

Ethnic or multi-ethnic parties? Party competition and legislative recruitment in Moldova

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Securing adequate representation of minorities in institutions of the state is commonly described in the literature as an important mechanism for addressing issues of ethnic tensions in culturally diverse societies¹. A proportional electoral system is generally perceived as more friendly for representation of minority interests than a majoritarian single member district system². The introduction of the former system in a number of post-communist countries encouraged institutionalization of ethnic minority parties. These parties became a permanent part of the political landscape in South Eastern European countries such as Bulgaria and Romania³.

Moldova, which is also often classified as belonging to the same geographic region, did not witness the emergence of electorally successful minority parties. This is despite the fact that proportional representation (PR) rules were introduced from the very start of the post-independence transition and competitive politics evolved under conditions of high levels of ethnic mobilization. Ethnic parties did not succeed even though political competition in Moldova was relatively unconstrained by authoritarian practices employed throughout the rest of the former Soviet Union. In terms of one frequently cited indicator, the Freedom House index of democratic freedoms, Moldova performed better during most of the post-communist period than any other post-Soviet successor state with the exception of the Baltic republics.⁴

This paper attributes the lack of minority party institutionalization in the Moldovan case to the success of political entrepreneurs engaged in constructing political organizations capable of winning multi-ethnic support. These entrepreneurs have drawn on the resources and legacies of the Soviet period in order to compete successfully for societal support in a new democratic environment and in a new country where approximately 24% of the citizens found themselves belonging to an ethnic minority population. In addition to having invested in the development of programmatic profiles attractive to multi-ethnic constituencies, they effectively implemented recruitment policies intended to build genuinely multi-ethnic political organizations. The paper examines a key element of these policies – legislative recruitment. As has been argued in the literature, legislative recruitment is an important

¹ P. Norris, "Ballots Not Bullets: Testing Consociational Theories of Ethnic Conflict, Electoral Systems, and Democratization", in A. Reynolds (ed.) *The Architecture of Democracy: Constitutional Design, Conflict Management and Democracy* (Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York 2002), 206-248.

² A. Lijphart, "Constitutional Design for Divided Societies", 15 *Journal of Democracy* (2004), 96-109.

³ J.K. Birner, *Ethnicity and electoral politics* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007 ; W. Crowther, "Romania", in S. Berglund, J. Ekman and F.H. Aarebrot (eds.) *Handbook of Political Change in Eastern Europe* (Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2004).

aspect of the political process which affects both popular perceptions of the legitimacy of the political system and substantive policy outcomes generated by the political process⁵.

The paper first discusses the country's unexpected choice of the PR electoral system at the start of the transition and the effects that this choice had on the strategies of political parties and on electoral outcomes. It then turns to examining the patterns of legislative recruitment and to comparing the ethnic profile of parliamentary deputies elected through the lists of political parties belonging to the different ideological families. The disputed nature of the ethnic affiliation of deputies belonging to a titular group, which is an interesting phenomenon specific to the Moldovan case, is addressed next. The effects that recruitment strategies of electorally successful parties had on the overall level of minority representation in the national parliament are discussed in the final section of the paper.

Electoral system and party building in Moldova

Moldova's choice of electoral system was unusual in the post-Soviet context. This country case illustrates how a specific political context rather than interests and preferences of politicians in charge of drafting electoral laws can shape the design of electoral institutions⁶. The country's first fully free and competitive parliamentary elections, which were held in 1994, used the PR formula for seat allocation⁷. The country was designated into a single electoral district in which parties competed on the basis of closed lists and were required to cross the 4% electoral threshold in order to gain parliamentary representation. All other Western Commonwealth of Independent states (CIS) countries, as well as all other post-Soviet states excluding Estonia and Latvia, opted for a mixed-member or single-member district (SMD) system. Political forces that dominated the transition in post-Soviet republics preferred the latter types of electoral system primarily due to the fact that this system builds

⁴ The Freedom House index registered a decline in Moldova's democratic standards since 2005. See: *Moldova*, available at: <http://www.freedomhouse.hu/images/nit2009/moldova.pdf>, last accessed 30 June 2009.

⁵ P. Norris, *Passages to Power: legislative recruitment in advanced democracies* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (1997) ; H. Best and M. Cotta, *Parliamentary representatives in Europe, 1848-2000: legislative recruitment and careers in eleven European countries* (Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2000); W. Crowther and I. Matonyte, "Parliamentary elites as a democratic thermometer: Estonia, Lithuania and Moldova compared", 40 *Comparative Political Studies* (2007), 281-299.

⁶ S. Birch, F. Millard, M. Popescu, K. Williams, *Embodying democracy: electoral system design in post-Communist Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2002) ; O. Shvetsova, "Endogenous Selection of Institutions and Their Exogenous Effects", 14 *Constitutional Political Economy* (2003), 191-212.

⁷ W. Crowther and S.D. Roper, "A Comparative Analysis of Institutional Development in the Romanian and Moldovan Legislatures", in D.M. Olson and P. Norton (eds.), *The New Parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe* (Frank Cass, London, 1996), 133-160; W. Crowther, "The Politics of Democratization in Post-

on the personalistic ties and networks which characterized much of later Soviet politics. At the same time, parties were at a very early stage of development and societal support for introducing a PR electoral system which would have favored parties was rather weak.

These general circumstances of the post-Soviet transition were also applicable to Moldova. The record of this early period reveals heated debates about various draft laws favoring a mixed-member or PR electoral system. The reason why PR was chosen was due to the political need to have an electoral formula that could give at least a possible option of electoral participation for citizens in the secessionist region of Transnistria. This consideration was connected to the most salient issue on the political agenda of that period, the secessionist conflict in Transnistria. The authorities of this breakaway region had almost complete *de facto* control of the area by the end of 1992 and would have been able to prevent parliamentary elections based on an SMD system. Introducing a PR system with a single national district was thus seen by the Moldovan politicians as a way of avoiding an explicit acknowledgement of the loss of Moldova's sovereignty over a part of the country's territory. PR was the electoral system which would allow citizens from the Transnistria region to participate in elections by casting their votes in locations controlled by the central government. Although opinion polls show that a large proportion of citizens (70-80%) were in favor of electing deputies in single-member districts, various attempts to conduct a referendum or to pass a law on the introduction of a SMD or mixed-member system have not been successful.

The secessionist conflict shaped deliberations about the electoral law in another important way. By the time the drafts of the electoral law were debated in the Moldovan parliament in 1993 a large number of Transnistrian deputies had left the parliament. The preferences of a majority in this group, which included a large number of state enterprise directors, were in line with those law drafters who favored a personalistic and candidate centered electoral system. The passage of the PR version of the electoral law was therefore facilitated by the departure of these members of parliament.

The main provisions of the electoral law remained the same throughout the post-communist period.⁸ The electoral threshold requirements, however, saw a number of important modifications. The electoral threshold for individuals parties was raised to 6 % in

Communist Moldova", in K. Dawisha and B. Parrott (eds.), *Democratic Changes and Authoritarian Reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997), 282-330.

⁸ Independent candidates are also allowed to run in the elections but their position is clearly disadvantaged. They face stricter registration requirements and need to gain 3% of the national vote to enter the parliament. See O. Protsyk and I. Osoian, "Moldova: Party Institutionalization in a Resource-Scarce Environment", in S.D. Roper and J. Ikstens (eds.) *Public Finance and Post-Communist Party Development* (Ashgate, London, 2008), 95-112.

the 2001 and 2005 parliamentary elections and the higher levels of electoral threshold for electoral blocs were also introduced in the 2005 elections (9% for blocks consisting of two parties and 12% for blocks of more than two parties).

In addition to electoral laws, certain provisions of the law on political parties also favored national-wide political parties. Thus, since 1998, a party could only be registered with the Ministry of Justice if it had at least 5000 members having residence in at least a half of intermediate-level administrative-territorial units,⁹ but not less than 150 in each of the mentioned territorial units. In terms of minority politics, this provision has had a major effect only on the functioning of the ethnic Gagauz parties formed in the autonomous territorial unit Gagauzia.

Overall, the passage of the first electoral law and the use of the same basic principles in the subsequent pieces of legislation were of critical importance for the institutionalization of the party system. Electoral system rules, which were combined with a constitutionally weak presidency and party participation in the cabinet formation process, provided incentives for parties to start investing in developing policy-making capacities and in constructing coherent public images. These rules also led to the dominance of the party rather than candidate-oriented campaigns throughout Moldova's entire post-communist period.

The electoral results produced by the Moldovan party system operating under these institutional rules are summarized in Table 1:

Table 1. Moldovan Parliamentary Election Results, 1994-2005

Year	1994		1998		2001		2005	
Electoral threshold, %	4%		4%		6%		6%=1, 9%=2, 12%>2 parties	
Electoral contestants	V%	S%	V%	S%	V%	S%	V%	S%
Democratic Convention Electoral Bloc	-	-	19.42	25.7	-	-	-	-
For a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova Electoral Bloc	-	-	18.16	23.8	-	-	-	-
(Democratic) Agrarian Party	43.18	53.9	3.63	0	1.16	0	-	-
Alliance of the Popular Christian Democratic Front	7.53	8.65	-	-	-	-	-	-
Christian Democratic Peoples' Front/Party ¹	-	-	-	-	8.24	10.9	9.07	10.89
Democratic Party of Moldova ²	-	-	-	-	5.02	0	-	-
Electoral Bloc <i>Braghis</i> Alliance	-	-	-	-	13.36	18.8	-	-
Electoral Bloc <i>Moldova Democrata</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	28.53	33.66
Electoral Bloc <i>Patria-Rodina</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.97	0
Party for Renaissance and Conciliation of Moldova	-	-	-	-	5.79	0	-	-
Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova	-	-	30.01	39.6	50.07	70.3	45.98	55.45
Party of Democratic Forces	-	-	8.84	10.9	-	-	-	-
Peasants and Intellectuals Bloc	9.21	10.6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Socialist Party and <i>Unitate-Edinstvo</i> Movement Bloc	22	26.9	-	-	-	-	-	-

⁹ Moldova's administrative organisation currently includes 32 [districts \(raioane\)](#), 3 municipalities ([Chişinău](#), [Bălţi](#), and [Bender/Tighina](#)), one autonomous territorial unit ([Gagauzia](#)), and one territorial unit ([Transnistria](#)) -the status of the latter not being defined yet.

Others (parties, blocs and independent candidates)	18.1	0	19.9	0	16.34	0	11.5	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: The electoral contestants who obtained more than four percent in at least one election are only listed.

¹ In 1994 in a coalition named Alliance of the Popular Christian Democratic Front and in 1998 in the Democratic Convention Electoral Bloc.

² In 1998 in a coalition named For a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova Electoral Bloc and in 2005 in the Electoral Bloc *Moldova Democrată*.

Source: data from www.e-democracy.md (accessed:04.04.2007)

As Table 1 indicates, only four electoral contestants were able to enter the parliament in the first two rounds of electoral competition. The change in the electoral threshold prior to the 2001 elections had the effect of further decreasing the number of successful electoral contestants to three in each of the subsequent rounds of elections. The 2001 rise of the electoral threshold was a product of the legislators' intention to encourage party system consolidation. Prior to 2001 the identity of parties and party blocs was very unstable, especially in the early period of the post-communist transition. The majority of parties represented through electoral blocs in the first parliament elected in 1994 chose different alliances or even changed party labels to participate in subsequent parliamentary elections. The creation of new parties and coalitions was the politicians' response to particularly acute failures in governance during the 1994-2001 period.

The party system became somewhat more stable after the 2001 parliamentary elections. The Communist Party (PCRM) has dominated the political process in the country since its parliamentary victory in the 2001 elections¹⁰. As the table indicates, the party had already become the largest parliamentary faction after the 1998 elections. These were the first elections the party contested after being re-established following the lifting of the ban on the activities of the communist party. The communist party's 2001 victory was magnified by the inability of several parties to clear a newly established 6% threshold. This enabled the PCRM to control the constitutional majority of parliamentary seats between 2001 and 2005. The party managed to retain power by winning the 2005 parliamentary elections, although with a significantly smaller margin than in 2001.

¹⁰ S.D. Roper, "From semi-presidentialism to parliamentarism: Regime change and presidential power in Moldova", 60 *Europe-Asia Studies* (2008), 113-126; L. March, "From Moldovanism to Europeanization? Moldova's Communists and Nation-building", 35 *Nationalities Papers* (2007) ; L. March and G.P. Herd, "Moldova Between Europe and Russia: Inoculating against the Colored Contagion?", 22 *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 349-379.

Neither of the political parties that individually or as a part of an electoral bloc entered the Moldovan parliament throughout the analyzed period could be described as an ethnic minority party. The operational definition employed in this paper categorizes a political organization as an ethnic minority party when the organization competes primarily on ethnic minority issues, relies electorally exclusively on the ethnic minority vote, and is sustained organizationally by the ethnic minority membership. Ethnic minority parties are not listed in Table 1, which summarizes the results for electoral winners only. Ethnic minority parties, however, can be found in the Moldovan case among the electoral losers.

Organizations that meet the operational definition of an ethnic minority party proposed here have been formed and have competed in a number of parliamentary elections in Moldova. For example, the Socio-Political Movement “Ravnopravie” (SPMR), which is translated as “equal rights” movement, contested both the 2001 and 2005 parliamentary elections. The organization campaigned explicitly on the political agenda that prioritized the protection of ethnic minority rights. The distinct feature of its campaign strategies was an attempt to appeal to voters across minority groups. The choice of this form of ethnic appeal was based on calculations rooted in the Soviet experience of inter-ethnic coexistence in Moldova. Linguistic Russification of main minority groups in Moldova during the Soviet period made appeals, first of all, for the introduction of Russian as a second state language, an attractive strategy for ethnic entrepreneurs seeking to mobilize not only ethnic Russians but also other minority groups.

Another notable example is that of the ethnic Gagauz parties that have existed in Gagauzia regions before 1998, such as Popular Party “Vatan” and Gagauz People’s Party. The parties had their roots in popular movements in the region which fought for the rights of the Gagauzian minority in the early 1990s and greatly contributed to the establishment of the autonomous territorial unit Gagauzia. Despite all this, in the 1995 elections of the Gagauz autonomy’s legislature (People’s Assembly) Gagauz voters preferred candidates nominated by national parties, workers’ collectives, and independent candidates rather than regional parties’ candidates.¹¹

¹¹ I. Botan, “Elections in Gagauzia - a new beginning or déjà vu?”, 4 Democracy and governing in Moldova [ADEPT] (2006), December 30.

Available at: <http://www.e-democracy.md/en/comments/200612302/index.shtml>

Accessed 4 August 2009 ; The two Gagauz parties secured only six seats out of 34, while the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova won eight seats, the Democratic Agrarian Party – four seats, worker’s collectives – 11 seats and independent candidates – 5 seats.

The inability of the Socio-Political Movement “Ravnopravie” to gain sufficient electoral support to enter the parliament, as well as failures of other political organizations to mobilize minority voters on purely ethnic appeals in the earlier rounds of parliamentary and autonomy elections, is a product of the success that some mainstream parties had in attracting and sustaining minority support. This success is partly attributed to the appropriation by these parties of political slogans articulated by ethnic minority entrepreneurs. It is also a result of the parties’ recruitment policies. Some of the mainstream political parties provided ample opportunities for politically active members of minority groups to rise through the party ranks to positions of prestige and power in institutions of the state, thus denying ethnic entrepreneurs the ability to claim exclusive rights to minority group representation.¹²

Ethnic dimension of legislative recruitment

The adoption of the closed list PR system provided the leadership of political parties with a high degree of control over the formation of electoral lists. The expectation that such rules would strengthen the role of the party leadership vis-à-vis such bodies as the general party conference or local party organizations is indirectly corroborated by the results of a recent survey of experts on the Moldovan party system. Expert survey results indicate that party leadership plays a much more important role than other party organs in all key aspects of parties’ internal decision making processes¹³. Selecting party candidates for legislative office is one of such key decision-making areas. Parliamentary posts are positions of high political power and prestige, and are few in number. The number of parliamentary seats available for any electorally successful party is always much smaller than the number of loyalists the party would like to reward or the number of prominent individuals whose support the party would like to ensure through granting them a secure position on the party’s electoral list. Pre-election public opinion polls provide party leadership with quite accurate estimates on the number of seats the party can expect to win. The poll results thus set a limit on what could be considered the winning portion of the electoral list of any given party. By allocating

¹² For example, Nicolai Oleinic, chairman of the ethnic Ukrainian association, had been an MP on the communist party’s list both in the 1994 and 2005 parliaments. Dmitrii Croitor, a prominent Gagauz leader, was an MP in the 1998 term for the « For a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova » Electoral Bloc and was later elected as Bashkan (Governor) of Gagauzia. Another Gagauz leader Gheorghe Tabunscic, was a communist party MP in the 2001 term. He also served in 1995-1999 and in 2002-2006 as Bashkan (Governor) of Gagauzia.

¹³ O. Protsyk, I. Bucataru, and A. Volentir, *Partiinaia konkurentzia v Moldove: ideologija, organizatsiia, i. podkhodyk razresheniiu etno-territorialnykh konfliktov* (Universitatea de Stat din Moldova [USM], Chisinau, 2008).

positions on electoral lists to individuals, the party leadership effectively decides which of the available party candidates will become parliamentary deputies.

The composition of the parliamentary faction of political parties thus reflects the party leadership's prior decisions on which individual politicians should represent the party in the parliament. These decisions are a product of calculations based on numerous factors.

Examining the profile of parliamentary deputies provides us with some insight into what factors shape these calculations. Given our interest in parties' strategies with regard to winning the support of ethnic minority groups, ethnic affiliation of individual deputies is one feature of deputies' profile that is examined in detail here.

Despite the fact that considerable difficulties are involved in classifying the ideological orientation of many political parties that emerged in the post-communist space, one influential recent study highlights similarities in the ideological profiles of these parties to the profiles of traditional party families found in Western Europe¹⁴. Following this logic, Table 2 below classifies all Moldovan parties that had parliamentary representation in one of the five traditional party families. The table also lists the total number of deputies that served in parliament on behalf of the parties belonging to each individual party family and provides details on the distribution of deputies' ethnic identification.

Table 2. Ethnic Affiliation of Moldovan MPs, by Party Family (1994-2009)

	Communist	Social Democrats	Centre	Christian Democrats	Centre Right	Total
Moldovan/Romanian	61.65% (125)	66.67% (63)	78.75% (63)	100% (36)	100% (77)	74.18% (364)
Ukrainian	13.59% (29)	8.69% (8)	3.75% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	8.2% (40)
Russian	10.68% (23)	15.21% (14)	5% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)	8.2% (41)
Gagauz	8.25% (17)	4.35% (4)	3.75% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	4.92% (24)
Other	3.4% (7)	1.09% (1)	5% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)	2.46% (12)
No data	2.43% (5)	1.09% (1)	3.75% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	2.05% (9)

¹⁴ M. Gallagher, M. Laver and P. Mair, *Representative Government in Modern Europe*, 4th ed. (McGraw-Hill, Boston, 2006).

Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(206)	(91)	(80)	(36)	(77)	(490)

Legend: **Communists:** Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova; **Social Democrats:** Socialist Party and *Unitate-Edinstvo* Movement Bloc, Socialist Party of Moldova, Labour Union, "Furnica" Party of Social Democracy, "Speranta-Nadejda" Professionals' Movement; **Centre:** Democratic Agrarian Party, For a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova Movement, Democratic Party of Moldova, Centrist Union of Moldova, Civic Party of Moldova, Popular Democratic Party of Moldova, "Forta Noua" Socio-political Movement; **Christian Democrats:** Christian Democratic Peoples' Front/Party, Democratic Christian Party, Women's Christian-Democratic League of Moldova, Christian-Democratic Peasants' Party; **Centre-Right:** National Liberal Party, Intellectuals Congress, Alliance of the Free Peasants, Party of Democratic Forces, Party of Rebirth and Reconciliation of Moldova, Our Moldova Alliance, Social-Liberal Party

Note: the last column data includes several observations with missing info on party family
Source: author's calculations

One of the most visible characteristics of Table 2 is that the share of minority deputies that served in parliament on the tickets of parties belonging to different party families varies significantly. As one moves from the left to the right of the table, the share of minority deputies drops from more than 35 % to 0%. The communist party family includes only one party in the Moldova case, PCRM. As discussed above, the party controlled the largest share of seats in the last three consecutive parliamentary terms. As the table data reveals, more than 35% of deputies that served on the party's behalf in the parliament came from ethnic minority groups. The share of minority deputies drops to about 30 % for the parties that were classified as social democratic and to about 20% for the parties identified as agrarian or center parties. Minorities were not represented at all in parliamentary groups formed by the parties of Christian democratic orientation or other types of center-right parties.

This pattern indicates that it is the parties of the left who recruit the members of minority communities. These recruitment practices in turn contribute to the continuation of minority support for the left parties and to these parties' persistent dominance on the national scene. The parties of the Moldovan left varied in the degree of their programmatic support to the political agenda articulated by minority activists. Neither of the leftist parties represented in parliament, however, have made the minority-related issues a central focus of their electoral campaigns. In other words, the leftist parties have not attempted to turn into ethnic minority parties. They have not ceased their efforts to highlight the traditional concerns of the left such as social justice, redistribution, and welfarism. Left appeals and an accommodative stance on minority issues were combined by these parties with inclusive recruitment policies. This combination has proved to be a winning electoral formula for the most of the post-communist period.¹⁵

¹⁵ On programmatic aspects of party competition in Moldova see (O. Protsyk et al., *Partiinaia konkurentzia v. Moldove* (2008); see also L. March, "From Moldovanism to Europeanization? Moldova's Communists and Nation-building", 35 *Nationalities Papers* (2007), 601-625.

The dominance of left parties is reflected in absolute number of deputies that entered the parliament on the ticket of left parties. As the table indicates 298 out of 488 deputies that served in the Moldovan parliament since 1994 belong either to communist party or to the parties of social-democratic orientation. The presence of significant number of minority deputies in the legislature across the individual parliamentary terms is largely due to the significant presence of left-wing parties in each of the terms.

Table 3 below provides details on the share of titular group and minorities across individual parliamentary terms. For post-independence terms, the titular share varied between 63.71% and 84.62% of legislative seats. The lowest share of titular group deputies was recorded for the 2001-2005 parliamentary term, which is the period when the communist party controlled the largest majority in parliament. The size of this majority has been, to a considerable extent, a product of party's ability to defeat its various competitors for ethnic minority vote.

Table 3. Distribution of MPs' Ethnic Affiliation Across Parliamentary Terms

	1990-94	1994-98	1998-01	2001-05	2005-09	Total
Moldovan/Romanian	71.24% (270)	70% (91)	84.62% (99)	63.71% (79)	79.49% (92)	72.9% (631)
Ukrainian	8.71% (33)	5.38% (7)	5.13% (6)	17.74% (22)	4.27% (6)	8.42% (74)
Russian	16.62% (63)	12.31% (16)	3.42% (4)	8.87% (11)	7.69% (10)	11.88% (104)
Gagauz	2.64% (10)	4.62% (6)	5.13% (6)	7.26% (9)	2.56% (3)	3.92% (34)
Other	0.26% (1)	3.85% (5)	1.71% (2)	2.42% (3)	1.71% (2)	1.5% (13)
No data	0.53% (2)	3.85% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)	4.27% (5)	1.38% (12)
Total	100% (379)	100% (130)	100% (117)	100% (124)	100% (118)	100% (868)

Note: the count of deputies includes both term starters and late comers

Source: author's calculations

Besides listing data for the all post-independence terms, the table also gives details for the last legislature from the communist period. That legislature was dominated by the old

Communist Party of the Moldovan SSR, which had been a highly multi-ethnic organization on its own terms. The vast majority of minority deputies that served in the 1990-94 parliament came from the ranks of the Communist Party. The party was banned following the August 1991 coup attempt in Moscow and was unable to contest the 1994 parliamentary elections. Many of the Communist Party functionaries then took a part in creating the Socialist Party and *Unitate-Edinstvo* Movement. Two organizations formed a bloc which was successful in contesting the 1994 elections. Approximately 60% of deputies that the bloc put in the parliament in 1994 came from ethnic minority groups, which accounts for the highest share of minority deputies for any party or alliance that successfully contested parliamentary elections in Moldova. Minority problems constituted one of the central campaign issues for the bloc.

Focus on minority issues, however, did not help either of organizations to enter the 1998 parliament. The votes they expected to win went largely to a newly established Communist Party, PCRM. The party, formally, was not a successor to the Communist Party of MSSR. In terms of personnel, structures, and policies the newly established PCRM nevertheless showed a high degree of continuity with the old party. In its electoral campaigns PCRM explicitly linked itself to the predecessor and used cultural capital and symbolic recourses provided by the communist past.

Inclusive recruitment was a central part of the PCRM's overall electoral strategy. The PCRM's electoral list for the 2001 parliamentary elections included, for example, 9 ethnic Gagauz, all of whom eventually served as MPs in the course of the 2001-05 parliamentary term. These were individuals with a strong reputation and standing in the minority community. Among others, former governor of Gagauzia Gheorghe Tabunscic was in this group. The PCRM's aggressive recruitment drive became one of the factors that led the Gagauz community, which is the only minority group that was granted a territorial autonomy status in the early 1990s, to vote overwhelmingly for the PCRM in 2001. 80.6% of votes in the Gagauz autonomy in 2001 was cast for the communists. This was the highest result the party received across the country. The average share of minority deputies that served on the Communist Party's behalf in the different parliaments was about 35 %.

Titular group representation

The Moldovan case provides a very interesting variation in terms of titular group representation. This representation reflects a disputed nature of titular group identity. Moldovanism and Romanianism are two competing visions of the ethnic identity of the majority group. They translate into two different types of ethnic majority nationalism, which

could be respectively termed as “state-seeking” and “unification” types of nationalism. Both are comprised of well elaborated sets of values and beliefs that serve as a basis for political mobilization and provide coherence for policy agendas and political goals articulated in the public domain.

For Moldovanists, the essential unifying features of their identity complex are history, culture, religion, and language, all of which are claimed as being distinct and different from Romanian. The advocates of Romanianism question the distinctiveness of these characteristics and see them, at most, as regional variations of a common Romanian history and pan-Romanian culture. Thus Moldovan and Romanian identities are seen by Romanianists as complimentary, while for Moldovanists they are competitive. Debates over Moldovanism and Romanianism provided the strongest inspiration for political action in the early 1990s. The Romanianist orientation of key leaders in the Popular Front, a mass political movement that dominated political life in Moldova at the beginning of the 1990s, explains the political salience of a policy agenda associated with a Romanian identity complex.

The rapid decline of the Popular Front’s popularity and its organizational disintegration dramatically decreased the political clout of groups and organizations associated with Romanianism, but did not mean that political battles over the symbols associated with different identity complexes ceased. At the same time, Moldovanists, whose political victory over competitors from the ranks of the Popular Front was solidified by the results of the 1994 parliamentary elections, chose to focus on only some of the potential conflicts over identity-rooted policy issues with the proponents of Romanianism.

The 1994 consultative referendum on independence was one of these battles. Initiated by the Moldovan president Snegur, who is often credited with providing programmatic coherence to Moldovanism in his public speeches¹⁶, the referendum marked, at least temporarily, a closing of the window of opportunity for the active pursuit of the unification agenda. The voters overwhelmingly rejected the unification option and supported independence. The referendum results, which were easily forecasted both by referendum supporters and opponents, had a demobilizing effect on the Romanianist camp and took the unification issue off the active political agenda. The ambiguities over the nature of ethnic identity, however, persist both on collective and individual levels. President Snegur, whose position on the issue of identity subsequently shifted away from the strongly pro-Moldovanist pole due to the electoral maneuvering in the up-run to the 1996 presidential

elections, for example, is identified in a number of published sources as ‘Moldovan (Romanian)’.

Identifying himself/herself exclusively as an ethnic Romanian became a political statement indicating the person’s political orientation and support for unification. Table 4 below provides details on the distribution of deputies in the titular group according to this criteria.

Table 4. Ethnic Affiliation of Titular Group MPs in Moldova, by Party Family (1994-2009)

	Communist	Social Democrat	Centre	Christian Democrat	Centre Right	No data	Total
Moldovans	100% (125)	100% (64)	84.13% (53)	25% (9)	60.87% (43)	66.67% (2)	82.04% (296)
Romanians	0% (0)	0% (0)	15.87% (10)	75% (27)	39.13% (27)	33.33% (1)	17.96% (65)
Total	100% (125)	100% (64)	100% (63)	100% (36)	100% (70)	100% (3)	100% (361)

Source: author’s calculations

None of the deputies elected on the ticket of the communist party or social democratic parties identified themselves as Romanian. More than 15 % of deputies from the titular group declared their ethnic affiliation as Romanian in case of centrist parties. The percentage of the Romanian further increases when one moves to the parties of the centre right. A total of 75% of Christian Democrats, which traditionally take the most pro-unionist stance, declared themselves Romanian. When comparing the left wing and the centre right it is obvious that there is more variation in terms of ethnic self-identification among deputies belonging to the titular group in the parties of the centre right than in the parties of the left.

Overall, this data and the findings cited earlier in the paper suggest that ethnic divisions and ideological left-right divisions overlap in the Moldovan case. Parties on the left are strongly Moldovanist in their cultural orientation while parties on the right gravitate to the pan-Romanian ethnic identification. Recruitment patterns reflect the more inclusive positions that the left parties take on minority issues. The attempts by the centre right to develop a more inclusive image by adopting programmatic statements committing the parties to the protection

¹⁶ Stefan Ihrig, “Romanian vs. Moldovanism-National Identity Negotiated in History Teaching in Moldova”, paper delivered at the ASN-Convention, April 2005.

of minority rights have not been supported so far by these parties' efforts to put minorities in positions of power in their organizations.

Proportionality of ethnic representation

The continuing presence of a large number of ethnic minority deputies in the national parliament is a product of continuing dominance of the left wing parties on the political scene. These parties have been open to the idea of minority recruitment throughout the post-communist period both because of interest in having minorities' electoral support and because of more inclusive programmatic positions on identity issues. As a result of these recruitment policies a large number of members of minority communities entered the parliament. In fact, the aggregate data indicates a substantial degree of minority overrepresentation in the Moldovan parliament in the post-communist period.

Table 5 combines data on ethnic distribution of the population with the data on ethnic composition of the Moldovan parliament. It lists population and parliamentary shares of all minority groups represented in the parliament and provides frequency information on a number of deputies of each ethnic background. The last column gives scores for the proportionality of representation index, which is calculated by dividing an ethnic group's proportion in the parliament by its proportion in the population. This provides a single summary figure where 1.0 symbolizes "perfect" proportional representation, more than 1.0 designates a degree of "over-representation" and less than 1.0 indicates "under-representation".

Table 5. Proportionality of Ethnic Representation in Moldovan Parliament
5a. Moldovan Census 2004/ Parliamentary Data 1994-2009

Group	Percentage	Number	N of MPs	Parl Share	Proportionality Index
Moldovans	75.80%	2564565.66	296	60.86%	0.80
Ukrainians	8.40%	284199.89	41	8.20%	0.98
Russians	5.90%	199616.59	41	8.20%	1.39
Gagauzian	4.40%	148866.61	24	4.92%	1.12
Romanians	2.20%	74433.30	65	13.32%	6.05
Bulgarians	1.90%	64283.31	7	1.43%	0.75
Others	1%	33833.32	5	1.02%	1.02
No answer/data	0.40%	13533.33	10	2.05%	
Total	100%	3383332.00	489	100%	

5b. Moldovan Census 1989/Parliamentary Data 1990-94

	Percentage	Number	N of MPs	Parl Share	Proportionality Index
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Moldovans	64.40%	2790700.00	270	71.24%	1.11
Ukrainians	13.80%	599700.00	33	8.71%	0.63
Russians	12.90%	560400.00	63	16.62%	1.29
Gagauzian	3.50%	152700.00	10	2.64%	0.75
Bulgarians	2%	87700.00	1	0.26%	0.13
Others	3.40%	65600.00			
No data			2	0.53%	
Total	100.00%	4256800.00	379	100%	

Source: Population data from the 2004 and 1989 Moldovan censuses; Legislative data is based on author's calculations.

The table lists separately data for the 1990 parliamentary term and for the rest of the parliamentary terms. This is due to the fact that the breakaway region of Transnistria has not been effectively part of Moldova since 1992, thus changing the composition of Moldova population quite substantially. The results for the 1990 term, which include the Transnistrian data and which are reported in Table 5b, indicate a degree of overrepresentation for ethnic Moldovans. This overrepresentation came at the expense of all minority groups, except ethnic Russians. The latter enjoyed a higher degree of overrepresentation than ethnic Moldovans.

The results for the post-communist period are summarized in Table 5a. The table combines data on all deputies who entered Moldovan parliament during the 1994-2008 period. As the table indicates, the fortunes of the titular group have been reversed when compared with the 1990 term: ethnic Moldovans became underrepresented in the parliament during the post-communist period. The titular group was underrepresented even when one combines those deputies who declared themselves Moldovans and those who self-identified as Romanian. The degree of under representation in this case, however, is only minor -the value of the proportionality index is .98. When the share of ethnic Romanian deputies is taken separately, as it is in Table 5, this ethnic group is highly overrepresented. Proportionally many more politicians claim to be ethnic Romanians than the census figures reveal to be the case in the population. The census figure of 2.2% Romanians is, however, highly disputed in Moldova by many politicians on the center right who claim that the communist government, which is the ardent promoter of Moldovanism, manipulated the figures and reduced very significantly the number of citizens declaring themselves Romanian and point to the fact that 16.5% stated Romanian as their mother tongue.

In terms of minority groups, the table indicates that the Russians, the dominant group in the USSR, continue to be significantly overrepresented in the Moldovan parliament. As a comparison of Tables 5a and 5b indicates, the level of overrepresentation for Russians is higher for the 1994-2008 period than for the 1990-94 period. The Gagauz also enjoyed a

decree of overrepresentation in the post-communist period, albeit of a smaller magnitude than the Russians. Ukrainians, which are the largest minority group in Moldova, were almost proportionally represented. Among demographically large minority groups the ethnic Bulgarians remain the only significantly underrepresented minority group in the post-communist period.

Overall, these results indicate that the Moldovan party system has proven to be sufficiently inclusive in terms of minority representation. This representation has been achieved through multiethnic parties formed mainly by the political left and, to a smaller extent, by the centrist forces. Recruitment practices of these parties have helped to ensure that ethnic exclusion practices did not become a hallmark of Moldovan politics in what proved to be a very difficult and conflict-prone transition from communist rule.

Conclusion

The ways in which societies' ethnic diversity is represented in the political sphere is shaped by many factors. Whether minorities become integrated into mainstream parties or establish electorally successful minority organizations might be affected by minority group characteristics, history of co-existence with majority, the polity's levels of democracy, and the nature of electoral rules. The paper provided a case study of the Moldovan party system, which evolved in circumstances favorable to the emergence of viable minority parties. The large demographic size of minority groups, their political mobilization in the early stages of post-communist transition, democratic openness of Moldovan political system, and electoral rules favoring party development all pointed to possibilities of party system institutionalization along ethnic lines.

Yet the Moldovan party system has so far avoided formalizing the existing ethnic divisions in the configuration of the party system. Minorities have become integrated in the political process in Moldova in ways that are different from, for example, Bulgaria and Romania, where electorally successful ethnic minority parties became a permanent feature of the political process. The paper provided an account of how this outcome came about by examining the electoral strategies of politicians with stakes in the construction of multi-ethnic organizations. These politicians capitalized on Soviet legacies of multi-ethnic organizational life and on the positive historical experience of ethnic group co-existence in building their organizations and attracting a multi-ethnic following. Their programmatic appeals and, what this paper specifically focused on, their recruitment strategies enabled them to win the competition with the emerging ethnic minority entrepreneurs for minority group support.

The emphasis that this paper put on the role of agency, however, should make one aware of the risks of accepting the current dominance of multi-ethnic organizations as a reliable predictor of the absence of electorally successful minority organizations in Moldova's future. The dynamic nature of the political process in new democracies provides a number of reasons for being sceptical about the prospects of the party system 'freezing' in polities such as the Moldovan one. The paper's emphasis highlights instead the importance of analyzing the interaction between majority and minority politicians and the value of examining their recruitment and programmatic strategies. Such analysis and examination enrich our understanding of supply side relations in minority politics.

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