

**Ethnic Minority Alliance in the Making – Similar Context, Different Patterns.
Theorising Minority-Majority Coalitions in Post-Cold War Central Eastern
Europe. Lessons from Romania and Bulgaria**

Abstract

This project takes insight from the social movement, ethnic parties, and ethnic conflict literature and asks under what institutional opportunity structures ethnic minority parties choose to enter coalitions with majority political groupings. By focusing on two post-authoritarian countries in the Balkan region (Romania and Bulgaria), it scrutinises why parties representing the main ethnic minority groups and activating in a similar post-authoritarian environment have nevertheless pursued coalitions with the governing parties at different times and in a different temporal pattern on their domestic electoral arenas. The proposed model takes into account an inter-play of three explanatory variables and argues that a combined high level of international support and domestic political liberalisation in connection with low kin state pressure are conducive to ethnic parties' de-radicalisation and their entering into coalition patterns with other non-ethnic parties. While taking an innovative stand in the ethnic politics literature, this project argues that when politics normalize, that is when the domestic and international environment is perceived by ethnic parties as stable and improving the condition of minorities, ethnic parties serve the role of stability for a democratic regime by entering such domestic political power-sharing agreements.