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## **Past Enemies Becoming Best Friends? A Theoretical Account of Inter-Ethnic Coalition Making in Post-Communist Romania**

(draft – work in progress – please do not quote nor distribute without permission)

### **Abstract<sup>1</sup>**

*This project constructs 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 as well. In the context of a transition period from authoritarian to democratic rule in Romania, 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? The theoretical framework seeks to explain the empirical puzzle of the main Hungarian ethnic party in Romania constantly fluctuating on the political integration scale from participating in elections on its own to pursuing coalitions with the governing party and participating in the government. My proposed explanation lies on the social movements and ethnic politics literature and argues first, that a combined level of integrative lobby actor and mediating actor influence, and previous high conciliatory tendencies pursued by the majority party winning the elections leads to an openness of the minority party towards entering coalition agreements with majority parties. Second, it posits that a combined integrative type of mediating and lobby actor influence, a moderation of demands of the minority party prior to the elections, and a low degree of xenophobia in the polity leads the majority party to invite the ethnic minority one 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 entering coalitions with one another. More specifically, it adds to the Europeanization literature by tying it directly to ethnic politics and coalition-making and reverses the initial arguments stating that the EU while acting as a mediating actor in the region plays a positive role in the political integration of minorities and majorities. Rather, my research shows that in fact the EU can play both an integrative and disintegrative effect depending on the membership point at which one polity is found. A clear illustration of the EU double effect can be seen through the radicalisation of ethnic parties' demands in the post-accession period in Romania.*

### **Introduction**

What explains the emergence, type, and length of inter-ethnic coalitions in post-conflict and post-authoritarian states? What account for variation in the choice of coalition-making between ethnic minorities and majorities in the Central and Eastern European region (CEE)? Answering such puzzling questions appears highly important in the policy-making and academic arenas in the context in which the ethnic politics

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the innovative theoretical framework, this study is not complete yet in its empirical part. More specifically, given the need for interviews and more in depth quantitative data, one category in the dependent variable and two in the independent ones will not be considered in the empirics. Stay tuned for updates of the project!

environment is closely associated with the democratic stability and survival of a political regime.<sup>2</sup>

Twenty years following the democratic regime change, multi-ethnic political tensions remain high in the region. The extent of such tensions is well illustrated by the following recent diplomatic incident between Romania and Hungary. On 15<sup>th</sup> March 2009, the Hungarian president Laszlo Solyom planned an unofficial visit in the multi-cultural town of Targu Mures in neighbouring Romania in order to participate in the celebrations organised by the local Hungarian community with the occasion of the Hungarian public holiday of commemoration of the 1848-1849 war lost against Austria. Despite his intention to enter the Romanian territory for a seemingly cultural related reason, the Romanian authorities have interdicted his visit on the desired date on grounds of national security claiming that his predicted arrival on a military plane at a time of an increasing debate over cultural autonomy of the Hungarian inhabited regions of Transylvania would only radicalise the demands sustained by the main ethnic Hungarian party in Romania and thus heighten the current tensions in Romanian politics.<sup>3</sup> Romanian president Traian Basescu defended the Romanian authorities' decision by claiming that his Hungarian counterpart planned his visit in a specific attempt to rhetorically sustain the Magyar minority demands for cultural and possible territorial autonomy in the region.<sup>4</sup> As a response, Solyom accused the Romanian president of not abiding by international customary diplomatic norms in attempting to stop his projected cultural visit. Finally, the story ended with Solyom arriving a day earlier in Transylvania and entering it not by military plane but by car.

This recent anecdotic diplomatic incident has deep roots in the historical conflictual dynamics surrounding the two main communities in Romania, the Romanian majority and the Hungarian minority and can be traced to general inter-

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<sup>2</sup> See among others, K. Chandra, "Why Ethnic Parties Succeed", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004; J. K. Birnir, "Ethnicity an 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.

<sup>3</sup> *Realitatea*, "Vizita presedintelui Ungariei nu era "oportuna" fiindca intentiona sa sustina autonomia teritoriala", 13th March 2009, available at [http://www.realitatea.net/vizita-presedintelui-ungariei-nu-era-oportuna--fiindca-intentiona-sa-sustina-autonomia-teritoriala\\_474896.html](http://www.realitatea.net/vizita-presedintelui-ungariei-nu-era-oportuna--fiindca-intentiona-sa-sustina-autonomia-teritoriala_474896.html)

<sup>4</sup> I. Niculescu, "Basescu: Presedintele Ungariei da des declaratii care incalca constitutia Romaniei", *Cotidianul*, 17th March 2009, available at <http://www.cotidianul.ro/basescu-presedintele-ungariei-da-des-declaratii-care-incalca-constitutia-romaniei-77036.html>

ethnic dynamics in the entire region. Historically repressing one another, with the titular majority becoming minority and vice versa depending on the territorial shifts occurring over the past century, conflicting dynamics between ethnic groups have been a recurring issue of concern for policy-makers and scholars since the dismantling of the multi-cultural empires at the end of the World War I. With the end of the communist rule, the ethnic factor has once again become the root of many internal as well as external conflicts. 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 Eastern European 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.<sup>5</sup> 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 cleavage<sup>6</sup> 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 play out in connection with the goals and strategies pursued by majority parties as to scrutinize whether they undermine or on the contrary improve the legitimacy and stability of democratic rule.

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 still

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<sup>5</sup> above, n. 2.

<sup>6</sup> G. Evans, S. Whitefield, "Identifying the Bases of Party Competition in Eastern Europe", *British Journal of Political Science*, 23/4, 1993.

scarce.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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 polity<sup>10</sup>, this area of political science is quite innovative. Moreover, studies focusing on the majority parties and their mobilization patterns are lacking in the field. Most party politics studies have focused in creating general frameworks for understanding coalition-making decisions among all political actors involved based on the existent cleavages without focusing on a specific framework that delineates in a time longitudinal manner the interaction between minorities and majorities in general elections and their subsequent alliances.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> J. K. Birnir, “Ethnicity an Electoral Politics”, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> A. Grzymala-Busse, “Coalition Formation and the Regime Divide in East Central Europe”, *Comparative Politics*, 2001, 34(1); S. Rokkan, D. Urwin, “Centre-Periphery Structures in Europe”, New York, Campus Verlag, 1987.

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 in connection with a majority group and vice versa.

Dwelling on Paul Mitchell and Gary Evans' study on ethnic coalition-making<sup>12</sup>, this project posits 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, the question to be asked is what makes ethnic parties pursue such integrationist behaviour in entering coalitions with governing parties and what makes the latter invite them in the first place? What explains the level of inter-ethnic coalition-making taken on an integration scale continuum? More generally stated, what explains the different degrees of political integration and reconciliation between the majorities and minorities as they are illustrated through coalition making in general parliamentary elections. This problematique becomes more puzzling given the high level of nationalist cultural cleavage existent in the Eastern European domestic politics at the onset of the democratic rule in the early 1990s. Newly formed minority parties encompassed solely ethnic issues on their agendas while numerous majority parties have included in their official name the term "national".<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, in light of past conflicts existent between ethnic groups in the region, given previous repressive practices that the minority has faced at some point in the previous communist rule, and in a general climate of mistrust and miscommunication, it becomes highly surprising that such past enemies decided to close in politically and form alliances with one another.

In order to answer the above questions, I introduce a theoretical framework which takes its insight from the social movement and ethnic politics literature emerged over the past decade. Through the process tracing, I aim to understand what

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<sup>12</sup> P. Mitchell, 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](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1077760)

<sup>13</sup> Romania is a highly relevant case for instance, as most majority parties taking part in the 1990 elections included the term national in their official name.

triggered different types of coalitions at different moments in time, thus taking a longitudinal approach starting from the end of the communist rule and until the present time. Such a period would cover both the transitional environment as well as the period when democracy becomes progressively consolidated, thus aiming at depicting a general framework for inter-ethnic coalition making in post-authoritarian and post-conflict multi-ethnic states that can be extended to normal democratic politics in the long run. I thus attempt to elucidate the conditions under which ethnic minority and majority parties enter political arrangements with one another.

In light of the inherent instability accompanying a transitioning state, this paper provides a blueprint for policy makers on how to avoid conflict and promote the integration of minorities in the political life of their residing polity. Consequently, in order to illustrate the importance of the inter-ethnic alliance making and its integrative function, I selected the single case study of Romania which presented a high level of difficulty for reconciliation from the onset. Such difficulty consisted first of the Hungarian minority having been repressed in the communist period, thus creating a frozen conflict with the majority at the beginning of the transition to democracy period; second, the inter-ethnic relations between the two ethnic groups at stake have gone through past periods of violence, hatred and mistrust thus creating a highly unstable climate at the offset of the communist rule in 1989; third, the country has in its vicinity a kin state to the main Hungarian minority, which is capable of exercising pressure and influence and radicalize its kin minority in Romania and thus have a say on the inter-ethnic political dynamics in Romania. In light of these initial structural shortcomings, it becomes puzzling to understand what triggered the integrative outcomes in the political game between the two minorities as to elucidate conditions that may facilitate a reconciliatory attitude undertaken by the major ethnic groups at stake that may improve the overall stability of the polity. Furthermore, it becomes interesting to understand the variation of coalition-making occurring between the two actors ranging from intra-ethnic individual electoral endeavors to coalition-making at the governmental level between the two actors. Since such fluctuations occur in other states in the region as well as in other parts of the world, this paper scrutinizes what factors may trigger such fluctuations in alliance-making between minority and majority parties. The puzzle is amplified when put against previous research findings that illustrate that ethnic parties which follow their ethno-nationalist program and thus act individually on their political arenas are relatively immune to electoral punishment

and tend to preserve and even enhance their base of support over time.<sup>14</sup> So the question arises once again: why is there variation in the choices of minorities towards entering coalitions with the majority and what makes the majority take steps in such an integrative direction? What are the political opportunity structures that trigger such converging strategies? Accordingly, the case of Romania is highly relevant on this matter, as it comprises of various types of coalition making ranging from intra-ethnic to full participation in the government over the last nineteen years.

Through my research, I aim to remedy the existing literature gap as well as the current empirical and conceptual limitations by developing a dynamic institutionalist theoretical model through the inclusion of a set of independent variables which may explain the different types of alliance-making that the minority and majority parties may pursue within a polity. Given the presence of at least two political sides in the process of coalition-making, I consider the independent variables' explanatory effects on each one of them individually. First, with regards to the minority party, I consider the external mediating and lobby actors' pressure as well as the nationalizing or denationalizing tendencies of the governing majority party. Second with regards to the majority party, I assess whether its strategy has been influenced by the interplay of external lobby, mediating actors' influence, minority level of radicalization as well as the general level of xenophobia existing in the country prior to the considered election.

One final important aspect to discuss relates to the dependent variable in the study. Although the political integration of minorities and the inter-ethnic reconciliation can be viewed in a variety of ways, from legislative representation to outward participation in the government of a polity, I take a comprehensive view on the issue and assess not only the mere presence of a group in a power-sharing structure such as the type of coalitions existent ranging from individual, coalition with the opposition, and presence in the government, but the actual relevance and meaningfulness of such participation in projecting output benefits for the minority group. Accordingly, I further divide, the presence in a government into two categories coalitions of convenience and coalitions of integration in order to assess the effectiveness of a coalition in promoting integrative policies benefiting the minority group.

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<sup>14</sup> S. Alonso, "Enduring Ethnicity: the Political Survival of Incumbent Ethnic Parties in Western Democracies", Working Paper 2005/221, Madrid, Juan March Institute.

This study shall be divided as follows. First, I provide definitions of the key terms employed in the study, namely ethnic group, ethnic mobilization, ethnic minority and majority party, and the European minority protection regime. Second, I illustrate the main theoretical arguments existent on the sector of ethnic politics on which this project relies on. 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 minority and majority parties' strategies. Fourth, I present an embryonic section on the empirics of such coalition arrangements as they are depicted in post-communist Romania.

### **Main Definitions: Ethnic Groups, Ethnic Mobilisation, Ethnic Parties, the European Minority Protection Regime**

Since this project presents an explanatory model for ethnic minority and majority parties' political behaviour as exemplified through choices of different types of alliance-making, I adopt a minimalist definition of groups. Such an approach allows the model to be expanded to other multi-ethnic countries not considered in this study. Consequently, I use Max Weber's general definition which could be applied to large typologies of national minorities. He defines them as "those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent 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".<sup>15</sup> Additionally, following John Gerring and Paul Baressi, I add the concept of territoriality<sup>16</sup> in the definition as it presents a structural condition for the occurring of a centre-periphery cleavage in general party politics in which an ethnic group can present itself in an electoral campaign with a political program that takes into consideration and often emphasizes its territorial base through demands for self-governance or various types of autonomy. Such concept will play a primary part in the scope conditions of the present study.

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<sup>15</sup> M. Weber, "Economy and Society", G. Roth, C. Wittich (eds.), University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978.

<sup>16</sup> J. Gerring, John, P. Barresi. "Putting Ordinary Language to Work: A Min-Max Strategy of Concept Formation in the Social Sciences." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 2003,15.

Ethnic mobilisation is defined generally as the process by which groups organize around some feature of ethnic identity in pursuit of collective ends.<sup>17</sup> However, in order to specifically connect ethnic mobilisation to the political competition existent in multi-ethnic democracies, I rely in my analysis on the definition provided by Charles Tilly who views it as the process by which ethnic group members utilize their ascriptive characteristics in order to enter the arena of political participation.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, this definition should be used in connection with the strategies undertaken by minority parties in their choice of alliance-making with majority parties in their polity.

In light of the lack of agreement in the literature vis-à-vis a specific definition of the ethnic party concept<sup>19</sup>, I use 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 an ethnic and cultural nature.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, since my area of concern focuses on the strategies undertaken by the main ethnic party in a polity, I analyse the political actor that dwells the plurality of support and votes of the minority group in question. Similarly, for the majority party, I scrutinise the political actions and electoral choice undertaken by the majority ethnic party that is in charge of forming the coalition, ie, in most cases the party that has won the plurality of the vote in the previous election.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, as explained above, this study assesses the strategies pursued by ethnic minority and majority parties through their choices of alliance-making in the domestic arena in connection with the overall environment in which the national minority protection regime functions. Such a regime provides the institutional environment in

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<sup>17</sup> S. Olzak, "Contemporary Ethnic Mobilization", *Annual review of Sociology*, 9/1983.

<sup>18</sup> C. Tilly, "From Mobilization to Revolution", Random House, New York, 1978.

<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> 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. See D.L Van Cott, "From Movement to Parties in Latin America. The Evolution of Ethnic Politics", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005

<sup>21</sup> In case two parties are equally close in the election results and decide to form a coalition together such as is the case following the 2008 elections in Romania, I analyse both parties' activities.

which such parties activate and pursue their claims and from which ethnic party leaders may perceive opportunities arising which may affect their alliance-making. Since the area of focus is Europe, I shall dwell on the continental institutional frameworks existent for the protection of national minority rights and the dynamics related to it. More specifically, for the purpose of my study, I rely on the definition provided by Baptiste Chatré who considers this regime as encompassing the multitude of practices and instruments that arise from the existence of institutions regulating the minority question in Europe.<sup>22</sup>

Since in my research I assess the minority and majority political parties' actions in connection with both the domestic and the international environment, I do not consider the minority protection regime as encompassing solely the international institutions creating and regulating national minority norms. Accordingly, for the purpose of this project, I thus expand its area of focus by selecting the following attributes as taking part in the national minority protection regime existent in Europe:

- A. The International Organisations creating/promoting national minority norms; (mediating actors)
- B. Third party minority networks debating and triggering pressure for the application or the enhancement of such norms (lobby actors)
- C. Domestic national minority group organisations debating and triggering pressure for the application or the enhancement of such norms (EG: strategies pursued by ethnic parties);
- D. Domestic setting: governments, authorities, institutions in charge of applying such norms.

In conclusion, I shall assess the activities and claims pursued by the main ethnic parties and the majority parties in government in the four states under scrutiny in connection with the institutional changes, practices, and dynamics arising from the existence of the above institutions. A more in depth account of the relationship between the national minority protection regime dynamics and the strategies followed by ethnic parties in the domestic and international arena shall be illustrated later, in the theoretical framework section.

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<sup>22</sup> B. Chatré, "La question minoritaire en Europe Centrale et Orientale. Effectivité du Regime européen de protection de minorités sur la dynamique conflictuelle entre Magyars et Roumains en Transylvanie : 1989-2005, thèse, Paris, Université de Sorbonne, 2005.

## Literature Review

The theoretical framework that I present in connection with the mobilisation strategies pursued by the ethnic minority and majority parties dwells on specific segments of the ethnic politics and ethnic mobilisation literature. In this section, I present a review of the principal sources to which I either contribute or argue against in this study.

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. While dismissing theories such as primordialism who emphasize ethnicity as an inherent constantly destabilising variable for multiethnic societies,<sup>23</sup> this study focuses on more optimistic institutionalist accounts of ethnic politics, by considering that minority and majority parties may react positively to specific constructed variables such as institutions, or to external actors' behaviour.<sup>24</sup> The importance put on such variables stems from the belief that individual ethnic identities are changeable and managed by political entrepreneurs.<sup>25</sup> 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.

Before entering the political institutionalist literature to which I directly contribute to, it is important to briefly illustrate the main arguments stemming out of the party politics coalition theory that are relevant in ethnic politics although my study openly challenges most of them. Surpassing the initial general coalition theory which focused on the minimum winning coalitions in which parties would form alliances irrespective of the policies advocated by parties in the run out before the election<sup>26</sup>, this study answers directly to the spatial model theoretical understandings of electoral politics. Such "spatial" studies have emphasised that the trigger for coalition

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<sup>23</sup> D. Horowitz, "Ethnic Groups in Conflict", Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985.

<sup>24</sup> Such theories 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.

<sup>25</sup> K. Chandra, "Ethnic Parties and Democratic Stability", *Perspectives on Politics*, 3, 2/2005.

<sup>26</sup> W. Riker, "The Theory of Political Coalitions", New Haven, Yale University Press. 1962.

arrangements lie in the policy proximity of parties on either a single dimension<sup>27</sup> or in multiple dimensions. Such dimensions may be connected to the left right economic divide or on other political cleavages, such as one directly relevant to this study, the cultural dimension.<sup>28</sup> The latter dimension has been advanced by Stein Rokkan who emphasized its relevance on a centre-periphery cleavage occurring between the dominant national culture and the ethnic, linguistic, or religious minorities in the provinces and the peripheral sectors of society.<sup>29</sup> In Rokkan's understanding such conflicts occur over values and cultural identities.<sup>30</sup> Such multilevel spatial dimensions have been made under the assumption that the parties participating in the electoral game are unitary actors<sup>31</sup> and that the policies they predict for the coming governmental term are easily identifiable based on the political reputations of the actors participating in the game<sup>32</sup>. However, in the context of the post-communist elections where parties' positions in the cleavages especially on the left-right dimension was ambiguous or arguably non-existent, holding vague ideologies and few clear-cut policy differences it was difficult for a political reputation to be easily distinguishable except perhaps for an assessment of their recent stands on the relevant issues at stake. In other words, such spatial positioning is very difficult to be taken into consideration in the alliance-making electoral dynamics. Moreover, perceived ideological proximity has not always been the case in the post-communist world, Poland and Slovakia bringing either the second or best third alternative in the government, or forming a coalition with parties from the ideological opposed camp, respectively.<sup>33</sup> Finally, Rokkan's cultural cleavage based monde has been criticised for not being sufficiently adapted to the Eastern European environment. More

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<sup>27</sup> W. Riker, "The Theory of Political Coalitions". New Haven, Yale University Press, 1962.

<sup>28</sup> M. Laver, Michael, N. Schofield, "Multiparty Government: The Politics of Coalition in Europe" Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990.

<sup>29</sup> S. Lipset, S. Rokkan, "Cleavages Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments : An Introduction" in "Party Systems and Voter Alignments", New York, Free Press, 1967.

<sup>30</sup> above, n. 29.

<sup>31</sup> M. Laver, K. Shepsle, "Coalitions and Cabinet Government" *American Political Science Review* 1990, 84.

<sup>32</sup> M. Franklin, T. Mackie. "Familiarity and Inertia in the Formation of Governing Coalitions in Parliamentary Democracies," *British Journal of Political Science*, July 1983.

<sup>33</sup> A. Grzymala-Busse, "Coalition Formation and the Regime Divide in East Central Europe", *Comparative Politics*, 2001, 34(1)

specifically, Rokkan stated that in a multi-ethnic setting, a minority party is created and positions itself on the centre-periphery scale while acting as a catalyst for potential conflict and negotiating with the majority parties in order to prevent the degeneration of a conflict into violence.<sup>34</sup> However, this has not been the case in Romania and Macedonia and it is difficult to explain through such a framework the variation of ethnic demands and the occasional radicalisation of claims on the political spectrum leading to tensions between communities in Eastern Europe. Accordingly, Antoine Roger specifically criticises Rokkan's theoretical application in Eastern Europe by stating that unlike in Western Europe, the ethnic parties in the eastern part do not serve to institutionalise an internal conflict but to in fact articulate it in connection with the internal and outside scene, the latter being represented by connection of such party with its kin neighbour state.<sup>35</sup>

Having reviewed the relevant coalition theories that may predict inter-ethnic electoral alliances, I turn now to the segment of the ethnic politics literature on which I particularly dwell in this study. These studies take a political-institutionalist approach on 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".<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, when political opportunities change, we are more likely to activity from groups.<sup>37</sup> The underlying assumption is that ethnic identity is constructed and can therefore be altered by specific events difficult to predict.

Some studies hold that institutions create incentives for ethnic groups to de-radicalise and follow moderated claims in the electoral arenas.<sup>38</sup> Such factors can include the presence of a proportional representation system, low thresholds for minority participation, or types of power-sharing 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

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<sup>34</sup> S. Lipset, S. Rokkan, "Cleavages Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments : An Introduction" in "Party Systems and Voter Alignments", New York, Free Press, 1967.

<sup>35</sup> A. Roger, "Economic Development and Positioning of the Ethnic Political Parties: Comparing Post-Communist Bulgaria and Romania", *South East European Politics*, 2002, III, 1.

<sup>36</sup> S. Tarrow, "Power in Movement", Cambridge University Press, New York, Cambridge, 1994.

<sup>37</sup> The assumption behind is that ethnic identity is constructed and can therefore be altered by specific occurring events.

<sup>38</sup> 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](http://myweb.uiowa.edu/hehansen/Hansen_isa2006.pdf)

and participation for such groups.<sup>39</sup> She argues that voters in divided societies choose between parties by conducting ethnic head counts and voting solely and blindly parties representing their ethnic group rather than by comparing policy platforms.<sup>40</sup> Consequently, given that ethnic parties benefit 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.<sup>41</sup> Henceforth, the presence of an institutional setting privileging such access to power sustains the democratic stability of that polity.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, a recent study by Geoffrey Evans in the ethnic politics literature argues that the presence of inter-ethnic institutionalized power-sharing arrangements such as Northern Ireland leads initial extremist ethnic parties to moderate their claims and provide compromise solutions because of 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 to successfully promote their electoral program.

Nevertheless, such approaches focused on specific institutions appear limited in explaining the constant changes in the type of alliances pursued by ethnic minority and majority groups. 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. Additionally, even if ethnic groups may constantly receive votes that would preserve their political share in a democratic polity, what would occur to such groups if they are continually outvoted and not be part of the decision-making in a polity? Furthermore, variation may occur in the initial alliance choices pursued by ethnic groups such as in the cases of Romania, or Albania, where the emergence of a proportional representation system in the post-totalitarian period, despite generally favouring coalition arrangements did not lead to an ethnic party entering government level until 1996. Additionally, Evans' focus on power-sharing mechanisms although relevant in portraying the progressive de-radicalisation of minority claims in an institutionalized 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 arising out of the creation of a power-

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<sup>39</sup> K. Chandra, "Why Ethnic Parties Succeed", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

<sup>40</sup> K. Chandra, "Why Ethnic Parties Succeed", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

<sup>41</sup> K. Chandra, "Why Ethnic Parties Succeed", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

<sup>42</sup> K. Chandra, "Ethnic Parties and Democratic Stability", *Perspectives on Politics*, 3(2), 2005.

sharing arrangement in which past enemies interact and work on a routine basis cannot be fully applied in the Eastern European inter-ethnic coalition making context. In the latter, the ethnic party already moderates its approach in domestic politics by making a specific choice to enter an alliance-agreement. Henceforth, the causes of such behaviour in the latter case are exogenous to the actual practice of power-sharing institutions. Since in the East European region such consensual institutionalised bodies do not exist at such level as to force minority and majority parties to co-operate in an institutionalized way, it is important to find other less static explanatory variables.

Other theoretical approaches assessing opportunities and threats in a longitudinal fluid manner focus on variables such as the role of the leaders, their policies on the domestic and international level in connection with minority mobilization and regime stability.<sup>43</sup>

In one important and relevant study that I directly dwell on, 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 fluctuations in the institutional opportunity structure and by the actions of the group's external power such as Diaspora or their kin state.<sup>44</sup> More specifically, she creates a bargaining theory of ethnic demands in which the minority's host government and its lobby actor's actions are the two actors whose actions can explain the behaviour of the ethnic group.<sup>45</sup> Jenne argues that the salience of ethnicity is expected to rise when a minority's host government and lobby actor are engaged in a conflict over the ethnic group's status, thus fracturing inter-ethnic coalitions.<sup>46</sup> On the contrary, when the host government and lobby actor agree on minority issues among each other, thus signalling a non-nationalistic intent in their relationship, minority and majority elites respond by forming inter-ethnic coalitions.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, her theory explains how

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<sup>43</sup> Other institutionalist theoretical accounts explain ethnic political mobilisation through an assessment of the presence of specific structural factors such as 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. Such structural factors although perhaps relevant in specific contexts in other areas in the world, do not explain the variation of outcomes in the coalition-making patterns of the case-studies under scrutiny.

<sup>44</sup> E. K. Jenne, "Ethnic Bargaining. The Paradox of Minority Empowerment", Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2007.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

shifting perceptions of support can change the strategy used by ethnic groups in advancing their demands on the domestic arena.

Taken to a more specific format, 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.<sup>48</sup> 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. Moreover, Milada Vachudova focuses her analysis on the application of minority norms in the EU acceding states and how the Copenhagen criteria created incentives for applicant states to improve the position of minorities in the domestic polity, thus contributing to the overall stability in the region. However such studies have either been focused on understanding ethnic conflict dynamics or have limited their analysis to the emergence of such political grouping movements while judging their subsequent electoral success. Theoretical understandings that involve both minority-majority ethnic coalition-making and related political strategies pursued in connection with dynamic domestic and international opportunity structures still remain scarce in the ethnic politics literature.

One important study that I dwell on in the Europeanisation literature takes into account the post-accession inter-ethnic political situation in Western Europe by showing how the European discourse on minority rights may hold a disintegrative understanding especially after one state gains membership.<sup>49</sup> While focusing her analysis on Spain, UK, and France, Myuen Kim analyses the rise of the ethnic vote as well as the radicalization of demands in light of the post-accession and the opportunities for nationalist discourse that the EU holds as a supranational entity.<sup>50</sup> She argues that the Europe of regions discourse has paved way for ethnic parties to focus more specifically on increasing autonomy arrangements in a supranational entity where borders become less rigid and consequently to re-emphasize the cultural

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<sup>48</sup> 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; See also D. Lake, D. Rothchild, D. (eds.), "The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation", Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1998.

<sup>49</sup> M. Kim, "European Integration and Ethnic Voting: Electoral Fate of Ethnic Parties in Seven European Regions", conference paper, New Orleans, 2009, available at

[http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p\\_mla\\_apa\\_research\\_citation/0/6/7/6/8/p67683\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/0/6/7/6/8/p67683_index.html)

<sup>50</sup> above, n. 49.

centre-periphery divide in electoral politics.<sup>51</sup> Her analysis could be easily tested on the newly member states of Eastern Europe while specifically addressing the inter-ethnic coalition making in the post-accession period.

Finally, another recent study that I dwell on in this project is Johanna Birnir's theoretical approach on ethno-political mobilisation. In her book, she contributes to the institutional-constructivist literature in the ethnic politics field by highlighting the role of ethnic political parties' electoral strategies on the stability of a transitioning democratic polity.<sup>52</sup> More specifically, she argues, that an improvement of rights for minorities such as allowing them participation in elections and government brings stability to the polity in which they reside.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, her central argument is that ethnic identity serves as a stable but flexible and fluid information shortcut for political choices that influences party formation and development.<sup>54</sup> She argues that in a transitional period, a 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.<sup>55</sup> This latter attitude would occur due to a gradual moderation of the party's claims on the electoral arena. Consequently, through a diversification of their programs and claims, and by cross-cutting the ethnic cleavage through inclusion of left-right wing issues in the party programs such ethnic parties can become a force themselves for peace and stability in their polity by diversifying their platform from purely ethnic issues and by getting involved in the general running of their polity. Birnir's argument can be easily applied to ethnic coalition making between minorities and majorities. Indeed, the choice of entering a coalition with a governing party implies a certain 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.

Having reviewed the theoretical trend on which I dwell in explaining the relationship between ethnic parties and the stability of democratic regimes, I now proceed to present my own argument and its contribution to the above literature.

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<sup>51</sup> above, n. 49.

<sup>52</sup> J. K. Birnir, "Ethnicity an Electoral Politics", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid*

<sup>54</sup> *ibid*

<sup>55</sup> *ibid*

## Theoretical Framework and Contribution

This project takes insight from the social movement literature and from the ethnic conflict and ethnic politics theories and asks under what conditions do ethnic minority and majority parties choose to ally with each other. In assessing the variation of inter-ethnic coalition-making in Romania it seeks to explain why ethnic parties activating have fluctuated their choices of coalition making and what triggers different post-electoral outcomes.

This project's main goal is to create a theoretical framework for understanding the ethnic majority and minority's choices of alliance-making among each other in a highly unstable transitioning environment in the post-Cold War Eastern Europe by focusing on the empirical illustration of the puzzling case of Romania. By taking an institutionalist-constructivist approach that connects political opportunity structures (POS) to minority behaviour, this study sustains the findings of authors who argue that access of ethnic parties to representation and electoral competition in domestic politics stabilizes the existence and running of a democratic regime.<sup>56</sup> However, it surpasses such studies by focusing specifically on the gradual development of minority and majority party electoral strategies on the domestic arenas and not by simply assessing the importance of the institutional presence of such minority ethnic entities in electoral politics. It contributes by taking a specific approach in the ethnic politics field by looking at the level of integration of ethnic parties in the polity through an assessment of the electoral alliances pursued between minority and majority groups.

This study first dismisses the coalition making theory literature presented above on several grounds. While taking into consideration the spatial proximity ideological model, one can perceive its clear limitation when projected in the transitioning political environment in the CEE region. First, the left/right dimension on which parties can position themselves cannot account in a post-communist climate where policy stands on these issues where influenced by the major international organizations that the countries aspired to be members of. The positions of the parties

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<sup>56</sup> K. Chandra, "Why Ethnic Parties Succeed", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004; E. Giuliano, "Secessionism from the Bottom Up: Democratization, Nationalism, and Local Accountability in the Russian Transition", *World Politics*, v.58, 2/2006.

in power had to be in line with EU and NATO requirements and thus constant privatization to varying degrees was the required norm for entering such institutions. The Europeanisation wave has thus put governments on a similar path irrespective of the slowness of their policies. Second, the cultural divide in the periphery/center cleavage was difficult to assess due to many ethnic parties consisting being represented by umbrella based organizations comprising various ideologies and different levels of radicalization in their structure. Third, one more general argument can be made against the perception of one party's actual positioning on a spatial model. This stems out from the uncertainty of even the Party Manifesto data which focus on experts' subjective interpretative coding of party practices.<sup>57</sup> If such experts' understanding of party's positioning is put into doubt, one can perceive the uncertainty that politicians would hold vis-à-vis the placement of their competitors in elections. Fourth, given the constant change of policies of both the minority and majority parties on the cultural dimension in line with the POS arising from the external influence as depicted below, it becomes increasingly difficult to take into consideration the reputation of a party on these lines. Consequently, this study argues against the spatial coalition-making model existent in the party politics literature. Nevertheless, one specific variable shall be taken into consideration albeit to a limited extent: the party reputation of actors. As it shall be stated below, in light of the inherent difficulties in grasping a clear and constant strategic line and ideological platform that a political party would abide by, such a variable shall be assessed only based on recent actions and policy platforms.

In view of that, this study speaks directly to Birnir's institutionalist thesis which stated that ethnic parties that gradually cross-cut ethnic cleavages constitute a force for peace and stability. By inverting the equation, I propose instead that only when politics normalize, that is when the domestic and international environment is perceived by both ethnic and majority parties as stable, can ethnic minority and majority parties serve as a stabilizing force in democratic regimes regime by entering coalition agreements with majority parties rather than running in ethnic type of alliance in opposition.

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<sup>57</sup> K. Benoit, M. Laver, S. Mikhaylov, "Treating Words as Data with Error: Estimating Uncertainty in the Comparative Manifesto Project", paper, 2008, available at <http://politics.as.nyu.edu/docs/IO/2791/Ben-Lav-Mik.pdf>

Additionally, this project contributes directly to Jenne's bargaining theory of ethnic demands. It surpasses Jenne's study by focusing not only on the ethnic groups and their political factions but by including in the systemic picture the majority political behaviour and strategies as well. Indeed, a minority party despite desiring to enter a political coalition with a majority would nevertheless depend on the latter's decision as to conclude an official agreement. Consequently, in the model, I focus my analysis on both actors while constructing a theoretical framework that illustrates the relationships between the independent variables and each one of the two actors at stake. Moreover, whereas Jenne looks at partisan lobby actors that increase the ethnic salience and break down inter-ethnic coalitions, I look at how different kinds of external mediating actors have the opposite effect. The difference between a mediating and a lobby actor lies in that the former takes sides in an ethnic dispute, while the latter attempts at remaining neutral and activates with the goals of peace and stability rather than having a specific interest in one side winning over the other.

The theoretical framework developed below draws on social movement theory from the past two decades. It examines the mobilisation drivers of collective action through which national minority organisations strategically pursue their goals. This project looks at the role and interactions among two sets of attributes explaining social movements: political opportunities and framing processes. Scholars of political opportunities have focused on the relationship between institutionalised politics and the emergence and development of social movements by looking at the changes that occur in the institutional structure or informal power relations of a given domestic political system.<sup>58</sup> Framing processes have been defined as conscious strategic efforts by groups of people in order to create or consolidate a shared understanding of the world and of themselves so as to legitimate and motivate collective action.<sup>59</sup> 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. In doing so, it enriches debates in the social mobilisation academic field by creating a theoretical framework that operationalises framing processes while using a comparative approach

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<sup>58</sup> 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.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

through which one can understand the various pathways of ethnic organisational actions in connection with the political opportunities existent in the domestic and international environment.

More specifically, following George Tsebelis, POS is comprised of three dimensions: formal political rules and institutions that create points of access; relevant interested political actors and informal procedures of decision-making and the strategies of those in power.<sup>60</sup> 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 authorities on the domestic and international scenes, such as specific actions or discourses associated with minority rights protection.

In this project, I rely on the above POS dimensions that revolve around the minority-majority political relations in a polity. Since the choice of coalition-making implies the moderation of both ethnic minority and majority behaviour through the pursuit of compromise with a majority party, I examine how POS may influence the strategies of both actors in such a direction. I thus look specifically at five sets of factors arising out of the European minority protection regime: the mediating external actors at play, the effect of the lobby actor for the minority group under study, the nationalizing and denationalizing tendencies of the majority party winning the elections as perceived through its reputation in the six months prior to the electoral scrutiny, the radicalization level of demands pursued by the minority party in the six months period prior to the elections, and finally the general level of xenophobia in the population as exemplified through surveys opinion polls for the specific period under scrutiny. In view of that, I scrutinise how their perceived interplay of the independent variables may play a role in their choices of coalition making.

The minority and majority parties' coalition making choice of type of coalition on the domestic arena is operationalised nominally by looking specifically at what type of alliance they pursue. While assessing their political integration in a continuum

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<sup>60</sup> G. Tsebelis, "Veto Players: How Institutions Work", New York, Russel Sage Foundation, 2002.

based on the efficiency of the given regime in providing for minority concessions, I divide such alliances into five types ranging from lowest to highest in a reconciliatory framework: a. intra-ethnic alliance; b. a coalition with a majority ethnic party found in opposition; c. simple accords and agreements of support with governing parties; d. convenience based coalitions with a majority ethnic party in government; e. integrative or commitment based coalitions with a majority party found in the government. The last two categories imply a difference in the meaningfulness of such an alliance and their typology is largely based on Donald Horowitz differentiation of such coalitions into convenience versus commitment.<sup>61</sup> While option d would lean towards an unstable or conflictual coalition that may present temporal interruptions and threats of division, option e leans towards a mature coalition formation and stability in which the two actors actually adopt and implement minority policies that benefit the ethnic group at stake while allowing the minority leaders to take hold of ministerial and administrative positions that are relevant to their campaign demands. The division between the last two being the most difficult to make, their division and operationalisation may be accomplished through an analysis of the policies implemented as well as on the discourses of both actors at play when participating in such alliances. Henceforth, content analysis of newspapers focusing on the discourse of the two actors vis-à-vis one another as well interviews with the party leaders are taken into consideration when differentiating between the two.<sup>62</sup> Such a division of the dependent variable allows for variation in understanding ethnic parties' integration in the political making of their polity ranging from a solitary ethnic focused outlook towards being further integrated either by being in the opposition with other domestic parties or by 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 entire polity's regime. Additionally, such a classification illustrates the openness of the majority party to surpass the ethnic cleavage and its attempt to integrate the minority party in the policy-making while acting towards reconciliation with past enemies.

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<sup>61</sup> D. Horowitz, "Ethnic Groups in Conflict", Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000.

<sup>62</sup> The difference between options d and e is not taken into account in this paper due to time constraints and lack of availability of data. A future research trip in May and an archival newspaper content analysis of the main centre right and centre left newspapers in Romania should elucidate the matter in the near future.

Furthermore, this study assesses alliances pursued by ethnic minority and majority 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 being part of the general policy-making arenas.

While assessing the role of the POS as represented through the three independent variables, this project uses the process-tracing technique<sup>63</sup> and explains the most important stages of the different types of alliance-making pursued by the main ethnic minority parties and the majority ones while providing reasons for changes occurring based on analysis of the connection between the independent and dependent variable.<sup>64</sup> A special attention shall be given to shifts of strategy by analysing how the independent variables may have an impact on the dependent variable in order to assess their connectedness. Through process tracing undergone via an analysis of the specific events triggering a change of behaviour of both actors and re-assessed through an interviewing technique of the party leaders taking alliance-making decisions, it can be determined how the possible intervening causal processes may lead to different outcomes of the dependent variable, ie the alliance-making typology mentioned above. Additionally, interviews are conducted with policy makers and party leaders that have participated in negotiations leading to the formation of political alliances in the four countries. Finally, newspaper content analysis is performed as to allow for a clear understanding of the minority and majority discourse prior to general parliamentary elections.

I scrutinise the political opportunity structures arising from dynamics involving the European national minority protection regime in the domestic and international arena. I measure first the mediating actors' mechanisms used in influencing the domestic application of national minority rights; the variable is operationalised by investigating the approach used by the relevant international

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<sup>63</sup> A. L. George, A. Bennett, "Process Tracing and Historical Explanation and Theory Development in the Social Sciences, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2005.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

organisations involved in national minority protection in Europe towards an enhanced application of national minority rights in the states under scrutiny. The mediating actor should be read as an external power whose *raison d'être* is not to take sides but aims at reaching or preserving the stability of a polity. Building on Vachudova, I assess in the specific context of Eastern Europe and the subsequent enlargement waves, how the European norms and discourse may affect the behaviour of domestic actors, and more specifically, inter-ethnic coalition-making. The impacts of the EU are assessed both at the state and regional level, the latter being important in the context of the decentralisation discourse present in Brussels and that may play an effect in the post-accession period as it shall be illustrated below. Although the EU influence shall be emphasized, it is important to state that several other actors have played a role as mediating actors in the early stages after the regime change, namely the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), NATO, as well as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with a constant financial consulting presence in the area. Accordingly, this project assesses the link between the European integration and how the pre-accession and post-accession conditions may affect minority-majority political dynamics. More specifically, by assessing the mediating actor's influence through the international organisations' policy-making and discourse, I assess how such supranational actions have been related towards the centre-periphery cleavage by playing down or on the contrary by reinforcing the ethnic divide existent in the country. I thus operationalise the variable into three types. The first type deals with a **multi-ethnic integrative emphasis** in which EU policies and discourse have been aimed at inter-ethnic cooperation and thus leading towards reconciliatory and executive power-sharing agreements between the two actors. Such measures could be easily found in documents such as the Copenhagen criteria<sup>65</sup> which clearly stipulates minority provisions that need to be implemented based on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) document<sup>66</sup>, the first legally binding document in the field. Such documents stipulate the implementation of negative and positive rights vis-à-vis the minorities ranging from non-discrimination to their active participation in the public affairs of their host state. This type of discourse and related policies can be perceived as an attempt towards integrating the minorities and

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<sup>65</sup> EU, "Copenhagen Criteria", document, 1993.

<sup>66</sup> CoE, "Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities", document, 1995.

majorities through power-sharing such as coalition-making in both the executive and regional arenas. A second type of mediating actor influence may occur through a **regional disintegrative emphasis** being illustrated by discourse and policies that reinforce the centre-periphery cleavage existent in a state. The Europe of Regions discourse and the role played by the Committee of Regions created in light of the Maastricht treaty<sup>67</sup> and associated policies can be understood as reinforcing an initial centre-periphery cleavage existent in a country. Such a regional emphasis can be understood as providing an opportunity structure for minorities to radicalise their discourse by focusing on self-governing aspects related to their regional territorial base, such as for instance the desire for cultural, economic and political autonomy arrangements. Finally, a third type of discourse is a **hybrid** of the two in which none of the two approaches is sufficiently spelled out, and thus prone to create a higher leeway for political actions for both the minority and majority in their choices of coalition-making. A change in POS on the international level will be measured as the appearance of new international legal frameworks that enforce minority rights or enhance the application of existing minority rights in an integrative or regionalised perspective. 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 mediating actors' influence has been gradually perceived in an integrative perspective as the accession to the EU has gone nearer while in the post-accession environment, the regionalising approach has been more prevalent.

Second I scrutinise the lobby actors' actions and how their interest group pressures and level of support for a minority may subsequently influence the inter-ethnic alliance-making in a state. For the purpose of this project, a lobby actor can be considered as a third party which takes a clear stand in support of a minority group in a state. Such lobby actors could vary from the neighbouring kin state government to a Diaspora organisation or even to a foreign state that has an interest in the region. With regards to the case study of this project, I look specifically at kin state official legislation undertaken vis-à-vis relations with the neighbouring country and specifically to its kin minority. I divide the kin state pressure into **integrative, passive, and disintegrative**. An disintegrative kin state pressure can be considered in

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<sup>67</sup> EU, "Committee of Regions", 1994.

the scenario of such lobby actors adopting legal measures or undertaking certain discourses that focus on improving relations with its kin minority while at the same time downplaying diplomatic relations with the neighbouring country. An integrating kin influence is represented through the reversed scenario in which a kin state actively aims at improving relations with the majority through, for instance, signing bilateral accords or creating bilateral policies on the minority situation while at the same time relaxing its relations with its kin group. Finally, a passive or hybrid attitude of the kin state allows for a non involvement in the minority-majority relationship of the neighbouring state. Accordingly I analyse kin state policies and officials' specific relevant discourses which may increase the perceived leverage of integrative or disintegrative support that the kin minority may have at the executive level in its mother country. I argue that the kin state integrative support leads to higher types of coalition making while a disintegrative emphasis leads to the opposing trend.

Third, I measure the degree of minority protection at the domestic level by monitoring the nationalising and de-nationalising recent tendencies in discourse and practice of the governing majority parties that have won the elections under analysis and thus were in charge of forming the government. In light with the coalition formation theories presented above, and given the difficulty of assessing the spatial position of a party on the cultural scale, this variable assesses the recent reputation of the winning party on the cultural divide in the previous six months before winning an election.<sup>68</sup> This variable addresses institutional measures undertaken by the winning party in elections as well as the discourse that its officials use vis-à-vis the main ethnic political group and its demands in the six months prior to the electoral scrutiny. It focuses first on changes advocated in the institutional framework of a state such as sustaining the adoption or retraction of legal benefits that a minority profits from. When positive legal changes or discourses are advocated, the support shall be considered **conciliatory**. 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 **repressive**. Finally, when the winning party leaders do not relate to the minority party in their discourse, the level of support shall be considered **passive**. This variable is

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<sup>68</sup> The six month margin should give enough insight into a party's discourse vis-à-vis a minority group as to see whether there have been differences prior to the actual electoral campaign in its position on the cultural scale.

investigated through newspaper content analysis of the two main centre-left and centre-right newspapers in the given country as well as through interviews with party leaders.

The fourth variable of this study deals with the minority party radicalisation prior to the parliamentary elections. Similarly as for the previous variable in light of the constant shifting of behaviour on the cultural scale, it is assessed through content newspaper analysis for the six months period prior to an election as well as through interviews with the minority party leaders. Such archival and empirical analysis should allow for understanding of the level of demands pursued by the minority vis-à-vis its host state. Such reputation can be classified into **moderate** or **radical** by relying on the content of the FCNM convention. In the FCNM document, minority rights are of two kinds: positive and negative. Despite clear provisions of non-discrimination and participation, the concepts of cultural or political autonomy do not appear in the document in an attempt by the CoE to make its application less controversial in the member countries. Henceforth, the FCNM provides solely for integrative mechanisms with regards to the minority majority political relations. Consequently, when the minority party focuses on such mechanisms, its reputation on the cultural divide shall be considered as moderate. Similarly, when the minority party advocates advanced rights such as self-governing mechanisms in the shape of cultural or territorial autonomy which reinforce the centre-periphery divide, its position stand shall be classified as radical.

Finally, the fifth variable of this study relates to the general level of xenophobia persistent in the country. This variable shall be scrutinised by relying on general population surveys, polls and the Eurobarometer studies that depict the overall opinion of the majority ethnic group vis-à-vis the minority. The variable can be operationalised into **declining, ascending, and stagnating** and can be connected to **negative, positive, and neutral** values. For instance, if the polls portray an over 65% negative perception of the minority group, and in the subsequent opinion poll prior to an election, the perception increases by ten percent, the variable shall be given an increasing positive sign. On the other hand, if the negative perception of a minority has only a 15% value and grows to 25%, it shall be given a declining negative sign. Finally, if the variable shifted from 45% to 52%, it shall hold an increasing neutral value. Otherwise, said, the neutral value shall range from 40 to 60%. The reason for addressing this variable lies in the party elites' perceptions of electoral support. Since

the main objective of a party is to accede to office, it needs to take into account the electorate's opinion. By addressing the level of xenophobia existent in a given polity, one can hypothesize that if the polity's level of xenophobia rises, the majority party may be more reluctant in taking electoral risks in associating itself with the minority party, and henceforth, would prefer to embark on an intra-ethnic rather than multi-ethnic type of alliance. (this specific variable is still embryonic and not tested; any feed back on it would be beneficial)

To summarise, the minority and majority parties' choice of alliance-making relies on the perceptions that the two political actors have on the opportunity structures arising out the European minority protection regime. More precisely, I scrutinise on the one hand, the effect on the majority party's electoral choices of the mediating actor, the lobby actor, the minority demands prior to the elections, and the degree of xenophobia existing in the polity. Similarly, I analyse how the minority party reacted in its alliance-making in connection with the influence propagated by the mediating actor, the lobby actor, and the nationalising tendencies of the minority party prior to the election. In conclusion, based on the operationalisation of the independent variables in the theoretical framework, I hypothesise that a combined level of multi-ethnic integrative mediating actor influence, an integrative lobby actor, a conciliatory governing party, a moderate party radicalisation, and a declining negative level of xenophobia should lead to the highest type of inter-ethnic of coalition making. Furthermore, I hypothesize that a shift in one of the independent variables, that is in the perceptions of the two electoral actors vis-à-vis the POS, should translate into a change in the level of inter-ethnic coalition making.

In the following section, I test the theoretical model by assessing the inter-ethnic coalitions that have occurred in Romania from 1990 until the present.

### **Empirics: Romania<sup>69</sup>**

What explains the emergence, type, and length of inter-ethnic coalitions in post-communist Romania? What account for variation in the choice of coalition-

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<sup>69</sup> This section is very much an initial draft; henceforth, some of the variables are not touched upon, namely the one focusing on the level of xenophobia reached at the population level and the minority radicalisation variable; furthermore, in light of the unavailability of data thus far concerning the division on the dependent variable between coalitions of convenience and those of commitment, I do not yet include this further division in the analysis.

making between the ethnic minority and ethnic majority in Romania? Why has the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR) pursued different types of alliance-making in connection to the majority parties in the electoral arena over the past nineteen years? While responding to such puzzling questions, this section focuses specifically on the electoral choices pursued by the two political actors in their pursuit of coalitions on the domestic arena; accordingly, it situates such inter-ethnic coalitional dynamics in direct connection with the political opportunity structures' as they have been exemplified in the theoretical framework presented above, thus creating a dynamic institutionalist model for alliance making. Accordingly, this section analyses how the interplay of domestic and international variables have had an impact on the inter-ethnic alliance making in Romania. More specifically, it assesses, on the one hand, how the influence of the mediating, and lobby actor as well as the minority radicalisation of demands may play a role on the majority choices of coalition making. On the other hand, it scrutinizes the pressure propagated by the lobby actor, the mediating one, and the previous nationalising/de-nationalising tendencies pursued by the majority party winning the elections on the ethnic minority party's electoral choices in the alliance-making.

The choice for the case selection is multifold. First, Romania is a highly heterogeneous state holding a Hungarian national minority making up 6.6% of the population of the country and thus holding a constant electoral source of support in the domestic elections. Second, the Hungarian minority is regionally located thus holding a territorial base thus activating the centre-periphery cleavage in electoral politics. Third, the repressive policies advocated during Ceausescu's dictatorial rule have left a legacy of mistrust and conflict among the two main ethnic communities in Romania at the end of the communist rule in 1990. Fourth, the presence of a lobby actor Hungary allows for an analysis of how policies and discourses occurring in the kin neighbour states may have played a role in the Romanian domestic inter-ethnic policies and in the choices of coalition making between the two communities. Fifth, Romania's membership drive and subsequent integration in the major European organisations allows for an analysis of the road towards accession and how the mediating actors' discourse influenced domestic electoral inter-ethnic policies.

This section is divided as follows. First, it provides a brief introduction of the main constant actor at play, the Hungarian party UDMR followed by a short review of the varying types of inter-ethnic coalition making that occurred from the start of the

transition period towards democracy in 1990 until the present day when the country became consolidated democratic state and an integral part of the international and European organizational structures. Second, it ties the dependent variable of the study to the independent ones by assessing what interplay of factors have been at stake in generating coalition outcomes following each parliamentary election.

### **1. Varying Degrees of Inter-Ethnic Coalition Making**

The recent diplomatic controversy portrayed above surrounding the visit of the Hungarian president Solyom with the occasion of the commemoration of the Austro-Hungarian war of 1848-1849, has its deep roots in the conflictual dynamics surrounding the inter-ethnic politics in Romania, and namely the uneasy political relationship between the Hungarian minority and the Romanian majority parties. Since its establishment as a political party the UDMR has fluctuated in its integrationist positions vis-à-vis the Romanian political parties ranging from participating individually in the opposition to being present in the governmental structures in coalitions with a majority party.

In Romania, the UDMR was established as a political party on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1989 in the immediate aftermath of the regime change 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. 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 but 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. Following the break up of the governmental coalition in 2006, with the Democratic Party (PD) entering the opposition, the UDMR remained in a minority government alongside the Liberal Party. In 2008, in the aftermath of the parliamentary elections in November, the Hungarian party returned to the opposition following an individual intra-ethnic program until the present time.

In light of the changes of electoral strategy in UDMR's 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? What triggered the winning majority parties in parliamentary elections to include the UDMR in a governmental schema? What explains variations of their inter-ethnic coalition making? In line with the theoretical framework illustrated above, I present an overview of developments associated with the independent variables under consideration as to see how they may have played a role in the relevant actors' alliance-making choices.

## **II. The Role of Political Opportunity Structures in the choice of Inter-Ethnic Coalition Making in Romania<sup>70</sup>**

A first variable that can be assessed in the political opportunity structures' schema is the nationalising and denationalising tendencies pursued by the party winning the elections. As illustrated above, such tendencies could be classified as repressive, reconciliatory or passive. Following the outcome of the first two elections in 1990 and 1992, the National Salvation Front emerged as the winner and was in charge of forming the government. Its recent reputation on the cultural divide prior to the two parliamentary elections can be considered as repressive through a projection of an adversary role towards minority rights and towards the UDMR. Despite an initial openness in the immediate aftermath of the revolution in attempt to provide for

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<sup>70</sup> As this section is very much a draft, it should be taken into consideration through a plausibility probe while necessitating further specific research on the precise unfolding of the independent variables.

a catch all framework and to secure the support of the ethnic = population through an invitation towards the Hungarian party for participation in the first self-proclaimed government, its attitude has quickly shifted to an adversary role. The rhetoric propagated by Ion Iliescu, the FSN's president in that period following the violent clashes in March 1990 between Hungarians and Romanians and its active opposing stand on university education in the mother tongue illustrated its party's option for a centralised unitary nation-state model and thus for a repressive type of discourse vis-à-vis the Hungarian minority demands in the country. Following its investiture in power in 1990, the FSN, later named PDSR, has been reluctant to advance reforms in the minority rights protection field while playing on the ethnic cleavage card in order to bolster subsequent electoral support. This can be perceived through the constitution-making process in 1991 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.<sup>71</sup> 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.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, 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 and the repressive position of the winning party in the elections vis-à-vis the Hungarian minority.

In 1992, following the general elections, the UDMR entered into an opposition coalition agreement with the Democratic Convention of Romania, an opposition umbrella of parties that took a passive role in the protection of national minorities and vis-à-vis the UDMR prior to the elections. (expand and check four more sources)

In 1996, however, in an election considered by the international media as the actual democratic regime change occurring in Romania<sup>73</sup>, the former opposition party, the Democratic Convention in Romania won the suffrage and formed a government in which the UDMR was included and given ministerial and

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<sup>71</sup> "Constitutia Romaniei", 1991, available at the Romanian Chamber of Deputies website at [www.cdep.ro](http://www.cdep.ro)

<sup>72</sup> "Legea administratiei publice locale", 69/1991, available at [http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis\\_pck.htm?act?ida=1341](http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htm?act?ida=1341)

<sup>73</sup>

administrative positions. Given the past coalition in opposition between the two and in light of pre-electoral agreements, the attitude of the CDR vis-à-vis the UDMR could be considered as reconciliatory in the period before the elections. (expand)

In the run out to the 2000 elections, the PSD while being uncertain of the leverage of support surrounding its future election, and in light of the international pressure propagated by Romania's membership drive towards NATO and the EU, has taken a passive discourse vis-à-vis the Hungarian party, while limiting itself towards critiques vis-à-vis the governing coalition at a general level and focusing on direct electoral competition with the CDR. Surprisingly a verbal commitment of a now moderated PSD to uphold minority rights allowed for new agreements to be established with the UDMR in the elections' aftermath 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 extremist Great Romania Party (PRM) which came in second place at the parliamentary elections. Additionally, the relationship with the former coalition partners has become uneasy in the last year of governance. UDMR's constant 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. Consequently, such attitudes may explain UDMR's decision to enter such tacit agreements with the PSD now in power.

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 entered the government being invited by their former coalition partners in the 1996-2000 period. (no data found yet on the policies and discourse of the DA coalition in the six months prior to the election)

The DA coalition separated itself in 2006 due to disagreements vis-à-vis the dismissal of the Minister of Justice, Monica Macovei and the subsequent allocation of the ministerial portfolio. The UDMR remained in the governing alongside the Liberal party while forming a minority government. Finally, in 2008 elections, following the electoral success of the Democratic Party followed only by a small margin by the PSD which contributed to a grand alliance among the two former rivals, the UDMR went back to the opposition camp pursuing once again an intra-ethnic individual alignment.

The preceding period to the elections has been marked by an increasing nationalist discourse of the PD party leader and Romanian president Traian Basescu who repeatedly stated its opposition to the cultural self-governing autonomy advocated by the UDMR leaders while also expressing an official rhetorical disapproval over the Hungarian president Solyom's support for it. Henceforth, the period prior to the 2004 elections can be considered as illustrative of a repressive discourse vis-à-vis the Hungarian party and its minority demands.

Second, an assessment of the post-communist inter-ethnic coalitions can be made through an analysis of Hungary's kin state involvement in the manner. In the period prior to the 1990 and 1992 elections a disintegrative discourse can be perceived through specific actions and policies undertaken by the Hungarian government. In 1990 the prime-minister of Hungary claimed in a public statement that he considers himself in spirit the prime-minister of all Hungarians throughout the world.<sup>74</sup> 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".<sup>75</sup> 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.<sup>76</sup> Also, the Hungarian Standing Conference has been created as a forum for constant dialogue between the Hungarian government and the UDMR officials in Romania.<sup>77</sup>

Au contraire, the period of 1993-1999, has witnessed an integrative Hungarian kin state discourse 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 clearly that he

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<sup>74</sup> 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" - MTI (Hungarian News Agency), 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

<sup>75</sup> Hungarian Constitution, 1989.

<sup>76</sup> See the website of the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture, available at <http://www.om.hu>

<sup>77</sup> 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>

is the prime-minister of only 10.5 Hungarians, representing the citizens of Hungary.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, the foreign minister Geza Jeszenszky affirmed that Hungary is not military capable of threatening its neighbours.<sup>79</sup> 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 signed just before the parliamentary elections in Romania.<sup>80</sup>

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 Fidesz party in power, the Hungarian elites have become increasingly active in supporting their kin minorities abroad. This has led the once again to a radicalisation of the discourse towards encompassing a disintegrative approach vis-à-vis the inter-ethnic relations in Romania. 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.<sup>81</sup> 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.<sup>82</sup>

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 lowering nationalist rhetoric on the part of the Hungarian authorities vis-à-vis their

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<sup>78</sup> Quoted in A. A. Reisch, "The New Hungarian Government's Foreign Policy", *RFE/RL Research Report*, 15<sup>th</sup> 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.

<sup>79</sup> C. J. Williams, "Hungarians in Serbian Province Fear that They May Be Next", *Los Angeles Times*, 12<sup>th</sup> 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.

<sup>80</sup> E. Oltay, "Hungarian Foreign Minister on Relations with Neighbouring Countries", *RFE/RL Newline*, Central and Eastern Europe, 12<sup>th</sup> October 1994; Treaty between the Republic of Hungary and Romania on Understanding, Cooperation, and Good Neighborhood, 16<sup>th</sup> September 1996, at <http://www.regione.taa.it/biblioteca/normativa/bilaterali/trattato%20ungherese-rumeno%20verisone%20inglese.pdf>

<sup>81</sup> 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>

<sup>82</sup> 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>

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.<sup>83</sup> The period leading to the 2004 elections can thus be considered as illustrating a passive type of discourse arising from the Hungarian kin state vis-à-vis the Hungarian minorities.

Finally, the period preceding the 2008 elections should be taken into consideration with regards to the decreasing popularity of the socialist party in power in Hungary and an increase of electoral support for the right wing Fidesz party and its leader Viktor Orban. The Fidesz party holding a nationalist type of discourse and supporting rhetorically the cultural autonomy demands of the UDMR in Transylvania is expected to be the winner of the next parliamentary elections in 2010. Furthermore, the Hungarian president Solyom's constant support of self-governing territorial arrangements in Transylvania, and the Fidesz financial aid accorded to the newly formed radicalised Hungarian party in Romania, the Civic Hungarian Party (PCM)'s electoral campaign in the European elections in 2008 illustrate the newly disintegrative discourse occurring in connection to inter-ethnic relations in Romania.

Finally, another set of political opportunity structures may arise out of the international organizations' level of support in the minority rights field. In the first two elections, in light of the lack of a clear aim of the Romanian political authorities vis-à-vis membership in the international organisations with the exception of the CoE and given the uncertainty of an accession agreement towards inclusion in NATO and the EU, the international discourse towards inter-ethnic reconciliation in Romania can be perceived as passive. However in light of the distress caused by the Yugoslav war and the need for regional stability and given the clear steps for membership exemplified through political conditionality mechanism, integrative policies and discourse has been amplified vis-à-vis Romania. 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.

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<sup>83</sup> For more information, check the official website of the Government Office for Hungarians Minorities Abroad, available at [www.hhrf.org/htmh/en/?menuid=02](http://www.hhrf.org/htmh/en/?menuid=02)

A threefold time division could thus be made in the assessment of the pressure induced by international organizations in Romania. First, the 1989-1994 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 Targu Mures conflict or in light of the passing of minority non-friendly laws such as the Law on Public Administration of 1991<sup>84</sup> and can thus be considered as a quasi-passive policy stand in the inter-ethnic reconciliation pattern. 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 accession in 2007. Henceforth, one can witness a heightened international pressure holding an integrative effect until Romania's entry in the EU. However, in the period post-accession, the lack of political conditionality and the increasing focus in Brussels on decentralisation and regional policies could be perceived as triggering a disintegrative discourse leading towards a reinforcing of the centre-periphery divide and leading to a schism between the minority and majority parties through an emphasis on the importance of the territorial structures of a state. (expand)

## Conclusion

In conclusion, through an assessment of the three independent variables that have been scrutinised in the study, one can perceive how the inter-ethnic coalition trends occurring in Romania have been correlated to the political opportunity structures arising from domestic and international influences. This paper shows how

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<sup>84</sup> 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.

the highest integrative inter-ethnic coalition making occurred primarily when the mediating and lobby actor have focused their policies and discourses through an integrative approach and when the majority party's reputation on the cultural divide has been perceived as taking a reconciliatory stand. Furthermore, it has been portrayed that a shift in the type of influence arising out of the three variables has also played an effect on the inter-ethnic coalition-making type in Romania by changing the type of chosen electoral alliance. Given that this study has not taken into consideration the minority radicalisation level of demands or the general degree of xenophobia in the country yet, it remains to the plausibility probe to demonstrate their projected effect in the inter-ethnic coalition theoretical model. Such findings could be expanded to other countries in the CEE region which have undergone a regime change or have found themselves in a post-conflict environment in which minority and majority party find themselves in electoral competition and prone to be influenced by mediating and lobby actors. Furthermore, the inter-ethnic coalition theory presented above could additionally be tested in other multi-ethnic states found in other regions in the world. This study could be extended by assessing how intra-ethnic party competition might affect the rules of electoral behaviour and alliance-making patterns and choices in similar scope conditions.

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