

## **It is not how many votes you get, but also where you get them**

*Territorial determinants and institutional hurdles for the success of ethnic minority parties in post-communist countries*

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#### **Abstract**

Electoral rules have long been held as important for the success of new political parties, but research has neglected the dimension of territory in this equation. This article argues that the territorial structure of social groups, in interaction with the electoral system, makes a crucial difference for the ability of new parties to enter parliament. In district-based electoral systems, social groups that are highly concentrated face much lower hurdles with an own party than groups which are spread throughout the country. The argument is tested on a novel database on ethnic minority groups from post-communist countries in Europe, including 123 minorities in nineteen countries. To test hypotheses with complex interaction effects and binary variables, Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) appears as the most suitable method. After controlling for size and special, minority-relevant provisions in the electoral systems, there is strong confirmation for the hypothesised effect.

Keywords: Electoral systems; new parties; ethnic parties; post-communist countries.

#### **Introduction**

The comparative literature on the effect of electoral systems on party systems has only marginally addressed the dimension of the territory. All major work on electoral system effects on party system fractionalisation (Sartori, 1986; Taagepera & Shugart, 1989; Lijphart, 1994; Cox, 1997; Taagepera, 2007) or on the electoral success of new or small parties (Harmel & Robertson, 1985; Tavits, 2006) has heavily relied on the importance of district

magnitude. The concentrating effect of district magnitude on the party system, however, occurs solely at the local level. How it is translated to the national level, as the bulk of the literature implicitly assumes, is theoretically and empirically puzzling (Amorim Neto & Cox, 1997: 168; Ordeshook & Shvetsova, 1994: 109). Studies that solely focus on the effect of electoral systems at the national level produce very convincing results for most Western democracies, but mostly regard parties with an almost homogeneous level of support across the country.

Differently, this study investigates the effect of electoral systems on the electoral success of new political parties under particular consideration of the territorial structure of the party support. It looks at the most basic question of electoral success—the ability of a new party to enter parliament. The electoral system element that is the most common focal point for this question, small electoral districts, only has a concentrating effect on national party systems if parties win a fairly similar vote share in all parts of a country. In this case, small parties would get low vote shares in every electoral district, and fail to win seats if the districts are small. Recent research on the territorial structure of political parties (Chhibber & Kollman, 1998; Caramani, 2004; Harbers, 2008) has shown that there are wide differences among parties. Heavily *nationalised* parties rely on rather homogeneous rates of electoral support across a polity, while the votes of *weakly nationalised* parties are territorially concentrated, which is typically the case for territorial cleavages. So far, the political effects of party nationalisation have, however, been systematically addressed by only a few studies.

The study of new parties' success is methodologically challenging, since potential new parties might often anticipate whether they might enter parliament, and where they deem their chances to be small, they may not be created, and may not run in elections (Hug, 2003). Given that new parties are a self-selected population, studies that solely investigate parties and distinguish successful ones from others, will renounce on the bulk of the negative cases –

parties that have not even been created. To avoid this problem, I study party formation and success along ethnic divides in post-communist countries in Europe, looking at 123 ethnic minority groups in nineteen countries. Ethnic identities in this region are strong, clear-cut, strongly politicised, and have existed long before the current party systems. Unlike most other parties in post-communist countries, new ethnic parties belong to the most stable ones in the region, with a loyal electorate, so that our results are robust over time. Empirical tests of complex conjunctions of explanatory factors rely on the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) method (Ragin, 1987, 2000).

The article proceeds as follows. In the next section, I discuss how previous work has addressed the success of new political parties. This is followed by an examination of the institutional explanation with an emphasis on the territorial dimension. Section 3 presents the research design, while the QCA methodology and the operationalisation are presented in section 4. Results are discussed in section 5, and posited in a wider context in section 6.

## **1. Explaining the emergence of new political parties**

The literature has identified several factors that are relevant for the potential success of new parties. Key explanations include the role of institutional rules, the strategic behaviour of other political actors, and the new parties' own resources (Harmel & Robertson, 1985 offer an overview over this literature).

New political parties are usually successful when they “fill representational needs of the society” (Harmel & Robertson, 1985: 502), or react to crises in the expressive function of established parties (Ignazi, 1996; Sikk, 2006). Typically, they address voters along new political divides, such as the post-materialist divide, revived ethno-regional divides, xenophobia, or the revival of former communist parties.<sup>1</sup>

The cartelisation theory has built on the idea that established political parties will try to reduce party competition in order to secure their power in political office, for instance through restrictive party regulations or electoral laws. Small electoral districts and majority or plurality voting rules makes it difficult for new parties to enter parliament (Hauss & Rayside, 1978; Birnir, 2004). While Harmel & Robertson (1985) hold that new parties are easier created in parliamentary systems, Golder (2006) argues that they might emerge from coattail effects from presidential candidatures. Difficulties for new political parties to become registered and to win the first seat in parliament, might, however not only affect their chances of entering parliament, but likewise affect their electoral strength (Hug, 2001).

The established political parties might also try to inhibit the entry of new competitors through incorporation of their political requests, trying to keep the issues of new parties from becoming salient (Meguid, 2005; Hauss & Rayside, 1978; Kitschelt, 1988), so that new parties can affect the positioning of existing parties (Harmel & Svåsand, 1997).

New political parties try to pass the institutional thresholds and compete against the action of established political parties with costly campaigns. Hauss and Rayside (1978) have argued that a strong personal and organisational basis is important for the success of new political parties. However, resources alone do not guarantee electoral success: they need to be linked to a new electoral niche (Sikk, 2006).

## **2. The institutional framework: Necessary conditions for new parties' success**

The focus on electoral laws and new issues or cleavages emerges as one of the most prominent explanations of new parties' electoral success. This section explains how the territorial structure of voter groups, which is related to new issues or cleavages, makes a difference for institutional models.

In the cleavage-institutional model, the emergence of political parties is explained as the manifestation of a social cleavage (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). Electoral systems set a hurdle for the emergence of political parties (Duverger, 1951; Taagepera & Shugart, 1989). The model for the explanation of the success of new political parties relies mainly on a dichotomy of PR versus majoritarian vote (Harmel & Robertson, 1985), on district magnitude (Meguid, 2005; Tavits, 2006), and legal thresholds (Hug, 2001; Moraski & Loewenberg, 1999, etc.) as explanatory variables. They particularly affect the chances of a party of getting represented in parliament—a key variable related to a new party’s success. Most studies treat district magnitude  $m$  and legal electoral thresholds  $T_{leg}$  as almost equivalent aspects of electoral laws, or combine them in effective thresholds  $T_{eff}$  (Lijphart & Gibberd, 1977; Pennisi, 1998). If a country has very large districts, then the threshold of exclusion  $T_{ex}$  is low, whereas small districts impose high thresholds of exclusions, according to equation 1.

$$T_{ex} = \frac{1}{m + 1} \quad (1)$$

If the threshold of exclusion  $T_{ex}$  is low, but a considerable legal threshold applies, it might be more relevant. Hence, the effective threshold corresponds to the higher of both thresholds (equation 2).

$$T_{eff} = \max (T_{ex}, T_{leg}) = \max (1 / (m+1), T_{leg}) \quad (2)$$

In electoral systems with substantial thresholds, only the largest parties within an electoral district have chances to be elected. New parties need to bear very considerable costs in order to break the dominance of established parties, in that they must build a very solid basis of voters.

Many studies stop here, neglecting the territorial dimension of voting. While legal thresholds usually apply at the national level, setting out a minimally required share of the national votes for a party to be represented, the effect of electoral districts is a local one, limited to the area that is covered by an electoral district. Small political parties with many votes in one or a few electoral districts are much better off than those with a nationally homogeneous vote share (Taagepera, 1998). Their locally concentrated votes allow them to win mandates in certain electoral districts, while not competing or gaining only few votes elsewhere. If all votes are concentrated in only one electoral district (which heavily relies on the districting process), we can calculate the threshold of exclusion for parties with a territorially concentrated electorate. According to equation 1, any party can win a seat in a district of magnitude  $m$  with a vote share of  $1/(m+1)$  of all district votes. If the district counts a proportion of  $q$  of the overall number of voters in the country, the threshold to enter parliament for a locally concentrated party amounts to  $q/(m+1)$ . Usually, the share of the national voters living in a local district is approximately equal to the share of seats that is allocated in this district,<sup>2</sup> so that if there are overall  $S$  seats in parliament, the proportion of voters living in the district amounts to  $m/S$ . This allows me to establish the proportion of national votes for party with a locally concentrated electorate to enter parliament,  $T_{reg}$ .

$$T_{reg} = \frac{1}{S} \cdot \frac{m}{m+1} \quad (3)$$

For instance, for single-seat districts, district magnitude is one ( $m=1$ ), so that the threshold of exclusion amounts to  $1/2S$ . For large district magnitudes, the formula converges to  $1/S$ .

Small parties, whose electorate is dispersed throughout the country, need to win approximately the vote share of the national threshold of exclusion,  $T_{ex}$ , in order to enter parliament. Accordingly, they will favour large PR districts, which have a lower threshold of exclusion than small districts (cf. OSCE/ODIHR, 2001). Small electoral districts discriminate between

parties with a territorially concentrated and dispersed electorate, while national legal thresholds do not do so.

Empirical proof founded on the distinction between concentrated and non-concentrated groups of voters and the role of electoral districts is not known to the author. Mozaffar et al. (2003) employed a similar idea, arguing that electoral systems with small districts were an institutional filter against the fractionalisation of the party system, except in the case where social groups were significantly concentrated. Empirical results, based on a study of ethnic diversity, do not, however, support the hypothesis.<sup>3</sup>

Studies that deal with the impact of electoral systems on new parties usually look only at the core characteristics of electoral systems that have been discussed above. Special electoral rules which facilitate or guarantee the representation of certain communal groups are only looked at exceptionally (Lijphart, 1986). Such are either group-specific quotas within districts or non-territorial districts, which unify all voters of a social group. The representation of territorially concentrated groups can be guaranteed through specifically designed territorial electoral districts.

In brief, I expect that the success of small new parties in elections (here defined as winning at least a seat in parliament) relies on the size of their potential electorate, its degree of concentration and the electoral rules. A new political party can be successful:

- if its potential electorate outnumbers the effective threshold (given through the district magnitude) and the national legal threshold,
- if its potential electorate is concentrated and outnumbers both the regional threshold (given through the district magnitude and the number of seats in parliament) and the national legal threshold,
- if its potential voters elect their representatives according to special rules, in a special, non-territorial district, or according to a group-specific quota.

### **3. Research design**

The study of the emergence of new parties is methodologically challenging, since they are a self-selected population. Negative cases of successful new parties are those that failed to win representation and those that were not created or did not compete in elections (Hug, 2003). To circumvent the self-selection problem, this investigation relies on social divides as units of investigation. This allows the estimation of the electoral potential of a political party that competes along a social divide, and the distinction between cases where such parties were created and won seats in parliament from negative cases where social divides did not engender any political party (see Kitschelt, 1988; Meguid, 2005 for a similar design).

In Western democracies, new social divides are rare, though often-employed exceptions are ethno-regional or post-materialist cleavages. The potential electoral strength of a new party can often be established only vaguely, as voting behaviour along new social divides is not homogeneous enough. Many cleavages do not have a territorial dimension, so that they do not allow the investigation of this aspect of my model empirically. Differently, ethnic identities in the post-communist countries in Europe are strong and clear-cut, and the size of ethnic groups can be established from census data or alternative sources. Unlike most other social divides in young democracies and especially in post-communist countries, ethnicity is arguably the most stable cleavage of party mobilisation (Bugajski, 1995; Stein, 2000; Birnir, 2007). Most parties of ethnic minorities emerged soon after the introduction of competitive elections, and unlike other parties, they could count on a very stable electorate. At the time of party creation during and after the transition to democracy at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, all ethnic identities in the region were long in existence, so that endogeneity problems (attached to cleavage-based explanations of party systems) appear less salient in this case. Furthermore, the territorial concentration of ethnic groups and the key aspects of the electoral systems vary

considerably in Central and Eastern European countries, and there is no country with very heterogeneous district size (which would be problematic for the calculation of the threshold of exclusion).

The creation of parties on an ethnic basis has been subject to a number of studies (Horowitz, 1985; Reilly, 2001; Chandra, 2004, 2005; De Winter, 2001; Levi & Hechter, 1985; Mitchell, 1995; Van Cott, 2003, etc.), including several with a special focus on Central and Eastern Europe (Stein, 2000) and on electoral system effects (Juberías, 2000; Friedman, 2005; Moser, 2005; Kostadinova, 2007; Bochsler, 2010). Similarly to the general literature on new parties, work on ethnic parties praises PR with large districts or specially designed districts for ethnic minorities as a way to include minority groups into politics (Lijphart, 1986; Rule & Zimmerman, 1994, etc.). Doorenspleet (2005: 366) is by far not the only author to claim that “majority rule is dangerous in divided societies, because minorities that are continually denied access to political power will feel excluded and discriminated against by the regime”. The territorial dimension and its importance gets only a few lines of mention in the seminal contributions to the field (Norris, 2004: 212). It appears, thus, as particularly interesting to test my model of new party creation on parties of ethnic minorities.

I have constructed a new database for the study that includes information about political parties and their ethnic affiliation, electoral laws, and the size and territorial structure of 123 ethnic minority groups (see also Bochsler, 2010). The inclusion of very heterogeneous sources, both from government offices as from human rights and minority rights organisations, makes me confident of having identified the most relevant groups that are associated with an ethnic identity.<sup>4</sup> Given the low variance over time on all variables, I use a cross-sectional design considering the latest legislative electoral contest (first chamber) in the Central and Eastern European countries by the end of 2007.<sup>5</sup> Every ethnic minority in each of the investigated countries is coded as one case. I investigate minorities from Albania to

Ukraine (cases are listed in table 3), excluding Belarus and Russia from the analysis, as they lack democratic standards of elections, and because the Russian parliament counted a very large number of independent candidates whose ethnic affiliation is not identifiable. The model presented in this article allows me to test the interaction effects of the territorial structure and size of ethnic minorities on the one hand and the electoral rules for ethnic minority parties on the other hand.

#### **4. Methodology and operationalisation: Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)**

I have argued apart from the commonly praised PR with large districts, there are several paths that allow for the representation of new political parties, but none of them is sufficient. The parties' potential relies on further aspects, such as the size and the territorial structure of the potential electorate of a party. The model with several alternative paths and multiple interaction terms, tested on only 123 cases, does not lead to stable results when tested with probabilistic methods.<sup>6</sup> However, the hypotheses ideally correspond to what Ragin (1987) call "multiple conjunctural causality". Given further that most of the explanatory variables employed in this study and the dependent variable are dichotomous by nature (see below for the operationalisation), crisp-set QCA appears as the most-suited method of analysis. The method systematically identifies paths and combinations of conditions, which lead to a positive or negative outcome.

QCA follows a deterministic concept, identifying necessary and sufficient conditions, which—if violated by only one or a few cases—are modified or dismissed. With larger numbers of cases, a deterministic strategy becomes challenging. It is likely that certain cases with the same configuration of condition variables, but different outcomes exist, which is a problematic result from a deterministic perspective (Ragin, 2000: 133; Rihoux & Ragin, 2008: 48-56). In my analysis with a considerable number of cases, such contradictory

outcomes should not astonish. My hypotheses identify only necessary, but no sufficient conditions. For this reason, even in a deterministic logic, heterogeneous configurations are not contradictory. Rather, the data suggests that cases with either positive or negative outcomes belong to the set of necessary conditions, but the conditions of these configurations with heterogeneous outcomes are *not sufficient* for a positive outcome.

### *Operationalisation and notation*

My analysis investigates for each identified ethnic minority group whether an ethnic minority party (or a list representing the minority) has won seats in the national parliament while competing independently<sup>7</sup> in the most recent elections before the end of 2007. Following the common notation in QCA, my outcome variable for representation is coded in capital letters,  $R$ , when the value is positive, while  $r$  indicates negative values (no representation with an own party in parliament). Explanatory or condition variables are listed in table 1. For mixed electoral systems, which are quite frequent in the region, combining the allocation of one part of the seats by PR, and another by majority vote, I distinguish both parts of the seat allocation. This is motivated by the idea that new parties might win seats in the majoritarian, in the PR part, or in both. In mixed systems, PR district magnitude ( $D$ ) relates to the PR part of the system, and the threshold ( $T$ ) relates to the legal threshold in the PR part of the system. Further, I take the number of PR seats in parliament into account ( $P$ ). A separate variable ( $M$ ) relates to the number of seats in the majoritarian tier of mixed electoral systems (table 1).<sup>8</sup>  $S$  identifies special, ethnically-defined districts for ethnic minorities or special quotas.

Legislations that forbid ethnically-defined parties are controlled for (variable  $B$ ). The question of whether or not to include these cases might be delicate. Addressing such “impossible-but-happens cases”, Mahoney and Goertz (2004) argue that they are relevant for

empirical studies. This allows for proper consideration of positive outcomes, which on first sight might seem impossible.<sup>9</sup>

xxx include table 1 about here xxx

### *Formalisation of the hypotheses*

Boolean algebra uses both signs + (addition) and \* (multiplication) in order to show how variables (conditions) are linked. The addition sign (+) stands for the logical “or”, while the multiplication sign (\*) means a logical “and”. The notation “C+t” hence means that an ethnic minority is concentrated (C) or that it is smaller than the legal electoral threshold (t). The notation “Ct” however would mean that an ethnic group is concentrated and that it is smaller than the threshold. This allows me to formulate my hypotheses in formal terms.

I have formulated three alternative paths that allow the entry of a new political party.

- a) The parties’ potential electorate is large enough to pass the threshold imposed by the magnitude of the PR districts (D) and the national legal threshold that applies in some PR systems (T).

DT->R

- b) The parties’ potential electorate is concentrated (C), and it is large enough to pass the threshold imposed by the size of parliament (P for PR seats, M for majority seats).

*For PR systems or the PR part of mixed electoral systems, considering also the limits imposed through national legal thresholds (T):*

CPT->R

*For the single-seat district part of mixed electoral systems (where legal thresholds do not apply):*

CM->R

- c) Or, if its potential voters elect their representatives according to special rules (S), thus in a special, non-territorial district, or according to group-specific quota.

S->R

Given the specific empirical case of application, I add an additional necessary condition that needs to be fulfilled in all these paths, namely electoral systems with a ban on ethnic minority parties (B) do not allow the representation of such.

b->R

Overall, the paths that have been sketched, and the necessary condition of an absence of a ban on ethnic parties, can be summarised in a comprehensive formula displaying a combination of conditions that are jointly necessary towards the outcome, which looks as follows:

$b^* (DT+CPT+CM+S) \rightarrow R$

Certainly, for the creation of a new party, more is needed than just an electoral system that allows for its potential creation. The success of ethnic minority parties might rely on further aspects, such as the existence of multiple parties that compete for the votes of ethnic minorities, or the presence of mixed-ethnic political parties that address ethnic minority voters. These aspects, however, might rather be a consequence than a cause of the existence of ethnic minority parties, so that their inclusion in the model might flaw the results. For the sake of simplicity, and in order to avoid possible problems of endogeneity, I have left further aspects, such as the degree uniformity of the voting behaviour of potential supporters, the extent to which other parties might try to attract their electorate, or the organisational and financial capacities of a new party, apart. The necessary character of my hypotheses reflects that the electoral system and the demographic structure of the minority alone do not explain the emergence of minority parties, but rather allow or hinder it.

## 5. Empirical analysis and results

This section illustrates the empirical analysis and presents the results. The database lists 43 minority groups for which at least a party ran in national parliamentary elections, and 34 out of these parties won seats in parliament (table 2).<sup>10</sup>

xxx include table 2 about here xxx

The classification according to the condition variables (table 3, left part) leaves us with 27 empirical configurations. For eight configurations, outcomes are always positive: all ethnic minorities within these configurations are represented by their own minority party in parliament. Fourteen groups are always coded negatively (no ethnic minority parties), while the remaining five groups of cases are mixed: some of the ethnic minorities classified there are represented by their own parties in parliament; others are not. As I have formulated necessary conditions, contradicting configurations can be treated jointly with the configurations with positive outcomes: the necessary conditions for the success of an ethnic minority party are fulfilled, but this does not always mean that such a party will be created (cf. Ragin, 1987).

xxx include table 3 about here xxx

Using Boolean algebra, the 27 configurations can be reduced to a formula with four paths, identifying the conditions for positive outcomes (table 4).<sup>11</sup> Positive outcomes can be observed for each of the four paths, and none of the paths is superfluous. This gives us confidence that the hypothesis fits the empirical data, and that it is not overly complex.

xxx include table 4 about here xxx

The empirical formula looks more complicated than my hypothesis. While the equation again represents the four paths of the hypothesis (bold part of the formula), certain additional conditions are added on the right (narrow typing). All these aspects are solely empirical conditions, added due to limited empirical diversity. As common in QCA, not all possible configurations of condition variables are observed. Seven dichotomous condition variables would result in  $2^7=128$  possible configurations, but only 27 occur. For instance, there is no electoral system that combines majoritarian voting with special districts for ethnic minorities, so that there is no empirical information for the combination SM, while the combination Sm exists. I would expect that both lead to a positive outcome. Other combinations of variables are theoretically implausible or impossible: the regional threshold (related to P) is never higher than the effective national threshold (related to D), and therefore, cases with D (group large enough to win a PR-district seat) are theoretically a subset of P (group large enough to win a PR-seat). I renounce on the frequent practice to include counterfactuals (non-occurring “logical remainders” (Rihoux & Ragin, 2008: 59-65)) automatically, as they might lead to artificial contradictions of the theoretically derived hypotheses.<sup>12</sup> Instead, the simplification through inclusion of logical remainders in a *theoretically informed* way (Stokke, 2007: 509; Rihoux & Ragin, 2008: 135-136; Ragin, 2008: 160-172), shows that the empirically resulting formula corresponds to the hypothesised formula (table 4, bold typing). As the positive outcome, the negative outcomes can also be summarised in a formula (see online appendix C).

The emergence of new political parties, or in this case of ethnic minority parties, depends on the size and the territorial structure of their potential electorate and, as well as on electoral laws. While in some countries ethnic groups of just tenths of percents hold parliamentary seats, other electoral laws hinder even relatively large groups of voters from being represented in parliament. The hypothesised effect of concentration is particularly relevant

for the explanation of the outcomes. In some cases, under a mixed electoral system, parties of concentrated minority groups were able to win majoritarian seats, such as parties of ethnic Poles in Lithuania or Greeks in Albania. The party of the Poles in Lithuania, however, does not pass the legal threshold that applies in the PR tier.<sup>13</sup> Also, parties with a concentrated electorate enter parliament (Germans in Poland), while in very similar situations (e.g. configuration no. 23), parties organising non-concentrated minorities were not able to do so.

In sum, parties with a large potential electorate may be represented through every kind of PR, through special districts, or through mixed electoral systems (however, there are no empirical cases which confirm this last configuration). Parties with a medium-sized potential electorate do best with PR without thresholds or with systems with special districts. If their voters are territorially concentrated, they may be represented through a mixed electoral system as well. Parties with a low electoral potential, rely on need special districts, PR with very large districts, or (if their voters are regionally very concentrated) a mixed electoral system. (There is no empirical evidence for the last configuration.) Especially for geographically non-concentrated groups of voters, representation in parliament with an own party is often difficult or even impossible to achieve, except for the case when the groups are large or can vote in special electoral districts.<sup>14</sup>

The configurations with heterogeneous outcomes (groups 9-13) merit further attention. Even if the electoral systems in these cases allow for the creation of minority parties, other reasons might explain why in these very similar cases some minorities are represented, and others are not. Russian-speaking minorities in several countries (Estonia, Lithuania, Ukraine) are not represented by their own parties, even if the electoral laws would allow so, which might possibly be explained through other, overlapping cleavages.<sup>15</sup> Further exceptions might be due to a recent change of the electoral rules, after the party system was already largely

established (Serbia), or to errors resulting from the rudimentary measure of the degree of concentration.

## **6. Conclusion: Territory matters**

The scholarly discussion on the effect of electoral systems on the emergence of new political parties has widely relied on the characteristics of the electoral system, such as district magnitude and national legal thresholds, and on the size of the potential electorate. However, the effect of district magnitude and of legal thresholds depends heavily on the question whether voters are homogeneously spread across the country. This is not the case for many new parties, especially for those that mobilise along ethnic divides (De Winter & Türsan, 1998; Stein, 2000; Birnir, 2007; Van Cott, 2003; Mozaffar et al., 2003).

This study shows that both the territorial structure of the voting group and often overlooked instruments of the electoral system, such as special minority districts or ethnic quotas, can make a crucial difference. Parties that address territorially concentrated groups of voters have better chances of getting elected to parliament in district-based electoral systems than parties whose voters are spread across the country.<sup>16</sup> After considering the territorial dimension and subtleties of electoral systems that are usually not looked at in systematic comparative studies on this subject, my study allows an accurate institutional explanation of the success of parties of ethnic minorities.

Looking at 123 ethnic minorities in Central and Eastern Europe, this article presents four ways how parties of ethnic minorities obtain representation in national parliaments. Electoral systems with considerable legal thresholds or with small PR districts allow parties representing a large minority to access parliament. Small parties in district-based electoral systems are better off if their electorate is concentrated on certain areas. This is especially the case for electoral systems with single-seat districts, where representation of minorities depends solely on the territorial pattern of their settlement. To allow minority parties

representation despite restrictive electoral systems, certain countries apply special electoral rules, which guarantee the representation of their minorities on a non-territorial basis.

Certainly, the question whether minority parties can become represented is only one out of many criteria that matter for the choice of the constitutional order in divided societies. Similarly relevant are questions whether the electoral system generates a premium on moderation, or whether it allows for competition among parties of the same group. It is also worth noting that rules that discriminate (positively) on the basis of ethnicity might impose problems of the identification of members of ethnic groups.

Finally, the choice of the electoral system is more delicate than simply choosing between a PR and majoritarian systems and preferential voting rules. For each party, the effect of electoral systems highly depends on the territorial structure of the electorate.

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<sup>1</sup> For instance Inglehart (1981), Kitschelt (1995), Ignazi (1996), Moraski & Loewenberg (1999), Meguid (2005), Minkenberg and Perrineau (2007) or Tronconi (2006).

<sup>2</sup> At the absence of malapportionment, the rate of voters per mandate should be approximately constant across all electoral districts.

<sup>3</sup> The study of African elections by Mozaffar et al. (2003: 386-387) shows that the investigation of joint effects of electoral systems and social cleavages merits deepening. Mozaffar and colleagues come however to a hard-to-explain positive impact of concentrated ethnic group *if district magnitude is large* (positive impact of the triple interaction variable *magnitude\*ethnic fractionalisation\*concentration*). This is contrary to their expectations, according to which for concentrated ethnic groups district magnitude should not matter. Mozaffar et al. (2003: 386) argue that, “increased number of group cleavages encourages candidates to forge inter-group alliances to improve on their electoral gains”. It remains unclear why this should be less the case if district magnitude is large *and* groups are concentrated (as their results suggest). Brambor et al. (2007) have refined the analysis, but their results – as the original analysis – still show in the opposite direction of common expectations.

<sup>4</sup> Ethnic minorities are numeric minorities in a country. Ethnicity refers here to the self-definition or social definition of social groups that are considered to have common characteristics, even if such characteristics are often socially constructed.

Ethnic minority parties define themselves explicitly or implicitly as representatives of an ethnic group and their program is focussed on a conservation or improvement of rights of their minority group; see Horowitz (1985: 291), including as well parties with a clear ethnic agenda.

<sup>5</sup> Only in two cases, the parliamentary representation of ethnic minorities has changed after the mid-1990s in a major way. One case is Serbia, where ethnic minority parties were increasingly represented starting with the 2007 national parliamentary elections, after the 5% national threshold has been abolished for minority parties. The other case is Estonia, with parties of the Russian-speaking minorities gaining seats in 1995 and 1999, before they were challenged by the Centre Party’s appeal to minorities, split, and became marginal after losing parliamentary representation in 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Probabilistic methods of analysis hardly yield any results at standard levels of statistical significance, as the number of cases is too small for the fairly complex form of the hypothesised interaction terms, especially since outcomes can only be measured dichotomously.

<sup>7</sup> Especially in Serbia and in Macedonia, ethnic minority parties often join the electoral lists of non-ethnic parties, in order to circumvent restrictive electoral rules. Such minority parties do not have the same autonomy

and independence as parties with their own list, and are not identifiable separately on the ballot. This is well-illustrated by a case from Serbia, in 2005, when the non-ethnic Democratic Party (DS) attempted to headlock its small electoral partner, the Bosniak minority's "Lista za Sandžak", when the minority party wanted to enter government (while DS stayed in opposition). As a lack of their own electoral list, they entirely depended on the DS to replace their MPs.

<sup>8</sup> In mixed electoral systems, voting behaviour and strategic choices of political parties are often influenced both by PR rules and by the single-seat districts simultaneously (Cox & Schoppa, 2002; Ferrara, Herron, & Nishikawa, 2005). However, the necessary conditions on which this study focuses, rely heavily on the mechanical effect of electoral systems. In this regard, each part of mixed electoral systems works independently, and this is reflected by the operationalisation of this study.

In Albania, 40 (out of 140) PR seats are allocated in order to provide overall proportionality of votes and seats (cf. Massicotte & Blais, 1999), with a 2.5% legal threshold. There, I treat the 100 majoritarian seats as in other mixed electoral systems, while the compensatory PR tier is treated as a 140-seats district with a 2.5% threshold.

<sup>9</sup> Legislation in Albania and in Bulgaria bans political parties founded on ethnic grounds (Cesid, 2002; Juberias, 2000). Nevertheless, one important minority party in each of both countries has been tolerated all over the post-communist period under non-ethnic label, the parties of Turks in Bulgaria ("Movement of Rights and Freedom") and of Greeks in Albania ("Human Rights Union Party").

<sup>10</sup> Parties of the following minorities ran in elections, but did not enter parliament: Roma in Bulgaria and in Hungary; Bosniaks in Montenegro; Moravians in the Czech Republic; Russians in Estonia, Moldova and Ukraine; Serbs and Turks in Macedonia. In three cases (Bosniaks in Montenegro, Russians in Estonia, Russians in Ukraine), the conditions would have been fulfilled, according to my hypotheses, to enter parliament, but the parties could not rely on a sufficiently united electorate of the ethnic minority. In the six other cases, the electoral system is too restrictive.

<sup>11</sup> The analysis is carried out with the software Tosmana, which allows the user to find parsimonious terms. Positive and contradictory outcomes are merged, as the hypothesis suggests only necessary, but no sufficient conditions.

<sup>12</sup> Logical remainders might include configurations that were not expected to belong to the hypothesised solution, and result in a formula that seemingly contradicts the hypotheses, bare any empirical proof, and based solely on an artificial attribution of counterfactuals. A formula with an extensive use of logical remainders is presented in the online appendix C.

<sup>13</sup> The Polish minority in Lithuania is heavily concentrated—mainly in the areas surrounding Vilnius—and they are a clear majority in two (out of 71) single-seat districts, where most of the Lithuanian Poles live. The Russian minority, which is larger in numbers, is more spread, so that a Russian minority party would lose in nearly all single-seat districts, and remain heavily underrepresented.

<sup>14</sup> The group that arguably suffers most under its territorial spread are Roma and Ashkali minorities. Alternative explanations put forward that Roma and Ashkali lacked effective political organisations (Sobotka, 2001; Alionescu, 2004: 62). Others, however, stress that attempts to organise the Roma minority has been substantially supported by the international community (Barany, 2005: 83). Roma or Ashkali parties only succeed, where profit from special electoral rules, either special PR quotas (Kosovo), reserved ethnic minority seats and an exception from the national legal threshold (Romania), or a lowered electoral threshold for ethnic minorities (Serbia). In Macedonia, a Roma party has in certain elections had access to parliament in an electoral alliance with a mainstream party.

<sup>15</sup> In Lithuania, the *Labour party* addresses many ethnic Russian voters. In earlier elections, Russian parties formed coalitions with non-ethnically defined parties (Jurkynas, 2005: 775-776). Besides a mixed-ethnic party or mixed-ethnic coalitions, there is not a lot of space to form a Russian minority party. In Estonia, Russians have recently voted heavily for the mixed-ethnic *Centre party* and votes of the remaining Russian speakers were split on several smaller parties (Mikkel, 2006). In Ukraine, several overlapping conflicts heavily correlate with the conflict between Russians and Ukrainians (Birch, 2000). Bosniaks in Montenegro used to have their own party in parliament until 1998 (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1998: 7), but voted mostly for non-ethnically defined parties thereafter.

<sup>16</sup> For other questions, such as the number of seats that a minority party wins in parliament in single-seat district systems, or the degree to which minority views are affecting policy outcomes, local concentration might also work at the group's disadvantage. See King (1990) for partisan biases arising from local concentration, and Cameron et al. (1996) for policy consequences.

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## Tables

*It is not how many votes you get, but also where you get them. Territorial determinants and institutional hurdles for the success of ethnic minority parties in post-communist countries*

Name	Description and importance	Definition of positive coding
<b>Outcome variables (dependent variable)</b>		
R	Representation of minority group with own party (elected with an own list),	At least one party exists that is related to the ethnic minority and won parliamentary seats with an own list (negative: other cases). (The variable is based on the results from the most recent national elections, as of 2007.)
<b>Condition variables (explanatory variables)</b>		
C	Regional concentration of the population group.	An overwhelming majority of the ethnic minority group is located in a small part of the country. (There is no systematic data to operationalise this condition more precisely.)
D	PR system: number of seats in an average electoral district in relation to the (countrywide) population share of the minority group.	The minority population share is large enough to win a seat in an average PR district. <i>* Indicator: <math>p * (m+1) \geq 1</math></i> In countries with nationwide seat allocation, the district magnitude is equal to the number of PR seats in parliament.
P	PR system (or PR element in mixed system): number of PR seats in parliament in relation to the (countrywide) population share of the minority group.	The population share of the minority corresponds to at least one PR seat* in parliament. <i>* Indicator: <math>p * s * (m+1)/m \geq 1</math></i>
M	Majority vote system (or majoritarian element in mixed system): Number of seats in parliament accorded by majority vote in single-seat districts, in relation to the (countrywide) population share of the minority group.	The population share of the minority corresponds to at least one district seat* in parliament. <i>* Indicator: <math>p * d_s \geq 1</math></i> In systems pure PR systems, the indicator results in 0.
T	Vote share required according to national legal threshold in the PR elections or in the PR tier of mixed systems in relation to the population share of the minority group.	The population share of the minority is equal or larger than 1.5 times the threshold, or if ethnic minority parties are exempted from the threshold requirement.
S	Members of ethnic minorities elect their parliamentary representatives in special districts.	Ethnic minorities that vote in special ethnic districts. In Croatia, where several minorities compete in the same constituency, the variable is coded positively only for the largest ethnic group in each constituency.
B	Ban on parties from ethnic minorities. Some counter-legal exceptions exist: some parties are tolerated despite their ethnic character.	Legal ban on ethnic minority parties (de-facto exceptions of the legal ban are coded negatively).

*Table 1: Operationalisation of the variables, notation, and dichotomisation.*

*Notation:  $m$  = average district magnitude;  $p$  = population share of the minority group;  $s$  = overall number of seats in parliament;  $d_s$  = number of single-seat districts. Sources, see online appendix B.*

		Minority party runs in national parliamentary elections		
		no	yes	Total
Minority party wins seats in elections	no	80	9	89
	yes	0	34	34
	Total	80	43	123

*Table 2: Ethnic minority parties in elections and winning parliamentary seats.*

Nr.	Condition variables								Outcome	Cases
	C (minority lives concentrated)	B (minority party ban)	S (special rules)	T (legal threshold)	D (PR district magnitude)	P (PR seats in parliament)	M (majority seats)	R (representation)		
1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	<i>HR-SE</i>	
2	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	<i>HR-MU</i>	
3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	<i>HR-HU,RO-SE,RO-SK,RO-TA,RO-TU</i>	
4	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	<i>CG-AL,KO-BO,KO-GO,KO-SE,KO-TU,RO-HU</i>	
5	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	<i>RO-RO</i>	
6	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	<i>RO-GE,RO-UK</i>	
7	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	<i>SLO-HU,SLO-IT</i>	
8	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	<i>KO-RO</i>	
9	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	C	<i>AL-GR,LI-RU</i>	
10	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	C	<i>BG-TU,BIH-BO,BIH-SE,CG-SE,ES-RU,LV-RU,SE-CG,SE-RO,SE-YU</i>	
11	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	C	<i>BIH-HR,CG-BO,MA-AL,SE-AL,SE-BO,SE-HR,SE-HU,SE-RM,SE-SK,SE-VL,SK-HU,UK-RU</i>	
12	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	C	<i>LI-BE,LI-PO</i>	
13	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	C	<i>MA-BO, PL-GE, SLO-SE</i>	
14	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	<i>AL-RO,AL-VL</i>	
15	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	<i>AL-MA,AL-SLA</i>	
16	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	<i>BG-RO,BG-SLA,BG-VL</i>	
17	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	<i>BG-MA</i>	
18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<i>CG-RO,CZ-GE,CZ-HU,CZ-RO,CZ-UK,ES-FI,HR-RO,HR-SLO,HU-SK,LV-LI,SK-GE,SK-PO,UK-AR,UK-JE,UK-TA</i>	
19	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	<i>CZ-MO,CZ-PO,CZ-SK,LV-BE</i>	
20	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<i>CG-HR,CZ-SI,HU-JE,HU-SLA,LI-UK,LV-UK,SK-RT,UK-GR</i>	
21	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	<i>ES-BE,ES-UK,LV-PO</i>	
22	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	<i>HU-GE, HU-RO</i>	
23	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	<i>MA-RO,MA-SE,MA-TU,SLO-HR</i>	
24	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	<i>MA-VL,PL-UK,SE-GE,SE-MA,SE-RU,SE-SLO,SLO-RO</i>	
25	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	<i>MD-RO,MD-RU,MD-UK,SK-CZ,SK-RO,UK-BE,UK-MD,UK-PL</i>	
26	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	<i>CG-MU,MD-BG,MD-GA,UK-BG,UK-CT,UK-HU,UK-RM</i>	
27	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	<i>PL-BE,SE-BC,SE-BG,SE-CZ,SE-GO,SE-MO,SE-RT,SE-UK,SLO-BO,SLO-YU</i>	

Table 3: QCA “Truth Table”, variables determining the representation of ethnic minority parties  
123 ethnic minority groups are arranged in 27 groups according the independent variables.

Cases with positive outcome are indicated in italics.

(Abbreviations of the cases, see online appendix A).

<i>hypotheses</i>	<i>additional empirical conditions (subset)</i>	<i>outcome</i>
<b>b *</b>	<b>( DT</b>	<b>*Pm</b>
	<b>+ CPT</b>	<b>*sm</b>
	<b>+ CM</b>	<b>*DPs</b>
	<b>+ S</b>	<b>*m (Pt+ Cdp) ) -&gt; R</b>

Table 4: Equation for positive outcomes.

The terms contained in the hypothesis are bold. Extensions of these terms in narrow print.