

Dominant Ethnicity: From Minority to Majority

In global terms, we are in the midst of a long-term shift from dominant minority to dominant majority ethnicity. Indeed, this paper claims that *a cardinal principle of the premodern order is minority domination (often by an ethnic minority) whereas that of the modern era is dominant majority ethnicity*. Modernity, with its accent on democracy, popular sovereignty and the coincidence of culture and politics, renders the principle of minority ethnic dominance increasingly untenable. The most recent examples of this shift may be seen in the former Soviet Union (with the decline of Russian settler minorities), and now in Iraq and even Bolivia, where Evo Morales declared, in 2005, that 'for the first time, we [indigenous people rather than Spanish creole descendants] are the government'. ("Bolivia's Election Stunner" 2005) Looking ahead, one can spot the vulnerability in minority-dominated societies like Syria, Rwanda and Bahrain, not to mention the precarious economic dominance of Latin American and Caribbean whites, and diaspora Chinese, Lebanese and Indians. (Chua 2002) At a time when regime change and democratisation form the centrepiece of American foreign policy, it is particularly germane to investigate how dominant minorities have gained and sustained their dominance over subordinate majorities, the nature of power shifts to ethnic majorities, and the way in which dominant ethnicity intersects with national identity.

Dominant Ethnicity

The explosion of research in ethnicity and nationalism studies in the last quarter century has systematically failed to comprehend dominant ethnic groups, except as political actors struggling for power within plural, mainly postcolonial, states. The *ethnic* identities of dominant groups and their relationship to the nation remains opaque because of the divide between studies of ethnicity (which only address dominant groups in the context of power relations) and scholarship on nationalism. Students of ethnicity, beginning with Robert Park's 'Chicago School' of urban sociology in the United States in the early 1920s, generally focused on ethnic groups as immigrant minorities. (Kaufmann and Zimmer 2004) Meanwhile, writing on nationalism began from a statist tradition (i.e. Kohn 1944; Deutsch 1953; Cobban 1969), with the foremost expositors of this genre being Europeans who took the post-1789 European nation-state as their reference point. For these 'modernist' theorists of nationalism, the major phenomena to be explained were the nations that states created and the minority nations that arose on the peripheries of these states in opposition to the nation-building project of the state. (Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990; Anderson 1983) State-nations, anti-state nations and immigrant ethnic minorities thereby formed the building blocks of scholarship on ethnicity and nationalism. This in turn influenced political theory: Will Kymlicka's typology encompasses 'ethnocultural groups' (i.e. immigrant minorities), 'minority nations' (i.e. anti-state nations) and the national identity of the state (i.e. state nations). (Kymlicka 1995: 15; 1997: 59) This work has since become the reference point for the vast political theory literature on liberal nationalism and multiculturalism. Dominant ethnic groups remain, unfortunately, missing from this picture.

The taproots of a literature on dominant ethnicity come from two major directions. The first scholarly tradition highlights the role of ethnic dominance within plural societies with ranked ethnic systems. (Geertz 1963; Smith 1969; Schermerhorn

1970; Young 1976; Horowitz 1985) Schermerhorn, for example, fleshed out a four-way matrix which divided the world's ethnic groups into dominant and subaltern, minority or majority. This was an exclusively power-centred typology, but at least it acknowledged the reality that, first, ethnic groups could be majorities, and, second, dominant ethnic groups could exist as minorities. What remained lacking, however, was an understanding of the 'ethnicity' side of the dominant ethnicity equation, and how this related to the nation. This deeper, subjective realm of dominant ethnicity remained unprobed until Anthony Smith's landmark *Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986). Here Smith introduced the concept of a 'core ethnies' whose premodern mytho-symbolic resources, including myths of ancestry and homeland as well as a proper name, laid the basis for subsequent nation-states like France or Japan. Smith later refined this argument through elaboration of the concept of the dominant ethnies, which he views as the principal actor behind the rise of many nations. (Smith 1991) Smith's work is vital in that it breathed life into dominant ethnic groups, portraying them as real communities with subjective narratives rather than simply vessels of power.

Still, important omissions remained. For Smith, the dominant ethnies serves as a kind of chrysalis from which the modern nation emerges. It is not clear from his writing what fate befalls the cocoon when the moth takes flight. Certainly the 'ethnic' heritage remains as a resource toward which the nation sometimes veers in its modern odyssey. Nonetheless, we are not treated to a discussion of whether the dominant ethnies remains a discrete social actor within the nation - with its own *ethnic* boundaries, institutions, actors and cultural projects - that may be distinguished from more inclusive, statist *national* narratives.

It is also difficult to apprehend the role of dominant ethnies in Smith's so-called 'nations by design', the heterogeneous colonial states whose boundaries often cut across ethnic divisions. Does stewardship of the postcolonial state alternate between ethnic groups, or does it remain under the control of a dominant group? If dominant group(s) emerge, why is this the case, and what is the relationship between the discourse of national identity and that of the dominant ethnies? It seems abundantly clear that many, if not most, postcolonial states have dominant ethnies, even if these often lack the premodern, organic ties to the state and its national identity that one finds in Europe and East Asia. Writers such as Clifford Geertz (1963) have flagged up the legitimization crisis of the postcolonial state and the consequent struggle for ethnic dominance. They have pointed to dominant group repression of minorities or dominant ethnies' informal exchange of resources with ethnic minority clients (Rothchild's 'hegemonial' model) as techniques for maintaining ethnic dominance. (Wimmer 1997: 650) However, none have focused specifically on dominant ethnic groups' relationship to a wider (and distinct) national identity. Nor has there been an explicit conceptualisation of the shift from dominant minority to dominant majority ethnicity which encompasses both postcolonial and Eurasian cases, relating dominant ethnic identity projects to those of the nation.

This can be attributed to the prevailing split in the literature between theorists of ethnicity in postcolonial societies and theorists of either nationalism or minority ethnicity in European (including European settler) or East Asian societies. They have done excellent work and our efforts build on their insights. However, we also attempt to bridge the significant gap between these literatures. Those focusing on postcolonial states, for example, accept the idea that dominant minority ethnicity arises out of the process of colonialism and decolonisation, but neglect its relationship to - and difference from - national identity. Those who examine European, Europe-settled or

East Asian cases concentrate on the nation and its exclusion of ethnic minorities, but fail to spot the minority-to-majority shift within these 'established' nations and the distinction between the nation and the dominant ethnic majority. In *toto*, these lacunae urgently need to be filled, for we live in an age when the distinction between the nation-state and 'its' dominant ethnic is increasingly laid bare by democratisation, liberalism, and/or multiculturalism.

From Dominant Minorities to Dominant Majorities

Politically dominant minorities are those communally differentiated ruling groups who are able to govern majorities despite being demographically outnumbered. These groups are distinct from social minorities, a category that refers to disadvantaged and subordinate groups irrespective of their relative numerical size. Several dominant ethnic groups in postcolonial states are minorities. These would include the Kikuyu in Kenya, pre-1980 white Rhodesians, Creoles in Belize, Guyana and Trinidad, or pre-1980 Americo-Liberians. The Sunnis in Saddam Husayn's Iraq were a politically dominant minority sect whereas the Shi'ites, constituting a demographic majority, were the socially disadvantaged group. Likewise, Afrikaners in South Africa, Alawis in Syria and the Tutsi in Burundi have all governed, or are still governing, subordinate majorities. Unlike the majoritarian politics of democracies, the point of autocratic minority rule is the obverse: to narrow the circle of power as much as is militarily possible so as to maximise returns to the power-holding minority.

With almost all regions of the world experiencing some degree of transition to democracy¹, hegemonic minorities are finding it increasingly difficult to sustain rule in divided societies. A principal contention of this paper is that the shift from dominant minority to dominant majority is implicit in the logic of modern nationalism. Note that this paper builds upon scholarship which foregrounds the shift from multicultural premodern empires legitimated by divine right to the principle of popular sovereignty in which a 'people' needs to be defined. Such accounts rightly point to the exclusive tendencies brought on by these modernising forces in both postcolonial and western settings. (Wimmer 1997: 635) What such explanations miss, however, is that European or East Asian states typically contained a dominant minority ethnic (not merely an imperial status elite) in the premodern period. This dominant *ethnic* minority, which Smith coins a 'lateral-aristocratic' ethnic, gained modern democratic legitimacy by sinking roots within the mass population and assimilating it to the elite ethnic core. (Smith 1991) In this manner, these dominant ethnic minorities 'solved' their problem of modernity in a way that dominant minorities in postcolonial settings - who largely failed to assimilate the majority - did not.

Notice that this perspective entails a deviation from strict modernist interpretations which deny the existence of premodern elite ethnicity (i.e. Gellner 1983; Anderson 1983), claiming that culture stratifies by status rather than marking out distinct groups in space. However, we also question versions of ethnosymbolism which posit the premodern diffusion of ethnic sentiments within the mass of the populace. Instead, we consider that premodern imperial monarchs rule with the aid of an aristocratic elite which often develops a sense of genealogical distinctiveness *vis à vis* dynastic competitors. Since ethnic groups are defined by a sense of shared genealogical ancestry, this raises the question of premodern ethnicity. Were the royal

¹ The Middle East being a notable exception (Bellin 2004; Huntington 1991: 24-5).

houses of Europe or the elites of the Islamic empires ethnic groups? We have plenty of evidence that in a world of competing dynasties, genealogies were crafted and territorial claims defended with reference to culture and descent. (Brass 1996: 89)

For example, in 1315, Robert the Bruce, in planning an incursion into Ireland, wrote to the Irish, asking for their cooperation: 'Since we and you, our people and your people, free since ancient times, have sprung from one national stock, and a common language and custom stir us to come together eagerly and joyfully in friendship'. Likewise, around the same time, Polish rulers appealed to their shared language to cement claims to Pomerelia, dominated by the Teutonic Knights. (Bartlett 1996:130) In England, Anglo-Saxon writers like Bede, and later King Alfred, helped to narrate a myth of the Anglo-Saxon origins of the 'English' people. (Hastings 1997: 35-39) Though often nakedly instrumental in origin, such concepts laid the foundations for more enduring ethnic myths, reproduced in path-dependent fashion by elite institutions.

In the medieval or early modern period, for instance, a number of chronicles and origin myths sprang up around ruling elites. Thus in Scotland, the Declaration of Arbroath of 1320 made reference to the fact that 'the "Scots" were descended from the early medieval Irish immigrants'. (MacDonald 2005:86) Genealogies helped to cement dynastic rule, but also underpinned myths of descent for what Smith terms 'lateral-aristocratic' ethnies of the classical, medieval or early modern period like the Parthians, Hittites, Persians, Arabs, Ottoman Turks, English, French, Poles, Hungarians and Castilians. (Smith 1986: 78-79)

It may be convincingly objected that aristocratic ethnicity, owing to its elite character and lack of social penetration, cannot be described in ethnic group terms. We are prepared to bracket this question, which remains a subject of intense debate between modernist and ethnosymbolist theorists. (Ozkirimli 2007; Leoussi 2006) Indeed, the norm of dominant ethnic minority rule becomes especially apposite when one imagines a self-conscious ethnic elite ruling over a highly variegated Gellnerian cultural terrain such as medieval France, Austria, India or Italy. In this sense, the medieval Frankish-descended dynasty of France was a French aristocratic ethnie which ruled not ethnic Frenchmen, but rather a patchwork of local nobles and peasants speaking Latin, Celtic and Germanic dialects. Hence the French differed little from Ottoman Turks and Austro-Germans who dominated ostensibly more 'multicultural' empires. The basic principle remains, however: dominant minorities were the rule in the premodern world, and most of these were ethnically consciousness.

Dominant Minorities in the Modern Era

A handful of dominant minorities managed to persist into the modern era and many arose through colonial and post-colonial processes. Four observations can be made with regards to politically dominant ethnic minorities in modern states: they normally owe their dominant position to colonial legacies; they rely on coercive policies while building a narrow societal support base; they establish distinct links to overarching national identities; and they have been historically more common than they are at present due to democratisation processes that shift power to majorities.

Colonial Impact

Colonialism facilitated minority political dominance in more than one way. First, European occupiers carved modern states and created centralised governing

institutions where none had existed, thus granting those at the highest echelon of the newly introduced administration unprecedented political authority. Second, they actively placed minorities in positions of governance. In some cases, including South Africa, Namibia, Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe), and the Caribbean Islands, European settlers that arrived with colonialism ruled as a dominant minority over an indigenous population. In other cases, colonial regimes practiced divide-and-rule policies that favoured one indigenous minority, handed it a superior social status, and co-opted it into the governing apparatus and the security forces. The colonial legacy allowed favoured minorities to either retain dominance or take over the state at a later point.

The most prominent example of colonial settler domination is that of South Africa. This country had seen settlers arrive from the Netherlands and Britain, as well as from other European countries. Immigration of Dutch settlers first started in the 17th century, while large scale immigration of English-speakers from Britain took off in the early 19th century. Unsuccessful resistance to British encroachment culminated in the Boer War (1899-1902), which in turn resulted in the formation of the Union of South Africa, a name later changed to the Republic of South Africa. The political structure introduced in the first half of the twentieth century extended political rights to the white population with only a few nonwhites in the southern Cape province entitled to vote. The regime practiced racial segregation and nonwhite subordination. Following the victory of the Afrikaner National Party in the 1948 elections, the apartheid policy of formal, legalised racial classification and reordering was introduced. It was only with the first democratic elections of 1994 that minority domination was replaced with majority political rule.

In cases of indigenous minority rule, European occupiers, whether British, French, or otherwise, introduced modern state institutions and placed favoured minorities in positions of authority. In Burundi, for example, Tutsi political hegemony was facilitated by Belgian policies that advanced an ideology of Tutsi racial superiority (albeit without residential segregation), not dissimilar to the legislated race classification of apartheid, and required all members of society to carry identification cards that identified their ethnic affiliation, and hence their social status. Members of the Tutsi elite were incorporated into the senior ranks of the administration and military while the Hutu were downgraded to the status of inferior subjects. In the newly introduced Conseil Supérieur du Pays, 31 of 33 members were Tutsi (Uvin 1998: 17). Furthermore, previously independent chiefdoms were consolidated into new administrative units by the Belgians. All 45 of the newly created chiefdoms were Tutsi controlled. When the Belgian colonizers departed, the institutional infrastructure left behind was conducive to Tutsi domination of the civil administration and the military (Lemarchand 1994).

Likewise, the origins of Sunni hegemony in Iraq date back to the very beginning of its construction by the British (which in turn may be traced further back to the looser Sunni hegemony which prevailed after the Sunni Ottoman conquest of Iraq's three component provinces from the Shi'ite Safavids in 1638). Following their victory in World War I, the British created Iraq by joining three former Ottoman provinces: Basra, Baghdad and Mosul, thus bringing together the Shi'ite population in the south with a Sunni Arab minority in the central region and the Kurdish minority in the North within a single political unit. The British brought their ally in their war against the Ottoman Empire, Hashemite Faysal ibn Husayn, from Syria and crowned him as king of Iraq. The ruling dynasty, thus, was foreign to the local population (Eppel 2004: 15). Furthermore, the urban Sunni Arab elites from the Baghdad region

were integrated into the administrative institutions and practically monopolised military and administrative authority. According to Yitzhak Nakash (1994: 110), when Iraq gained its independence in 1932, only about 15 percent of high-ranking government posts were held by Shi'ites. The communal features of the organisational infrastructure were retained after independence was formally obtained. The characteristics of the administration and military led the majority of the Shi'ites, approximately 60 percent of Iraq's population, and the Kurds, roughly 20 percent, to view the newly created Iraqi state as a Sunni-Arab institution (Eppel 2004: 17). Sunni Arab hegemony was solid and did not change even after the monarchy was overthrown in a 1958 coup.

French legacies in Syria were comparable although it took several decades after independence before the Alawi minority, constituting approximately 11 percent of Syria's population, took over control of the state. Until the arrival of the French, the Alawi minority had an inferior status (Antoun 1991; Haklai 2000; Zisser 1999: 129-31). However, as in the case of Burundi's Tutsis and Iraq's Sunnis, Syria's Alawi population were a minority favoured by the European occupiers. Two important features of French rule, lasting from 1920 to 1946, contributed to Alawi empowerment. First the French granted the Alawis an autonomous status in their home region which, in turn, provided the previously subordinate minority with the administrative skills required for governance. Second, recruitment patterns to the security apparatus gave preference to this minority because the growing nationalist resistance within Syria came from Sunni quarters. The Alawis were seen by the French as reliable allies, who could be counted upon to suppress nationalist revolts (Haklai 2000: 32). Although the Alawis lost their autonomous status in 1936, their disproportionate presence in the military remained after French withdrawal. Their representation grew as a series of military coups resulted in the expulsion from the military of many of the senior officers, mostly Sunni, thus opening up space for Alawi promotion. Alawi officers played an important role in the 1963 Ba'th coup, something that allowed them to further consolidate their position in the military at the officer ranks and to eventually overthrow the Sunni president, Amin al-Hafiz, in 1966.

Governing Strategies

The very means through which dominant minorities attained their superior political status - whether as a settler society or a favoured indigenous minority - meant that sub-state group identities were politically salient following the departure of the European superpowers and, therefore, dominant minorities were to face challenges. Maintaining minority political hegemony necessitated extensive reliance on the coercive exclusion of majorities from decision-making centres. In Apartheid South Africa, for example, minority rule was contingent upon the denial of suffrage to the vast majority of nonwhites. In Taiwan too, Martial Law enacted by mainland Chinese settlers, who arrived following the Communist Revolution on the mainland in 1949, excluded the Taiwanese majority, approximately 84 percent of Taiwan's total population, from participation in politics for several decades.

In many cases, dominant indigenous minorities established pervasive authoritarian regimes with an extensive security apparatus to ensure majority marginalisation. In Iraq, according to data compiled from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (2002: 105-6, 279), the regime employed about 19.4 persons per thousand in the armed forces at the beginning of the twenty-first century, whereas in Syria, the number was close to 26 (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2002: 117-8, 282). The extent to which these figures are high is revealed when compared to

the numbers in democracies like Canada, where there are 2 people under arms per thousand, Spain, where the number is close to 6.3, and Brazil where the number is slightly below 4 (Ibid: 36-7, 55-8, 173-5, 252, 255, 310). Even when compared to other authoritarian regimes, like Saudi Arabia and Egypt, where the numbers are 10.2 and 11 respectively, dominant minority regimes are more heavily securitised (Ibid: 102-3, 116-7, 279 & 282).

Extensive security apparatuses have routinely been used to make sure that all citizens were deterred from dissent. This message was delivered through merciless suppression of all communally-motivated resistance and opposition activism. For example, the Kurdish uprising in Iraq in 1974 resulted in the massacre of thousands of Kurds and the relocation of tens of thousands to southern Iraq (Whitely 1993-94). In the late 1980s, chemical weapons were used against the Kurds and about 50,000 of them were reportedly killed by the regime in the *Anfal* campaigns (Bengio 1999: 153). Likewise, Shi'ite (and Kurdish) uprisings throughout the 1990s were brutally repressed. Roughly a quarter of a million Shi'ites in southern Iraq were forcefully driven out after approximately forty thousand soldiers descended upon the region and the local marshes were drained (Cordesman and Hashim 1997: 108). Similarly, attempted revolts in Syria were brutally suppressed. When a rebellious force of the Muslim Brotherhood took over the city of Hama in 1982, imprisoning several local officials, including the governor, the army descended upon the city with heavy artillery and its combat air force, killing tens of thousands of local inhabitants. In all these cases, the message of the regime was unequivocal and left no room for pondering regime change. The forcefully instilled widespread belief in regime omnipotence, in turn, had created a cycle where opposition movements stopped mobilizing, which in turn further consolidated the minority's hold on power.

In places where dominant minorities were unable to sustain an expansive and deterring security apparatus, minority rule faced repeated challenges and revolts. Minority rule in Burundi, lasting until an internationally brokered agreement in 2003 enabled a gradual transition of power to an elected majority Hutu government, was least stable. In Burundi, about seven people per thousand were employed in the armed forces by the state at the beginning of the twenty-first century, a number much lower than in Iraq and Syria (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2002: 197 & 321). Presumably, the poor fiscal condition of the minority regime in Burundi accounts for its inability to sustain a security apparatus similar to those of oil rich Iraq or Syria, which for many decades enjoyed Soviet patronage and reaped economic benefits from its occupation of Lebanon. Consequently, the Tutsi regime had difficulty containing the numerous uprisings and revolts that took place in every decade after independence. The violence frequently resulted in mass displacements and hundreds of thousands of Tutsi and Hutu deaths. The conventional response of the regime up until the late 1980s was to intensify the exclusion of Hutus from positions of authority. Following a 1965 coup and the abolition of the monarchy in 1966, only three of the seventeen army officers of the newly created National Revolutionary Council, the institution which centralised political authority in Burundi, were Hutu. By the end of Colonel Bagaza's reign (1976-1987), only two Hutu members remained in the 65 member central committee of the UPRONA Party, which became the state's supreme institution in 1979 (Lemarchand 1994: 78-109). Ethnic cleansing of the military, the ruling UPRONA Party, the fragile civil administration, and the military of Hutus did not, however, lead to Hutu submission. Rather, it led many to join independent militias to fight the minority regime for control over the state (Adekange 1996: 38-41; Lemarchand 1994: 72). Attempts to introduce reform in the late 1980s

and early 1990s only served to polarize Burundi politics as Hutu candidates won 80% of the seats in the newly created national assembly in the 1993 election. The military responded by staging a coup shortly thereafter to reverse the verdict at the polls. Once again, the military was unable to subdue the widespread resentment and turmoil that ensued and that was manifested in a long civil war which claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands.

Significantly, commanding positions in the security agencies, as well as in other governing agencies of minority regimes, were commonly placed in the hands of loyalists. At the core of Hafiz al-Asad's regime in Syria, for example, were members of the Alawi Kalbiyya tribe as well as leading members from other large Alawi tribes, including the Matawira and Haddadin (Zisser 1999: 135-6). Dividing the most senior positions in the security apparatus between the large Alawi clans, Asad, whose reign lasted from 1970 to 2000, was able to build a narrow but loyal circle of confidants. This Alawi alliance ensured that the major players in the Alawi community had every interest in sustaining minority rule, yet no single tribe was powerful enough to overthrow Asad's regime alone. A broader coalition, in the form of a second layer outside the primary core, was built with other minorities who had much to lose from majority-Sunni rule. Isma'ilis and Druze were integrated into the second layer of power centres when members of these communities were appointed to important, if not the most superior, positions in the security apparatus. This order was largely preserved after Bashar Asad succeeded his father in 2000 (Zisser 2007: 60-73).

Likewise, in Iraq, the Sunni rulers placed particular emphasis on hegemony in the security apparatus. By 1936, less than four years after independence was gained, 95 percent of the senior officers were Sunnis (Tarbush 1982: 80-82). Although Shi'ite discontent in the 1930s and 1940s led to increased representation in the government and civil service - majority sect representation in the government reached 36 percent in 1950 (Nakash 1994: 127) - and to the appointment of the first Shi'ite prime minister, Salih Jabir, in 1947, Sunni resistance reversed the trend and the Prime Minister was forced to resign. Following the Ba'th takeover in 1968, the innermost circle narrowed even further. The regime relied first-and-foremost on members of the Tikrit tribe from where the leadership, including Saddam Husayn, arose. Alliances with other major tribes within the Sunni community constituted the second and subsequent layers of regime support base. The Republican Guard, composed mostly of tribes affiliated with the regime, and the paramilitary unit known as 'Saddam's *Fedayeen*', became two of the most important security agencies and were entrusted with ensuring regime safety.

While exercising brutal suppression to coerce submission, minority authoritarian regimes have also frequently relied on one-party rule to broaden their support base and provide incentives for individuals to join the ruling party and, thus, also support the regime. In Burundi, the UPRONA Party was made the sole governing institution in 1979; in Iraq and Syria, constitutions introduced in the 1960s made the Ba'th institutions the supreme institutions of the state. In all three cases, therefore, the single-ruling parties were transformed into the state while the presidency of the party overlapped with the presidency of the state and command of the military. In Iraq, the Ba'th's Revolution Command Council (RCC) and its Chairman turned into the highest and exclusive decision-making body (Baram 1989), with the Chairman taking on the role of president of Iraq and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. By one estimate, a quarter of the Ba'th Regional Command, from whom members of the RCC used to be elected, were Tikritis by the late 1970s (Henderson 1991, 34). According to Hanna Batatu (1999: 177-9), the number of members in the Syrian Ba'th party had

increased from 65,398 in 1971 to 1,008,243 in 1992, approximately 14.5 percent of all Syrians eligible to join the party (age fourteen and above). In comparison, 9 percent of the Soviet Union's adult population were members of the Communist Party. Yet the Syrian regime created two categories of membership: 'full members' and supporting or 'associate members'. The vast majority of party members, normally around 80 percent, belonged to the latter category, which meant that they were not eligible to vote in the party's institutions, occupy senior or middle-level positions in the party hierarchy, and hence, yield political influence. Associate membership, however, has its own benefits. The party has been providing easier access to resources, particularly to peasants from the Alawi and other minority communities but also to rural Sunnis (Ibid: 185-6; Zisser 2007)). Integrating into networks of patronage has become a useful avenue for upward social mobility. As peasant clients, party members can hope for improved irrigation systems, preferential treatment by state bureaucrats, and priority in development projects. A similar dynamic occurred in the Iraqi Ba'th regime. The UPRONA in Burundi, conversely, did not possess similar fiscal capacity and, therefore, has a more difficult time building extensive networks of patronage and extending its outreach beyond its immediate constituency.

Dominant Minorities and National Identity

Denial of majority-group access to political participation has often been accompanied by manipulation of overarching identities. In South Africa, the official ideology unified the Europeans into a single white nation and excluded the majority from membership in the nation. The nonwhites were separated into nine tribal national groups, who were denationalised when the regime established nine separate tribal states, known as Bantustans, for them on about 13 percent of the land (Adam and Moodley 2005: 51-53).

In other instances, authoritarian regimes promoted a unifying national ideology or a supra-ethnic identity by introducing notions of collective historical memory and shared destiny. The ideologies, used as tools to control majorities, were often advanced using coercive means. In Burundi, for example, the Bagaza government (1976-87) outlawed the usage of ethnic group names, while Kirundi, Burundi's official language, became the only language of instruction in schools. Meanwhile, the Ba'th regimes in Iraq and Syria attempted to promote a Pan-Arab identity and downplay religious differentiation. The official doctrine of the party declares that language, rather than religion or sect, is definitive of national identity (Baram 1989: 448). At the same time, Saddam Husayn added the phrase 'Allah u-Akbar' onto the Iraqi flag to stress factors uniting Muslims, whether Shi'ites and Sunnis, and to emphasise that the regime, despite Ba'th official secular ideology, was in practice friendly to its religious constituents. Likewise, Syrian television has been regularly broadcasting mosque attendance by the Alawi president. In the same vein, the Iran-Iraq war was referred to as Qadissiyat-Saddam, evoking an old mythical war that unified Arabs against Persians and facilitated the spread of Islam eastwards. The Ba'th regimes in both countries have often tried to portray themselves as leaders in the common Arab goal against shared enemies including Israel and "the West" (Seale and Butler 1996).

What we therefore find in postcolonial societies where there is no organic link between dominant ethnies and the state, is a recourse to an inclusive national ideology. These nationalisms are of the 'missionary' type described by Kumar and Roshwald. (Kumar 2003; Roshwald 2006:185-186) In other words, the nation views itself through a lens of universalist ideology, as the leading (if not chosen) missionary

for the wider idea. In its exploits for the greater cause, recognised by others, the nation is glorified and attains its identity. In the Syrian and Iraqi cases - as with Egypt and Jordan - the nation serves as an exemplar of pan-Arabism. Similarly, in Julius Nyerere's Tanzania, national identity was realised through service to pan-Africanism and nonaligned socialism. In each case, the ideology is ostensibly supranational, but the focal point remains the bounded nation, which accrues glory for its contribution to the wider cause.

In many postcolonial societies, coalition politics is common, in which a dominant minority mobilises a wider ethnic coalition around it and crafts a more inclusive, missionary, national identity. Such ideologies need not be completely inclusive, and often exclude at the pan-ethnic level. We have already seen how Syrian and Iraqi 'civic' pan-Arabism grated against non-Arab minorities like the Kurds. This is also true of Iran's Shi'a Islamic national identity after 1979, which includes some 92 percent of the population, but excludes the 7-8 percent non-Shia minority.

Of course, national identity can be more ethnically explicit in its exclusivity. Here dominant ethnicity and nationhood substantially overlap as concepts, though the definition of the nation remains contested by minorities and by moderates within the dominant ethnies. Thus the Bété of southern Côte D'Ivoire, led by Laurent Gbagbo's FPI party, have mobilised a coalition of southern 'autochthonous' Ivoirian ethnies (Bété, Dida, Neyo, Bakwe, Kroumen, Guéré) against northerners who are often portrayed as 'foreigners'. Ivoirité, a kind of southern pan-ethnic nationalism, became the official state ideology, a divisive narrative precipitated by paramilitaries who began to carry out violent ethnic pogroms against those of northern origin after 2002. (Marshall-Fratani 2006: 21-32) The same could be said about the Islamist identity of northern Nigerian states or Sudan and its alienating effect on their Christian fellow nationals. (Laitin 1998) Indeed, in much of Africa, ethnicity has an 'onion'-like quality, with dominant ethnic minorities leading pan-ethnic majority coalitions, each with its own ethno-national project. (Fereé 2004) This may in turn be combined with a more inclusive missionary-style civic nationalism, but the glue of socialism, pan-Africanism and other postcolonial ideologies has lost potency with the demise of the Cold War and the rise of democratisation - all of which places the accent on solid ethnic coalitions. The upshot is that secure dictators could more easily flirt with inclusive identities than their more insecure democratic successors who must placate an ethnic electoral base.

The Decline of Minority Dominance

The prevalence of minority dominance began to change, as we know, after 1789. Once power was vested in the nation and popular sovereignty replaced the principle of the divine right of kings, the stage was set for majorities to usurp the 'illegitimate' rule of dominant minorities. Nationalism and democracy went hand in hand. In lands where 'foreign' rulers were dominant (i.e. Habsburgs in the Czech lands, British in Ireland), dominant minorities came under pressure to leave. In other cases, aristocratic ethnies (i.e. English, Turkish, French, Italian) successfully negotiated the pitfalls of modernity and penetrated down the social scale, homogenising diverse dialect zones. These groups effectively transmuted themselves from dominant ethnic minorities into dominant ethnic majorities. In the latter set of cases, dynasts (where not killed by Republicans) were elbowed aside by democratic rulers but granted a symbolic role as monarchs in the new nation-states. This in contrast to the provinces of multi-ethnic empires where 'foreign' aristocratic ethnies like the Ottoman Turks, Austro-Germans, Baltic Russians or Anglo-Irish were driven from power and excised from the nation.

As Wimmer notes, the nationalist revolution is also an ethnic revolution in which the dominant 'native' ethnic group is elevated and ethnic minorities (including formerly dominant minorities) are expelled or marginalised. (Wimmer 2002)

Among the elite minorities who lost in the transition to modernity or during processes of democratisation, we might include: 'the Manchus in China and the Tatars in Russia; in Africa pockets of former European colonists left in Kenya, the Maghreb and pre-eminently, since 1994, the Afrikaners of South Africa, and the Arabs of Zanzibar; in Latin America possibly one could count the Spanish-descended Creoles after the Mestizos or mixed bloods seized power from them; and in Europe the Anglo-Irish and the various German, Hungarian and Turkish communities which were left outside of their former homelands' (Wright 2004: 32). To this list we might add the former Russian minorities in the Baltic and Central Asia after the collapse of the USSR; Serbs of Kosovo, Bosnia and Croatia post-Milosevic; the Americo-Liberians and white Rhodesians, Tutsi of Burundi, and the Sunnis of Iraq. The latter two groups saw their decline following recent elections. In both cases, the transition has been painful and accompanied by civil wars. The result of the 1993 election in Burundi (the country's first open election since 1965) that saw a Hutu majority win proved unacceptable to the Tutsi-dominated elite. As a result, a bloody civil war ensued. The transition to majority rule only consolidated with the help of an internationally brokered peace agreement in 2003. The agreement provided constitutional provisions for protecting the previously privileged minority, yet ultimately enabled an elected majority Hutu government to take over in 2005. Meanwhile, the demise of minority rule in Iraq has yet to produce a clear outcome. A new constitution in 2005 enabled an election for a 275-member Council of Representatives. The outcome of the elections demonstrated the salience of the sectarian cleavages, yet the democratisation process has been held back as Sunni insurgents have been resisting the new regime.

We could also include groups which benefited from higher status (though not necessarily dominance) by allying themselves with the colonisers. These would include ethnies as diverse as Tamils in Sri Lanka, Ambonese in Indonesia, Lozi of Zambia and trading minorities of South Asians in Africa, Chinese in Southeast Asia, or Lebanese in Africa and the Caribbean. (Horowitz 1985:192). Trading minorities are the subject of Amy Chua's recent (2002) work, which draws attention to their vulnerable situation due to decolonisation and democratisation, which removed much of their protection and legitimacy. Globalisation adds fuel to the populist fire by sharpening economic disparities between elite trading minorities and impoverished (but newly empowered) dominant majorities. This cocktail can lead to majority reprisals against trading minorities, extending to pogroms (as in Uganda or Indonesia) or even genocide. (Chua 2002) The so-called 'third wave' of democratisation after 1989 has accelerated a pattern of majoritisation which began in 1789, gained momentum after 1914-18, and entered onto a wider plane with decolonisation. Secession and democracy are thus the midwives which give birth to newly empowered dominant majorities and downwardly mobile elite minorities. International norms shift from recognising the claims of suzerainty to those of self-determination. (Mayall 1994: 275) Even if a separatist minority achieves mere autonomy rather than independence, the pole of dominance can be reversed. In this sense, the Anglo-Canadians of Quebec after 1960 have much in common with the English in post-1960s Scotland or Castilians of post-Franco Catalonia in experiencing downward symbolic mobility. (Zuelow 1998)

Dominant Majorities and National Identity

As early as 1971, Walker Connor drew attention to the fact that even though more than 90 percent of the world's 132 states were multi-ethnic, over 70 percent of states had an ethnic majority. (Connor 1994: 96) The breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, coupled with a number of successful secessionist movements means that the proportion with a majority has increased. Thus a more recent dataset covering 151 countries finds that just 27 (18 percent) lack a majority ethnic group. Even among the 27 states which lacked a majority in 1998, 14 had a plurality of over 40 percent, a further 9 had a plurality group of 30-40 percent, with just two, Kenya (22 percent Kikuyu) and Liberia (19 percent Kpelle) having fewer. This overstates ethno-demographic dominance to some degree, given that Alawi were classed as Arab, Taiwanese as Chinese, and some other nested minorities aggregated into their pan-ethnic groups. But even if we disaggregate these groups, this only adds 9 new dominant groups (20 if we include whites in tropical Latin America). Most states without a majority possess a healthy plurality group.² In other words, there are as few deeply multicultural states as there are monocultural ones.

The near-universal presence of ethnic majorities (or pluralities) in the world mattered less when power accrued to a minority. However, the modern shift in power from dominant minorities to majorities raises questions about the relationship between dominant majority ethnicity and the national identity of the state. Earlier, we saw how dominant minorities in postcolonial settings pursued a dual strategy of reinforcing their own ethnic identity and privileges while simultaneously crafting a more inclusive national identity (such as pan-Arabism) at the state level. The same appears true for dominant pluralities and majorities. They, too, may be drawn to missionary nationalism in order to smooth legitimacy among their minority constituents. Iran's post-1979 Shi'a Islamism and Jordan's Hashemite pan-Arabism provide examples of missionary nationalisms carried by dominant ethnies (Persians, Transjordanians) which comprise a plurality of the population. The same is true of Ghana, where the 40-45 percent Akan ethnic plurality - incarnated in the person of Kwame Nkrumah - sponsored a missionary national identity based on pan-Africanism and nonaligned socialism. (Brown 2000) In the southern Caribbean states of Belize, Suriname and Trinidad, Creoles of African descent (comprising a plurality or bare majority of the population) have managed to emerge as dominant ethnic groups, taking over from white settlers after decolonisation. Here, national identities based on creolised English or Dutch language and customs have come to be accepted, in part if not wholesale, by Asian minorities. Creole legitimacy rests upon their earlier arrival as manumitted slaves (predating Indian indentured labourers), higher degree of integration into the colonial power structure and European culture, and their earlier urbanisation. (St. Hilaire 2001)

Nonetheless, ethnic boundaries remain and ethnic politics lurks beneath the veneer of civic nationalism. This can be seen in Nkrumah's anti-Ewe rhetoric in 1970s Ghana, designed in part to placate the sentiments of the dominant Akan (Ashanti) ethnie. Even Nkrumah's more 'inclusive' successor, Jerry Rawlings, felt obliged to appear in Akan traditional dress to appeal to his core constituency even as he preached the rhetoric of an inclusive pan-African, socialist nationalism. (Brown 2000: 115-16) In Singapore, Lee Kwan Yew's inclusive national identity based on 'Asian values' did not prevent Chinese dominant ethnicity being reinforced by immigration

² I am indebted to Tatu Vanhanen for this dataset. For further details, see (Vanhanen 1999).

policies favouring ethnic Chinese over Malays and Indians (in order to maintain the ethnic balance) or 'speak Mandarin' campaigns of the 1980s. (Brown 2000: 94-101) In Iran, the Persian language and the dominance of ethnic Persians remains, despite its official missionary nationalism based on Shi'a Islam. Socially, Persians remain a dominant group, with non-Persians (i.e. Azeris, Kurds) experiencing varying degrees of exclusion in public life outside their ethnic regions. This does not preclude an important role for Azeris in the national project, however.¹ Meanwhile, in Jordan, electoral gerrymandering has successfully kept the slender Palestinian majority from achieving control, despite the official rhetoric of pan-Arab unity. (Frisch 2002) In Trinidad, Asian and Creole parties continue to conflict, despite the presence of certain unifying Creole-influenced symbols such as cricket and Caribbean cuisine.

In other cases, dominant ethnicity dominates unabashedly as ethnic nationalism, maintaining little pretence of neutrality. Apartheid South Africa, Malaysia, Fiji after the 2000 coup, Côte d'Ivoire, pre-1972 Northern Ireland, Israel, post-independence Estonia, Croatia and Latvia furnish contemporary examples. Even if dominant majority elites are receptive to minority claims in the name of national unity, they often accede to pressure from their ethnic base. In contemporary Iraq, for example, Sunni violence has often been met by calls from the Shiite-dominated government for Iraqi unity. Major Shi'a party leaders like Muqtada al-Sadr have also tried to take a broader, national perspective. However, this has prompted resistance from grassroots Shi'a, who demand that the leadership acknowledge their Shi'a and not merely Iraqi identity, name Sunnis as perpetrators, and minister more directly to Shi'a sectarian concerns by endorsing violent responses to Sunni attacks. (*Al Askari Mosque Destroyed Sparking Sectarian Violence* 2006)

Likewise, in Northern Ireland, attempts by reforming Unionist Prime Ministers of Northern Ireland like Terence O'Neill (1966-69), James Chichester-Clark (1969-71) and Brian Faulkner (1971-74) to water down Protestant privileges in housing, electoral districting and public employment in the name of Northern Ireland's 'British' unity were met by extensive popular Unionist revolt. Dominant majority ethnicity - expressed through both the mainstream Orange Order and Ulster Unionist Party as well as the independent Unionism of Ian Paisley - resulted in the downfall of these reformist Protestant politicians. As with David Trimble a quarter of a century later, each leader had relied on hardline ethnic credentials to gain power, but, once at the helm, softened their rhetoric in favour of cross-community reconciliation at the behest of the British government. In the final analysis, the official narrative of an inclusive, nonsectarian Britishness was derailed by Ulster-Protestant ethnic concerns. (Kaufmann 2007; Patterson and Kaufmann. 2007)

Dominant Ethnicity's Persistence in the Modern West

The Northern Ireland example shows that dominant ethnicity is as pervasive within as outwith the West. The American case is especially noteworthy, since official American universalist rhetoric on liberalism ('all men are created equal') contrasted so sharply with the reality of white, Anglo-Protestant dominance in the pre-1965 period. This dissonance has been expressed by thinkers as diverse as Ralph Waldo Emerson ('double consciousness') in the 1840s and Gunnar Myrdal ('An American Dilemma') in the 1940s. As in contemporary Jordan or pre-1972 Northern Ireland, minority voters were disenfranchised using indirect measures. Catholics and Jews, concentrated in the urban northeast, were neutralised by malapportioned congressional districts which gave the largely white Protestant countryside an

enormous advantage over the polyglot cities. (Kaufmann 2004b) Poll taxes, cumbersome electoral registration procedures or literacy tests (as well as local intimidation) simultaneously silenced the black vote in the lowland South. Meanwhile, exclusive social networks and overt discrimination helped ensure Anglo-Protestant domination of top echelons of the military, cabinet, corporations and Ivy League universities until the 1960s. (Mills 1956: 60; Anderson 1970: 143-45) The equivalent metaphor for pre-1970 Canadian WASP hegemony is the 'vertical mosaic' in which British Canadians dominated despite talk of Canadian multiethnicity. (Porter 1965)

Thus we can see, in both developed and developing countries, that various indirect techniques can maintain *de facto* dominant ethnicity, even in the absence of *de jure* hegemony. Poll taxes, language and literacy tests may exclude potential voters, as in Estonia or Latvia, where a significant proportion of ethnic Russian residents are non-citizens and thus cannot vote. Candidate selection and recruitment in major parties can discriminate against ethnic outsiders running for office or gaining high positions within the government, military or police force. Immigrant minorities in developed countries may even acquiesce in this cultural hegemony by pushing members of the dominant group to the top of their secular organisations, as with the mainly British and Irish ancestry of many twentieth century American labour, Catholic church and city leaders, whose membership, parishioners or electorate were mainly southern and Eastern European in origin.

That said, the New Left has, since the 1960s, concentrated its liberal-egalitarian scrutiny ever more closely upon covert dominant ethnic practices in western countries. This has expanded to encompass post-2004 EU accession states like Latvia and Estonia, which have been called to account for denying citizenship to Baltic-born ethnic Russians who have failed to pass language tests and surmount other bureaucratic hurdles. (Jurado 2006) Liberal 'best practices' promoted by the OSCE and European Commission even extend to non-discriminatory immigration and refugee policies, thereby directly challenging ethno-national congruence. These have also, in the much looser guise of global, 'postnational' norms (Soysal 1994), prompted non-European societies like Japan or the Gulf Arab states to pay lip service to principles of ethnic neutrality, even if they do not, in practice, abide by them.

Increasingly, therefore, we find that dominant ethnicity is being challenged, at least in some western societies. This comes about as a consequence of ideas about multiculturalism and immigration, which inserts a wedge between dominant ethnies (often majorities) and 'their' nation-state. (Kaufmann 2004a) Whereas traditional leftist politics tended to ignore cultural divisions in favour of economic disparities, the New Left and its heirs now stress race and culture more than class. This places traditional left politics in direct conflict with dominant ethnicity. The greater reliance of the native working class on their ethnic identities as a source of status, coupled with the declining salience of class issues for left-wing parties, helps explain why sections of the native working class in western Europe have switched their allegiance from socialist to far right or centre-right parties. (Betz and Immerfall. 1998)

State narratives of nationhood stress inclusion and forward-looking projects, hence the 'Britishness' of Gordon Brown and New Labour, or the 'civic nationalism' of the Parti Québécois, Scottish National Party or Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya. Explicit ethnic nationalism exists mostly on the far right of the political spectrum and few contemplate the notion of the state speaking in the name of a particular ethnic group, as in pre-1972 Northern Ireland or in Israel. (Smootha 2002) But between these poles, and beneath the canopy of 'inclusive' state discourse, we still

find the old cut-and-thrust of ethnic interaction and conflict, in which the dominant group remains a more-or-less cohesive sociological actor. It may not overtly speak its name, but dominant ethnicity persists and becomes increasingly self-conscious in proportion to the degree it feels embattled by immigration, affirmative action and multiculturalism. (Gallagher 1997)

In this sense, there is a difference between the ethnic nationalism identified by Smith, Brubaker, Kohn and others - a situation where dominant ethnicity and state nationhood neatly overlap and constitute each other - and the increasingly common occurrence in which an inclusive 'civic' nationalism at the official level coexists with dominant ethnicity in the 'lower' echelons of civil society. Inclusive state citizenship is prevalent in the public sphere, but more exclusive dominant ethnic narratives and boundaries persist in civil society, the private sphere, and the interstices of the public sphere. These currents occasionally intrude into national politics in the guise of issues like immigration, crime, cultural policy or concerns about welfare abuse, but even if not as apparent at the national level, dominant ethnicity in the West is politically expressed at the local level in ethnically diverse wards, cities and regions. The British National Party, for example, has no parliamentary presence, but in May 2006 posted its best ever showing in local elections, and now controls 55 English councils.

The emergence of a distinct sense of dominant ethnicity (as distinct from state-nationality) is evident from recent British research. For example, the proportion of respondents in England identifying themselves as 'English not British' in surveys has increased from 30 to 40 percent between 1992 and 2005. (*Economist* 2007) Whereas fans once waved the British Union Jack at England football matches, the *English* Cross of St. George has taken its place, and its display in the windows of homes and vehicles serves as a badge of English ethnicity. This text runs in parallel to the waves of inclusive 'Britishness' discourse propounded by successive British governments and reaching a crescendo under Gordon Brown's Labour Party. Meanwhile, debates over immigration and integration in many European and Anglo-Saxon settler societies expose the social division between 'natives' (dominant ethnies) and 'foreigners' at local level - facts which fit uneasily within an official story of inclusive state nationalism.

'White flight' from diverse areas to more homogeneous locales is one of the most important forms of modern western dominant ethnicity since it latently reconstitutes ethnic boundaries without the need for the kind of manifest ethno-nationalist politics which would violate the acutely developed liberal norms of western societies. Michael Walzer rues these trends, instead defending the power of

The sovereign state ...to make its own admissions policy, to control and sometimes restrain the flow of immigrants...The distinctiveness of cultures and groups depends upon closure and, without it, cannot be conceived as a stable feature of human life. If this distinctiveness is a value, as most people...seem to believe, then closure must be permitted somewhere. (Walzer 1983: 39)

Walzer favours national immigration restrictions over free immigration and private ethnic segregation since he reasons that national cohesion can better maintain social welfare systems, cultures and common goals than ethnically segregated enclaves. (Chang 2007: 9) Proponents of multiculturalism (Banting and Kymlicka 2006), conversely, have argued that ethnic diversity does not inevitably lead to the decline of the welfare state. Indeed, many western states have opted for policies that run counter to Walzer's hopes, choosing the path of relatively open nation-states

coupled with voluntary ethnic segregation. Given the decline of ethnically-selective immigration criteria in many western countries by 1970 (Joppke 2005), and the high levels of immigration experienced since then, it is plausible to argue that dominant ethnicity has thereby been demoted in the public arena.

In the 1990s, for example, the leading American immigration destinations were also the least attractive cities for the native-born. Los Angeles and New York City, for example, received between 1 and 1.5 million immigrants apiece during 1990-1998, but simultaneously shed 1.5 to 2 million native-born Americans. (Frey and DeVol. 2000) Likewise, Amsterdam (pop. 740,000) became officially half nonwhite in 2005, a process driven by immigrants and their children settling in the city, but accentuated by the departure of 30,000 ethnic Dutch residents in the 1990s alone. (Alexander 2007: 165) This inverse relationship between international and domestic migration makes little economic sense because economic magnets should attract native and foreign-born workers alike.

The rise of multiculturalism, in combination with 30-40 years of below-replacement fertility among native white populations in Europe and North America, is powering a demographic revolution that will reduce the size of ethnic majorities in western countries. In the United States, the 'browning of America' will reduce the white racial category (*alias* the white pan-ethnic majority) to just 50 percent by 2050. (Kaufmann 2004b: 274) In Britain, similar dynamics will, on current trends, decrease the proportion of whites from the current 92 percent to just 75 percent by 2050, declining to as little as 30-40 percent by 2100. (Coleman 2005; Coleman 2006) Does this mean we will come full-circle, with dominant majorities declining to minority status through immigration and low native fertility?

Such an outcome seems unlikely. Indeed, projections in both the United States and Europe show considerable growth in the 'mixed-race' population, driven by soaring rates of interracial marriage. (Coleman 2005; Edmonston and Smith 1997) In addition, there is evidence for the 'whitening' postulate in that mixed-race individuals in Britain overwhelmingly prefer white marriage partners to those of other racial categories. (Voas 2006) When we consider the expansion of the definition of the dominant 'white' ethnic group in the United States in the period since the 1960s to encompass white Catholics and Jews (and even mixed-race Hispanics and Asians), it becomes conceivable that dominant ethnic groups can maintain their majority even in the face of massive immigration. Assimilation, minority desires for 'whitening' and pan-ethnic coalition, and, occasionally, boundary expansion, allows the dominant ethnic to adapt, counteracting demographic decline. The same could be said for Mexico's *Mestizo* dominant ethnic, which has successfully assimilated numerous indigenous people into its ranks since its ascent to dominance in 1917. (Brading 2001) All told, the modern shift from dominant minority to dominant majority ethnicity seems, like the nation-state, to be an indelible process which will continue into the foreseeable future.

Conclusion

This article takes the often overlooked phenomenon of dominant ethnicity as its subject matter. Our central argument is that there has been a long-running shift from dominant minority to dominant majority ethnicity which parallels the rise of the modern nation-state. This is driven by modern ideas of popular sovereignty and nationalism, which stress majority rule and the rule of 'like over like'. (Wimmer 1997: 635) Nonetheless, dominant ethnic dynamics must be distinguished from national

ones - national identities are usually contested and cast their symbolic net well beyond that of the dominant ethnies. We begin by considering dominant minority ethnies (and sects) in postcolonial societies, focusing in particular on the cases of Syria, Rwanda and Iraq. We note that politically dominant minorities in modern states: normally owe their dominant position to colonial legacies; rely on coercive policies while building a narrow societal support base; and attempt to forge links to wider national identities. The disjuncture between dominant ethnicity and national identity is especially pronounced in these societies - where the two narratives seem to run in parallel with little 'organic' connection between them. Democratisation and secession lead to the rise of dominant ethnic majorities (or pluralities) and the demise of dominant ethnic minorities. We find that there are few cases of dominant minorities remaining in the world, and these (i.e. Syria, Bahrain) are typically associated with authoritarian or imperfectly democratised regimes. Finally, we consider the vicissitudes of dominant ethnicity in the West. Strong ethnic majorities, often umbilically connected to 'their' nation-states, have recently come under pressure from liberal-multicultural norms and global migration. This has driven a wedge between dominant ethnies and 'their' increasingly inclusive national identities, bringing them into closer alignment with postcolonial tendencies. In addition, the demographic preponderance of dominant majorities in the West is waning due to immigration and low native fertility. Though this raises the possibility of a return to the premodern condition of dominant minority ethnicity, we deem this an unlikely outcome given the propensity for many dominant ethnies to assimilate newcomers and forge pan-ethnic coalitions to retain numerical control.

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¹ Azeris like Ahmadinedjad are a partial exception, forming a strong cadre within the current government and playing an important historic role in the elite of the country.