

**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 the analysis on two post-totalitarian 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 variables and argues that a combined high level 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. Furthermore, this project argues that international organisations' pressure has no direct effect on ethnic parties' choice of alliance making. Consequently, while taking an innovative stand in the ethnic politics literature, this project argues that only 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.

Introduction

What accounts for the pursuit of political coalitions between ethnic minority¹ and majority parties in the multi-ethnic post-Cold War Central and Eastern European environment? Why have the main ethnic parties activating in a similar legislative and political environment in Romania and Bulgaria pursued coalitions with the governing parties at different times and at a different length in their domestic electoral arenas? What accounts for variation in the choice of coalition-making between ethnic minority and majority groups in the Central and Eastern European region? Answering such puzzling questions appears highly important in the policy-making and academic

¹ Throughout the paper, I shall use interchangeably the terms, national minority, ethnic group and ethnic minority.

arenas in the context in which the ethnic politics environment appears closely associated with the democratic stability and survival of a political regime.²

Conflicting dynamics between minority and majority ethnic groups in Eastern Europe have been a recurring issue of concern for policy makers and scholars since the dismantling of multi-cultural empires at the end of World War I. The subsequent creation of states containing multiple ethnic minorities and holding a history of violent conflict with majority groups has created a general unstable environment throughout the inter-war era. Following World War II, the past legacy of conflict and violence has been artificially contained by the CEE's totalitarian states' elites through repressive practices in which majority groups have attempted to subordinate and assimilate their national minorities. However, these practices have been unsuccessful and the saliency of the unresolved ethnic issue bounced back violently in the uncertain climate of transitions to democratic rule occurring in the CEE region in the 1990s.

One specific aspect of concern in understanding the conflicting dynamics involving majority and minority groups and their repercussions on the stability of a democratic regime has been the mobilization strategies pursued by ethnic parties.³ Since the end of the communist rule, political parties representing minority ethnic groups have emerged across Eastern Europe. In the context of a highly heterogeneous environment and since ethnicity has been theorized as a particular historical salient social cleavage⁴ it is of no surprise that ethnic groups have become politically active at the outbreak of the totalitarian rule. In light of the presence and mobilization of ethnic groups on domestic arenas in newly established democratic regimes, it becomes particularly important to understand how their claims and strategies pursued may undermine or on the contrary improve the legitimacy and stability of democratic rule.

² See among others, K. Chandra, "Why Ethnic Parties Succeed", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004; J. K. Birnir, "Ethnicity and Electoral Politics", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007; D. Horowitz, "Ethnic Groups in Conflict", Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985; A. Lijphart, "Democracy in Plural Societies", New Haven, Yale University press, 1977; S. Saideman, "The Ties That Divide: Ethnic Politics, Foreign Policy, and International Conflict" New York, Columbia University Press, 2001; D.L Van Cott, "From Movement to Parties in Latin America. The Evolution of Ethnic Politics", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

³ above, n. 2.

⁴ G. Evans, S. Whitefield, "Identifying the Bases of Party Competition in Eastern Europe", *British Journal of Political Science*, 23/4, 1993.

Despite a few specific studies in the ethnic politics field, the literature on the behaviour and role of ethnic parties in domestic and international politics is very scarce.⁵ The existent relevant academic studies pursue two major diverging trends in attempting to explain the linkage between ethnic electoral politics and democratic stability. On the one hand, “skeptical” authors believe that the mere presence of ethnic parties and their leaders following an ethnic message in electoral politics hold a major destabilizing effect for the domestic policies of the polity in question.⁶ On the other hand, more recent “optimistic” research argues that the participation of ethnic parties in the domestic political life represents an important positive factor for the degree of stability of the democratic state in question.⁷ In any case, both fields illustrate the importance of the ethnic party factor in connection with the stability of a democratic regime.

While the relevance of the political participation of national minorities in the policy-making of the state and its relation to the stability and the survival of democracy existent in a country are acknowledged as portrayed above, not much has been written on the significance of the actual strategies pursued by ethnic parties in advancing their goals on the political arena. With the exception of a few authors who have touched upon the role of the strategies that ethnic political parties pursue vis-à-vis the democratic stability of their polity⁸, this area of political science is quite innovative. Henceforth, it becomes both academically interesting and important from a policy-making perspective to understand what kind of a political environment is more conducive to a specific type of alliance that one ethnic party pursues.

⁵ Some of the most relevant and recent academic studies of ethnic electoral politics that may be connected to this project are the following: K. Chandra, “Why Ethnic Parties Succeed”, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004; J. K. Birnir, “Ethnicity an Electoral Politics”, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, and D.L Van Cott, “From Movement to Parties in Latin America. The Evolution of Ethnic Politics”, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

⁶ See R. Dahl, “Polyarchy”, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1971; D. Horowitz, “Ethnic Groups in Conflict”, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985; A. Lijphart, “Democracy in Plural Societies”, New Haven, Yale University press, 1977.

⁷ J. K. Birnir, “Ethnicity an Electoral Politics”, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

⁸ K. Chandra, “Why Ethnic Parties Succeed”, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004; K. Chandra, “Ethnic Parties and Democratic Stability”, *Perspective on Politics*, 3(2), 2005; J. K. Birnir, “Ethnicity an Electoral Politics”, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007; S. Alonso, “Enduring Ethnicity: the Political Survival of Incumbent Ethnic Parties in Western Democracies”, Working Paper 2005/221, Madrid, Juan March Institute.

In light of the results of the previous research on ethnic coalition-making⁹, this project considers that the mere creation of coalitions between minority and majority groups is a step forward in moderating the claims pursued by the minority party; consequently, such power sharing arrangements may represent a step forward towards easing tensions between two ethnic groups since they intrinsically provide a deliberative setting in which former enemies become partners with the incentive of moderating claims while aiming at compromised solutions from both sides.

Consequently, given the importance of multicultural alliance-making for the stability of the democratic political regime, this study focuses specifically on the activity of ethnic parties on the domestic political scene while scrutinizing their pursuit of coalitions with majority groups. By taking insights from the social movement literature, and through the use of process tracing of case studies of in a time longitudinal analysis, I ask under what political opportunity structures do ethnic minority parties choose to enter political arrangements with majority ethnic parties in post-totalitarian transitions to democracy in Eastern Europe? While looking at the salience of the ethnic issue in electoral politics, I scrutinize what triggers a change in the strategy of an ethnic party to shift from one type of alliance to another in time. Through my research, I aim to remedy the existent literature gap as well as the existing empirical and conceptual limitations by developing a dynamic theoretical model through the testing of a set of three independent variables: the international organizations' level of influence, the level of domestic political liberalization of national minority rights in the polity, and the effect of the kin state of the minority group under study.

The theoretical framework is applied in connection with two case-studies in the post-cold war Eastern European region: Romania and Bulgaria. The two cases share a number of similar attributes with regards to the general political environment as well as structural factors such as the level of territorial cohesiveness or the past legacy of discrimination in their countries. Nevertheless, it becomes puzzling that despite such existing similarities the main ethnic parties in Romania, and Bulgaria have pursued coalition-making with majority groups at different times and at different length in their domestic political arenas; the Bulgarian party entering much faster

⁹ P. Mitchells, G. Evans, B. O'Leary, "Extremist Outbidding on Ethnic Parties is not Inevitable: Tribune Parties in Northern Ireland", LSE Working Paper 6, London, 2006, available at http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1077760

coalition movements and staying in power for a much longer period of time than the Hungarian party in Romania. So, what explains such shift in coalition-making and a different timing of choice among these ethnic parties? The puzzle is even enhanced when put against previous research findings that illustrate that ethnic parties that follow their ethno-nationalist program and thus act individually on their political arenas are relatively immune against electoral punishment and tend to preserve their electorate and even enhance their base of support in time.¹⁰

In presenting my theoretical contribution to the ethnic politics literature, I make the claim 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.

This study shall be divided as follows. First, I provide definitions of the key terms employed in the study, namely ethnic group, and ethnic mobilization, and ethnic party. Second, I present the main theoretical arguments existent on ethnic politics. Third, I present my own theoretical model and contribution to the specific segment of institutionalist literature focused on the relationship between opportunity structures and ethnic parties' strategies. Fourth, I present empirical illustrations of the main Hungarian and Turkish parties' coalition-making strategies undertaken in post-Cold war Romania, and Bulgaria. Finally, I present my conclusive remarks summarizing the results of the study.

I. Main Definitions: Ethnic Groups, Ethnic Mobilisation, Ethnic Parties

Since this project presents an explanatory model for ethnic parties' political behaviour as exemplified through choices of coalition making with majority groups, I consider the definition of ethnic groups in a minimalist way. Such an open approach allows the model to be expanded to other multi-ethnic countries not considered in this study. Consequently, I dwell on the Weber's general definition which could be applied to large typologies of national minorities. He considers them as "those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent

¹⁰ S. Alonso, "Enduring Ethnicity: the Political Survival of Incumbent Ethnic Parties in Western Democracies", Working Paper 2005/221, Madrid, Juan March Institute.

because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation”.¹¹ Additionally, in light of the inevitable connection existent between ethnic parties and the international minority rights regime existent at the European level, I provide a more expanded legal definition proposed by the Council of Europe (CoE) that dwells on such continental frameworks and includes various elements that may be attributed to ethnic groups. They are “a group of persons in a state who: (a) reside on the territory of that state and are citizens thereof; (b) maintain longstanding, firm and lasting ties with that State; (c) display distinctive ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic characteristics; (d) are sufficiently representative, although smaller in number than the rest of the population of that state or of a region of the state; (e) are motivated by a concern to preserve together that which constitutes their common identity, including their culture, their tradition, their religion or their language.”¹²

Ethnic mobilisation is defined generally as the process by which groups organize around some feature of ethnic identity in pursuit of collective ends.¹³ However, in order to specifically connect ethnic mobilisation to the political competition existent in multi-ethnic democracies, I rely my analysis on the definition provided by Charles Tilly who considers it as the process by which ethnic group members utilize their ascriptive characteristics in order to enter the arena of political participation.¹⁴

In light of the lack of agreement in the literature vis-à-vis a specific definition of the ethnic party concept¹⁵, I dwell on Donna Lee van Cott’s characterization that provides a general and minimalist understanding of the concept. She defines the ethnic party as an organisation institutionally authorised to compete in local and national elections, and whose leadership auto-identifies itself as belonging to a non-dominant ethnic group, and whose political program includes claims and programs of

¹¹ M. Weber, “Economy and Society”, G. Roth, C. Wittich (eds.), University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978.

¹² Council of Europe Parliamentary Recommendation 1201 (1993) on an additional protocol to be adopted by the Assembly on February 1, 1993.

¹³ S. Olzak, “Contemporary Ethnic Mobilization”, *Annual review of Sociology*, 9/1983.

¹⁴ C. Tilly, “From Mobilization to Revolution”, Random House, New York, 1978.

¹⁵ See the differences in the definitions portrayed in D. L. Horowitz, “Ethnic Groups in Conflict”, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985 and L. de Winter, “Conclusion. A Comparative Analysis of the Electoral, Office and Policy Success of Ethnoregionalist Parties”, in L. De Winter, H. Türsan, Huri (eds.), “Regionalist Parties in Western Europe, London, Routledge 1998.

an ethnic and cultural nature.¹⁶ This allows for the inclusion of various political groupings championing the interests of a specific ethnic group in line with the minimalist definitions presented above.

The Existing Literature

The literature on ethnic politics is innovative in the political science field. Most studies have stemmed out of the ethnic conflict and ethnic mobilisation theories of the last few decades. There are nevertheless several major theoretical trends that explain ethnic parties' political mobilization and the choice of specific strategies undertaken in a multi-ethnic polity.

On the one hand, the primordialist theory is based on the assumption that ethnicity formulates the ultimate basis for violent intra-state conflicts.¹⁷ Primordialists argue that identities of nations are stable and based on either biological traits such as race, blood or common descent, or past shared practices.¹⁸ Through such pre-existing historical understandings that support their inherently exclusionist goals, ethnic groups can justify hostility with regards to other ethnic groups.¹⁹ Consequently, the logic behind the theory is that ethnic groups would mobilise, radicalise and not cooperate with the majority groups in order to support their secessionist goals of seceding from one state and joining their kin state or joining their own.²⁰

The consequence of taking a primordialist cultural view in the ethnic politics field is obvious when judging the stability of a democratic regime through the ethnic parties' participation within. Authors supporting this theoretical approach have emphasized that parties representing ethnic groups bring an inherent instability to a democratic polity for a number of reasons.²¹ First, an ethnically politicised society is believed to less likely acquire the minimal sense of a political community necessary

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¹⁷ D. Lake, D. Rothchild, D. (eds.), "The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation", Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998.

¹⁸ D. Lake, D. Rothchild, D. (eds.), "The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation", Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998.

¹⁹ D. Lake, D. Rothchild, D. (eds.), "The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation", Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998.

²⁰ E. K. Jenne, "Ethnic Bargaining. The Paradox of Minority Empowerment", Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2007.

²¹ D. Horowitz, "Ethnic Groups in Conflict", Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985.

for democracy to function than one in which the ethnic factor does not exist.²² Second, demands made by ethnic groups may be perceived as more radical and thus potentially destabilising than those made by non-ethnic groups.²³ Third, the politicisation of ethnic groups' claims is likely to lead towards the creation of a new nation or towards the division of the territory of the state in which they reside.²⁴ Consequently, from a primordialist account, the mere existence of an ethnic party is considered harmful to the stability of the democratic regime on whose electoral scene they activate.

Furthermore, such primordialist cultural accounts are based on the belief that an ethnic group's pre-existing preferences may explain party strategy. Rabushka and Shepsle argue that ethnic parties are forced to adopt extreme, exclusive preferences because voters demand them.²⁵ Such behaviour is understood as leading towards an ethnic outbidding scenario in which minority parties compete with each other by advancing more extreme platforms of actions and radicalising their demands.²⁶ Consequently, this may lead to a political polarisation of an ethnically divided society.

The problem with a theoretical model based on primordialist assumptions is their assumption of the ethnic factor as being constantly salient. In doing so, they do not provide explanations for the variation of ethnic demands in time. Certain groups may radicalise or de-radicalise at given moments, and primordialism through its rigidity cannot explain for instance, why an ethnic party would prefer to moderate its strategy by pursuing an electoral alliance with a political group belonging to the ethnic majority. A primordialist account of ethnic politics advocates radicalisation and further radicalisation while not accounting for the empirical reality in which many ethnic parties in multi-cultural societies in both Eastern and Western Europe have gradually moderated their initial exclusionary or separatist claims.

A second set of theories on ethnic conflict illustrate a more optimistic view of the role of ethnicity in promoting the stability of a democratic regime. Such theories

²² C. Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States", in "The Interpretation of Cultures". New York, Basic Books, 1973.

²³ K. Chandra, "Ethnic Parties and Democratic Stability", *Perspectives on Politics*, 3, 2/2005.

²⁴ C. Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States", in "The Interpretation of Cultures". New York, Basic Books, 1973.

²⁵ A. Rabushka, K. Shepsle, "Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability", Charles E. Merrill Publishing, Columbus, 1972.

²⁶ A. Rabushka, K. Shepsle, "Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability", Charles E. Merrill Publishing, Columbus, 1972.

vary from assessing structural or economic factors that play a role in the behaviour of an ethnic group vis-à-vis its host state to institutional or constructivist variables explaining ethnic conflict and the claims pursued by such groups. The importance put on such variables stems from the belief that individual ethnic identities are changeable and managed by political entrepreneurs.²⁷ Henceforth, depending on the opportunities that one ethnic group perceives in the political arena, its party strategy may fluctuate from a radicalisation of its demands to softening its claims.

Structural theoretical accounts explain ethnic political mobilisation by assessing the presence of specific factors such the ethnic group size, its territorial compactness, its location in a given territory such as being situated next to the territory of a kin state, the past legacy and level of discrimination associated with the previous regime, or the economic development of a group or region where it resides.²⁸ One argument stemming from structural understanding of inter-ethnic group dynamics advocates that if the group is small relative to other ones, its ethnic party may want to resist the urge to use of an exclusive radicalised appeal.²⁹ Nevertheless, such structural explanations have their own limitations. First, they do not take into account intra-group political competition when parties representing the same ethnicity pursue different types of strategy and political claims. Second, the above arguments have been mainly associated with ethnic conflict studies so the capacity for such factors to explain the dynamism of politics in the relatively peaceful environment in most of eastern European states remains limited; accordingly, they do not explain the empirical reality in Eastern Europe and more precisely, dynamics revolving around the parties representing the main ethnic groups in Romania and Bulgaria. Such groups are relatively similar in the population size, in the level of territorial compactness, or in terms of economic development. Consequently, such structural factors although perhaps relevant in specific contexts in other areas in the world, do not explain the coalition-making outcomes of the case-studies under scrutiny.

Economic accounts of ethnic political mobilisation focus on specific factors/opportunities. Some theories stress the grievance factor as a trigger for the

²⁷ K. Chandra, "Why Ethnic Parties Succeed", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

²⁸ See among others, J. Fearon, "Ethnic and Cultural Diversity by Country", *Journal of Economic Growth* 8, June, 2003, T. Vanhanen, "Domestic Ethnic Conflict and Ethnic Nepotism: A Comparative Analysis", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 36/1999, 1.

²⁹ D. Posner, "The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi", *American Political Science Review* 98, 4/2004.

mobilisation of an ethnic minority group towards radicalising its demands.³⁰ Basically when a group suffers repression or economic discrimination, it is likely to mobilise as to end the perceived inequality.³¹ On the same line of thinking, a party representing an ethnic group which has been the victim of economic inequality vis-à-vis other ethnic groups in a state, is likely to mobilise and to cause instability in that polity. Another set of economic factors or opportunities that may be taken into account when assessing the ethnic groups' potential for violent behaviour may include the funding their political groupings may receive from Diaspora or the existence of primary commodities in their territory.³² Such factors could thus be considered when assessing the demands pursued by ethnic parties in the electoral scene and how their strategy may fluctuate depending on the economic opportunities that these actors may perceive. Nevertheless, when applying economic variables to ethnic parties' coalition-making on domestic electoral scenes, in post-totalitarian states, it is difficult to find a specific singular correlation between the two and thus create a theoretical model in which such factors alone present the explanatory value. In the Central and Eastern European region, ethnic parties have entered coalitions despite differences in the level of economic opportunities arising among countries.

Finally, a segment of the literature takes a political-institutionalist approach on ethnic political mobilisation. Such mobilization is analyzed from the perspective of the presence of political opportunity structures (POS) understood as filters that "either encourage or discourage people from using collective action".³³ Accordingly, when political opportunities of states change, we see most activity from groups.³⁴ The assumption behind is that ethnic identity is constructed and can therefore be altered by specific occurring events.

Certain studies focusing on a static approach assess the role of institutions in creating incentives for ethnic groups to de-radicalise and consequently follow

³⁰ T. R. Gurr, "Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts, Washington DC, United States Institute of Peace Press, 1993; W. H. Moore, K. Jagers, "Deprivation, Mobilization, and the State: A Synthetic Model of Rebellion", *Journal of Developing Societies*, 6/1990.

³¹ T. R. Gurr, "Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts, Washington DC, United States Institute of Peace Press, 1993.

³² P. Collier, A. Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War", *Oxford Economic Papers*, 56/2004.

³³ S. Tarrow, "Power in Movement", Cambridge University Press, New York, Cambridge, 1994.

³⁴ S. Tarrow, "Power in Movement", Cambridge University Press, New York, Cambridge, 1994.

moderated claims in their strategies pursued on the electoral arenas.³⁵ Such factors can include the presence of a proportional representation system, lowering thresholds for minority participation, the level of decision-making centralization, or types of governance. Kanchan Chandra argues for instance that the presence of ethnic parties can lead to a stabilization of a patronage democratic regime if the institutional framework permits access to power and participation for such groups.³⁶ She argues that voters in divided societies choose between parties by conducting ethnic head counts rather than by comparing policy platforms.³⁷ Consequently, given that ethnic parties benefit constantly from receiving votes from their own group, it is in their interest to preserve a democratic polity in which their groups have electoral access to power.³⁸ Henceforth, the presence of an institutional setting privileging such access to power sustains the democratic stability of that polity.³⁹ Additionally, a new study by Geoffrey Evans in the ethnic politics literature argues that the presence of inter-ethnic institutionalized power sharing arrangements such as in the case of Northern Ireland leads initial extremist ethnic parties to moderate their claims and to provide compromised solutions given their constant interaction in a specific institution. Consequently, in light of the need for compromise at the executive and legislative level, voters tend to vote for parties that soften their claims and appear ready to govern with the other group as to successfully promote their electoral program.

Nevertheless, such approaches focused on specific institutions appear limited. Although the emergence of an institution may clarify initial behaviour of ethnic groups in their polities, it cannot explain the subsequent variation of demands of minority groups, such as for instance the choice of entering coalition agreements with majority parties. Furthermore, variation may occur in the initial choices pursued by ethnic groups such as in the case of Romania, where the emergence in 1990 of a proportional representation system despite generally favouring coalition arrangements has not led to an ethnic party entering such agreements at the state level until 1996. Additionally, Evans' focus on power-sharing mechanisms although relevant in portraying the progressive de-radicalisation of minority claims in an institutionalized

³⁵ B. Reilly, "Electoral Systems for Divided Societies", *Journal of Democracy*, 2/2002, 13; H. Hansen, "Identity and Institutions: Explaining Party Success in Europe", working paper, San Diego, 2006, available at http://myweb.uiowa.edu/hehansen/Hansen_isa2006.pdf

³⁶ K. Chandra, "Why Ethnic Parties Succeed", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

³⁷ K. Chandra, "Why Ethnic Parties Succeed", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

³⁸ K. Chandra, "Why Ethnic Parties Succeed", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

³⁹ K. Chandra, "Ethnic Parties and Democratic Stability", *Perspectives on Politics*, 3(2), 2005.

such setting, cannot be fully applied with regards to the constant fluid dynamics of ethnic coalition-making. In Evans' approach, the moderation of ethnic claims comes as a consequence of two parties being in a sense forced to work together in light of the existing institutional requirements. In the latter, an ethnic party already moderates its approach on domestic politics by making a specific choice of entering an alliance-agreement. Henceforth, the causes of such behaviour in the latter case are exogenous of the actual practice of power-sharing institutions; since in the CEE region such consensual institutionalised bodies do not exist, it is important to find other less static explanatory variables.

More dynamic theoretical approaches take account of such limitations presented above and assess opportunities and threats in a time longitudinal manner by focusing on variables such as the role of the leaders, the undertaking of reforms and policies on the domestic and international level in connection with minority mobilization and regime stability. Erin K. Jenne argues that minority radicalisation is driven by the groups' shifting perceptions of power vis-à-vis the state, such changes being informed by changes in the institutional opportunity structure and by the actions of the group's external power such as Diaspora or their kin state.⁴⁰ Peter Vermeersch scrutinizes the international level of support in the form of political backing arising from European institutions that play an effect on the success of mobilization of an ethnic group.⁴¹ He explains the success of domestic minority political mobilization through interplay of factors ranging from the existence of clear international norms to the presence of allies in the domestic political arena. However such studies have either been focused on understanding ethnic conflict dynamics or have limited their analysis to the emergence of such political groupings and their subsequent electoral success. Consequently, theoretical understandings of minority-majority ethnic coalitions and related political strategies pursued in connection with dynamic domestic and international opportunity structures are still very scarce in the ethnic politics literature.

⁴⁰ E. K. Jenne, "Ethnic Bargaining. The Paradox of Minority Empowerment", Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2007.

⁴¹ P. Vermeersch, "Ethnic Mobilization and the Political Conditionality of European Union Accession: the case of Roma in Slovakia", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 28/2002; D. Lake, "D. Lake, D. Rothchild, D. (eds.), "The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation", Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998.

One new study on which I particularly dwell in this project is represented by Johanna Birnir's approach. In her book, she contributes to the institutional-constructivist ethnic politics literature by highlighting the role of ethnic political parties on the stability of a democratic polity while at the same time assessing the effect of such groups' type of claims pursued in the electoral arena.⁴² More specifically, Birnir looks at party formation and development by assessing the political strategies of ethnic political actors.⁴³ She argues, on the one hand, on the same line with Chandra that improving rights in the institutional framework of a polity such as allowing for continuous participation in elections for ethnic groups and providing them with the opportunity of access to all levels of government brings stability to the given polity.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, on the other hand, her central argument is that ethnic identity serves as a stable but flexible and fluid information shortcut for political choices which influences party formation and development.⁴⁵ She argues that in a transition to democracy period, a national minority party would initially emphasize the ethnic cleavage in domestic politics; however, if given constant access to power and legal possibilities for participation in elections and towards institutionally voicing their concerns, the party's strategy may change as to focus on additional non-ethnic issues affecting the entire polity.⁴⁶ Consequently, through a diversification of their programs and claims, and by cross-cutting the ethnic cleavage such ethnic parties can become a force themselves for peace and stability in their polity by diversifying their sole ethnic focus and by getting involved in the general running of their polity.

Birnir's argument can easily be applied to ethnic coalition making between minorities and majorities. Indeed, the mere choice of entering a coalition with a governing party implies a moderation of one ethnic group's policies and a shift of interest towards the entire polity given the need for establishing a common program with coalition partners in the general running of the polity.

After having reviewed the major theoretical trends explaining the relationship between ethnic parties and the stability of democratic regimes, I now proceed to present my own argument and specific contribution to the literature.

⁴² J. K. Birnir, "Ethnicity an Electoral Politics", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

⁴³ J. K. Birnir, "Ethnicity an Electoral Politics", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

⁴⁴ J. K. Birnir, "Ethnicity an Electoral Politics", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

⁴⁵ J. K. Birnir, "Ethnicity an Electoral Politics", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

⁴⁶ J. K. Birnir, "Ethnicity an Electoral Politics", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

3. Argument and Theoretical Framework

This project takes insight from the social movement literature and from the ethnic conflict and ethnic politics theories and asks under what institutional opportunity structures ethnic parties choose to ally with a majority political grouping. In assessing the variation of inter-ethnic coalition-making in Romania and Bulgaria, it explains the dilemma of why have ethnic parties activating in a similar legislative and political environment in Romania and Bulgaria pursued coalitions with the governing parties at different times and at a different length in their domestic electoral arenas?

By taking an institutionalist-constructivist explanatory approach connecting political opportunity structures (POS) to minority behaviour, this study contributes to the ethnic conflict and ethnic politics literature in several ways. It dismisses the primordialist arguments linking ethnic politics with the instability of a democratic regime. In doing so, it sustains the findings of Chandra who argues that access of ethnic parties to representation and electoral competition in domestic politics stabilizes the existence and running of a democratic regime. However, it surpasses such studies by focusing specifically on the actual development of party strategies on the domestic arenas and not by simply assessing the institutional presence of such entities in electoral politics. It contributes by taking a specific approach in the ethnic politics field and looking at claims made by ethnic parties as perceived through the type of alliances pursued in electoral politics.

Furthermore, this study contributes specifically to Birnir's project which states that ethnic parties that gradually cross-cut the ethnic cleavages constitute a force for peace and stability. Rather, by inverting the equation I provide my central argument to this project by stating that **only when politics normalize, that is when the domestic and international environment is perceived by ethnic parties as stable, only then can ethnic parties serve the role of stability for a democratic regime by entering coalition agreements with majority parties rather than running in an ethnic type of alliance on the electoral arena.** Additionally, this project builds on previous studies assessing the role of domestic and international variables from the perspective of ethnic conflict as mentioned above.

The theoretical framework dwells on the literature on social movement theory that has emerged among scholars over the past two decades. It looks at the

development of collective action through which national minority organisations strategically pursue their goals. The analytical perspective of this project looks at the role and interactions among two sets of attributes explaining social movements: political opportunities, and framing processes. Scholar studies on political opportunities have focused on the relationship between institutionalised politics and the emergence and development of a social movement by looking at the changes that occur in the institutional structure or informal power relations of a given domestic political system.⁴⁷ Framing processes have been defined as conscious strategic efforts made by groups of people in order to create or consolidate a shared understanding of the world and of themselves as to legitimate and motivate collective action.⁴⁸ Accordingly, this project focuses on the relationship between political opportunities structures (POS) and the framing processes through which ethnic political parties strategically pursue their actions in the domestic and international arena. Given the lack of academic studies which attempted to operationalise framing processes as well as in the advice of other academicians for taking a comparative approach which would involve the two elements, this project enriches debates in the social mobilisation academic field. In doing so it creates a theoretical framework for understanding the various pathways of ethnic organisational actions in connection with the political opportunities existent in the domestic and international environment. Such institutional opportunity structures may be seen as “a transient political environment that emerges often unexpectedly to alter the balance of power between minorities and the centre”.⁴⁹

More specifically, following George Tsebelis’ analysis, POS can be assessed under three dimensions: a. formal political rules and institutions that may create points of access; b relevant interested political actors; c informal procedures of

⁴⁷ D. McAdam, J. D. McCarthy, M. N. Zald, “Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes – Toward a Synthetic, Comparative Perspective on Social Movements”, in D. McAdam, J. D. McCarthy, M. N. Zald (eds.), “Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements. Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings”, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

⁴⁸ D. McAdam, J. D. McCarthy, M. N. Zald, “Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes – Toward a Synthetic, Comparative Perspective on Social Movements”, in D. McAdam, J. D. McCarthy, M. N. Zald (eds.), “Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements. Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, an Cultural Framings”, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

⁴⁹ E. K. Jenne, “Ethnic Bargaining. The Paradox of Minority Empowerment”, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2007.

decision-making and the strategies of those in power.⁵⁰ In the context of the European minority protection regime, the POS dimensions can be linked first with the presence of both a domestic and international framework arising out of specific institutions clarifying rules and frameworks for action in the minority rights field. Second, it includes political actors such as governments, policy-makers, and other authorities at both the domestic and international level involved in decision-making concerning national minority provisions. Third, it includes actions undertaken by such authorities on the domestic and international scene, such as specific actions or discourses associated with minority rights protection.

In this project, I rely on the above POS dimensions which revolve around the minority-majority political relations in a polity. Since the choice of coalition-making implies the moderation of ethnic demands through the pursuing of a compromise with a majority party, I assess how POS may influence the behaviour of minority political parties in such a direction. I thus look specifically at three sets of comprehensive factors arising out of the European minority protection regime: the international organizations' level of influence, the domestic political liberalization of national minority rights, and the effect of the kin state of the minority group under study. In view of that, I scrutinise how their interplay may have a role on the behaviour of ethnic groups in their choice of coalition making with majority ethnic parties.

The ethnic parties' coalition making choice on the domestic arena is operationalised by looking specifically at what type of alliance the parties representing the main ethnic groups pursue. Such alliances can be divided into three types: a. individual or in an alliance with co-ethnic parties; b. a coalition with a majority ethnic party that is not in the government; c. simple accords with governing parties; d. coalitions with a majority ethnic party in government. Such a division of the dependent variable allows for variation in understanding ethnic parties' integration in the political making of its polity ranging from a solitary ethnic focused outlook towards being further integrated either by being in the opposition with other domestic parties or participating in the policy-making of the state. The classification is meant to illustrate the level of integration of one ethnic party in its polity and consequently, the possibility to cross-cut ethnic cleavages by entering de facto into multi-ethnic compromised solution benefiting the stability of the regime of the entire polity.

⁵⁰ G. Tsebelis, "Veto Players: How Institutions Work", New York, Russel Sage Foundation, 2002.

Furthermore, this study assesses alliances pursued by national minority parties at the national level in connection with parliamentary elections and the aftermath dynamics occurring in the representative chambers. The focus on the highest political arena is meant to illustrate more clearly the level of integration of national minorities in domestic politics and how ethnic cleavages may be surpassed. Although, coalition-making occurs at the local level also, I believe that a focus on a higher arena of representation can provide a clearer assessment of how ethnic parties can relate their political message to the entire polity in which they reside.

While assessing the role of the POS as represented through the three independent variables this project uses the process-tracing technique.⁵¹ Through a time series analysis, the project attempts to explain the most important stages of the different types of alliance-making pursued by the main ethnic parties while providing reasons for changes occurring based on analysis of the connection between the independent and dependent variable. Through process tracing it can be determined how possible intervening causal processes may lead to the different outcomes of the dependent variable in the cases under study by following the ethnic parties' evolution in their alliance-making on the electoral scene.

As portrayed above, I assess the political opportunity structures arising from dynamics involving the European national minority protection regime in the domestic and international arena. I assess, first the mechanisms used by international organisations in influencing the domestic application of national minority rights; the variable is operationalised by investigating the approach used by the relevant international organisations involved in national minority protection in Europe towards an enhanced application of national minority rights in the states under scrutiny. Specifically, I scrutinise changes occurring at the European level through the appearance of new international legal frameworks enhancing the application of minority rights. Consequently, I consider that when positive changes or discourses occur, the level of support for minority rights shall be considered high. When no changes or on the contrary, when international institutions take positions against an enlarged scope of application of minority rights or against specific claims or actions

⁵¹ A. L. George, A. Bennett, "Process Tracing and Historical Explanation and Theory Development in the Social Sciences, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2005.

taken by the ethnic parties under scrutiny, then the level of support shall be considered low. Contrary to the expected explanations arising from the political conditionality literature assessing the role of international norms in adjusting behaviour of domestic actors, I argue that the level of international support does not change the attitude of national minority parties in entering or leaving multi-ethnic coalitions.

Second I scrutinise the kin state actions and how the level of support for its minority may subsequently influence the latter's behaviour. I look specifically at the kin state official legislation undertaken vis-à-vis relations with the neighbouring country and specifically to its kin minority. Furthermore, I analyse kin state officials specific discourses which may increase the perceived support that the kin minority may have at the executive level in its mother country. When kin states adopt legal measures or undertake certain discourses that focus on improving relations with its kin minority while at the same time downplaying diplomatic relations with the neighbouring country, the kin state level of pressure shall be considered high. In the opposing case, it shall be understood as low. I argue that when the kin state support is low, ethnic minority parties tend to follow more inclusive strategies by joining a coalition with a majority ethnic party.

Third, I analyse the domestic level of political liberalisation by monitoring the state authorities' application of national minority protection mechanisms both in discourse and practice. This variable assesses institutional measures undertaken by state authorities as well as the discourse that state officials use vis-à-vis the main ethnic political group and its demands. It focuses first on changes in the institutional framework of a state that may occur at a moment in time. Such changes can be represented by the adoption or retraction of legal benefits that a minority benefits from. When positive legal changes or discourses occur at the domestic level, the level of support for minority rights shall be considered high. When no changes or, au contraire, when state policymakers take positions against an enlarged scope of application of minority rights or against specific claims or actions taken by the ethnic parties under scrutiny, then the level of support shall be considered low. Accordingly, I argue that when the domestic liberalisation climate of minority rights protection improves, minority parties are prone to choose to enter alliance agreements with ethnic majority parties.

Consequently, this study assesses whether the interplay of the above POS variables has had an effect on the type of alliance-making pursued by ethnic parties. It argues that a combination of low kin state pressure and high domestic political liberalisation of national minority rights leads to ethnic parties pursuing coalition with non-ethnic parties. More specifically, when changes are perceived in the level of support arising from the above variables, ethnic coalition-making fluctuates as well. Furthermore, it argues that perceptions of support arising from the international pressure effected by European organizations had played little direct effect in the choice made by ethnic minority parties to enter alliances with ethnic majority ones.

In the following section, I shall test the above hypotheses through an assessment of the coalitions undertaken by the main ethnic parties, the Hungarian Democratic Federation of Romania (UDMR), and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) in Bulgaria.

Lessons from the Ground: Romania and Bulgaria⁵²

Why do some ethnic minority parties pursue coalitions with ethnic majority parties more frequently than others? What accounts for variation in the coalition making dynamics when comparing the similar cases of Romania and Bulgaria? While responding to such puzzling questions, this section focuses specifically on the choices pursued by the two main parties in these countries in their pursue of coalitions on the domestic arena; accordingly, it situates such inter-ethnic coalitional dynamics in direct connection with the political opportunity structures' based theoretical framework presented above, thus creating a triadic dynamic model for alliance making. It looks at the influence of the international environment as exemplified by the kin state and international organisations, and of the domestic liberalisation climate of minority rights protection on ethnic party electoral choices.

The choice for this specific case selection criterion is multiple. First both Romania and Bulgaria are heterogeneous states holding significant numbers of Hungarian and Turkish national minorities.⁵³ Second, the two ethnic minorities are

⁵² Given the time and length constraints of this paper, this section presents a short synopsis of the empirical situation in the two countries summarising the major events in connection with the dependent and independent variables. A more lengthy version shall follow soon.

⁵³ The last population data shows that Hungarians make up 6.6% of the population in Romania, while the Turks account for 9% in Bulgaria.

territorially located in specific regions of the country close to the neighbouring kin state. Third, both countries have a similar past legacy of totalitarian rule and a similarly slow process of democratic consolidation losing out to the other CEE states. Fourth, both Hungarian and Turkish minority have undergone a past legacy of repression and nationalisation during the previous totalitarian regimes. Finally, both countries are prone to a degree of influence arising from the international environment: both are under the influence of the European minority framework by sharing a political conditionality road towards membership in the European Union accession; additionally, they equally have a kin state neighbour that has historically dominated parts of the country and that is capable of exerting influence on the main national minority in the titular state.

Despite the above similarities, a look at the empirical picture in tables 1 and 2 shows ethnic minority-majority coalitions occurring at different length, time, and pattern in the two countries. Indeed, while in the case of Bulgaria, the MRF has been mostly found in coalition agreements with the governing and opposition parties, the UDMR in Romania has fluctuated back and forth from pursuing inter-ethnic alliances to running individually. The question arises then to why do we observe such differences of ethnic electoral behaviour in the two states? What triggers the choice of an ethnic party to enter an alliance agreement with a majority based one?

Figure 1: UDMR's alliance-making in the post-communist era

Romania	Time	1990-1996	1996-2000	2000-2004	2004-?
	Alliance type	Individual (until 1992)/ sporadic accords with opposition parties (1992-1996)	Coalition with governing party	Individual/accords with governing party	Coalition with governing party

Figure 2: MRF's alliance making in the post-communist era

Bulgaria	Time period	1990	1991-1994	1994-1997	1997-2001	2001-?
	Alliance type	Individual	Coalition with governing party	Coalition with opposition party	Coalition with governing/opposition (split in the party)	Coalition with governing party

Romania

This section scrutinises how the interplay of the domestic and international political opportunities assessed may have had an impact on the inter-ethnic alliance making in Romania.

The UDMR was established as a political party on 25th December 1989 in the immediate aftermath of the change of regime in Romania. As an ethnic party it can be perceived as an umbrella association for various small sections with different ideological platforms ranging from right to left on the political compass; nevertheless, despite the existence of multiple political views, the UDMR's main rationale has been the constant promotion of the ethnic issue on its agenda and has actively focused on the promotion of the rights of the Hungarian minority in Romania. Throughout its post-communist existence, the UDMR's main ethnic strategy has been disputed among two major factions, an inward and an outward looking one. The inward faction has generally focused on co-operation with domestic political authorities and has advocated a gradual process of reform on minority rights holding non-separatist claims; the outward faction has held more radical demands with a specific focus on territorial autonomy in the areas where the Hungarian minority constituted a majority and has generally looked up to Hungary for support. The outcome of the inside conflict between the two factions has given the line of strategy pursued by the UDMR in the post 1989 time period.⁵⁴ Accordingly, it is in light of the rivalry between the two factions in the UDMR that one can perceive the meaningfulness of external and

⁵⁴ A. Roger, "Economic Development and Positioning of Ethnic Political Parties: Comparing Post-Communist Bulgaria and Romania", *South East European Politics*, 3/2002, 1.

domestic political opportunity structures in being able to influence the two factions' possibilities for presenting their program and advancing their claims on the domestic arena.

The line of electoral attack pursued by the UDMR in the early 1990s has been rather individualistic. Despite an initial co-operation for a couple of weeks in the immediate aftermath of the revolution with the communist successor party the National Salvation Front (FSN), the latter's nationalising tendencies have led the UDMR to pursue domestic politics on its own. On this line, there have been no political accords with majority domestic parties at the state level scene until 1992; between 1992 and 1996, some sporadic accords have occurred with the opposition party in an attempt to provide an enhanced resistance to the nationalising tendencies pursued by the party in power the Social Democratic Romanian Party (PDSR). Nevertheless, no proper signed and long term accords took place on an inter-ethnic level in this period. The following period between 1996 and 2000 has allowed for a completely different scenario. Following the victory of the former opposition party, the Democratic Convention of Romania (CDR) in the 1996 elections, the UDMR joined the new government. After a period of four years in office in which it held a few ministerial positions, the UDMR returned to the opposition in light of the win of the PDSR in the 2000 elections. Between 2000 and 2004 the UDMR surprisingly pursued sporadic accords with the governing party the PDSR without however entering in a coalition government. It was only in 2004, when the Truth-Justice alliance (DA) formed primarily on the backbone of the previous CDR has won the elections, that the UDMR entered an institutionalised coalition agreement once again. Until present they are still in the government. In light of the changes of strategy in its choice of inter-ethnic coalition making, the question arises to why such fluctuations have occurred in the Romanian domestic electoral arena. What triggered UDMR to enter and leave coalitions? In line with the theoretical framework illustrated above, I present an overview of developments associated with the three independent variables under consideration as to see how they may have played a role in UDMR's alliance-making choices.

The domestic liberalisation climate of minority rights in early post-communist period has been marked by the nationalising political tendencies pursued by the governing elites. Playing on the ethnic cleavage in order to bolster electoral support, the FSN, later named PDSR, has been reluctant to advance reforms in the minority

rights protection field. This can be perceived through the constitution-making process in which the FSN supported a fundamental law which clearly made reference to the Romanian state belonging to the Romanian nation while emphasising the territorial unity of the polity.⁵⁵ Other pieces of legislation such as the Law on Public Administration entering adopted in 1991, have specifically disallowed group rights for minority groups while emphasizing the national character of the Romanian and not providing specific legislation aimed at sustaining national minority rights.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the violent clashes between the majority and minority groups in the town of Targu Mures in 1990, or the tacit accords between the PDSR and extreme-right wing parties represented in the parliament following the 1992 elections have certainly not improved the ethnic climate in the country in the early post-communist period.

The subsequent reform process undertaken by the governing party has been very slow and made only under the pressure of international organisations. In light of Romania aspiring for membership in international organisations such as the CoE, NATO and ultimately, the EU, the political conditionality mechanisms linked to the country's membership drive have constantly pressured the state authorities in liberalising minority policies. One such step has been the creation of a Council of National Minorities in 1993 aimed at providing ethnic groups with a permanent forum for debate on issues of their concern; such an institution has nevertheless been dismissed by the UDMR as a pure symbolic organ with not real power.⁵⁷ Furthermore, UDMR criticised the fact that all minorities were placed on an equal footing irrespective of the population size of each group.⁵⁸ This led to the UDMR boycotting the forum altogether. Furthermore, even the relationship between the UDMR and the main opposition party the Democratic Convention of Romania (CDR) has been tense. In 1993, the UDMR submitted a draft of the Law on National Minorities and Autonomous Communities. Nevertheless, this draft has never been considered in the parliament due to resistance from both governing parties and the opposition. Consequently, one can perceive the domestic liberalisation climate in the

⁵⁵ "Constitutia Romaniei", 1ant991, available at the Romanian Chamber of Deputies website, available at www.cdep.ro

⁵⁶ "Legea administratiei publice locale", 69/1991, available at http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htm?act?ida=1341

⁵⁷ M. Shafir, "Minorities Council Raises Questions" *RFE/RL Research Report*, 1993a.

⁵⁸ M. Shafir, "Minorities Council Raises Questions" *RFE/RL Research Report*, 1993a.

early post-communist period as being low in connection with the protection of national minorities this coinciding with the Hungarian minority not entering coalition with majority ethnic political parties.

Nevertheless, under the influence of the international environment, the domestic authorities have been constrained to gradually sign and ratify international treaties as well as to improve inter-ethnic relations in the country. In light of their quest for membership in international organisations, Romania has been one of the first states to have signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) in 1995. Furthermore, the Hungarian-Romanian treaty has been signed in 1996, with several provisions concerning the treatment of the Hungarian minority in Romania. Consequently, pale but steady signs of openness could have been perceived in the run up to the 1996 elections.

Having been defeated in the 1996 elections, the PDSR left the governmental scene and allowed the CDR to form a coalition government. Interestingly enough, although the CDR had the majority to form a coalition government without the UDMR, it decided to ask the Hungarian party to join as to illustrate a clear break from the non-democratic past including the latter's ethno-nationalising tendencies. With the UDMR holding two ministerial policies, the government has gone through a period of liberalising minority rights through the adoption of several domestic and international documents. In this period, the government ratified two major international documents in minority rights protection, the European Charter for Regional and Minority Rights in 1997 and the FCNM in 1998. Furthermore, the Law on Education and the one on Public Administration have been modified as to respond to the demands of the UDMR for friendlier minority rights provisions. Henceforth, one can perceive a liberalisation trend starting before the 1996 elections and continuing in its aftermath in the early years of the coalition government.

However, as time progressed, the UDMR's relation with the majority parties has become uneasy. UDMR's demands for the adoption of a law on national minorities which was drafted by the Hungarian organisation as early as 1993 as well as its specific claims for enhanced status in education, namely the idea of separate Hungarian state universities have been met with reluctance by the majority parties in the coalition. Furthermore, given the reluctance of the PSD in parliament to support minority friendly provisions led to the inability of further liberalising ethnic rights in the country. Henceforth, the domestic liberalising climate has undergone a shift back

in the late years of the CDR-UDMR coalition culminating with the UDMR deciding to run individually for the 2000 parliamentary elections.

With the election of the PDSR in power now called the Social Democratic Party (PSD), the UDMR went back into opposition while pursuing an individualistic line of politics. Moreover, given the polarisation of the ethnic issue within the Romanian society with the extreme-right wing Great Romania party (PRM) leaders reaching 33% in the second round of the presidential elections, it is of no surprise that the UDMR has decided once again to act individually. Nevertheless, surprisingly a clear commitment of a now moderated PSD to uphold minority rights allowed for new agreements to be established with the UDMR the following year albeit on a more ad hoc and non-institutionalised way as in the previous coalition. The PSD has decided to follow such a line of policy due to the perceived Romanian interests to join the EU which disallowed a coalition with the PRM extremists. Moreover, in exchange for such temporary parliamentary accords of support, the PDS accommodated partly UDMR interests by advocating a series of laws and provisions. It appointed two Hungarians as sub-prefects in the counties where the Magyars were a majority. Furthermore, subsequent reforms took place such as the restitution of unlawfully confiscated church and private properties nationalised under the communist period. A new law on public administration has been passed while education policies vis-à-vis the Hungarian minority have been adopted in the parliament. Finally, the Constitution has been amended as to clearly allow for the use of minority language in education, public administration, and in the administration of justice.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the situation on the ground at the level of implementation was not as merry as the simple act of adopting and ratifying legal instruments may lead us to think. Consequently, one can perceive a new wave of liberalising tendencies in the minority rights policies in the post 2001 period. Nevertheless, despite the given reforms, the UDMR did not formalise a coalition with the government but preferred to choose its position a la carte on single handed issues throughout the 2000-2004 governmental mandate.

The 2004 elections have shown once again a switch in government with some of the former CDR parties now renamed the Justice and Truth Alliance (DA) winning against the PSD. The UDMR once again joined the governing party being invited by their former coalition partners in the 1996-2000 period. Within the new coalition, the

⁵⁹ “Constitutia Romaniei”, 2003, available at www.cdep.ro

UDMR has been given ministerial positions as well as three prefect appointments, in Transylvania. Furthermore, in light of the projected entry of Romania in the EU in 2007, the level of implementation of the national minority legislation had to be carried out as to respond to the requirements of the Copenhagen criteria.⁶⁰ Although the DA coalition split, the UDMR remained allied under the Liberal party's current governmental mandate.

Additionally, the UDMR's choice of domestic alliance-making can be judged in connection with political opportunities arising from the kin state actions with regards to the Hungarian minority in Transylvania. The radicalization of the UDMR party in the 1989-1992 and its individual participation in electoral politics can be connected with the Hungarian elites' pursuing of a nationalistic rhetoric of support vis-à-vis their co-ethnics in the neighbouring countries. In 1990, the prime-minister of Hungary claimed in a public statement that he is in spirit the prime-minister of all Hungarians throughout the world.⁶¹ Furthermore, he also stated that "we never said that the minority question was the only factor in interstate relations, but we find it impossible to have good relations with a country that mistreats its Hungarian minority".⁶² Moreover, in legal terms, Article 6 of the Hungarian Constitution revised in 1989 clearly stipulated the sense of responsibility that Hungarian elites would have for the fate of their kin minorities living in neighbouring countries".⁶³ Additionally, the concern for its kin minorities has been portrayed through the establishment in 1992 of a Hungarian Government Office for Hungarians Abroad under the Ministry of Education and Culture.⁶⁴ Also, the Hungarian Standing Conference has been created as a forum for constant dialogue between the Hungarian government and the UDMR officials in Romania.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ See below.

⁶¹ E. Oltay, "Minorities as Stumbling Block in Relations with Neighbours", *RFE/RL Research Report*, 8th May 1992 in E. K. Jenne, "Ethnic Bargaining in the Balkans: Secessionist Kosovo Versus Integrationist Vojvodina" in "Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment", Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2007.

⁶² MTI (Hungarian News Agency), 20th April 1991 in E. K. Jenne, "Ethnic Bargaining in the Balkans: Secessionist Kosovo Versus Integrationist Vojvodina" in "Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment", Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2007.

⁶³ E. Harris, "Management of the Hungarian Issue in Slovak Politics: Europeanisation and the Evolution of National Identities", Polis Working Paper No. 7, at <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/polis/research/pdf/wp7harris.pdf>

⁶⁴ See the website of the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture, available at <http://www.om.hu>

⁶⁵ L. Balazs, "Politics of Balance. The Conjuncture of Ethnic Party Formation and Development in Romania and Bulgaria", working paper, Nice, 2006, available at <http://www.iehei.org/bibliotheque/memoires/2006/BALAZSI.pdf>

Au contraire, the period of 1993-1999, has witnessed a non-supportive Hungarian kin state representing a major shift vis-à-vis the policies and rhetoric sustained in the previous period. Prime-minister Gyula Horn made it clear that he would not intervene in the domestic affairs of other countries by stating that he is the prime-minister of only 10.5 Hungarians, representing the citizens of Hungary.⁶⁶ Moreover, the foreign minister Geza Jeszenszky affirmed that Hungary is not military capable of threatening its neighbours.⁶⁷ Also, foreign minister Laszlo Kovacs declared that he was eager to normalize relations with its neighbours, a clear trace of it being the signing of the Treaty between Hungary and Romania on Understanding, Cooperation, and Good Neighbourhood in 1996.⁶⁸

In the period from 2000 until 2003 the kin state level of support has once again shifted upward. With the new arrival of the right wing Fidezs party in power, the Hungarian elites have become increasingly active in supporting their kin minorities abroad. The passage of the Act on Hungarians abroad in Parliament allowing for citizenship benefits to kin-minorities in neighbouring states is a clear illustration in this sense.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the Viktor Orban led government in Hungary continuously expressed support for the autonomy claims made by the radical outward minority faction within the UDMR.⁷⁰

Finally, in the post-2003 period, the kin support level that Hungary provided for the Magyar minority in Romania has diminished once again. First, the results of the referendum held in Hungary on double citizenship provisions for Magyars abroad fell due to the low turn out. Second, the arrival of a new left wing government led to a

⁶⁶ Quoted in A. A. Reisch, "The New Hungarian Government's Foreign Policy", *RFE/RL Research Report*, 15th August 1994 in E. K. Jenne, "Ethnic Bargaining in the Balkans: Secessionist Kosovo Versus Integrationist Vojvodina" in "Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment", Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2007.

⁶⁷ C. J. Williams, "Hungarians in Serbian Province Fear that They May Be Next", *Los Angeles Times*, 12th October 1993 in E. K. Jenne, "Ethnic Bargaining in the Balkans: Secessionist Kosovo Versus Integrationist Vojvodina" in "Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment", Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2007.

⁶⁸ E. Oltay, "Hungarian Foreign Minister on Relations with Neighbouring Countries", *RFE/RL Newsline*, Central and Eastern Europe, 12th October 1994; Treaty between the Republic of Hungary and Romania on Understanding, Cooperation, and Good Neighborhood, 16th September 1996, at <http://www.regione.taa.it/biblioteca/normativa/bilaterali/trattato%20ungherese-rumeno%20verisone%20inglese.pdf>

⁶⁹ L. Balazs, "Politics of Balance. The Conjuncture of Ethnic Party Formation and Development in Romania and Bulgaria", working paper, Nice, 2006, available at <http://www.iehei.org/bibliotheque/memoires/2006/BALAZSI.pdf>

⁷⁰ L. Balazs, "Politics of Balance. The Conjuncture of Ethnic Party Formation and Development in Romania and Bulgaria", working paper, Nice, 2006, available at <http://www.iehei.org/bibliotheque/memoires/2006/BALAZSI.pdf>

lowering nationalist rhetoric on the part of the Hungarian authorities vis-à-vis their kin minorities in Romania. A clear policy example of this is the replacement of the double citizenship idea with a Homeland Fund guaranteeing financial assistance for educational and cultural purposes for Hungarians abroad and at the same time promoting their return and stay of Hungarians in their home country.⁷¹

Finally, another set of political opportunity structures may arise out of the international organizations' level of support in the minority rights field. The pressure put by international organizations in advancing national minority rights policies in Romania has been gradually increased in light of Romania's commitments to join the main European and North-Atlantic organizations: the CoE, Nato, and ultimately the EU. What started in the early post-communist period as mere soft pressure mechanisms such as condemnation and advices undertaken by the CoE and individual European governments in the aftermath of the violent inter-ethnic clashes in March 1990, have been gradually transformed in carrot and stick mechanisms for compliance with European minority norms.

A threefold time division could be made in the assessment of the pressure induced by international organizations in Romania. First, the 1989-1992 period has been marked by soft pressure mechanisms such as condemnations and advices pursued by the CoE and individual member governments in light of the search for stability in an area of past inter-ethnic conflict. Such symbolic acts have been undertaken rhetorically in the aftermath of violent events such as the Tg Mures conflict or in light of the passing of minority non-friendly laws such as the Law on Public Administration of 1991.⁷² However, with the expressed commitment of the Romanian authorities to join NATO and the EU, the international organizations have been able to use political conditionality mechanisms in order to increase pressures for commitments to national minority provisions. Romania's early applications for membership in NATO in 1994, and EU in 1995 have put the country's reforms under the monitoring lenses of the two organizations. By employing a carrot and stick approach to reforms undertaken in Romania, the organizations' pressure has had an increasing effect in sustaining minority rights provisions at least up to the country's

⁷¹ For more information, check the official website of the Government Office for Hungarians Minorities Abroad, available at www.hhrf.org/htmh/en/?menuid=02

⁷² D. Petrescu, "Can Democracy Work in South-Eastern Europe?", I. Constantin, Z. Kantor, C. Petrescu, D. Petrescu, T. Balazs (eds.), "Nation Building and Contested Identities: Romanian and Hungarian Case Studies", Budapest, Iasi, Regio Books, Polirom, 2001.

accession in 2007. Henceforth, one can witness a heightened international pressure from 1989 towards the present.

(GRAPHICS SHOWING THE IV VARIATION TO BE ADDED HERE AT A LATER STAGE)

In conclusion, as illustrated above, the assessment of the role of the three independent variables on the coalition-making in Romania shows first a strong correlation between changes in the domestic liberalisation level of minority rights protection in Romania and inter-ethnic coalition-making behaviour. More precisely, when parties in government implement reforms in the minority rights field, ethnic parties enter coalition agreements with them. Second, the kin state pressure appears to play an effect on ethnic minority parties' domestic alliance-making as well. Accordingly, when the kin state is active and promotes policies towards its neighbouring kin minority, the main ethnic political party radicalises and tends to pursue domestic politics on its own. Finally, there is no direct correlation between the international organisations' pressure on domestic authorities and the ethnic parties' choices of alliance-making. Despite a progressive heightened pressure induced on domestic authorities in the post-1994 period, the UDMR has not immediately reacted to it. Furthermore, at a time of high international scrutiny, UMDR has not participated in the government in the 2000-2004 period.

Bulgaria⁷³

The Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) was founded on the 4th of January 1990 as a successor of the former illegal party in the communist times, the Turkish National Liberation Movement. The movement represents the interests of the Turkish community in Bulgaria and has been led throughout the post-communist period by Ahmed Dagan, a Turkish minority rights activist in the Communist era. In light of the Bulgarian legislation banning ethnic parties⁷⁴, the MRF has been obliged to take a moderate stand in ethnic politics and open up to all ethnic and religious groups while renouncing autonomist or separatist ambitions. Nevertheless, its main

⁷³ This section is still an early draft and consequently it presents the developments in Bulgaria in a brief manner.

⁷⁴ See below.

base of support in elections comes from the Turkish national minority⁷⁵. The organisation's main goal has been more moderate than the UDMR's in Romania and has focused mainly on a struggle for official recognition and for an institutionalised protection of ethno-cultural rights for the Turkish community.

The line of electoral attack pursued by the MRF has fluctuated back and forth from an individualistic pursuit of domestic politics to co-operationist policies with the governing or the opposition parties. Until 1991, the MRF has not been part of an accord with neither the ruling communist successor party, the Bulgarian Socialists (BSP) or with the opposition's Union of Democratic Forces (UDF). Following the 1991 elections, the MRF has briefly entered a coalition with the UDF for a one year period. Following disagreements over the allocation of funds and economic priorities of the governmental program, the MRF switched to an alliance with a BSP lasting until 1994 in which the MRF held the position of prime-minister and formed the government. Between 1994 and 1997, as a consequence of the nationalising tendencies of the BSP, the MRF re-became an opposition party and entered parliamentary accords with the UDF. After the 1997 elections, it supported the UDF government for part of the time but did not enter institutionalised coalition agreements remaining in the opposition. Finally, in 2001, with the entry on the political scene of the former Bulgarian king Simeon's party and in light of its subsequent win in the elections, the MRF chose to pursue a coalition with the new political grouping for the duration of its mandate. The same co-cooperationist strategy was preserved after the 2005 elections.

Consequently, in light of the fluctuations occurring in the ethnic party's choices of alliance-making in Bulgaria, I present an overview of the major developments associated with the three independent variables assessed in order to identify whether such political opportunity structures have played an effect on inter-ethnic domestic coalitions.

The domestic liberalisation climate of minority rights protection in Bulgaria has gone through a slow improvement in the aftermath of the regime change. Indeed, this should come unsurprising given the past repressive policies occurring in the 1980s when an elite led Bulgarisation campaign has greatly diminished Turkish

⁷⁵ N. Bizziouras, "Ethnic Parties, Collective Action and Resource Mobilization: Evidence from the Balkans and Central Europe", conference paper, 2005, available at <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/kokkalis/GSW7/Bizziouras%20paper.pdf>

national minority rights.⁷⁶ Such past policies have been partly reversed in 1990. First, the government condemned the arbitrary changes of names, allowing for the freedom of religion, of speaking minority languages in nonofficial communications, as well as the right to practice ethnic customs freely.⁷⁷ Second, the BSP administration restored some additional cultural rights to the Turkish minority after winning the first parliamentary elections.⁷⁸

Nonetheless, in 1990, there have been a series of events which illustrated once again the nationalising tendencies of the new elite leading to an inevitable non-cooperation between the ethnic minority and majority parties in light of the parliamentary elections that year. The BSP in order to appease its nationalist electors who constituted an important part of its constituency, has decided to pursue policies which were detrimental to minority rights in Bulgaria. Accordingly, the MRF wasn't invited in the Round Table discussions following the end of the regime in which the two main Bulgarian parties, the BCP, and the MRF have negotiated the new institutional and political order.⁷⁹ Additionally, the idea of protection of Bulgarian national unity found itself into the Political Parties Act of 1990 and later in the new Constitution in 1991.⁸⁰ Some of the discriminatory measures introduced in the bodies of such laws were the ban of ethnic parties and on Turkish language classes in school.⁸¹ It is in this climate of low domestic liberalisation that the BSP won the May 1990 parliamentary elections with an appeal to nationalist forces for support. Subsequently, the MRF has been confined to the opposition camp and chose not to pursue an agreement with the UDF during the parliamentary term.

The BSP government was short lived due to its inability to deal with the economic crisis in the country and new elections took place in 1991. Prior to the scrutiny, the BSP has constantly campaigned for outlawing the MRF on the grounds of ethnicity in line with the law banning the existence of such parties in an attempt to

⁷⁶ Among such repressive measures taken against the Turkish minority, one can mention the Bulgarisation of their names, the ending of public broadcast in their own language, the closure of minority newspapers, or the interdiction of wearing their own traditional costumes in public, etc.

⁷⁷ J. K. Birnir, "Ethnicity an Electoral Politics", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

⁷⁸ J. K. Birnir, "Ethnicity an Electoral Politics", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

⁷⁹ L. Balazs, "Politics of Balance. The Conjuncture of Ethnic Party Formation and Development in Romania and Bulgaria", working paper, Nice, 2006, available at <http://www.iehei.org/bibliotheque/memoires/2006/BALAZSI.pdf>

⁸⁰ Bulgarian Constitution, 1991, available at http://www.justiceinitiative.org/db/resource2?res_id=100482 ; Political Parties Act, 1990, available at <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UNTC/UNPAN016314.pdf>

⁸¹ For sets of legislation from the early post-communist period, see <http://www.lexadin.nl/wlg/legis/nofr/eur/lxwebul.htm>

appeal to its nationalist voters. However, a boast of support for MRF and ethnic politics in general came from the Central Electoral Commission and later the from the Constitutional Court's decisions to permit the Turkish party to be present on the electoral scene.⁸² The results of the parliamentary elections allowed the UDF to win a governmental mandate confining the nationalist BSP to the opposition. Consequently, in an attempt to win the MRF support, one of the first promises of the new administration was to overturn the ban on Turkish language classes.⁸³ In light of the UDF's openness towards granting rights to the Turkish minority, and given the perceived possibility for liberalising its national minority status, the MRF entered parliamentary accords with the UDF. Nevertheless, they did not enter an institutionalised coalition agreement but remained confined to ad hoc agreements with the ruling party in this period.

The UDF government supported by the MRF made improvements in the national minority rights field through the signing of the bilateral accord between Turkey and Bulgaria. These were the first steps taken in the normalisation of relationships between the two countries in light of the past repressive policies undertaken during the communist regime. Such an accord served as a balance and compensation for the Turkish minority in light of the previous laws unfriendly to minorities adopted during the BSP led government.

The UDF government did not last long and fell on to a vote of no confidence in 1992. The MRF's decision to pull out their support in parliament came as a consequence of the liberalising tendencies of the UDF government through the privatisation of domains directly affecting constituencies in which a majority of Turks resided. As a result, a large number of the Turkish population decided to immigrate to their kin state in light of such hardships. Given these unforeseen developments, the MRF pulled out of the agreement with the UDF in 1992. The consequence was the ousting of the government and the subsequent surprising formation of a new executive under a MRF mandate. The new MRF government led by an independent technocrat was actively supported by a new faction of the UDF, the Union for New Democracy (UND) and had the tacit backing of the BSP. During this period the MRF exercised control over the appointment of high officials in the executive branch. Nevertheless, in an attempt to preserve its position in power, the MRF did not take any risks in

⁸² J. K. Birnir, "Ethnicity an Electoral Politics", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

⁸³ J. K. Birnir, "Ethnicity an Electoral Politics", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

liberalising policies on national minority rights provisions during its term. Consequently, the government resisted in power until 1994 which is surprising given the amount of social unrest taking place in the period.

The 1994 parliamentary elections saw the BSP restored to power in alliance with two small parties. The MRF joined an opposition coalition with the UDF called the United Opposition Forces (UtdDF). In the period preceding the scrutiny, the BSP had undertaken once again a nationalistic tone to its campaign constantly attacking the MRF.⁸⁴ Furthermore, in the aftermath of the elections, the BSP included representatives of the anti-Turkish nationalist faction Patriotic Alliance as well as former ex-communist functionaries in the government resulting in new tensions with the Turkish party⁸⁵. Moreover, the BSP has publicly condemned the resurgence of Turkish nationalism while invoking the threat of an Islamic fundamentalism in Bulgaria.⁸⁶ Additionally, members of the coalition nationalist parties started collecting signatures in the parliament for banning altogether the MRF party in 1995.⁸⁷ The nationalising rhetoric of the governing party has led to an increasing inter-ethnic tense climate in the 1994-1997 period. Perhaps, a few of the only minority friendly legal provisions adopted by the BSP government in its term in office has been the signing of the FCNM in 1995 and the creation of the National Council on Social and Demographic Issues in the same year.⁸⁸ The BSP government lasted in power until 1997 when it succumbed to massive street protests criticising its ineffective economic policy and its Moscow oriented foreign policy.⁸⁹

The subsequent early elections in 1997 have been won by the opposition association Alliance of Democratic Forces (UtdDF). Although the MRF has initially

⁸⁴ L. Balazs, "Politics of Balance. The Conjunction of Ethnic Party Formation and Development in Romania and Bulgaria", working paper, Nice, 2006, available at <http://www.iehei.org/bibliotheque/memoires/2006/BALAZSI.pdf>

⁸⁵ U Büchschütz, I. Georgiev, "Nationalismus, nationalistische Parteien und Demokratie in Bulgarien seit 1989" [Nationalism, Nationalistic Parties and Democracy in Bulgaria since 1989], *Südosteuropa*, Vol. 50, No. 3-4/2001.

⁸⁶ D. Dimitrova, Dimitrina. "The influence of communist style administration on ethnic conflict in Bulgaria", *Nationalism, Ethnicity, Identity*, Russel F. Farnen. New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 1994.

⁸⁷ A. Roger, "Economic Development and Positioning of Ethnic Political Parties: Comparing Post-Communist Bulgaria and Romania", *South East European Politics*, 3/2002, 1.

⁸⁸ A. Roger, "Economic Development and Positioning of Ethnic Political Parties: Comparing Post-Communist Bulgaria and Romania", *South East European Politics*, 3/2002, 1.

⁸⁹ M. Wien, "'Ab heute ist Bulgarien nicht dasselbe Land' Die Parlamentswahlen vom 17. Juni 2001" ['Bulgaria is not the Same Country after Today' The Parliamentary Elections of 17 June 2001], *Südosteuropa*, Vol. 50, nr. 4-6/2001.

campaign alongside the UtdDF which was based on the UDC skeleton, in the end it chose to form an electoral coalition with the Monarchists and the Greens small parties. This choice has been taken in light of the infighting and split occurring within the MRF itself. As a result of the inside conflict, a section of the MRF joined the UtdDF while the core of the party itself pursued an alliance with smaller parties. The subsequent policies undertaken by the UtdDF entered a gradual reform process towards minority protection. Accordingly, the government included members of the Turkish minority faction deviating from the MRF in ministerial bureaucratic positions. The country ratified in 1999 the FCNM. In light of NATO and EU membership requirements, the new government created a special inter-ethnic forum namely the Council for Minority Issues and promulgated a number of other minority reforms such as amending the Citizenship Law and allowing Bulgarian Turks residing in Turkey double citizenship.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, critics arising out of the MRF movement voiced the irrelevance of the inter-ethnic body in effectively creating policies for ethnic minorities.⁹¹ Moreover, the MRF expressed strong criticisms of the new draft law on religious denominations which gave strong powers to the Directorate of Denominations.⁹² Consequently, under the UtdDF mandate, the Turkish minority has been effectively split politically between a small faction represented in government and the MRF itself which remained in opposition.

The elections in 2001 brought into power a new political formation created by the former Bulgarian king, the Simeon II National Movement (NDS). The party presented itself as a technocratic movement aimed at economic reform in Bulgaria in light of the EU accession.⁹³ In light of past divergences with the UDF, the MRF allied with the newly emerged political party. Under the coalition which also included representatives of the BSP, it received five deputy ministerial positions, thus being at least formally part of the decision-making process. In a surprising move a few months later, the MRF sustained the BSP candidate in the subsequent presidential elections

⁹⁰ N. Ozgur-Bakacioglu, "Dual Citizenship, Extraterritorial Elections, and National Policies: Turkish Dual Citizens in the Bulgarian-Turkish Political Sphere, available at http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no9_ses/18_nurcan.pdf

⁹¹ L. Balazs, "Politics of Balance. The Conjunction of Ethnic Party Formation and Development in Romania and Bulgaria", working paper, Nice, 2006, available at <http://www.iehei.org/bibliotheque/memoires/2006/BALAZSI.pdf>

⁹² E. Cohen, "Bulgaria: A meeting of religious leaders denounces the final version of the draft denominations act.", available at <http://www.pili.org/lists/piln/archives/msg00692.html>

⁹³ L. Balazs, "Politics of Balance. The Conjunction of Ethnic Party Formation and Development in Romania and Bulgaria", working paper, Nice, 2006, available at <http://www.iehei.org/bibliotheque/memoires/2006/BALAZSI.pdf>

and following his win, it received the vice-president position. On this note, the MRF entered the governing coalition with two different parties at both the parliamentary and presidential level. Given the Copenhagen requirements for accession in the EU, the NDS II had to continue to implement national minority reforms while in power. In the context of increased domestic liberalisation and due to MRF's access to power, it came as no surprise that the MRF entered a new coalition agreement with the NDS II and the BS in the 2006 elections.

Additionally, the MRF's choice of domestic alliance-making can be judged in connection with political opportunities arising from the kin state actions with regards to the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. Turkey's actions and influence vis-à-vis its kin minority have progressively lowered in the post-communist period. If in the 1980s, Turkey was very active in condemning internationally the Bulgarisation campaign led by the Zjivkov regime, the subsequent actions of the Turkish state have gradually paled away. Such a downward pattern of kin state influence can be explained by various factors. First, the restricted role of Turkey can be seen in connection with the consolidation of the Turkish nation itself. Turkey refuses the acknowledgement of national minority provisions on its own territory claiming for instance the non-existence of the Kurdish nation. Consequently, if the Turkish state was active in support of its kin national minority in Bulgaria, it would legitimise further actions undertaken by the Kurds on its own territory and would hold repercussions on its refusal in signing the FCNM and admitting the existence of national minorities on its territory. A second reason for low kin state pressure arises from the EU accession process undergone by Bulgaria in the 1990s. If initially Bulgarian Turks have immigrated to Turkey in 1989 and in the early period of the 1990s, the wave has been virtually stopped given the possibility of obtaining EU citizenship upon Bulgaria's entry in the EU in 2007. Consequently, the perceived economic interest may have played a role in reducing outward looking demands of the MRF itself and of the Bulgarian Turkish population. Third, the existence of a large number of Bulgarian Turks in Turkey due to the previous strong immigration waves could have played an influential role in the political leverage that the MRF may have had in raising its votes in elections. Nevertheless, the expected voting behaviour never occurred and only a small margin on the Bulgarian Turks residing in Turkey has placed their ballots in elections. Finally, Turkey's bid for entry in the EU has led to a decreased international

lobbying leverage of the country. Consequently, in light of the above factors, the level of kin state support has been on a constant decline from 1990 to the present time.

One can nevertheless, perceive an initial period of higher support in 1990 in light of the unstable environment in Bulgaria when the Turkish authorities have voiced criticisms against the nationalising campaigns pursued by the BSP. One such specific type of rhetorical protest action has been taken in 1990 and 1991 in light of the decision undertaken by the Sofia City Court to declare the MRF as a unconstitutional party in line with its ethnic status. Even so, the support provided by Turkey has never transcended that of public condemnation of specific Bulgarian elite actions or of financial assistance to the MRF and Turkish cultural associations. In any case, following the early years in the aftermath of the regime change in Bulgaria, the Turkish kin state influence has decreased steadily.⁹⁴

The international leverage of support arising from European organisations has been on a steady upward swing since the end of the communist rule in Bulgaria. As in the case of Romania, such mechanisms of pressure have varied from rhetorical public condemnations, advices, and recommendations in the early post-communist period to full-time monitoring pursued by the international organisations that Bulgaria joined or to which it aspired membership. Indeed, in the period ranging from 1989 to 1992, the Council of Europe in tandem with other western governments have mainly used mechanisms of soft pressure in condemning among others the Bulgarian legislation banning the existence of ethnic parties as well as other nationalising tendencies pursued by the domestic authorities. With the adherence of Bulgaria to the Partnership for Peace Program in 1994 and its subsequent application for EU and NATO memberships in 1995 and 1997, the international organisations' presence in the country became much more intense. Through the usage of a carrot and stick approach linked to a political conditionality mechanism carried on in order to pressure the domestic authorities for adopting and implementing national minority reforms, the international organisations' pressure has constantly raised since the end of the communism rule.

(GRAPHICS SHOWING THE IV VARIATION TO BE ADDED HERE AT A LATER STAGE)

⁹⁴ N. Ozgur-Bakacioglu, "Dual Citizenship, Extraterritorial Elections, and National Policies: Turkish Dual Citizens in the Bulgarian-Turkish Political Sphere, available at http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no9_ses/18_nurcan.pdf

In conclusion, as in the case of Romania, one can perceive a timely connection between changes occurring in the domestic liberalisation climate for minority rights protection in Bulgaria and the fluctuating choice of alliance-making that the MRF pursued on the electoral scene. Accordingly, when parties in power advocate nationalist tendencies and unfriendly provisions on minority rights, the Turkish party pursues an equally defensive strategy by either pursuing an individualistic type of alliance or by entering agreements with opposition parties. This occurred in 1990 when the MRF did not enter coalition agreements with neither the government party nor the opposition or in the 1994-1997 period, when the MRF has only pursued accords of support in the parliament with the UDF opposition party. Similarly, when the UDF attempted to liberalise the minority rights protection climate, the MRF joined parliamentary accords and sustained their government. The constant improvement of provisions benefiting the Turkish minority, led to the MRF's alliance-making with governing parties in the post 2001 period. The outlier is represented by the 1997-2001 liberalising period but even then, one Turkish party has been in power in light of the schism which occurred inside the MRF. Additionally, the high level of kin support propagated by Turkey in the first two years following the regime change in 1989, has contributed as well to MRF's choice of electoral politics on a similar individualistic line. The lowering of the kin support in the subsequent years shows the tendency of the minority party to pursue inter-ethnic coalitions. Finally, as in the case of Romania, one cannot see a correlation between the heightened international level of support and MRF's choice of alliance-making, as it has not had a direct effect in coalition-making until 1997.

Conclusion

This study theorised inter-ethnic alliance making in post-communist ethnically heterogeneous states in post-authoritarian Eastern Europe. It scrutinised the factors that account for variation in the choice pursued by ethnic parties in alliance-making on the domestic electoral scene. While contributing to ethnic politics literature, it advanced the claim that only 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. In its analysis,

the project assessed the role of political opportunity structures arising from the European minority rights protection regime on the pursuit of inter-ethnic alliance making. Its results portray the explanatory role of the domestic liberalization climate and of the kin state actions pressure on the actual electoral choices made by ethnic parties. It argued that when either the kin state pressure lowers or the domestic liberalization increases in minority rights protection, ethnic parties are prone to enter accords with ethnic majority parties. Finally, the study argued that the international pressure arising from international organizations plays no direct effect on ethnic parties' choices of alliance making.

Further areas of research need to be explored in order to understand how national minority parties may de-radicalize even further in the aftermath of joining alliances with parties representing the ethnic majority. One such possibility is to study the de-ethnicisation of minority party demands by understanding what accounts for certain parties to pursue left-right wing policies while playing down the ethnic cleavage in the alliances they pursue domestically. Future studies may elucidate such existing empirical trends.