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Economic Development and Positioning of Ethnic Political Parties: Comparing Post-Communist Bulgaria and Romania

ANTOINE ROGER
Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Bordeaux

Abstract

Stein Rokkan's theory is frequently used to explain how the economic development can influence the position of an ethnic party in the national political balance : it explains the political representation of minorities as a process of accommodation. An ethnic minority is supposed to stand up against the homogenising policy of national authorities. A specific party is then created which can negotiate with wider political forces supported by the main population. Such a collaboration prevents a conflict from degenerating into civil war. Does such a theory offer a good basis for comparing different countries? The answer is negative when one considers the situation of Bulgaria and Romania. To compare these two cases, one pay attention to a factor which is neglected by Rokkan, namely the respective economic situations of the "homeland" of the ethnic minority and the country it lives in. These situations direct the balance between inward-looking and outward-looking factions within the party which represent an ethnic minority. Hence, it makes the negotiations with the big governing parties more or less easy to manage.

Introduction

In order to understand the political orientations of the parties which represent an ethnic minority in South-eastern Europe, it is useful to draw comparisons. Two parties deserve particular attention as they have been continuously represented in parliament and are capable of waging parliamentary battles over particular legislation. They are the Movement for Rights and Liberties (*Dvizhenie za Prava I Svobodi*, DPS), which is supported by the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, and the Democratic Union of the Magyars of Romania (*Uniunea Democrata a Maghiarilor din România*, UDMR) which represents the Magyar minority in

Romania. Both parties represent a strong minority, but they do not play the same political role.

The DPS was created in 1990 as an organisation which declared its intention to protect the rights and interests of Bulgarian citizens of Turkish origin. It declared that it would be defending the interests and rights of Bulgarian citizens in general, although it has on the whole remained confined to Bulgarian citizens of Turkish origin and Bulgarian Muslims. The DPS formulates cultural demands; it has never upheld a precise economic programme. Hence, it has adopted a flexible political stance and agreed to form an alliance with two contending parties- it supported the liberal government formed by the Union of Democratic Forces (*Sajuz na Demokraticnite Sili*, SDS) until October 1992. Following this, it supported the formation of a new government in alliance with the Bulgarian Socialist Party (*Balgarska Socialisticeska Partija*, BSP).

The UDMR was born in December 1989 in Tîrgu Mures, the only important city (170 000 inhabitants) where the ethnic Romanians are still a minority. It unites pre-existing confessional movements, as well as associations of young people, professional associations and cultural associations. Its main demands are the creation of a *ministry for Nationalities*, the recognition of bilingualism in the Transylvanian administration and judicial system, the systematic organisation of an education programme in the Hungarian language and the opening of a Hungarian university in Cluj. It is also seeking a quick implementation of the economic reforms required by the European Union and international creditors. It opposed President Ion Iliescu and the governments formed under his authority between 1992 and 1996. In 1996, it contributed to the success of the opposition candidate Emil Constantinescu. In keeping with this support, it participated in government until 2000. It continued to demand collective rights. The slowness of the government to answer its demands provoked repeated protests and threats to withdraw from the governing coalition.

To sum up, two contrasted configurations are to be considered. The DPS formulates moderate cultural demands and is ready to form alliances with big political parties regardless of their ideological orientation. The UDMR formulates vindictive cultural demands and agrees to share power only with parties which are likely to implement economic reforms.

How can one explain such diversity ? Why do the parties which represent an ethnic minority not adopt the same political stance in every case? Does it mean that they are not subject to any common logic? Does one have to settle for a case by case analysis and forgo any comparison? In our view, the comparison is possible on the condition that one can define an appropriate theoretical framework and take into account the most significant variables.

Stein Rokkan's theory is frequently used to explain how the presence of an ethnic minority can shape a national political balance. It consists in highlighting a cleavage between a homogenising “Centre” and a “Periphery” standing up for its cultural identity. This cleavage is supposed to give birth to two antagonistic political parties, one fighting for the interests of the centre and the other for the interests of the periphery. An ethnic political party is nothing but a means of domesticating the Centre/Periphery cleavage.

My thesis is that such a theory does not offer an appropriate frame for comparing Bulgarian an Romanian cases. It proves inefficient because it does not clear up the differences between the two cases nor give any means of escaping a case by case analysis.

At first, I will specify why Rokkan's theory does not apply:: it focuses on internal conflicts and underrates the external variable.

Then, I will try to remedy the difficulty by building up an alternative explanatory scheme that integrates such a variable. Attention should be paid to the respective economic situations of the "homeland" of the ethnic minority and the country it lives in. These situations should be related to the balance between inward-looking and outward-looking factions within the party that represents an ethnic minority. The degree of interplay between inward-looking and outward-looking factions is dependent on the relative positions of the ethnic minority's "homeland" and the country it lives in. The degree of interplay affects negotiations with the big governing parties, making them either easier or more difficult.

I. Testing Rokkan's model: an ethnic political party as a means to contain an internal conflict?

Stein Rokkan emphasises two historical revolutions; he asserts that each one has generated two cleavages. The "national revolution" (the Reformation) brought cleavage between the Church and the State as well as between the Centre and the Periphery of the territory. The Centre/Periphery cleavage pits the dominant national culture against ethnic, linguistic, or religious minorities in the provinces and the peripheral sectors of society. It involves conflicts over values and cultural identities. The industrial revolution brings cleavage between urban and rural society as well as between the wealthy and the employees (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967)[i]. All these cleavages are long-ranging. "Resulting from dysfunctional phenomena, they stem from the societal structure and are a constituent element of this structure" (Seiler, 1982: 110). Political parties are created so as to domesticate the cleavages and to prevent them from ending in a mere civil war. Every party plays a role in institutionalising the deepest antagonisms (Rokkan & Urwin, 1982: 8; 1983: 82; 1987: 112-33 ; Seiler, 1986: ch. 4).

Rokkan's model focuses on the Western countries but some commentators stressed that "its degree of abstraction gives it a predictive force which exceeds widely its area of origin". By this assumption, one has just to specify that it does not give the same results in Western and non-Western countries. The wealthy/workers conflict is the strongest in the first case; it is overthrown by the Centre/Periphery conflict in the second case (Charlot: 448). So to use Rokkan's model in the non-Western countries, one has to consider that " the technoeconomic base of the society can engender contradictions (…); this phenomenon can occur when a single political system has to govern several economic settings distributed on well localised parts of the national territory" (Seiler, 1986 :110-111). Such a process is all the more perceptible in Central and Eastern Europe as, under the communist rule," the nationalisation of the means of production and the subsequent elimination of the capitalist bourgeoisie" disrupted the conflicts stemming from the industrial revolution. The conflicts stemming from the national revolution are the only ones to remain relevant. The conflict between the Centre and the Periphery turns out to be of utmost importance (Seiler, 1996: 104).

In keeping with such a thesis, one should explain the political representation of minorities as a process of accommodation. By virtue of a superimposing logic, a territorially-based ethnic minority unavoidably comes to stand up against the centre (first level). A specific party is then created which positions on the Centre/Periphery axis and remains indifferent to the questions that have nothing to do with this axis (second level). This party can consequently negotiate with wider political forces supported by the main population. Such a collaboration prevents the conflict from degenerating into civil war (third level). As a matter of fact, the party which represents a minority serves to institutionalise a conflict within society.

The point is to know whether such a process can be detected in the three selected cases. Rokkan's model works in the case of Bulgaria with a perfect superimposing of the three levels: a territorially-based minority defends its rights against the assertion of an hegemonic centre; a party carries its demands without positioning on other issues; it negotiates and collaborates with big parties so as to defuse the conflict. The comparison with Romania nevertheless spotlights certain flaws in the explanation. In this case, the outcome is completely different from the Bulgarian one even though it is the same at the first level: a territorially-based minority is represented by a political party but it does not result at all in a dismantling of the conflict.

Bulgaria: a conflict contained by a territorially-based ethnic party

The Turkish minority[ii] is strongly established in two confined regions: Razgrad-Shumen, in the Dobrudja plain, and Kardzhali, in the Rhodope Mountains. The DPS obtains its greatest electoral successes there. Thus, it supposedly contributes to the institutionalisation and political taming of the Centre/Periphery conflict. It seems to prevent the conflict from ending in a violent clash. This role is internalised by the very members of the party. Lutfi Yunal, vice-chairman of the DPS, explains that the DPS aims at " safeguarding national identity and culture versus groups and values furthering national nihilism ". According to him, all the conditions were ripe in 1989 for Bulgaria to follow the same road as Bosnia or Kosovo. A spark was just needed to set fire to the powder keg. But the DPS has pushed hard to defuse the conflict and to find "a civilised way" to restore the rights of the Turkish minority (Holley, 2001).

Some elements are to be found in recent history of the relations between the Turkish minority and the Bulgarian majority that are likely to back such an interpretation. As the last result of the violent campaign for changing the names in 1984 and 1985- the so-called "Revival process" - more that 350,000 Bulgarian Turks left the country in 1989. The beginning of 1990 was marked by the adoption of the *Declaration of the National Assembly on the National Question*, which rejected the previous policy and served as the basis for the reform of Bulgarian legislation in the sphere of minority protection. It was followed by the passing of the *Names of Bulgarian Citizens Act* (March 5, 1990) which allowed Bulgarian citizens whose names had been forcibly changed to restore their former names (Bates, 1994: 204-210; Ilchev & Duncan, 1993: 36-37; Karpat, 1995: 51-55).

In the course of the process of democratisation all restrictions were abolished regarding the religious rights and freedoms of Bulgarian Muslims and Bulgarian citizens of Turkish origin.. In Bulgaria, there are presently more than 950 functioning mosques, a large number of them having been built in the past 5-6 years. The Koran and other religious literature are freely disseminated in both Bulgarian and Turkish. Currently, there are four secondary religious Muslim schools and one undergraduate Islamic institute in the country (Hopken, 1997: 54-61).

These measures of accommodation were not enough to defuse the conflict. The legal framework for Bulgaria lends itself to the development of a violent conflict inasmuch as the Bulgarian minority enjoys no collective rights. Being based on the notion of the unity of the nation, the Constitution does not provide for collective political rights of ethnic or religious groups of the population. It acknowledges the existence of religious, linguistic and ethnic differences and guarantees the possibility to exercise rights deriving from those differences in the form of individual, rather than collective rights (Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, art. 2. 1.).

Hence, the scope of the rights enjoyed by ethnic Turks does not satisfy the DPS. Leaders of the party demand the extension of this scope by the adoption of the principle of granting collective rights (Konstantinov, 1992: 85-86). On the face of it, it might lead to the emergence of separatist and irredentist tendencies. But, in keeping with Rokkan's model, the DPS negotiates with the Centre and defuses the conflict by means of institutionalisation. Its members expect to obtain what they want by a series of small concessions and they succeed to a large extent. Legislative measures are introduced by the Bulgarian authorities - by the Centre – so as to satisfy them and to prevent them from making too many violent demands. The Public Education Act (1991), as well as the Rules and Regulations for the Implementation of the Public Education Act (1992), reaffirm and specify the constitutional right to study one's mother tongue in public and private schools. At present, mother tongue instruction is provided in municipal schools as an optional subject up to 4 hours a week and is financed by the municipal budget, with textbooks provided to students free of charge (Eminov, 1997: 145-150; Stojanov, 1994).

In June 1995, a National Council on Social and Demographic Issues was set up with the Council of Ministers with consultative and co-ordinating functions. Since January 1998, it has been transformed into the National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues. It includes representatives of all ministries and institutions concerned with these issues. Its working meetings can be attended by representatives of other organisations and research institutes. A special public council on ethnic issues has been created with the Presidency.

Last but not least, Bulgaria signed the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities on behalf of the Republic of Bulgaria on October 9, 1997. This act was a result of a six months of public debate on the issue of whether the country should be a party to the Convention. The DPS has played a major role in this debate.[iii].

Thus, Rokkan's model seems to work in Bulgaria as one finds the three superimposed levels. The Turkish minority stands up for its rights on a territorial basis (first level); the DPS serves to carry its demands; it looks for an extension of the rights enjoyed by the Turkish minority and nothing more. It does not adopt a clear-cut position in the debates that are not related to the Centre/Periphery axis (second level). Its members logically agree to collaborate with all the political parties which represent the interests of the Centre, whatever their economic programme. They help to manage a peaceful relationship between the Centre and the Periphery (third level).

However, the single Bulgarian case is not enough to validate Rokkan's model. To obtain such a validation, one should observe the same superimposing at the first level. The Romanian case precisely counters the model. In Romania, one finds the same situation at the first level, but not at the third level. The Magyar minority is in the same situation as the Turkish minority, but the political party which represents it is unlikely to collaborate efficiently with parties of the Centre. It does not defuse the conflict but magnifies it instead.

Romania: a territorially-based ethnic party unlikely to contain the conflict

According to the census of 1992, the Magyars of Romania number about 1.62 millions; they represent 7.1% of the total population and 20 % of the population of Transylvania. In the so-called *Szeklerland*, that is to say in the rural districts of Hargita and Covasna, they represent 84.7 % and 75.2 % of the population, respectively.

The UDMR is built on a territorial basis. It finds its main support in Transylvania. It upholds the interests of the Transylvanian Periphery and demands for a decentralisation of the Romanian State. These demands collide with the centralism of authorities. This Centre/Periphery seems to fit Rokkan's model. However, the UDMR does not defuse the conflict by means of institutionalisation. It is not in a position to collaborate effectively with big governing parties. At first, it opposed the governments formed under the aegis of president Ion Iliescu. When the authorities laid down institutions for negotiations between central authorities and minorities, the UDMR thought it was nothing but a trap designed to suffocate instead of satisfy its demands. In March 1993, the government announced the creation of a Council for National minorities (Consiliu pentru Minoritatile Nationale - CpMN). The charter of the CpMN was elaborated in association with an American Non-governmental organisation (Project one Ethnic Relations). It granted 14 seats to the government's representatives and a seat to each of 17 registered national minorities. It was specified that assemblies will be held regularly so as "to ratify" the texts of law which contain elements of particular concern for ethnic minorities. Each member had the right to veto. The UDMR criticised the fact that all the minorities were placed on the same basis while they did not have the same weight: the Polish minority which numbered less than 3000 members had the same power and the same veto right as the Magyar minority which numbered 1,62 million representatives. The UDMR finally opted for a "conditional participation": it claimed that the CpMN should elaborate a text of Law on the rights of national minorities and to amend the Law on Education. The government opposed these demands. UDMR then decided to boycott the CpMN (Shafir, 1993a: 35; Karnoouh, 1997).

In 1996, the political change in the majority created a new context for UDMR's leaders, but it did not bring them to negotiate as efficiently as the DPS in Bulgaria. Having defeated Ion Iliescu and his followers in the general elections, the *Democratic Convention of Romania* (*Conventia Democrata din România*, CDR) was willing to introduce economic reforms at an accelerated rate and to move closer to Western standards. The UDMR decided to support it. Two of its representatives were appointed to the new government: Akos Birtalan became minister for Tourism; Gÿorgy Tokay became minister without portfolio, in charge of national minorities besides the Prime Minister (his task consisted in proposing reforms and monitoring the observance of international and national texts dealing with the rights of ethnic minorities). What is more, the UDMR managed to implement *Prescription n°22 on local administration* and *Prescription n°36 on Education*. Prescription n°22 made it compulsory for municipalities in which at least 20 % of the population belong to a national minority to have bilingual public registrations. Prescription n°36 education authorised the use of the Hungarian language in secondary grammar schools and vocational schools; it also stated that the training of the teachers can be assured in a minority language. The prescriptions could not be applied until being completed by statutory acts. The government implemented these statutory acts at a very slow rate. The UDMR interpreted it as a lack of will. It realised that its positioning in office did not change the actual situation of the Magyar minority. In December 1997, the UDMR adopted a vindictive stance. It demanded the *immediate* opening of a Magyar faculty within the university of Cluj[iv]. When this failed to materialise, it demanded the dismissal of the Minister of Education, Andrei Marga (Oprescu, 1999). To calm it, Romanian authorities announced the creation of a German-Magyar University Petöfi-Schiller, but they did not go further than creating an ad hoc parliamentary committee on the issue.

One must admit that the three superimposed levels identified in Rokkan's model are not observed in Romania. No difference is noticed at the first level as the Magyar minority is territorially-based and tries to uphold its rights in front of the Centre. But at the second level, the behaviour of the party which represents this minority is not dictated solely by the Centre/Periphery rationale. Thus, a taming effect is not liable to be observed at the third level The UDMR simply refuses to collaborate with some political parties; when it is in office, it falls short of collaborating effectively with its coalition partners.

The difference in the two cases invalidates Rokkan's model. For this model to work it would be necessary to obtain the same superimposing when the same criteria are gathered at the first level. Since this is not the case, the model does not explain the observed differences between the Bulgarian and Romanian examples. This failure is due to the fact that Rokkan conceived his model for analysing the political parties of Western Europe. The political evolution of these countries is mainly endogenous; parties can be conceived as the outcome of internal conflicts. In Bulgaria and Romania, the logic is quite different. Ethnic political parties do not serve to institutionalise an internal conflict but to articulate the outside and the internal scenes. The problems met by the members of an ethnic minority at the internal level are connected with the economic position of their “homeland” and of the country they live in. To understand the differences between the Bulgarian and the Romanian cases, on has to take into account such a dimension.

II. Definition of an alternative model: an ethnic political party as a means of combining internal and external pressures

The main factor of variation is found in the differentiated economic position that the “homeland” of every minority occupies. This position can be similar to that of the country the minority lives in, but it can also be better. In every case, an international comparison can be constructed. It is constructed in connection with the internal pressures the minority undergoes - and that is why it is appropriate to speak of a combination. The political party must be thought of as an interface between the national and international conflicts in which the minority is engaged.

This logic of combination has a direct effect on the organisation of each party. It gives birth to two kinds of factions, which can be qualified as *outward-looking* and *inward-looking*. In every ethnic party one finds an outward-looking faction which pushes hard to strengthen the links with its homeland. One also finds an inward-looking faction which turns more to the internal balances of the society in which it lives. It looks for an agreement with other parties so that the country the minority lives in takes on the international position of the “homeland”. The direction of the party should balance these contending factions. The balance can be easy or difficult to obtain depending on the size of the gap between the “homeland” of the minority and the country they live in[v].

When the “homeland” of a minority and the country they live in are in a similar situation, the outward-looking faction does not formulate radical demands and the agreement with the inward-looking faction is easy to obtain. The party that represents the ethnic minority is liable to collaborate with all other parties without being beset with difficulties. This is the case of the DPS in Bulgaria.

When the comparison is not in favour of the country the ethnic minority lives in, the outward-looking faction wishes to obtain a separate status so as to benefit from the same advantages as the people who live in the “homeland”. The inward-looking faction strives for reforms which could fill the gap between the two countries. Both strategies can be observed within the UDMR in Romania. They are not easy to combine.

Two magnifying factors can make tensions within ethnic political parties harder to manage, but they do not create them. First, the homeland may encourage the ethnic minority’s demands or not. In this regard, there is a discrepancy. Turkish authorities remained passive, whereas Hungary took an active interest in the status of Magyars in Romania. Secondly, the European Union’s enlargement process has a differentiating effect. As a condition to proceeding with negotiations, the European Commission requires that applicant countries implement economic reforms. Such reforms cannot be implemented at the same rate in each and every case (structural impediments inherited from the communist period differ from one country to another). Thus, some applicants are considered "good pupils" and can qualify for the next round of the European Union's enlargement, whereas others are told to wait. As neither Turkey nor Bulgaria are eligible for membership, the enlargement process is a neutral issue for the DPS. A deeper contrast exists between Hungary and Romania; which enhances the tensions within the UDMR (Roger, 2001; 2002).

Bulgaria: an easy combination

From an economic point of view, Bulgaria and Turkey are in a rather similar position. According to the European Union’s statements on both countries, Bulgaria and Turkey were kept aside from the first wave of enlargement for the same reasons. Because of their overspecialisation in industry, they are considered unable to conform to the third enlargement criteria announced in the 1993 Copenhagen summit, namely to ”face competitive pressures within European Union .” The budgetary deficits and the unemployment rates are also described as disqualifying factors (European Commission, 1998 ; European Commission, 1999).

Because of the similarity of the Bulgarian and Turkish positions, the differentiation between the factions is weak within the DPS. There is indeed a powerful inward-looking faction, strongly implanted in regions with a concentration of Turks. One also finds an outward-looking faction which turns its eyes to Turkey and which is powerful within the parliamentary group of the DPS as well as in the editorial staff of the party's newspaper (Rights and Freedom, *Prava i Svobodi*). But both factions are not very principled and the leader of the party, Ahmed Dogan, succeeded in reconciling them on the whole (Anguelov, 1990:27-28).

At the first free elections, which were held in October 1991, the UDF obtained the largest share of the vote (34.4%), defeating the BSP by a narrow margin of just over 1% of the votes cast. The UDF won a total of 110 seats in the legislature, while the BSP obtained 106 seats. Filip Dimitrov, the leader of the UDF, was elected chairman of the new government with the support of the DPS. Such support was in keeping with the strategy of the inward-looking faction. It was meant to obtain some concessions from the government. But the outward-looking faction did not oppose it (Engelbrekt, 1991: 5-8; Bates, 1993:195-96). The main party in the opposition, the BSP, summoned the DPS before the Court of Justice in 1991, charging it with an infringement of Article 11 (4) of the Constitution, which forbids the formation of an ethnic party. As a consequence, the party would not have been allowed to take part in the general elections (Perry, 1991: 5-8). The Constitutional Court finally ruled in its decision No. 4 of 21 April 1992 that the DPS had legal status, but the relationship between the DPS and the BSP remained unfriendly.

Throughout 1992, social unrest was endemic. In April the government's programme of price liberalisation caused strikes by miners, port employees, public transport, medical staff, civil servants, teachers and munitions workers. As the UDF was beset with economic hardships, it was less amenable to the DPS's demands. This situation cast doubt on the very relevancy of the inward-looking strategy. The outward-looking faction then pushed hard to obtain a shift of strategy. At the end of October, the DPS and BSP Members of Parliament in the National Assembly defeated the government by 121 votes to 111 in a vote of no confidence. The government subsequently resigned. Following the failure of the UDF and DPS to reach an agreement for a coalition under DPS mandate, an academic, Professor Lyuben Berov, became Prime Minister. The DPS was represented in the new government. Evgeni Matinchev, member of the parliamentary group of the DPS and leader of the outward-looking faction, was designated first deputy prime minister. The Berov government wished to look apolitical- it was determined to support programmes designed by independent minded technocrats instead of following party platforms. The DPS exercised control over appointments of high-ranking officials in the executive branch. Matinchev was in a position to implement new laws and acts. But his outward-looking orientation prevented him from taking advantage of this position. In office, the DPS made no effort to translate liberal principles that might regulate the relationship between ethnic minorities and majorities into economic programmes that would benefit minorities. The inward-looking faction soon began to protest. Members of Parliament elected in regions with a high concentration of Turks feared a loss of popular support as they realised that their constituents did not understand why the government failed to address their daily problems (Riedel, 1992: 118-19).

A shift in the political situation happened to reshuffle the balance between the two factions. On 5 April 1994, thousands of demonstrators protested in Sofia against government economic policies. On 2 September 1994, Berov's government offered its resignation. At the general election, which was held on 18 December 1994, the BSP (in alliance with two small parties) obtained an outright majority in the National Assembly, with 125 seats, while the UDF won 69 seats (Koulov, 1995; Karasimeonov, 1995: 586; 1999: 117-18). The new government, headed by the Chairman of the BSP, Zhan Videnov, was appointed at the end of January 1995; the majority of the ministers were members of the BSP. The DPS then came back to its first inward-looking orientation and decided to engage with the UDF in a coalition called the *United Opposition Forces* (UtdDF). The outward-looking faction took issue with this backward step. Mehmed Hodzha, member of the DPS parliamentary group, decided to create a new Turkish party, the *Party of Democratic Change*[vi]. Journalists of *Prava i Svobodi* went on strike (Ganev, 1995: 50). But these protests soon stopped when the BSP began to denounce the resurgence of “Turkish nationalism” and to stir up nationalistic feelings by invoking “the threat from rising Islamic fundamentalism.” In November 1995, the Member of Parliament Gincho Pavlov, one of the leaders of the National Committee for the Protection of the National Interests, a coalition partner of the Bulgarian Socialist Party, referred to the Movement for Rights and Freedoms as “an organisation detrimental to Bulgaria” and started collecting signatures among the remaining Members of Parliament for a new petition to the Constitutional Court, demanding that it be banned. These outside attacks silenced dissent within the DPS. Faced with danger, both factions decided to close ranks. (Dimitrova, 1994: 397).

On 21 December 1996, Videnov unexpectedly resigned from the office of Prime Minister and the post of party leader. In January 1997, the BSP designated the Minister of the Interior, Nikolai Dobrev, to replace Videnov as Prime Minister. The BSP and two nominal partners governed in a coalition. Widespread social unrest provoked daily anti-government protests in January and February. Under mounting pressure, the BSP-led government agreed in early February to hold elections in April 1997. A parliamentary general election was held on 19 April 1997. This resulted in the UtdDF gaining an overall majority in parliament with 137 seats; the BSP and its allies obtained 58 seats. Ivan Kostov, the leader of the UtdDF, was asked to form a government. So as to prevent new tensions between its two factions, the DPS decided not to be represented in the government.

In September 2000, the final version of the draft Denominations Act, prepared by the Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights and Religions on the basis of the three previous drafts elaborated by the UDF, was published. On October 12 2000, the text was submitted to Parliament for the second and final reading. The DPS fell short in opposing its implementation. Lutfi Mestan and Ahmed Usein, Members of Parliament from the DPS stated that, on the whole, the Draft was worse than the acting Law which was passed at the beginning of the Communist regime. They stressed that the draft gave far-reaching rights to the Directorate of Denominations, a state body especially created for providing for "the co-ordination of the State with the various religious faiths." The Directorate had the right to give_the Court opinions for the registration of religious organisations. It also had the right to approve the creation of schools for the training of all kinds of clergy and to approve the curricula of these schools. It was provided in the Draft that the Directorate of Denominations "shall control the activities of the various faiths with reference to their compliance with their statutes and the provisions hereof." Moreover, the Directorate "shall investigate the religious basis and rites of the thus associated religious faith and shall issue an opinion on the registration of the same." These rights were formulated in extremely vague terms and thus gave great possibilities for arbitrariness. The implementation of the Draft made it impossible for the DPS to get closer to the UDF (Cohen, 2000).

Then, the inward-looking faction was almost ready to make an agreement with the BSP, but its plans were overturned by a documentary on the communist assimilation campaign against ethnic Turks in 1984- which was compromising for some leaders of the BSP. It became evident that Dogan would have lost the backing of ethnic Turks if he agreed to enter a coalition with former Communists. Thus, the DPS decided to run alone, postponing any coalition decisions until after the elections due in June 2001. (Synovitz, 2001).

The new coalition created by the last Bulgarian king, *Simeon II National Movement* (*Nacionalno Dvišenie Simeon Tvori*, NDS II), eventually won the elections. It fell short of obtaining the absolute majority, gaining 43.04 % of the votes. The DPS won 6.73 % of the votes and presented itself as the best ally for the formation of a new government. No frame for collaboration was still available, as the NDS II was a new-born coalition. But, due to pragmatism, DPS was prone to find an agreement. In August, it officially moved nominees for deputy ministers to NDS II.. Under the coalition agreement, it was entitled to five deputy ministerial positions: the regional development, finance, defence, economy and environment ministries. The movement put forth two nominees per position, allowing the respective minister to choose from the two candidates.

When one takes into account the external variable, it becomes easier to understand the political positioning and repositioning of the DPS. With Bulgaria and Turkey in a similar rank in the race for accession to the EU, the outward-looking faction remains moderate and never bluntly opposes the inward-looking faction. The tensions between both factions remain episodic. Such a configuration is in stark contrast to the Romanian case.

Romania: a chaotic combination

Because of its bad economic performance, Romania is not likely to be included in the first wave of the European Union's enlargement (European Commission, 1998). Hungary is promised a quicker integration. Its inhabitants enjoy economic conditions far superior to those the majority of the Romanian citizens live in. Thus, Magyars of Romania look enviously beyond the frontiers. On behalf of_their membership in the "Hungarian community", they wish to benefit from the economic reforms implemented in Hungary and to establish fruitful contacts with the Western powers (European Commission 1999; Capelle-Pogacean, 1997).

Various political options stem from such an orientation. An inward-looking faction is found within the UDMR, as well as an outward-looking faction. The former is larger in numbers than the second. However, the UDMR grants real autonomy to its local cells (UDMR, 1991, p. 1) so that a minority faction can lean on isolated strongholds and direct disproportionately the general line of the party. This principle of organisation nurtures permanent internal tensions, but it prevents political splits at the same time (Pepine, 1994: 6-7).

The inward-looking faction is connected to the so-called *Liberal Circle* of Cluj. It is mainly supported by urban Magyars. Until 1993, it was led by Géza Domokos, a former member of the Romanian Communist Party's Central committee who remained on good terms with Ion Iliescu. Domokos and his followers tried hard to encapsulate the Magyar issue in a broader reflection on democratisation and decentralisation of Romanian society (Fey, 1997). They do not demand cultural autonomy for the Magyar minority but rather territorial autonomy for the whole of Transylvania. Their recommendation is to "take things one step at a time" rather than to hurry the Romanian leaders. They do not expect to obtain territorial autonomy straight away but rather progressively and with few concessions. They wish to allay one by one the apprehensions of the ethnic Romanians (Oltay, 1991).

The outward-looking faction is mainly established in the Hargita and Covasna districts. It is steered by the charismatic pastor Laszlo Tökes. Among its influential members, one has also to mention Imre Borbely, elected in Merciurea Ciuc (prefecture of the Hargita district), Adam Katona, an elected member of the municipality of Tîrgu-Secuiesc (in the Covasna district) and Geza Söcs, a former correspondent of Radio Free Europe who is still closely connected with Western journalists. Generally speaking, the upholders of the outward-looking faction compensate their numerical inferiority within the UDMR with foreign support. By doing so, they wish to obtain the immediate recognition of an autonomous Magyar entity that could follow the same path as Hungary, no matter what happens in the rest of Romania. Tökes and his followers demand the building up of specific Magyar institutions in Transylvania and the recognition of collective rights for the Magyar minority. They take issue with the strategy of "taking things one step at a time" as they consider the government can use it to divert the Magyar minority from its main objectives. They assert that the only effective method is to stir things up (Shafir, 1995: 36; Bellet, 1999). In 1990, Laszlo Tökes set out on a diplomatic visit to the United States and demanded that complete autonomy" should be granted to Magyars of Romania. In September, 1992, he went on hunger strike to denounce the "infringements of human rights" in Transylvania. The outward-looking faction drafted a series of memoranda on this issue and sent them simultaneously to the Romanian government and to the international organisations (Council of Europe, UNO, etc.). It attempted to demonstrate that the Magyar minority was confronting a process of "ethnic cleansing".

In the 1990s, there was a complex triangular game between the government, the inward-looking faction and the outward-looking faction of the UDMR. The outward-looking faction acted as a foil to the government. It allowed it to reject altogether the UDMR's demands by pointing the finger at their radicalism. This stigmatisation had no effect but to strengthen the position of the outward-looking faction as it confirmed the charge of ineffectiveness made against the strategy of "taking things one step at a time." So as to avoid open dissension, and despite its numerical superiority within the party, the inward-looking faction was then forced to handle Tökes and his followers with care. Therefore, the speeches of the UDMR became more hard-line. New arguments were supplied to the government for refusing any concession, - and a new game began. One can map out such a process by considering the successive programmes of UDMR.

The first Congress of the party was held in April 1990 in Oradea. Domokos was elected as president and Tökes as honorary president. Several representatives already rebelled against the inclination of Domokos to negotiate with the government. The second Congress of the UDMR was organised one year later in Tîrgu Mures. Domokos was re-elected by 129 votes to 123 for Söcs. The inward-looking faction then announced its intention to place the Magyar demands on a wider political platform, defined in association with other parties. The outward-looking faction replied immediately: Adam Katona announced a popular referendum about the establishment of an "autonomous territory" that would group together the Magyar populations of the Hargita and Covasna districts. His initiative was immediately denied by the leadership of the UDMR. Nonetheless, it provoked a parliamentary debate and strengthened the suspicions of other political parties (Shafir & Ionescu, 1991: 24-28). In October 1992, the inward-looking faction tried to calm the outward-looking faction by taking into account some of its main points. The UDMR published a *Declaration*: it ceased speaking anymore on behalf of a Magyar "minority" but on behalf of a Magyar "co-nation". It demanded a status of "autonomous community", based on *belso onrendelkezes* - a Hungarian concept which can be translated (in Romanian as in

English) as “autonomous administration,” or alternately as “autonomous government.” This semantic ambiguity facilitated the concluding of an agreement between the two factions. The inward-looking faction put the emphasis on the first meaning and the outward-looking faction on the second. The inward-looking faction demanded general measures of decentralisation whereas the outward-looking faction demanded a separate political entity. Romanian authorities considered this last position as that of the whole UDMR. They firmly condemned the *Declaration*. The inward-looking faction tried to minimise the importance of the text: Domokos described it as a simple “proposition”, as a “basis for discussion.” Conversely, the outward-looking faction pushed hard to magnify the incident: Borberly described the Declaration as a founding text which could precipitate a *Parliament of the Magyars of Transylvania*, which could veto laws passed by the Parliament of Bucharest.

In 1993, the third Congress of the UDMR was held in Brasov. It was designed to appoint Domokos’ successor. Tökes declared he was a candidate and appeared to benefit from a rather wide support. The inward-looking faction immediately announced that it would leave the party if he were elected. A compromise president was finally found in the person of Bela Marko: more radical than the inward-looking faction, he looked more moderate than the outward-looking faction at the same time. However, the point was to work out a programme which could satisfy both factions. The outward-looking faction proposed to stand up for the rights of the “Magyar national community”. The inward-looking faction assumed that this formulation would reopen the debate raised by the *Declaration*. It looked for more neutral terms. An agreement was finally found: the UDMR demanded the recognition of a “personal and cultural autonomy” for the Magyars of Transylvania, that is to say the possibility “to protect the Magyar national identity, including its culture in all its aspects: language, religion, education, social organisations and means of information” (Shafir, 1993b:11-12). On this base, Bela Marko managed to impose an inward-looking line. So as to maintain the cohesion of the party, he was nevertheless compelled to make some concessions to the outward-looking faction. On January 7, anniversary of the creation of the UDMR, he claimed that Magyars of Transylvania should benefit from a “triple autonomy,” “personal, administrative and regional.” He announced the constitution of a *National Council of Autonomous Administration* (*Consiliu National de Auto-guvernare*) (Shafir, 1996; Haveaux, 1996: 29-30). At the same time, Marko tried hard to tighten the links between the UDMR and other parties. He explained that the solution to the Magyar issue should be thought of as a means of “modernising” the whole Romanian society (Roper, 1995: 525). On the occasion of its fourth Congress, organised in Cluj in May 1995, the UDMR adopted a moderate programme. It assumed that its priority was “integration in the European Community”. According to its programme, it is in keeping with such a goal “and in the interest of all the Romanians” that closer economic links were to be established with Hungary.

Such a balance between the outward-looking and inward-looking factions could not be held for a long time. The outward-looking faction pushed hard for the adoption of a harsher programme. In August 1993, it sent a *Memorandum* to the Council of Europe, asking that the final examination of the Romanian candidacy should be postponed until there could be better protection of the Magyar minority (UDMR, 1993). The initiative raised a general outcry. All big parties condemned it as an "anti-Romanian" act (Ionescu & Reisch, 1993: 26-32). The inward-looking faction then accused Tökes and his followers of discrediting the Magyar movement. It tried to marginalise them. In 1996, György Frunda, prominent member of the inward-looking faction, ran in the presidential race for the UDMR. He collected 6.02 % of the votes. The UDMR then recommended to vote for the CDR candidate Emil Constantinescu in the second round. The UDMR became an integral part of the new majority- for the first time, it reached government.

In October 1997, the UDMR organised its fifth Congress in Tîrgu Mures. It worked out a new platform and published a *List of priorities in the application of the programme of government*. It laid emphasis on its "own vision of the Romanian economic policy." It demanded "the establishment of a market economy based on private property; a progressive reduction of the role played by the State in the economy at national and local levels; the development of an economic environment which could favour private companies; the transformation of the economy in accordance with European and international standards"… (UDMR, 1997a: 1-13; 1997b: 1-6) This clear-cut economic programme was designed to ease the dialogue with other members of the government coalition. However, it was not likely to contain internal dissent. Since Magyar demands are not completely satisfied, the outside-looking faction can assert with a strengthened credibility that it would be much more profitable to renounce the logic of participation and return to a logic of confrontation. During the sixth Congress of the UDMR, which was held in Merciurea Ciuc in May 1999, it openly expressed its dissatisfaction. Senator Josef Csapo drafted a "project of internal autonomy" for the Hargita and Covasna districts. Adam Katona blamed Marko for not pushing hard to obtain the recognition of a "double Romanian and Hungarian citizenship." To assert their strength, 150 representatives of the outward-looking faction sent an open letter to the president of the United States, drawing his attention to the "ethnic cleansing" of the Magyars in Romania. So as to defuse these initiatives, the inward-looking faction had to show some signs of firmness. It suggested that an international conference on stability in the Balkans could be organised and asserted that the UDMR could be invited to participate on the same basis as the Romanian State (UDMR, 1999).

In the November 2000 elections, the ruling coalition was defeated. Ion Iliescu won the presidential race and his party obtained a relative majority in Parliament. To improve its international legitimacy, the new government revealed its intention to collaborate with the Magyar minority. The inward-looking faction of the UDMR adopted a realistic stance and decided to take up the challenge. As a result, a *Local Public Administration Law* was voted in Parliament, requiring bilingual street signs to be placed in localities where minorities represent at least 20 percent of the global population. This law was only an episodic agreement, and some signs of dissent were soon apparent after it was voted on. The so-called *Status Bill* created a new bone of contention. This bill, which was considered by the Hungarian parliament in April 2001, defines a special status for ethnic Hungarians abroad (it grants them special rights when they come to study or to work in Hungary). It immediately provoked strong reactions within UDMR and within the governing party. Romanian Prime-minister Adrian Nastase protested that implementation of laws passed by foreign countries is possible only "on the basis of mutual agreements, or commonly accepted international standards," and "must respect [the provisions of the] constitution and the current internal legislation." At the same time, the Hungarian Status bill reinforced the outward-looking faction within the UDMR. Tökes and its followers were legitimated by its radical demands ; they felt stronger and blatantly expressed their demands. Bela Marko had to pay lip service to them. In March 2001, he protested against the "nationalist rhetoric" of the governing party. One month later, he met the Hungarian minister for education and called for a " new strategy of education in mother tongue ." As a consequence, collaboration with the governing party became harder and harder.

In Romania, the factions game is much more conflict-ridden than in Bulgaria. Because of an important distance between the economic position of Romania and that of Hungary, the Magyar minority is torn between two options. They can either negotiate with the government so conditions in Romania as a whole improve to the standard of Hungary, or they can focus on Transylvania and connect it separately to the Hungarian economy. The followers of the first option are dominant, but the upholders of the second option are politically active and impede any peaceful dialogue with authorities.

Conclusion

If one concentrates on the Centre/Periphery conflict, one has to content oneself with a strictly internal reading. One cannot perceive what makes ethnic minority parties in Bulgaria and Romania peculiar- namely, an aptitude to combine internal and external pressures. Similarly, one cannot analyse the differences between the three selected cases in terms of variation. One is compelled to assume that each country has its own logic, and to be content with a case by case study. In Bulgaria, the Turkish minority is territorially-based and stands up for its rights against a homogenising Centre. A specific party was created to uphold its interests. It succeeded in defusing the conflict. In Romania a completely different outcome is found. While the Magyar minority is also territorially based, the party which represents the Magyars does not collaborate efficiently with the big governing parties. It magnifies the conflict instead of containing it.

To interpret the observed differences without renouncing a global explanation, it is necessary to consider both the homeland of the ethnic minority and the country it lives in. One has to look at their respective economic positions. These positions should be related to the balance between inward-looking and outward-looking factions within the party that represents the ethnic minority. As Bulgaria and Turkey have similar economic conditions, factions are slightly differentiated within the party supported by the ethnic Turks of Bulgaria. An alliance with all big governing parties is possible as it does not require too many concessions from the outward-looking faction. Since Hungary is in a much better position than Romania, the factions are sharply differentiated within the political party that represents the Magyar minority of Transylvania. The outward-looking faction is strong, and its demands are to be taken into account by the leaders of the party. That impedes an efficient collaboration with big governing parties.

Parties which represent an ethnic minority in Central and Eastern Europe are engaged in complex dynamics, but it is possible to analyse them within a global theoretical frame. The models built up for analysing Western Europe do not work systematically at the other end of the continent.

Notes

[i] An “international revolution” arises later; it results in it *a summa divisio*: the group “employees” is divided by a secondary cleavage between those who take sides with the Bolsheviks and those who continue to defend the traditional line (Rokkan, 1970).
[ii] According to data from the population census of December 4, 1992, Bulgaria has a population of 8,487,317 with ethnic Bulgarians being the most numerous at 7,271,185 (85.7% of the population). Ethnic Turks, numbering 800,052 (9.4%), were second.
[iii] The ratification of the Convention by the Bulgarian National Assembly, however, needs to be accompanied by an interpretative declaration specifying the minority groups in Bulgaria to which the principles of the Convention are to apply.
[iv] The Magyar University was closed by communist authorities in the 1970’s. The debate over its reopening was recurrent in the 1990’s. It reached a peak only in 1997, as the political context made the issue more sensitive. The demand may be related to a brain drain phenomenon. After 1989, Magyar students left for Hungarian universities, which they considered better endowed than Rumanian ones. According to the Hungarian ministry of Education, 1200 out of the 5000 Magyar pupils who obtained the Romanian high school diploma in 1993 decided to join a Hungarian University (Robert, 1997)
[v] Beneath some common features, there is a great difference from Rogers Brubaker's model. According to Brubaker, the position of ethnic minorities is determined by three factors: internal dynamics, encouragement from ethnic homeland and behavior toward minorities by the host country. Brubaker describes the ethnic minority as a ’dynamic political stance or, more precisely, a family of related yet mutually competing stances, not a static ethno-demographic condition .’ He notes that within the minority ‘some may shun overtures to external parties, believing it important to demonstrate their loyalty to the state in which they live and hold citizenship,’ while ‘others may actively seek patronage or protection from abroad — whether from a state dominated by their ethnic kin or from other states or international organizations.’(Brubaker, 1995 : 110-121 ; 1996 : 4-7 ; 55-78 ; 1998). However, he focuses on the conceptions of citizenship, conceptions which are rooted in the global political situation nations find themselves in on the one hand, and in the presence or absence of perceived compatriots in the ‘near-aboard’ on the other hand. He does not address the economical dimension of the relations between ethnic minorities and majorities. This oversight prevents consideration of the *precise* conflicts that are noticed within the DPS and the UDMR.
[vi] It obtained 0.27% of the votes in 1997 elections.

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