ethnocracies based on ‘dictatorships of the minority’! (see Anderson 2013).

Ethnically biased ‘balancing acts’ by the British, and also by the French with respect to the Maronite Christians of Mount Lebanon (see Traboulsi 2007), ensured that minorities succeeded in carving out their state territories contrary to the wishes of the great majority of the respective pre-partition populations in Palestine, Ireland and Greater Syria. And they did it perhaps too ‘greedily’ in Northern Ireland and Lebanon, for the Protestants and Maronites would eventually lose their demographic pre-eminence. In Palestine the British made expedient WWI promises both to the Palestinians and to the Zionists, but they were committed to a Jewish ‘national home’ on Palestinian land through the Balfour Declaration of 1917 which was then written into their subsequent League of Nations Mandate. In the words of Jerusalem’s British Governor in the 1920s, they wanted to create ‘for England a “little loyal Jewish Ulster” in a sea of potentially hostile Arabism’ (a self-serving imperialist logic still alive in the USA, though Americans now increasingly have to question Israel’s ‘loyalty’).

Up to 1939, the British had seriously weakened the Palestinians politically and militarily before they were faced with ethnic cleansing in 1947-48, while in contrast half of the opposing Zionist forces had had military training from the British Army. Their ‘Plan D’ ethnic cleansing actually began before independence because the British effectively abdicated and left the Palestinians to their fate (see Pappe 2007, and Piterberg 2008).

Imperial power has to negotiate the three-way relations involving ‘settlers’ and ‘natives’, or it has to ‘divide and rule’ a plurality of indigenous ethnicities, but either way imperial ethnocracy is rarely a simple matter of unambiguously supporting one ethnic group. Instead, while seldom ‘even-handed’, it typically has to alternate in supporting different groups (and in consequence may be distrusted by all of them). National ethnocracies in contrast generally have no such ‘balancing’ constraints: national self-governing ‘democratic majorities’ typically have the simpler, less mediated, two-way relationship against the ‘minority’ – as in independent post-British Israel; and in Northern Ireland where the British government effectively left ‘local matters’ to Unionist rule – or rather ‘mis-rule’ – until things ‘blew up’, literally, in the late 1960s.

Although national ethnocrats are more concerned about projecting democratic appearances, their regimes of bias are often less restrained and more authoritarian than imperial forerunners. There is thus the general paradox of imperial ethnocracy often being ‘milder’ than its national ‘democratic’ successors. However, this paradox is only partial and has to be qualified. Some imperial powers clinging on desperately before departure in
the face of local opposition resorted to extreme brutality and very ethnically-divisive tactics (e.g., the French in Indo-China and Algeria; the British in Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus and Aden). This, happening last, is often what is remembered locally, rather than more peaceful imperialism in its prime, and so a nasty lasting legacy was left for successor national regimes, including ethnocratic ones.

‘Post-Conflict’ or ‘Shared’ Ethnocracy

More speculatively, I’m suggesting two further extensions of ‘ethnocracy’: to the usually mis-named ‘post-conflict’ stages of ‘peace processes’, and, even more tentatively, to ‘post-national’ and religious ethnocracy. These variants are speculative or tentative largely because of their overlapping, ambiguous or shifting relations with national ethnocracy, and particular regimes or movements may move into and out of the categories.

‘Post-conflict’ or shared ethnocracy is a continuation of national ethnocracy but it constitutes a distinct category as it now involves two (or, as in Bosnia, three) distinct and conflicting ethnicities with access to state power though on a shared basis. In the new consociational, power-sharing arrangements they continue to compete but they are also under pressure to co-operate. So this variant has its own distinctive dynamics, or in some cases a lack of them: there may be mutual blocking of ‘the other’s’ initiatives, or ‘gridlock’ because of institutional guarantees which were originally designed to counter damaging majoritarian democracy and end violent conflict.

Typically power-sharing has to be imposed or at least strongly encouraged by external powers – dominant ethnocrats do not willingly agree to it. Examples include the 1995 ‘Dayton Agreement’ for the territorial and governmental relations between the Serbs, Croats and Muslim Bosniaks of Bosnia, and the 1998 Good Friday Agreement for Northern Ireland. They have had the great merit of very largely ending lethal conflict, but inevitably with negative aspects. Institutional guarantees have been necessary to get the armed fighters to stop fighting, but that almost inevitably builds dysfunctional rigidities, even ‘gridlock’, into the political system. It can help perpetuate, or indeed accentuate, the very ethno-national divisions which feed the conflict and were a cause of it in the first place, despite being well-intentioned. Old ethnocratic ways of thinking die hard anyway, but, harder if they are actively encouraged and perpetuated by consociationalism. Not surprisingly, its critics have latched onto this truth, some thinking to ‘demolish’ the very idea of consociationalism. But they in turn need to be reminded of the other truth that there once was an armed conflict which had to be stopped: here the framing of the original settlement obviously requires
care and foresight but in reality there are no easy answers – undefeated fighters have to be given guarantees to persuade them to stop fighting.

Power-sharing between groups already defined in ethnic terms inevitably puts ethnic identity and ethnic politics centre-stage, and this tends to crowd-out other identities, other politics. It may confirm separate ethno-national electorates with each ethnic group voting for its own ethnic representatives, and little ‘cross voting’; and little scope for dealing properly with issues which straddle the ethnic divisions, such as those of social class, poverty, inequality, the environment, non-ethnic forms of discrimination, and so forth. These get systematically neglected which is what led to rioting in Bosnia and helped motivate Madinati in Beirut. The main democratic or inter-party competition tends to be within more than across or between the main ethno-national communities, and that often results in the more ‘extreme’ representatives (or self-styled ‘defenders’) of the ethnic groups winning their respective intra-ethnic competitions. Sometimes – as in the division of Bosnia into the Republica Srpska for Bosnian Serbs, while the other two ethno-national groups share the territorially separate Croat-Bosniak Federation – the continuing ‘post-conflict’ divisions are reinforced spatially and territorially. But even without territorial reinforcement there tends to be ethnically-divided and hence often dysfunctional government.

So in Northern Ireland people say that rather than having a ‘power-sharing’ government, we have a ‘sharing out of power’, or what can be seen as a sharing between two ethnocratic parties. The biggest parties from each ‘side’ – here the Irish nationalist Sinn Fein and the ‘Paisleyite’ Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) – ‘share out’ the most important government ministries between themselves, with often secret ‘horse-trading’. But that can break down especially before elections, and ‘stupid ethnocracy’ returns. (The DUP for instance behaving as if Northern Ireland is still the unionist ethnocracy of their memories or dreams, though alternatively, there’s the local joke that ‘Irish unionists are too stupid to know when they’ve won, and Irish nationalists are too smart to admit they’ve lost’.) The previous (actually quite clever) leader of the DUP did argue that unionists had ‘won the war’, the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 confirmed the continuation of the union with Britain, only a minority of Catholics now supported a United Ireland, and the hence the DUP should now be open and welcoming to Catholics. But that original ploy fell apart when (presumably for electoral purposes) he and his party helped ferment a petty, purely symbolic but toxic dispute about flying the British Union Jack over Belfast City Hall 365 days a year – a dispute which they predictably lost.

So, unstable ethnocracy can have a third outcome – not simply the continuation of lethal conflict, nor the ending of it in genuine democratisation
and sharing, but something in-between: a consociational ‘shared post-conflict ethnocracy’ where conflict is (mostly) non-lethal but the reality (inverting the aphorism of Clausewitz) is that the politics is the war continuing ‘by other means’.

‘Post-National’ and Religious Ethnocracy
So far we have proceeded without looking at the slippery nature of ethnicity and the divisive problems that can arise from how it is defined and used for political ends. It seemed enough to ‘know’ that the Sri Lankan majority are Sinhalese who are Sinhala-speaking Buddhists while their minority Tamil opponents are Tamil-speaking Hindus. But while a language may symbolise an ethnic or ethno-national group identity, perhaps not all putative members actually use or even understand it. For some it is mainly or merely a tokenistic badge or marker of a particular political nationalism (despite often being in fact transnational). For others, however, language is mainly of value in its own right, an end in itself rather than a means to an end, and perhaps more important than nationalism – they are sometimes called ‘cultural nationalists’ or are language activists rather than ethno-national activists. Obviously the lines are blurred – indeed the same person or group may move from one category to the other (and back again) – but ‘ethnic politics in the service of language’ clearly has a different logic from ‘language in the service of ethnic politics’.

The same applies to religion, and indeed more so. It is generally more important and more problematic as the basis of ethnocracy. It may be used simply as a marker of a particular ethnic group, but it is generally transnational or universal in ethos with strong objectives of its own. Most ethno-national conflicts are not centrally about religion per se – many participants are irreligious – nevertheless religion is often an important factor in shaping these conflicts – and their intractability. Religions have a material institutional existence rooted in everyday life, and they can erect strong social boundaries between groups (e.g. a religious equivalent of bi-lingualism is beyond most people’s imagination though some Indian Hindus managed it). While often supporting peace and reconciliation, religions also have substantial historical associations with violence. Ideologically they tend to deal with ‘matters of life and death’ and in dogmas of ‘absolute truth’ which can preclude a useful or peaceful discussion of disagreements. Arguably this

12For example, the Gaelic League established in 1893 to restore the Irish language was initially neutral in party political terms believing the language belonged to all, Irish unionists as well as nationalists. But between 1912 and 1915 it was effectively taken over by its dominant nationalist component to further the specifically political aims of Irish republicans.
can encourage violent conflict, sometimes with largely religious motivation (see O’Dowd and McKnight 2015)\(^\text{13}\). 

So, not surprisingly, relations with nation and national ethnocracy are complex, ambiguous and shifting: religious ethnocracy is an unsettled variant developing through different routes. For example, it may come from combining religion with tribal conflict, as in Kaduna, Nigeria; it may ‘spill over’ from national ethnocracy, as in Israel-Palestine; or it may spring ‘post-national’ from the failures of secular nationalism, most obviously from the ashes of the pan-Arab national movement.

Religion-based ethnic conflict and ethnocratic ‘solutions’ may arise to some extent separately from national movements. This was the case in Kaduna, although the British Empire, by creating Nigeria with its north-south, Muslim-Christian split, and the unequal treatment of different ethnic groups by imperial ethnocracy and then the Nigerian state, provided the crucial context. The present sometimes violent conflict in Kaduna since the 1980s has been fuelled by hostilities between Pentecostal Christianity and Reform Islam but has centrally been about differential tribal access to socio-economic resources, (un)employment, and state positions and power (see Harris 2013). It is partly about getting/keeping control of the existing state, not an ethno-national struggle to re-shape or partition the state on religious lines, though it could conceivably transmute into such a struggle (perhaps similar to Sudan’s).

Religious motivations, objectives and justifications are increasingly mixed in with national secular ones within some national ethnocracies. We see this in Israel-Palestine where Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox religious radicals who comprise less than 30% of the total Jewish population have become increasingly powerful since the 1970s; they make up nearly all the West Bank settlers, and have been pushing towards a theocracy. And secular Palestinian politics have also experienced religious radicalisation (see Yiftachel and Roded 2010). Although the main conflict is still clearly ethno-national, religious factors sharpen it but also sometimes ‘spill-over’ to become more important than secular ones.

Where religious institutions have a long history of active involvement in sometimes violent politics (e.g., the Croatian Catholic Church), differentiating ‘religious’ from ‘national’ objectives, or distinguishing

\(^\text{13}\)For our ‘Divided Cities’ project, (see Acknowledgements), we had an international workshop on ‘Religion, Violence and Cities’ with a Special Issue of *Space and Polity* organised by Liam O’Dowd and Martina McKnight (2015). It is perhaps not coincidental that our two least violent divided cities, Brussels and Montreal, are the two where language rather than religion constitutes the main dividing line.
different types or historical stages of ethnocracy, can be difficult, a merging of priorities and continuity the apparently dominant realities. Nevertheless, such differentiations are important for understanding ethnocracy. Thus in the case of some Islamic groups, the political reassertion of religion has been directly at the expense or as a consequence of failed or partly failed secular nationalist movements (e.g. secular pan-Arab nationalism, whose last representatives have included Saddam Hussein, Colonel Gaddafi, and now Assad in Syria, hardly a reassuring trio). The over-used term ‘post-national’ does seem appropriate for their radical Islamic successors or opponents. There is also the fact that the traditional Muslim concept of the ummah, or the whole community of Islam, is trans-ethnic, transnational and potentially universal in character, and this is to some extent reflected in the non-territorial politics of some jihadists who fight under such banners as Al Qaeda.

However the inverted commas around ‘post-national’ are retained because ours is still an era dominated by national states and nationalisms, and to a varying extent these groups (e.g. Hamas, Hezbollah, the Afghan Talibab, Al-Shabaab, Islamic State) are sometimes quite nationalistic or at least territorially particularistic in their objectives. Often there are tensions between religious objectives on the one hand, for example the widespread or ‘universal’ application of sharia law in opposition to ‘Western or Christian imperialism’, and, on the other hand, more immediate political objectives such as the creation of an Islamic coalition government in a particular territory, with the issues further complicated by groups acting as proxies to advance the geopolitical ambitions of particular regional powers, perhaps ‘dressed up’ in religious garb. The Shia Hezbollah of southern Lebanon got a lot of political kudos and leverage as the national defenders of Lebanon against Israeli invaders; and geopolitically it is an active proxy army for its major funder Shia Iran, more recently in the Syrian conflict.

So religion as a marker and component of ethno-national belonging may transmute into something much more substantial. The categories are fluid rather than fixed and we need to be alive to the possibility that movements or regimes may switch category. While the dominant historical trajectories have been for some ethnic groups to transmute into ethno-

14 The Croatian ultra-nationalists who led the 1991-95 war against Serb forces with active backing from the Croatian Catholic Church harked back to the 1941-45 Nazi puppet regime of the Ustashe fascists. As well as murdering several hundred thousand people, mostly Serbs but also Jews, Roma and others, the Ustashe attempted to forcibly convert Orthodox Serbs to Catholicism. After 1995 the mountain top from which Croat forces had bombarded the Muslim section of Mostar (its famous Old Bridge included) became the site of a huge mountain top cross, mimicking the Corcovada statue in Rio but with its own unsubtle message to the Muslims below.
national ones, and religion to go from being a pre-national force in its own right to becoming a national marker, there is no reason to believe that history is one-directional. On the contrary, it clearly is not. While historical processes are never literally reversed or repeated (change is not merely cyclical or ‘circular’ for there are always new elements involved, and ‘spiral’ is perhaps a better metaphor), nevertheless there is widespread evidence of a reassertion or re-juvenation of religion as an end in itself, a political force on its own behalf across different faith groups, most notably in radical Islam but also in Christian fundamentalism.

The concept of ethnocracy and its five variants help unify different aspects and situations of ethno-national conflict and ethnically-biased regimes into a more coherent whole: national and urban ethnocracy in relation to contested states and divided cities; the cities’ origins at the edge of traditional territorial empires, and the often formative influence of imperial ethnocracy on later national or post-national developments; the continuation of more muted ‘post-conflict’ ethnocracy in consociational power-sharing situations; and the possibilities of a ‘post-national’ ethnocracy and religious motivations predominating over national ones. With all five types we find they are as much the cause as the consequence of conflict, often operating in zero-sum terms which are ultimately self-defeating and damaging for all sides. So we need to understand their conflict-generating and unstable character, and their inherent tendency to deepen conflict unless countered by internal and external forces. Understanding how they operate in terms of their specific dynamics in the different situations can help in reducing conflict or transforming it into something more positive. Less optimistically, the relevance of the concept may become more prevalent if reactions against perceived ‘outside forces’ continue to mobilise around the chauvinistic ‘purities’ of ethnic identity.

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COMMENTARY

Extending Ethnocracy: Reflections and Suggestions

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Abstract
As prelude to the special issue, this short piece reflects on the scholarly origins of the 'ethnocracy' concept, and comments on the arguments made by James Anderson's insightful opening article. It then outlines several concepts developed in the author's own work in later years as 'offsprings' of ethnocracy. Finally, it answers the challenge raised by Anderson by suggesting future theoretical, conceptual and empirical directions for research into ethnocratic dynamics on urban, state and global scales.

This special journal issue, devoted to the concept of 'ethnocracy', is an excellent opportunity to reflect on the making and life of the concept some two decades after its emergence in the social sciences and humanities. It is also an opportunity to evaluate the concept's strengths and weaknesses, and assess its ability to shed light on the nature of political regimes and identity politics during a critical transitional period in the world's political geography. In this short piece I will first reflect on the origins of ethnocratic theory, then briefly comment on Anderson's insightful lead article, and highlight several concepts and research agendas that rest on the foundations of the ethnocratic angle.

To refresh the readers' mind, the term 'ethnocracy' was developed into a comprehensive theory during the 1990s and early 2000s (Yiftachel, 1997, 1999, 2006). It identified a particular regime type, which uses a 'thin' layer of (often distorted) democratic practices, but structurally facilitates – explicitly
or implicitly – mechanisms of ethnic control and expansion over contested lands. Ethnocratic theory analysed critically the causes, content, consequences and different trajectories of ethnocratic regimes. It was developed (after years of being sporadically mentioned in the literature) following criticism of conventional, typically non-critical scholarship describing the nature of political regimes, (e.g. Alvarez et al. 1996). It was also propelled by a critique of several key concepts that emerged in the 1990s, such as 'nationalizing states' (Brubaker 1996) or 'ethnic democracy' (Smooha 1990, Yiftachel 1992). These discussions exposed a serious void in existing typologies of political regimes, which consistently overlooked the persistence and often neo-colonial nature of ethnic domination in a wide range of states, even during their so-called 'democratic transition'.

While the development of ethnocratic theory was strongly influenced by studying the Zionist-Palestinian conflict, the concept was developed by using comparative methods, and hence became equally relevant to other regimes facilitating the domination of a particular identity group over others, such as Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Estonia and Serbia. The insightful articles of this special issue, dealing with Fiji, Australia, Lebanon, Ireland, the Baltic States, Sri Lanka and the city of Jerusalem, vividly illustrate this international relevance.

During the 1990s and 2000s, empirical and comparative work on ethnocratic societies resulted in the development of a set of related concepts, seeking to fine-tune the understanding of the logic, workings and consequences of ethnocratic systems of power. These have focused on the impact of spatial, legal and discursive practices on social and political relations, and included concepts such as 'settling ethnocracy', 'ethnicization', 'ethnic religion', 'ethno-class', 'fractured regions', 'trapped minorities', 'stratified citizenship' and 'urban ethnocracy' (See, among others: Anderson 2013; Murtagh and Keaveney 2006; Nagle 2009; Howard 2012; O'Dowd and Komarova 2011; Renemyi 2011; Tuathail, 2013 Yiftachel 1997, 1999, 2006; Yiftachel and Yacobi 2000; Yiftachel and Ghanem 2004).

**Extending Ethnocracy**

In his perceptive leading article, James Anderson suggests extension of the concept in three related directions, dealing with 'imperial ethnocracy', 'religious-political ethnocracy' and 'post-conflict' ethnocracy. Indeed, such insightful suggestions take the concept into areas of investigation often overlooked in previous work. Conceptually and politically, religion is obviously a major mobilizer of identity and politics. The two decades since the development of 'ethnocracy' have seen a significant rise of religious discourses as key platforms of identity conflicts, notably in the Middle East,
where political Islam has radically reshaped previous political landscapes and forms of violent conflicts in key states such as Turkey, Egypt, Iraq and Syria. In Israel/Palestine religion has never been far from the political surface, but in recent years its impact has amplified, often positing a radicalizing challenge to state ethnocratic logic (see also Yiftachel and Roded 2010). Likewise, countless political struggles in Africa, Asia, and the Americas and even in Europe have revolved around explicit or implicit notions of religion.

Beyond its empirical validity, the rise of political religion also presents a challenge to the ethnocratic model in ways unpredicted by the original model. New religious politics often promote different sets of political boundaries and horizons around which power is mobilized and contested. In ethnocratic settings, religious identities often overlap ethno-national definitions to create ‘ethnic religions’, leading to a mutual reinforcement of the two sets of political mobilizations (evident in cases such as Lebanon, The Balkans, Sudan or Northern Ireland). Other times, however, religious boundaries and goals contest state authority and power, particularly when fuelling expansionist agendas, as in some versions of political Judaism and Islam (see Yiftachel and Roded 2010). The unstable relations between ethnocratic and religious projects, as Anderson points out well, add an important dimension of ethnic politics yet to be fully analysed or understood.

Anderson's additional idea of extending ethnocracy, 'back' to imperial history, and 'forward' to post-conflict settings, is also highly commendable. Beyond the obvious interest in the historically changing nature of territorality and identity, it also introduces the importance of time and temporality as critical analytical categories, often underplayed in the study of political geographies and conflicts (see also Jamal 2016; Yiftachel 2016). In ethnocratic societies, the management of time has become a tool for preserving the position of dominant groups, through the portrayal of their history, archaeology and belonging to contested territory as timeless and natural.

In parallel, ethnocratic time management tends to define the existence of other groups as temporary, transient, invasive or uncertain, hence weakening their claims for recognition, belonging and resources. In many ethnocratic states, territorial time has been colonized by the dominant power, with the effect of triggering resistance, hardening identities and deepening conflicts. On the contrary, in federal, multi-cultural or liberal societies, the recognition of multiple collective times and overlapping histories have been instrumental in the transition from conflict to coexistence. Therefore, even beyond imperial and post-conflict settings, Anderson's intervention opens up wide horizons for new research on these timely topics.
Further Horizons
In the spirit of Anderson's discussion, let me now identify other aspects of ethnocratic theory, which call for further scholarly and political attention. These include (but naturally, not limited to) race, gender, immigration and urban regimes. Race is closely related to ethnicity, being a 'biological-like' social and political category constantly changing over time. Racial categories have been commonly imposed over marginalized groups in order to maintain social and political supremacy. The similarities and differences between race and ethnicity in the making of political and spatial power need to be further explored, if we are to fully understand the making and maintenance of ethnocracies and group conflict (see Winant 2011). This is particularly the case in the current age of increasing immigration and refugee movement, as collective identities are increasingly essentialized. At the same time, liberalization and democratization see indigenous and national minorities reassert their demands, thus further fuelling group boundaries and tensions.

Gender, like race, is understudied in the ethnocratic context (for exceptions, see Mostov 1999; Fenster 2005; Yuval-Davis and Werbner 1999). Gender is obviously critical to the very making of ethnic categories and the manner in which they are reproduced. Gender relations are mobilized both to sharpen the differences between collectivities, but also to shape the nature of gender and sexualities within groups. In particular, ethnic conflict and neocolonial relations often suppress the struggle over gender issues such as abuse, domination, equality, family structure and sexuality, commonly in the name of serving 'higher' collective goals. The typical ethnocratic silencing of gender issues thus facilitates the essentialization of collective identities and the inability of women to challenge their oppression (see: Mostov 1999). But other examples also exist, where women mobilize the struggle to move 'upwards' in the social order, as occurred in the first Palestinian Intifada or with women mobilization in Liberia. Research in these areas can add crucial insights to the understanding of the making and maintenance of oppressive ethnocratic systems, and the manner in which 'cracks' in the system have been exploited to challenge patriarchal ethnocracies.

Two additional areas of research appear to be vital for the understanding of contemporary ethnocratic societies: immigration and urban regimes. The expansion of the ethnocratic inquiry into these areas has already begun (see: Porter and Barry 2015; Roy 2009). Using a 'grounded theorization' approach, my own work has explored the changing spatio-political positioning of these groups in rapidly expanding urban regions. While these topics still require much more research, it is clear that ethnocratic and racial logics are critical for the understanding of governance and social relations in today's metropolis. This factor has been underplayed in most
critical urban and planning theories with the effect of ignoring and/or misunderstanding major political upheavals (Yiftachel 2016). Systematic engagement with urban identity regimes has spawned the development of new concepts, such as ‘gray spacing’, ‘dynamic structuralism’, ‘creeping apartheid’ and ‘metrozenship’ (Yiftachel 2015). Space limitation prevents proper discussion of these concepts, which can be likened to branches splitting from the core of ethnocratic theories, and shedding light on related, yet different, configurations of power, space and identity.

Immigration, either international or internal, was also previously underplayed in the study of ethnocratic regimes. It has nonetheless become a critical factor in understanding new formations of class and identity, and hence political regimes. The amplifying mobility (of both immigrants and refugees) has been unprecedented in recent years, causing shockwaves to political systems worldwide. The recent examples of Brexit and the rise of Donald Trump in the US are clear illustrations that even in the most liberal capitalist societies, ethnocratic considerations are firmly on the agenda. Hence, the current stage of globalizing capitalism, often portrayed in the literature as either (neo)liberal or color-blind, is strongly implicated in the rise of ethnocratic practices and mobilizations.

In such settings, ethnocratic principles play a critical new role, by creating new hierarchies of civil status between 'veterans' (typically citizens with full rights), and 'newcomers' (often having partial or minimal rights). The normative and legal foundations of this process are rooted in the putative 'ownership' of particular groups over states and public resources. Hence, the institution of citizenship, which was created to overcome feudal or colonial hierarchical systems of privilege and create a universal ‘demos’, has now – ironically – become a foundation of new, often racist, social hierarchies.

Urban regimes have become central to shaping these relations as the manifestation of these processes became nearly exclusively urban, with most immigrants congregating in rapidly growing urban regions. This has put in train a process I have conceptualized as 'gray spacing', in which growing groups, areas, developments and economies are being placed, indefinitely, between the 'lightness' of full membership, legality and safety, and the 'darkness' of marginalization, criminality and eviction. This indefinite ‘in-betweenness’ has structurally marginalized large parts of the population, signalling a new manifestation of ethnocratic norms that rear their head in the current age of capitalist globalization and the associated rapid urbanization (see Yiftachel 2011; Tzfadia 2013).

Gray spacing has become a hallmark of the new metropolis, and hence the foundation of a new political order. One of the main challenges is thus to explore in new research the interaction of ethnocratic and racist, or
alternatively liberal or democratic practices, on the emerging or new urban regimes. Given the centrality of cities, the urban order will increasingly become a main battleground for the making of new citizenship and social relations. Although states obviously remain key players, the city is where new colonial relations are being forged, where new mobilizations, democratization and/or marginalization are being established.

'Creeping Apartheid' is therefore emerging as a leading urban political order. The congregation of marginalized, ‘partial’ citizens in major urban centres has meant that many urban regimes are now – knowingly or unwittingly – facilitating this process through a range of structurally discriminating practices and regulations, in policy areas such as housing, land, development and representation. Apartheid is 'creeping' because these practices and policies remain undeclared, being justified as ‘temporary’ or as a result of a ‘natural’ market or ‘international’ order. Here, the concept of ‘metrozenship’ was suggested to offer a new normative and political horizon to de-colonize the emerging exploitive and often racist urban order (Yiftachel 2015). Nevertheless, these urban apartheid too should be considered as ‘branches’ of the ethnocratic state, as it attempts to control the tensions between persisting governance structures, ethnic and cultural demands, within the latest stage of global capitalism. These regimes must be further studied theoretically and comparatively to better understand their impact on social relations and political transformations.

Finally, the connection of ethnocracy to Israel/Palestine can, and should, be explored more deeply in line with the suggestions above, and beyond. Further bold, critical, theorizations of such studies will demonstrate that Israel/Palestine is not an exception, as is often argued. It is rather an intense hyper-example of processes commonly evident elsewhere, many of which as 'off-springs' of the ethnocratic order which should be further studied, critiqued and resisted.

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Sri Lanka: An Ethnocratic State Preventing Positive Peace

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Abstract
Although proclaimed a democratic republic, the Sri Lankan state is strongly controlled and ruled by Sinhala Buddhist influence and a deeply engrained belief that the island ‘belongs’ to the Sinhala Buddhists. It is an ethnocratic state and its mono-ethnic, mono-linguistic and mono-religious stances in a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-religious island have led to a widening and deepening discrimination against particular ethnic groups, especially the Tamils who have traditionally inhabited the north and east of the island. In a continuing ethno-political conflict, ethnocracy continues to be defended and justified by the state in the name of sovereignty, territorial integrity and national security, and has led to further polarization of the already divided ethnic groups. As a consequence of the ethnocratic nature of the Sri Lankan state, a bloody war erupted between successive governments of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who fought for an independent state for the Tamils. After nearly 38 years the prolonged war came to a brutal end in May 2009 amidst blatant violations of international law. However, the root causes of this conflict, which lie in the ethnocratic nature of the state, have still not been addressed, resulting in the continuation of the ethnic conflict despite the end of the war. This paper focuses on the ethnocratic nature of the Sri Lankan state structure dominated by Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, and does not seek to cover all forms of the ethno-political conflict or any intra-ethnic conflicts.

Introduction
Sri Lanka, previously known as Ceylon, is a tropical island nation off the southeastern coast of the Indian subcontinent. Of the co-constituting communities in the island the Sinhalese make up 74.9% of the population, the
Tamils make up 15.4% (the traditional inhabitants of the north and east of the island comprise 11.2% while Tamils of relatively recent Indian origin make up 4.2%), and the ‘Moors’ (Sri Lankan Muslims) make up 9.2%, with other ethnic groups comprising only 0.5% of the total (Department of Census and Statistics – Sri Lanka, 2012).

The Tamil-speaking people were the majority population in the North and the East prior to the state-sponsored colonization schemes executed with the intention of demographic change. As a result today, the Tamils are the majority population only in the northern part of the island. Concerns exist that their identity and culture are under serious threat with the loss of land and heritage. The Sinhalese, whose mother tongue is Sinhala, are the numerical majority in the island and most of them are Buddhist. They form the majority population across the South. Yet their dominance and power is present throughout the island because of the state’s support of this ethnic group through all state structures.

Although proclaimed a democratic republic, the Sri Lankan state is strongly controlled and ruled by Sinhala Buddhist influence, with a deeply engrained belief that the island ‘belongs’ to the Sinhala Buddhists. ‘[T]he energies of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism were translated into concrete policies and programs of language, education, employment, peasant resettlement, territorial control of the island and so on...’ (Tambiah 1992, p. 58). The modus operandi of the Sri Lankan state apparatus reflects its now extreme form of ethnocracy¹.

Despite being portrayed as a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-religious and multi-cultural country, the constitution of Sri Lanka enacted Sinhala as the official language (Official Language Act 1956, No. 33) in 1956, while Buddhism was granted the foremost place in the constitution in 1972 and again in 1978. The constitution states that ‘it shall be the duty of the State to protect and foster the Buddha Sasana’ (The Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka).

A section of extremist Sinhala Buddhists also justifies ethnocratic structures as a response to the imperial ethnocracy that was brought by the British to the island. In an interview, Gnanasara Thero, the General Secretary

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¹ ‘Ethnocracy’ at its simplest means ‘government or rule by an ethnic group’ or ethnos, specified by religion, language, ‘race’ or other criteria...sometimes contrasted with democracy or rule by the demos or people’ (Anderson 2015).

Ethnocracy ‘encompasses state regimes and associated political movements and parties which discriminate systematically in favour of some ethnic groups and against others. The ethnocracy may be formal with discrimination enshrined in law (as in Apartheid South Africa), or it may be more informal with apparent or formal equalities masking very unequal realities (as happened in Northern Ireland)’ (Goodman 2015).
of a hard-line Buddhist nationalist organisation, the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) or Buddhist Power Force was quoted as saying, ‘This country belongs to the Sinhalese, and it is the Sinhalese who built up its civilisation, culture and settlements. The white people created all the problems... We are trying to... go back to the country of the Sinhalese’ (Haviland 2015).

This mono-ethnic and mono-religious attitude has led to a widening and deepening of discriminatory acts and policies, injustice and pogroms against the Tamils since Sri Lanka’s independence. While being formal, arguably enshrined in past and present constitutions, the systematic discrimination by the Sri Lankan state against the Tamil people is also ‘informal with apparent or formal equalities masking very unequal realities’ (Goodman 2015). Ethnocratic policies towards Tamils continued in armed conflict, discrimination, oppression, and denial, prevention and deprivation of rights and justice. This ethnocracy was and is defended and justified by the state in the name of sovereignty, territorial integrity and national security, and it has led to increasing polarization of the already divided ethnic groups.

It is also important to note that non-Buddhist religious groups such as the Christians, including Sinhala-origin Christians, and Muslims have also been targeted and affected by the ethnocratic nature of the Sri Lankan state. The patterns of persecution may have changed with consecutive governments but deep-rooted ethnocentric discrimination remains strong. It is this consistent and widespread ethnocracy in Sri Lankan state affairs that has given birth to the identity conflict in the island. The asymmetric conflict has gone through different stages including oppression, violence and state-sponsored pogroms against the ethnic Tamils. The Sri Lankan state’s continued ethnocratic nature resulted in the ethnic conflict developing into a fierce war between successive governments of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). After 38 years, it came to an end in May 2009 amidst grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. This paper explores the ethnocratic nature of the Sri Lankan state structure influenced by Sinhala Buddhist nationalism. Other forms of the ethno-political conflict or any other intra-ethnic conflicts in the island have not been examined as they are beyond the scope of this paper.

**Emergence of Ethnocracy in Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka gained independence from the British in 1948. The island was called *Ceylon* for well over 150 years before *Sri Lanka* was ‘unilaterally introduced into the vocabulary of international usage in 1972 – an act that took place without the consent of the Tamils’ (Wilson 1998, p. v). The Portuguese and the Dutch colonizers had ruled the Tamil and Sinhala
The desire for self-government emerged within Tamil circles in the early 1920s. However, it did not pose a serious challenge till the 1970s. In the intervening 50 years Tamil politicians closely engaged with Sinhala political leaders. In fact, in the early 1900s Tamil political leaders proactively worked together with Sinhala politicians to protect and promote Ceylon’s identity and the island’s national interests. Tamil leaders were so committed to the ideology of living in a united country that they were not even in favor of a federal arrangement for the island. Indeed this proposal was first brought forward by prominent Sinhala leader and later Prime Minister, S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake, who in the 1950s was the main instigator of ethnocracy for his own political ends. Tamil efforts to continue united actions were now increasingly ignored by Sinhala political leaders as they attempted to strengthen the dominance of Sinhala hegemony, and this compelled Tamil leaders to shift their ideology from a ‘united country’ focus to a focus based on Tamil identity.

According to Little (1994, p. 4): ‘The newly elected prime minister, S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake, and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) he led, achieved power in 1956, with the strong support of Buddhists leaders, by campaigning for the primacy of Sinhala language, culture and religion. The Tamils took offence. Inspired by Gandhi’s campaigns of civil disobedience against the British in India, they mounted a series of Satyagraha (civil disobedience) demonstrations to protest the new policies, only to provoke violent retaliation by the Sinhala.’

Soon after independence, in 1949, one million ‘up-country’ Tamils were disenfranchised and declared as non-citizens. It is important to distinguish between these Tamils, who are of recent Indian origin brought to the island by the British mainly to work on tea plantations, and the Tamils of the North and East who are traditional inhabitants. By disenfranchising the ‘up-country’ Tamils, a Sinhalese electoral majority was established in the up-country areas (Sivanandan 2010). This act of blatant discrimination against the ‘up-country’ Tamils by the state can be seen as foreshadowing the emergence of a wider ethnocracy.

In 1956 the state passed into law the ‘Sinhala only’ language policy. Ethnocracy, which was deep-rooted as a main component within the Sri Lankan state, was emboldened by S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake and over the years would be utilized by politicians to gain power, playing on the mindset of the Sinhalese who according to Harvard anthropologist Stanley J
Thambiah were ‘a majority with a minority complex’ (Weisman 1987). Bastian (1999, p.7) notes that:

‘During the 1950s Sinhala Buddhist revivalism attained a new dominance in national politics. The election of 1956 brought into power a government with a hegemonic Sinhala Buddhist ideology, which the same year passed the Sinhala only Act. This made Sinhala the language of the majority community, the only official language.’

In opposition to the Sinhala only Act, Tamil political leaders from the Federal Party staged a non-violent campaign in 1956. As a response, the first of many state-aided anti-Tamil pogroms\(^2\) took place. In a place called Galoya in the East over 150 Tamils were killed. Subsequent anti-Tamil violence, in May 1958, resulted in a loss of nearly 300-400 lives. Rather than taking action to prevent violence, the Prime Minister, S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake, indirectly encouraged it. It was the Governor-General, Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, who declared a state of emergency in order to bring the violence to an end. He even alluded that the violence had not been spontaneous, having announced off the record at a press conference:

‘Gentlemen, if any of you have an idea that this was a spontaneous outburst of communalism, you can disabuse your minds of it. This is the work of a Master Mind who has been at the back of people who have planned this carefully and knew exactly what they were doing. It was a time-bomb set about two years ago which has now exploded’ (Vittachi 1958, p. 79).

Despite continuing acts of injustice, discrimination and pogroms, the Tamil people continued to advocate for a united Sri Lanka and did not support the notion of an independent state until the first republican constitution was introduced in 1972. In response to the 1972 constitution, which ‘removed the safe guards of the previous (British) constitution, gave a pre-eminent position to Buddhism, in addition to the Sinhala language, and most importantly, concentrated power in the Sinhala-dominated legislature’ (Bastian 1999, p.7) the Tamil leadership was compelled to articulate their political aspirations for an independent and sovereign Tamil state, Tamil Eelam, through democratic means in the form of the Vaddukkodai Resolution in 1976. This resolution was seen as a people’s mandate when in the 1977

\(^2\) A pogrom can be defined as a ‘deliberately organized—and especially—state-supported killings and the destruction of property of a targeted group’. (Brass 2002)
parliamentary elections the largest Tamil political party, the Tamil United Liberation Front, achieved a land-slide victory in the traditional Tamil regions of the North and East after running its election campaign based on the resolution. As DeVotta argues in his study of Sri Lanka, ‘The impetus for separatism in most ethnonational struggles is sparked by ethnocentric practices initiated by the state of dominant ethnic group’ (DeVotta 2004, p. 8).

Sinhala extremist politicians, particularly of Buddhist faith, exploited religion to maintain or capture power regardless of their political party background. ‘Buddhism and Sinhalese were so closely intertwined that it became impossible to treat either in isolation in the mid-1950s and 1960s.’ (De Silva et al. 1988, p. 69) ‘Within thirty years after the independence, “the land, the race and the faith” were successfully linked by Buddhists protagonists and most Sinhalese political leaders who had ambitions of winning electoral majorities’ (Wilson 1998, p. 53). This pattern continued to be the practice in Sri Lanka including in the current government.

Regardless of party background, politicians from the main political parties, the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) – which were both predominantly Sinhalese – used ethnocracy as their main political strategy to gain power, thus presenting further challenges to the conflict resolution process as ‘confidence-building measures’ gradually diminished. ‘It is the demand for separation on the one hand and the demand for the establishment of Sinhala-Buddhist supremacy on the other that seriously hinder a peaceful settlement of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict’ (Deegalle 2006, p. 78).

Sri Lanka’s institutionalized ethnocracy constantly and deliberately targeted the Tamil language, land, culture, education, economy, history and identity, while promoting and protecting Sinhala language, land, culture, education, economy, history and identity. For instance, the major Sinhala-Buddhist parties competed and contributed to the mass destruction of Tamil lives and properties including the burning in 1981 of the Jaffna Public Library, which housed over 95,000 books and rare manuscripts and was hailed as one of the largest libraries in South Asia region at the time.

In order to strengthen Sinhala-Buddhist state hegemony and weaken non-Sinhala Buddhists, particularly the Tamils, government structures used the ‘divide and rule’ strategy capitalizing on the antagonism between the Tamil community and the Muslim community, regionalism between the Tamils of the North and those of the East, religious conflict between Hindus and Catholics particularly in Mannar, and casteism particularly in Jaffna.
Ethnocracy: A Major Political Strategy

A clear message was conveyed to the Tamils time and again by both major Sinhala political parties as well as other political factions, of its main ideology, influenced by the Mahavamsa (a Buddhist text), based on the belief that the island belonged to Sinhala Buddhists. As Spencer asserts: ‘[A] nationalism based upon the Mahavamsa would have to be a Buddhist nationalism with little space for non-Buddhist identities’ (Spencer 1990, p. 6).

Those political parties used chauvinism and racism repeatedly to gain political support of the majority Sinhala Buddhist population, regardless of political party affiliation. Strengthened state structures became a vehicle for this: ‘[T]he myths of history…already popular and integral to a diversity of cultural practices facilitated their appropriation to often elite political interests and the apparatuses of power of a modern bureaucratic and technologically based state’ (Kapferer 2012, p. xxv). ‘In 1960, then Prime Minister, Sirimavo Bandaranaike [of the SLFP] promptly encouraged linguistic nationalism and Buddhist supremacy. She insisted that the full implications of the Sinhala Only Act be enforced’ (De Silva 1986 cited in Little 1994, pp. 201–202). The first Executive President of Sri Lanka, the late J.R.Jayawardena of the UNP had said in a public speech:

‘Seventy percent of our country are Buddhists. Therefore we shall lead our lives according to the sacred words of Buddha…The UNP government aims at building a new society on the foundation of the principles of Buddha Dharma. We have a duty to protect the Buddha sasana and to pledge that every possible action would be taken to develop it’ (Kemper 1991 cited in Little 1994, pp. 173–174).

In the name of protecting Buddhism he established ethnocratic polices and also engineered, or at the least was a bystander of, state-sponsored pogroms against the Tamils. Decades later he was quoted in the British Daily Telegraph of 11 July 1983 as saying: ‘I am not worried about the opinion of the Tamil people…now we cannot think of them, not about their lives or their opinion…Really if I starve the Tamils out, the Sinhala people will be happy’ (Justice for Genocide 2014, p.13). Within a fortnight of the interview, anti-Tamil pogroms took place resulting in an estimated 3,000 Tamils dead, over 200,000 Tamils displaced, 18,000 Tamil homes and 5000 Tamil businesses destroyed, with economic losses totalling $300 million (Tamil Guardian 2006).

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3 Sirimavo Bandaranayake was the widow of former Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake.
The ethnocratic policies of the UNP, however, were neither limited to J.R. Jayawardena nor his period of leadership alone, but rather were a feature of the entire party. In fact, ethnocracy influenced the policies not only of the two major political parties but of even so-called leftist parties such as the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). As Abeysekera notes, the ‘JVP claimed to liberate the Sinhala Buddhist (monks’) country and nation. In such a context the discourse, “country or death,” became an authorized “Buddhist” practice for the JVP monks seen as the true patriots of the country’ (Abeysekara 2001, p. 5) The International Crisis Group made a similar point: ‘The Sinhala nationalist project has not been confined to the poorer rural and urban voters from whom the JVP draws support. Its contemporary appeal to urban middle and upper classes can be seen in the rise of the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU), which first came onto the scene in 2000 in the form of the Sihala Urumaya (Sinhala Heritage) Party (SU). If the JVP is the left wing of Sinhala nationalism, the JHU is its right wing’ (International Crisis Group 2007, p.14).

Whether based on mutual understanding or opposing views, ‘the Sri Lankan elites have promoted a state-sponsored ethno-religious nationalism while, simultaneously, religious actors have tried to take over parts of the political sphere’ (Weiberg-Salzmann 2014, p, 284). The interrelation between Buddhism and the Sri Lankan state promoted not only Buddhism but also allowed Buddhists monks to influence state politics and the political system. ‘The emergence of Buddhism as an indispensable part of the parliamentary system not only conditioned but also was conditioned by the party system, as also their objectives and ideologies’ (Sharma 2011, p. 33).

Sri Lanka’s Buddhist monks’ influence in state affairs started soon after independence. ‘The campaign to establish Sinhala as the national official language and to ensure the primacy of Buddhism in the Sri Lanka polity established the bhikkhu as an unmistakably legitimate opinion leader’ (De Silva et al. 1988, p.116). Their actions were spurred by their deep belief that the island belonged to the Sinhala Buddhists. ‘The monks spoke out for a

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4 The JVP, (also known as Peoples Liberation Front) emerged as the collective expression of the vernacular educated, radicalized Sinhala youth, hailing from rural peasantry and sub-urban lower middle classes in the mid-1960s as an organized reaction to increasing unemployment, rural poverty and the ‘political betrayal’ of the first generation of left leaders who collaborated with the SLFP to form coalition governments. Blending Sinhala Buddhist nationalism with Marxist rhetoric to form its ideological base, the JVP staged two failed armed insurrections in 1971 and 1989 to capture state power, only to be crushed brutally by the state armed forces. By mid-1990s, the survivors succeeded in reorganizing the party for the third time, reforming it to become a major mainstream political party focused on parliamentary politics.
“Sinhala Nation”, a “Dhamma Kingdom” – a state built upon Buddhist principle “to save the future of our race and religion” (Weiberg-Salzmann 2014, p. 298).

It is noteworthy that there are a small number of Buddhist monks committed to peace. However, they are neither supported nor promoted by the state. Meanwhile, fundamentalist Buddhist monks continue to strengthen themselves through various means and spread their network beyond Sri Lanka (Francis 2014). So far the Sri Lankan state has not taken any strong measures to control or stop their extremist propaganda but has rather explicitly or covertly acted in support of it.

In addition to the link between Buddhism and the state, the collaboration between monks and politicians accentuated ethnocratic practices, particularly in the Tamil dominated North and East. ‘Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka have also played a pivotal role propagating and preserving a unique Sinhalese culture, and the historical relationship between Buddhism and the state has further ensured that the monks maintain influence’ (DeVotta & Stone 2008, p.32). Lands in Tamil areas became primary targets of these policies, which started immediately after independence and continue till today. The First Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, D.S.Senanayake, in an address in the 1940s to Sinhala settlers in Pathaviya (an area linking the Northern and Eastern provinces) said:

‘Today you are brought here and given a plot of land. You have been uprooted from your village. You are like a piece of driftwood in the ocean; but remember that one day the whole country will look up to you. The final battle for the Sinhala people will be fought on the plains of Padaviya. You are men and women who will carry this island’s destiny on your shoulders. Those who are attempting to divide this country will have to reckon with you. The country may forget you for a few years, but one day very soon they will look up to you as the last bastion of the Sinhala’ (Justice for Genocide 2014, p. 13).

Sinhala settlement through state-aided colonization schemes with the intention of demographic change has a long history. Soon after the war came to an end the JHU, Sri Lanka’s Buddhist nationalist party, in 2009, stated that ‘Each road in the liberated areas in the North should be named for the war heroes who sacrificed their lives for the nation’s liberty’ (Colombopage 2009).
The JHU’s ethnocratic ideology is obvious and easily observable. The SLFP and UNP, though, are not always as explicit in their ethnocratic agenda and ideology, and perhaps express their political opinion in more liberal tones. However, deep analysis and observations could reveal that there exist no major differences in the primary objective and intention of the JHU, SLFP and UNP in terms of ethnocratic policies and practices towards Tamils.

The historical and ongoing land-grabbing process in the north and east parts of the island is a clear example of this. These land-grabbing plans need to be understood as the calculated outcome of a state policy. The grabbed land is mainly taken for either militarization or colonization purposes. In principle, both militarization and Sinhalization projects are mutually interconnected; the policy is aimed at eliminating the collective national existence of the Tamils, and intends to ensure that any future Tamil national revival would never materialize (Nirmanusan 2012). This agenda is not only for political gain but also rather for the strengthening of the Sinhala Buddhists dominance and influence, while weakening the Tamil nation and it has continued in the aftermath of the end of the brutal war, during the Rajapaksa administration as well as under the Sirisena-Ranil administration.

The present government also continues to frame the current situation as post conflict instead of post war. This denial is one of several deliberate attempts to divert local and international attention on fundamental burning issues of accountability for wartime mass atrocities and the political solution to the Tamil national question, as well as an attempt to hide the continuation of ethnocratic policies and practices.

Post-Conflict vs Post War; Negative Peace vs Positive Peace

Despite the proclamation by the Sri Lankan government and its allies that ‘peace’ exists today within Sri Lanka, in reality it is not a post-conflict peace but an invisible war by other means against the Tamil population. Arguably, one cannot refer to Sri Lanka in ‘post-conflict’ terms as the root causes of the conflict have still not been addressed appropriately. The ‘end of war’ does not always mean the ‘end of conflict’. Though the LTTE which itself was an outcome of the conflict, was destroyed, a military solution could never have been the answer for a protracted ethno-political conflict which emerged as the consequence of the ethnocratic nature of the Sri Lankan state.

The absence of violence is only a ‘negative’ peace and there is a danger that it could eventually drive the island once again towards brutal violence. Therefore, it is important to set the trend towards ‘positive’ peace, through the presence of justice. As long as the structures of ethnocracy continue to be in place, ongoing conflict will inevitably intensify and it will
become harder to make the positive peace that could lead to genuine reconciliation and the co-existence of nations in the island. In this context it is imperative to adequately address the ethnocracy that continues to dominate, control and rule the Sri Lankan state.

‘Good Governance Government’ or a New Era of Ethnocracy?

During the reign of the Rajapaksa administration, which lasted from 2005 to 2015, heavy military occupation of Tamil regions, state-sponsored colonization, continued acts of abduction, enforced disappearances, arrests, detention, torture and rape, with re-arrests and re-abuse, were common occurrences. This added to the state of fear, uncertainty and vulnerability affecting the entire Tamil society. Despite accusations of having committed direct acts of genocide\(^5\) (Haigh 2014), the Rajapaksa regime intensified its structural and cultural war against the Tamil nation, while continuing to deny its own wrongdoing.

Continued denials created widespread anger throughout the island among the Tamil people, and established a unifying mindset against the Rajapaksa regime. This manifested itself in the Presidential election which took place on 8 January 2015. The ‘anti-Rajapaksa vote’ amongst the Tamils, the branding amongst the Sinhalese of the Rajapaksas as a corrupt and nepotistic family, and a bout of attacks on Muslim businesses and mosques by Sinhala extremist Buddhists created a common enemy and unified the anti-Rajapaksa factor which ensured a surprising regime change in Sri Lanka.

Though no mutual trust existed between the polarized nations throughout the protracted ethno-political conflict, the prominent leaders of the new Sirisena government gave hopes of a return to normalcy (eg. demilitarization), to the Tamils prior to the election and immediately following the regime change. Therefore, as contributors to the regime change, sections of the Tamil community also expected in return meaningful changes for them as well.

However, except for whitewashing and satisfying a section of the international community, no significant political developments have yet taken place to create normalcy in the lives of the Tamil people. Instead ‘[O]ver the past six years, the process of Sinhalization has intensified with an aggressive government-led effort that systematically replaces Tamil culture and history with victory monuments dedicated to Sinhalese hegemony and Buddhist religion on the ruins of the Tamil homeland’ (The Oakland Institute

\(^5\) The Peoples' Tribunal on Sri Lanka found that the ‘state of Sri Lanka is guilty of the crime of genocide against Eelam Tamils and that the consequences of the genocide continue to the present day with ongoing acts of genocide against Eelam Tamils’ (Permanent Peoples' Tribunal 2013).
2015, p. 3). In addition, there have been no signs of any genuine commitment from the current government, as with previous governments, to address the root causes of the conflict in order to resolve the national question through a genuine negotiated political settlement. Also, there has been neither acknowledgement nor political will to deal with the Tamil people’s search for justice and accountability for wartime atrocities. Rather, the new government has continued in ‘denial mode’ like its predecessor. In fact, the new government has been waging the war through other means such as Sinhala Buddhist colonization and militarization, seriously affecting the collective psychology of the Tamil nation, and this has proven to be a major impediment for genuine reconciliation and lasting peace between the nations in the island.

The UN Secretary-General’s internal review panel on UN action in Sri Lanka (November 2012) stated that ‘[b]ased on an internal review panel report, over 70,000 people are unaccounted for’ (Report of the Secretary-General’s Internal Review Panel on United Nations Action in Sri Lanka November 2012). According to the Bishop of Mannar (a district in the North), Catholic Diocese, Rt. Rev. Dr. Rayappu Joseph, in post-war Sri Lanka over 146,679 people in the Vanni (where the final phase of the war took place) have been unaccounted for (Perera 2011). With family members wanting to know the fate of their loved ones, while Tamils aspirations and grievances are intentionally ignored by the state, it is difficult to create an environment to move forward.

Upon gaining power the new government gave an impression they were to reverse former President Rajapaksa’s policies, and some were reversed, though, except for a few symbolic moves, none were to the benefit of the ethnic Tamil population. In contrast the new government continued the Rajapaksa government’s policies against the Tamils though sometimes using different tactics and strategies, which were still ethnocratic in nature.

Within Sri Lanka, the Tamil community has endured genocide in the form of four decades of war, military repression and terrorization of the civilian population in the North-East. Constant and intentional massacres, destruction of property by consecutive Sri Lankan governments, denial of violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law and flawed domestic investigations and probes on human rights violations and mass atrocities led the democratically elected Northern Provincial Council (NPC) to pass a resolution in February 2015 declaring that the successive Sri Lankan governments have carried out a systematic campaign of genocide against the Tamil nation in the island. Clearly expressing the Tamil people’s long wait for justice, and their feeling of victimization which continues to increase, the resolution reads:
'This resolution provides an overview of the evidence demonstrating successive Sri Lankan governments’ genocide against Tamils, and respectfully requests the ongoing United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL) to investigate the claim of genocide and recommend appropriate investigations and prosecutions by the International Criminal Court.' (Sri Lankan Northern Provincial Council Resolution 2015)

While deep concerns of the victims and survivors remain unanswered, the new government is instead increasingly engaging in serious ill-planned moves through ethnocratic practices.

In May 2015, the new government also appointed Maj. Gen. Jagath Dias who led the Army’s 57th Division, which has been accused of serious violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law (TRIAL International) as the new Chief of Staff of the Sri Lankan armed forces. This act has come under criticism at a national and international level. Brad Adams, Asia Director of Human Rights Watch has stated:

‘Sri Lanka’s new government has promised genuine accountability for wartime abuses, but naming the general of an abusive unit the army chief of staff is a slap in the face for victims. Members of the UN Human Rights Council expecting genuine accountability in Sri Lanka need to closely scrutinize the government’s actions’ (Human Rights Watch 2015).

The new government also nominated former Army Commander Gen. Jagath Jayasuriya, another accused of war crimes, as Sri Lanka’s ambassador to Brazil (Ferdinando 2015).

Another development disturbing for the war victims and survivors is the promotion by Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena of former army commander General Sarath Fonseka to the rank of Field Marshal in March 2015. Sarath Fonseka was the Sri Lankan army commander when major violations of the Geneva Conventions took place during the final stages of the war. The US ambassador in Colombo at the time, Patricia Butenis, said one of the reasons there was such little progress towards a genuine Sri Lankan inquiry into the killings was that President Rajapaksa and the former army commander, Sarath Fonseka, were largely responsible. Butenis noted:

‘There are no examples we know of a regime undertaking wholesale investigations of its own troops or senior officials for war crimes while that regime or government remained in power…In Sri Lanka this is further complicated by the fact that responsibility for
many alleged crimes rests with the country’s senior civilian and military leadership, including President Rajapaksa and his brothers and opposition candidate General Fonseka’ (Borger 2010).

In an interview in 2008, Sarath Fonseka said:

‘I strongly believe that this country belongs to the Sinhalese but there are minority communities and we treat them like our people...We being the majority of the country, 75%, we will never give in and we have the right to protect this country... They can live in this country with us. But they must not try to, under the pretext of being a minority, demand undue things’ (Bell 2008).

Prior to the parliamentary election in August 2015, the incumbent UNP-led United National Front for Good Governance stated that in their ‘good governance’ government, defeated candidates would not be appointed as Ministers. However, despite contesting the 2010 presidential election, and subsequently being defeated, this very same government this year (2016) appointed Field Marshal Sarath Fonseka as the Minister of Regional Development (President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Official Website, 2016). The incumbent government that gave hopes of demilitarization of the north and east of the island failed to build on the expectations and trust of the Tamils. Rather, they intensified the Buddhization of the Tamil dominated areas in the North and East. The political appointments are also interconnected with the Sinhala Buddhist colonization process.

In terms of the economy, state development projects have been more favourable to the Sinhalese, adding to the sense of discrimination amongst the Tamils. The underdevelopment of Tamil-dominated regions is an indication not only of the war-devastated Tamil economy but also the state’s lack of genuine interest to rebuild or develop these areas. State ‘development’ projects rather than benefiting Tamils have been used by the state as a strategy to enhance the Sinhalization process by settling Sinhalese in the traditionally Tamil regions. In the post-war context these activities have been further accelerated, with the military too being involved in development activities (The Oakland Institute 2015, pp. 5). An increasing number of military-run businesses in Tamil areas, from tourism to agriculture, compete with local Tamil vendors. The state’s confiscation of fertile land and sea regions in Tamil areas for ‘security’ purposes has caused further deprivation of the Tamil economy. This has been exacerbated by the emergence of military-run businesses profiting from confiscated property. The government
has also used ‘securitized development’ to portray themselves as engaging in peace-building and reconciliation processes, and curb international criticisms (TamilNet 2016).

Infrastructure such as bridges and highways in post-war Tamil regions have been strategic in connecting Sinhala settlements, facilitating easy and efficient transport for state-aided Sinhala settlers and the occupying Sri Lankan armed forces, rather than assisting the local Tamil communities or improving their economy. The government administration has also allowed the re-naming of historical places and streets with Sinhala names in Tamil dominated areas (Northern Provincial Council, November 2015).

Cultural Genocide and Religious Discrimination

The present government, though proclaiming itself a ‘good governance’ government committed to restoring democracy, continues to refresh Sri Lanka’s ethnocratic policies and practices. Currently a new constitution-making process is in progress after many local and international actors urged a constructive constitutional reform in order to create lasting peace in the island given that past and present constitutions have strengthened the ethnic conflict. However, according to media reports, the national question has not yet been addressed appropriately in the ongoing constitution-making process and once again the Sri Lankan President rather than urging for a secular constitution has ensured no removal of the Buddhism clause from the constitution (Tamil Guardian 2016). At a Buddhist religious festival in Kandy in August this year (2016), President Maithripala Sirisena declared Buddhism as Sri Lanka’s biggest wealth (Tamil Guardian 2016).

While Tamils and a section of the international community continue to call for demilitarization of the North, prominent monks in Sri Lanka have urged for the military to remain in the North and East. In Tamil areas Buddhists monks in partnership with the Sri Lankan army are constructing new Buddhist temples in the North and East, a region where Buddhists are a relative minority. After the new government came to power in January 2015, Buddhist monks in the occupied Tamil areas have built memorial stones for fallen Sri Lankan armed forces (TamilNet 2015). Speaking at the parliament in November 2014, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) parliamentarian for Batticaloa, Seenithamby Yogeswaran said that at the end of the year in 2012 there were 10,349 Buddhist temples in the Northern and Eastern provinces, while at the end of the year 2013 the figure had increased to 10,812 deducing that in 2013 alone 463 Buddhist temples were built in the predominantly Tamil areas (TamilNet 2014).
In the first half of this year (2016) alone the Sri Lankan government has planned to construct 14 new Buddhist temples in one divisional secretariat in Trincomalee district in the Eastern Province (British Broadcasting Corporation Tamil Service 2016). On 16 May 2005, a Buddhist statue was constructed overnight at the Trincomalee bus stand leading to tensions and subsequent violence between Tamil and Sinhala communities resulting in death and injury. Another 67-foot Buddha statue is in the process of being built in the Tamil dominated Jaffna district, which is considered as the cultural capital of Tamils and not a Buddhist region. According to independent journalists on the ground, Jaffna Fisheries Federation alleged Rs 3.2million allocated for a fishing market in Manalkaadu has been given to build the Buddha statue upon request by the Chief Monk of the Naiyeanatheevu Buddhist Temple (@Garikaalan 2015).

A Buddhist temple is under construction in the premises of a historical Hindu temple in Iranaimadu, Kilinochi district (Northern Province). The NPC adopted a resolution to stop the construction of the Buddhist temple inside the Hindu temple premises and for the removal of the Buddhist statue. However, Sri Lankan minister Swaminathan said that Buddhists Viharas (temples) already built or currently being built by the military in the North post-2009 could not be removed. ‘We can’t touch on these Viharas as they are religiously sensitive to Soldiers’ (@Garikaalan 2015). It is noteworthy that after the occupation of the Tamil areas, the Sri Lankan military have also planted peepal trees in many places, later following up with erecting Buddhist statues and temples under those trees.

While the government has failed to allocate sufficient funds to rebuild Hindu temples destroyed due to war, the construction of several hundred Buddhists temples and statues have been spearheaded throughout the predominant Tamil occupied lands, in areas including main junctions of the highways and towns, historical Hindu places and strategic locations in the Tamil areas and bordering villages. Not only is the Sri Lankan military constructing new Buddha statues and temples but they are doing so after destroying Hindu temples in certain places. The author of this paper obtained from on-the-ground sources details of Hindu temples either damaged or destroyed partly or fully numbering 912 in the northern part of the island alone.

The activities of the current regime are best illustrated by the key points declared at a rally held by Tamils in Jaffna in September 2016. Seen as the largest since the war came to an end in May 2009, the rally titled Ezhuka

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6 The peepal tree, also known as the sacred fig, is very closely interlinked with Buddhism and arguably a Buddhist temple will always have a peepal tree.
Thamizh (which translates in Tamil to “Tamils! Rise up!”), declared twelve key points including the two below which mainly focus on Sinhala Buddhist colonization and militarization:

1. ‘Sinhala colonies, Buddhist temples and Buddha statues are being aggressively constructed with military sponsorship and the tacit approval of the government of “Good Governance”, with the sole purpose of Sinhala- Buddhuisization of the North- Eastern Tamil homeland, alteration of the demography of the North and East and the bifurcation of Tamil speaking areas. This rally demands that the government immediately halt all efforts to alter the demography of the North and East through Sinhala- Buddhuisization and settler colonialism.’

2. ‘Seven years after the end of the war, the North and East remains heavily militarized. Not only has this occupying military appropriated thousands of acres of land in the North and East, but it continues to appropriate more land, even under this regime. Further, the Army substantially disrupts the civilian economy by engaging in tourism, agriculture, and other businesses. The security forces continue to intervene in the day to day civilian administration of the North and East. This has resulted in the Tamil nation having to depend on the Army to sustain its nascent economy. Further, the social fabric of the Tamil nation continues to be eroded by heavy militarization and deep surveillance of the North and East, and has disrupted the Tamil people from collectively exercising their freedom of assembly to demand that their political aspirations be heard. Sexual violence perpetrated against women and children has placed the most vulnerable of community at the mercy of the occupying forces. This rally demands that the occupying forces immediately leave the North and East and that a genuine and fully fledged civilian administration is enabled in the North and East.’ (Tamil Guardian 2016)

Continuing ethnocratic policies and practices have increased the polarization between the ethnic communities in the island, and inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations are still at crossroads as a result of ongoing ethnocratic politics, even seven years after the war came to an end.

Conclusion

Ethnocracy has been an enduring, central and now deeply rooted feature of Sri Lankan state affairs for over 60 years. It has led to an ongoing ethnopolitical conflict against the Tamils, including a war which lasted 38 years.
The war came to an end seven years ago. Almost two years ago a new government took power. After its surprising victory in the January 2015 presidential election, the incumbent regime portrayed itself as a ‘good governance’ government and announced restoring democracy to be one of their main tasks. However, there have been no significant developments with regard to the halting of ethnocratic policies and practices. Rather, very little has improved and this government has in many respects continued to strengthen the ethnocratic policies and practices. For instance the state-aided Sinhala Buddhist colonization has intensified in the predominantly Tamil areas in the North and East and further weakened the already rare opportunities for genuine reconciliation and positive peace in the island. If positive peace is to prevail in the island of Sri Lanka, it is crucial to accept and eliminate the ethnocratic policies and practices in Sri Lankan state affairs without further delay.

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Exploring Ethnocracy and the Possibilities of Coexistence in Beirut

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Abstract
In response to James Anderson’s article “Ethnocracy: Exploring and extending the concept”, this article revisits some of the extensive discussions of Lebanon’s political sectarianism through the prism of ethnocracy to the extent that it contributes to an analysis of the socio-political structure of the Lebanese capital, and vice-versa. After a discussion of the relevance of the notion of ethnocracy to the Lebanese context and Anderson’s “extensions” of the concept, the paper will briefly introduce recent developments in the country that point to growing and organised contestation of the political system and what it reveals about the Lebanese model’s “resilience”.

Introduction
It was an early spring day of 2015, and I was listening to the car radio while travelling across Lebanon’s capital, Beirut. The snow of the mountain range that makes up Lebanon’s border with Syria was melting and there was speculation that this would facilitate the movement of fighters engaged in Syria and flare up the war front with the Lebanese Army. As is often the case, the press both local and international laid out yet more scenarios for
Lebanon’s imminent implosion. I asked Marwan, who was driving, what he made of all this, as he has been alarmed by the situation for a few years now. But he said ‘the more they talk about war, the less it is likely to happen’. I took this to mean that when politicians and the press beat the drums of all-out war, they effectively delay it.

Since the signing of the Ta’if Agreement in 1989 that ended the 15-year long civil war, Lebanon has been said to be ‘on the brink of war’ numerous times. At the same time, the ‘Lebanese model’ has proven more resilient to substantial shocks, both internal and external, at least to the extent that it manages to perpetuate itself – at the cost of the public good. This model of political sectarianism or confessionalism that at times has given way to discussions about ethnocracy or consociationalism is said to be at the root of the state’s dysfunction while at the same time it is defended as a viable – if temporary – system for the safeguarding of Lebanon’s diverse communities.

In response to James Anderson’s article in this issue ‘Ethnocracy: Exploring and extending the concept’, this article revisits some of the extensive discussions of Lebanon’s political sectarianism through the prism of ethnocracy to the extent that it contributes to an analysis of the socio-political structure of the Lebanese capital, and vice-versa. After a discussion of the relevance of the notion of ethnocracy to the Lebanese context and Anderson’s ‘extensions’ of the concept, the paper will briefly introduce recent developments in the country that point to growing and organised contestation of the political system and what it reveals about the Lebanese model’s ‘resilience’.

Ethnicity in the Lebanese context

Anderson defines ethnocracy as ‘government or rule by an ethnic group or ethnos’ specified by religion, language, ‘race’ or other criteria, contrasted to democracy which is rule by the demos or people. The concept has only recently received widespread attention, mainly following the work of the Israeli geographer Oren Yiftachel on Israeli ethnocratic practices. He applied the concept from national to urban contexts, and Anderson extends it further to apply to ‘imperial’, ‘post-conflict’ and ‘post-national’ regimes.

In trying to assess the extent to which a broader understanding of ethnocracy applies to the case of Lebanon, this paper will discuss national ethnocracy, the imperial roots of ethno-nationalism, and post-conflict and post-national ethnocracies, considering the implications of each for the Lebanese capital. At different levels, the case for an extended concept of ethnocracy in the Lebanese context is at once revealing and concealing with
respect to a complex series of political and urban arrangements that have undergone numerous reiterations and are still openly contested. But first, one of the difficulties when writing about ethnocracy is the definition of ethnicity, particularly in the Lebanese context.

Ethnicity or ethnic group is related to the classification of people and group relationships (Eriksen 2002) and, as such is also the subject of continuous debate over the nature of those relations and boundaries. As Abner Cohen writes, however, ‘the question is not which definition is the most valid but which is most helpful in the analysis of certain theoretical problems’ (2001 p. ix and in the case of Lebanon, the use of the notion of ethnicity has been limited. The Lebanese constitution speaks of sects or denominations (al-tawa’if) that are distinguished on the basis of religion of which 18 are officially recognised in Lebanon. Ethnicity is sometimes used to signify the difference between Arabs, Armenian and Kurds who are also linguistically differentiated, but even here, the category of ethnicity is seldom used to describe political sectarianism or confessionalism.

In the cases where ethnicity is used to describe the confessional groups that make up Lebanon, it is either defined fairly broadly (Nagle 2015) to incorporate colour, language and religion, or to signify the politicisation of confessional identities as Samir Khalaf (2012) argues, explaining that the ethnic group then also becomes ‘for itself’, self-conscious”. In a similar vein, As’ad AbuKhalil ‘claims that the subjective stress on distinctions, however concocted and artificial, is so strong as to warrant the designation of “sectarian ethnicities”’ (1988 in Farha 2016).

While it is clear from Anderson’s treatment of ethnicity that he takes a broad approach to the term to include religion, it is important to note that in the case of Lebanon sectarian distinctions do not immediately translate into ethnic ones, whether the assumption is that these categories are constructed or not. Ussama Makdisi (2000) argues that it is precisely the conflation of religion and ethnicity by colonial powers and Ottoman administrative reform that led to the development of a ‘culture of sectarianism’. This approach to sectarianism, however, is contested by Mark Farha (2016) who argues that while sectarianism may be less about religious doctrine than about communal memory, it precedes early 19th century colonialism and is inherent to the politico-religious relations of the Levant.

Moreover, alongside the sect, there is also the political group, which in many cases is an assemblage of overlapping sensitivities and loyalties that do not immediately overlap with sectarian identities, and sometimes even contradict them. This is particularly significant when analysing the implications of an ethnocratic approach to Lebanese government, as sectarian categories are constantly contested and fragmented by shifting alliances and
oppositions that respond to changing imperatives (Kastrissianakis 2012; Kastrissianakis 2015). As Max Weiss convincingly explains in his book *In the Shadow of Sectarianism*, the negative connotations and characterisations of sectarianism – after all, no one positively calls themselves sectarian – are preventing an understanding of the processes of production and reproduction of sectarian boundaries (Weiss 2010).

While a comprehensive discussion of sectarianism is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to emphasise that ethno-sectarian categories are fluid and permeable, though they can also harden through institutionalisation and in the face of acute tensions. The confessional group, cannot be essentialised but ought to be seen as an instrument in a context that makes it a conducive vehicle for political organisation (Weiss 2010). As such, the notion of ethnocracy may sit somewhat uncomfortably in the Lebanese context where ethnicity as a category is seldom used and a multiplicity of shifting religious, sectarian, clan or political solidarities articulates a complex set of alliances and enmities. At the same time, as constructed and socially contingent as sectarian identities may be, they play a powerful role in the formation of political subjectivities and organising the social, economic and political spheres. In an urban context, such as Beirut, the ebb and flow of those relations organises the socio-spatial geography of the city, and conversely, the city redraws political relations.

**National Ethnocracy: From fragile to negotiated majority**

The modern iteration of Lebanon’s system of political sectarianism (communalism or confessionalism) is commonly situated in the mid-19th century, when the Ottoman Empire granted the Maronite Christians in the Mount Lebanon area the *mutasarrifya*, designating it as a semi-autonomous region which became an independent Christian state mainly under French protection. The Mount Lebanon Mutasarrifate was the expression of a Libanist approach to the nascent nation-state to which, the Muslims, and particularly Beirut’s and Tripoli’s Sunni elite, opposed an Arabist perspective that saw the area of modern day Lebanon firmly part of the Syrian provinces¹. Under French Mandate (1920-1943) and with its support, the *mutasarrifya* became the state of Grand Liban, ‘a nation-state for the Christian Lebanese people’, and a *terre d’asile* for the persecuted Christians of the Orient who had suffered violent attacks between 1840 and 1860, culminating in the massacres of 1860 in Mount Lebanon, Damascus and Aleppo (Makdisi 2000, Kassir 2010 & Ziadeh 2006).

¹ For a detailed discussion of the different Arabist views on Lebanese state formation, see Sulh 2004.
By the mid-1930s, backed by Arab and British influence, the Muslims recovered some of the political initiative which was met with the will to compromise within the growing ‘pragmatist’ Christian camp led by Bechara el Khoury. The old Maronite-Druze formula that had dominated this Ottoman province until then, defended by the Maronite nationalist Lebanese elite represented by Emile Eddé and the Free French, would be replaced by a Maronite-Sunni duumvirate led by an Arab-oriented, pro-British, intercommunal elite (Ziadeh 2006).

The National Pact of 1943 would cement the new arrangement, based on a double negation, in which the Christians renounced French tutelage and protection, while the Muslims renounced their struggle for a union with Syria. This oral pact sanctioned and extended the confessional allocation of political, judicial and administrative positions that was presented as temporary in the Constitution of 1926. It also gave the Presidency to the Maronites, the post of Prime Minister to the Sunnis and of Speaker of Parliament to the Shi’a and introduced the six Christians to five Muslims ratio for parliamentary seats and throughout the state administration. This ratio was based on the 1932 census – also the latest – which showed that Christians represented a slim majority within the then Grand Liban with Maronites constituting the largest Christian denomination.

This majority would not only be reversed later, Rania Maktabi (2007) argues it was already uncertain in 1932. As Maktabi and Hanna Ziadeh (2006) explain, the then Maronite leadership – with French support – sought to maintain Christian supremacy while annexing to the new state areas populated by Muslim majorities. By expanding the contours of the new state, however, they also diluted Christian claims to a hegemonic position. The conduct of the 1932 census would therefore be a complex exercise in citizenship formation, as Maktabi argues somewhat controversially:

‘Neither territorial amputations nor population displacements were effected as a result of unequal ethnic demographic distribution, as seen by some Christian political leaders. The carrying out of the 1932 census and the application of citizenship policies in the aftermath of the census should, however, be seen within a perspective where certain steps were undertaken in order to preserve and buttress Christian hegemony over the state. What were perceived as unfavourable demographic realities were sought to be controlled through citizenship policies that differentiated between

2 The population of the sanjak in 1911 totalled 414,800 of whom approximately 80% were Christians, with the Maronites comprising 58%. In the areas annexed to the sanjak, the Christians comprised 35% of the population after 1920, with the Maronites comprising a mere 14% (Maktabi 2007, p. 230).
Concurring with Anderson’s description of imperial ethnocracy, European powers and Christian Ottomans deployed ethno-sectarian identities to carve out the Lebanese state, as well as secure a dominant position for Christians, and particularly the Maronites, in the nascent state. In the process they also reversed the order of privilege from Sunni Muslims to Maronite Christians, and embraced missionaries as mediating agents of the state’s social services (Thompson 2013, p.77). Furthermore, the definition of national ethnocracy as a set of prerogatives that favour the dominant ethnos is relevant to the Lebanese system of political sectarianism as established by the 1926 Constitution which gave Christians, and Maronites in particular, an advantage at all levels of state institutions, be they civilian or military. In fact, Rania Maktabi borrows the term from Nils A. Butenschøn who defines the notion of ethnocracy in 1993 as:

‘a political regime which, in contrast to democracy, is instituted on the basis of qualified rights to citizenship and with ethnic affiliation (defined in terms of race, descent, religion, or language) as the distinguishing principle. The raison d’être of the ethnocracy is to secure that the most important instruments of state power are controlled by a specific ethnic collectivity’ (1993, pp. 5-6 in Maktabi 2000, p. 153).

The National Pact offered what was then deemed an acceptable formula for a Christian dominated independent state, but this pact among elites would also regularly be destabilised and was the object of regular negotiation and at times the cause of violent confrontation. In fact, whereas the Constitution and the National Pact favoured Christians, and Maronites in particular, Christian hegemony was moderated by constant negotiation among the zu’ama - the communal political elites - that sought to maintain a public order from which they mutually benefitted. As will be discussed below, the system of

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3 At the same time, Sunni opposition to the creation of an independent Lebanese state, which translated into the boycotts of the 1921 census and limited participation in the administration despite French efforts to appease them by offering Sunni elites key positions, accentuated the marginalisation of Muslims. Between 1920 and the mid-1930s, Sunni leadership vacillated between acquiescence, collaboration and resistance to the Mandate authorities and their Maronite counterparts. However, they participated fully in the 1932 census in the hope that they may constitute a majority and accede to the Presidency. For a detailed discussion of those shifting relations during the French Mandate, see (Atiyah 1973; Thompson 2013).
consociational democracy that was taking shape hinged – and still does – on the client system that the zu’ama maintained and the political patronage they could distribute.

Post 1943 Beirut: A socio-spatial order reproducing and challenging strict ethnocratic order

In the years that followed Lebanon’s independence in 1943, the economic boom fuelled by the flow of capital and skills from other Arab countries, the agricultural crisis in South Lebanon, and the laissez-faire policy of public authorities, prepared the ground for the extremely rapid expansion of Beirut’s agglomeration along main arteries, swallowing up the beaches and crawling up the mountains. Beirut metamorphosed into a relatively outsized capital city that accounted for 45% of the country’s population by 1975, but this growth did not bring about a reduction or dismantling of sectarian spaces that had organised the city’s immediate periphery. ‘On the contrary, migrants moved in along social, economic and topographic mechanisms that reproduced or reconstructed relatively homogenous confessional spaces’ (Nasr 1979). As Michael Johnson explains, the psychological and societal difficulties associated with rapid urbanisation even intensified ‘a sense of ethnic nationalism’ and territorialisation processes along confessional lines, particularly for the more disenfranchised sections of the population: ‘Shi’a migrants to Beirut in the 1960s became far more conscious of their confessional identity in response to the social and psychological pressures of urban life’ (2001, p.18).

While the inter-communal elite shared an interest in maintaining public order, developing a horizontal cross-confessional consociationalism, this was not always the case among the poorer sections of the population. Since the late 19th century, the menu peuple, who gathered in more homogenous clusters that were animated by communally shared grievances did not always share the enthusiasm of the new mercantile elites for inter-communal relations. To the pudeur des communautés, (‘the decency of the communities’ (Beydoun 1984)) the less privileged had opposed the communal cold war (Kassir 2010, p.232). Horizontal conviviality among elites and vertical communalism organised urban and national political life into a relatively stable consociational model, despite regular challenges to its ethnocratic tenets. For Arend Lijphart (1969), the National Pact actually had established a relatively successful consociational democracy, but one that could be destabilised by internal socio-economic inequalities and external pressures, as was the case in the second half of the 1950s.
This consociationalism hinged on a client system organised around the zu’ama, a new type of political leadership that emerged in the mid 19th century. The za’im (pl. zu’ama) was a socially prominent patron who could grant political protection if necessary. As political relationships between the zu’ama became more heated, they would have recourse to the vertical support they could muster through their street bosses (qabadayat), whether just as a show of force, or to actually secure elected seats. Competition for communal seats of power was fierce among za’ims, and was at times the source of intra-communal fighting orchestrated by the za’ims and their qabadayat. While, over time, the client system became more institutionalised, via institutions of a confessional character providing health services and education, qabadayat were still mobilised to secure votes for national and municipal elections. In fact, this system outlasted both the Ottoman period and the French Mandate, and is still a key feature of urban life in Beirut (Johnson 1978; Johnson 1986).

In 1958, the country saw the first sustained violent confrontations since its independence, opposing, on the one hand, the pro-Western, pro Baghdad Pact President Camille Chamoun supported by armed militias (Phalangists), and, on the other hand, Nasserists and Arab nationalist movements in support of the United Arab Republic. The more destitute sections of the Sunni population in Beirut, facing mounting unemployment and rising inflation, but also the petty bourgeoisie that could not effectively reap the larger benefits of the clientelistic system in the new republic, had turned against Christian hegemony finding a voice for their grievances in Nasserist policies and Arab nationalism:

By imparting a sense of dignity to people of low social status, he [Gamal Abdel Nasser] provided a focus for a broadly based movement of the Muslim urban poor which, stimulated by political and economic grievances, played an active role in 1958. [...] the guts of the revolution were taxi drivers, young butchers, bakers and welders. In Tripoli something that approached the Paris commune was achieved: a revolutionary city controlled by itself. The same was true of the Basta quarter of Beirut (Johnson 1986, p.131).

During this period, the city centre that had once been dominated by the institutions of imperial and colonial powers started to take on the symbols of an independent republic permeated by the attempt to reconcile distinct attachments to Libanist and Arabist views of the role of Lebanon. In 1957, a bronze statue of pan-Arab leader Riad el-Solh assassinated in 1951 for having bought into communal compromise was erected on the former al Sour Square, renamed Riad el-Solh Square. In 1960, President Fuad Shehab
inaugurated the Martyrs’ Statue commemorating the martyrs killed in the fight for independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1915-1916. It replaced Yussef Hoayek’s limestone sculpture which depicted a Muslim and a Christian woman facing each other, their arms outstretched towards each other, gazing and mourning over an urn sitting between them, a symbolic container of the martyrs’ ashes (Volk 2010, p. 55).

The new statue in bronze stood at the centre of the square, with an allegorical couple on an elevated square platform, the woman representing Liberty and a man a step behind her representing the Nation. Underneath them, two fallen men with European features struggling against an invisible enemy represent the martyrs, ‘the actual struggle, and the standing figures represented the values that made their struggles worthwhile’ (Volk 2010, p. 99). The victory memorial that had replaced a mournful one, was also an attempt to look forward to a heroic future as opposed to a tragic past:

‘In the case of Lebanon, the allegory of liberty replaced two other female statues, which had represented balance between ethno-religious communities. By losing the local reference point, Lebanon’s national symbol had become more modern and more European. The message was that a modern nation moved beyond attachments to ethno-religious differences’ (Volk 2010, p. 102).

The main thrust of the period between 1950 and 1975 in Beirut was one of redefinition of urban space to represent the newly independent state, the city’s ‘third period of urban modernisation’ as it were (Verdeil 2010). Echoing Mohammad Naciri’s statement that with every social upheaval affecting rural or urban space, the State has reacted by a greater investment in spatial planning this wave of modernisation followed the 1958 clashes (1987, p. 53 in Cattedra 2002). The 1960s were thus marked by the presidencies of statist Fouad Shehab (1958-1964) and Charles Helou (1964-1970) and their challenge to the clientelistic system that dominated Lebanese politics. Fuad Chehab initiated a number of interventions on urban infrastructure, including highways and ring roads, official street names, traffic lights, public institutions in buildings of internationalist architecture and a public University, all in the name of state-building.

The Ecochard 1964 Masterplan, would seek to organise the rapid and haphazard sprawl of the city that was accommodating waves of refugees and

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However, a number of related projects did not materialise due to the high cost of expropriation and the start of the war in 1975. These include the Cité gouvernementale projected in Bir Hassan, or the Ghalghoul-Saifi project of urban renewal in pericentral Beirut. For a more detailed discussion see (Verdeil 2010).
rural-urban migration, primarily composed of Palestinians and Shi’as from the South and the Bekaa, within what journalists and planners liked to call a ‘misery belt’ in dire need of modernisation. The rapid transformation of this area was, in a large sense, the indirect product of the formation of the state of Israel, and the modern state of Turkey before it. The Armenian genocide in 1915, the *Naqba* of 1948 and the *Naqsa* of 1967 pushed large numbers of Armenian and Palestinian refugees into Lebanon, and due to the cutting of economic relations with historical Palestine, pushed many Shi’a families from the Jabal Amil towards Beirut’s eastern and southern suburbs. This belt of tin-roof sheds wrapped around the city from the Qarantina in the East down to the southern suburbs of Beirut was extending the concentric growth of the city beyond its municipal boundaries and with it road traffic and congestion without the infrastructure to support it.

However, Fuad Chehab’s and Ecochard’s plans were obstructed by Beirut’s landowning elite pushing for a more flexible building code and the privatisation of public land. They agreed on highways connecting the centre with the suburbs that favoured their economic and commercial interests. The purpose of these roads was not only to facilitate the bypassing of the centre but also to cut through the urban fabric and weaken the internal cohesion of neighbourhoods with a strong confessional identity and putting them in relation with each other. Instead, they provided these neighbourhoods with stronger delimitations and sharper edges, turning the neighbourhoods inwards (Kassir 2010).

The wide boulevards that were built by the late 1970s would be the sites of regular mass demonstrations mobilised by Kamal Jumblatt’s Front of National and Progressive Parties and Forces at different stages of the build up to the civil war against the Maronite-dominated sectarian order. In the poverty-stricken suburbs and the Palestinian camps that the growth of the tourist and banking sectors did not reach, mounting tensions translated into sporadic fighting until April 13 1975, when in Ain al-Remmaneh, a Maronite working-class Phalangist stronghold of Beirut, the Phalangists shot at a bus carrying Palestinians returning from a political rally. This shooting, which had followed the attempted murder of the Phalangist leader Pierre Gemayel, is generally said to signal the start of the 15 year long civil war.

**Post Ta’if and Doha Agreements: Shared ethnocracy and political gridlock**

By the time the Ta’if Agreement was signed to end the war in 1989, Beirut had suffered great destruction, particularly in the city centre and along the Green Line which demarcated the city into what became a majority Christian
East Beirut and majority Muslim West Beirut, but also in every other part of
the city, where fighting followed the different cycles of shifting alliances and
enmities. By 1984, the Lebanese army had been disbanded, the PLO had
been pushed out and the Israeli army had withdrawn south of the Litani River,
the Syrian military occupied the Beqaa, and the international peacekeeping
mission had left the country. Militias fought over streets in Beirut, rural
territories, and the country’s resources, fighting yesterday’s ally alongside
tomorrow’s foe. A new brand of leadership dominated the Lebanese political
landscape, with warlords supported by a myriad of foreign powers fighting
their own proxy wars.

The second half of the 1980s was a period of fighting for the control
of sectarian groups, pitting Hezbollah against Amal, and Lebanese forces
against the Phalangists. The Communist Party, which had been aligned with
the mostly Muslim Lebanese National Movement coalition and the
Palestinians, was now fighting against Islamists in Tripoli and against Amal
in Beirut. The overarching ideologies that had momentarily articulated the
two sides that initially polarised the country had broken down to reveal the
power struggles of ever smaller spheres and their hold over an ever more
fragmented city.

The Ta’if Agreement and the 1991 Amnesty Law did not challenge
the gains made by militias, but rather would allow their leaders to enter into
formal politics, legitimising and consolidating their hold over their respective
communities. This agreement legitimated Syrian military presence and
hegemony for a period of two years, demanded the disarmament of all
militias – except Hezbollah, which was fighting against Israel’s occupation of
Southern Lebanon – and introduced amendments to the National Pact of 1943
with regards to the confessional distribution of public office posts and
parliament seats. Ta’if formulated a collective intercommunal government
that reflected a shift in the balance of power, the result of new demographic,
social and regional realities. It also ‘aimed to transform the political system
from a hierarchical communal partnership among the major communities into
a consociational, intercommunal collective partnership’ (Ziadeh 2006, p. 140).
The Ta’if system shifted executive power from the Maronite president to the
council of ministers and changed the ratio for parliamentary seats and
positions in public administration from 6 Christians to 5 Muslims to 5:5. The
agreement did not challenge the paradox ‘of claiming an absolute citizen-

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5 For comprehensive analyses of the civil wars between 1975-1990, see in particular (Hanf 1994)
and (Picard 2002). On the fragmentation of Lebanese sovereignty and economy, see (Hannoyer
1999; Traboulsi 2012; Harik 1994). On the premises for the breakdown of the Lebanese state,
see (El-Khazen 2000).
based equality at the same time as an all-encompassing communal system of rights and privileges was rebuilt’ (Ziadeh 2006, p. 145).

Instead of the hierarchy of communal rights, the President of the Republic (Maronite), the President of the Council of Ministers (Sunni) and the Speaker of the Parliament (Shi’a) formed a Troika that decided on the basis of consensus. However, that consensus was subservient to Syrian hegemony that was indefinitely extended and often consensus within the troika led to stalemate, creating a geopolitics of separate territories governed, most prominently, by the (Maronite) Lebanese Forces, headed by Elie Hobeika; the (Shi’a) Amal Movement of Nabih Berri and Hezbollah; and Walid Jumblatt’s (Druze) Progressive Socialist Party 6. But as Fawaz Traboulsi argues, the end of the war had also seen the marginalisation of a Sunni community left without a strong leadership (Traboulsi 1993), which opened a vacuum for Rafiq Hariri to fill7. For much of his tenure as Prime Minister between 1992-1998 and between 2000 and 2004, Hariri did not confront the post-Ta’if elites, but circumvented them, using Beirut’s urban reconstruction as his main political instrument to dominate the Lebanese, and particularly the Sunni, political landscape (Gervais 2012).

As proposed by James Anderson, the post-conflict or shared ethnocracy of consociationalism succeeds in ending lethal conflict but brings about rigidities that typically perpetuate or accentuate ethno-national divisions. It is, as he writes, ‘shared dysfunctional ethnocracy as the war continuing by other means’. It is a sobering approach to the indeed often mis-named post-conflict periods, where as we see in Lebanon, sectarianism has only become further entrenched and territorialisied, although rather subdued under Syrian tutelage. After Hariri’s assassination on 14 February 2005 and the Syrian military pull-out, those divisions came to the fore and were rearranged along pro-Syria (March 8 coalition) and anti-Syria (March 14 coalition) camps, respectively led by Hezbollah and Saad Hariri (Rafiq’s son). What had been dormant lines of division rapidly became animated, turning the city into a stage for the demonstration and exhibition of political and confessional affiliation, and the sites where they meet into spaces of sectarian and political confrontation. In Beirut, this would translate into the ‘new demarcation lines’ but this time between Sunnis and Shi’as. These two

6 Alongside these larger factions, the political leadership also incorporated representatives of the Alawite militia of Tripoli and a leader of the Abbash (the radical Sunnis of Beirut) (Picard 2005).
7 The same can be said of the Christian community whose leadership was either killed during the war, in exile or imprisoned. Moreover, the 1992 electoral law divided the Mount Lebanon governorate in six electoral districts, thereby weakening the Christian vote. For more details on the place of the Maronite leadership post-Ta’if and the controversies surrounding the electoral law, see (Baroudi & Tabar 2009; Knudsen 2005; Nagle 2015).
coalitions polarised Lebanon over the coming years, their boundaries cutting across traditional religious lines:

‘No more is the classic Christian-Muslim divide relevant; nor the narrow Sunni-Maronite divide, which dominated the squabbles of the Lebanese political elite in pre-war Lebanon. The two new camps have crystallised along lines that are rather new to the history of the Lebanese conflict (As’ad AbuKhalil in Haddad 2009).

A new urban order was now being drawn up, no longer defined by the East-West demarcation of the war, nor based on a centre-periphery hierarchy. Instead, the city had become a metropolitan region within which historical and new centralities were redrawing the urban structure, within which territorialities became bastions of competition between March 8 and March 14, pro and anti-Assad coalitions respectively. The regional context of rising tensions between Saudi Arabia and the US, on the one hand, and Iran and Syria, on the other, amplified the sectarian undertones of the political polarisation in Lebanon, and sharpened divisions between Sunnis and Shi’as in Beirut.

After 2006, the Maronites split between, on one hand, the Phalangists and the Lebanese Forces with March 14 and, on the other, the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) led by former General Michal Aoun, who in early 2006 signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Hezbollah to bolster his chances of becoming President of the Republic. Reminiscent of the disagreements between nationalists and pragmatists that divided the Maronites on the eve of the Lebanese state’s independence, the split between the Phalangists/Lebanese Forces and FPM is however no longer about whether Maronites should share power more equality, but with whom they stood a better chance of securing what remained of the Maronite hold on the state and the extent to which this would involve the Syrian regime.

The war between Hezbollah and Israel in July 2006 only accentuated divisions. In December 2006, the March 8 opposition demanded the resignation of the March 14 government by staging a peaceful protest under the Prime Minister’s office in the old city centre that eventually turned into a ‘tent city’ that occupied Riad el Solh Square and the southern part of Martyrs’ Square for nineteen months. Escalating tensions between Sunni and Shi’a, as well as between Shi’a and Maronite areas of Beirut burst into armed
confrontations in January 2007, and peaked with the clashes of May 2008, the worst fighting since the civil war, when militias led by Hezbollah took over West Beirut and confronted a weak to non-existent resistance, from Saad Hariri’s Future Movement.

The instability that has characterised the post-2005 period has been also accompanied by a more pervasive marking of urban territory. Neighbourhoods became more clearly demarcated as being under the control of the different political factions, with flags, banners, posters, and symbols saturating the urban environment and marking public space. This ‘territorialisation’ of Beirut was not new, but the intensification of confrontations since 2005 has turned the city, and particularly West Beirut, into a site of open and constant contestation. More than the temporary signs of political animosities, the marking of territory is the most explicit emanation of a more continual process of territorialisation that has become the most dominant feature of Beirut’s urban order, organising the socio-spatial structure of the city.

The 2008 Doha Accords, that suspended the escalation of violence between the opposing camps, stipulated that the next president would be a consensual one (General Michel Suleiman); and that an interim national unity cabinet would serve until the June 2009 parliamentary elections held on the basis of the 1960s electoral law, whereby smaller voting constituencies – the Qada – were institutionalized in electoral redistricting. These seemingly rather harmless decisions in fact reinforced the grip of sectarian leaders and the sectarian logic. While the Lebanese electoral system allows for cross-voting and, in fact, candidates often have to rely on cross-confessional support to be elected, the redistricting into smaller voting constituencies has diminished the extent to which candidates needed to reach outside their confession. In Imad Salamey’s words:

‘The Doha Agreement delegated significant power to sectarian elites, charging them with the task of agreeing over vital national issues. The role of the elected parliament was significantly marginalized. It turned into a superficial

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8 A scuffle between students in the cafeteria of the Beirut Arab University escalated into an armed confrontation, leaving 4 dead and 35 injured. The university is in the Sunni neighbourhood of Tariq el-Jdideh (Bakri & Fattah 2007).

9 Hezbollah’s show of force followed the government’s decision to expel the airport’s Commander of Security, accused of working under the orders of Hezbollah, and to disable Hezbollah’s communication network. These decisions, the government led by the Future Movement had argued, were taken following suspicions that Hezbollah was planning the assassination of a pro-government figure who would use the airport. For more details on the May 2008 events, see (Shehadi 2008; Fregonese 2012).
rubberstamping institution dedicated to approving elite arranged agreements over almost every aspect of its political jurisdictions: drafting electoral laws, electing the president, and approving the formation of the Council of Ministers’ (Salamey 2013, p. 175).

In January 2011, the then government led by Saad Hariri was brought down when the eleven March 8 and the President’s four Ministers resigned as the Special Tribunal for Lebanon was preparing to indict five Hezbollah members for Rafiq Hariri’s assassination. An interim government was then established with Najib Mikati nominated by March 8 at its helm. In 2013, as the conflict in Syria was in its second year, Mikati submitted his resignation in the context of intensifying tension between the pro- and anti-Assad camps and was succeeded by Tammam Salam. The ‘caretaker’ government led by Salam has remained in place since February 2014, amid a renewal of the parliament’s mandate and the postponing of elections. In effect, the current parliament has rarely met and has enjoyed limited legitimacy, reinforcing the political role of communal leaders and “the street”. Moreover, while the country had been without a president since May 2014, as this paper goes to print, General Michel Aoun was elected president by the parliament at its 46th electoral session on 31 October 2016. The President is elected with a two-thirds majority vote in the parliament. However, the two coalitions had consistently refrained from supporting each other’s candidate, repeatedly postponing the President’s election.

**Beirut Madinati: Challenging the ethnocratic system**

Regional developments and the war in Syria in particular have had a significant impact on Lebanon, which has always been porous to external influence and interventions. The already dysfunctional and weakened state has therefore been further paralysed, and this was only made more obvious by the garbage collection crisis that started in the summer of 2015. The Naameh landfill, which had been Beirut’s main landfill since the mid-1990s, had been active for seventeen years instead of the initially planned six. This landfill was to be a temporary solution before a comprehensive garbage-processing plan could be devised. Instead, it came to represent the country’s corrupt and fractured leadership and administration.

When in July 2015 Naameh’s inhabitants demanded the landfill’s closure by blocking the road to the garbage trucks once more, Beirut filled with the city’s uncollected garbage causing an environmental and health crisis. The mobilisations around the garbage crisis brought rarely seen numbers of protesters to the streets, particularly youth, and spawned a series
of mobilisations demanding a solution to the crisis. The garbage crisis and the government’s inability to resolve it highlighted the government’s severe shortcomings and corruption, which propelled the movement towards more far-reaching demands, including the end of the sectarian system and the removal of the entire political class.

While the movements had limited success as far as the garbage issue was concerned, they brought about another response, this time at the level of municipal government. Beirut Madinati (Beirut My City) emerged in March 2016 as a political campaign led by a list of 24 independent candidates stemming from civil society, academia, marketing, architecture, medicine, the arts or the fishers’ association. It had an equal number of Christians and Muslims, men and women. A rare sight in Lebanese elections, BM also put forward a 10-point programme, which included measures on public transportation and spaces, affordable housing, pollution, poverty alleviation or municipal governance. After two months of public debates, awareness raising and campaigning with very limited means, BM got around 40% of the vote in the municipal elections of May 2016 – the first elections since the parliamentary ones of 2009 –, but no seats on the municipal council because of a winner-takes-all election system. The list that won the municipal elections is a collection of candidates from the two, otherwise opposing, political coalitions, March 8 and March 14.

With national level institutions largely under the control of political parties and in continuous gridlock, the municipal and city levels are seen as key scales of government where a more technocratic governance can be exercised to address immediate needs and gain legitimacy. It is also, pragmatically speaking, a scale at which a group with limited resources can effectively dent the hold of entrenched party politics. While the response to the campaign was largely positive, even if sometimes met with cynicism, and did a lot to open room for a challenge to the client-based sectarian system, this very system showed how when faced with an existential threat, otherwise belligerent partisans closed ranks to preserve their prerogatives. As the head of the Democratic Gathering, Walid Jumblatt, allegedly said to Saad Hariri about the need to elect a president: ‘go ahead and elect any president, even Aoun because the important part is to save the system’ (Saleh 2016).

Post national or religious ethnocracy

In the case of Lebanon, transnational solidarities and political relations that challenge a self-contained, centralised idea of the state have been part of its very foundation. As we saw above, the territory of Lebanon was expanded during the French Mandate to include Muslim majority areas into the Grand
Liban. At different times before and since 1943, Christians and Muslims have relied on foreign patrons to weigh in to support their political projects. Often identified as a destabilising factor, regional and international actors have been part of a complex web of relations, but here too, it is not possible to isolate sectarian identity or religion as the only defining criterion guiding local and international political activity. Even the decline of Arab Nationalism and the rise of Islamism cannot be said to describe a post-national order since both share the same disdain for national borders.

One could say that Lebanon has to some extent always been ‘post-national’, but also that Islam and Christianity have been ‘Lebanonised’, i.e. religion has been more about religious identity essentialised and instrumentalised by political sectarianism, than it has been about religion per se. Waddah Charara even speaks of sectarianism ‘as nothing less than the organising principle of Lebanese society, the “real religion” of the Lebanese in the words of late Maxime Rodinson (Farha 2016). Moreover, as Salamey and Tabar argue, Lijphart’s consociational model, has always been challenged by ‘the phenomena of “deterritorialization” and “denationalization” amid globalization and, consequently, the overwhelming interconnectedness of ethnopolitics reaching out beyond the nation-state’ (Salamey 2008, pp. 239-240). In other words, Lebanon’s process of state building was always tied to a complex and changing set of regional political axes and its neighbours’ regular upheavals, while at the same time transnational religious identities never neatly guided internal political relations. Transnational sectarian solidarities are confronted and renegotiated, amplified or moderated, according to the local, national and regional power struggles.

In this regard, my position would be that what we see is not so much the return of the religious, which Anderson describes, but as Peter Sloterdijk describes it, the ‘recognition of the immunitary constitution of human beings’:

‘Something is indeed returning today – but the conventional wisdom that this is religion making its reappearance is insufficient to satisfy critical inquiries. Nor is it the return of a factor that had vanished, but rather a shift of emphasis in a continuum that was never interrupted. The genuinely recurring element that would merit our full intellectual attention is more anthropological than ‘religious’ in its implications – it is, in a nutshell, the recognition of the immunitary constitution of human beings. After centuries of experiments with new forms of life, the realization has dawned that humans, whatever ethnic, economic and political situation might govern their
lives, exist not only in ‘material conditions’, but also in symbolic immune systems and ritual shells’ (Sloterdijk 2013).

The ‘symbolic immune systems and ritual shells’ that Sloterdijk mentions are not only the political, legal or military tools that people mobilise in order to inhabit the world, but the way they constitute meaningful interiors. In his “Spheres” trilogy, Peter Sloterdijk (2011, 2014, 2016) presents what he terms “spherology”, the study of morphological and cosmological interiors that humans produce to inhabit the world. In the Lebanese context, this is not only articulated around sectarian, political or familial spheres, but around a whole array of practices and spaces that make life in the context of instability and uncertainty possible. The boundaries drawn in Beirut, both physical and metaphysical, articulate a “political habitat” within the city, building on everyday habits and practices, but also arising from the built structures of the city. This is not to say that the contours of urban worlds and territories do not change. Rather, they are constantly drawn and re-drawn, and utilize the city, its infrastructure, and architecture, the roads, the overpasses, the walls and spaces to delimit those worlds (Kastrissianakis, 2015). Urban or national divisions, enmities and alliances are not based on persistent primordial attachments, but a complex web of meaning and relations that one can inhabit. In this sense, post-national ethnocracy in Lebanon may be less about religion, and more about the constant re-articulation of habitable interiors.\(^\text{10}\)

**Conclusion**

By bring Peter Sloterdijk’s comment to the Lebanese situation, this article seeks to underline that identities and the constructions of sects or political groups are not only contingent on a multiplicity of factors, but also that their relevance and power rests on the extent to which they are seen to secure one’s place in the country or region. Political sectarianism and ethnocracy have been deployed in the case of Lebanon at various stages in different ways, but as more recent scholarship on Lebanese sectarianism has shown, it is a modern political phenomenon as much as it is a socio-political reality that is not only perpetuated by a self-serving leadership, but also a population that draws meaning and security from a system reinforced by patronage and clientelism.

\(^{10}\) For a more detailed discussion of Peter Sloterdijk’s immunological spheres and its relevance to the Lebanese context, see (Kastrissianakis 2015).
Ethnic or sectarian demarcations have been mobilised by the Lebanese, by imperial powers and regional actors, in various ways to serve different purposes. This is not to say that those demarcations while being constructed are not also social realities. Rather they are moved around, foregrounded or pushed to the background to include and exclude, bring closer or push further apart. In the tired context of Lebanese sectarianism, they are indeed overshadowing pressing issues such as class, gender and ecological issues, as Anderson argues. Nevertheless, the sectarian system and the political leadership that sustain it still hold sway despite growing inequalities, ecological disasters, poor infrastructure and public services. By brandishing the spectre of all-out-war made all the more immediate with developments in the region, the political class manages to still render itself relevant despite its continuous disregard towards economic sustainability, social justice, youth employment or liveable cities.

While we have seen how ethnocracy may offer a relevant framework in the Lebanese context, I would also say that the Lebanese could contribute a few points to the extension of ethnocracy and urban ethnocracy in particular. Whereas cities are said to either facilitate coexistence or heighten conflict between diverse communities, the way the consociational system is articulated in Beirut presents a more nuanced situation. As we have seen, political leaders have for the most part shared an interest in maintaining public order, developing a horizontal cross-confessional consociationalism while maintaining strong ties with their co-religionists through patronage, clientelism and sectarian patriotism. As Michael Johnson, a Marxist in search for class consciousness and working class struggles, had to concede, the more destitute layers of society were more vertically integrated with their patrons than they could ever be with a proletariat, horizontally cutting across religious denominations and client networks (Johnson 2001). This political system not only facilitates victories – however hollow – at the ballot box. It also in many ways organises conflict and coexistence in the city.

This remains the main challenge that the likes of Beirut Madinati face, for beyond the immediate gains (and heavy cost) of clientelism and patronage, this vertical relation is constantly renegotiated and redefined ‘to save the system’. An ethnocratic understanding of government could gain from a deeper engagement with what constitutes the architecture of those vertical relations for their significance is what makes them so resilient to horizontal challenges.
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Extending the Concept of Ethnocracy:
Exploring the Debate in the Baltic Context

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Abstract
The advance of liberal understanding of democracy with its interest in and constrained ability to interfere with citizens’ identities made cases of ethnocracy rare over the past decades. Over the past 25 years, Baltic politics and societies have experienced considerable change, however, as I demonstrate, considerable debate persists around the issues central to the argument about ethnocracy in the region. In the context, when discussing the central role played by state institutions in negotiating conflicts between groups over access to scarce resources of the state, it is central to see minorities as being in both the inferior numerical position as well as in a symbolically more disadvantaged place: If we see democratic politics for what they are as majoritarian politics, and if we see these as taking place in the context of state institutions designed to uphold the ethnic majority dominance, then any kind of liberal democratic politics would be a good candidate for ethnocracy.

Introduction
When James Anderson contacted me to contribute to the debate on ethnocracy in this special issue, I agreed without hesitation. Since my days as a doctoral student I was exposed to discussions on the politics of managing ethnic diversity in what are today Estonia and Latvia. Over the past 25 years, Baltic politics and societies have experienced considerable change;
independence from the Soviet Union, a period of post-communist transition, membership negotiations with the European Union, EU accession in 2004, and more than twelve years of membership in both the EU and NATO all have changed the nature of politics in the Baltic states individually and collectively (Agarin 2010; Galbreath 2005). However, as I will demonstrate below, considerable debate persists around the issues central to the argument about ethnocracy in the region.

In his opening article James Anderson presents a variegated taxonomy of issues relevant for identifying different types of ethnocracy. However, beyond description of what we find in various places where one ethnic group exercises majoritarian rule over subordinate minorities, we ought to start from the beginning and determine what makes a political regime a candidate for ethnocracy. Nearly all democratic regimes in Europe, East and West, as well as in Asia and Africa, rely heavily on the liberal democratic principle of majoritarian rule. Thus, in countries whose citizenries have a clear ethnic majority we should be presuming a form of ethnocratic dominance of a qualified majority population that determines and facilitates implementation of policies affecting all residents, regardless of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identities. This would be the case in most countries across the globe.

Such generalisations however would render both the conceptual, and factual contribution that we as students of ethnic politics could make by engaging with debate on ethnocracy futile at best, counterproductive at worst. If nearly all states are ethnocracies, what good is there to single out a select few and analyse relationship between ethnic groups there as being driven by ethnic – rather than any other – issues? Under these circumstances, the question of distinguishing an arithmetic majority of voters who are likely to express more or less similar opinions at the ballot box from patterns of an ethnic majority population acting systematically to undercut interest representation of the remaining, minority populations are essential. Thus, we should look out for cases of discrimination against the resident minority by the numeric majority populations when ethnocratic institutional designs are de jure enshrined in national legislation. The advance of liberal understanding of democracy with its interest in and constrained ability to interfere with citizens’ identities made cases of ethnocracy rare over the past decades. This trend, however, seems to go in reverse. As the recent case of the ban on the burkini in France testifies, some states have now began promoting their ethnic identity politics as de facto politics of civic intolerance towards elusively defined minorities (Reuters 2016).
However, although observable in its pure form only in the rarest of instances, ethnocracy is still a useful concept. It allows us to make sense of sets of cases similar in their central features – ethnic diversity of the population at large is constrained by the dominant role of one group in political decision-making, the privileged status of that group vis-à-vis the political institutions of the state, and the culture and language being protected by the state which all residents regardless of their ethnic background need to uphold and promote. We can start with Oren Yiftachel’s criticism of Sammy Smooha’s model of *ethnic democracy* as an alternative to *ethnocracy* (Yiftachel 2006). As Anderson rightly points out in his introductory contribution, Yiftachel identifies ‘ethnocratic regimes as inherently conflict-generating’. In these, inequality in access to resources of the states creates an inherently unstable political, but also social environment for co-existence of ethnic groups. It is precisely this lack of political and social stability therefore that makes ethnocratic regimes more and more committed to upholding the dominant position of one group over all others in order to provide a mirror-image of stability generating more, not less, intergroup tensions. Both *ethnocracy* and *ethnic democracy* however have been widely used in the scholarship and related to politics in various regions of the world, not least to cases of Estonia and Latvia which I use here as critical references for the discussion in this Special Issue of the *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Journal*.

Ethnic diversity has a long history in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, yet contemporary state institutions are entrusted to protect identities and interests of ethnic core nations, rather than of all residents. The official narrative of statehood in the Baltic states emphasizes the principle of state continuity from pre-Soviet republics to the present. In so doing, it entrenches inequality between the majority, titular ethnics and the small groups of ‘historical minorities’, and those who settled in the country during the latter half of the twentieth century, the ‘Russian-speaking minorities’. It is at the expense of these large groups of minorities that states have been reformed as democracies for members of the titular majority nation. As such, Estonia and Latvia (alongside Lithuania) have been acknowledged as a fit and welcome addition to the European family of nation-states when Baltic states joined the EU in 2004. Regrettably, only little progress has been made to accommodate the previously excluded groups in Estonia’s and Latvia’s societies: In the discussion that follows I will demonstrate that both Estonia and Latvia turned out to be procrustean states instrumentalising the insecurities of majorities to marginalise minority communities’ participation and representation rather than as was previously believed ethnocratic polities on the stable transitory pathway towards a fully-fledged democracy.
Danes and Swedes first, and then German, Jewish and Polish communities have played an important role in the Baltic histories in the past, yielding crucial power over domestic populations and enriching cultural life in the region. Yet, contemporary Baltic societies mainly face challenges of ethnocultural diversity resulting from the Soviet period in the Baltic history. Today, the overwhelming majority of minority groups in the Baltic states speak Russian as their first language (see Table 1). While in everyday life we can fairly easily identify minority from the majority representatives, for the purposes of analyses it is rather difficult to come up with a conceptual definition of what makes minorities in the region candidates for the study as objects of ethnocratic rule.

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<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>1,352,399</td>
<td>2,180,442</td>
<td>3,043,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority nation</td>
<td>898,845 or 69.87%</td>
<td>1,299,368 or 59.6%</td>
<td>2,561,300 or 84.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russians</td>
<td>25.22%</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainians</td>
<td>1.74%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>n.a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarusians</td>
<td>0.95%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poles</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
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Table 1: Ethnic composition of Baltic States (author’s calculation from official statistical data for each country). For details see, Agarin 2016.

In his assessment of interethnic relations in Estonia, Priit Järve has asked questions that are still relevant today, though rarely discussed explicitly: Are Baltic states ethnic democracies? Can post-communist Baltic states be considered hotbeds of ethnic nationalism? Have political institutions failed to put societies on the pathway toward liberal democracy? (Järve 2000).

Most of these questions are as topical today as they were 16 years ago and it is wholly insufficient to identify that Estonia, and for that matter also Latvia, is an ethnic democracy. There are indeed several parallels that Järve et al. have identified in their comparative assessment of the situation in Israel and these two Baltic states:

1. ethnonationalism preceded the establishment of the nation-state after the World War I in both Estonia and Latvia;
2. majority ethnic nations have had a dominant role in statecraft during the interwar period of statehood, de jure also during the period of Soviet inclusion, and de facto after the independence in 1991;
dominant groups perceive an acute threat from the minority and their external – though self-designated – homeland to be the penultimate challenge to majority led nation-state building project; and finally,

the dominant ethnic group has been committed to some form of democratic decision-making for in-group members albeit at the exclusion of minority groups (Smooha and Järve 2005, 30).

For that reason, it is disingenuous – beside the reason I have set out from, i.e. that most democratic states operating democratically require a majoritarian decision-making to be in place – to infer that politics where we see ethnic dominance are not democratic as such.

Much more, it appears, liberal democracies require a robust set of political institutions to be in place and operational. These require a set of functional criteria to perform successfully on the entire territory of the polity, in just a selected (set of) language(s), promote allegiance of residents to state institutions, and allow participation in political process for those affected. All these criteria can be easily found in states across the globe, be it Australia or Austria, India or Ireland, UK or US, all states committing to protection of individual liberal rights of their citizens could well be veritable candidates for ethnic democracies of sorts. We however need to acknowledge that ‘liberal democracy’ sensu strictu additionally accords resident minority groups some collective rights, either by means of affirmative action programmes (as in the US), liberal multicultural policies (as in the UK), minority rights (as in Germany), language rights (as in Poland for regional languages), or territorial forms of minority as majority rule (as in Canada for the First Nations on ‘their’ territories). All of this makes ‘ethnic democracy’ increasingly indistinguishable from the liberal multicultural democratic approach of building institutions with variegated impact on groups of non-core ethnic communities among the citizenry. Indeed, while most (Western liberal) democratic states have been hailed as having successfully managed their ethnic diversity by facilitating participation and representation of non-dominant societal groups via parallel institutions serving those minority groups exclusively, there is a good chance that such states should also be considered candidates for ethnocratic regimes of scale.

If for no other reason then, ethnic democracy is a type of governance that is inherently democratic in design for some of its members (usually ethnic majority), while implicitly excluding the other members (usually ethnic minority) from participation in political process. This is because
despite the fact that institutions of the state are not ethnoculturally defined, functionally the plain upon which visibility, participation, and representation take place are tainted by the cultural aspirations of the majority and preclude minority agenda setting on their own terms (McGarry and Agarin 2014; for a more general discussion, see Phillips 2007). Remarkably, therefore, the state which can deliver on its promise to the dominant group must itself commit to several actors: to the international community as an active and viable state on its own right (Cordell 1999), to publics as being a credible ‘service station’ for citizens (Budryte 2005), to domestic political elites to allow unfettered and constitutionally consequential decision-making (Galbreath 2005) and to the majority population as such as a guarantor of its continuous survival in an uncertain international environment (Ehin and Berg 2013).

It is from this perspective that my own past work has echoed much of Yiftachel’s criticism of ethnic democracy model (Agarin 2015; Agarin 2010; Agarin 2005): it assumes that states can be formally democratic even though their policies are designed to exclude segments of population on the basis of purported identity claims of state-builders (Yiftachel 2006). This is an important caveat for students of European polities, all of which have been built upon the two contradictory principles: liberal democracy for all citizens and ethnic definition of the state institutions serving primarily the dominant ethnic majority (Agarin 2014; Agarin and Cordell 2016). Indeed some critics have suggested that particularly the new and reconstituted states in the eastern part of Europe have been adamant when enforcing the principles of majority rule, have circumvented consociational arrangements of formal and effective representation of minorities in official political process, as well as undermined guarantees for emergence of group-based solidarity outside the ethnically defined criteria (Jackson-Preece 1997). Yet, after the EU accession of many post-communist states with their political institutions largely unchanged and with the European Union rubber stamping nation-states of majority as having the duty to serve all residents, we could rightly claim that all European, including the EU member-states, are ethnocracies albeit of different form and disguise.

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Baltic states provide an excellent point for illustration in this context. After their independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 the majority, state-nations of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia claimed to be outposts of Western values and opposing the East, in particular Russia. Fifteen years on, EU-accession, rising standards of living and an increasingly Western outlook within the Baltic societies might suggest that they are on their way to catching-up with their European neighbours when it comes to respect and promotion of
societal diversity. However, popular discontent with political, economic and social reforms appears to be ubiquitous with the legacies of the Soviet past said to present a major impediment to greater successes. In the past, the Estonian and Latvian publics, press and politicians had been persistent in suggesting that the problems encountered during their transition to independent states resulted from the differences in opinions of majority and minority publics on the core issues of post-Soviet development. In fact, the public eye turns most often to the legacies of the Soviet industrialization policies which resulted in the migration of citizens from other Soviet republics into the region (Mertelsmann 2003). However, Soviet nationalities policies promoted the identities of ‘titular’ groups, recognized their right to national territory and forged a shared civic identity of all residents as a part of the Soviet peoples’ brotherhood (Hajda and Beissinger 1990; G. Smith 1996). For both the majority titular nations and the Soviet-era migrants, provisions for education in their native language were made to foster loyalty to the Soviet state. During the Soviet economic and political reforms of the late 1980s, Baltic nations began to mobilize on ethnopolitical platforms to seek their republics’ independence from the Soviet Union, and this was formally achieved in August 1991.

And so, the official narrative of statehood across the Baltic states emphasizes the principle of state continuity from the original, pre-Soviet republics to the present, entrusting states to protect their ethnic core nations. This effectively entrenched inequality between the majority titular ethnics and the small groups of ‘historical minorities’, and those who settled in the country during the latter half of the twentieth century. Political elites in the Baltic States have consistently emphasized that their states did not join the Soviet Union voluntarily but were unjustly occupied in 1940 and again in 1944, after the German retreat from the area. All three states, therefore, followed the principle of state restitution when re-creating their legal citizenship frameworks as independent states (Van Elsuwege 2008). This principle substantially affected the political rights of minority, non-titular, residents in Estonia and Latvia.

In post-Soviet Estonia and Latvia, only citizens of the pre-war republics and their descendants were entitled to automatic citizenship. In Estonia, only citizens were allowed to vote in the first post-Soviet elections in 1992. As 99.6% of the citizenry declared themselves to be ethnic Estonians, minorities were not represented in the constituent parliament. Since the 1995 general elections, minority representatives have been running on minority party lists or for other parties. Minority parties (including the Constitutional Democratic Party, and the Russian Party of Estonia) were represented in two consecutive parliaments from 1995 to 2003, but since then have failed to
collect sufficient votes to enter parliament. Non-citizens can elect and be elected at both municipal and regional elections after a five-year residency period. Owing to their concentrated settlement, minorities have been continuously represented in regional and municipal administrations across northeast Estonia and areas of Tallinn with large Russian-speaking populations. To some extent this regional dominance of Russian-speaking populations has allowed them to send political representatives into municipal councils and administrations to look after their interests better. However, as the overall political process is dominated by Estonian speakers and is geared toward the majority dominance, none of the qualified observers of Estonia’s politics has been able to identify a shift toward more minority accommodation even in these regions dominated by Russian-speaking electorates (Nakai 2014; Cianetti 2015).

In Latvia, non-citizens are not allowed to vote in either national or municipal elections. Only citizens of the pre-Soviet Latvian state were allowed to vote in the first post-Soviet elections in 1993; unlike in Estonia, these included small numbers of minority citizens. Although over the years naturalization of Russian-speakers has considerably increased their share among the electorate, there was only a slight rise in numbers of Russian-speaking political actors in Latvia, most running on a minority party list (For Human Rights in United Latvia) or an interethnic party (Harmony Centre). The share of Russian-speakers among political elites is significantly lower than their share among the national electorate. This is due to the fact that all individuals running in national, regional and municipal elections in Latvia must demonstrate the highest level of Latvian language skills. Most political parties representing the Latvian majority continue to press for restrictions on minority participation in politics, primarily by advocating stricter language requirements, though others including the party National Alliance seek to end the naturalization process. National radical organizations also frequently express support for the ‘decolonization’ of Latvia by outlawing Russian-speaking political representatives, stripping Russian-speakers of electoral rights, and deporting Soviet-era migrants, including those who have successfully naturalized since 1995. Indeed, this ethnocentric rhetoric focussing, even abusing the perception of the dominant majority about survival of the national, cultural and linguistic community is clearly indicating that at least one part of electorate in Latvia is considering ethnocracy in ‘their’ state a serious option. If the agenda of the National Alliance and its predecessor party For Fatherland and Freedom have for years sought to establish the Latvian state as a state for ethnic Latvian members of the citizenry only, we should certainly identify Latvia’s political institutions as ethnically biased and imposing the values, aspirations and not
least the language of its majority upon resident minorities as a tool of ethnic control and domination akin to what Yiftachel identifies as ‘ethnocracy’.

The Estonian citizenship law (passed in 1992), and the Latvian equivalent (passed in 1995) made around thirty per cent of residents in Estonia (as ‘aliens’) and around forty percent in Latvia (as ‘non-citizens’) de jure stateless, only allowing acquisition of national citizenship through naturalization, despite the fact that most of them were long-term local residents, with an average 20 years’ residence, as of 1995. Naturalization procedures require the applicant to successfully sit an exam testing knowledge of the constitution, history, and the national anthem; to swear an oath of allegiance to the state; and, foremost, to pass an examination testing proficiency in the national language. Since 1998, children born to stateless persons in Estonia and Latvia can receive citizenship without this naturalization procedure if their parents apply on their behalf. After peaking in the late 1990s, naturalization rates have since fallen dramatically. In 2008, 932 individuals received Estonian citizenship, while around the same number opted for Russian Federation citizenship. The numbers of individuals who have successfully naturalized in both states have for the first time exceeded the numbers of those still stateless in 2009. On January 1 2014, Latvia’s Population Register counted 295,122 ‘non-citizens’ living in Latvia (approx. 14.25% of residents), down from approximately 715,000 in 1991. On February 1 2014, there were approx. 83,600 ‘aliens’ in Estonia (approx. 6.5% of residents). All ‘aliens’ and ‘non-citizens’ are Russian-speakers, the overwhelming majority declaring themselves to be ethnic Russians. Overall, around 1.64% of Latvia’s and around 7.25% of Estonia’s residents carried Russian Federation passports on January 1 2014 (Agarin 2016).

Until today, perceptions of social stability in both Latvia and Estonia are woven together with a narrative of (ethno-) national survival. On the other hand, however, one observes the long-term impact of gradual, yet decisive developments in domestic policies of integration put into place as a result of the EU accession pressures: For example, Estonia’s Law on Citizenship was amended in 1999 allowing children born after 1992 to parents who are non-citizens to forego the full naturalisation process (Pettai 2005). Also, Estonia’s social integration programmes were introduced first in 2000 easing the way of resident non-Estonian non-citizens into an Estonian-dominated public sphere; of late, language tests for citizenship applicants have been simplified in February 2015, facilitating access to Estonian citizenship for the elderly.

The high tensions, intensity of deep distrust and mutual recriminations between Baltic majority titular nationals and Russian- as well as Polish-speakers will require a sustained, sensitive and systematic approach to fostering good neighbourliness and greater cooperation among ethnic
communities in the Baltic states (Kochenov and Dimitrovs 2013). The Russian Federation, as successor state of the Soviet Union, claiming to be the ethnic kin state of Russian-speakers in the Baltic states since 1991, can easily be seen as a challenge to regional stability (Agarin 2015). Beside the fact that permanent *de jure* statelessness of a significant proportion of the population is a strain on the political representation of stateless long-term residents in the two countries, not only the formal representation in political process but much more fundamentally, visibility in the public space are themselves an issue. The status and visibility of ‘foreign languages’ – *de facto* all except the state Estonian and Latvian languages respectively – has caused outrage among Russian-speakers and are central to contemporary ethnopolitical tensions (Galbreath and Galvin 2005; Silova 2006).

Governments of both states initiated state language teaching programmes for Russian-speakers as a gateway to citizenship in late 1990s-early 2000s, largely in response to pressures from the High Commissioner on National Minorities prior to the states’ NATO accession in 2004 (Kruusvall 2002; Antane and Tsilevich 1999). Yet, insufficient funding, and the lack of qualified personnel, as well as the institutionalized dominance of the state languages and the requirement of language proficiency for naturalization have combined to leave many Russian-speakers in a socially marginal position even after EU accession (Brosig 2008; Muiznieks 2010). In addition, many international initiatives were neutralized by tightened legislation concerning state language use ahead of Latvia’s and Estonia’s accession to the EU in May 2004 (Mikkel and Pridham 2005). Some observers see ethnopolitical affairs as being in a state of flux in both Estonia and Latvia and stress emphatically the crucial role played by the EU wielding its soft power over these states’ nationalising politics (See particularly, D. J. Smith 2002). However, tensions around the rights and status of Russian speaking populations have prevented even the recognition of this group in its status as minority over the past two decades.

In Latvia, tensions around the use of the Russian language culminated in a referendum to grant Russian the status of second state language in 2012 (Ijabs 2016; Hanovs 2016). While Latvian-speakers have interpreted the referendum as a challenge to their ethnic group’s sovereignty over the state institutions, Russian-speakers rallied around greater political representation of Russian-speakers and inclusion into dialogue about political and social issues at the national level. Though Russian-speakers have succeeded in collecting sufficient signatures for the referendum to be organised by and sponsored by the state, support from the Russian-speaking politicians has been meagre: Support for the referendum was seen by the Latvian political establishment and by the majority, state-bearing nation of the country as a
clear sign of disloyalty to the state and has only further reinforced ethnic cleavage. This allowed for the Latvian side of those who were eligible to cast their vote in the referendum to portray the initiative as an ‘existential issue’ (Ijabs 2016, 299). The was later used by opportunistic (majority) political elites to justify an addition to the Latvian Constitution of a Preamble designating ethnic Latvians as the sole bearers not only of the statehood but also of democracy in the country, the change that was made into law on June 19 2014.

Overall, the lack of political representation of Russian-speakers continues to undermine their capacity to communicate specific expectations in political forums and be considered viable contributors to developing social institutions of the state. As a result, voting still takes place mostly along ethnic lines, and the crisis in Ukraine has complicated majority-minority relations even further. In Estonia, the participation of Russian-speakers in political and civic life remains very low, and there is a noticeable ethnic segmentation in the labour market in both countries. Furthermore, both states have experienced significant out-migration after joining the EU, which further exacerbates fears of ethnic majority survival and insecurity about national sovereignty (Duin and Miani 2015; Petsinis 2016). Some authors point to the fragmentation of Latvia’s and Estonia’s Russian speaking communities alongside socioeconomic markers to emphasise the potential for greater interethnic interactions in the everyday (Vetik and Helemäe 2011). If nothing else however, these only further limit access to scarce resources of the state by the select elites of ethnic majority and those of the co-opted minority, in fact hampering the long-term democratisation of these countries.

Thus it is fair to conclude that the processes of nation-state building for the ethnic majority has impacted on majority-minority relations in both countries significantly and over the decades since independence additionally put the strain on development of political culture that is tolerant of, if not endorsing the dissent and criticism of public policy and decisions made by the elites. It is therefore plain and clear that the stalemate in majority/minority relations observed in Estonia and Latvia today is a product of, rather than a condition for, ethnonational state building. At the heart of this conclusion lays the notion of the nation-state with a clearly defined national majority, whom that state is to serve above all other groups, whose language is a state language and whose culture and history the state is to protect and promote to all residents regardless of their ethnic identities.

Similar to the claim of an ethnocratic nature of the state that both Yiftachel and Smooha make, and Anderson endorses in his introduction, is the idea of political institutions serving primarily the majority and delivering democratic governance for the majority group at an expense of minority
communities, regardless of their demographic, economic and political clout. In her *Minority Rights in Europe* (2005), Tove Malloy suggested that European states whose constituent nation finds itself in a precarious position of majority often opt for nationalising policies vis-à-vis their resident minorities and in doing so invite minority resistance, the involvement of external kin states of the minority, and frequently also international organisations’ keen interest in preventing ethnically based conflicts (Petsinis 2016; Herd and Lofgren 2001).

Though in principle this assessment is correct, I beg to differ. The impact minority group representation in ethnically divided societies can have on political opportunities for participation can be easily observed in the Baltic states. Here, we see minorities bringing forward their own concerns to challenge the state-driven decision-making and making clear that they mobilise *as groups* along the ethnic lines in the first instance to achieve representation of their interest in the public domain as groups but merely to have an access to and be able to participate in state-wide political process as individuals on their own agendas (Agarin 2013). This notion however is particularly challenging to the dominant mode of decision-making in contemporary liberal democracies which often do more than question the minority benevolence in challenging policies and institutions of the state as such. By inviting minority representatives into the ranks of the majority-dominated political elites, they undercut minority representation in terms that are particularly relevant for the group itself and usher in reframing of their interests in terms suitable for the ethnic, state-bearing majority. And it is precisely because minority representatives find no space for their (ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic, etc) identities in the context of political institutions of Latvian and Estonian statehood, that they seek participation in politics in areas that have been previously parcelled out for the majority and have not been reclaimed in totality by the members of majority proper. These succinct and subtle processes of minority co-optation (Agarin 2009), assimilation presented as integration (Malloy 2009) and advocating equality in the public domain for *citizens* rather for the (institutionally excluded) minority ethnics (Purs 2012) are indicative of the type of governance Yiftachel labels ‘ethnocracy’.

This is where we are coming full-circle in thinking about democratic governance for and by the ethnic majority of the state: Any form of the rule of law installed for and promoted by the majority can easily go down the ethnocratic slope unless credible commitment for domestic publics is in place to keep the ethnonational foundations of governance in check when participating in decision-making. While we are examining political decision-making as a process aimed at a *domestic* audience and delivering *domestic*
policy outputs, inevitably a lot of other factors are likely to pop up in discussions. In the case of the Baltic states, questions of loyalty of Russian-speakers towards their ‘external homeland’ have been particularly central to further consolidating domestic ethnocratic governance mechanisms, despite the fact that few (if any) Russian-speakers indicate that their connection to Russia trumps their affiliation with their states of residence (Birka 2016; Demuth 2000; Dorodnova 2000). On the other hand, issues of prejudice against external – and as such unpredictable – actors (with their belligerent rhetoric, as well as their presumed meddling in domestic affairs) open space for wishful thinking where rational analysis should have triumphed. Neither helps us understanding when, and crucially why, ethnocratic governance prevails and is getting entrenched in public opinions and later, via the ballot box in public institutions, becoming the only game in town.

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In conclusion of my brief excursion into the contemporary Baltic region, I can only reiterate my impression that an ethnocratic mode of governance is still the order of the day in both Estonia and Latvia. Though views on the effects of ethnocracy diverge considerably among the members of the majority and minority populations in these countries, these differences can be alarming only in so far as they are representative of the mode of governance across much of the EU today. During the period of Eastern enlargement, the EU had an opportunity to challenge and change domestic institutions delivering governance to the people in all candidate countries. Yet, 12 years since the accession of the then eight post-communist states to the Union when we ought to see European commitment to delivering an inclusive and democratic governance we find it is applied only to people already defined in domestic legislations as prime beneficiaries of state building. In the past, external observers largely overestimated the ability of the EU to challenge legal frameworks, including policies regulating access to citizenship and minority protection in the Baltic region, and across much of the accession states. Today more so than ever the analysis converges on the view that the EU accession process, including conditionality mechanisms sought to, and has, strengthened the institutions of nation-state along the initial pledge to protect and support the numeric (and alas, ethnic) majorities. For one part this is due to the EU’s own commitment to majoritarian decision-making, for another, it reflects the focus of supranational politics on the nation-state whose sovereignty has to be taken seriously (Agarin and Cordell 2016; cf. Keating 2004).

Therefore, regardless of my personal unease (which I share deeply with James Anderson) about the persistent nature of ethnocratic governance,
there is little room in contemporary international politics to challenge the notion of sovereignty facilitating, if not outright inviting, the forms of democracy that cater to the majority ethnic group among the citizenry. The framework of analysis requiring our attention to ethnocracy as a form of domestic governance presupposed the secondary role of external actors in domestic process. As such, however much we would like to engage with the role both the EU and for that matter, also of Russian Federation as a self-style ethnic homeland of (at least some) Russian-speakers in the Baltic states, these are but external to domestic policymaking on the Baltic region. The fact that each state has been created to serve its own citizens who can – and do – vote on whatever issue they perceive relevant for themselves and elect politicians they choose, makes the choices of demos to maintain ethnocratic regime a narrow-gauge, domestic issue. However much both the ‘external homelands’ of minorities, or any international organisations including the EU and/or NATO might be concerned about the implications of domestic instability resultant from the ethnocratic rule, there is little they can do – without powerful leverage in the form of either positive or negative incentives – to dissuade domestic political entrepreneurs from exploiting the opportunities for further consolidation of ethnocratic governance.

Specifically, this has been happening when the Russian Federation has been portraying itself as a defender of Russian-speakers’ interests in the region; factually however, it has been powerless to improve the perceptions, status, and rights of Russian-speaking minorities in either Latvia, or Estonia for 25 years. So whereas publics are welcome to think that there exists some external tool to pressure for and revise ethnocratic governance and policies to endorse minority groups participation in domestic policymaking, no serious academic should take the rhetoric of external actors to be anything else than futile rhetoric.

Where we should start therefore is at the concept of ‘ethnocracy’ as a tool for analysing processes of governance in ethnically diverse societies. Indeed, when political scientists focus on the state as a set of political institutions which shape the everyday lives of state residents, we ought to question not their origins or their very existence, but the rationale for their change. Ultimately, all political institutions are little more that the sets of rules established by means of social contract in the context of the already existing social institutions and as such, and only as such, do they acquire acceptance and legitimacy from the publics they govern. In the majority of cases, state political institutions are ‘out there’ to deliver services to taxpayers and citizens expecting something in return, not least the ability of the state to cooperate with its stakeholders. To do so effectively, institutions of the state designate a language in which they can do so most effectively and
lay out sets of rules and regulations that (most often) implicitly establish the hierarchy of ethnic groups in their access to state resources.

The newly (re-)established states like Estonia and Latvia are no different from cases of other ‘historically evolved’ states such as France or Germany in their primary commitment to deliver effective services to their resident populace. Though we are likely to take the ethnicised nature of those historically evolved nation-states for granted, they too at some point in the historic past have ‘chosen’ an official language, ethnocultural core nation, and identified resources to be available for all speakers of ‘the’ language, but from which others, non-citizens and non-residents, were to be excluded unless these chose to compete on equal terms. In other words, the access to critical positions in and influence on state development has been reserved to individuals with distinct, predefined characteristics of the majority stock by all states, democratic or not, while presuming that others, usually the members of an ethnic minority, were excluded from equal opportunities at least at some point in the historic past.

My fundamental point is that regardless of their political institutional design, democratic or otherwise, liberal or corporatist, all political landscapes are ethnicised to a degree requiring individuals of minority backgrounds to accept rules of the game established by the majority population in order to join in and compete with the majority. Since the collapse of communism however, most Western liberal democracies went to great lengths in facilitating minority participation on their own terms, yet none has achieved complete parity between majority and minority groups in public sphere. This I believe throws the light on what Yitfatchel has been particularly adamant about in his narrower studies (Yiftachel 1998) when talking about the ability of stakeholders to hamper change in institutions and as such in the form of governance.

There are some additional lessons to learn from this also, on the limited ability of the actors excluded from decision-making to impact the ‘direction of travel’ in domestic politics whose outcomes those excluded might be extremely unhappy about. The lack of progress on accommodation of the cultural, social, economic and political rights of minority, non-titular, communities in Estonia and Latvia should be alarming to NATO and EU member-states. Arrangements to recognise the connection of minority groups to post-Soviet states of residence, rather than to their (however tentative) ethnic kin-state should move onto the political agenda particularly following the recent developments in Ukraine as elsewhere in the post-Soviet region. However, when discussing the central role played by state institutions in negotiating conflicts between groups over access to scarce resources of the state, it is central to see minorities as being in both the inferior numerical
position as well as in a symbolically more disadvantageous place: If we see democratic politics for what they are as majoritarian politics, and if we see these as taking place in the context of state institutions designed to uphold the ethnic majority dominance, then any kind of liberal democratic politics would be a good candidate for ethnocracy.

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From ‘Ethnocracy’ to Urban Apartheid:
The Changing Urban Geopolitics of Jerusalem\al-Quds

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Abstract
In the core of this article stands an argument that while ethnocracy was a relevant analytical framework for understanding the urban dynamics of Jerusalem\al-Quds up until two decades ago, this is no longer the case. As this article demonstrates, over the past twenty years or so, the city’s geopolitical balance and its means of demographic control, as well as an intensifying militarization and a growing use of state violence, have transformed the city from an ethnocracy into an urban apartheid. Theoretically, this article aims to go beyond the specific analogy with South African apartheid, the most notorious case of such a regime. Rather I would suggest that in our current market-driven, neo-liberal era, an apartheid city should be taken as a distinct urban regime based on urban trends such as privatization of space, gentrification, urban design, infrastructure development and touristic planning. I would propose that these practices substitute for explicit apartheid legislation (of a sort introduced in the South African case), bringing to the fore new participants in the apartheidization of the city, such as real estate developers and various interest groups.

Introduction
The development of urban areas in Israel/Palestine has been strongly framed by an ethno-national drive for Judaization, segregation and division.

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(Yiftachel 2006; Yacobi 2009). Hence, ethnically mixed regions in general and cities in particular are both uncommon and by nature unplanned, often resulting from a spatial process of ethnic expansion and retreat, globally prevalent in contested urban spaces. Mixed cities were conceptualized as urban ethnocracies, or ‘ethnocracities’, wherein a hegemonic group colonizes, appropriates and controls a city's apparatus, producing a contested space and social instability (Yacobi 2009).

Jerusalem\al-Quds has already been defined as a clear example of an urban ethnocracy (Yiftachel and Yacobi 2002). As elaborated by Yiftachel (2006), an ethnocracy is a distinct regime type, designed to impose and expand a dominant ethno-nation's control in multi-ethnic territories. In such regimes, ethnicity, rather than citizenship, forms the main criterion in the distribution of power and resources. Consequently, ethnocracies typically display high levels of non-uniform ethnic segregation. Importantly, ethnocratic regimes sometimes combine a degree of political openness and formal democratic representation with political structures that facilitates the seizure of contested territory by a dominant ethno-nation. At the same time, the dominant group appropriates the state apparatus and control over capital flows, marginalizing peripheral ethnic and national minorities.

In the urban context, ethnocratic control involves forceful seizure of land, formal legislation, an exclusivist public discourse and invisible means of control. These forces are often 'muffled' under an official and legal understanding of the city as a space enabling social mobility, residence and political activism. Hence, these forces seemingly enable but practically undermine the promise of the city as a democratic arena for all of its inhabitants (Yiftachel and Yacobi 2004).

While ethnocracy was a relevant analytical framework for understanding the urban dynamics of Jerusalem\al-Quds up until two decades ago, this is no longer the case. Over the past twenty years or so, the city’s geopolitical balance and its means of demographic control, as well as an intensifying militarization and a growing use of state violence, have transformed the city from an ethnocracy into an urban apartheid. Distinguishing between the two urban regimes does not suggest that urban apartheid is essentially a different form of control, but rather a radicalization of the ethnocratic phase.

The transition from ethnocratic regime into urban apartheid can be demonstrated by the way in which the Palestinian Ghetto (the product of urban ethnocratic policies) has been turned into a frontier. Ron (2003) proposes that a frontier is a territory that is not integrated into the realm of influence of a state’s legal apparatus, thus enabling an exercise of ‘illegal’ power. A Ghetto, on the other hand, despite being a space of exclusion, is
Ron considers 1992 Bosnia to be an example of a frontier, where violent actions included ethnic cleansing. He considers the Occupied Territories in the 1990s to have been a ghetto in relation to Israel, and claims that despite the outbreak of the First Intifada in late 1987, the rough measures taken by Israel did not amount to expulsion or demographic engineering. I would suggest that this is no longer the case – for the Palestinian Ghetto in Jerusalem is undergoing a rapid frontierization (Pullan 2011), characterized by escalation in state violence, collective punishment and the attempt to empty large Palestinian neighborhoods of their inhabitants and at solidifying the separation between Jewish and Palestinian populations. Such processes support the transformation of the city into a territorial entity under apartheid.

In this article, I wish to go beyond the specific analogy with South African apartheid, the most notorious case of such a regime. Other scholars have applied the concept of apartheid regime to cities and spaces produced, engineered and controlled along ethnic and racial lines, attempting to divide, isolate and exclude racial and ethnic minorities (Massey and Denton 1993; Abu-Lughod 1981). The reference to apartheid regimes as a wider typology of political control was well defined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted in 1998 (four years after South African apartheid came to its formal end). The Rome Statute defines apartheid as ‘inhumane acts […] committed in the context of an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime’\(^1\). Indeed, according to the logic of international law, apartheid ends with the elimination of legalized racial discrimination and the transformation of the racial state. However, even an examination of South Africa post-1994 reveals the pitfalls of such an approach, and the necessity to move beyond the legal-liberal definition of apartheid as a form of control (Clarno 2015). Rather, Clarno calls to adopt a political-economic understanding of apartheid regimes (yet not in the urban context) that combines ethnic exclusion and racial capitalism stemming from neo-liberal agenda.

In other words, in our current market-driven, neo-liberal era, an apartheid city should be taken as a distinct urban regime based on urban trends such as privatization of space, gentrification, urban design, infrastructure development and touristic planning. These practices substitute for explicit apartheid legislation (of a sort introduced in the South African case), bringing to the fore new participants in the apartheidization of the city, such as real estate developers and various interest groups. Moreover, political

\(^1\) [http://www.crimesofwar.org/a-z-guide/apartheid/](http://www.crimesofwar.org/a-z-guide/apartheid/)
The economy analysis of current apartheid urbanism also reveals the new trends of racialization and exclusion as well as new patterns of mobility in the city.

The innovation of the approach outlined above stems from the fact that contested urbanism has been studied along two separated lines which are often understood as contradicting each other, and studied separately: one is the ethno-national contested city and the other is the neoliberal city. In the former that dominates the discourse, the first generation of literature on the ‘Jerusalem conflict’ focused on the city being ‘divided’, as a ‘top-down’ subject of Israeli national aspirations. This literature analyzed the colonial power of the state from the perspective of its legislative, planning and military mechanisms. Recently published works (e.g., Pullan et al. 2013; Dumper 2014) can be seen as a second-generation analysis of the city, offering a more nuanced understanding of urban processes. These present Jerusalem as an arena of highly-charged power relations, a contested space that is continuously produced and reproduced by ‘bottom-up’ protest, global forces and a wide spectrum of political institutions (NGOs, religious organizations, professionals).

In the specific context of Jerusalem, though, some of the processes discussed in the extant literature can be seen as even more radicalized: over the last few years, groups of Jewish settlers have colonized new houses in central Palestinian neighborhoods such as Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan; Jewish worshippers were murdered in a synagogue by Palestinian residents of Jerusalem; closures were imposed on Palestinian villages; and more generally, Israeli military forces and Palestinian protestors alike were involved in escalating tension and clashes around the city. But the logic behind the increased ‘security’ measures fails to solve the conflict, facilitating, instead, the process of apartheidization, as I will elaborate presently.

The making of colonial space

‘Jerusalem is the eternal capital of the Jewish people, a city reunified so as never again to be divided… Our people's unparalleled affinity to Jerusalem has spanned thousands of years, and is the basis of our national renaissance. It has united our people, secular and religious alike’ (PM Benjamin Netanyahu, May 21, 2009).2

The statement above, by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, expresses the mainstream Israeli understanding of the city as ‘unified

Jerusalem,’ a fixed urban space, a given subject of Israeli sovereignty and ethno-national aspirations. But in fact, the city of Jerusalem is manufactured continuously by geopolitical practices, which include not merely military occupation but also colonial planning and demographic engineering.

As widely documented and analyzed (see: Pullan et al. 2013; Dumper 2014), a turning point in Israel's geopolitical situation occurred in June 1967, when Israel occupied East Jerusalem and other territories. Following this occupation, and despite international objections, the Israeli government issued the Municipalities Ordinance (Amendment No. 6) Law, 5727–1967, applying Israeli law to East Jerusalem. As a result, Israel annexed Palestinian land and declared the city of Jerusalem to be its united capital. This stage in the colonization of East Jerusalem was heavily based on legal measures in the form of expropriation of Palestinian land into (Israeli) state hands.

The next stage in the process was the rhetorical device of incessantly declaring that Jerusalem is a unified city. In this regard, planning policies have clearly reflected the paradigm of an ethnocracy; both state and city governments have pursued the same general policy, which persistently promoted the Judaization of Jerusalem – i.e. the expansion of Jewish political, territorial, demographic and economic control. More specifically, over the past five decades, Israel has used its military might and economic power to redraw borders and recreate boundaries, to grant or deny rights and resources, and to move populations around for the purpose of ensuring Jewish control. These all served a common goal, which was to construct a new cognitive map for the city and thus normalize its occupation.

From a planning perspective, this stage is characterized by the construction of settlements (‘satellite neighborhoods’) in East Jerusalem and by an extensive building of infrastructure (Pullan et al. 2007; Nolte and Yacobi 2015). As a complementary step, a series of Master Plans were drawn in order to limit the growth of Palestinian neighborhoods in the city (Bimkom 2013). Indeed, as suggested by Jabareen (2010), planning in Jerusalem has been based on geopolitical strategies aiming to control demography, to expand the jurisdiction of the city through expropriation of Palestinian land and to exclude the Palestinian inhabitants of the city from planning processes.
While the above illustrates a clear example of urban ethnocracy, i.e. using ‘neutral’ practices such as planning and its democratic façade as a legitimate tool of spatial control, in the following section I will identify a shift into a more radical policy of apartheid. This stage is linked to the construction of the Separation Barrier, which allowed Israel to annex another 160 km$^2$ of the Occupied Territories, in addition to 70 km$^2$ annexed right after the 1967 occupation of East Jerusalem. The Barrier enforces Israel’s de facto political borders in Jerusalem, and transforms it into the largest city in Israel, in geographical terms.

Moreover, the route of the Separation Barrier creates a de facto *Cordon Sanitaire* between the walled city and the Palestinian hinterland. The geographic continuum and functional integration of the Palestinian neighborhoods are disrupted, isolating them completely from their hinterland. One of the results of this process is the escalation in the number of Palestinians working in West Jerusalem (Shtern 2015). Since 2011, almost 50 percent of the labor force of East Jerusalem has been employed in the Jewish sector of West Jerusalem and other cities in Israel. Indeed, while Jerusalem remains a colonial city, its strategy has also been transformed by neoliberal
economic restructuring and widespread unemployment (following the separation wall and the isolation of Jerusalemites). This has produced a pool of unemployed workers desperate enough to accept exploitation under the neo liberal regime. The creation of a racialized labor market goes hand in hand with radical reaction. A telling example is the activity of Lehava, a radical right wing organization that mapped the presence of Palestinian workers in West Jerusalem’s main market area, or their campaign warning of mixed marriage.

Indeed, the logic behind the erection of the wall in order to increase ‘security’ measures does not solve the conflict. Rather, it produces a new urban geopolitics which allows the vast majority of territory and resources in the Jerusalem metropolitan area to be controlled by Jews, while Palestinians are confined to disjointed enclaves, without real sovereignty, freedom of movement, control over natural resources, or contiguous territory. Furthermore, the notion of division and security is framed within a racializing discourse, which includes calls to purify the social body and to protect the personal and collective Jewish identity from the risks of chance encounters with Palestinians.

Clearly, the creation of racialized labor market and the reaction against Palestinian presence in urban space marks a shift in the conflict where enmity is replaced by racism. As already noted by Balibar (1991), new patterns of racism are formatted and organized around sociological signifiers, replacing biological markers. In other words, the principal factor in this form of racism is not the ‘biological’ fact that Palestinians are non-Jewish or non-white, but rather that idea that their mere presence in the urban space of Jerusalem, as well as their uncontrolled flow through borders and boundaries, should be collectively denied.

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3 Since the year 2000, the number of Palestinian worker in the city has increased from 40,000 to 70,000, while a significant gap in the average income between Jewish and Palestinian workers has been maintained. For a detailed report see: Shtern 2015

4 Lehava is an extreme right wing religious organization that objects to any personal or business relationships between Jews and non-Jews in Israel. As part of its activities Lehava encourages Israeli Jews to report to the organization the names of Jews who rent to Arabs or Jews who employ Arabs. See: [http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4610561,00.html](http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4610561,00.html)
Housing is an additional arena of the conflict in the city; the attempt to ghettoize the Palestinian neighborhoods west of the wall, by declaring their surroundings urban parks is well known (BIMKOM 2013); as is the ongoing effort to settle Jewish families inside central Palestinian villages and neighborhoods. A less familiar process, stemming from the changing
geopolitics of the city, is the migration of Palestinians to Jewish neighborhoods or settlements in East Jerusalem.

As detailed by Yacobi and Pullan (2014) French Hill is the neighborhood that was the first settlement of East Jerusalem that is undergoing a process of demographic transformation as Palestinians, both with Israeli citizenship and Jerusalem Resident Certificates, have begun moving there in recent years. This internal migration highlights the paradox of the apartheid city; on one hand the Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem were planned, designed and marketed as part of the attempt to Judaize the city, while on the other hand Palestinians who move to these districts cross an invisible boundary to become one with the ‘settlers’. This is, indeed, a characteristic of the current apartheid urbanism in Jerusalem: on one hand, the forceful effect of the normalization of occupation was orchestrated by Israeli law, planning and state regulations that privilege Jewish citizens. On the other, the opening of the market – to all intents and purposes a normalization process – countered these policies and practices when the new districts started to attract the Palestinian population.

Figure 3: An advertisement against selling apartments to Palestinians in one of Jerusalem’s Jewish neighbourhoods
Similar to the South African case, the neoliberalization of capitalist systems has enabled some members of oppressed populations to join the ranks of the elite. For neoliberals, as suggested by Clarno (2015), the shifting racial composition of the elite – along with the middle class – provides evidence that the free market can eliminate racial disparities. Yet, the neoliberal language of equal opportunity and individual achievement masks the continuing significance of racism, the declining stability of middle-class life, and the growing class divide between rich and poor.

As I have shown in this section, using the term apartheid to denote this phase in the city’s politics does not suggest that a fundamentally new, qualitatively different, stage has begun. It only highlights new practices of violence and control, appropriation and colonization, identifying the role of new actors and agents such as settler movements and NGOs. As I will demonstrate in the following section, the process of apartheidization advances through very banal acts, such as the ones involved in city planning.

Silwan: a banal apartheid

Silwan is a Palestinian village bordering on the southeastern wall of the old city of Jerusalem. It has a population of around 23,500. The neighborhood is mainly inhabited by Muslim Arabs and is currently part of ‘Israeli Jerusalem’. The village (termed ‘neighborhood’ by the municipality) is located in an area known for its archeological and religious sites, and therefore is important to Muslims, Christians and Jews alike.

During the 1980s and 1990s, a number of properties in Silwan were declared ‘absentee properties’ (according to the Absentee Property law passed in 1950) and thus could be sold to the Israeli Development Authority. These properties were supposed to be jointly managed by the Development Authority and the Israel Land Administration, without discrimination based on nationality. However, according to a report by the NGO Peace Now, the Israeli authorities used the Jewish National Fund (JNF) and its organ Himnuta (established by the JNF in 1938) for bypassing this provision. Through the JNF and Himnuta, properties were transferred exclusively to Jews. Although the JNF cannot purchase land from or in Palestinian territories, Himnuta is not similarly restricted, even though it is almost wholly owned by the JNF5.

Thirty dunams of absentee property in Silwan were transferred to Himnuta by the Development Authority in exchange for land Himnuta owned in Wadi Ara (in northern Israel). This deal was made in order to ensure that the land in Silwan came under Jewish ownership. Himnuta then leased these properties to Jewish settlers and initiated legal proceedings for the eviction of Palestinian tenants. One of the principal beneficiaries of Himnuta properties is Elad, a radical right-wing NGO. Elad now possesses several properties in Silwan, and is using them for archeological excavation, as a tourist center and for housing settlers.
It is important to mention that the forced tourist development of the area also started from the year 2000, with the expectation that Israel would attract tourism from the beginning of the Millennium, and with the hope to attract global capital. A promenade that surrounds the ‘Holy Basin’ was designed and partly developed – marking the attempt to appropriate the area and to attach it to the secured tourist’s map. Within this context one should understand the case of the Kedem Center project, an immense visitor center designed around and over the important archaeological finds in Silwan. On April 3, 2014, the Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee approved the Kedem Center plan (Plan no. 13542), promoted by the Elad settler organization, to construct a five-story structure (in excess of 16,000 m²) in the Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan, about 20 meters from the walls of the Old City. Several appeals against the plan’s approval were submitted to the Appeals Committee of the National Planning and Building Council, including by residents of Silwan, various NGOs and a group of 35 planners and conservation experts. An appeal was also submitted by Elad and the Israel Nature and Parks Authority against the District Committee’s decision to reduce the structure’s approved height by one storey.

Most appeals against the plan’s approval were based on the argument that it served as a pretext for Israel to promote another settlement in the heart of Silwan, in violation of conservation principles regarding the Old City and
its surroundings. As stated in the appeals, the plan would significantly alter the Old City environs, deviating from rules of conservation and planning practiced for decades, and all without the level of deep and open public debate required for decisions of this magnitude. The National Planning Council’s Appeals Subcommittee held three hearings, and on June 7, 2015 approved the plan for the Kedem Center, albeit with significant amendments. Yet, in April 2016, after perfunctory deliberations, the full committee of the National Planning Council issued its formal decision, revoking the previous decision by the Appeals Committee. The full committee’s decision restored the April 2014 ruling of the District Planning and Building Committee, which accepted the plan for the visitor center in full, with the modest modification of reducing the height of the building by one storey.

Furthermore, the Kedem Center is only one case in a more general effort to create a territorial continuity in Jewish Jerusalem, promoted by Elad and supported by the state. The continued colonization of the Old City and of the Silwan area clearly illustrates Israel's efforts to promote the transformation of the Palestinian ghetto into a frontier, as presented in the introduction of this essay. Following Billig’s seminal work on the banal forms of nationalism that accentuated the ways in which everyday expressions construct geographical imagination, national boundaries and jurisdictions (Billig, 1995), I explored in this section the banal role of planning, policy and development in the apartheidization of the city.

Discussion

Urban Apartheid is not a chance occurrence, or the reflection simply of the noncoordinated choices of millions of individuals, but has long been an intentional creation (Feagin 1998, p. 10). As Feagin notes (referring to the American case), urban apartheid is a product of ideology and policy. And indeed, as illustrated throughout this essay, the developing apartheid city is a result of intentional policies that aim to secure Jewish control in the vast majority of territory and resources in the Jerusalem metropolitan area, restricting Palestinians to small parts of the city and denying them their future.

This scenario is a well-documented step in the development of colonial regimes. It is driven by an ideology that views it as the right of one group to control its (self-defined) homeland, while dominating and marginalizing other groups sharing the same space (Yiftachel and Yacobi)

6 The facts presented in this section are based on Ir Amim’s report see: http://altro.co.il/newsletters/show/7893?key=a7e7d4de5230480f4c74880e36013fd3

In Jerusalem this situation resembles – though it does not replicate – the pre-1994 South African apartheid system: in Jerusalem too, a resident's cluster of rights and opportunities is determined, first and foremost, by ethnicity/race. And in Jerusalem too, there is a continuous, concerted effort to regulate mobility and to produce a total separation between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians, in the spheres of housing, work, politics and culture, which are constantly challenged by economic forces and dependency.

The urban processes described in this essay were not evolutionary or natural. Rather, they are products of a colonial project and of its purposeful actions, and they reflect the role of ideology in both the built landscape and the project of demographic engineering. This project is a common occurrence in ethnocratic contexts, where conflict with the indigenous population plays a central role in the formation of a national collective consciousness (Yiftachel 2006). Moreover, in the specific context of Jerusalem, such spatio-political dynamics serve as a (territorial and political) basis for further radicalization, creating the necessary conditions for the establishment of an apartheid city. There might be one law but it is manipulated and implemented in different ways – according to ethnicity and national affiliation.

More specifically, the apartheid city is classified discursively and represented as an ordered territory, a subject of ‘banal’ apparatuses including urban planning (as well as of other practices, not discussed in this essay, such as health, infrastructure and the like) that is dominated by one ethno-national group holding unequal power over the definition of urban citizenship. Resources and services are allocated on the basis of ethnicity and race rather than residency, and urban politics are racialized.

In the ethnocratic phase, which characterized the city’s spatio-politics from 1967 up to the beginning of the current century, Palestinian inhabitants faced institutional discrimination whose influence was clearly felt in areas such as planning, land and housing. Today, however, planning and territorial appropriation by the state and especially by its agents frontierize the Palestinian Ghetto and attempt to empty the city of its Palestinian inhabitants.

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Colonial and Post-Colonial Ethnocracy in Fiji

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Abstract
This paper analyses colonial ethnocracy, post-colonial ethnocracy, inter-ethnic alliances and new forms of ethnocratic ethnocracy in Fiji as historical sociology. Utilising Oren Yiftachel’s theorisation of ethnocracy and location of ethnicity and race in historical structures, I intent to problematise ethnocracy in Fiji as socio-historical moments, comprising of the hegemony of the ethnocratic colonial regime, post-colonial political discourse between Indo-Fijian and indigenous Fijians within post-colonial ethnocracy and inter-ethnic collaboration and alliances that led to the political reconfiguration of the ethnocratic polity, ethnoclass and supposedly non-ethnocracy from 2006.

Introduction
Fiji has a history of ethnic tensions where Europeans, indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians competed for ethnocratic hegemony. The British colonial authorities established colonial ethnocracy based on the concept of harmony of indigenous and European interests where indigenous Fijian chiefs supervised indigenous cultural discourses and the Europeans controlled the economy and the state. Nevertheless, the colonial regime introduced ethnic complexity and brought Indian indentured labourers to Fiji to protect indigenous Fijians from the destructive forces of plantation capitalism, based on cultivation of sugar on European alienated indigenous Fijian land. By 1945, the Indo-Fijian population had overtaken that of indigenous Fijians and Europeans and by the 1960s, Indo-Fijian leaders pushed for independence of
the Colony of Fiji, raising fears in the indigenous community that Indo-Fijians wanted political control to re-design indigenous land ownership. As a result, ethnic tensions increased with Indo-Fijian leaders giving up their quest for political control and accepting the vision of indigenous Fijian leader Ratu Mara, who engineered a political compromise in post-colonial Fiji where indigenous Fijians established political control in partnership with the Europeans and Indo-Fijians stayed in opposition. This vision unravelled in 1987 when inter-ethnic collaboration between the two communities resulted in the loss of indigenous political control, triggering military intervention in May 1987. The military coup was followed by the racially-weighted 1990 Constitution but by 1993, deep divisions among the indigenous Fijian elite forced Prime Minister Rabuka to undertake a constitutional review, resulting in the 1997 Constitution. However, this constitution could not resolve underlying ethnic tensions and in 2000, there was a military coup and mutiny led by indigenous Fijians at the military barracks in Suva. Following the mutiny, military commander, Voreqe Bainimarama, criticised the nationalist government of Laisenia Qarase and overthrew his government in December 2006. The military implemented de-ethnicisation strategies but the underlying ethnic tensions continued following the promulgation of the 2013 Constitution and democratic elections in September 2014. Post-independence Fiji is characterised by these conflicts over ethnocracy.

**Ethnocracy: Theoretical Consideration**

Ethnocracy is a type of political regime that ‘facilitates the expansion, ethnicisation and control of a dominant ethnic nation’ (Yiftachel 2006, p. 11). In such regimes, ethnicity is the key driver of the polity, including economic resource allocation, public policy, political rights, social engagements, religious constellations and social discourse. Oren Yiftachel (2006, p. 12) identified three major political and historical engines of ethnocracy: ‘the formation of the colonial settler society, mobilisation of power of ethnonationalism and ethnic logic of capital’. As identified, many parts of the world have settler communities which were planted by hegemonic European powers including Spain, Portugal, Great Britain, France, Dutch and Italy. Most important and relevant of the hegemonic powers to this article was Great Britain which established indirect rule in Fiji from 1974 to 1970 and the white settler community controlled the state and the economy.

At independence, the colonial ethnocracy took a post-colonial form with ‘constant democratic and ethnocratic tensions, (Yiftachel 2006, pp. 16-18). These tensions led to further ethnic segregation ‘diffused into social and political system, enhancing multidirectional processes of essentialising
political ethnicisation’. In fact many post-colonial societies became ethnonations led by the ethnoclass but these nations quickly descended into ethnic violence and prolonged ethnic conflict where ethnic armies executed ethnic coups and participated in ethnic cleansing. The civil society in an ethnonation becomes dysfunctional because of national social and cultural programming along ethnic lines with Non Government Organisations caught in the middle as ineffective referees. The ethnic nation dictates and manipulates constitutional, legislative and committee systems to ensure that the ethnoclass continues its grip on political power.

According to Yiftachel (2006, p. 16), the ethnic state has a dominant ‘charter’ where the ‘ethnoclass appropriates the state apparatus and determines the outcomes of most public policies’. These appropriations are a conscious assembly of the state apparatus along ethnic lines and political discourses are controlled from above with ethnic identities the mainstay of social discourse. Over time, the ethnoclass and ethnonation become synonymous and those outside the ethnic in-group face structural and systemic marginalisation, resulting in counter cultures, disruptions, protests and boycotts and eventually ethnic violence.

Oren Yiftachel’s analysis was primarily focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conundrum and his analysis of the ethnoclass and the ethnonation was aimed at demonstrating the rigidities of ethnic hegemony where all aspects of social life of the community revolve around ethnic identity and ethnic considerations. The ethnonation gets trapped in its own systems and structures as inflexibility sets in and ethnic out groups find it difficult to have any meaningful engagement. While Yiftachel focused on ethnoclass and ethnonation, Randolph Persaud (1997) located ethnocracy in a wider political discourse. For Persaud (1992, p. 173), ‘colonial domination was much broader than economic exploitation. It was a form of domination which was civilisational in content and in which race played a key role’.

What transpired after the colonialists left in many of the former British periphery was continued ethnic conflict and race politics. In Fiji in particular, the ethnoclass remained largely indigenous Fijian chiefs, indigenous commoner nationalists and Europeans. The colonial-inspired constitutional structure at independence ensured that the mutated ethnoclass maintained its grip on power by invoking ethnic solidarity, thus continuing with the ethnonation and the inherited colonial systems and structures (Naidu 1992, pp. 81-102). The other distinct feature of the Fijian state was the military which was entirely indigenous Fijian and guarantor of the hegemony of the ethnoclass. In 1987, and again in 2000, the ethnic military intervened in politics to restore ethnic hegemony but found the ethnoclass divided and fragmented.
The whole concept of ethnonation and ethnoclass was re-examined by the military hierarchy from 2003, resulting in the restructure of the Fijian ethnonation from 2006 to 2014. The ethnic history of Fiji provides insights into the historical moments that shaped Fiji’s ethnocracy and the tensions between those in power and those on the periphery as inter-ethnic alliances led to new political configurations and social outcomes in 1987, 1999 and 2014.

Colonial Ethnocracy

Colonial ethnocracy was established when indigenous Fijian chiefs ceded the islands of Fiji to Great Britain and accepted the formal arrangement whereby the British colonial rulers controlled the politics and the economy of the colony and the chiefs continued with their cultural hegemony of indigenous Fijians. The colonial ethnoclass consisted of the British political administrators, the Great Council of Chiefs influenced by later by Ratu Sukuna, and the European settlers. On October 10 1874, the chiefs of eastern Fiji – Vunivalu Cakobau, Ma’afu, Ratu Epeli, Tui Bua, Savenaca, Esekelo, Tui Dreketi, Ritova, Katonivere, Ratu Kini, Matanitobua and Nacagilevu ceded Fiji to Britain. The Cession was inevitable, because the Cakobau government (1871-1874) was bankrupt and the European community wanted a stable political authority to protect their economic interests. The provisional Governor of Fiji, Sir Hercules Robinson, inherited the task of administering Fijians. Borrowing from the political and social organisations of eastern Fiji, he grouped the islands of the colony into provinces, based on boundaries of the old Fijian state, and within the province a number of divisions were created, each comprising a group of villages related by kinship. Each of these administrative units – the village, the district, and the Province - was placed in charge of a Fijian, and here was a chain of responsibility from the lowest level to the highest (Roth 1951, p. 135).

The British colonial authorities at once restructured the native administrative system by giving exclusive jurisdiction on native affairs to the Council of Chiefs. The Boselevu Vakaturaga, the Great Council of Chiefs, was a new institution, based on the collective experience of the chiefs in the failed Cakobau Government. Despite being dominated by the chiefs from the maritime provinces, the Great Council became the official custodian of Fijian land, culture, tradition, customary rights and social relations. Besides that, the Council helped to entrench colonial ethnocratic rule in Fiji by ensuring least resistance to the new political order from the indigenous masses.

The Great Council of Chiefs was also an agent of colonial propaganda. The Deed of Cession was interpreted in a way that created the popular myth
of a protective colonial policy towards the natives. According to Macnaght, ‘in the Fijian popular mind the lands had been given by the chiefs to the Queen Vakaturaga, that is, by way of a chiefly presentation which entitled them to expect that the Queen in her reciprocal generosity would return the lands to be shared and used by the people’ (Macnaght 1982, p. 30). The first Governor to Fiji, Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon, cemented the protective colonial policy by strengthening the social and cultural foundations of the Great Council of Chiefs. Gordon was a conservative at heart and campaigned against self-government in the North American Colony of New Brunswick. His apparent lack of success in British North America left him bitter and disillusioned. However, he was very well read and had intimate knowledge of the cultural destruction of the indigenous peoples of North America, West Indies and Australia. As a convert to preserving indigenous way of life, Gordon was determined to safeguard indigenous Fijian culture. But according to historian Peter France, Gordon’s understanding of indigenous Fijian affairs was fundamentally flawed. To begin with, Gordon did not speak or write Fijian and was further estranged by his adoption of the position of a high chief (France 1969, pp. 104-105).

Gordon was an avid anglophile and mistakenly claimed that the Provincial, District and Village system was deeply rooted in indigenous Fijian tradition. But this was not the case for all of Fiji. In Western Viti Levu, different forms of social organisation and hierarchies existed, particularly in the interior of Ra and Nadroga where matrilineal descent groups prevailed. Nevertheless, Gordon saw Roko Tui (the Provincial chief), Buli (District Chief) and Turanga-ni-koro (the village head) as synonymous with the colonial administration and as a result, Fijian Administration, modelled by the colonial masters, was imposed on the rest of the Fiji islands. Indigenous Fijian labour was regulated by a paternalistic tax-in-kind policy, which stipulated that every male Fijian between the ages of sixteen and sixty would be liable to contribute twenty days labour on public works in his province, including road works, improving provincial offices, hospitals and gardens and these provisions were enforced by the village administrators who kept detailed account of who did what, where and how. By this arrangement, Sir Arthur Gordon ensured that Fijians worked on their land and were not directly involved with the colonial capitalist economy, where more intensive labour was required under exploitative conditions. The Deed of Cession allowed the indigenous Fijian chiefs, together with the Colonial Government, to oversee and regulate Fijian land. However, by the virtue of the Deed, the Colonial Government had absolute authority on the economic development of the Colony and, as such, Sir Arthur Gordon tapped into the existing indentured labour system operating in British Colonies since 1835 and
imported Indian labourers to Fiji from 1879 to 1916. Indian labour proved quite successful in developing and extending the sugar economy. For the Colonial Government, Indian labour gave the Fijians the time needed to absorb the impact of colonial rule and embed colonial ethnocracy, thus arresting the steady decline in indigenous Fijian population numbers, and enabled Fijians to enjoy the unusual institutions that had given them a powerful voice in colonial policy (Macnaught 1982, p. 2).

The Chief-Gordon viewpoint was founded on two important pillars: colonial ethnocracy where Europeans controlled the state and the Great Council of Chiefs provided guidance to the colonialists on indigenous culture and land. The colonial ethnocratic state was built not only on protective native policy but on an ethnic exclusive political agenda where indigenous Fijians were disbarred from developing any meaningful social contact with Indo-Fijians. Village Turaga ni Koros were informed to keep an eye on any Indo-Fijian who may find their way into a village and if Indo-Fijians were detected, they were to be arrested and brought back to the coolie barracks that housed indentured labourers. William Sutherland states that the ideology and the practice of racialism perpetrated by the ruling class made a large section of the Fijian population see themselves primarily as Fijians rather than exploited people (Sutherland 1992, p. 32). By the early twentieth century, the colonial-chief alliance embedded the colonial ethnoclass that dictated social and political discourses in the colonial ethnonation of Fiji.

One of the most avid defenders of the colonial ethnocracy was Ratu Sukuna, one of the first Fijian chiefs to receive western education. Ratu Sukuna was the District Commissioner of Lau and a son of a Bauan chief. As the most gifted of the young Fijian chiefs, he was selected to be educated in New Zealand and England at the expense of the Fijian people. Ratu Sukuna was the impetus behind the formation of the Fijian Affairs Board and the Native Land Trust Board in the 1940s. He was dedicated and wanted to strengthen the existing colonial ethnocracy via Fijian Administration. Ratu Sukuna focused his energy on protecting and preserving indigenous Fijian land and chiefly privilege and forged alliances with the Europeans to ensure legislative provisions. As a result, the Native Land Trust Ordinance of 1940 was formulated to shield the colonial ethnonation from the demands of Indo-Fijians and their leaders who demanded political equality from 1920 to 1970 through series of boycotts, disruptions and strike. According to Robert Norton (2002, p. 136), Ratu Sukuna and the Great Council of Chiefs was major obstacle to change on ‘proposals to extend franchise to Fijians’ because the official view was that indigenous Fijians were not ready to participate in politics.
The ethnic hegemony of the chiefs was established in the 1960s when indigenous Fijian leader and the paramount chief of Lau, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, created a three-tier party structure to manage Fiji's ethnic politics and formed the Alliance Party of Fiji which had three distinct arms - the Fijian Association, the Indian Alliance and the General Voters (Newton 1970, p. 33). The Fijian Association was active in promoting indigenous Fijian political paramountcy since the 1950s when indigenous Fijian chiefs rose within the ranks of the colonial bureaucracy, providing political leadership to their community. For example, the Fijian Association was behind the Wakaya Letters of 1956 wherein the chiefs affirmed ethnic hegemony of the chiefs by invoking the Deed of Cession of 1874, arguing that transfer of political power after independence must be from the Crown to the indigenous chiefs. According to Robert Norton (2012, p. 522), ‘the post war Fijian political bureaucratic elite was formed in rapid period of economic, social and political change’ where ‘several chiefs and some commoners acquired great official status’.

In 1959 Fiji witnessed challenges to the colonial authority by the multiracial Fiji Retail and Wholesale Workers Union. The protest by the union ended up in riots where European properties were damaged by Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijian activists (Howard 1991, p. 53). However, with the intervention by indigenous chiefs, Ratu Edward Cakobau and Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, the short lived rebellion against the colonial authority and the European business monopoly was defeated. The chiefs argued that indigenous Fijians were manipulated by Indo-Fijian political activists to facilitate their own anti-colonial political agendas (Bain 1989, p. 15). As a result, the temporary inter-ethnic alliance was broken and the two communities retreated to their ethnic and communal camps. Francis West (1960, p. 49) observed that ‘the European tendency, and that of the Fijian chiefs, has been to imply that if the Fijians rioted, they must have been incited and egged on by alien anti-European provocateurs and by hooligans; by implication Indians or outsiders’. Furthermore, West (1960, p. 53) analysed the ethnic contours that prevailed in Fiji at that time: ‘there are professional Indians, doctors, and lawyers independent of the government and this is one of the political strengths of the Indian community. The Fijians, lacking them, may find an already complex situation further complicated by the rift in political and economic consciousness which the riots already seem to show between the town and the countryside’. In fact, the Indo-Fijian population had quadrupled between 1921 and 1966. According to Christian Leuprecht (2012, p. 89), by the ‘1950s, not only the Indians became an absolute majority, they had fairly young age structure’. The ideological position of Indo-Fijian leaders and their activism against the colonial
ethnoclass were blamed for the 1959 inter-ethnic disturbances against the colonial authorities. Indigenous Fijian chiefs were reminded that the ‘heathen’ Indo-Fijian leaders were attempting to drive a wedge between the indigenous chiefly hierarchy and the commoner indigenous Fijians by spreading anti-colonial and anti-chief propaganda.

Following a series of activism against the Colonial Sugar Refining Company and the colonial government for the rights of Indo-Fijian sugar cane farmers, Indo-Fijian political leaders formed the Federation Party following disturbances in the sugar belt of Fiji. The Federation Party was led by Indo-Fijian leader A.D. Patel (Lal 2011) who called for land reforms so that farmers could get easy access to indigenous land on generous lease arrangements. Patel was also motivated by the decolonisation movement following the Second World War and advocated independence for the Colony of Fiji. The Federation Party was an extension of Maha Sangh (Kaplan & Kelly 2001), which was formed in the 1940s to fight for the rights of Indo-Fijian sugar cane farmers. After initially focusing on Indo-Fijian issues, the party formed a partnership with the indigenous Fijian National Party in 1969 and attempted to promote inter-ethnic cooperation but this effort was short lived as political parties fractured along ethnic lines. Also, in the lead up to Fiji’s independence, indigenous Fijian chiefs remained suspicious of Indo-Fijian leaders and increasing Indo-Fijian population that has surpassed indigenous Fijians (Premdas 1978, p. 35).

However, with the formation of the UN Decolonisation Committee, the international stage was set for Fiji to move towards independence (Alley 1970, p. 150) despite the domestic political condition in Fiji despite ethnocracy firmly entrenched in the party system. Eight decades of colonial rule ensured that indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians had minimum social interaction and, at all times, the colonial administration reinforced ethnic and communal identities. Also, demographic changes played a key role in ethnic tensions. A majority of indigenous Fijians in the 1960s were living in rural areas and only a handful of indigenous chiefs and indigenous commoners had emerged with any significant leadership experience and education, and this group was committed to indigenous political hegemony in the new post-colonial political order.

The colonial Fijian Administration, entrenched after the cession of Fiji to Great Britain, allowed for social hierarchy to be cemented in villages, districts and provinces and most indigenous Fijians were entirely removed from commerce or any form of social engagement with the Indo-Fijians. Church, chiefs, customary obligations and subsistence agriculture were central to the indigenous Fijian village life while politics and governance was the sole domain of hereditary indigenous chiefs and the privileged few
indigenous commoners. Indo-Fijians had little access to land ownership and largely worked on sugar plantations and in urban factories. The Indo-Fijian elite had chosen non-agrarian careers and lifestyles and were predominantly middle class doctors, engineers, lawyers, accountants and public servants and some taking over from Europeans in business (Mamak 1978). One problem was that the Indo-Fijian leaders lacked a political strategy aimed at bridging the divide between the two communities and aggressively pushed for independence with the hope of working with progressively minded indigenous Fijian leaders. However, the indigenous Fijian leaders saw independence as a chance to reclaim the state from the Crown and were united in their view that the only protection for indigenous land ownership was indigenous Fijian political hegemony. Despite strong nationalist views, indigenous chief Ratu Mara developed some working relationship with Indo-Fijian leader A.D. Patel, but as discussed this was hardly the case at the grassroots level, where racial bias and prejudices were prevalent (Brookfield 1972). Before independence, the Ratu Mara-led Alliance Party of Fiji won the election of 1966, but the Indo-Fijian leaders refused to work with indigenous Fijian leaders and resigned from the parliament, forcing by-elections in 1968. Indigenous Fijians interpreted the behaviour of Indo-Fijian leaders as disrespectful and as a consequence the first significant racial tensions flared up (Newton 1970, p. 34).

Robert Norton (2002, pp. 134-137) noted that ‘the terms of decolonisation, most specifically the electoral system, became the point of acrimonious struggles between the Fijian and the European leaders on the one hand, and the principal Indian leaders on the other’. Norton further determined that the ‘privileged position of chiefs in the colonial state contrasted starkly with government’s weak links with Indians’ and, as a result, Indo-Fijians were looked upon with suspicion because they continuously challenged the European dominated ethnocracy and called for equality between Europeans and Indo-Fijians which attacked the heart of European political and economic hegemony in Fiji. Also of concern was the future state of the country after political authority transferred from the colonial authorities to indigenous Fijians who saw Indo-Fijian leaders as agitators, continually pushing for better terms of land lease, and political equality. As a consequence, ethnic tensions increased in the lead up to independence.

Indo-Fijian leader A.D. Patel, as a result of ethnic tensions, softened some of his positions on land. Ratu Mara continued holding discussions with A.D. Patel and was responsible for achieving consensus with the Indo-Fijian leadership from 1970-1972 on the future of the new independent nation. In 1969, A.D. Patel passed away and Siddiq Koya assumed the leadership of the National Federation Party. Koya at first adopted a more conciliatory approach
towards indigenous Fijians but maintained the push for ‘common roll’ (a common electoral franchise), which was supposed to enhance political equality (Vasil 1972, p. 25). According to Henry Rutz (1995, p. 74), both communities in Fiji embraced independence for vastly different reasons. ‘Indians imagined a newly created “citizen” living in a civil society that subordinated the status of religion race and a particularist culture to national solidarity’ whereas indigenous Fijian rhetoric was embedded in the paramountcy of Fijian interest informed by ethnic or communal voting system, hegemony of the chiefs and protection of indigenous land.

**Establishing Post-Colonial Ethnocracy**

Indigenous Fijian leaders quietly opposed common roll and were concerned that one person one vote would ultimately lead to Indo-Fijian political domination. Under the 1970 Constitution, the Senate had 8 Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) nominees who had powers of veto over legislation affecting indigenous Fijian interests. This provision of the constitution was never properly explained to indigenous Fijians, who were extended voting rights from 1962 whilst Indo-Fijians had been electing their representatives since 1929. Also under the 1970 Constitution, there was a 52 member House of Representatives with 22 seats (12 elected on communal roll and 10 on national roll) each for indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians and 8 seats for General Voters. The constitutional set up ensured that indigenous Fijians and Europeans would bloc vote to ensure paramountcy of indigenous Fijian interest in government.

Following the promulgation of the 1970 Constitution, the Alliance Party and the National Federation Party postponed national elections until 1972 and agreed in principle to work towards a non-ethnic model, embracing an agreed version of the common roll electoral system. However, Ratu Mara did not support common roll after the 1972 election because indigenous Fijians in his government equated common roll to Indo-Fijian political domination and, as a result, the relationship between the two parties soured in 1975 after the Street Commission recommendation that Fiji was ready for a common roll electoral system. Ratu Mara remained unconvinced following strong indigenous Fijian polling for the Alliance Party in the 1972 election against common roll. Koya and Mara had a falling-out and the so-called ‘Fiji’s honeymoon period’ premised on cooperation between two communal leaders was over (Lal 1986, p. 78). Also, in 1975, an Alliance Member of Parliament caused uproar within the Indo-Fijian community when he called for the expulsion of Indo-Fijians from Fiji to India, sparking accusations from Indo-Fijian leaders that the Alliance Party was actively promoting ethnocracy. Sakeasi Butadroka, in fact, highlighted the views and concerns of many
indigenous Fijians that Indo-Fijians were taking over the country since Indo-Fijian business had all but taken over from the Europeans after independence. Butadroka who was from the indigenous Fijian province of Rewa was able to successfully tap into indigenous fears and concerns caused by continued lack of interaction between the two communities (Lal 1986, pp. 96-97).

With the formation of the Fijian Nationalist Party, racial politics entered a new phase in Fiji as the illusion of multiracial harmony created by Ratu Mara’s ‘Pacific Way’, premised upon the concept of a happy and a peaceful multiracial society, faded. According to Mara (1997, p. 282), ‘the phrase inspired his 1970 partnership with the Indian opposition leader to produce a constitution whereby people of different races, opinion and cultures can live and work together for the good of all’. However, Fiji was a racially stratified society where cultural isolation of the two communities reinforced prejudices and biases, which were exploited by the ethnic leaders for their personal political ends. Ratu Mara did not want to compromise on any form of electoral solution that compromised indigenous Fijian political hegemony while Koya continued to campaign for common roll. The post-colonial ethnoclass in Fiji comprising indigenous Fijian chiefs, indigenous Fijian commoner nationalists and Europeans and the ethnonation that was established through the 1970 Constitution ensured indigenous Fijian political control via ethnic bloc voting with the support of Europeans. In the April 1977 elections, Indo-Fijians who supported the Alliance Party were unimpressed with the political position of Ratu Mara and so their support moved to the National Federation Party. Also, the Fijian Nationalist Party split the Alliance Party’s indigenous Fijian vote allowing the National Federation Party (NFP) to win power and challenge the post-colonial ethnic class. However, the split within the NFP ranks and the indecision on the part of the NFP leadership forced the intervention of the Governor General Ratu Sir George Cakobau, who appointed Ratu Mara as a caretaker Prime Minister (Murray 1978, pp. 230-238). Seeing the prospect of the repeat of the April 1977 results, indigenous Fijian voters came back to the Alliance fold. Race played an important part in the second general elections of 1977 and showed that division amongst indigenous Fijians could compromise the political position of their leaders. Race continued to dominate Fiji politics until the April elections of 1987 when the Fiji Labour Party and the NFP coalition put forward a new multiracial vision for Fiji and successfully convinced urban indigenous Fijians to change their voting behaviour. Another important factor besides race was that indigenous Fijians were a minority by 1987, and as a minority community were concerned by the economically dominant position of the majority Indo-Fijian community. The minority-majority dynamics caused suspicion among indigenous Fijian
nationalists of Indo-Fijian political designs and furthermore the ethnoclass that governed Fiji became increasingly concerned about losing power due to slight shifts in ethnic voting patterns. As stated before, indigenous Fijian political hegemony could only be realised if the community voted as a bloc for the Alliance Party led by Ratu Mara. Robbie Robertson (2012, p. 511) noted that by the early 1980s, there was a ‘significant challenge to post-colonial racial divisions’ and the ‘irruption of the Fiji Labour Party very quickly precipitated Fiji’s first military coup in 1987’.

Militarising the Ethnonation

In 1987, a third-ranking Colonel in the Royal Fiji Military Forces ousted the democratically elected multiracial government of late Dr. Timoci Bavadra (Lawson 1991; Robertson & Tamani sau 1988; Lal 1988; Ramesh 2007). Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka within months was promoted to the Commander of the Fiji military by the late Governor General Ratu Penaia Ganilau. A Military Council was established with the participation of defeated politicians from the Alliance Government (1970 – 1987). The Great Council of Chiefs (GCC), the Methodist Church and the indigenous nationalist Taukei Movement became the ‘traditional’ voice in support of the military takeover. Moderate indigenous views on multiracial democracy were quickly expunged and prisoners were released to protest in Suva against a writ filed in the Fiji High Court by Dr. Bavadra, challenging the dissolution of parliament by the Governor General (Kaplan 1988, p. 98). Moreover, Indo-Fijians were attacked and harassed by the Taukei Movement members, who became increasingly violent after a political solution, in the form of a Government of National Unity (GNU), was reached at Deuba in September 1987. Coup leader Rabuka remained unhappy with the turn of events since May and after stating publicly that ‘the objectives of the coup had not been met’ executed his second coup on 25 September of that year. Following the second coup, there were reports of gross human rights violations. According to Kenneth Bain (1988, p. 211), Indo-Fijians were forced to: ‘walk naked in the street, stand for up to twenty four hours in an iron water tank, swim in sewerage ponds filled with human excrements, sit naked for hours at a time on hot tar sealed road, submit to sexual assault by soldiers often in uniform and at army check points, and walk long distances carrying heavy loads while watched by soldiers’. Meanwhile, union members were harassed, detained and tortured for anti-government protests. These actions of the military led the Australian and New Zealand trade unions to call for an immediate economic boycott of Fiji. In response to the actions from the regional trade union movement, Rabuka handed authority to Ratu Mara and to Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau.
From 1987 to 1992 the ethnoclass in Fiji evolved into a new three tier social structure with indigenous Fijian chiefs, indigenous Fijian commoner nationalists and the Fiji military. Indigenous Fijian chiefs Ratu Mara and Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau led the nation as Prime Minister and President, indigenous nationalist commoner Fijians remained active and continued with their campaign for a Christian State and a ban on all work on Sundays via the Sunday Observance Decree, and the Fiji military under the control of Rabuka continued harassing and intimidating the mostly Indo-Fijian political activists.

In 1988, the constitution review process started, following the abrogation of the 1970 Constitution in 1987. The post-coup ethnoclass ensured that the new constitution would maintain permanent Indigenous Fijian political control in spite of any factionalisation. To this end, Ratu Penaia appointed the Fiji Constitution Inquiry and Review Committee (CIRC) led by Colonel Paul Manuelli. The Committee was given four terms of reference: ‘to scrutinise and consider the extent to which the draft constitution submitted to the cabinet meets the present and future needs of the people, to facilitate the widest possible debate throughout Fiji, to invite and receive representations from the people, and report to the cabinet’ (Premdas & Steeves 1991, pp. 158-159). In fact the CIRC was dominated by individuals sympathetic to the 1987 coup and the purpose of the draft was to ensure indigenous Fijian political hegemony. The Fiji Law Society explicitly rejected the draft and argued that ‘international law recognises the principle of self-determination and the legitimate rights of indigenous races. However, it does not recognise or condone or encourage the subjugation of any race irrespective of its origin (The Fiji Times, 31 May 1989). Joining in the condemnation of the draft constitution were academics at the University of the South Pacific, unions, women’s groups, and human rights organisations.

On 23 September 1989, the CIRC made its recommendation to the interim government, calling for ‘69 member House of Representatives comprising of 37 Fijians out of whom 30 to be elected by Fijian provinces and 7 by Fijian residents in urban and peri-urban areas; 27 Indians to be elected by communal roll, 4 General Electors (European descent) and 1 Rotuman’ (The Fiji Times, 23 September 1989). Despite massive protests by Indo-Fijians against the CIRC recommendation the new racially weighted constitution was promulgated by the coup makers in July 1990. The Australian section of the International Commission of Jurists ‘criticised special powers against subversion, stating that it is a recipe for continued military intervention in the life of the community’ (The Fiji Times, 9 October 1990). Not long after the promulgation of the constitution, four University of the South Pacific lecturers, a doctor and a retired school teacher were detained for burning the constitution and one of the lecturers, Dr. Anuridh
Singh was abducted and tortured for eleven hours by members of the military. At the trial of those accused of torture, ‘the defence counsel referred to Section 100 of the 1990 Constitution as the accused persons were provoked in doing what they did to the complainant whom they have considered to have insulted the President, the Prime Minister and members of the Great Council of Chiefs and Fijian people generally’ (Singh 1991, p. 53).

International criticisms of the 1990 Constitution were ignored by the interim government which modified public order decrees to suppress freedom of expression. In 1990, three journalists were charged for reporting the burning of the 1990 Constitution, with harassments of journalists continuing well into 1991. The interim government was not only facing protests from political activists and journalists but new battlelines were drawn with the enactment of the Sugar Master’s Award, which imposed an unreasonable tax on farmers and reduced the rate paid for burnt sugar cane. The National Farmers Union (NFU), led by Mahendra Chaudhry, went into action and organised series of harvest boycotts, forcing the interim government to withdraw the award. Humiliated but not out, the government continued its onslaught on the NFU and threatened to hold cane payment and enacted labour decrees, to outlaw protests and to strip Mahendra Chaudhry of his influence by outlawing union officials from holding two union positions (Ramesh 2015, p. 113).

By 1992, Indo-Fijians were divided between the National Federation Party (NFP) and the FLP with the FLP refusing to contest the 1992 elections. Indigenous Fijian members of the FLP split from the party and formed the New Labour Party (NLP) but failed to win any indigenous communal seats in the 1992 general election. The NFP on the other hand argued that by not contesting the elections, Indo-Fijians would be further alienated from the political process. Led by Jai Ram Reddy, the NFP made a come-back from the political wilderness of the late 1980s in the 1992 general elections.

The 1992 election was won by the Soqosoqo ni Vakevulewa ni Taukei (SVT) Party which secured 30 of the 37 communal seats. The NFP won 14 and the FLP 13, effectively splitting the Indo-Fijian votes in half. The Fijian Nationalist United Front won 5 seats with 2 independents. After the election, it was clear that none of the political parties had an outright majority of more than 35 seats (The Fiji Times, 2 June 1992). To the surprise of many, FLP lent its support to Rabuka, following an agreement to ‘review the 1990 Constitution, revoke labour reform decrees, scrap the Value Added Tax, and put in place mechanisms to discuss land tenure’ (The Fiji Times, 3 June 1992). However, FLP support for Rabuka did not last and soon after the election, FLP staged a lightning walkout of parliament, accusing Rabuka of breaching the pre-election agreement. However, NFP saw the tensions
between the FLP and the SVT as an opportunity and embraced Rabuka much to the peril of the party.

The 1992 election once again highlighted that the ethnoclass established via the 1990 Constitution continued to suffer from the problems that afflicted the 1970 constitutional order: indigenous Fijian disunity. From 1992 to 1999, Fiji went through a series of political transformations. The SVT split in 1993 after members of the SVT party defeated the 1994 Budget. No longer with the SVT, rebel members formed the Fijian Association Party (FAP) under the leadership of late Josevata Kamikamica. Fiji went to the polls in 1994 and the SVT was once again returned to office. Despite the SVT win, divisions within the indigenous Fijians became apparent as Prime Minister Rabuka sought to improve his failing political fortunes by seeking assistance for constitutional reforms from the NFP leader Jai Ram Reddy. In 1995, a Constitution Review Commission (CRC) was established to review the 1990 Constitution. The CRC recommended drastic changes to Fiji’s constitutional make up. Some of the changes were so far reaching that the indigenous Fijian leadership used the Joint Parliamentary Select Committee to ‘soften’ the impact of the CRC Report. In the end, indigenous Fijians were unhappy with the new constitutional arrangement whereas Indo-Fijians saw constitutional reforms as the only way of safeguarding minority rights in the country. The consequence of Rabuka’s constitutional reforms was two-fold. Firstly, a number of Fijian provinces withdrew support for the GCC-backed SVT party and secondly, there was an upsurge in indigenous nationalism, which led to the formation of the Christian Democratic Alliance party or Veitokani ni Lewenivanua Vakarisito (VLV). Both these developments spelt disaster for Rabuka and the SVT in the 1999 elections as the party was abandoned by a majority of the indigenous Fijians. On the Indo-Fijian front, Jai Ram Reddy’s cordial relationship with Rabuka ended the political hopes of the NFP party. Many Indo-Fijians saw the NFP has a ‘weak’ party unable to champion the rights of the Indo-Fijians. As a result, the NFP was wiped out of the Fiji’s political landscape as Fiji’s first Indo-Fijian Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry formed the Peoples’ Coalition Government with the indigenous Fijian FAP, VLV and the Party of National Unity (PANU) parties.

The divisions within indigenous Fijians were far reaching and as Alumita Durutalo (2000, p. 79) concluded, these divisions were played out at different levels within the indigenous community: ‘within each province there are subtle forms of competition based on pre-colonial vanua. In each province, for example, there are certain vanua which receive more from government than others. In the province of Nadroga and Navosa, the coastal Nadroga people have always been favoured over the inland Navosa people in terms of state resources for any development in the province’. Also there
existed tensions between the maritime provinces and provinces on the main land of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. In the 1990s, Ratu Mara, the paramount chief of Lau favoured Josevata Kamikamica to take over as Prime Minister from 1992. Other chiefs particularly from Cakaudrove supported Rabuka. These tensions within the indigenous Fijians created a weak ethnoclass.

In addition, the 1997 Constitution, based on preferential voting exacerbated divisions by allowing ethnically exclusive parties to form grand coalitions and adopt preference engineering against their foes. While a new era dawned on Fiji’s ethnic politics, the indigenous nationalists remained unconvinced with the political outcome on constitutional reform and privately expressed shock with the election of the first Indo-Fijian Prime Minister. Chaudhry, a former trade union leader and a Minister for Finance in the deposed Bavadra government, reintroduced some of the Labour policies that had led to the coups of 1987. Within six months in office, the Peoples’ Coalition Government was heading for a showdown with the GCC and the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB) over sugar lease arrangements under the Agricultural Landlord and Tenants Act (ALTA). Capitalising on the sensitivities over land, indigenous nationalists led by George Speight, with the support from a section of the Fiji military, deposed the Peoples’ Coalition Government on 19 May 2000.

On 19 May 2000, armed men stormed Fiji’s parliament and held cabinet members of the People’s Coalition Government hostage for 56 days (Robertson & Sutherland 2001). The May 2000 coup, the third in a series of coups, was executed by indigenous Fijian nationalists and members of Fiji’s military’s Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unit. However, unlike in 1987, the 2000 putsch caused indigenous fragmentation and paved way for further coups. Like in May 1987, the 2000 coup leaders mistakenly thought that there would be overwhelming support among indigenous Fijians for the takeover, following claims by indigenous nationalists that the People’s Coalition Government, led by an Indo-Fijian Mahendra Chaudhry, proposed a number of bills aimed at diluting the rights of indigenous Fijians. Moreover, the coup makers wanted to oust the President of Fiji, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, who remained steadfast in his support for the multiracial 1997 Constitution, after indigenous petitions for its abrogation.

George Speight and his supporters exploited traditional divisions and quietly negotiated with the vanau of Vuda to nominate Ratu Josefa Iloilo (Burebasaga) to the position of the President and a high chief of Bau, Ratu Jope Seniloili (Kubuna) to the position of Vice President. The Speight group argued that President Ratu Mara had become an obstacle to their ‘objective’ because he had failed to persuade Mahendra Chaudhry and his government to ‘voluntarily resign’, and ‘address the grievances of the indigenous

George Speight produced more than divisions and fragmentation among indigenous Fijians. According to Graham Dobell (2000, p. 176), ‘there were Pacific rhythms at work’ and one such rhythm involved racial violence. After the Speight group failed to unite indigenous Fijians behind its cause, it started exploiting ethnic and cultural divisions and ordered indigenous supporters to attack Indo-Fijians in areas sympathetic to the coup. Susanna Trnka (2011, p. 333) during her research in Fiji at the height of the 2000 mayhem observed that ‘members of the Indo-Fijian community that I was working among were profoundly shaken by the violence. They talked about the coup incessantly, relating accounts of physical attacks that had happened to them or to their relatives. They spoke at length about their fears that the country was going to devolve into anarchy. Some foretold that this might be the beginning of ethnic genocide’. At the end of the 56 day siege of the parliament, George Speight and his rebels humiliated the military, divided the Great Council of Chiefs, and succeeded in having their own supporters in an interim government (Alley 2000, p. 515).

The interim government that was eventually established after the 2000 coup continued with the direction espoused by the Speight group. The interim Prime Minister, Laisenia Qarase, argued that there was an urgent need to bridge the economic gap between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians and immediately implemented a ‘blueprint on supremacy’, which re-invented affirmative action programs that had existed under previous indigenous governments following the 1987 coups. Steven Ratuva labelled the affirmative action program under the interim government as ‘second phase’, which had two parts: ‘first the attempt by the military appointed interim government led by Laisenia Qarase to appease ethno-nationalists who supported and were responsible for the ethnic violence surrounding the 2000 coup and, secondly, to harness political support by the newly elected SDL government led by Qarase’ (Ratuva 2014, p. 142). The ‘blueprint’, after the 2001 elections, passed the legislature and became the Social Justice Act 2001, which had scheduled 29 schemes, out of which ‘9 were discriminatory in racial terms’ (Cottrell & Ghai 2007, p. 240-41). According to the Citizens’ Constitutional Forum (CCF), the Social Justice Act contained a number of anomalies that required revisions and amendments. The CCF further observed that the weaknesses in the Act existed because it was promoted as a general election promise (Citizens Constitutional Forum, 11 February 2002).

According to Brij Lal, ‘Fijian nationalists want Fijian paramountcy recognised as a right, but there is no basis on which the paramountcy of Fijian interests or Fijian political paramountcy can be elevated into a right.
But no constitution can guarantee political paramountcy of a particular ethnic
group in a multi-ethnic state unless, of course, it abandons all claim to be
democratic’ (Lal 2000, p. 292). Brian Martin (1993, p. 53) also observed that
‘the use of ethnic divisions for political purposes has a long history in Fiji.
The Labour Party itself represented a challenge to this political use of
ethnicity, and the coup represented a reversion to this status quo’, both in
1987 and 2000. However, after the 2001 election, the military had started to
question ethnically exclusive policies of the Qarase government.

After the August 2001 general elections, the SDL and the CAMV
formed a coalition government and ensured that the FLP was not allowed to
join cabinet as stipulated under the 1997 Constitution. As expected, the FLP
leader challenged his party’s exclusion from government and in a landmark
judgment in 2003, the Supreme Court of Fiji upheld the multiparty cabinet
 provision in the Fiji Constitution but allowed political parties to resolve
differences and agree to a multiparty government rules. Unfortunately the
SDL refused to cooperate with the FLP and the two parties drifted further
apart. By 2003, the military Commander had lost all faith in the SDL
government. While initially supporting affirmative action for indigenous
Fijians, Voreqe Bainimarama, Commander of the Republic of Fiji Military
Forces, saw the SDL’s Social Justice Act and the blueprint on indigenous
supremacy as divisive and counterproductive for Fiji. Moreover, the army
was equally concerned about the SDL’s support for the individuals
implicated in the 2000 coup.

The tensions between the army and the SDL government escalated
from June 2005 with the release of the Racial Tolerance and Unity Bill
(RTU), which provided amnesty to the individuals involved in the events of
2000. The government proposed not only the RTU but it had plans to enact
the Qoliqoli and the Lands Claims Tribunal Bills. The bills in their totality
were seen by the army Commander as a threat to ‘national security’. According to Stephen McCarthy (2011, p. 566), ‘the perpetrators of the 2000
coup sought their amnesty and pushed for the establishment of an
independent unity commission as part of a reconciliation initiative – the
Reconciliation Tolerance and Unity Bill – to address causes of the crisis and
resolve Fiji’s ongoing political instability’. To make matters worse, the SDL
supporters in the Fiji military were given the go-ahead to depose Commander
Voreqe Bainimarama and in January 2006, there was another failed mutiny at
the Queen Elizabeth Barracks in Suva.

As Fiji headed towards elections in May 2006, the SDL absorbed the
nationalist CAMV party and went to the polls with an agenda to divide
the country along religious lines. A large number of the SDL Indo-Fijian
candidates were Muslims whereas the FLP candidates were predominantly
Hindu. This type of religion-based electioneering backfired when the SDL failed to win a single Indo-Fijian communal seat. Seeing the country divided ferociously along racial lines, the triumphant SDL Prime Minister invited nine FLP members to join his government. While the FLP leader Mahendra Chaudhry, throughout the previous SDL term, was enthusiastic about multiparty government, after May 2006 elections, his response was lukewarm and at times obscurantist. Despite nominating party members to join the SDL government, Chaudhry wanted to be the leader of the opposition. One cannot be part of the government and be in opposition at the same time. It is contrary to the fundamental principle of parliamentarianism. Just before the 5 December coup, Chaudhry remained committed to derailing the multiparty government after four FLP cabinet ministers voted against the 1997 Budget. Chaudhry warned earlier that all nine FLP cabinet ministers had to vote against the budget. However, five FLP cabinet members were granted leave of absence by the deposed Prime Minister Qarase on the day of the budget vote. Chaudhry was unhappy after the 2007 budget passed with forty votes to twenty six. In a last bid to save the multiparty government, Qarase on 24 November came up with a compromise. Qarase proposed that he would allow FLP cabinet ministers who voted against the budget to stay in cabinet provided the FLP did not take any disciplinary action against the other five. This was rejected by Chaudhry who argued that party directives superseded those of the cabinet in what was the final nail into the coffin of a disintegrating multiparty government. According to Mahendra Chaudhry:

The FLP, for instance, was not consulted on the formulation of the 2007 budget, especially on the imposition of an increase in the value added tax (VAT) from 12.5 per cent to 15 per cent – a totally insensitive move that would have greatly intensified the hardship faced by our lower-paid workers and the poor. Laisenia Qarase also shunned every overture I made as leader of the FLP to get bipartisan talks going on the highly contentious and divisive Promotion of Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity (RTU) Bill (a misnomer because its main objective was to grant amnesty to those convicted for their part in the 2000 coup), and the Qoliqoli and Land Claims Tribunal bills (Chaudhry 2009, p.346).

Not only did Chaudhry criticise the SDL government’s handling of controversial bill, he also was very scathing of the 1997 Constitution, despite the fact that he won an absolute majority in the 1999 election under it. Chaudhry (2009, p. 345) argued that the 1997 Constitution was ‘flawed’ and
‘deliberately damaged by the political leadership of Sitiveni Rabuka and Jai Ram Reddy when they wrote it and entrenched the communal electoral system’. The 1997 Constitution of Fiji required parties with 10 per cent or more of the total seats in parliament to be included in a multiparty cabinet. The electoral system was changed from the first-past-the-post system under the 1970 Constitution to Alternative Vote, which was to ‘promote majority victors and to encourage interethnic accommodation’ (Reilly 2007, p. 62). However, evidence from the 1999, 2000 and the 2006 Fiji elections showed that ‘the majority of transfers of preference votes in Fiji flowed from the more moderate or centrist parties towards the more extremist organisations’ (Fraenkel 2004, p. 126) as interethnic moderation, envisaged by the Constitution Review Commission, did not materialise, leading to the failure of multiparty cabinet, and the collapse of the mid-1990s ‘constitutional engineering project’ (Fraenkel 2007, p. 44). In his analysis of the 1999 Fiji elections, Fraenkel (2000, p. 106) observed that ‘strong opposition can provide an important check and balance in the system, particularly where this represents substantial sections of the electorate. The SVT-NFP coalition might, under proportional representation, have commanded 25 seats’. In addition, there was another serious problem overlooked by constitution designers, and identified by FLP leader Mahendra Chaudhry, and that was preponderance of communal seats (45) over national ones (25), thus continuing with the failed post-colonial political trajectory of ethnocracy, ethnoclass and ethnonation led by indigenous Fijian nationalism.

Worse, the deposed Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase was a poor political strategist because he made futile attempts to make Chaudhry a substantial stakeholder by offering him the position of the Deputy Prime Minister in the ill-fated multiparty government, especially after the army wrenched up its anti-government rhetoric with the reintroduction of the controversial Racial Tolerance and Unity, Qoliqoli and Land Claims bills. Instead of trying to salvage the multiparty government, Laisenia Qarase should have agreed to the demands of the army because there was no other way. Laisenia Qarase (2009, pp. 353-374) was also perhaps somewhat delusional as he believed he led a ‘genuinely representative multiracial government’ accusing Mahendra Chaudhry of the FLP of ‘distortion and misrepresentation about affirmative action’ and further labelling Bainimarama as ‘the bad guy’ who wanted to ‘evade the law’ for the alleged murder of those military officers who wanted him dead.

The army Commander, Voreqe Bainimarama, was on a path of no return and on 5 December, the SDL government was deposed in a bloodless military coup. Soon after the coup, the GCC, sections of the Methodist Church, the NGOs, and the Fiji Law Society condemned the takeover and
called for a quick restoration of democracy. Previously in 1987 and in 2000, both the GCC and the Methodist Church supported armed takeover of government but this time around the deposed government was voted into office by more than 80 per cent of the total eligible indigenous Fijian communal votes. The deposed Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase’s fight to restore the SDL government became stuck because in 2001 Qarase reiterated that democracy was a ‘foreign flower’ and that it was incompatible with the indigenous tradition and culture. The army moved quickly against its critics and in less than a month secured its grip on the country. Laisenia Qarase was banished to his island home of Mavana in Vanuabalavu, parliament was dissolved, all SDL appointed board members dismissed and dissidents silenced.

On 4 January 2007, the army Commander handed executive authority to the President of Fiji Ratu Josefa Iloilo, who appointed Voreqe Bainimarama as the interim Prime Minister of Fiji. A new interim government was sworn in on 8 and 9 January 2007 as the 1987 coup was repeated with some slight modifications. While the SDL was entirely excluded from the interim line up, the FLP and the NAPF were given substantial portfolios, leading to criticisms from the deposed leader of the opposition, Mick Beddoes and the deposed Prime Minister Qarase. The return of veteran politician and the FLP leader Chaudhry to the portfolio of finance was observed with interest in both Fiji and abroad.

Dismantling Ethnocracy

The military takeover in Fiji in December 2006 was aimed at dismantling the ethnoclass and the ethnonation that were characteristic of the political order established at independence in 1970. As I have argued, this ethnoclass consisted of indigenous Fijian chiefs, commoner indigenous Fijian nationalists and the Europeans from 1970 to 1987 when the ethnoclass incorporated the military in defining the ethnonation from 1987 to 2000. By 2000, the military split when forced to confront George Speight and his supporters and following the failed mutiny in 2000 against military commander Voreqe Bainimarama, the military was effectively purged and turned against the ethnoclass resulting in the coup of 2006. Robert Norton (2015, p. 122) observed that ‘during the conflict with Qarase, Bainimarama had begun to shape the corporate identity of his army as guardian and guide for the multi-ethnic nation’. The new ethnoclass that emerged from the ashes of the 1997 Constitution was based on alliance between the military, progressive indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians, who for a very long time campaigned for political equality and a common name. A non-ethnic nation
was achieved with the promulgation of the 2013 Constitution and democratic
elections in 2014 where the new ethnoclass in the form of FijiFirst won 59
per cent of the votes to win government.

Fiji went to the polls on 17 September 2014 as overseas anti-
government blog sites ramped up its anti-FijiFirst Party commentary, even
though there was a 48 hour political campaign blackout in Fiji. Blog sites
accused FijiFirst of manipulating the election, planning curfews, buying
votes, and threatening non-FijiFirst participants, but the international
observer group found no evidence of such activities. There were in total
590,000 registered voters out of which 496,364 (83.9 per cent) voted in the
2014 general election. The voting was carried out in 1500 polling stations
where voters showed their identity cards to the electoral officers who verified
their name on the voter list, marked their finger with an indelible ink and then
issued them the ballot paper whereon the voter marked with a cross or a tick
against his or her preferred candidates number and deposited the ballot into a
secured ballot box. Most of the voting on 17 September was completed
before 3 pm and the provisional results were published in the morning of 18
September.

The provisional election figures placed FijiFirst in the lead with 60 per
cent of the seats, followed by SODELPA and the National Federation Party.
The Fiji Labour Party, the Peoples’ Democratic Party, One Fiji and the Fiji
United Freedom Party failed to secure the required 5 per cent threshold of
24,818 votes. In the afternoon of 18 September, Fiji Labour Party, Peoples’
Democratic Party, SODELPA, One Fiji and the National Federation party
issued a joint statement in a letter, arguing that there were irregularities in the
conduct of the election and requested the count of the votes be suspended.
The Supervisor of Elections responded that the allegations from political
parties were too general and refused to suspend counting. On 19 September,
political parties questioning the election produced a list of ‘evidence’
claiming that extra ballot papers were printed, seals on the ballot boxes were
broken, counting was suspended without explanation and ballot papers were
tampered with. The Election Office rejected the claims on 20 September and
the full and final result of the election was published on 21 September 2014.

While FijiFirst came out on the top with 59 per cent of the votes, there
were concerns that the 2014 election was rushed with very little thought
given on the transition from military rule to democratic elections, including
restrictions on political parties with the promulgation of electoral and
political parties’ registration decrees. Also, there were allegations that the
non-ethnic political agenda of the FijiFirst was nothing more than window
dressing since majority in the FijiFirst government and the public service are
indigenous Fijians, thus a continuation of ethnocracy under the guise of non-
ethnic rhetoric. However, these criticisms have been dismissed by FijiFirst as political posturing by the opposition which hopes to bring back the communal and ethnic agendas of the past.

To understand the new ethnoclass in Fiji, it is imperative that we visit some of the underpinning ideologies of the ethnoclass that was deposed in the 2006 coup. An analysis by Stewart Firth (2015, pp. 101-112) provides an insight into the exclusive ethnic trajectory that was adopted by the Social Democratic Liberal Party of Fiji (SODELPA) before the 2014 election. According to Firth, a minority within the indigenous Fijian community see that they have ‘special rights that belong only to the descendants of Fiji’s original occupiers’ and consider the ‘United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of 2007 guarantees a form self-determination, entrenching indigenous dominance’ (Firth 2015, p. 103). Ratuva notes that SODELPA ‘increasingly shifted towards extreme ethno-nationalist and protectionist position’. However despite utilising the indigenous Fijian supremacy template of the previous nationalist regimes, SODELPA managed to only secure ‘46 percent of indigenous votes compared to FijiFirst with 50 per cent’ (Ratuva 2015, p. 147).

Perhaps even more telling is Ratuva’s assertions that it was time to move away from ethnic analysis and focus on ‘deeper intra-ethnic dynamics’ (Ratuva 2015, p. 137) because a new political landscape based on ethnic equality operates in Fiji. In fact, analysis of the Indo-Fijian votes in the 2014 Fiji election shows that Indo-Fijian voters who went to FLP in 2006 elections pledged their support for FijiFirst (72 per cent). According to Jon Fraenkel (2015, p. 41) ‘the collapse of support for the Fiji FLP – which had obtained 81% of the first-preference votes of the Fiji Indian community (and 39.2% of the national vote) at the previous elections in 2006 but which secured only 2.4% of the national vote in 2014 – gave an obvious indication of one key source of FijiFirst’s new support base’. Beside Indo-Fijian votes, Fraenkel (2015, p. 46) analyses in detail indigenous Fijian votes by provinces and in particular highlights the support for SODELPA in Fiji’s maritime provinces including Bua (51%), Kadavu (68%) Lau (75%) and Lomaiviti (58%). These provinces along with parts of the main islands Viti Levu and Vanua Levu traditionally supported candidates who advocated strong nationalist views. However, in 2014, except for Namosi (57%), the rest of the provinces supported FijiFirst. This shift in historical voting pattern may have been caused by the lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18 and the younger generation in both urban and rural areas accepting a non-ethnic political discourse.

According to Patrick Vakaoti, ‘for young people concerned about completing school and finding employment, FijiFirst offered an element of
stability and continuity, even if their track record of adherence to democratic principles was questionable. It could be argued that the reduction of the voting age to 18 years was a calculated decision, given the Bainimarama Government’s appeal for a new brand of politics and the many policies and forms of assistance that directly impacted on first-time voters’ (Vakaoti 2015, p. 163). Besides young voters, there were also other forces at play including the popularity of Bainimarama, who was seen as committed to a non-ethnic nation where social policies were enacted on the basis of need and open and accountable government instead of repacking discriminatory policies of past indigenous nationalists.

FijiFirst called for the separation of state and religion, a common name of ‘Fijian’ for all Fiji citizens, allocation of state resources based on community needs instead of race, fair agricultural leases, land bank, anti-corruption measures via the Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption, reducing violence against women, affordable housing, national employment scheme, infrastructure plan, agri-business diversification, reducing bureaucratic red tape, modernising the legal framework, encouraging women in the workplace, lowering youth unemployment, being tough on sacrilege and other criminal acts, free water, reasonable rates for electricity and gas, fee-free education, investment in higher education, subsidised milk for primary school students and equal citizenry.

The Social Democratic Liberal Party (SODELPA) led by Rewa chief Ro Teimumu Kepa, and supported by former Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase, criticised ‘Fijian’ as a common name, wanted Fiji to be a declared a Christian state, preferred changes to land lease money distribution for a larger share to indigenous chiefs, sought the return of the political role of the Great Council of Chiefs, the reinstatement of Fijian Affairs Board scholarships, a restructured Taukei Land Trust Board, the possibility of bringing back the 1997 Constitution, reforming the Republic of Fiji Military Forces, establishing Indigenous Fijian foreshore rights via a Qoliqoli legislation, the review of all decrees between 2006 and 2014, and the implementation social justice and affirmative action programs for indigenous Fijians, similar to what existed during the reign of the former SDL Government (2001 to 2006).

In the end SODELPA managed to muster only 28% of the vote as voters rejected its exclusionary political agenda and embraced FijiFirst. The new ethnoclass of FijiFirst consisting of progressive indigenous Fijians, Indo-Fijians and members of the military is the new Fijian elite which has started work on reducing ethnic polarisation with an aim to establish a broad-based national leadership, sensitive to the needs of the people of Fiji.
Conclusion

This paper has shown how Fiji has continued along a turbulent ethnocratic trajectory established during colonial times. Post-colonial Fiji emphasised an indigenous Fijian political hegemony and this led to tensions with Indo-Fijians, who pushed for political equality. These tensions have played out in political instability over several decades, until a new ethnoclass emerged through the FijiFirst political party, at least for now uniting progressive indigenous Fijians, Indo-Fijians and members of the military in a new multiracial Fijian elite.

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“Once upon a Time in … ethnocratic Australia”: migration, refugees, diversity and contested discourses of inclusion and exclusion

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Abstract
To what extent can Australia be analysed as an ‘ethnocracy’, a term usually reserved for ostensibly democratic societies in which an ethnic group or groups control the life opportunities of a more widely ethnically diverse population? Australia adopted its first refugee policy in 1977 having been forced to address the humanitarian claims of Asian and Middle Eastern refugees. Only a few years after abandoning the White Australia policy of three generations, the public discourse about refugees was framed by the ethnic origins of these groups (primarily Vietnamese and Lebanese). Over the decades a utopian light has come to be cast on the Indo Chinese as a success story in settlement, while the Middle Eastern peoples have been shaded as a settlement failure. Yet the counter narratives developed in the SBS television documentary series “Once Upon a Time...” demonstrate how ethnocratic framing can be challenged and more nuanced and analytical discourses introduced into the public sphere.

Introduction
Attitudes to asylum seekers and refugees among Australians are said to depend on two factors – first, that the government has control of Australia’s borders and therefore the only refugees who enter have been determined to meet Australia’s sense of what a ‘good settler’ needs to be; and second, that ‘good settlers’ integrate, contribute and do not cause disharmony (Eureka Research 1998). These narratives when applied to ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ contemporary refugees reflect deeply entrenched views formed initially at the end of White Australia in the mid-1970s, when the country for...
the first time took non-European immigrants in significant numbers. At that
time, and unexpectedly for policy makers, the Australian Government had to
revise its policies on refugees in the face of world-changing struggles
overseas, in Vietnam and in Lebanon, which transformed the sources of
immigrants and patterns of settlement from then on (Jupp 2007).

These two communities – Vietnamese (Lewins 1984) and Lebanese
(Humphrey 2007) – have featured in the debates about immigration for forty
years, and have oscillated in the public mind between good and bad. While
such a simplistic dichotomy may appear to have limited value in providing a
nuanced scholarly analysis of contemporary arguments over immigration, an
analysis of their situations and the ‘push-back’ against simplistic and
destructive stereotypes exposes the importance of resistance narratives in the
political culture of national identity which challenge the choices made by
political leaders in ‘narrating the nation’ to the public (Jupp, Nieuwenhuysen
&Dawson 2007).

The central argument of this article takes the demonstrated impact of
these 1970s refugees on public discourses about national stereotypes in the
first decade or so of their settlement. The article proposes that this ethnic
dichotomy, reversed in focus, now frames debates about contemporary
refugee arrivals. It is this deeply embedded cultural framing of people based
on ethnic origin that marks Australia as an ethnocratic political space (Pullan
& Baillie 2013).

The anti-Asian phobia captured by the intervention of the prominent
historian Prof Geoffrey Blainey in 1984 funnelled the rise of the push-back
against multiculturalism (Lewins 1987). This culminated in the first election
of the far-right Pauline Hanson, and what later became her ‘One Nation’
party, to Parliament in 1996 (Jakubowicz 1997). The social movements that
have currently formed around the contemporary politics of refugees carry
thematic impressions from the 1990s, given sharpened focus following the
July 2016 re-election of Hanson and three other One Nation Party senators.
Once more, the fierce arguments over border control illuminate the ways in
which ethnocratic power in Australia is expressed, imposed and resisted.

Across this period there were however important indications of ethnic
community resilience, reflecting wider settlement narratives. These were
explored in depth through two television documentary series focused on the
experience of the Vietnamese and the Lebanese migrants. Under the title
‘Once upon a time in…’, they explored otherwise obscured local suburb-level
narratives, and were broadcast in 2012 and 2014, at the height of political
debate over turning-back asylum seeker boats (Ngo 2011). This article
reflects on these experiences and on the documentaries themselves, as a
counterpoint to the wider public debate and its persistent ethnocratic
dimensions. The conclusions point to Australia’s ‘ethnocratic securitisation’, and to the alternative narratives that mobilised against it.

1. ‘Ethnocracy’ in an Australian city: Sydney and its ethnic spaces

In November 2016 the Australian Liberal National Coalition government’s Immigration Minister, Peter Dutton, launched a sustained attack on the 1976 decision of a former Liberal Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, to allow Arab Muslims fleeing from the civil war in Lebanon, to be given refuge in Australia (Hewson 2016). It was the children and grandchildren of these under-qualified refugees, he claimed, who had grown up to become homegrown terrorists and had travelled to the battle grounds of Syria and Iraq to join the thousands of ‘foreign fighters’ supporting the expansion and defence of the Islamic State (Anderson, S. 2016; Davidson 2016).

It is very rare for major figures from either side of the political divide to target particular ethnic groups en masse as a ‘failure’ or a ‘danger’ to Australia. It had been the typical rhetoric and ideology of early Australian nationalism in the late 19th century, especially against the Chinese (Rivett 1962). This form of ethnic framing was supposed to have been abandoned with the adoption of a multicultural perspective in the late 1970s. Even so, the last significant criticism of this type was proffered by the Immigration minister in the Howard coalition government, Kevin Andrews (Harrison 2007). In 2007 he voiced his belief that African refugees were failing to ‘integrate’ into Australian society, and their migration should therefore be halted (Jakubowicz 2010). Dutton took aim at this same group of African settlers in a second salvo when announcing an Inquiry (also in November 2016) by the Joint Parliamentary Migration Committee into youth crime in Melbourne, supposedly associated with African communities (Parliament of Australia 2016).

In the previous week the conservative News Ltd. media had run a series of stories pointing to the ‘failure’ of many post-refugee communities to integrate, arguing high rates of dependence on social security payments of various sorts meant they had failed in the job market (or never even tried) (drawing on Morton 2016). The named groups included people from the Middle East (especially Lebanon) and from Africa. Sky News commentator Andrew Bolt has summarised this narrative of threat on Facebook, where he demanded that “politicians acknowledge that culture counts – it must be a factor when deciding who we let into Australia” (Bolt 2016).

A description of these political moments serves to introduce and expand on the concept of ‘ethnocracy’, the theme of this special issue. ‘Ethnocracies’ as James Anderson has defined them, are societies (or even regions in societies) that are characterised by hierarchies of ethnic power.
Ethnocracy basically means ‘government or rule by an ethnic group’ or ethnos, and more precisely rule by a particular ethnos in a multi-ethnic situation where there is at least one other significant ethnic group. Ethnicity and group self-awareness can be specified in terms of religion, imputed ‘racial’ features, language, and/or a shared history and culture more broadly defined, components which vary and sometimes in problematic ways. (Anderson, J. 2016, p. 1).

These hierarchies find their realisation in the day-to-day constraints and barriers experienced by ethnic groups, despite claims in the political realm by the ruling elites that no such barriers exist, or if they do, they are produced by the subordinated ethnic cultures. This is a focus of the analysis that Oren Yiftachel used in developing the concept in relation to Israel and its divided cities (Yiftachel 2006).

Often these barriers (expressed in unemployment, drug or alcohol abuse, crime, violence and depressed local economies) become a focal point for discursive power, with narratives explaining identifiable ethnic disadvantage directed to highlight the supposed cultural failings of the groups concerned. The key dynamic of discursive power in ethnocracies lies in the constant reiteration that those who are marginalised have the opportunities to overcome their social position, but choose not to so for nefarious and manipulative reasons or are culturally incapable of doing so.

While Australia has a long history as an ‘outed’ ethnocracy in the period between 1901 and 1973 under the White Australia policy (Tavan 2004), by the mid-1970s governments of both political persuasions (Labor first and then the Liberal-National Party Coalition) had abandoned racial definitions of the national project, and withdrawn racial and religious barriers to immigration. In that context a new policy framework, ‘multiculturalism’, was developed and advanced, shaping Australia for a post-racialised place in a globalising world of highly mobile labour. ‘Multiculturalism’ has as its basic trope the condemnation of ethnocratic power, and the denial of its contemporary persistence in any serious way (Borowski 2000).

During the birth pains of that policy shift from White Australia in 1976, Australia was confronted with two major refugee crises – the end of the Indo-China wars with the exodus of tens of thousands of Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians, from countries then governed by military-backed Communist regimes; and the exodus prompted by widespread bloodshed caused by the primarily inter-faith and sectarian conflict between Christians and Muslim citizens of Lebanon. The popular narratives associated with the arrival, settlement and growth of these two communities appear to have set the discursive boundaries for current interpretation of ‘successful’ settlement and ‘failure’. In contemporary Australia the mainstream media tend to paint
the Indo-Chinese as the dream story of escape, renewal and success, while the Muslim (primarily Sunni) Lebanese are portrayed as criminals, terrorists and jihadists (Noble, Poynting & Collins 2000). This sense-making is so pervasive that it affects the response to and management of asylum seekers who take the unauthorised maritime route towards Australia (Tsiolkas 2013).

2. Settlement anxieties: ethnocracy revived?

The metropolis of Greater Sydney has a population of about 4 million people in 2016. Due to its topography and transport routes, and the location of migrant hostels in working class areas (where arriving refugees are often first housed), the geography of Sydney is somewhat ethnically segmented. While no suburbs are overwhelmingly identified with one ethnic group, many ethnic groups tend to be concentrated in locations associated with accessibility to key services, especially religious buildings, food stores, cheap housing and proximity to co-religionists or language speakers. In the case of Sydney, first generation Indo-Chinese settlement focussed on the Fairfield municipality and especially the suburb of Cabramatta, while Muslim Lebanese settled in the region of Canterbury Bankstown in suburbs such as Lakemba and Punchbowl.

The history of political and related media discourses about ethnic groups demonstrates a long slow ‘build’ of negative perceptions (Jakubowicz 1994). As Teun van Dijk has demonstrated in a strong body of work exploring the media construction of racial stereotypes (van Dijk 1991), media discourses play a central role in shaping public attitudes towards immigrants, and influence the shaping and delivery of policy and programs.

Until 1977 Australia did not have a refugee policy per se, but rather took in refugees as immigrants when sponsored by approved agencies. The decision to have a refugee policy, first made in 1977, thus sets the opening moves in the process of incorporating ethnocratic societal maps into policy over asylum seekers (Neumann 2015). In fact the recognition of its ethnocratic dimension (namely the use of state power to limit and define the possibilities of survival differently for different ethnic or religious groups) provides a necessary dimension for analyzing and ultimately modifying the policy positions that have arisen. These positions, while speaking in the name of humanity, actually serve to restrain those ethnic groups which are essentially escaping failed states or their own tenuous minority status under authoritarian regimes, from securing safety.

In his 1977 speech to Parliament the Federal Immigration Minister in a conservative government, Malcolm Mackellar, outlined Australia’s commitment to the UN Refugee principles, while describing the lack of structure for managing applications for people seeking refuge who did not have pre-existing family in Australia (Mackellar 1977). He argued there
needed to be a framework for those future crises that Australia would be sure to face as part of the international community, such as those described by a Senate Standing Committee the previous year (Senate 1976).

At that time the main game was definitely in Indo-China and the uncontrolled exodus of those fleeing the victory of national liberation forces. The Australian Government was being lobbied by an NGO coalition (the Indo Chinese Refugee Association ICRA) to accept some 4000 people from the refugee camps in Thailand, Malaysia and Hong Kong following the end (or loss by the West) of the Indo-China Wars. Under the direction of the Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, it negotiated a regional agreement that saw Australia accept some 10,000 Indo-Chinese refugees each year for the next decade, far beyond the lobby’s aspirations (Colebatch 2010).

Almost simultaneously, in the Middle East, Minister Mackellar was driven to act following threats to Australian migration posts in Lebanon charged with responding to the situation generated by the civil war. In particular, with the closure of the Australian post in Beirut, and withdrawal of personnel to Damascus and Cyprus, a more regularised system had to be put in place. In a very significant move, in 1977 the family-sponsored migration advocated by the Christian Lebanese community for its own people was extended to non-discriminatory humanitarian entry for Muslim Lebanese refugees (Higgins 2016).

These mid-1970s refugee ‘moments’ have entered the public discourses about Australian political culture in relation to global refuge-seeking: the Fraser Indo-Chinese decisions have been framed as a utopian bi-partisan regionally-supported intervention with very positive longer term outcomes, enabling the eventual settlement of many hundreds of thousands of people from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos (Vanstone 2004). As noted, after a first generation of difficulty and criminality (especially around the importation and sale of heroin from South East Asia and the embedding of crime triads), the Indo-Chinese are now seen for the most part as model minorities making significant contributions to Australia’s development, a utopian project (Jupp 2002).

The dystopic model is attributed to the Lebanese Muslim intake of the decade after 1976. While the majority of refugees from Lebanon at that time in fact comprised Christians (mainly Maronite Catholics and Eastern Orthodox, a significant minority were Muslim. The Muslims were mainly Sunni, though there were also some Shi'a and other minority sects. The Sunni came to be branded as dangerous failures (Sheehan 2006). Although in fact the majority of the community was mainly a settlement success, it has also thrown-up a series of socially-challenging segments. The earliest appearance was in the illicit drug scene, where Lebanese gangs fought for turf with
Vietnamese triads (Tabar, Noble & Poynting 2003). By the 1990s this had expanded into gang crimes of sexual violence, extortion, political support for anti-Western nation states (Iraq, Palestine, Libya), and soon thereafter into religiously-framed violence. These perspectives associated ‘people of Middle Eastern appearance’, as the police identified them, with deeply destabilising anxieties about the social order, exacerbated by media moral panics (Noble, Poynting & Collins 2000).

There is evidence then that the framing of the refugee narrative within the fears and practices of an ethnocratic state such as Australia, or its local variant in New South Wales and its capital city, Sydney, continues to provide the criteria for judging the quality of refugee integration in ways that see the culture of the arrivals as all-determining, and their relationship with the state or civil society as essentially irrelevant. The refugee policies that opened Australia to the presence of Indo-Chinese Catholics and Buddhists, and Muslim Arabs, were forged as the ground rules for interpreting these new waves were starting to emerge in public discourse and government action or inaction.

The narrative around Vietnamese was more destructive and ‘excited’ early on in their settlement. By 1984 anti-Asian rhetoric was rising, captured by Australian historian Geoffrey Blainey’s controversial claims that Asians were threatening Australian social cohesion due to their failure to integrate, heightened by competition for working class jobs in a declining economy (Jakubowicz n.d.). A decade later (1996) the regular reporting of Cabramatta as a centre for drugs and violent crime helped the independent nationalist politician Pauline Hanson secure her election to Federal Parliament on a platform that included her goal to stop Australia being ‘swamped by Asians’ (to be refreshed 20 years later when the swamping was by Muslims after her election to the Senate in 2016). Anti-Asian sentiment reached its height in the aftermath of the Coalition win at the 1996 election, with a survey carried out by the government in 1998 showing widespread antipathy to Asians, but almost no expression of concerns about Muslims or Lebanese (Eureka Research 1998).

By 2001 the situation had reversed. There were many reasons for this shift in public attitudes – though primarily it can be sourced to a re-direction of public excitement in the media to Lebanese Muslims. This Islamisation of fear was heightened by new waves of ‘boat people’ from Afghanistan and the Middle East (Marr & Wilkinson 2003), the 2001 September suicide and murder attacks on New York and Washington, and soon thereafter, the murder of Australian tourists by Indonesian Muslim jihadists in Bali (Jakubowicz 2007). While the refocus on Muslims paralleled the rise of trans-national Islamist ideologies, in Sydney it was intensified by a
constellation of factors – some specifically Lebanese, some more generally Sunni, some over-archingly Muslim (collecting Shi’a and others). In particular there were two arenas of criminal behaviour that became ‘Middle Eastern’ in media interpretation – a murder of an outsider in Punchbowl’s Telopea Street by members of a drug gang made-up mainly of young Australian Lebanese Muslims, and the kidnapping and rape of young women by men also understood to be from Muslim Middle Eastern backgrounds (Jakubowicz 2015).

3. Shifting the Narrative: The ‘Once upon a Time’ series…
The media stigmatisation and stereotyping of Vietnamese and Lebanese communities as criminal and dangerous, with their leaders as ineffectual, or uncaring about the consequences, was a matter of deep concern to the wider Lebanese and Vietnamese communities. The Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), a Federal government media organisation, had been concerned for some time about how they could enter the contested narrative, which was contributing to the marginalisation of communities that had first sought refuge in Australia some thirty-five years before. In 2011 SBS commissioned a series from the documentary producer Northern Pictures, to be named “Once Upon a Time in…” (OUATI…), covering the experience of the Vietnamese in Cabramatta and Lebanese (of all sects) in Punchbowl. Both documentaries were made at a time when there was increasing apprehension about ‘unauthorised maritime arrivals’ (refugees arriving by boat), and as the spread of Islamist terrorism was becoming a major concern of domestic security organisations. It is important to comprehend that while the documentaries were offering a historical narrative they were also providing a contemporary commentary on public debates.

The ‘dark’ ethnocracy that prevailed in the wider media and was apparent in the discourse of conservative politicians had played a role in marginalising communities towards whom the rhetoric and representation were directed. It also contributed to the more anti-social counter-narratives developed among the criminal gangs and then the sectarian groups that emerged through the socialisation of the second generation in Australian society.

The SBS Cabramatta series (OUATIC) began with some key structural ideas that provided a frame for a dramatic telling and development of a redemptive counter-narrative. In the case of the Vietnamese, the boundaries were set for an exploration of a community development trajectory among escapees from a civil war. They had no pre-existing community structures in Australia. Prior to 1976 during White Australia, there had been hardly any Vietnamese in Australia – usually only students under the Colombo Scheme. Some of the post-war arrivals were
unaccompanied teenagers, while many of the adults (outside those who were officials of the defeated South Vietnamese regime) were poorly educated and with no English skills. Some had arrived by boat after dangerous voyages through the South China Seas, others had been selected from camps in Thailand and Malaysia. After 1978, regional agreements with the government of Vietnam opened up opportunities for family reunions under orderly departure.

The Vietnamese SBS program theme had two elements – the first Asian community immigration on a significant scale since the 19th century occurred before the institutions of multiculturalism had been created and in the umbra of the long slow death of White Australia. In the chaotic and unplanned settlement zones ‘all was chaos, and the first thing to get organised was crime’ (Jakubowicz 2015). So the narrative had to recognise the criminal dimension, how it emerged, what its effect was on the cohesion of the community, and how it was able to grow in a period of widespread police corruption. It demonstrated what an ethnocracy actually felt like for those entrapped within it, as parents struggled to understand their children, and rescue them from the gang culture and heroin scene that spread quickly through the community. More particularly it demonstrated the abandonment of the community by the authorities and therefore the vulnerability of marginalised people to the depredations imposed on them by their own criminal edge.

The key interviewees included a gang member who recalled the attractions of the sub-cultural life of crime, money, sexual freedom and violence; his redemption was in evangelical Christianity. Another was a small-time drug dealer and user whose parents decided to make him go cold-turkey, and save him from the life on the street – both him and his parents participated in the program; they now have a successful small business together. Another was a Vietnamese man who had grown up in a Westernised family outside the area, and had returned to discover his roots, only to become deeply involved in the politics of redemption. He became a member of the local Council, an active advocate for change and the rights of Vietnamese Australian citizens to peaceful and enriching lives. Others interviewed included Anglo-Australian business people, police, and academics.

The last episode tracked the period of redemption, highlighted by the counter-narrative advanced by Asian members of the State parliament in conjunction with cross-ethnic community leaders from Cabramatta. An Upper House Inquiry led by a Chinese Australian MP from the area, into the policing of Cabramatta revealed serious corruption. It foregrounded the belief of the police that corralling the heroin scene in Cabramatta made it easier to
monitor, while they had little empathy for the primary victims, local Vietnamese Australians, or those caught up in inter-gang violence.

In moving to pre-empt the report of the Inquiry, the State Labor Government finally acted in what they had always taken for granted as a safe Labor constituency, undertaking mass arrests of dealers, introducing area-based and coordinated delivery of State services, and a strongly improved drug rehabilitation program. The final scenes of episode 3 of OUATIC showed the outcomes for a number of families – a son rescued from heroin through tough love, the streets cleared of dealers and addicts, and a prosperity returned to the town centre. In 2016 Cabramatta is on the urban culinary tour map of Sydney, and a centre for the expression of a syncretic and vibrant Australia-Vietnamese culture. Generation 3 are now fully integrated into the wider life of Sydney, with a high number of graduates in the professions. The Vietnamese story is now being hailed as a success (Thomas 2015), with the struggle and the political barriers that had to be overcome unremarked in the narratives that portray the contemporary ethnic scene in Sydney.

The response to the broadcast of the Cabramatta series was very positive. While some viewers thought the disappearance of dealers from the town was not as total as might have been suggested, and indeed the criminal edge of the Vietnamese community continues, the majority commented that for the first time it allowed a narrative from within the community to test and challenge the stereotypes imposed over decades. The series unwrapped how ethnocracy can come to overwhelm democracy, and also how local struggles can help to recompose the wider narrative, and thereby move the pendulum more generally towards the democratic centre. Cabramatta remains a safe Labor Party State seat, though concerted attempts by Liberal and now independent politician Dai Le, who arrived as a child after a dangerous sea journey, have shown that the old order has changed.

The second series, based on Punchbowl, complicates the idea of ethnocracy. While the Vietnamese arrived in 1975/6 to a space with no previous Vietnamese settlement, after the end of formal White Australia but before formal multiculturalism, there had been Arab Settlers from the Middle East and the Syrian/Lebanese region of the Ottoman Empire since the mid-19th century. Many had started as travelling pedlars moving through rural areas carrying city goods, and then created stores in rural towns. Later their families had become business people and professionals (such as Dame Professor Marie Bashir, former Governor of New South Wales, whose husband Nicholas Shehadie had been a rugby union international, Lord Mayor of Sydney, and chair of SBS in the 1980s). This community was primarily Christian – usually Maronite Catholic, Melkite (Greek Catholic), or eastern Orthodox. It was really only in the 1960s that the first Muslims
arrived, and then large numbers came during the civil war after 1976. A long established community that had been apparently well integrated was confronted with the trauma of war and displacement, rapidly changing its class and sectarian composition.

Once Upon a Time in Punchbowl (OUATIP) released in 2014, tracked the longer trajectory of the Lebanese population in one suburb through the arrival in 1976 and 1977 of thousands of primarily Muslim refugees from the civil war. The original pressure for Australia to open its migration channels to Lebanese refugees came from the established Christian Lebanese communities, who feared for the well-being of their co-religionists being attacked by various Muslim militias, of both Sunni and Shi’a identities.

As the Muslim communities arrived they found an environment where there were few Lebanese Muslims, the overwhelming Lebanese Arabic community being the Christian often Francophile groups that had been arriving for decades, despite a pre-War break at the height of White Australia (Monsour 2006). As with the Vietnamese, whose time of arrival fairly much paralleled their own, among the Lebanese there were many families and individuals deeply scarred by the conflict, and lacking key cultural capital in relation to language and skills suitable for an advanced capitalist economy. On the edges here too there were people with criminal pasts including in the drug trade in the Bekar valley of Lebanon, who sought out opportunities to continue their illicit lives.

The series mapped out the key set pieces, points at which the tensions within and between the Lebanese communities began to be displayed. Essentially the first decade or so of settlement was characterized by orientation, job-seeking and family formation. The Christian communities were uncomfortable with what many of them saw as ‘the enemy’ arriving unexpectedly, despite their leaders’ warnings to the Fraser Liberal government about the dangers of importing these conflicts. The Immigration Department, new to the idea of non-European refugee arrivals not mediated by Australian agencies, noted that many of the refugees, though desperate to leave, were not as skilled as previous refugee arrivals from Europe. These had included the Holocaust survivors and Displaced persons after the Second World War, or from Hungary in the 1950s or Czechoslovakia in the 1960s (Neumann 2015).

The series was not designed to accept uncritically these negative narratives about the Lebanese, though at the same time it did not try to ignore many of the crisis points that marked the rising negative impact of the Lebanese settlement story on Australian public opinion and the mainstream media. The narrative arc began with the moment of arrival and followed the communities (both Christian and Muslim) as they tried to come to terms with
each other in a new location, building as they went networks of influence and power to bolster their survival. It took as its theme the coda “In a society of Honour and Shame, what happens when Honour turns toxic?”.

The key events each demonstrate (on reflection) dimensions of ethnocratic power and its impact on an often-reeling community. In 1993, an Arabic community picnic day was terrorized as a small altercation in a Tempe (an inner city suburb of Sydney) park descended into a near riot, sparked by the arrival and intervention of mounted police and dogs. This presentation of the Arabic community (not identified by religion) as potentially violent and unruly, did not reflect the realities of life in their neighbourhoods. However it did follow soon after the first questioning of the national loyalty of Arabs, a focal point of media attention during the first Gulf War (1990-1991) when camera crews toured the streets of Arab Sydney interrogating passers-by on their allegiances.

However the ‘descent’ in the public mind began in earnest in the late 1990s, in part because of conflicts between Lebanese gangs and those from Vietnamese backgrounds in Cabramatta, and more widely in Bankstown, a key suburb in western Sydney. In 1998 a drug gang in Telopea Street, Punchbowl was raided by police after months of complaints from the public and inter-group violence. The murder of Edward Lee, a 14 year old Korean Australian student, by gang members, and the arrest of others for dealing turned a spotlight on gang life in the West, resulting in a police focus on criminals of “Middle Eastern Appearance”, and the creation of the Middle Eastern Crime Squad (MECS). From 2000 the public narrative became overwhelmed by negative imagery, that ‘bleeds’ across to touch everyone of Lebanese background and Muslim faith. A series of gang rapes sensationalized the stereotypes even more vividly, compounded by the Imam of the Lakemba Mosque Sheikh Hillaly using overtly demeaning language to discuss the behaviour of women. The series of bombings that took place in New York and Washington, Bali and London, claiming many lives, refocused public attention on something that was supposedly uniquely Islamic in form and practice.

The 2005 Cronulla riot, a confrontation between 5000 non-Muslims and a few Muslims arising from months of hostility over the Lebanese presence at this city ocean beach suburb (Jakubowicz 2009), intensified the relevance of ethno-political frames of reference. The conflicts said to exist between Muslim and non-Muslim communities expressed the fragmenting of stalemates that had been part of the ethnocratic structuring of multicultural Sydney. Usefully, the conceptual frame offered by ethnocratic theory can be appropriated, both to critique alleged Muslim behaviours, and to critique those who are seen as the oppressors of Muslim rights in Australia. From
both perspectives, ethnocracy is exposed as a set of power relationships, enacted in particular interchanges. From this perspective the original riot in Cronulla in 2005 can be seen as a racialised claim by the White defenders of Cronulla beach to exclude those (the ‘Lebs’) whom they detest and distrust. The return to Maroubra (another seaside suburb in the south-east of Sydney) and the assaults on local residents by the remnants of the Telopea Street gang and another gang, the Punchbowl Park boys, marks an attempt, albeit violent, to return to the enemy’s space and re-appropriate it by assaulting this enemy’s feelings of White safety.

For a multicultural society such readings are deeply disturbing. Multicultural policy claims that inter-group relations occur on a democratic and egalitarian playing field. The behaviour in Cronulla in 2005 suggested the opposite (Jakubowicz 2007). In the final episode of the documentary (OUATIP), the people are redeemed, though not freed, through the contribution of the new generation exemplified in the family of Jihad Dib. The family was the epitome of success, with Jihad a highly successful and transformative high school teacher, later to become the first Muslim member of the Legislative Assembly in the NSW Parliament.

While both series looked-for and highlighted hopes for the future in the rebuilding of communities, in the public debate of the mid-2010s redemption has only been allowed to the Vietnamese. The uproar occasioned by the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Peter Dutton’s comments about the Lebanese arrivals producing terrorist offspring, reveals no sense among those who share his perspective (as in the journalist Andrew Bolt) that they have been redeemed. The documentaries attest to the main argument of this paper, that narratives about the place of minorities in Australia society reveal how much the policy discourse of multiculturalism actually reflects serious struggles for and against ethnocratic power. These struggles, resurfacing in a particularly vituperative form after the election of Donald Trump as President of the USA in November 2016, have been emboldened thereby on the side of those advancing the White ethnocracy. Immigration especially of refugees has become an increasingly central defining block of contemporary politics, with an anti-Immigration party One Nation likely to be influential in the (Australian) Federal Senate for some time.

4. ‘Unauthorised’ arrival: a new ethnocratic narrative
The election of the conservative Howard Liberal-National Party Coalition government in 1996 moved the political discourse on refugee settlement back towards the more Anglo-centric and nationalistic view of Australia, and away from the more multicultural global perspective; indeed this popular fear of any ‘opening to Asia’ drove much of the support for the conservatives (Betts
2008; Gordon & Topsfield 2006). That moment was marked by the first election of right-wing nationalist Pauline Hanson as a break-away from Howard’s party. Her political performance since that time has provided a simple but portentous guide to the strength of white nationalist ideology both electorally and discursively (Jakubowicz 1997).

The pivotal moment occurred in 2001, when under orders from Prime Minister John Howard, Australian armed forces turned away a container ship, the ‘Tampa’ (Tsiolkas 2013). The ship, through humanitarian motives, had rescued a contingent of asylum seekers from a leaking boat, and sought to deliver them to the safety of the nearest Australian port. Instead they were sent to Nauru Island, an independent liege state of Australia’s in the Pacific (Marr & Wilkinson 2003).

‘Tampa’ has been indissolubly linked in the public mind with the attacks of 9/11 in the USA, and the supposed subterfuge by other asylum seekers in Western Australian waters at around that time in what became known as ‘the children overboard’ events of 2001. Drawing these events together conservative political forces were able to apply a narrative of manipulative dissimulation to asylum seekers, and naive entrapment to their supporters (Andrews 2007).

The Government elaborated its response to the asylum seekers question through a range of stratagems. Most importantly it created a new ‘tragic couplet’, attaching the adjective ‘illegal’ to the noun ‘refugee’. In the UN Convention seeking asylum or seeking to be a refugee cannot as such be defined as a criminal act (Clack 2000). Prior to 2001, asylum seekers were deemed to be unlawful entrants to Australia, whose successful claim for asylum would make them ‘lawful’. By changing the words used, it became presented as illegal to even enter Australia without pre-arranged authorisation, so turning back boats and so on could be spoken of as lawful, as it purported to prevent an illegal act taking place (Editorial 2001). Legislation was passed to protect any Australian official participating in the expulsion of asylum seekers from any legal consequence. In 2001 the Coalition government also removed the whole coastal area of Australia from the migration zone, meaning that even if an entrant landed on the coast they were not technically ‘in Australia’ and therefore entitled to claim asylum and be heard (Jupp 2007). In 2013 the whole country was excised from the migration zone by the Labor government (Brown 2016).

The control narrative portrayed the arrival by boats as explicitly and equally criminal both for the seeker and the smuggler, and dangerous to the social order of Australia; the smugglers were portrayed as devious and caring only for profit, rendering them hard to stop. Technically though if an asylum seeker made it into Australia they could then activate the UN Convention
provisions (as many do who arrive on other temporary visas by plane, and then seek asylum); hence, the increasingly extensive excisions of the land mass from its own migration zone. Secondly the asylum seekers were said to be a privileged group who had the resources to make the trip to Indonesia and then pay the smugglers; it was their wealth rather than their need that drove them, and they were really economic immigrants falsely declaring a refugee status. Even where they were ‘real refugees’, their wealth was said to allow them to leap-frog the thousands without resources but with equal or greater need languishing in camps overseas, or trapped in places of danger. By doing this they were seen to be thwarting the goal of UNHCR to regularise and prioritise the flow of refugees to accepting host countries such as Australia (Sampson 2015).

So the policy became to turn back boats that were intercepted in order to ensure the asylum seekers could not land in Australia, intervene where possible in Indonesia to ensure boats did not leave, and promise that no one taking the ‘boat’ option would ever settle in Australia, and would languish in holding camps off shore for so long as it took for them to both prove their refugee claims, and find some country willing to take them – potentially for ever (Brown & Missbach 2016).

From 2001 to 2009, few boats attempted the crossing while those asylum seekers held on Manus Island and Nauru were slowly processed, and fed into Australia, NZ and some of the Nordic countries. Then in 2009 the Labor government changed the policy, allowing on-shore processing of refugee applications. This encouraged some 50,000 people to cross by sea to Australia in four years, well over a thousand dying at sea, and causing an overwhelming of the country’s compassion and protective capacity. No ‘balanced’ approach could gain support from either the Opposition Liberal-National Party Coalition (supporting strong defence) or the Greens (supporting humanitarian acceptance), and the government was frozen, until it re-adopted the turn back and off-shore processing line from the Opposition. The memory of this debacle was one of the key elements in the election of the conservative coalition in 2013, and its re-election in July 2016. While the detail has changed, effectively the key components remain – turn back the boats, no entry ever to Australia, and indefinite punitive detention offshore unless re-settlement somewhere that is not Australia can be found.

It should also be recognised that Australia takes about 13,000 UNHCR identified refugees each year, who have been processed outside the country. During the Syrian refugee crisis, the Government agreed to take an additional 12,000 refugees from the conflict, specifying those from minority ethnic groups unlikely to be able to return (that is, not the Sunni Muslims whose significant numbers will ultimately be part of any power-sharing
resolution in Syria). In September 2016 the Government announced an increase in the refugee intake, drawn mainly from camps in Central America (overwhelmingly Christian), who would be traded for processed refugees held offshore on Manus Island and Nauru. In November 2016 the government announced it had secured the agreement of the US Obama presidency to resettle some of the Nauru/Manus refugees: at the time of writing there was no clarity as to whether the administration of President-elect Trump would honour the agreement. (McGuirk 2016).

The debate on refugees remains one sharply coloured by the specific conditions of Australian political history. It is unlikely that the policy on asylum seekers arriving by sea would have the same parameters, if the refugees were of the same of similar cultural and ethnic origins as the majority of Australian society. Both Andrew Bolt and Pauline Hanson, now joined as exemplary advocates of an ethnocratic hierarchy in Australia, have made their views on refugees clear – it is the cultural background of the refugees that is the problem, not merely their method of seeking refuge.

5. Deserving and undeserving: asylum seekers and the quality of mercy

If the argument that ethnocratic hierarchy frames the assessment of how the acceptance of refugees retains its place in Australian global human rights practice, then we would expect two elements to be evident as is the case with the Bolt/Hanson comments identified above. The first relates to process, that is, that the refugees’ avenues to arrival have failed to meet security and selection criteria relating to potential for successful settlement. The second focuses on the lack of cultural capacity of the asylum seekers to adapt to and survive within Australian society.

The Vietnamese/Lebanese ideal-types that have come to permeate the popular imaginary as polar opposites continue to be potent frames for discursive engagement. In the struggle between those social movements that assert an ethnocratic world view, and those which resist it, deserving and undeserving representations of asylum seekers are heavily linked to the assumed narratives of success and failure.

The supporters of the government position, and indeed those who want the government to become even more intent on the creation of barriers to refugee arrivals, focus on people from Muslim countries and Africa. Here they recount the consequences of Arab Muslim immigration in terms of crime, terrorism and social dislocation among their descendants. They make scarce mention of any other refugees, in particular avoiding issues of criminality and violence elsewhere, or the overwhelming majority who are law-abiding ‘model’ citizens.
Opponents of the government position focus on the social damage done to the asylum-seekers under current detention regimes, concentrating on the deserving refugees and their contribution to Australian society. Often they draw on the context of the government’s acceptance of Indo-Chinese refugees in the late 1970s, and their descendants’ financial and community success, to present refugees in general as worthy contributors to Australian society. These advocates propose that the Government release the asylum seekers from indefinite detention and permit them to apply to settle in Australia.

**Conclusion: resisting ethnocratic power through building counter-narratives of resilience**

Australia has experienced the full range of being both colony and imperial centre, Indigenous homeland and settler society. It is the North in the South, with the implications of that coming to bear in the current refugee crisis. The two narratives of national solidarity, the one singular, White and Anglo-Christian, the other multiple, rainbow and polyfaith, have never before confronted each other so dramatically and with such complex mis-alignments. The ethnocratic reality of hierarchical difference sits uncomfortably with the multicultural ideology of equality and opportunity.

In attacking the Fraser Government’s decision to permit the settlement of Lebanese-Muslim refugees in Australia, Peter Dutton, as Immigration Minister, was advocating ethno-religious selectivity if not outright discrimination in Australian migration policy. In later comment, he signalled his Department was reviewing policies, and that ‘if we feel there are problems with particular cohorts, particular nationalities, particular people who might not be integrating well and not contributing well, then there are many other worthy recipients’; in this context he revealed the Department was already discriminating in favour of Christians fleeing the conflict in Syria (Davidson 2016). Further, by ethnicising terror crime as inter-generational, the Minister was also attacking multiculturalism. Here, Dutton directly linked terrorism to ethno-religious identity, not just that of the accused terrorists but also that of their grandparents. As such he was seeking to overturn the liberal civic precept of multiculturalism, that all citizens should be judged by their actions not by their ethnicity. This exploitation of ethnic difference for political gain is part of complex dynamic of inclusion, exclusion, integration and isolation in Australia.

The vast majority of those who are the descendants of the refugees of the 1970s today demand to be included as part of the Australian national narrative, yet face a media pack and political elite who want the right to insult and offend them whenever they wish. While the overarching term used by policy developers remains the idea of social cohesion (Markus 2015), that is,
being aware of how much opportunity for the individual depends on the survival of the whole, the edges between different perceptions are becoming sharper as fear and distrust rise, and trust and acceptance decline.

As clearly borne-out in its recent history, Australian political culture rewards ethnocratic assertion. Politicians can sometimes mobilise ‘their’ ethnic bloc, and seek to use the state to consolidate an ethnocratic power base. Politicians, and sensationalising media outlets, do so today as an ostensibly ‘reasonable’ reaction to reciprocal ethno-political mobilisation via global insurgencies and would-be terror organisations. Ethnic mobilisation, both from ‘above’ and ‘below’, becomes a lightning rod for discontent, repressing other social conflicts, whether over gender or class for instance. In this way, ethnocratic politics can indeed become a ‘carnival of reaction’ as flagged in the Introduction to this Special Issue, a carnival where the state is the prime orchestrator. Arguably, this ostensibly reciprocal logic of ethnic exclusion, presented as a reasonable and fair state strategy, offers a key normative foundation for what in Australia and elsewhere has become an unapologetic and explicit assertion of the right to discriminate against ethnic ‘others’. In this context we can conceptualise a form of ‘ethnocratic securitisation’, dependent on its threatening ‘other’ for ideological legitimacy.

Yet, still, there is no total collapse into ethnocratic politics, rather a heightened public engagement and polarisation. In the Australian context, as discussed in this article, as ethnocratic underpinnings are revealed, the anti-ethnocratic and humanitarian response can sharpen. As reflected in the TV documentaries discussed in this article, there can be a reassertion of the energy and creativity that comes from the interaction of difference, the excitement of innovation and the productivity of engagement. Australia in this respect balances on the cusp between democratic pluralism and authoritarian closure. For social scientists the extent to which outcomes can be affected by human choices and intentions remains difficult to determine. Is it more likely that fear and repulsion of the ‘other’ will surface above acceptance and inclusion? Will the ‘other’ themselves become be no less fearful and inward looking? While it is possible to resolve these issues so that the society finds greater cohesion, moving in this way requires a scope and intent of purpose by both government and civil society. Yet both the state and the civil world are constantly threatened by forces that would have isolation and exclusion as the preferred outcomes. In the turmoil of the moment it is sometimes difficult to recognise what indeed is taking place at this strategic level.

However the central question, of how open and in which ways Australia will chart a path of democratic pluralism in relation to population-building and creative social and cultural capital, still remains an unresolved
and even unspoken challenge. While policy makers focus on the short term, massive global population displacements are persistent and likely to be further exacerbated by the impact of climate change both in the global South, among Australia’s Pacific neighbours, and more widely. While the government worries at the business opportunities it might inadvertently offer to regional people smugglers, nativist politics blossoms on the back of prejudice, religious intolerance, and populist demagoguery. If the goal is a humane, manageable, economically productive population policy in which global responsibilities and humane aspirations are firmly embedded, the policy debate has a long way to go.

The ethnocratic practices and structures of Australian society have been well documented, if not often called-out in quite the manner pursued in this article. Indeed the emphasis of ethnocratic theory on violent confrontation and the maintenance of order through the imposition of a biased social order by the state, would sit uncomfortably with most expositions of Australian multiculturalism. Yet recognition of an ethnocratic flavour to Australian discussions of cultural diversity, difference, rights and practices, might allow a cleaner and less emotionally-invested conversation about moving towards greater equality. Where the ethnic power of the elites remains manifest in asylum policy it needs to be challenged. A widening of the opportunities is needed, beyond ethnic hierarchy, to broaden participation in the institutions of power. This would serve the democracy of the nation well, and arrive at more humane and unbiased outcomes in public policy.

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Afghanistan: Ethnocratic Militarism

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Abstract
Afghanistan has been a key site of state-building, founded on pragmatic ethno-military consociationalism. The 2001 invasion and subsequent occupation consolidated ethnicity as a political force in Afghanistan. Inter-ethnic elite bargaining instituted an ethnocratic oligarchy, grounded in militarism. Against this, everyday politics in Afghanistan has centred on social clientelism, founded on kinship networks rather than ethnicity. At the same time, formal political structures, expressed in the 2004 Constitution, are grounded in Islam and nationalist statehood, not ethnicity. Sharp disjunctures exist between ethnic elites and would-be constituents, creating dealignment and political fluidity. The paper addresses this question of ethnicity in the socio-political life of Afghanistan from an historical perspective into the present, through the lens of imperialism and militarism. On this basis the paper debates contending foundations for political solidarity and identification in the country, focusing on the 2004 Constitution, asking which would most likely secure legitimacy and justice.

Introduction
Afghanistan is an illustrative case of all the three aspects of ethnocracy identified in the opening article to this Special issue. First, the country is an artefact of imperial rival, initially as a buffer between British and Russian spheres of influence, and latterly as a stake in the Cold War US-Soviet rivalry. It became a UN-US protectorate in 2001, and since 2014 has become autonomous, but remains a site of political intervention for regional powers. Second, it is currently an ostensibly post-conflict society, where the political process centres on overcoming insurgency and reconciling former rivals. Under the 2004 Constitution inter-ethnic conflict is subsumed in an effort at establishing multi-ethnic political solidarity through religion and nationalism (see Anderson, 2013; Yiftachel, 2006). In practice though, Afghanistan’s post-conflict politics has strong consociational aspects, centring on informal structures of ethno-military parity. Third, the politics of the Afghanistan is grounded in forms of Islamic religious solidarity. All law is to be consistent with Islam, and the political institutions are established in the name of religion, with provision for different sects and for non-Islamic faiths.
Recent political dynamics in Afghanistan illustrate the centrality of concepts of ethnocracy to the ‘state building’ efforts of the imperial powers and their allies. The identity of the Afghan state has historically centred on an interactions between regional or tribal solidarity, nationalism and Islam, rather than ethnicity per se. This article discusses the interaction between these forms of solidarity through the lens of imperialism and militarism in Afghan history. It offers a brief history of ethno-national politics in Afghanistan, and discussion of socio-political solidarity centred on clientelism and kinship networks in the context of decades of military conflict. It outlines the ethnicisation of elite politics through the UN-US invasion and occupation, as the military alliance produced a model of inter-ethnic power-sharing in the workings of the Afghan state. Here informal elite consociationalism constituted ethnicity as a political force. The article assesses these pressures in the context of a would-be pluralist state, as defined by the 2004 Afghan Constitution. It argues the Constitution, and wider social pressures, offer possibilities for ethno-political de-alignment, enabling political contention within a broadly nationalist and Islamic political field.

Since the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 by the former Soviet Union the concept of ethnicity has become a key issue of discussion for academic researchers, social commentators, journalists and politicians (Tomsen 2011 for instance). In the 1980s and 90s the international community was convinced that ethnicity had and would have a prominent role in the future of Afghanistan. Therefore, different countries sent their foreign aid to different warlords as (self-appointed) representatives of different ethnic groups. Neighbouring countries also supported different rival ethnic groups, based on a real or imagined connection with them. Iran supported mainly Hazaras, based on their religious connection, and the Tajiks because of their language and cultural connection. Pakistan supported Pashtun groups because of their shared Pashtun heritage. Warlords themselves, seeing no other basis for their legitimacy, would assert ethnic leadership to convince foreign donors they had a broad constituency within Afghanistan.

The 2001 invasion, authorized by the UN Security Council, produced a transitional administration formally under the aegis of the UN. The state was, from the outset, centred on regulating ethnic politics. Subsequently the political system has institutionalized ethnic hegemony and division though an informal system of power-sharing. This has reflected the political priority of sustaining a government of national unity in the face of continued Taliban insurgency. Against this political background the article examines the importance of in the socio-political life of Afghanistan,
historically, and into the present. The paper argues that the recent ethnicisation of politics in Afghanistan is the product of warlordism, as militia leaders sought to secure a place for themselves in the future of the country. Neighboring countries, with their international administrators and aid donors, also bear considerable responsibility for the ensuing ethnopolitical divisions. Given this context the paper discusses the contending foundations for political solidarity and identification in the country, asking which would most likely secure legitimacy and justice.

**Afghanistan and Empire**

Whilst never colonised, Afghanistan is an artefact of imperial rivalry. This is critical factor in understanding its prospects. In the first instance, imperial power defined its territory. With the British failure to incorporate Afghanistan (by invasion), the Eastern border of Afghanistan defined the limit of the British empire in the nineteenth century. British efforts focused on delimiting the state through territorial acquisition. The eventual loss of eastern territory from Afghanistan to British India was defined in a one-page document in 1893 that established the ‘Durand line’. The line was established in the aftermath of the second Anglo-Afghan war and precipitated a third war and ongoing conflicts until 1919. The legitimacy of the border remains in dispute, as being the product of colonial coercion, as denying Afghanistan economic viability, and as dividing Pashtun lands (Biswas 2013).

The nineteenth century British-Russian rivalry, and the ‘great game’ that led to the Durand line were mirrored in the 1970s and 80s with the Pakistan-US alliance against the Soviet backed Afghan government. A Soviet military guarantee for the Afghan government in 1978 enabled the US to lure the Soviets to ‘into the Afghan trap’, to ‘give the USSR its Vietnam war’ (as Brzezinski, President Carter National Security Advisor put it; see Gibbs 2000). The fact that the effect of this was to create a decade-long civil war, in which the US would be arming warlords and Islamists was not a concern, as the principal aim was to give the USSR a bloody nose (which it did). Installing the warlords was a collateral effect.

The consequences were later visited on the US with the formation of Al Qaeda and its attacks on the US from the late 1990s. The assumption that foreign policy manipulations could only have consequences for the people living in those contexts was rudely shattered. The ensuing War on Terror very clearly demonstrated the extent to which the US and its allies were threatened by Al Qaeda insurgency. At the time the US President described the global insurgency as posing an ‘asymmetrical’ threat, requiring new powers and doctrines for the dominant powers. Since 2001 the US has claimed it is engaged in legitimate preventative actions to forestall terrorist
action, legitimized by the UN Security Council (Goodman 2013). These efforts to rewrite the rules of global military engagement have their origins in the Afghan war against the Soviet Union. The UN-sanctioned goal of rooting-out governments hosting Al Qaeda or groups deemed to be its associates, led to more-than decade long UN-backed occupation of Afghanistan. This brought the US and its allies into new state-building roles in the country. Afghanistan’s political status post-2001 hinged on the UN, and through it the US. The country remains as a quasi-protectorate, and has become heavily internationalized with its governance read as a test of US (and UN) capacity as much as Afghan capacity.

So, again, the future of Afghanistan sits at the centre of global empire – its future is circumscribed by external forces, the UN, the US, and its regional allies. Not least among these is Pakistan, which found itself rehabilitated as a US partner in the war on the Taliban; concerns about military dictatorship and nuclear proliferation were set aside, and even the ongoing collaboration between elements of the Pakistani state and the Taliban was overlooked. In the process, a neighbouring country that has a strong interest in a weakened Afghan state, has gained an important role in influencing the future of the country (Fair and Gregory 2013; Maley 2016). Pakistan, in fact, may exercise a veto power on state stability in Afghanistan.

Since 2005 these issues have been brought into sharp focus with the growing power of Taliban, which has repositioned itself as a national liberation movement at war with the occupying forces, and with a corrupted puppet administration (Kamel 2015). Reflecting this, the Afghan government opened negotiations with the Taliban for the transition to US withdrawal in 2014. A key element of this was recognition of de facto Taliban control over large segments of the country. Not surprisingly the Taliban has sought to strengthen its hand by alternating between political violence and negotiations, and this alternation has persisted since 2014 US withdrawal, partly driven by external interests (Maley 2016).

A Brief Ethno-political History

As a crossroad between different civilisations connecting East, South, West and Central Asia, the Afghan region has been a melting pot of many ethnic groups who came to the country as invaders or settlers during the pre-modern era. These groups included Aryans, Persians, Arabs, Turkish-speaking people from central Asia, people from Mongolia, the Xinjiang region of western China and ancient Macedonia. According to archaeological discoveries in the North and South of the country, in about 1500 B.C., the Aryans invaded the land, which is known today as Afghanistan. In the mid-500's B.C., Persians invaded northern Afghanistan, a region then called
Bactria. The Persians ruled Bactria until about 330 B.C., when the Greeks and Macedonians led by Alexander the Great conquered the region and much of the rest of Afghanistan. In about 246 B.C, the Bactrians formed a kingdom that lasted about 150 years, until the Kushans of central Asia seized the whole region (Holt 2012). Sasanians from Persia invaded Afghanistan in the 200 A.D., and White Huns from central Asia defeated the Kushans and Sasanians in the A.D. 400's.

The region became part of the Arab Muslim world in the late 600s, with the Muslim dynasties of Tahirid, Samanid, and Saffarid to the 900's. Turkic-speaking peoples from eastern Persia and central Asia ruled Afghanistan from about 900 to 1200, and Afghanistan was conquered by Mongols, led by Genghis Khan in the 1200's and by Timur, also called Tamerlane, in the 1300's. Safavids from Persia and Mughals from India struggled for control of Afghanistan from the mid-1500's to the early 1700's. By the Eighteenth Century the country had become a site of geopolitical tension between Persia and India, shaping migration flows, settlement patterns and affiliations.

Modern Afghanistan emerged under the Persian Empire in the mid Eighteenth Century, with Kabul as its capital from 1775. Internal conflict between the ruling tribal elites culminated in the rise of Dost Muhammad Khan, a tribal leader, who gained control as Amir (prince) in 1826. Dost Muhammad's descendants then ruled the country for the next 150 years (Axworthy 2009; Barfield 2010).

During the nineteenth century, Afghanistan became a competing ground for geopolitical influence between the British and Russian Empires (Fremont-Barnes 2014). Russia invaded large parts of Central Asia, including the northern parts of Afghanistan, seeking access to the Indian ocean (Tripodi 2010). Trying to insulate colonial India, British troops invaded Afghanistan in 1839, and were defeated, withdrawing in 1842. With Russian advances into Central Asia, the Afghan Amir signed a friendship treaty with the Russians, precipitating a second British invasion in 1878. Afghanistan became a protectorate of the British empire in 1880 under a treaty assigning control of the country’s external relations to the British, and later, in 1893 the Amir recognized the ‘Durand Line’ which consigned half of the country’s territory, and half of its Pashtun population, to British India, and rendered Afghanistan landlocked. The Durand Line has been contested by successive Afghan governments, and underpins ongoing hostility with the Pakistan state that inherited the Pashtun territory (Balaachandar 2010).

In the early Twentieth Century Afghanistan embarked on its own national development program. In 1919 the Amir precipitated the third Anglo-Afghan war, which ended Afghanistan’s protectorate status, allowing
the country to become fully independent. The constitution was drawn up in 1923, based on the French model, and the Amir (now King Amanullah Khan), sought to Westernise the country, including adopting a European dress code. The Islamic authorities opposed the new dispensation, and in 1929 overthrew the King with the help of the army (and supported by the British) (Hiro 1994). Within the year a new King was installed, Nadir Shah, and the country was renamed the ‘Islamic state of Afghanistan’. The King was assassinated in 1933 and his son, Zahir Shah, ruled until 1973.

In this forty years of political stability, 1933-73, Afghanistan experienced some degree of modernization, although the country remained one of the world’s least developed. The King introduced a constitutional monarchy under the 1964 constitution with free elections, allowed the formation of elected governments under the monarchy. During World War II Afghanistan was neutral, and in the Cold War it was closely aligned with the Soviet Union. At the same time the United States developed close military ties with Pakistan.

In 1973 a former Prime Minister, Daoud Khan, staged a successful coup against Zahir Shah, installing a republican administration while the King was in Italy (remarkably, the King was to return to the country to legitimize the transition of power after the US invasion in 2002, and died in 2007). Daoud Khan was ousted in 1978 in a military coup led by the Marxist-Leninist ‘People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan’ (PDPA) (Rubin 1995; Dimitrakis 2013). Once in power, divisions in the PDPA started to emerge, mainly between the urban elite and more radicalised rural cadres with strong links into the military. Fearing the collapse of the regime the Soviet Union signed a treaty of friendship with the government in 1978, guaranteeing military assistance in the event of a threat to the country’s territorial integrity (Krivosheev 1997). The regime became further destabilized with the forceful transfer of power from one faction to another, and was increasingly threatened by hostile forces internally and on the Pakistan border (Khan 2011). The Soviet state sought to assist the regime, sending ministerial appointees and military advisors, and at the end of 1979 several thousands of troops were sent as direct military assistance. A new more pro-Soviet President, Babrak Karmal, was installed after the incumbent was finally killed (Hassan 1995).

The Soviet-backed regime sought to align socialism with Islamic social justice, using Russian financial aid to extend social services. However, the presence of over 120,000 Russian troops in Afghanistan inflamed nationalistic sentiments, and forceful resistance was unified into the Afghan ‘Mujahideen’, backed by the Pakistan state. The ensuing nationalist war displaced more than six million Afghans into surrounding countries. From
1985, under Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviets encouraged power sharing with the ‘Mujahideen’ and in 1987 installed Muhammad Najibullah as PDPA President to negotiate a truce and put in place a new constitution. This was to allow the Soviet forces to be withdrawn, which they were in 1989 (Kaplan 2001). The constitution was revised in 1990 to remove references to communism, re-founding Afghanistan as a ‘unitary and Islamic state’, and Najibullah remained in power until 1992 when Russian aid ceased. His execution in 1996, after four years of civil war, announced the arrival of the Taliban regime. In his in-depth study of the Russian occupation and civil war period, Sharma suggests a transition from ideological politics to identity politics, directly linked to militarization (Sharma 2017). In this he highlights how ethno-regional identity was mobilized against the Russian invasion and then later used a resource against political Islam, in part through external proxy-formation. This legacy directly shaped elite-formation post-2001.

The ethno-political history of Afghanistan, to the rise of the Taliban in 1996, demonstrates the country’s political lineage as a crossroads or meeting point between global ideologies of nationalism, liberalism and communism, in a local context embedded in Islamic traditions and regionalist or tribal political formations. The polity has oscillated across combinations of nationalism and Islam, with institutions variously centred on monarchical, democratic and theocratic power. The history sheds light on the current constitutional arrangements and institutional practice, which, as argued, increasingly revolve around post-conflict clientelism and related ethnocratic institutional structures.

The meaning of ethnicity in Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, more markedly than in many other places, the meaning of ethnicity is blurred and shaped by other forms of identification. As Schetter observes, through the Nineteenth Century ‘identities [were] derived from tribal origin, religious or sectarian belonging, social status and profession’, noting these ‘societal boundaries and group formation altered in place and time’ (Schetter 2005:5). Despite strong cross-border ethnic links, for instance for Pashtuns into Pakistan, for Tajiks in Tajikistan, and Uzbeks with Uzbekistan, there has been no serious movement for secession or irredentism in Afghanistan (unlike in other post-colonial contexts). Regional powers have intervene to support ethnicised proxies, Pakistan for Pashtuns, Iran for Hazarras and Tajiks, but this has not translated into an irredentist political project. Afghan nationalism, in this respect, is dominant.

Despite the recent decades of military conflict, many people remain unaware of their presumed ethnic background and simply call themselves Muslims without thinking about their ethnicity (Schetter 2005:6). Pashtuns
are often said to be the biggest ethnic group in Afghanistan, at approximately forty to sixty per cent of the population. Yet Pashtuns are highly diverse, regionally, politically and culturally. While the Pashtun language, Pashto, is dominant, many Pashtuns speak Dari, which is the language of the Tajiks, who are said to be the second largest group in the country. Both languages are officially recognised, but there are more people talking Dari on a daily basis than Pashto, and many Pashtuns cannot speak one word of Pashto (One of the authors of this article, Wahid Razi, is a Pashtun Afghan belonging to the Alokzaie clan, a subdivision of the Durrani tribe. He has a very little knowledge of the Pasto language because his family belongs to a generation of Alokzaies’ who migrated from Kandahar to Kabul centuries ago and have been living amongst Tajeks and consequently they all have lost their original language of Pashto. This is not an isolated case there are thousands of Afghan with a Pashtun heritage who cannot speak Pashto).

The culture of ethnic groups is likewise highly diverse and syncretic. There has been much internal migration, inter-mixing and cultural exchange. There are elements of Pashtun culture, for instance, which have been adopted by other groups in Afghanistan. For example the Pashtuns’ Dance ‘Attan’ has become a national dance for all ethnic groups in Afghanistan and the Pashtuns have equally adopted elements of other cultures in the arts, food and language. Indeed, as with most countries around the world, the concepts of race and ethnicity were unknown in Afghanistan prior to the nineteenth century.

Certainly, since World War II the country has been more influenced by European assumptions about political identity, but these were often constructed. There are claims, for instance, that some of the names for Afghanistan’s ethnic groups were invented by European observers. Schetter, for instance, notes how ‘anthropologists such as Schurmann invented ethnic groups such as the Pashai, Tajiks, Mountain-Tajiks or Farsiwans’, creating the term Tajik, ‘which was usually used in social interactions only in a negative sense for somebody who did not belong to any group but merely shared the belief in a common tradition, implied an anti-ethnic notion in general…’ (Schetter 2005:5). Reflecting this, regional and tribal affiliation is often a stronger market of identity: in Afghanistan people often identify themselves by where they were born, a locality that they identify with, such as Charikarie, Kabuli, their tribes and clans such as Barakzaie, Alokzaie, or to their occupations. Ethnicity is still not a primary category of everyday identity. If people do make reference to their ethnicity, it is often for the purpose of formally defining ancestry with the authorities.
Here the material question of stratification and elite formation is central. A country wracked by insecurity is unlikely to be especially stable. Yet, as Adeny notes, despite this, and quite remarkably, the country has never ‘suffered from a secessionist movement, even though there have been serious conflicts between groups’ (Adeney 2008: 539). The civil conflicts have hollowed-out national elites: the Soviet invasion in 1979, with the subsequent civil war and eventual installation of the Taliban in 1996, saw an exodus of especially of urban middle classes, into neighbouring refugee camps in Iran and Pakistan; 4 million people returned after the 2001 invasion, but, as noted, under occupation the country’s elites have failed to generate economic autonomy and instead had become increasingly orientated to international aid flows. Meanwhile, as the security situation deteriorated from 2005, the exodus began again, welling numbers to 3 million in Pakistan alone (which announced mass forced repatriation in 2016).

Access to personal safety and livelihood is clearly segregated along gender lines, as well as on class and ethnic lines. Gender division has been politically salient for more than a century, to some extent disrupting ethnic categorisations. There is a long history of elite-driven efforts to extend human rights and women’s rights in Afghanistan, and reaction to these efforts, dating back to the 1920s. Restrictions on women under the Taliban invoked cultural traditions, and have persisted post-2001. These are increasingly contested and on occasion overturned by local and international pressure, one example being President Karzai’s revocation in 2012 of a proposed code of conduct that would have banned women from traveling without a male guardian (Agence France-Presse 2012). This domestication of gender disputes is critical: a paper from the Kabul-based Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit for instance warns against the imposition of values, and the commensurate reaction (Larson 2011).

Since the overthrow of the Taliban there have clearly been significant advances for women: women’s access to educational institutions has drastically increased, as has political and administrative participation, including public sector employment; critically, the mortality rate for the newborn children has declined, an indicator of the improving women’s health (Stanekzai 2012). Yet, given the deep feminisation of poverty, Afghan women as a whole are the primary victims of ongoing economic and political insecurity and civil conflict (AHRAM 2016). Cultural and religious practices imposed on women by men compound the disadvantage, and the state has further legitimized women’s subordinate status by institutionalising the power of former warlords, many of whom have been directly responsible for abuses against women. The famous statement by Malalai Joya at the 2003 constitutional Loya Jirga, exemplifies the contradiction: ‘Why would you
allow criminals to be present at this Loya Jirga, warlords responsible for our country’s situation?... They were the most anti-women people in the society who... brought our country to this state and they intend to do the same again’ (Defence Committee for Malalai Joya 2016).

With ethnicity mobilized at the elite level, kinship is more central in everyday life. Afghanistan has been in a state of war and conflict for decades, and during this time it is not ethnicity that has sustained communities. Rather, it is been much more everyday structures of kinship and clientelism that have enabled survival: ‘informal social security systems has been of critical importance in Afghanistan’ (Schütte 2009: 479). Family and kinship is the major means of support in the times of crisis, and offers a foundational form of identity, linked with regional and tribal affiliations. In a country where civil society and the state are weak, kinship governs the individual’s life and activities (Wimmer and Schetter 2003). In Afghanistan when people refer to their family they generally mean their extended family, often across a kin-based network with several hundred members, linked through strong social and economic bonds (Tapper 1991).

Kinship links with wider clientelist structures. These have their origins in the originally feudal system of Arbab wa Rayat, or ‘client and patron’. In this system, family or tribal leaders, landholders or employers, provide protection for the individuals that depend on them. Such protection creates an obligation for the Rayat or client, who must show their absolute loyalty to the Arbab or patron, when required. There also more informal structures of community duty for the well-off. In most neighborhoods there are individuals who support their locality, as part of their religious observance. Under the name of Khairat or baraie Khada (charity in the name of God or because of God), respected and wealthy members of a locality devote an amount of their daily income to the poorer members of their neighborhood (a form of local tithe, called Zakat).

With the breakdown of state authority and civil conflict since 1979 dependence on these systems of mutual obligation has spread, so that most Afghans are now somehow connected a powerful patron. Kinship, clan membership, tribal relations, religious obligation, local codes of honor and customary means of conflict resolution have become more important. This has become a fact of life in Afghanistan: ‘The permanent conditions of war since 1979 did not impair the significance of family, but the increased insecurity strengthened the role of kinship and clientelism. Distrust grew to an extent that clientelism spread to almost every sphere of the Afghan society’ (Schetter 2005:10). In the cities informal sources of social obligation have been weaker, especially amongst those internally displaced by conflict, leaving ‘a deep sense of insecurity for the urban poor’, and approximately
eighty per cent of the urban population relying on informal sources of livelihood and shelter. (Schütte 2009: 479).

Informal clientelism as a social practice is distinct from state corruption, which is extensive and has deeply corrosive effects (Braithwaite and Wardak 2013). Rangelov and Theros found that the ‘system of governance gives rise to an acute sense of injustice among ordinary Afghans, as they witness the contrast between their own deprivation and daily struggle for survival and the growing wealth of a privileged group of officials and power brokers’ (Rangelov and Theros 2012: 236). State security is contracted to foreign security companies, which employ local sub-contractors, often former Mujahidin commanders and warlords, who have the power to enforce bribery. Funds are routinely exported: in 2011 US$4.6 billion of declared funds left Afghanistan via Kabul airport, an amount equivalent to the country’s entire state budget for that year (Rangelov and Theros 2012; see also Shahrani 2015).

Another consequence of the decades-long internal conflict is the emergence of strong informal justice systems. This ‘legal pluralism’ reflects the lack of trust in an often corrupted state, or simply the absence state of state authority (Wimpelmann 2013). The rule of law established post-2001 has been established in combination with tribal and Islamic sources of legal authority. More or less institutionalized, informal justice varies across regions and population groups. Afghan Pashtuns for instance, live under three regimes - Afghan law, the tribal rule of Pashtun Wali, and the Islamic Sharia - with community judges arguing all three are compatible.

Often considered the ideal type of informal justice is the image of the jirga (Barth 1959; Carter and Connor 1989, 7; Rzehak 2011). Jirga is a Pashto word for a purpose-specific gathering of entrusted men tasked to make a decision or resolve a dispute. Through discussion, the representatives agree upon a settlement restoring honour, to which the parties are expected to adhere; women rarely participate and may themselves become a bargaining chip as part of the compensation package, a practice called ‘baad’ (Boesen 1983). Since 2001 various efforts at reforming and formalizing these ‘hybrid’ arrangements have not been successful, forcing a continued pragmatic use of informal structures in the context of the on-going Taliban insurgency (Wimpelmann 2013).

**From Warlordism to Ethnocracy**

When global and regional powers intervene in Afghanistan they have invariably assumed the existence of ethnic division. One example is Tomsen’s account of US diplomacy in the region, which highlights great power manipulations in the country: in doing do it exposes assumptions
about ethnic rivalry, especially in the immediate post-Communist civil war (Tomsen 2011). Intervention, whether to favour one ethnic group over another, or to ‘manage’ inter-ethnic relations, preempts the possibility of other foundations for political solidarity, be they tribal, religious, regional or national. Often external observers assume that ethnic groups have a clear and distinct identity, and read local conflicts as ethnic disputes. One journalist recently replicated the recurrent claim about Afghans, that ‘historically when they haven’t been united fighting outsiders, they’ve been fighting each other’ (Campbell 2013).

Certainly, political institutions are dominated by Pashtuns. While there is generally no evidence of Pashtun chauvinism, nor any political project of ‘Pashtunisation’, political power since the eighteenth century has almost exclusively been held by Pashtuns. Under the British Empire, Pashtun elites were favoured as a bulwark against Russian influence: ‘Pashtuns were privileged in all areas and dominated the military; Tajiks were left with the economic sector and the educational institutions, whereas the Hazaras were marginalized in general’ (Schetter 2005: 7). Today, reflecting these imperial legacies, political conflict is attributed to primordial ethnic identification. Such accounts then drive policy, especially in relation to state-building efforts. In this respect there are strong parallels between state-building led by the US under the UN mandate after 2001 and Soviet state-building in the post-1979 period.

Consecutive Soviet-aligned governments in Kabul had warned people of foreigners’ plans to divide the country on ethnic lines. There was some degree of truth in this as both Iran and Pakistan had an interest in ethnically the war, and funded ethnic proxies to achieve this (Pstrusinska 1990). The Soviet Union at the time echoed the same message, labeling rebel groups as the agents of foreign countries with aims to divide Afghanistan on ethnic lines. Once again, there was some truth in this as many of the so-called ‘Mujahedeen’ were in close association with foreign funders. With the Soviet invasion fear of ethnic conflict was commonplace: the regime attempted to de-ethnicise the state, but Pashtun elites persisted (Roy 1986). The period was characterized by a process of ethnicisation by proxy as a growing number of regional warlords presented themselves to foreign donors as the representatives of particular ethnic groups to garner legitimacy and assistance. The ‘Mujahadin’ itself rejected ethnic division, unified in its war of national Islamic liberation against the Russian state. The collapse of the PDPA regime from 1992 led to civil war, but it was not a war between ethnic groups, rather between rival warlords and their respective militias.

During the civil war thousands of people lost their lives but ethnic groups kept relative peace with each other. The main ethnic victim of the
Civil war was the Hazara Shia minority, although anti-Hazara attacks were more driven by religious sectarianism than ethnicity. Post-1996 the Taliban regime was Pashtun-led, and systematically repressed Shia Muslims and in particular the Hazaras in a number of cities in Afghanistan, on a sectarian basis. With the collapse of the Taliban government and the U.S war in Afghanistan in October 2001, there was once again speculation over the possibility of ethnic war. Yet since 2001 there has been relatively little in the way of ethnic conflict, especially given the scale of dislocation and conflict in the country. One exception concerns a number of clashes between the nomadic Pashtun tribes and Hazaras around Bamyan, reflecting intensified competition between the groups for access to water and land, and a range of sectarian anti-Hazara attacks, including by Taliban militants on Hazara refugees in Pakistan.

The relative absence of ethnic conflict contrasts with the ethnicisation of state power. Following the US invasion the new architects of the state sought to unify the polity and publicly downplayed ethnic division. The international community, the United Nations and supporting NGOs sought to ensure that all ethnic groups would have a role in the political and social life of the country (Wafayezade 2915: 15). In practice, though, state power was used to translate the power of contending militias into modes of ethnic leverage: power blocs were de-militarised, but also ethnicised. As Schetter argues, ‘every Afghan was assigned to a certain ethnic affiliation: the ‘Uzbek Dostum’, the ‘Pashtun Karzai’, the ‘Tajik Rabbani’ or the ‘Pashtun Zahir Shah’ (Schetter 2005:10).

Frishta Ali outlines how an ad hoc power-sharing arrangement was established at the 2001 Bonn conference which authorised the interim government under Hamid Karzai, himself an elite Pashtun. Multi-ethnicity was informally constituted in the cabinet, with 11 Pashtuns, 8 Tajiks, 5 Hazaras, 3 Uzbeks, and 2 members of other ethnic groups. Militia leaders subsequently positioned themselves as ethnic representatives with a call on government posts, with the US endorsing their military allies as legitimate rulers (Mukhopadhyay 2014). The breakdown is as follows: ‘Ahmad Shah Massoud's and Burhanuddin Rabbani’s Northern Alliance became today’s Jamiat-e- Islami, a primarily Tajik organization. Uzbeks organized under Rashid Dostum’s Junbesh-e-Milli. Abdul Ali Mazari’s followers were now under the Hazara Hezb-e-Wahdat. And Pashtuns followed Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami… The Mujahidin, the resistance who fought against the communist government, was fractioned into groups aligned to ethnicity as well. For instance, mainly Tajiks followed Ahmad Shah Massoud, Hazaras were led by Abdul Ali Mazari, Uzbeks and Turkmens were behind
Abdul Rashid Dostum, and Pashtuns were with Gulbuddin Hekmatya’. (Ali, 2015:10).

**Ethnicity and the constitution**

The 2001 Bonn meeting that defined the framework for the post-invasion polity was heavily influenced by would-be ethnic leaders who ironically stressed the need to prevent ethnic conflict in the country. A prominent role in all peace negotiations was granted to these leaders, who then built an ethnic oligarchy within the structure of the state, sharing government positions between them while selling other lucrative positions within government departments to clients. This informal consociational structure is entrenched in state authority and is viewed with disdain by the wider public, which is generally excluded from its material benefits.

The UNSC Resolution 1378, adopted on 14 November 2001, defined the framework for the post-Taliban administration, giving ‘strong support’ for government that was ‘broad-based, multi-ethnic and fully representative of all the Afghan people’. Afghan allies of the US met at the International Conference on Afghanistan in Bonn on 5 December 2001, selecting Hamid Karzai to head the Afghan Interim Authority. The conference drew up an ‘Agreement on Provisional Arrangements’ which stated the interim administration had to have ‘due regard to the ethnic, geographic and religious composition of Afghanistan’. Karzai’s cabinet, as noted, was informally consociational, composed effectively as a multi-ethnic power-sharing arrangement. The formal constitution was promulgated at a national deliberative conference, a Loya Jurga, held in Afghanistan in late 2003, and sought to institutionalise nationally-shared foundations for solidarity.

**Islamic solidarity** - In the first instance, religion in Afghanistan is the key foundation for political solidarity. The Constitution centralized power in an ‘Islamic Republic, independent, unitary and indivisible state’ (A.1). Islam in its civic form offers the possibility of a shared political culture, embedded in inclusive and non-authoritarian models of Islam, that allow for religious freedom for other religions as well as across Islamic traditions, Shia, Sunni, Sufi. Positioning a mode of political Islam that is civic in its logic contrasts with doctrinaire political Islam, in non-civic mode, where one interpretation of religious culture is asserted above others. Clearly, religious solidarity is vulnerable to these internal tensions, and as a political principle may quickly become a vehicle for national exclusivity.

In large part, Islamic solidarity is already vested in the Afghan state. The state itself is only sovereign insofar as it is compatible with Islam. It was declared in the year 1382 on the Islamic Calendar and names Afghanistan as
an ‘Islamic Republic’, requiring all law to conform to Islamic ‘tenets and provisions’. The constitution asserts a version of Sharia law (religious law) compatible with human rights norms: provisions for the Supreme Court state that ordinarily it acts in ‘pursuance of Hanafi jurisprudence, and, within the limits set by this Constitution’ (Hanafi being a School of Sunni law practiced in much of Central Asia where law is interpreted by legal authority is exercised not only by secular as well as religious orders) (A.130). The Court is limited to six justices appointed by the President and endorsed by Parliament.

Legal pluralism is accommodated, with the courts required to ‘apply Shia jurisprudence in cases involving personal matters of followers of the Shia sect in accordance with the provisions of the law’ (A.131). The framework for education exemplifies the model, in requiring a ‘unified educational curricula based on the tenets of the sacred religion of Islam’, along with ‘curricula for schools on the basis of existing Islamic sects in Afghanistan’ (A.45). Freedom of religion is asserted within this framework, with A2 stating the ‘followers of other faiths shall be free within the bounds of law in the exercise and performance of their religious rituals’: with the ‘bounds of the law’ defined by Islam, religious freedom rests on respect for Islam. As such, political parties may only be established that do not ‘contravene the Holy religion of Islam’ (A.35).

Tribal and regional solidarities - The 2004 Constitution centralized power while recognising Afghanistan as a multi-ethnic country (A.4). Importantly, the Constitution explicitly forbids tribalism, stating the ‘formation and operation of a party on the basis of tribalism, parochialism, language, as well as religious sectarianism shall not be permitted’ (A35). Ministers were not to ‘use their positions for linguistic, sectarian, tribal, religious or partisan purposes’ (A80). With the state defined as impartial, the Constitution recognizes ethnic identities, at A. 4 stating ‘The nation of Afghanistan shall be comprised of Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkman, Baluch, Pachaie, Nuristani, Aymaq, Arab, Qirghiz, Qizilbash, Gujur, Brahwui and other tribes’. A6 then recognizes the equal status of ‘all ethnic groups and tribes’ (A. 6). This is reflected in language policy which institutionalises Pashto and Dari as first and second languages and any local language as third language (A. 16). The national anthem ‘shall be in Pashto with the mention of “God is Great” as well as the names of the major ethnic groups of Afghanistan (A.20). This recognition of local languages and tribal affiliations was, interestingly, one of the most contentious issues at the constitutional Loya Jirga, precipitating a walk-out by forty per cent of the delegates (Adeney 2008).
Despite recognition of ethnic diversity there is little provision for local autonomy, although a structure of provincial district and municipal councils is established with devolution of power as required (A.137). These local versions of the state offer the possibility of local-level cultural provincialism but their powers exist at the behest of the central state. Such formations have the potential to enable forms of local democracy and hence legitimation, in the exercise of devolved local powers within a unitary state. By the same token, they may develop to displace centre-peripheral tensions from ethnicised competition for central resources into regionally-grounded aspirations and priorities. Since 2004 provincial councils have been constituted and have sought increased powers and resources, though remain relatively weak (Adeney 2008). In practice, reflecting the military occupation, effective power is centralized in the Presidency. Local autonomies have been weak, but may develop into the future.

National solidarity - A third foundation for solidarity is the state itself, legitimized as an expression of the Afghan nation. Legitimacy may be claimed in terms of a value commitment, vested in human rights norms and social citizenship, and in terms of representation as expressed in elected or appointed national assemblies and the elected presidency. In terms of representation the 2004 constitution vests considerable power in the directly-elected President, who selects two Vice-Presidents, appoints Ministers, defines policy and appoints provincial Governors.

The constitution provides for a directly-elected lower house ‘of the people’. The parliamentary electoral system is majoritarian, with more than one candidate per constituency enabling some proportionality (ie Single Non-Transferable Vote). In addition an upper house ‘of elders’ is constituted from provincial and district councils and a third appointed by the presidency. The lower house holds the legislative power; the upper house takes a more advisory role. Judicial authority is vested in an independent supreme court, which has the responsibility to enforce constitutional protections for the citizenry. These entrench non-discrimination and civil and political freedoms, which are qualified by undefined ‘duties’, and by a broader the ‘public interest’ (A22-4). Human rights norms are offered formal protection although there is little in the way of normative grounding for national identification, as Afghans.

The 2004 constitution does seek to establish conditions for economic autonomy and security. There is some guarantee of social security. At A.6 the state is committed ‘to create a prosperous and progressive society based on social justice, preservation of human dignity, protection of human rights, realization of democracy, attainment of national unity as well as equality between all peoples and tribes and balance development of all areas
of the country’. Health and education is a special focus with a commitment to ‘free preventative healthcare and treatment of diseases’ (A 52) and for the provision of ‘educational institutes free of charge by the state’ (A43). Beyond this there is some declaratory commitment to help develop industries and agriculture (A17).

Nevertheless, key clauses seem more directed at the interests of the occupiers than at the impoverished population. Under A. 10 the constitution requires the state to ‘encourage, protect as well as ensure the safety of capital investment and private enterprises in accordance with the provisions of the law and market economy’. This neoliberal constraint on policy is bolstered by A.11 which imposes a requirement that the central bank be independent and A.40 which protects property from confiscation. Under A.41 foreign ownership of immovable property is not permitted, but leasing ‘for the purpose of capital investment’ is (A41). And perhaps most important, security crises can trump the constitution, with the President, as Head of State explicitly vested with a specially-defined power to declare a ‘state of emergency’ where ‘protection of independence and national life become impossible through the channels specified in this Constitution’ (A143).

Overall, the 2004 Constitution clearly seeks to bolster cross-national solidarities, whether Islamic or nationalist, recognizing local, tribal and ethnic identification within the framework of the state. Ethnicity is subsumed into the national structure, and outlawed as a basis for political mobilization. On this basis the country has so far embarked on three electoral cycles, with elections in 2004, 2009 and 2014. The outcome of these elections in terms of de-ethnicisation are hotly debated.

Democracy and cross-ethnic de/alignment

The role of the central state mapped out in the 2004 Constitution is one of managing and correlating ethnic identifications. As noted, in the context of the Taliban insurgency pragmatic alliance-building led to informal consociational structures for rule. Over time these had the potential to ethnicise the state, and institutionalise what may be more fluid identifications, disaggregating what may have been more overlapping and multiple modes of coexistence. Alternatively, the implementation of the constitution arguably would open up new possibilities for cross-ethnic bargaining and allow the creation of new forms of non-ethnicised national-level political antagonisms. A crucial measure of this is the electoral outcomes, and the extent to which Afghan voters are aligned into rivalrous ethnic blocs.

A strong narrative of de-ethnicisation, as reflected in voting patterns, is widely claimed. The majoritarian electoral system is said to encourage cross-ethnic alliance-building in the presidential election given that the
dominant Pashtun group only claims at most forty percent of the national electorate. Nonetheless, ethnicisation in the 2004 presidential election was extensive. This serves as a baseline, directly reflecting the initial ethnicisation of formal inter-party politics. In the election the overwhelming majority of voters cast their vote for a co-ethnic candidate: ninety-five percent of Pashtuns voted for Karzai, ninety percent of Uzbeks for Dostum, eighty percent Hazaras for Mohaqiq; there was a similar ethnicisation in the 2005 parliamentary election. Giustozzi argues that the main drivers for this were the absence of ideological disputation in the country’s first election since the Taliban regime, along with weak class formation, weakened state capacity and external influences (Giustozzi 2015). The relative lack of political antagonism in the context of the Taliban insurgency may have been a contributing factor.

The 2009 election was seriously corrupted by the incumbent president, with about a fifth of the votes invalidated (Mobasher 2016). Despite this, observers highlighted strong signs of de-alignment. Dubrow for instance analysed the ethnic and spatial distribution of votes from 2004 to 2009, finding significant de-alignment, despite reinstalling President Karzai. The 2009 parliamentary election even superseded sectarian conflict, for instance where a Shiite Hazara candidate received the majority of his votes from Sunnis and non-Hazaras (Dubrow 2009).

The 2014 presidential election was also extensively corrupted, requiring a full recount. Yet it is seen as signaling a new departure, as Mobasher notes, ‘the scale of cross-ethnic voting in the Afghan election of 2014 was extraordinary’ (Mobasher 2017: 369). Cross-ethnic voting was encouraged by a change in electoral rules in 2013 that required presidential candidates to gather 100,000 signatures or two percent of those enrolled, across twenty provinces. Partly reflecting this, the only candidates to nominate were from the larger Pashtun and Tajik ethnic groups, and in the election most Hazaras voted for the Tajik candidate, most Uzbeks for the Pashtun candidate. Mobasher’s forensic analysis of cross-ethnic voting, province-by-province, reveals a complex structure of inter-ethnic bargaining through the 2004 and 2009 elections, initiated by President Karzai and built into the structure of the state. The 2014 poll marked a departure as the Pashtun vote split between a Tajik candidate, Dr Abdullah (formerly of Northern Alliance militia, also favoured by Tajiks and Hazaras), and a Pashtun candidate, Dr Ghani (who also attracted Uzbek support). In the context of a corrupted Electoral Commission the formal vote was never released and the two candidates resolved to exercise power in tandem, with Ghani as President and Addullah in a ‘Chief Executive’ role.
Interpreting the outcome is itself part of the political dynamic: one person’s ethnic bargaining is another person’s cross-ethnic collaboration. Mobasher for instance emphasizes inter-ethnic bargaining rather than cross-ethnic de-alignment, stressing the ‘persistence of ethnic voting and mobilization’ (Mobasher 2016: 412). In contrast, Sharma points to the 2014 election as demonstrating the ‘failure of neat ethnic homogeneity to stabilize, in spite of long years of armed bloody mobilization along ethno-political lines’ (Sharma 2017). The disagreement turns on the interpretation of inter-ethnic voting patterns and associated political accommodations at the elite level: at one level they entrench ethnic division; at another level they introduce new lines of non-ethnic antagonism.

In this respect Sharma argues that ‘political alliances… have not followed the neat simplistic ethnic logic of the kind often projected as the eternal fact of Afghan social political life’ (Sharma 2017: Conclusion page, FIND PP). Rather, they have a life of their own, shaped by a wide range of contingent, non-ethnicised matters. For Sharma, ethnicity is seen as a changing resource, with post 2001 demands for ethnic parity positioned as a political manoeuvre. Certainly ethnicity has become more salient in elite bargaining, but at the same time Islam and the idea of the nation have strengthened as identifiers. The result is a potentially complementary set of national, ethno-regional and religious solidarities, producing an amalgam, a co-national ethno-religious identification.

Conclusions

In 2010 the US Defence Secretary and the US Brigadier General in Afghanistan debated their reliance on what they termed ‘thugocracy’ in Afghanistan, as a necessary evil in their struggle against Taliban-style ‘theocracy’ (quoted in Shahrani 2015: 296). One question that arises in the context of the 2014 election and the 2015 US military withdrawal, is whether that US-sponsored ‘thugocracy’ is now in transition to ‘ethnocracy’ or ‘democracy’. The signals are mixed, but there is certainly evidence of a changing political landscape. One key factor, as argued here, is the relative weakness of ethnic identification in Afghan society, both historically and in the current period. Non-ethnic and localized affiliations appear to have gained greater social importance in the context of on-going civil conflict. In contrast, ethnic identification is more confined to elite-level bargaining, where it serves as a proxy for military rivalry. At the same time, the constitution, and growing autonomy following the US withdrawal, appears at least in some respects to have facilitated cross-ethnic bargaining, disrupting bloc formation. As inter-elite rivalry gives way to strategic alliance-building we can expect stronger cross-ethnic ideological engagement, especially on
gender and poverty. From this perspective Afghan politics may be moving into a post-ethnocratic phase, and towards the form of Islamic democracy envisaged under the constitution.

Research points to the corrupting effect of military occupation, especially in undermining prospects for strengthened identification with national-level elites (Braithwaite and Wardak 2013). Post-occupation there are signs of a revival of national-level political culture. Against this, there are inherent dangers of ethnic hegemony in the centralised winner-takes-all model, as reflected in the electoral system and the presidential structure. In this context Adeney argues there is a risk of ethno-regionalist alienation, and argues for much stronger guarantees of multi-ethnic power-sharing (Adeney 2008). This approach assumes (and we would argue, imputes) abiding ethnic identification, and may have the effect of institutionalizing inter-ethnic rivalry. The informal elite model of ethnic-military accommodation established in 2001 may be now be in the process of being superseded by new forms of political bargaining and cross-community national level contention. In this context new political blocs may emerge, grounded in the deep structural stratification of Afghan society, claiming the capacity to displace the militarized ethnocracy of the occupation period. As the Afghan people gain more greater control of their political destiny, after decades of occupation and militarization, there appears to be a new dynamism.

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