

Teddy Florea

Past Enemies Becoming Best Friends? Understanding Inter-Ethnic Coalition Making in Post-Cold War Central and Eastern Europe's States

Abstract

This project provides a newly refined theoretical framework for analyzing the inter-ethnic coalition making in the post-authoritarian multi-ethnic Eastern European states while at the same time explaining the possible conditions under which ethnic conflict can be managed through normal democratic electoral politics. In the context of a transition period from authoritarian to democratic rule, this project asks under what institutional opportunity structures do ethnic minority and majority political parties enter into alliance with one another. Otherwise said, what explains the emergence, type and length of inter-ethnic coalitions in post-authoritarian Eastern European states? The theoretical framework seeks to explain the empirical puzzle of why in countries very similar among various structural and institutional attributes, such as Slovakia and Romania, on the one hand, and Bulgaria and Albania on the other, the strategies pursued by both the minority and majority parties with regards to inter-ethnic alliance making have been different and have taken a different pattern and length. My proposed explanation lies on the social movements and ethnic politics literature and argues first, that a combined level of low external lobby actor pressure and high de-nationalising tendencies pursued by the governing party leads to an openness of the minority party towards entering coalition agreement with majority parties. Second, it posits that a combined high external mediating actor and high lobby actor pressure leads the majority party to invite a minority party into a governing coalition. In conclusion, this model emphasizes the role of domestic and international political opportunity structures having a direct effect on the behaviour of majority and minority elites in their choices of entering coalitions with one another.