

# Introduction

This thesis aims to examine the concept of ethnic domination and its manifestations in deeply divided places. In brief, ethnic domination can be defined as a means of managing ethnic differences in multiethnic contexts through asymmetrical power relations, in accordance with collective distinctions of an ethnonationalist ideology, whereby a group is subordinated to another holding the critical power, albeit not intent to directly eliminate the subaltern.

In the introduction and the first chapter, I shall deal with two core conceptualizations, namely ethnicity and the state, by proposing a 'constructivist-structural' approach towards ethnicity and emphasizing the role of the nationalizing state as an instrument of domination. When this process structures the ordinary politics, a hybrid political regime, the hegemonic ethnic state, could be revealed. Accordingly, I shall analyze Israel and Estonia, two prototypical cases of ethnic domination (also examined as 'most similar' cases). The Israeli and Estonian examples would be helpful to observe six features, detected by operationalizing ethnic domination properties on three political-institutional dimensions: (i) state-citizenship; (ii) government-parliament; (iii) parties and party system. Afterwards, an overarching classification of political regimes and a definition of democracy in plural societies would be articulated.

Secondly, I shall scrutinize the empirical cases in detail. In fact, Israel (considered within the Green Line) and Estonia have sizeable ethnonational minorities: the Palestinian citizens of Israel and the Russian-speaking group of the Soviet diaspora in Estonia. Moreover, they are dominated by majority groups (the Estonian and the Jewish) embracing ethnonational ideologies (Zionism and res-

torationism). The variables of ethnic domination would be thus retraced in the Estonian and Israeli experiences. In fact, both countries (i) adopt state centrism and hierarchizing citizenship policies in constitutional norms that disenfranchise or discourage minority participation; (ii) encompass ethnic majoritarianism in government formation practices despite electoral preferences and the (mostly ethnic) opposition; and finally (iii) reinforce ethnic cleavages in the ethnic party system in order to exclude minority parties or soften, through patronage or co-optation, minority claims.

Finally, I will discuss the findings of the comparison. After having problematized the relations between ethnic domination and political stability, the different trajectories of the two countries considered, namely the tightening of the condition of the Palestinian citizens of Israel and the democratic evolution of ethnic politics in Estonia, will be diachronically connected to internal and external factors.