

Gherghina, Sergiu; Jigla, George

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Outside the government: Why ethnic parties fail to join the post-communist cabinets

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Outside the Government: Why Ethnic Parties Fail to Join the Post-Communist Cabinets

Sergiu Gherghina^{*} and George Jiglău^{**}

^{*} Sergiu Gherghina is Post-Doc Research Fellow at the research unit “Democratic Innovations”, Institute of Political Science, Goethe University Frankfurt. His research interests lie in the areas of party politics, legislative and voting behavior, and democratization (with an emphasis on direct democracy). E-mail: gherghina@soz.uni-frankfurt.de. ^{**} George Jiglău is a teaching assistant at the Department of Political Science, Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj. He holds a PhD in Political Science from the same institution. His research interests lie in the areas of ethnic mobilization, political parties, and democratization. E-mail: george.jiglau@yahoo.com.



Landshuter Straße 4
D-93047 Regensburg

Telefon: (09 41) 943 54-10

Telefax: (09 41) 943 54-27

E-Mail: info@ios-regensburg.de

Internet: www.ios-regensburg.de

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Abstract

This article seeks to identify the causes impeding the ethnic parties to participate in the post-communist coalition governments. We conduct a cross-national and longitudinal analysis in which we take into account all the elections in which the ethnic parties gained parliamentary representation. With 44 cases over two decades – the party in election is the unit of analysis – and Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) as method of analysis, this study bears theoretical and empirical implications. The key findings illustrate that leadership stability (or rigidity) and the involvement in particular issues of representation can drive the ethnic parties out of government. This combined effect prevails against other factors such as the pivotal role, splits or mergers, electoral strategies (alliances or radical discourses), or incumbency.

JEL-Classification: D72, D74, D79

Keywords: ethnic parties, government coalitions, organizational change, post-communism

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1 Introduction

In the contemporary democracies with a proportional representation component there are rare instances in which the election winner gains sufficient shares of votes to govern alone. Most of the times, the largest parliamentary party has the opportunity to form a government coalition and thus invite aboard a few partners. Focusing on this process, scholars of coalition-formation have extensively tried to explain what parties get into government and to identify the determinants of their participation (von Neumann and Morgenstern 1953; Riker 1962; de Swaan 1973; Laver and Schofield 1992; Baron 1993; van Roozendaal 1993; Strom et al. 1994; Laver and Shepsle 1996; Warwick 1996; Martin and Stevenson 2001, 2010; Mattila and Raunio 2004). While the presence in government of mainstream and niche ideological parties is often determined by their policy positions and/or size, ethnic parties display different features that make them suitable as coalition partners. Combining features of classic political parties and interest groups receiving support from ethnic minorities (Horowitz 2000), the ethnic parties display high continuity on the political scene, benefit of relatively stable electorates, and show ideological flexibility. In the absence of a universalistic program, the ethnic parties do not pursue the enlargement of their supporters and voters. Instead, they appeal to particular ethnic groups and strive to mobilize most of the voters belonging to these groups (Horowitz 1985; Kitschelt 2001; Chandra and Metz 2002; Gunther and Diamond 2003; Chandra 2004; Ishiyama and Breuning 2011). In doing so, they employ a within group catch-all discourse in which the ideology is considerably loosened.

Along these lines, in spite of their small size, the ethnic parties are stable political actors available to participate in coalition governments – with the exception of those coalitions including radical right parties (Gherghina 2009). While many Western European ethnic parties have low propensity to seek representation at central government, the post-communist ethnic parties are willing to become a government partner. Such an attitude originates in their belief that minorities' interests are best pursued when in office. Accordingly, the East European ethnic parties always participated in government coalitions when asked. These features gain increased relevance in the post-communist region where electoral volatility is high, consecutive elections are rarely won by the

same party, and the number of entries or exits from the party system is generally high (Lewis 2000; van Biezen 2003; Millard 2004; Sikk 2005; Spirova 2007; Tavits 2008). Consequently, we may expect the ethnic parties to be a familiar presence in the post-communist government coalitions. In reality, the situation is different: out of the 44 ethnic parties securing parliamentary seats across all the post-communist countries with relevant ethnic minorities (Gherghina and Jigla 2011), only one third (15) got in the cabinet. Why is this the case?

Our article addresses this empirical puzzle and seeks to identify the causes impeding the ethnic parties to participate in the post-communist coalition governments. To this end, we conduct a cross-national and longitudinal analysis in which we take into account all the elections in which the ethnic parties gained parliamentary representation (the reserved seats are excluded). As this study aims to explain the absence of ethnic parties from government coalitions, the unit of analysis is the party in election (44 cases over two decades). We use Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) to map out the effects of organizational and electoral variables on the inclusion of ethnic parties in government coalitions. Understanding under what conditions the ethnic parties are included in coalition governments bears theoretical importance – their participation into cabinets can moderate their discourse and thus better accommodate inter-ethnic relations in society. The key findings illustrate that particular aspects of organizational stability (at the level of leadership) and the pursuit of representation interests (involvement in ethnic issues) can drive the ethnic parties into opposition. The empirical evidence reveals the prevalence of this combined effect against other factors such as the pivotal role, splits and mergers, electoral strategies (alliances or radical discourses), or incumbency.

The article starts by providing a theoretical and conceptual framework on ethnic parties as a starting point for five testable hypotheses. We then provide details about the case selection, explain the method, and operationalize the variables. The third section identifies the determinants of ethnic parties' absence from coalition governments. Finally, we outline the main findings and discuss avenues for further research.

2 Impediments to Ethnic Parties' Access to Government Coalitions

There is general consensus that ethnic parties follow a different logic from parties with mass appeals. The functions of interest channeling, aggregation and representation are pursued by the ethnic parties only relative to regional or ethnic groups (Horowitz 1985). Ethnic parties give voice to ethnic political claims (Keating 1996; Ishiyama 2001; Gunther and Diamond 2003; Birnir 2007) and are institutional means to pursue ethnic goals (Rudolph and Thompson 1985; Stroschein 2011). Ethnic parties portray themselves as the representatives of particular groups where they seek (and are dependent on) electoral support. Accordingly, the ethnic parties do not seek vote maximization, but rather constant support of the minorities they seek to represent (Horowitz 2000; Chandra and Metz 2002; van Cott 2003). The centrality of this bondage between the ethnic parties and their voters is underlined by the existing classifications (de Winter 1998).

The role of ethnic parties in democratic societies is controversial. On the hand, a few scholars argue that such parties coincide with the emergence of conflict (Horowitz 1985), deepen the divisions between ethnic groups (Hislope 1997), and are thus detrimental to democratic settings (especially through the manifestation of ethnic outbidding). On the other hand, earlier research indicates the beneficial role of ethnic parties for the integration of disaffected groups, inter-ethnic cooperation, interest definition and representation, and collective action (Lijphart 1977; Fearon and Laitin 1996; Cohen 1997; Ishiyama 2001; Chandra 2004; Birnir 2007). However, there are specific institutional factors that limit the positive impact of ethnic parties on democracy: the competition on the single dimension of ethnicity (Chandra 2005) and the exclusion from government (Birnir 2007). The latter observation is particularly relevant in the context of our study: the access to government coalitions of ethnic parties promotes flexible behavior of the ethnic group members, whereas the exclusion leads to intransigence and violence. Ethnic parties are included in government to isolate the macro-level concerns related to the stability of the majority-minority relations (i.e. part of the process of democratic consolidation).

This general argument applies at country level, but fails to account for the longitudinal variation within a country. It does not explain why ethnic parties participate only sometimes in government coalitions while the general relationships between majority

and ethnic minorities are relatively constant. To explain this variation we focus on party level determinants. Our quest relies on the assumption drawn from the empirical realities that the ethnic parties are willing to be part of the government. In post-communist countries, the access to decision-making is best secured through a presence in government. The central administration has a superior position to any regional administration and national level decisions are binding across the country. The representation and pursuit of minority interests (especially in those cases when the territorial concentration is an issue) is thus maximized when ethnic parties gain a central state voice. Accordingly, the government has an instrumental function that allows these parties to fulfill their goals. While it is true that the demographic variation of ethnic groups in Eastern Europe might produce local goals and strategies within the minority groups (Stroschein 2011), all these are consistent with the state-level goals pursued by ethnic parties.

The ethnic parties have specific features that make them appealing for most mainstream parties when forming a government: they have a stable electorate and they are ideologically flexible. First, previous research has indicated high levels of electoral volatility (vote shifts between consecutive elections) across time and countries throughout the entire post-communist region, both in absolute terms and relative to that of the Western European countries (Toka 1998; Lewis 2000; Birch 2001; Sikk 2005; Tavits 2005). As a result, there are numerous entries into and exits from the political scene. In Eastern Europe, approximately 30 parties have contested on average elections between 1990 and 2007, but only two parties have fought every election in each country (Rose and Munro, 2009). Moreover, out of the few hundred parties competing in elections over the past two decades, approximately one tenth has sustained a continuous presence in the legislature. The ethnic parties are somewhat different. Given their ability to encapsulate the voting preferences of minorities, cross-national and longitudinal evidence indicates that the ethnic parties are among the least volatile in Eastern Europe (Gherghina 2008). Similarly, their vote elasticity, i.e. the difference between the highest and the lowest vote share received in all the legislative elections (Rose and Urwin 1970), indicates a homogenous electorate over time (not only in consecutive elections). This empirical evidence suggests that in the post-communist region the ethnic parties are the competitors that are best able to mobilize a stable core of voters across time.

This electoral stability diminishes the risks of exits from the political arena and fosters a continuous presence in parliament. Thus, they are available partners for most *formateurs* – with the exception of radical right parties – in deciding the composition of a government coalition.

Second, the ethnic parties do not have easily identifiable profiles on the ideological scale applicable to other parties. Their policy platforms rarely emphasize economic, political, or social issues on which most political actors compete. Instead, they include a broad range of issues addressing specific needs of the minorities (e.g. collective rights, territorial or cultural autonomy). In doing so, the ethnic parties position themselves either closer to the ideological median or more to the extremes – when outbidding occurs – relative to the opinions of the minority groups. The pursuit of group policies and the absence of clear stances on the general ideological spectrum lead to a high degree of ideological flexibility. Empirically, this can be observed in the electoral manifestos of the East European ethnic parties. A longitudinal assessment of these documents reveals continuous changes in positions relative to the policy domains emphasized by the parties belonging to the majority population. Given this flexibility, the ethnic parties are open to collaboration with both parties to the left and to the right. This happens especially when the two sides of the political spectrum are much more nuanced and different in Eastern Europe compared to the established Western European systems (Evans and Whitefield 1998; Tavits and Letki 2009; Vachudova and Hooghe 2009). Accordingly, the ethnic parties can cohabit with almost every party taking the leading role in putting together a government; the prospects for governmental conflict are minimized as the ideological proximity is not a salient issue at stake.¹

So far, we have shown that in the post-communist world the ethnic parties have the advantages of political continuity and flexible ideology. These should favor their presence in government coalitions. We argue that this expectation is met as long as these advantages are perceived by the other parties. In this respect, we identify three major

¹ This happens also in practice as we found no relevant result when controlling for the impact of the *formateur's* or government's ideology (sometimes difficult as parties from different sides of the spectrum joined) on the inclusion of ethnic parties into coalitions.

threats: the organizational change, the leadership breakout, and the absence of a pivotal role. To start with the organizational change, it endangers the image of the ethnic party as a unified actor in the political struggles, including the negotiations for government formation. One indicator of this instability is the organizational fragmentation of the party (splits). Rooted in the effects of ethnic outbidding within a minority group (Horowitz 1985), fragmentation may occur both at group (i.e. more parties fighting for representation) or party (i.e. splitters from the ethnic parties occurred when some members are dissatisfied with its direction) level. Focusing on the latter, the organizational fragmentation is detrimental for the ethnic party in its attempts to secure government seats. A split usually leads to a shattering of the electorate and weakens its mobilization potential. Once the stable electoral support is threatened, the presence of the party on the political arena is also questioned. Accordingly, the ethnic party is less likely to represent a solid partner for the *formateur*.

Another indicator of organizational change is the party merger or fusion. Mergers are usually strategic: they target either the maximization of legislative seats (Crewe and King 1995) or the avoidance of electoral oblivion (Cox 1997). In the case of ethnic parties, an additional advantage is observable. A merger can safeguard larger electoral support within the minority group for the new party. In spite of these benefits, such an organizational change sends a message of instability. Apart from the fact that the party cannot be perceived as a monolith able to encapsulate the votes of minorities, a merger usually raises the question of duration. How long will the new party keep its current form? The identities of the parties deciding to fuse may emerge again and the threat of a split is quite credible. Along these lines, ethnic parties with recent merger experiences may be avoided in the coalition formation negotiations. For the purpose of this article, we also subsume to this causal condition the membership of an ethnic party in an ethnic electoral alliance – a coalition of at least two ethnic parties representing the same ethnic group formed in order to maximize the chances of these parties to gain seats. We consider this as a “temporary” form of merger (several political organizations pooling their resources for an electoral goal). Summing up, splits, mergers or the formation of temporary electoral alliances at the level of ethnic parties are likely to shed a negative light on their perceived stability and thus diminish their appeal to possible coalition partners.

Accordingly, we hypothesize that organizational splits or mergers impede the participation of ethnic parties to government coalitions (H1).²

The leadership complements the organizational aspects and is vital in the life of any organization (Huntington 1968). The three “faces” of parties proposed by Katz and Mair (1990; 1993) clearly outline the key roles of the central office and of the national leadership – either an individual or a committee – within a political party. In this respect, the leadership continuity is a relevant component of the party organization. Such a claim is even more relevant in the context of accumulated influence gained by contemporary party leaders in the legislature, electorate, and own organizations (Bean and Mughan 1989; Wattenberg 1991; Mughan 1993; 2000; Farrell 1996; Davis 1998; Scarrow et al. 2000). At the same time, leadership continuity is relevant for the relations established by parties with voters. Parties connect to citizens to achieve the exchange of voter mobilization for policy responsiveness. The linkage with voters can take place through direct communication initiated by party leaders (Poguntke 2002). This is relatively simple, reaches a large audience in a short period of time, thus being effective and efficient. As a result, leaders can contribute to the creation of a recognizable label for political parties over the medium to long term. Thus, a leader becomes one component with which voters can identify. Moreover, the stable ethnic voting amongst the minorities is mainly fueled by ethnic socialization through information shortcuts. The most important source of political learning for ethnic voters is the leaders of their own ethnic group (Birbir 2007).

Leadership change can occur for a number of reasons: desire to alter the party line, low ideological cohesion between leaders and party organization, inability of the leader to continue (age, illness, personal matters etc.), low popularity of the leader, or personal conduct (e.g. corruption allegations). In any of these instances, a new leader sends a message of discontinuity. Going back to the issue of stability, a leadership change may be detrimental to the chances of ethnic parties to participate in a government coalition. This internal dynamic, although aimed at improving things for the party in the future, can be regarded as troublesome by potential coalition partners. In this respect we may

² While in theory party mergers can enhance the coalition potential of political actors, this is less likely to happen for the ethnic parties. Given their profile and appeal to a specific target group, mergers can weaken their discourse and diminish the advantage of electoral stability.

expect leadership change to reduce the chances of ethnic parties to participate in government coalitions (H2).

In theory, the ideological flexibility of the ethnic parties is a relevant asset. Their ability to form coalitions with parties situated to both sides of the centre is expected to enhance their chances to participate in government. However, the leverage provided by the ideological flexibility is not straightforward in post-communist countries. Previous empirical findings showing that ideology has a marginal impact on coalition-formation (Grzymala-Busse 2001; Druckman and Roberts 2007; Tavits 2008; Glasgow et al. 2011). Under these circumstances, the participation of ethnic parties in government may occur only when they are necessary. This entails a strategic position in potential governments to be formed after election. The pivotal position provides strong bargaining advantages. Prior to government formation, pivotal parties are those that can turn to either side to generate a winning coalition. Although in Eastern Europe coalition formulae do not follow a clear-cut logic along the ideological space, the ethnic parties can end up in indispensable positions for coalition formation. Whenever the ethnic parties do not hold a pivotal position, it is less likely to have them in government (H3).

Apart from these main effects, we control for the impact of incumbency and the existence of ethnic issues on the participation in government coalitions. To start with incumbency, the logic for government coalitions derives from the effects observed at voter level. In general, incumbent parties are directly affected by retrospective evaluations that are transformed into punishment or reward-based behavior on the part of voters (Kramer 1971; Fiorina 1981; Bellucci 1984; Ferejohn 1986; Lewis-Beck 1988; Powell and Whitten 1993; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000; Freire and Lobo 2005; Anderson 2007). In spite of their lower level of experience in elections, these mechanisms are also at work in the new democratic post-communist countries (Fidrmuc 2000; Jackson et al. 2003; Tucker 2006) where government incumbency is a source of electoral volatility (Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Tavits 2005). Along these lines, only a handful of parties secured two consecutive terms in government in Eastern Europe. Therefore, we expect incumbency of the ethnic parties to inhibit their presence in the subsequent government (H4).

Previous research has shown that in the post-communist countries the existence of ethnic conflict can lead to political mobilization under specific circumstances (Gherghina and Jigla 2011). This happens for two reasons related to the constructive role of ethnic parties in promoting inter-group accommodation. First, following the arguments of the consociational scholars, ethnic parties help dampen conflict by channeling demands and representing the interests of the minority groups (Lijphart 1977). In this respect, their presence in the legislature or executive may have positive impacts on the democratic consolidation. Second, societal issues related to the ethnic group increase the importance of the ethnic parties. Some of these issues can develop into sources of conflict between majority and minorities. The ethnic parties can facilitate the integration of these issues into the political debates and thus diminish the risk of a conflict. Thus, when ethnic issues become salient the presence of ethnic parties in government may be encouraged. The absence of ethnic issues between elections can reflect the existence of a calm environment in which the ethnic parties do not play a relevant role. Accordingly, the lack of ethnic issues prior to elections may be an impediment for the ethnic parties' participation in government (H5).

3 Research Design

Our analysis focuses on the failure of ethnic parties from post-communist countries to join coalition governments between 1990 and 2011. Accordingly, the case selection was done in three steps. First, out of almost 30 European and Central Asian countries with communist regimes prior to 1990, we selected those with numerically relevant minorities. A minority group is relevant if its members account for at least 5% of the number of members from belonging to the majority group (Gherghina and Jigla 2011). Second, among these countries we were interested only in those where relevant minorities formed at least one ethnic party or political organization that competed in legislative elections. Third, for each election in each of these countries, we selected only those instances in which at least one ethnic party representing a relevant minority gained seats in the national legislature (or the lower Chamber for bicameral parliaments). In addition, three criteria were used to exclude particular cases: 1) countries or territories that did not govern themselves without the intervention of external authorities (e.g. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia or Moldova); 2) countries with large number of border changes³ (e.g. Serbia and Montenegro); 3) ethnic minorities gaining legislative representation as a result of either reserved seats (e.g. Roma in Romania) or particular electoral systems (e.g. Poles and Russians in Lithuania). Consequently, we analyze 44 elections in six countries: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Macedonia, Romania, and Slovakia. Table 1 includes each country with the corresponding elections and the ethnic party (or parties) gaining legislative representation.

In light of the theoretical issues and research design (i.e. number of cases, variables, type of data), we use Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). Based on Boolean algebra and set theory, QCA relies on dichotomous variables, logical operations between variables (causal conditions and outcomes in QCA terminology), logical operators (AND, OR and NON) and truth tables (Ragin 1989). The use of QCA allows a case-oriented approach and requires good case knowledge to explain the linkage between the theory, the cases (the reality on the ground), and the findings of the analysis. In addition, QCA re-

³ This can be a reason for minorities to change across time and thus raise issues of operationalization.

veals the interaction effects between the causal conditions included in the model and illustrate the cases associated to them, thus allowing for their better understanding.

Table 1 Cases Included in Analysis

Country	Elections	Minority	Parties
Bulgaria	1990, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2009	Turks	Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF)
Estonia	1995, 1999	Russians	Estonian United People's Party (EUPP)
Latvia	1993, 1995, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010	Russians	The National Harmony Party (NHP)/Harmony Center (HC)/Social Democratic Party Harmony (SDPH), Latvian Socialist Party (LSP), Equal Rights (ER)
Macedonia	1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011	Albanians	People's Democratic Party, Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP), Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA), Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), National Democratic Revival (NDR)
Romania	1990, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008	Hungarians	Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR)
Slovakia	1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2012	Hungarians	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (PHC), Most Hid (MH)

Throughout the analysis we use the QCA specific language. The outcome is what we usually call the dependent variable, while the causal conditions are the determinants (independent variables). A few technical issues deserve close attention. First, QCA requires the labeling of each variable (both dependent and independent) with a single letter. For instance, if A is a variable, then whenever 'A' appears in an expression it indicates the presence of the causal condition. Whenever 'a' appears it means the absence of the causal condition and is read as 'NON A'. Second, the presence of any variable (condition or outcome) is coded 1, whereas the absence gets 0. Third, QCA uses logical operators—AND, OR and NON. AND is represented in an expression by the sign '*' (e.g. 'A*B') or by simply putting the two letters labeling the variables next to each other (e.g. 'AB'). OR is represented by the sign '+' (e.g. 'A+B'). NON is represented by using the lower case letter. Consequently, a proposition in QCA links the causal combination or a reunion of causal combinations and an outcome. If AB is a causal combination associated with of P (the outcome), the solution

formula is ‘ $AB \rightarrow P$ ’. However, this is only a logical relationship and should not automatically be associated with the existence of causality. A causal link between the term(s) on the two sides of ‘ \rightarrow ’ is established on the basis of theory and empirical evidence that the observed relationship is actually taking place and that the term(s) on the left side of the proposition are actually cause(s) for the outcome, and the relationship is not a pure coincidence (Schneider and Grofman 2006).

The outcome is easy to dichotomize (for variable operationalization, see Appendix 1): it is present when the ethnic party joins the government coalition and absent when it fails to do so. Table 2 lists all the analyzed cases: there are 15 displaying the outcome and 29 that do not. The units in each category are listed in chronological order being labeled through the name of the ethnic party or ethnic alliance, the corresponding country and the election years

Table 2 Cases and Corresponding Outcome for Government Coalitions

Cases	Number of cases	Outcome (presence in government)
MRF 1991, 2001, 2005; PDP 1994, 1998; DUI 2002, 2008, 2011; DPA 2006; DAHR 1996, 2000, 2004; PHC 1998, 2002; MH 2010	15	Yes
MRF 1990, 1994, 1997, 2009; EUPP 1995, 1999; NHP 1993, 1995, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010; ER 1993, 2006; LSP 1995; PDP 1994, 2002; PDP/DUI 2006; DPA 1998, 2002, 2008, 2011; NDR 2011; DAHR 1990, 1992, 2008; PHC 1994, 2006; MH 2012	29	No
TOTAL	44	

4 Analysis and Results

This section includes two main subsections each corresponding to the specific steps required by QCA (Ragin 1989). We first conduct a necessity analysis. This is usually a routine step, but, as we will show, it already provides some useful results. We then focus on the cases in which the outcome does not occur and try to answer the research question. Throughout the analysis, we use two particular software packages: Tosmana and fsQCA.

4.1 No Necessary or Sufficient Condition

As a first step of our analysis, we test for the necessity (reflected in the consistency score) and sufficiency (reflected in the coverage score) of each causal condition (conducted for both the occurrence and the absence of the outcome). If one condition is necessary or sufficient, then the use of QCA is somewhat redundant as no interactions with other conditions are required to explain the outcome. Consequently, it is best to have the necessity and sufficiency scores for each condition below the 0.9 level of significance (Schneider and Grofman 2006). Table 3 displays the results of this analysis. As all the results are below this threshold, we can proceed to the causal analysis.

Table 3 Results of the Necessity Analysis

Conditions tested	Occurrence of the outcome (S)		Absence of the outcome (s)	
	Consistency	Coverage	Consistency	Coverage
A	0.266667	0.307692	0.310345	0.692308
A	0.733333	0.354839	0.689655	0.645161
B	0.266667	0.400000	0.206897	0.600000
B	0.733333	0.323529	0.793103	0.676471
C	0.800000	0.428571	0.551724	0.571429
C	0.200000	0.187500	0.448276	0.812500
D	0.466667	0.466667	0.275862	0.533333
D	0.533333	0.275862	0.724138	0.724138
E	0.600000	0.346154	0.586207	0.653846
e	0.400000	0.333333	0.413793	0.666667

4.2 Why Out of Government

There are 29 instances in which the ethnic parties gain parliamentary representation but fail to enter government. Out of these cases 15 are involved in contradictions. The contradictions are lines in the truth table with the same configuration of the causal conditions, but with different outcomes. These contradictions indicate that there is at least one other variable that explains the difference in outcome between these cases and always indicate potential paths for further research. Following a conservative approach, they should be excluded leaving only 14 valid cases for analysis. However, we notice that for the combination *abCdE* six out of eight cases also do not display the outcome, while in the combination *ABCde* four out of five cases are in the same situation. Therefore, we include these combinations in the analysis and consider them as being associated with the absence of the outcome.⁴ This compromise is reflected in the consistency score of our solution formulas – 0.88, meaning that it will be associated with the absence of the outcome in only 88% of the cases (not in all the cases, as it is case when the consistency score is 1). However, we get 10 additional cases for analysis, making it more meaningful.

In both the complex and parsimonious solution formulas there is one combination – *bdE* – that does not change after the use of simplifying assumptions and explains over half of the cases (13 out of 24). Also, the cases corresponding to two other complex expressions are exactly the same after their simplification: the number of expressions in the solution formulas does not change, nor does the distribution of cases. Therefore, we move straight to the explanation of the parsimonious solution presented in Table 4.

$$bdE + bcD + Be \rightarrow s \quad (1)$$

Condition A – organizational changes – is absent from the simple solution. Moreover, it is also absent from the simple solution for the cases when ethnic parties are included in government coalitions. Also, in the complex solution, A appears both as present and absent in different expressions. Thus, we can conclude that mergers, splits or electoral alliances within the same ethnic group do not play a role in determining

⁴ In technical terms, we established a lower cutoff point, to 0.7. Thus, if at least 70% of the cases associated with a combination do not display the outcome, it is included in this part of the analysis.

whether ethnic parties are included in governing coalitions. However, we cannot completely refute H1 based on our data, because we cannot discard the potential role that the organizational aspects captured by this causal condition play in determining whether ethnic parties gain seats in the parliament in the first place.

Table 4 The Simplest Causal Expressions for the Absence from Government Coalitions

Expression	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	Corresponding Cases
bdE [*]	0.448276	0.448276	0.866667	MRF (BG) 1990, MRF (BG) 1997, PDP ⁵ (MK) 1994, DPA (MK) 1998, PDP (MK) 2002, DPA (MK) 2011, DAHR (RO) 1992, PHC (SK) 1994, EUPP (ET) 1995, EUPP (ET) 1999, ER (LV) 1993, LSP (LV) 1995, ER (LV) 2006
bcD	0.172414	0.172414	1	MRF (BG) 1994, MRF (BG) 2009, PHC (SK) 2006, Most Hid (SK) 2012, DAHR (RO) 2008
Be ^{**}	0.137931	0.137931	0.800000	FHR (LV) 2002, NHP/HC (LV) 2006, SDPH (LV) 2010

Solution coverage	0.758621
Solution consistency	0.880000

^{*} This combination is present in two cases (not presented in the table) in which the outcome occurs – MRF (BG) 1991 and DUI (MK) 2002. ^{**} This combination is also present in the case of Most-Hid (SK) for 2010 (not included in the table).

Table 5 The Simplest Causal Expressions for the Presence in Government Coalitions

Expression	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency	Corresponding Cases
CDE	0.266667	0.266667	1	PDP (MK) 1998, DAHR (RO) 2000, DAHR (RO) 2004, PHC (SK) 2002
BCE	0.066667	0.066667	1	PHC (SK) 1998

Solution coverage	0.333333
Solution consistency	1

⁵ We use the full name for this party to distinguish it from the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP).

The combination *bdE* – no change in leadership (*b*), no incumbency (*d*), involvement in ethnic issues (*E*) – is associated with the absence of ethnic parties from governing coalitions in over 86% of the instances. This combination seems to depict quite radical ethnic parties that remain in the opposition for successive terms, adopt strong positions on ethnic issues, and have a rigid leadership. Moreover, they seem content with this approach to the representation of minorities, since they manage to gain enough support from the minority electorate to gain seats in the national parliaments, even if they do not join the government. Within our 13 cases corresponding to this combination, we find several parties that correspond to this description only at certain moments in their history and others that maintained these features constantly. In the first category, we have parties such as the MRF in Bulgaria, the DAHR in Romania, the PHC in Slovakia and the PDP in Macedonia. The first three can be found in this category only in instances from the first half of the analyzed period. In Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia, the 90's were marked by tense interethnic relations, which almost constantly constituted a potential source of conflict. Most of the tensions were kept in the political arena and violence was rather local and sporadic. However, the lack of trust between the biggest mainstream parties and the ethnic parties constituted one of the main features of post-communist politics. In all three countries, the first rounds of elections were dominated by nationalistic parties – the Socialists in Bulgaria and Romania and Meciár's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia. In this context, the representatives of the minorities often adopted strong positions. Prior to the 1990 elections, it was unclear if the MRF would be allowed to stand in the elections, determining the Turkish politicians to become more and more vocal and claim their minority is discriminated. Prior to the 1992 elections in Romania, the DAHR was at the center of autonomy claims (strong and ongoing until the mid-90's) made by the leaders of the Hungarian minority, strongly backed by top officials from the Hungarian state. A similar approach was used by Hungarian politicians in Slovakia before the 1994 elections.

The Albanian parties in Macedonia have constantly been involved in ethnic issues. This is not surprising, considering that Macedonia continued to foster ethnic tensions and local or nation-wide armed conflicts even after the breakdown of the former Yugoslavia. The size of the minority allowed for the existence of at least two parties compet-

ing for the same electorate and gaining seats, but this also contributed to a polarization of the political discourse within the intra-ethnic party system. During the 90's, the Party for Democratic Prosperity represented the more moderate alternative (despite its involvement in ethnic issues, as previously discussed), while the People's Democratic Party in 1994 and the Democratic Party of Albanians in 1998 were more radical, being left out of the governing coalitions. After the year 2000 and the armed conflict, the DPA and the Democratic Union for Integration took turns at entering the government and being left in opposition. In 2002, the PDP was not included in the governing coalition after adopting more radical positions in the previous electoral cycle, which corresponded with the armed conflict, but also after losing much of its electoral support (it gained only 2 seats; it never managed to gain representation since then). The DPA appears again in the list of cases corresponding to combination *bCe* after the 2011 elections. In the previous electoral cycle, starting with 2009, it resorted to a parliamentary boycott in protest over the refusal of the governing coalition to make Albanian the second official language of the state.

Both cases in Estonia – the Estonian United People's Party in the 90's – are in the same category. This seems to reflect the tense relations within the Estonia party system in that period and the hard-line approach of both the Russian minority and the Estonia majority concerning minority – and especially language – rights (van Elsuwege 2004). The EUPP has been the main advocate for more rights for the Russian minority, often being regarded as the outcast among the mainstream Estonia parties. This explains why it has not been regarded as a potential partner for a governing coalition.

The Latvian ethnic (Russian-supporting) parties in Latvia are distributed between the category described by this combination and the one corresponding to the combination *Be*, between changes in leadership (*B*) and no involvement in ethnic issues and (*e*). The two combinations are somewhat “opposed” and they seem to show that whatever the approach of the Russian ethnic parties is regarding minority rights or regardless of the level flexibility at the top of these parties, they are not considered as potential governing partners by the non-ethnic parties. This seems to indicate a constant attitude of rejection from the mainstream Latvian parties towards the politicians claiming to represent the Russian minority. Although within the society at large the

ethnic cleavages are less salient than at the beginning of the 90's, the political gap between Russian ethnic parties and the rest of the party system seems impossible to bridge.

A few general conclusions can be drawn from these findings. There is empirical support for H2: the rigidity of leadership (i.e. absence of change or renewal) leads to the absence of ethnic parties from governing coalitions. However, this causal condition bears this strong effect only in the relation to the absence of incumbency and involvement in ethnic issues. Most of the cases corresponding to this combination come from the first post-communist decade when the ethnic relations were more tensed. Nevertheless, the strong ethnic leaders emerging in the 90 have remained at the forefront of politics and often lead the path from radicalism to moderation (e.g. Ahmed Dogan in Bulgaria, Bela Bugara in Slovakia or Marko Bela in Romania).

The leadership stability can also be linked to the specific features of ethnic parties. Unlike mainstream parties, they represent minorities which often perceive themselves as under threat. The personalities emerging as leaders of the group are legitimized as its political voices and their stability at the top of the parties is ensured by their success to mobilize the ethnic electorate and guarantee the voice of the minority in the national legislatures. Moreover, the lack of a political compromise with the mainstream parties on relevant issues for the minority (illustrated by the involvement of the party in ethnic issues) strengthens the position of the leader as promoter and a fighter for the minorities' causes. Last but not least, we should bear in mind that representation in the national parliament is in fact a significant form of political success (although we regard "success" in a more narrow sense in this article). The only cases in which changes of leaders are present, but ethnic parties do not join the government, are in Latvia. Our study illustrated that the explanations for the constant absence of pro-Russian parties from government reside in the ongoing lack of mutual trust between the Latvian majority and the Russian minority, reflected in the political dynamics.

The absence of a pivotal position is not the main reason for which the ethnic parties are not included in government coalitions. While we find some empirical support for H3, its effect is quite weak. There are more important contextual factors that impede the

inclusion of ethnic parties in governing coalitions. Similarly, our analysis does not allow us to draw any clear conclusion on the effect of incumbency (H4). Although in most cases the opposition status is associated with the absence of ethnic parties from the government coalitions, there are also many cases in which incumbency leads to the same outcome.

The involvement of ethnic parties in ethnic issues (H5) neither impedes nor favors by itself the absence of ethnic parties from governing coalitions. Both the presence and the absence of this condition are associated with the absence of the outcome. Ethnic parties are neither accepted nor rejected by coalition parties solely based on their more radical or moderate discourse regarding ethnic issues. However, the behavior of ethnic parties regarding the salient ethnic issues is very relevant in combination with the rigidity of the leadership: it accurately explains the failure of ethnic parties to join government coalitions.

5 Conclusions

This study tried to identify the causes impeding the ethnic parties to participate in the post-communist coalition governments. Moving beyond single-case or small-N studies, our analysis of 44 cases throughout two decades provides useful theoretical and empirical insights. Due to the used method, we could test the combined effect of party and context-related variables – thus bridging different bodies of literature – and to determine the type of behavior that impedes ethnic parties from entering governing coalitions. One major implication of the results is that the failure to join government coalitions can be driven by endogenous determinants such as the continuity of leadership and aggressive pursuit of representation. Results indicated that the absence of leadership change and the involvement in ethnic issues explains best the failure of ethnic parties to gain seats on government. As the involvement in ethnic issues is usually done through the voice or at the command of the ethnic party leaders, the combination of the two causal conditions reveals the crucial role played by radical ethnic leaders in the future of their parties. This is further supported by the lack of relevance of organizational changes (mergers and splits) indicating that ethnic electorates are mainly loyal to leaders and less to the ethnic party as an organization. This finding is in line with the theoretical arguments underlining the specific nature of the ethnic parties: they display catch-all features through with the aim to mobilize the electorate within particular ethnic groups. Along these lines, the radical leaders mobilize their electorates better, but are less likely to be considered as desirable coalition partners.

This effect becomes even more relevant if we consider that the organizational changes (splits or mergers or electoral alliances with parties of the same ethnic group) do not play a role in determining whether ethnic parties are included in coalitions or not. The role played by organizational variables in determining whether an ethnic party gains seats in the national parliament is a potential direction for further research. Once these parties gain seats and become potential governing partners for the large mainstream parties, the attitude of the leaders, reflected in their own discourse and in the actions of the party, generates the perception of the other parties over ethnic political movements. This raises another point requiring further exploration: since this pattern is accepted by

the ethnic electorates, it is possible for the ethnic groups to perceive their interests as better (or at least well enough) represented if their ethnic parties are in Parliament, but in opposition. This might happen because ethnic minorities might regard the collaboration with mainstream parties as a threat to their own identity and therefore prefer more radical leaders. At the same time, the ethnic electorates may tend to blindly follow their leaders, regardless of their type of discourse, as long as the public political profile of the minority is maintained.

Another important finding is that the pivotal role of the ethnic parties rarely guarantees their presence in government. Accordingly, further research can focus on types of coalitions and investigate to what extent they foster the presence of ethnic parties in government. On a similar note, it is worth checking to what extent the presence of radical right parties in parliament may inhibit – through tensions - the governing potential of ethnic parties.

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Appendix 1 Variable Codebook

Variables (Conditions and Outcome)	Acronym	Values
Organizational Changes	A	1: splits or mergers between elections 0: no splits or mergers
Party leadership	B	1: different leader than in the previous elections 0: same leader
Pivotal Position	C	1: Hold pivotal position according to Banzhaf index 0: Do not hold pivotal position
Incumbency	D	1: In government prior to elections, for more than half of the term 0: in opposition or in government for less than half of the term
Involvement of parties in ethnic issues ⁶	E	1: protests, scandals or other forms of public tensions regarding ethnic issues 0: no involvement or moderate opinions
Success in Joining Government Coalitions	S	1: Ethnic party included in coalition 0: Ethnic party not included in coalition

⁶ The sources are the Minority at Risk reports, mainstream domestic or foreign media. We assess the behavior of the ethnic party throughout the legislature by taking into account not the aims expressed by the ethnic parties or the reaction of non-ethnic parties, but the used means. For alliances, we consider the condition to be present if at least one of the parties was involved in such issues. This variable is much broader than the assessment of radical discourse on the ethnic dimension captured in the Comparative Manifesto project.