6. Government formation and the radical right in Northeastern and Southeastern Europe: The Baltics and the Balkans

After introducing radical right parties and government formation in the four Central European countries in the previous chapter, this one turns to the two Baltic states, Estonia and Latvia, and the two Southeastern European countries, Bulgaria and Romania. Again, each case study first outlines the formation and composition of governments when radical right parties were present in parliament, before discussing the configuration of party systems, as well as the parliamentary strength of the radical right and their ideological distance to the formateur.

6.1 Estonia

6.1.1 Government formation with radical right parties in Estonia

The radical right Estonian National Independence Party (ERSP) entered government after Estonia's first free elections in 1992. The ERSP became a junior partner in a coalition government under Mart Laar, the leader of the victorious national-conservative Pro Patria alliance. The third party in the 1992 coalition was the Moderates (M). In the run-up to the 1995 parliamentary elections, Pro Patria and the ERSP merged into the Pro Patria Union which is not considered a radical right party (see Chapter 2.1).

It was not until 2015 that another radical right party, the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE), entered parliament. However, EKRE faced a cordon sanitaire and was thus never considered as a candidate for government by the other parties (Braghiroli and Petsinis 2019, 439). The 2015 government was formed by the Reform Party (ER), a neoliberal party that had split from Pro Patria in the 1990s, the Moderates, now renamed Social Democratic Party (SDE), and the national-conservative Isamaa (I). However, this coalition lasted only until 2016, when the Centre Party (EK) replaced the ER as prime minister party of the coalition. At that time,

there was a change of leadership within the EK, the largest opposition party, which had not governed for more than a decade due its controversial party leader, Edgar Savisaar (Lagerspetz and Vogt 2013). When Savisaar was replaced by Jüri Ratas in 2016, the two junior partners left the incumbent government almost immediately to form a new government under Ratas and the EK (Mölder 2017).

The 2019 Estonian parliamentary elections saw a close race between ER and EK. Both parties distanced themselves from EKRE during their campaigns, but post-electoral government formation revealed the fragility of the cordon sanitaire surrounding the radical right. After the ER won the elections, everything seemed set for the parties to form either a grand coalition of ER and EK or a three-party union of ER, SDE and Isamaa (Hartleb 2019). However, Jüri Ratas, EK's top candidate, was unwilling to settle for the role of junior partner in a government led by his biggest rival. Despite public protests against EKRE's inclusion in the Estonian government, both domestically and internationally, he broke the cordon sanitaire and formed a majority coalition with EKRE and Isamaa (Rankin 2019; Mölder 2020). This coalition did not survive the full term, however, and was replaced by the grand coalition of ER and EK in January 2021, although without former prime minister Ratas.

Most coalitions formed in Estonia since 2000 have been minimal winning coalitions, and this includes those with radical right parties (see Table 6.1). In the 1990s, however, this format was rare. Of the six governments formed in Estonia before 2000, only two were minimal winning coalitions, including the 1992 Pro Patria-ERSP-M government. The other four governments were either minority governments or oversized coalitions (Pettai 2019, 186).

Data on the ideological range of the coalitions is only available from the early 2000s onwards and thus only for the governments formed while EKRE was present in parliament. All three coalitions show a relatively broad ideological range on both the socio-economic and socio-cultural dimension. The 2015 and 2016 governments fulfil neither the criteria for the minimal range nor the minimal connected winning theory. The "conservative coalition" (Walker 2019; Mölder 2020, 119) of EK, Isamaa and EKRE, however, was socio-economically and socio-culturally connected. Despite an ideological distance of almost three points, this three-party coalition also had the smallest possible socio-cultural range in parliament, thus rendering it a minimal range coalition on this dimension.

Table 6.1: Format and ideological range of governments in Estonia

Formation year	Cabinet name and parties*	Radical right party		Coalition type**	Minimal range***		Minimal connected winning	
		Name	*Status*		*Socio-economic*	*Socio-cultural*	*Socio-economic*	*Socio-cultural*
1992	Laar I Pro Patria, M, ERSP	ERSP	Junior partner in a majority coalition	MWC	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
2015	Rõivas II ER, SDE, IRL	EKRE	Opposition	MWC	No 3.50 (1.11)	No 4.13 (0.73)	No	No
2016	Ratas I EK, SDE, I	EKRE	Opposition	MWC	No 4.38 (1.11)	No 4.13 (0.73)	No	No
2019	Ratas II EK, I, EKRE	EKRE	Junior partner in a majority coalition	MWC	No 3.31 (1.31)	Yes 2.91	Yes	Yes

Source: Own compilation based on data from Casal Bértoa 2021; Bergman, Ilonszki, and Müller 2019a; Jolly et al. 2022.

* Parties in parentheses = support party of a minority government.

** Abbreviations: MWC = minimal winning coalition, MinSP = single-party minority government, MinC = minority coalition government, Surplus = oversized coalition.

*** Values indicate the ideological range between the most distant parties in government, including support parties of minority governments. Values in parentheses indicate the smallest possible ideological distance of a majority government

6.1.2 The configuration of the Estonian party system

Fragmentation

As in many Central and Eastern European countries, the Estonian party system of the early 1990s was highly fragmented. Almost 40 parties competed during the first free elections in 1992 and seven parties or electoral alliances entered parliament (Pettai and Kreuzer 1998). The effective number of parties in the 1992 Estonian parliament was 5.9 (see Table 6.2). The bargaining situation was quite complex, since any majority coalition required at least three parties. Even Pro Patria, which won the elections quite comfortably, controlled less than 30 per cent of the seats.

Since the mid-2000s, however, the Estonian party system has undergone structural consolidation resulting in, among other things, a low number of new parties and moderate levels of fragmentation by Central and Eastern European standards (Lagerspetz and Vogt 2013; Enyedi and Casal Bértoa 2018, 430–31). The bargaining situation in 2015 was still relatively complex, despite a significantly lower number of effective parliamentary parties. The two strongest of the six parties in the Riigikogu, however, controlled a similar number of seats (30 and 27 seats), as did the two medium-sized (15 and 14 seats) and small parties (eight and seven seats). As a result, apart from the grand coalition, it would have taken at least three parties to reach the 51-seat majority, and neither of the two large parties had a decisive advantage. The fragmentation of the Estonian party system decreased further after the 2019 election to 4.2 effective, and five actual, parliamentary parties, reducing the number of possible minimal winning coalitions to five. Due to the relatively equal distribution of seats between the parties, however, the bargaining situation was not straightforward, since all parties had more than one option to enter government.

Table 6.2: Fragmentation of the Estonian party system

Formation year	Total number of parliamentary parties	Effective number of parliamentary parties
1992	7	5.9
2015	6	4.7
2016	6	4.7
2019	5	4.2

Source: Own compilation based on data from Casal Bértoa 2021; Nordsieck 2021.

Bipolar opposition

In the early 1990s, the ethnic divide between the Estonian majority and the large Russian-speaking minority was at the centre of Estonian politics and deeply intertwined with the regime divide, which also entailed issues related to the speed of economic reform and the urban-rural cleavage (Duvold, Berglund, and Ekman 2020, 42–45). The proportion of ethnic Estonians in the country had fallen from 95 to 61 per cent between 1945 and 1989 as a result of Moscow's Russification policy (Saarts 2011, 96–97; Pettai 2019, 174). After independence, the Estonian majority introduced an "ethnic democracy" (Braghiroli and Petsinis 2019, 438), which meant that the "Estonian political system, its polity, continuously obtains its basic energy from a discourse portraying it as a national *Gemeinschaft*, a community of ethnic Estonians" (Lagerspetz and Vogt 2013, 66, italics in original). Thus, nativism was a vital element of the Estonian political mainstream at that time (Mudde 2007, 53–54).

Under this ethnic democracy policy, members of the Russian-speaking minority could only obtain citizenship, and thus the right to political participation, through the process of naturalisation. By the end of 1991, more than a quarter of Estonia's 1.5 million residents were stateless and did not have the right to vote in the 1992 parliamentary election. Neither did they have the right to stand for election, which prevented the emergence of Russian-speaking minority parties in the country. A majority of Estonian parties favoured leaving the 1991 citizenship regulation untouched after the 1992 elections, so these restrictions remained unchanged for several more years. Even after large parts of the Russian-speaking minority had completed the naturalisation process and received the right to vote, no relevant party emerged to cater exclusively to minority interests. The majority of the Russian-speaking electorate rather supported existing parties, in particular the EK (Pettai 2019, 175). Thus, there was no bipolar opposition in the Estonian party system during the early 1990s (see Table 6.3).

In light of the broad consensus among the parties regarding the minority issue, socio-economic divides gained importance in Estonia from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, although the ethnic divide never disappeared completely. As the Russian-speaking minority was more supportive of redistributive socio-economic policies than the Estonian majority in the country, their underrepresentation in the political arena resulted in a party system lacking a representative on the socio-economic left. In the 2000s, the main opposition in the Estonian party system ran between a "national-neoliberal camp" (Lagerspetz and Vogt 2013, 66), consisting mainly of ER and Isamaa, and the more centrist EK, which received most of its support from the Russian-speaking minority and leaned slightly to the left on socio-economic issues. The SDE sided with the EK, but its socio-economic positions were more liberal than the party's label suggests (Saarts 2011, 96–97; Pettai 2019, 174). Lagerspetz and Vogt (2013, 55) even argue that the EK and SDE could pass for centre-right parties

in other European countries (see also Reetz 2011), as is also indicated by their membership in the liberal ALDE Party in the European parliament.

In the second half of the 2000s, the relocation of a Soviet soldier's memorial from the centre to the outskirts of Estonia's capital Tallinn caused the ethnic divide to resurface and escalate. The ER took a more nationalist stance in order to avoid losing votes to its conservative rival, Res Publica (Lagerspetz and Vogt 2013; Nakai 2014). The EK still represented the main opposition to the national-neoliberal camp, both in socio-economic terms and with regard to the ethnic divide. However, this opposition in the party system was less pronounced than in the population. Despite their general criticism of the ER, the EK and the SDE also supported neoliberal economic policies when in government (Reetz 2011; Lagerspetz and Vogt 2013). Thus, a significant sector of the population, particularly the Russian-speaking minority, found itself underrepresented at the national level (Lagerspetz and Vogt 2013; Pettai 2019). Pettai (2019, 175) concludes that "there are a number of important divides between the two ethnic communities, including major socioeconomic disparities, which may not always be addressed by dominantly ethnic Estonian political parties. Public opinion polls show that ethnic Russians tend to hold more centre-left views; still, because they are less present in electoral politics, the electoral landscape is by default shifted to the right." Hence, when EKRE entered parliament in the 2010s, the Estonian party system remained rather unipolar. There was an opposition between the national-neoliberal camp and the centrist EK, but the polarisation between them remained moderate and coalitions of parties from both sides were possible.

Table 6.3: Bipolar opposition in the Estonian party system

Formation year	Bipolar opposition
1992	Unipolar party system; most parties held similar positions on the dominant ethno-linguistic divide
2015	Opposition along aligned socio-economic and socio-cultural divides in the party system, but coalitions across camps were possible
2016	Opposition along aligned socio-economic and socio-cultural divides in the party system, but coalitions across camps were possible
2019	Opposition along aligned socio-economic and socio-cultural divides in the party system, but coalitions across camps were possible

Source: Own compilation.

6.1.3 Characteristics and preferences of Estonian radical right parties

Parliamentary strength

The ERSP received 8.8 per cent of the vote in the 1992 parliamentary elections, which earned it ten of the 101 seats in the Riigikogu (see Table 6.4). Even though the radical right was only the fifth strongest of the seven parties in parliament, its contribution of almost ten per cent was quite substantial in the highly fragmented Estonian party system.

Table 6.4: Election results and parliamentary strength of radical right parties in Estonia

Formation year	Party	Vote share (in %)	Representation in parliament	
			Number of seats	*Seat share (in %)*
1992	ERSP	8.8	10	9.9
2015	EKRE	8.1	7	6.9
2016	EKRE	8.1	7	6.9
2019	EKRE	17.8	19	18.8

Source: Nordsieck 2021.

EKRE achieved a similar result at the polls in its electoral breakthrough in 2015. However, the party's vote share of 8.1 per cent won it only seven seats, making it the smallest party in parliament. In the following parliamentary elections of 2019, EKRE won an impressive 17.8 per cent of the vote and almost tripled its seat share to 19 seats. As a result, it became the third strongest party in parliament and had much more bargaining power than in the previous legislature.

Ideological distance to the formateur

ERSP and Pro Patria

Research on party politics and the radical right in the Baltic states is even rarer than in other Central and Eastern European countries which makes evaluating the positions of the ERSP and its competitors relatively difficult (Auers and Kasekamp 2009, 242; Mudde 2018, 260). Only the recent success of EKRE and the National Alliance in Latvia brought more attention to this region. There is, nonetheless, little doubt that the ERSP was positioned clearly in the nativist, ultranationalist spectrum of Estonian politics. Pettai and Kreuzer (1998, 168) state that the "opposition to a liberal citizenship law has been the raison d'être" for the ERSP.

Similar to the majority of Estonian parties, the national-conservative alliance Pro Patria agreed with the radical right ERSP on the most important socio-cultural issue of the time—the rights of the Russian-speaking minority in the country. Both parties, like most of their competitors, supported the emigration of Russian-speaking Estonians (Bugajski 2002, 72–73; Kasekamp 2003, 404; Poleschuk 2005, 60). The main difference between the ERSP and Pro Patria was the latter's more moderate tone. Thus, this study places both parties clearly at the TAN end of the socio-cultural dimension. The slight difference in their position is reflected in scores of 9.50 and 8.50 for the ERSP and Pro Patria, respectively (see Table 6.5).

Table 6.5: Socio-economic and socio-cultural distance between radical right parties and formateurs in Estonia

Formation year	Parties	Socio-economic position	Socio-cultural position
1992	ERSP Pro Patria	(6.00) (7.00) distance: 1.00	(9.50) (8.50) distance: 1.00
2015	EKRE ER	4.69* 8.25 distance: 3.56	9.54* 3.13 (4.00) distance: 5.54
2016	EKRE EK	4.69* 3.88 distance: 0.81	9.54* 6.63 distance: 2.91
2019	EKRE EK	4.69 3.77 distance: 0.92	9.54 4.62 (6.63) distance: 2.91

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Jolly et al. 2022), amended by the author. Values in parentheses indicate author's placement based on a qualitative assessment of party positions.
* EKRE was not included in the 2014 CHES wave. Therefore, the 2019 placements are used in 2015 and 2016 as well.

On the socio-economic dimension, which was of secondary importance to the Estonian party system in the early 1990s, information on the positions of the two parties is even scarcer and more general. Overall, both the ERSP and Pro Patria clearly supported the introduction of a free market economy. The parties advocated for the country's quick accession to NATO and the EU in order to limit Russian influence. Thus, the parties' support for rapid economic transformation also reflected their scepticism towards the Russian-speaking minority and their kin-state, Russia. While socio-economic issues hardly played a role in ERSP's programmatic

documents, the literature states that the majority of the party's members expressed a clear preference for privatisation and a market economy (Pettai 2012, 84). Consequently, Pettai and Kreuzer (1998, 154) conclude that "Estonia got the shock-therapy market reform it had been promised by the nationalist parties" (see also Pettai 1993, 118). In light of the limited information available, both parties shall be placed on the liberal side of the socio-economic spectrum. The ERSP receives a score of 6.00, and Pro Patria is assigned a score of 7.00, reflecting the party's slightly more liberal position.

EKRE, the Reform Party, and the Centre Party

The core of EKRE's ideology is the concept of a *völkisch*, ethnic Estonian nation. The party's white supremacist ideology is evident in statements such as, "If you are black, go back!", made by Martin Helme, one of the party's leading figures, when talking about the ideal Estonian nation (Helme 2013, in Winkelmann 2018, 18). In its 2012 manifesto, EKRE also advanced a traditional Christian concept of the family, thus excluding the LGBTIQ+ and Muslim communities (Wierenga 2017; Winkelmann 2018).

Initially, the party's main enemy was the Russian-speaking minority and its kin-state, Russia. EKRE has accepted that many ethnic Russians and Russian speakers live in the country; however, it advocated for the introduction of Estonian as the only national language and rejected dual citizenship. The party also treated those members of the minority who remained stateless like a fifth column. Additionally, EKRE's programmatic documents included irredentist claims against Russia, seeking to restore the borders of the interwar period (Winkelmann 2018, 18). The Bauska Declaration, a joint manifesto of radical right parties from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania signed in 2013, highlighted the importance of cross-border cooperation and shared anti-Russian sentiments among the radical right in the Baltics. Here, EKRE and its Baltic brethren, diverged from the many European radical right parties that cooperated with Putin's Russia (Wierenga 2017; Braghiroli and Petsinis 2019).

Similar to many other radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe, EKRE emphasised immigration as a core issue beginning in the mid-2010s. Large parts of the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia shared the dislike for refugees and Muslims. This common position acted as a bridge, connecting the radical right and the Russian-speaking minority, thus making cooperation between these two camps possible for the first time (Wierenga 2017; see also Petsinis 2019). At this point, Wierenga (2017, 16) describes EKRE as "an ethnic nationalist party that wishes to conserve the ethnic makeup of Estonia, but would consider Russian-speaking Estonians who speak Estonian and pledge their allegiance to Estonia as allies in light of the refugee crisis".

On the socio-economic dimension, EKRE tends to take protectionist positions and puts the economic interests and social welfare of the imagined Estonian community first. For instance, the party called for an increase in agricultural production in order to make the country independent of exports, demanded restrictions on land acquisition by foreign investors (Winkelmann 2018, 17), and favoured placing higher taxes on foreign capital (Petsinis 2019, 220). EKRE's programme also contained proposals to strengthen the welfare state. In line with the neoliberal consensus in the country, however, the party also emphasised that economic growth and support for the Estonian economy were key elements for achieving social prosperity (Braghiroli and Petsinis 2019, 439n28). Thus, EKRE's socio-economic positions provide another example of the social-national economics typical of (Central and Eastern European) radical right parties. Unlike many other members of the radical right party family in the region, however, EKRE places less emphasis on redistributive policies and is thus located only slightly left of centre on socio-economic issues in the CHES.

EKRE was present in parliament for three consecutive government formations. In 2015, the ER acted as the formateur, while the EK played that role in 2016 and 2019. The ER has been the most vocal proponent of neoliberal economic policies in the country (Lagerspetz and Vogt 2013; Saarts and Saar 2020). Following the model of Southeast Asian states, the party regards Estonia as the "Nordic Tiger" and places more importance on economic growth than on social security (Jakobson et al. 2012, 64–65).

Initially, the ER's socio-cultural profile had been less nativist and less anti-Russian than other centre-right parties in Estonia. Since the second half of the 2000s, however, nationalist tendencies have become ascendant, as illustrated by its uncompromising positioning during the conflict over the relocation of the statue of the Soviet soldier in Tallinn (Nakai 2014, 78–79). The party has taken a liberal position on other socio-cultural issues, such as supporting same-sex marriage, however (Mölder 2016). While the CHES data reflects ER's neoliberal socio-economic positions quite well, the party's GALTAN placement in the 2016 wave (3.13) seems a bit too liberal. The party held liberal views on various socio-cultural issues, but it took tough positions towards the Russian-speaking minority, which reflects the presence of nationalist currents in ER's ideological platform. Therefore, the party's GALTAN position is slightly adjusted to 4.00.

The EK takes centre-left positions on the socio-economic dimension, even though the party has not consistently enacted this type of legislation when in power (Reetz 2011; Lagerspetz and Vogt 2013). In its programmatic documents, however, the party advocates for progressive taxation, an increase of pensions, and more extensive social benefits, in particular for families (Jakobson et al. 2012, 64–69; Mölder 2018, 91). The EK takes a rather favourable stance towards the Russian-speaking minority (Nakai 2014), although it has never completely rejected an ethnocultural concept of the nation (Jakobsen et al. 2012: 61). Otherwise, the literature

describes the party as culturally conservative (Walker 2019; Mölder 2020, 119), for instance regarding issues, such as LGBTIQ+ rights (Mölder 2016, 90). Peiker (2016, 115) also mentions an "illiberal top-down style of government". The 2014 CHES wave reflects these descriptions of the party's socio-cultural positions and places it at the moderate end of the GALTAN dimension (6.63), which seems more adequate than the score of 4.62 in 2019. Hence, EK's socio-cultural position of 2014 will also be used in 2019. The party's socio-economic positions in the left centre are well represented in both relevant CHES waves.

6.1.4 Summary

The radical right ERSP entered the Estonian parliament in 1992 and was immediately included in government. In a nascent party system that was dominated by the ethnolinguistic divide between the Russian-speaking minority and the Estonian majority, the coalition of three nationalist parties cemented the ethnic democracy model in the country with restrictive citizenship and language laws. Thus, the radical right in Estonia has successfully contributed to curbing the rights and the political representation of the Russian-speaking minority from the very beginning. ERSP's participation in government, and its merger with the national-conservative Pro Patria in 1995, illustrates a general openness to the radical right's nativist ultranationalism in Estonian politics during the early 1990s.

The circumstances were different when EKRE made its electoral breakthrough in 2015. The new radical right party was initially ostracised by its mainstream competitors, but the cordon sanitaire did not hold for long. Although EKRE continued to face fierce opposition from some parties and parts of the population, the EK nevertheless decided to form a coalition with the radical right in 2019. The cooperation between these parties is even more remarkable given that EKRE has been the most outspoken, anti-Russian party in the country, and EK has enjoyed the greatest support among the Russian-speaking minority. Cooperation between the two parties was facilitated by their shared opposition to refugees and Muslims in the context of the "migration crisis" (Wierenga 2017, 14). Even though this coalition did not last the entire term and EKRE found itself on the opposition bench after less than two years in power, the inclusion in government lent additional credibility to the young radical right party.

6.2 Latvia

6.2.1 Government formation with radical right parties in Latvia

The radical right National Alliance (NA) entered the Latvian parliament for the first time in 2010, and since then, it has consolidated its position within the Latvian party system. The party remained in opposition in 2010, although future prime minister, Valdis Dombrovskis, seriously considered including the party in his cabinet. Dombrovskis, leader of the victorious electoral alliance Unity, intended to form an oversized coalition with the Union of Greens and Farmers (ZZS) and the NA. However, one of Unity's members, the Society for Political Change, vetoed the proposal to include the radical right, thus putting an end to the NA's hopes of entering government. Ultimately, the short-lived Dombrovskis III government of 2010 was backed only by the minimal winning coalition consisting of the Unity alliance and the ZZS (Auers 2011).

The 2011 snap election marked the first victory of the centre-left Harmony Centre (SC), the main representative of Latvia's Russian-speaking population. This party, however, did not succeed in forming a coalition, so the mandate passed to former president Zatlers' Reform Party (ZRP) which had edged out the Unity alliance for second place. Both ZRP and Unity wanted to cooperate, but they were short of a parliamentary majority by nine seats, leaving Zatlers to choose between inviting the NA into a three-party coalition and forming a grand coalition with the SC. Initially, he preferred the second option, but the prospect of governing with the Russophile SC upset large parts of the Latvian majority in the country, including members of the ZRP who threatened to withdraw their support in the investiture vote. As a consequence of the public protest and ZRP's intra-party revolt, Unity's incumbent prime minister Dombrovskis retained power by forming a coalition of Unity, ZRP, and NA (Auers 2012, 7). As six MPs left ZRP's parliamentary group almost immediately after the elections, the coalition was formally a minority government, controlling only 50 of the 100 seats in the Saeima (Ikstens 2012).

At the end of 2013, however, Dombrovskis resigned after a supermarket collapsed in Riga, causing 54 people to lose their lives (Ikstens 2014). Dombrovskis' fellow party member, Laimdota Straujuma, was sworn in as the new prime minister in early 2014. This transition also involved a change in the composition of the coalition, as Straujuma invited president Andris Bērziņš' ZZS to become a junior partner. This extended coalition now controlled a majority in parliament, even without the support of the six independents (Ikstens 2015).

The SC emerged victorious from the 2014 parliamentary elections, but it again failed to find coalition partners. The right to form a government passed to the incumbent prime minister, who decided to continue cooperation with the previous junior partners. Since the ZRP had disintegrated and joined Unity, the Straujuma II

government consisted of three parties—Unity, ZZS, and NA (Ikstens 2015). In 2016, however, the chief executive was challenged by her internal rival, Unity party leader Solvita Āboltiņa, who sought to replace Straujuma as prime minister. However, Āboltiņa's candidacy was not supported by a majority in parliament. Thus, the ZZS took the chance and nominated its own candidate, Māris Kučinskis, who was ultimately elected as the new prime minister with the support of Unity and the NA (Auers 2016).

The 2018 parliamentary elections brought a significant change in the Saeima's composition. The collapse of Unity led to a reorganisation in the centre-right camp, including the emergence of various new parties (Ījabs 2018). The SC was the strongest party in the seven-party parliament, despite winning less than 20 per cent of the vote. Since a coalition capable of crossing the ethno-linguistic divide was out of the question (see below), it took three attempts for Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš, leader of New Unity (JV), the smallest parliamentary group and Unity's direct successor, to cobble together a five-party majority government. Besides JV, this coalition included the populist party Who owns the State? (KPV-LV), the New Conservative Party (JKP), the liberal party Development/For! (AP!), and the radical right NA.

Except for the 2011 minority coalition, all governments formed in Latvia while the radical right NA was present in parliament were minimal winning coalitions (see Table 6.6). In order to achieve majority status, the governments often required a large number of parties, most notably the five-party coalition of 2018. But even the Straujuma I government was supported by four parties. The analysis of the socio-economic and socio-cultural range of these coalitions reveals an interesting pattern. All five coalitions that include the NA are characterised by a high degree of socio-economic homogeneity. Three of them are even minimal connected winning and minimal range coalitions on the socio-economic dimension. This would also be true of the Dombrovskis IV government if the independent MPs were counted as members of ZRP's parliamentary group. Even the five-party coalition of 2018 is quite homogeneous, having a socio-economic range of just over two points. On the socio-cultural dimension, however, the coalitions that included the NA were quite heterogeneous. The most striking example is the Kariņš government of 2018. Here, more than six points separated the coalition partners on the GALTAN dimension. The only coalition in the 2010s that did not include the NA has a small ideological range on both ideological dimensions, even though it is neither a minimal range nor a minimal connected winning coalition. Based on a single case, however, it is impossible to determine whether or not this difference between coalitions with and without radical right parties is part of a general pattern.

Table 6.6: Format and ideological range of governments in Latvia

Formation year	Cabinet name and parties*	Radical right party		Coalition type**	Minimal range***		Minimal connected winning	
		Name	*Status*		*Socio-economic*	*Socio-cultural*	*Socio-economic*	*Socio-cultural*
2010	Dombrovskis III V, ZZS	NA	Opposition	MWC	No 2.22 (2.00)	No 1.50 (0.67)	No	No
2011	Dombrovskis IV V, ZRP, NA, (Independents)	NA	Junior partner in minority coalition	MinC	No 1.56 (2.33)	No 4.50 (0.86)	No	No
2014a	Straujuma I V, ZRP, NA, ZZS	NA	Junior partner in majority coalition	MWC	Yes 2.33	No 4.50 (0.86)	Yes	No
2014b	Straujuma II V, ZZS, NA	NA	Junior partner in majority coalition	MWC	Yes 1.00	No 4.50 (0.22)	Yes	No
2016	Kučinskis ZZS, V, NA	NA	Junior partner in majority coalition	MWC	Yes 1.00	No 4.50 (0.22)	Yes	No
2018	Kariņš JV, KPV-LV, JKP, AP!, NA	NA	Junior partner in majority coalition	MWC	No 2.18 (0.73)	No 6.18 (1.82)	No	No

Source: Own compilation based on data from Casal Bértoa 2021; Bergman, Ilonszki, and Müller 2019a; Jolly et al. 2022.

*Parties in parentheses = support party of a minority government.

**Abbreviations: MWC = minimal winning coalition, MinSP = single-party minority government, MinC = minority coalition government, Surplus = oversized coalition.

*** Values indicate the ideological range between the most distant parties in government, including support parties of minority governments. Values in parentheses indicate the smallest possible ideological distance of a majority government.

6.2.2 The configuration of the Latvian party system

Fragmentation

The fragmentation of the Latvian party system was relatively high in the first two decades after the fall of Communism, even in comparison with other Central and Eastern European countries (Enyedi and Casal Bértoa 2018, 443). Low requirements for founding new parties and legal regulations that make political campaigning highly dependent on external financial resources have contributed to the constant emergence of new parties, opening the door to a personalisation and oligarchisation of Latvian party politics (Auers 2013). The low fragmentation of the party system in 2010, when it comprised only 3.9 effective parliamentary parties (see Table 6.7), is an exception and the lowest value in Latvia's three post-Communist decades (Casal Bértoa 2021). The low number of parties, and the uneven distribution of parliamentary seats, left them with a choice of only three possible minimal winning coalitions.

Since then, however, the fragmentation has been increasing consistently, mostly as a result of the disintegration of existing parties and the formation of new ones to replace them. The 2011 Saeima consisted of five parties, but their seats were more evenly distributed than in 2010. The effective number of 4.5 parliamentary parties points to a more complex bargaining situation, in which the parties could form five minimal winning coalitions, and each party had at least two options to enter government.[1] In 2014, the effective number of parliamentary parties in Latvia rose to 5.1, which indicates a further increase in complexity. The parliament consisted of seven parties, and no two-party coalition could achieve a majority. Fragmentation peaked at 6.4 effective parliamentary parties after the 2018 elections, marking the highest value across all countries. The complexity of the bargaining situation is reflected by the fact that it took three rounds and required five parties to form a majority government.

1 This number does not include the six independent MPs as a separate parliamentary party. The count of possible minimal winning coalitions in this legislature considers them members of their original party, ZRP.

Table 6.7: Fragmentation of the Latvian party system

Formation year	Total number of parliamentary parties	Effective number of parliamentary parties
2010	5	3.9
2011	5	4.5
2014a	5	4.5
2014b	7	5.1
2016	7	5.1
2018	7	6.4

Source: Own compilation based on data from Casal Bértoa 2021; Nordsieck 2021.

Bipolar opposition

The ideological configuration of the Latvian party system has been relatively stable over the last three decades (see Table 6.8). After gaining independence in 1991, Latvia introduced strict citizenship and language laws, especially in relation to public administration, which resembled the Estonian ethnic democracy model. Similar to Estonia, the proportion of ethnic Russians in the Latvian population had risen from about ten per cent in 1935 to over one-third in 1989 (Auers 2013, 96). Hence, the ethno-linguistic divide was essentially connected to the regime divide in Latvia as well (Duvold, Berglund, and Ekman 2020). While Estonia introduced gradual reforms to reduce the nativist elements in its political system, Latvia's minority policies have remained relatively strict and exclusive over the past three decades (Nakai 2014). The ethno-linguistic divide between Latvian-speaking and Russian-speaking parts of the population dominated party competition in the country. Nativism has been an essential part of ethnic Latvian parties' DNA since the 1990s (Mudde 2007, 53–54), and it remains significant (Auers 2013, 95–101; Braghiroli and Petsinis 2019, 438).

The SC represented one side of the ethnic divide. The party enjoyed the support of the majority of Latvia's Russian-speaking electorate, took a positive stance towards Russia, and even signed a formal agreement of cooperation with Putin's United Russia in 2009 (Ikstens and Balcere 2019, 258). The ethnic Latvian camp comprised various—and changing—parties. The parties within this camp can be distinguished between moderate and radical nationalists, the latter category including the radical right NA (Auers 2013; see also Reetz 2011; Ikstens and Balcere 2019). Socio-economic conflicts also played a role in the Latvian party system, but they were clearly secondary to the ethno-linguistic divide. Both conflict dimensions were reinforcing each other (Saarts 2011, 96–97; Auers 2013). The SC combined its pro-Russian

stance with a centre-left socio-economic profile. Being the only supplier of left-wing economic policies in the country, the SC used these policy positions to mobilise support from ethnic Latvian voters who shared these preferences (Auers 2013). The liberal socio-economic positions of the ethnic Latvian parties differed only in degree, leaving the centre-left entirely to the oppositional SC. Hence, the national-neoliberal camp introduced to describe the parties of the ethnic majority in the Estonian party system (Lagerspetz and Vogt 2013) provides an adequate description of the ethnic Latvian parties as well.[2]

Table 6.8: Bipolar opposition in the Latvian party system

Formation year	Bipolar opposition
2010	Strong bipolar opposition along primary ethnic divide and reinforced by congruent socio-economic divide; coalitions across camps are not possible
2011	Strong bipolar opposition along primary ethnic divide and reinforced by congruent socio-economic divide; minor trend towards coalitions across camps, but they remain impossible
2014	Strong bipolar opposition along primary ethnic divide and reinforced by congruent socio-economic divide; coalitions across camps are not possible
2016	Strong bipolar opposition along primary ethnic divide and reinforced by congruent socio-economic divide; coalitions across camps are not possible
2018	Strong bipolar opposition along primary ethnic divide and reinforced by congruent socio-economic divide; coalitions across camps are not possible

Source: Own composition.

The polarisation between the SC and the ethnic Latvian camp was so intense that coalitions across camps were impossible. Braghiroli and Petsinis (2019, 438) even conclude that "the major concern of the mainstream centre-right and conservative parties […], following the outcome of the 2010, 2011, and 2014 elections, was to prevent Harmony from forming a government. Therefore, a cordon sanitaire was built around Harmony". The situation did not change in 2018. The gap between the camps widened even further when the SC maintained its pro-Russian stance after Russia's

2 Since the mid-2000s, the oligarchisation of Latvian party politics has caused an increasing politicisation of corruption. However, this issue has remained largely confined to the ethnic Latvian parties and has not been able to facilitate alliances across the ethnic divide. This has resulted in the further differentiation of ethnic Latvian parties into "oligarchic" and "corruption fighting" parties (Auers 2013, 92–95).

annexation of Crimea in 2014 (Ījabs 2018). Hence, the bipolar opposition in the Latvian party system prevented coalitions across camps during the entire period covered by this study.

6.2.3 Characteristics and preferences of Latvian radical right parties

Parliamentary strength

In its electoral breakthrough in 2010, the NA won only a moderate 7.7 per cent of the vote, making it the smallest party in the Saeima (see Table 6.9). Unlike many other radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe, however, the NA persisted and became one of the most consistent members of the party family in the region. The party secured well over ten per cent in each of the three parliamentary elections since 2010. Even in 2018, when the party lost ground for the first time, it still won 11 per cent of the vote. As one of Central and Eastern Europe's most successful radical right parties at the polls, the NA often contributed a substantial number of seats to the ruling coalition.

Table 6.9: Election results and parliamentary strength of radical right parties in Latvia

Formation year	Party	Vote share (in %)	Representation in parliament	
			Number of seats	*Seat share (in %)*
2010	NA	7.7	8	8.0
2011	NA	13.9	14	14.0
2014a	NA	13.9	14	14.0
2014b	NA	16.6	17	17.0
2016	NA	16.6	17	17.0
2018	NA	11.0	13	13.0

Source: Nordsieck 2021.

Ideological distance to the formateur

Unity served as the formateur of the four governments between 2010 and 2014, and its successor, JV, formed the 2018 coalition. During the mid-term government re-formation in 2016, the ZZS acted as the formateur. The NA advanced a nativist, ultranationalist concept of the Latvian nation based on ethnicity, culture, and language. The party's ethno-cultural nationalism is mainly directed against the Russian-speaking minority and its kin state, Russia. Even after the 2015 "migration crisis", the opposition to immigration and refugees remained secondary to its anti-

Russian platform. The NA campaigned for making Latvian the only language of instruction in public schools and increasing funding for traditional Latvian culture, thus trying to curb the influence of the Russian-speaking minority (Auers 2012, 6; Auers and Kasekamp 2015, 143). More radical forces in the party also regularly attended and supported the annual rally commemorating the Latvian SS Legionnaires who fought the Soviet forces in 1944 (Auers and Kasekamp 2013, 240–42). Even though the party was less outspoken against immigration than other radical right parties, particularly when in government, it still opposed the European quota system and framed immigration as a threat to national security. Framing immigration as a national security issue made it possible to connect it to the Russian-speaking minority and Russia (Braghiroli and Petsinis 2019, 442–43). In light of these positions, the party's GALTAN placements in the CHES (6.67, 8.09, and 8.11) are rather low, particularly in the 2010 wave, and are therefore adjusted to 8.50, which is still a moderate score for a radical right party (see Table 6.10).

On the socio-economic dimension, the NA combined liberal and protectionist positions. The national protectionism typical of radical right parties can be found in the Bauska Declaration: "We consider the independence of our economies to be just as important as our political independence. We are ready to combat the foreign financial influence in our countries and we see only Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian capital as a basis of our national prosperity" (National Alliance 2021). The NA's national-conservative predecessor, For Fatherland and Freedom/Latvian National Independence Movement (TB/LNNK), however, was clearly positioned on the liberal end of the socio-economic dimension. The merger with the radical right All for Latvia! (VL!) added an element of national protectionism, but it did not mute the liberal economic currents in the NA. Hence, the socio-economic positions of the NA are more liberal than those of many other radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe (Wierenga 2019, 143), which is also reflected in the party's CHES placements between 5.11 and 6.09.

The formateurs that the NA faced during the 2010s were also members of the neoliberal, ethnic Latvian camp. Unity, for instance, has been held responsible for the country's "fairly orthodox pro-market policies" (Duvold, Berglund, and Ekman 2020, 61). The party, and in particular prime minister Dombrovskis, fiercely defended Latvia's drastic austerity measures in the context of the economic crisis in the late 2000s (Sommers 2014; see also Duvold, Berglund, and Ekman 2020). On the socio-cultural dimension, Unity's version of ethno-linguistic nationalism was more moderate than that of the NA. Regarding other socio-cultural issues, the party held relatively liberal views. It even supported the European quota for refugees in 2015 (Auers 2016). Thus, the CHES places Unity slightly on the GAL side of the socio-cultural spectrum, with scores of 4.00 in the 2014 and 4.82 in the 2019 wave, despite its moderate nationalism. In the 2010 wave, however, the party received a GALTAN score of 5.25, which is not far away from its later placements. Due to the qualitative

difference between a value below or above 5.00 (see Chapter 7), the party's GALTAN score in 2010 is adjusted to 4.50 to reflect the party's liberal leaning.

Table 6.10: Socio-economic and socio-cultural distance between radical right parties and formateurs in Latvia

Formation year	Parties	Socio-economic position	Socio-cultural position
2010	NA V	5.11 6.56 distance: 1.45	6.67 (8.50) 5.25 (4.50) distance: 4.00
2011	NA V	5.11 6.67 distance: 1.56	6.67 (8.50) 4.00 distance: 4.50
2014a	NA V	5.89 6.67 distance: 0.78	8.11 (8.50) 4.00 distance: 4.50
2014b	NA V	5.89 6.67 distance: 0.78	8.11 (8.50) 4.00 distance: 4.50
2016	NA ZZS	5.89 5.45 distance: 0.44	8.11 (8.50) 7.64 distance: 0.86
2018	NA V	6.09 7.18 distance: 1.09	8.09 (8.50) 4.82 distance: 3.68

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Jolly et al. 2022), amended by the author. Values in parentheses indicate author's placement based on a qualitative assessment of party positions.

The ZZS is also located right of centre on the socio-economic dimension, but its positions are more centrist than Unity's. Even though the ZZS uses the label "Green" in its name, its socio-cultural positions are far from typical for the Green party family. The party and its leader, Aivars Lembergs, the mayor of Ventspils, have a conservative and nationalist outlook. They claim to protect Latvian national interests and national identity against alleged external enemies, such as the EU or George Soros (Galbreath and Auers 2010; Auers 2018, 352). Consequently, Galbreath and Auers (2010, 67) describe ZZS' rhetoric as "populist nationalist anti-liberal", which is also reflected in the party's CHES placement at 7.64 on the GALTAN dimension.

6.2.4 Summary

During the last decade, the NA has established itself as a strong, radical right party in the Latvian party system. The party entered government almost immediately after its electoral breakthrough in the 2010 parliamentary elections. While a liberal party in the Unity alliance prevented the radical right's participation in government in 2010, the NA has been a junior partner in all ruling coalitions since 2011. These coalitions were almost exclusively minimal winning coalitions, characterised by a high degree of socio-economic homogeneity and socio-cultural heterogeneity.

The bipolar opposition in the Latvian party system has imposed limitations on government formation which have helped Unity and the NA to cooperate despite their socio-cultural incongruence. The SC's inability to find willing partners with whom to govern forced the remaining ethnic Latvian parties to accept substantial ideological differences in order to form a majority government within this camp. The protests against Zatlers' attempt to overcome the bipolar opposition in 2011 illustrate how costly it was for the ethnic Latvian parties to consider forming a coalition with the pro-Russian SC.

6.3 Bulgaria

6.3.1 Government formation with radical right parties in Bulgaria

In 2005, Ataka was the first radical right party to enter the Bulgarian parliament. The party was joined by a second radical right party, the Patriotic Front (PF) in 2014. Three years later, both parties merged to form the United Patriots (UP) and contested the parliamentary elections together. When Ataka first entered parliament in 2005, Bulgaria was working towards EU membership. In this situation, the three largest parties in parliament decided to form an oversized coalition with the goal of preparing the country for accession to the EU. This coalition included the Communist successor, the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), the populist National Movement for Stability and Progress (NDSV) of the former Bulgarian tsar Simeon II Sakskoburggotski, and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS), which represented the interests of the Turkish minority (see Table 6.11). As the formateur, the BSP never considered inviting the Eurosceptic Ataka to join the government (Spirova 2006; Marinov 2008, 94–95).

Four years later, government formation took place under different circumstances. A new centre-right party, Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB), emerged victorious from the 2009 parliamentary elections. Contrary to expectations, it did not form a majority coalition with other conservative parties. Instead, two conservative parties, the Blue Coalition (SK) and Order, Law, and

Justice (RZS), as well as the radical right Ataka, supported a GERB minority government, but Ataka was the only support party to sign a written agreement (Spirova 2010; Avramov 2015, 301).

In May 2013, the next parliamentary elections were held early after the Borisov I government resigned following massive anti-government protests during the so-called "winter of discontent" (Avramov 2015, 299). However, only four parties entered parliament, and these organised themselves into two alliances, including GERB and Ataka on one side and the BSP and the DPS on the other. Each camp controlled 120 of the 240 seats in parliament, and the three challengers signalled during their campaigns that they would not support another minority government led by GERB. Ultimately, a BSP-DPS government under the leadership of prime minister Plamen Oresharski was sworn in—and it was Ataka's leader, Volen Siderov, who tipped the scales in favour of the minority coalition. He was the only member of the opposition to register for the investiture vote and thus enabled the government to secure the required quorum. All other deputies of GERB and Ataka deliberately abstained from the vote in order to boycott Oresharski's election (Karasimeonov 2013a, 2–3; Kostadinova and Popova 2014; Avramov 2015, 303–4). Even after this investiture vote, Ataka backed the Oresharski government on various occasions and did not support a vote of no confidence initiated by GERB (Karasimeonov 2013b, 8; Kostadinova and Popova 2015). Nevertheless, Ataka is not considered an official support party for the minority government because there was no formal public agreement between Ataka and the ruling parties.

The Oresharski government did not last long, however. The early elections of 2014 were again won by GERB, and Borisov received the mandate to form a government. Even though he was rather sceptical about renewing relations with Ataka, he still invited the party to exploratory talks, as he did with every party in parliament. Ataka, however, declined this invitation and decided to remain in opposition. Instead, Borisov formed a minority coalition with the centre-right Reformist Bloc (RB) and the nominally social democratic Alternative for Bulgarian Revival (ABV). This coalition was officially supported by the other radical right party in parliament, the PF (Karasimeonov 2014b, 2–3; Kostadinova and Popova 2015). In the run-up to the 2016 presidential elections, the government had lost significant public support, prompting the ABV and parts of the RB to withdraw from the coalition. The remaining coalition of GERB and RB still enjoyed the support from the radical right PF. Borisov intended to invite the PF to become a junior partner after the presidential elections later that year, but this plan never came to fruition. After GERB's candidate lost the presidential election, Borisov submitted his resignation in 2016, which resulted in yet another early election in 2017 (Kolarova and Spirova 2017).

GERB once again emerged as the winner of the parliamentary elections in 2017. Borisov held talks with several parties, but he quickly decided to form a majority coalition with the radical right UP. In May 2017, the coalition of GERB and UP was

Table 6.11: Format and ideological range of governments in Bulgaria

Formation year	Cabinet name and parties*	Radical right party		Coalition type**	Minimal range***		Minimal connected winning	
		Name	*Status*		*Socio-economic*	*Socio-cultural*	*Socio-economic*	*Socio-cultural*
2005	Stanishev BSP, NDSV, DPS	Ataka	Opposition	Surplus	No 3.25 (0.75)	No 3.08 (1.50)	No	No
2009	Borisov I GERB, (Ataka), (SK), (RZS),	Ataka	Support party of single-party minority government	MinSP	No 4.92 (1.55)	No 5.18 (0.64)	No	No
2013	Oresharski BSP, DPS	Ataka	Opposition	MinC	No 0.88 (1.85)	No 0.65 (0.97)	No	No
2014	Borisov II GERB, RB, ABV, (PF)	Ataka	Opposition	MinC	No 4.04 (0.98)	No 4.57 (0.32)	No	No
		PF	Support party of minority coalition					
2016	Borisov III GERB, RB, (PF)	Ataka	Opposition	MinC	No 3.41 (0.98)	No 4.57 (0.32)	No	No
		PF	Support party of minority coalition					
2017	Borisov IV GERB, UP	UP	Junior partner in a majority coalition	MWC	No 2.26 (1.14)	No 2.43 (0.23)	No	No

Source: Own compilation based on data from Casal Bértoa 2021; Bergman, Ilonszki, and Müller 2019a; Jolly et al. 2022.

* Parties in parentheses = support party of a minority government.

** Abbreviations: MWC = minimal winning coalition, MinSP = single-party minority government, MinC = minority coalition government, Surplus = oversized coalition.

*** Values indicate the ideological range between the most distant parties in government, including support parties of minority governments. Values in parentheses indicate the smallest possible ideological distance of a majority government.

sworn in. The government controlled a majority in parliament, and did not depend on the support of other parliamentary parties (Spirova 2018). Thus, after supporting minority governments in 2009 and 2013, the radical right finally received seats at the cabinet table for the first time in 2017.

The dominant format of government in Bulgaria during the period under investigation are minority governments. The Borisov IV government of GERB and UP was the only minimal winning coalition. None of the six Bulgarian governments since 2005 meets the criteria for minimal range or minimal connected winning coalitions. This is also due to the ideological distance between the ruling parties on the socio-economic and socio-cultural dimensions. The only exception is the Oresharski government of 2013, which was socio-economically and socio-culturally homogeneous, but it did not control a majority in parliament. These programmatic differences may have led parties to form minority governments with support parties instead of formal majority coalitions. The only minimal winning coalition, the 2017 GERB-UP government, supports this interpretation, since its ideological range was relatively small, at least compared to the previous governments.

6.3.2 The configuration of the Bulgarian party system

Fragmentation

The Bulgarian party system was quite stable in the first decade following the fall of Communism. It was dominated by two large parties—the Communist successor party, BSP, and the oppositional SDS. The DPS was the only other party that had continuous electoral success. The disintegration of the SDS in the early 2000s, however, resulted in the emergence of various new liberal-conservative parties (Karasimeonov 2010). These changes led to high levels of volatility and growing fragmentation in the Bulgarian party system during the 2000s (Enyedi and Casal Bértoa 2018, 438). The Bulgarian party system remained structurally unstable in the 2010s, witnessing considerable electoral swings and the entrance and exit of new parties.

Despite this instability, the fragmentation scores in 2009, 2013 and 2017, were relatively low (see Table 6.12). In all three instances, the complexity of the bargaining situation was manageable from a purely mathematical perspective. In 2009, GERB controlled 116 of the 240 seats in parliament and could thus form a majority coalition with any one of the five small parties. The 2013 National Assembly consisted of only four parliamentary groups, which left the parties to choose between one of three minimal winning coalitions. In 2017, there were five parties present in parliament, but the constellation of two large and three small parties allowed for only four possible minimal winning coalitions.

Table 6.12: Fragmentation of the Bulgarian party system

Formation year	Total number of parliamentary parties	Effective number of parliamentary parties
2005	7	4.8
2009	6	3.3
2013	4	3.2
2014	8	5.1
2016	8	5.1
2017	5	3.4

Source: Own compilation based on data from Casal Bértoa 2021; Nordsieck 2021.

The fragmentation was significantly higher in 2005 and 2014. The parliament consisted of seven and eight actual parties, respectively. In both years, one party controlled significantly more seats than the others, but not enough to establish a two-party majority coalition with most of the other parties. Since most of the possible minimal winning coalitions involved at least three parties, the bargaining situation was rather complex in these legislatures.

Bipolar opposition

The structural changes in the Bulgarian party system also affected the oppositional constellations. Party competition in the first post-Communist decade was strongly influenced by the regime divide. The BSP represented the old regime and the SDS the oppositional forces, while the DPS was ready to cooperate with either side and thus enjoyed a pivotal role in government formation (Autengruber 2006, 80; Karasimeonov 2010, 2). When Simeon II arrived on the Bulgarian political scene in the early 2000s, he positioned himself, and his party the NDSV, as an alternative to the existing elites, although he remained open to cooperating with the established parties (Karasimeonov 2010, 2–4; see also Avramov 2015). Even though the NDSV was founded shortly before the 2001 elections, it immediately became the BSP's main competitor. However, despite forming a majority coalition with the DPS in 2001, Simeon II decided to include two BSP ministers in his cabinet, which underlines the absence of a deep bipolar opposition at that time (Karasimeonov 2010, 4). When a radical right party entered the Bulgarian parliament for the first time in 2005, the configuration of the Bulgarian party system looked much like it had at the beginning of the decade. Despite the emergence of new parties, including Ataka, polarisation between different camps was mild and most parties shared the goal of securing Bulgaria's accession to the EU (Keudel-Kaiser 2014, 86; see also Karasimeonov 2010).

Persistent clientelism, and a growing alienation of the political parties from (civil) society, contributed to another transformation of the Bulgarian party system, which became visible in the 2009 parliamentary elections. The NDSV failed to enter parliament, which left room for new parties on the centre-right to gain prominence. The most successful of these parties was the populist GERB, which presented itself as an anti-corruption party and won 40 per cent of the vote in the first parliamentary election it contested (Karasimeonov 2010, 25–26). After GERB's electoral breakthrough in 2009, the party became the BSP's chief competitor. Since the DPS had by then sided with the BSP, and most of the new conservative and radical right parties coalesced around GERB, the 2009 parliamentary elections marked the return of a bipolar opposition to the Bulgarian party system (see Table 6.13). The polarisation between GERB and the BSP was much more affective than it was ideological. The parties held different views, in particular on socio-economic policies (see below), but these disagreements do not explain the deep rift between these parties, and their respective camps, which ultimately prevented them from forming cross-camp coalitions by 2009. The polarisation continued to deepen further and has remained a characteristic feature of Bulgarian politics until the end of the 2010s. On some occasions, GERB and BSP even attempted to boycott parliamentary proceedings when the other party won the election (Karasimeonov 2019).

Table 6.13: Bipolar opposition in the Bulgarian party system

Formation year	Bipolar opposition in the party system
2005	Regime divide has largely disappeared; government formation was not constrained by bipolar opposition
2009	Emerging bipolar opposition between BSP and GERB based on affective polarisation; coalitions across camps were already impossible
2013	Strong bipolar opposition between BSP and GERB based primarily on affective polarisation; coalitions across camps were impossible
2014	Strong bipolar opposition between BSP and GERB based primarily on affective polarisation; coalitions across camps were impossible
2016	Strong bipolar opposition between BSP and GERB based primarily on affective polarisation; coalitions across camps were impossible
2017	Strong bipolar opposition between BSP and GERB based primarily on affective polarisation; coalitions across camps were impossible

Source: Own compilation.

6.3.3 Characteristics and preferences of Bulgarian radical right parties

Parliamentary strength

In its electoral breakthrough in 2005, Ataka entered parliament with 8.1 per cent of the vote (see Table 6.14). The party improved its result slightly in the 2009 parliamentary elections, receiving 9.4 per cent, totalling the best result in the party's history. Since then, Ataka constantly lost at the polls, at least in part because some supporters disapproved of the party's support for the GERB minority government. It even looked like Ataka might fail to return to parliament in 2013. However, the anti-government protests revived the party, which allowed Ataka to pass the four per cent threshold comfortably (Avramov 2015). Because only four parties entered parliament after the 2013 elections, the 7.3 per cent of the vote won by Ataka resulted in more seats than the previous two terms. Ataka's partial support of the Oresharski government caused it to lose further credibility among its radical right electorate, however. Thus, in 2014 the party barely passed the four per cent threshold.

Table 6.14: Election results and parliamentary strength of radical right parties in Bulgaria

Formation year	Party	Vote share (in %)	Representation in parliament	
			Number of seats	*Seat share (in %)*
2005	Ataka	8.1	21	8.6
2009	Ataka	9.4	21	8.6
2013	Ataka	7.3	23	9.6
2014	Ataka	4.5	11	4.6
	PF	7.3	19	7.9
2016	Ataka	4.5	11	4.6
	PF	7.3	19	7.9
2017	UP	9.1	27	11.3

Source: Nordsieck 2021.

The PF outscored Ataka in its electoral breakthrough in 2014, gaining 7.3 per cent of the vote. Thus, the 2014 Bulgarian parliament included two relatively small radical right parties. After this experience, the PF and Ataka contested the 2017 election together as UP, which won 9.1 per cent of the vote. The UP fell short of Ataka and PF's combined result from 2014 (11.8 per cent), but they did secure a double-digit seat share (11.3 per cent) for a radical right party in the National Assembly for the

first time. Ultimately, this showing was enough to form a majority coalition together with GERB.

Ideological distance to the formateur

The radical right: Ataka, the Patriotic Front, and the United Patriots

In Bulgaria, several radical right parties have entered parliament. Ataka emphasised social-national economic policies. In its campaign materials from 2005, Ataka formulated the overarching goal of "making sure that the Bulgarian economy served the interests of the Bulgarian people" (Ghodsee 2008, 30). The party favoured, for instance, a strong welfare state, state investments, state ownership of key industries, as well as an increased minimum wage and progressive taxation (Avramov 2015, 308; Pirro 2016, 62–63; Popova 2016, 262–63). Ataka's socio-economic profile was thus not only more specific than that of many other radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe, but it was also decidedly more leftist. The party's CHES placements on the socio-economic dimension reflect its position on the left (see Table 6.15). However, the score of 1.44 in the 2014 wave seems very low and is therefore slightly adjusted to 2.50. Although Ataka's 2013 election programme indeed emphasises opposition to neoliberal policies, there is no indication of more radical positions than before (Kostadinova and Popova 2014).

On the socio-cultural dimension, Ataka's profile is dominated by a strong anti-minority platform. The party's policies and rhetoric are mainly directed against minority groups, such as Roma and Turks, and the party which represents them, the DPS. Anti-Semitism and verbal attacks against the LGBTIQ+ community also belong to the party's repertoire. Ataka's agenda has even included irredentist positions, although not as prominently as in other Central and Eastern European radical right parties (Karasimeonov 2010, 20; Cholova and Waele 2011, 34; Todorov 2013, 3; Pirro 2016, 62–66). Since the mid-2010s, the party has adopted the immigration issue, spreading racism and xenophobia while opposing the admission of refugees (Karasimeonov 2019, 7). Hence, Ataka displays all of the characteristics associated with the exclusionary, nativist ultranationalism of a radical right party, which is also reflected in the party's GALTAN placements between 9.17 and 9.65.

The two parties that merged to form the PF in 2014, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (VRMO) and the National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria (NFSB), appeal to a similar electorate as Ataka. NFSB's leader, Valeri Simeonov, was previously a member of Ataka but left the party to form the NFSB due to personal differences with Volen Siderov (Todorov 2013, 3; see also Karasimeonov 2014a, 2019; Krasteva 2016). VMRO was re-established in 1990 and since then has been part of the nationalist spectrum of Bulgarian politics (Krasteva 2016, 179). Similar to Ataka, the PF identifies minorities and immigrants as its main enemies (Krasteva 2016),

but it tried to position itself as a more moderate, radical right alternative (Kostadinova and Popova 2015). At the same time, however, Simeonov criticised Ataka's cooperation with the mainstream when it supported the GERB minority government (Krasteva 2016). While VMRO is indeed more moderate than Ataka, the NFSB resembles a "clone formation" of Ataka (Avramov 2015, 300). Simeonov underlined NFSB's similarities with Ataka, for instance, when insulting Roma in a public session of the parliament in 2014, for which he was later convicted in court (Karasimeonov 2017a). The CHES includes only the constituents of the PF, VMRO and the NFSB. Therefore, the PF's CHES scores are calculated by taking the mean of the two party's scores on the respective dimension. Thus, PF's GALTAN score of 8.31 is indeed more moderate than Ataka's. In 2017, all three radical right parties, Ataka, the NFSB, and VMRO, contested the parliamentary election as United Patriots. Therefore, the UP's GALTAN score of 9.34 is the mean of the parties' placements in the 2019 CHES wave.

The socio-economic positions of Ataka and the PF differ only slightly. In the 2014 election campaign, the PF campaigned for an expansion of the welfare state and wage increases (Kostadinova and Popova 2015). In contrast to Ataka, however, the PF's positions are more pro-market, which is also reflected in the LRECON scores of VMRO and the NFSB in the 2014 CHES wave (4.00). This score places the PF on the socio-economic left, but closer to the centre than Ataka, which received an adjusted score of 2.50.

The socio-economic positions of the three radical right parties remained largely unchanged in the run-up to the 2017 elections (Karasimeonov 2016, 9). The 2019 CHES wave, however, places both VMRO and the NFSB much closer to the centre of the LRECON dimension. The NFSB even receives a score of 5.50, locating the party slightly on the liberal end of the socio-economic dimension. Since this placement does not reflect the party's policy positions, the UP's LRECON score is calculated using VMRO's and NFSB's placement in the 2014 CHES wave and Ataka's in the 2019 wave. This results in a mean LRECON score of 3.84, which realistically describes the UP's left-leaning socio-economic profile.

Table 6.15: Socio-economic and socio-cultural distance between radical right parties and formateurs in Bulgaria

Formation year	Parties	Socio-economic position	Socio-cultural position
2005	Ataka BSP	3.25 3.25 distance: 0.00	9.17 5.83 distance: 3.34
2009	Ataka GERB	2.90 6.27 distance: 3.37	9.27 6.91 distance: 2.36
2013	Ataka BSP	1.44 (2.50) 3.47 distance: 0.97	9.65 5.94 distance: 3.71
2014	Ataka GERB	1.44 (2.50) 7.00 distance: 4.50	9.65 5.12 (6.91) distance: 2.74
	PF GERB	4.00* 7.00 distance: 3.00	8.31* 5.12 (6.91) distance: 1.40
2016	Ataka GERB	1.44 (2.50) 7.00 distance: 4.50	9.65 5.12 (6.91) distance: 2.74
	PF GERB	4.00* 7.00 distance: 3.00	8.31* 5.12 (6.91) distance: 1.40
2017	UP GERB	4.60** (3.84) 6.10 distance: 2.26	9.34** 5.76 (6.91) distance: 2.43

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Jolly et al. 2022), amended by the author. Values in parentheses indicate author's placement based on a qualitative assessment of party positions.
* The PF's CHES scores are calculated by taking the mean of the NFSB and VMRO.
** The UP's CHES scores are calculated by taking the mean of Ataka in the 2019 wave, and the NFSB and VMRO in the 2014 wave.

The formateurs: BSP and GERB

The BSP won the 2005 parliamentary elections and was thus tasked with government formation. The BSP is the successor of the Bulgarian Communist Party, which, similar to Ceauşescu in Romania (see below), adopted a national Communist ideology. In the first post-Communist decade, the BSP continued this tradition. The party did not shy away from nationalist rhetoric and had some reservations about Bulgaria's integration into NATO and the EU (Spirova 2008; Genov 2010). Around the

turn of the millennium, however, the BSP reformed its ideological profile and developed into a social democratic, centre-left party committed to a capitalist market economy, but favouring a comprehensive welfare state as well as limited privatisation and state interventionism (Smilov 2008, 15; Spirova 2008, 491). Moreover, the party also toned down its nationalist rhetoric and declared its support for European human rights standards (Spirova 2008, 491; Vachudova 2008, 870). The 2006 and 2014 CHES waves reflect the BSP's socio-economic and socio-cultural positions quite well. The party receives LRECON scores of 3.25 and 3.47, and GALTAN scores of 5.83 and 5.94, respectively.

The other formateur, GERB, has been the BSP's main opponent since the late 2000s. GERB's socio-economic agenda includes classic neoliberal policies, such as a flat tax and general tax reductions, cuts to the welfare state, and austerity measures (Karasimeonov 2009, 2014a; Kostadinova and Popova 2015). Similar to Ataka, the party started with a populist anti-corruption platform, but soon lost credibility in this area. GERB's chairman, Boyko Borisov, and his party are also decidedly pro-European. Regarding socio-cultural issues, however, GERB used sexist and homophobic rhetoric, and the party adopted some of Ataka's nationalist and anti-minority positions (Avramov 2015, 311–12; see also Pirro 2016). Krasteva (2016, 176) thus describes GERB's ideology as "moderate nationalism". GERB's GALTAN score of 6.91 in the 2010 CHES wave better reflects the party's position on the socio-cultural dimension than the centrist placements in the later waves (5.12 and 5.76, respectively). Therefore, this study uses the party's 2010 GALTAN score in 2013, 2014 and 2017 as well.

6.3.4 Summary

In Bulgaria, it took 15 years for radical right parties to enter parliament for the first time after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Since 2005, however, the radical right has been present in parliament without interruption. For much of this time, Ataka, the PF, or their alliance, the UP, have participated in government, despite never winning more than ten per cent of the vote. Initially, Ataka and the PF served as support parties for GERB-led minority governments. In 2017, however, GERB invited the UP to become a junior partner. While scholars have argued that radical right support parties of minority governments gain certain benefits, such as influence over government policies while maintaining an oppositional appeal (Zaslove 2012; see also Albertazzi and McDonnell 2005), this strategy has not paid off for the Bulgarian radical right. Ataka in particular lost at the polls after formally supporting the Borisov I government and backing the oppositional Oresharski government on various occasions, including the investiture vote.

The majority of governments in Bulgaria, including those with radical right parties, were characterised by a relatively broad socio-economic and socio-cultural

range. Borisov in particular tended to form multi-party governments with ideologically distant junior partners and support parties. The GERB-UP government of 2017 was an exception, as it was a minimal winning coalition that consisted of only two, ideologically proximate, parties. This coalition was also significantly more stable than the previous governments, as it lasted the full term, despite some quarrels between GERB and the radical right, as well as disputes within the UP itself (Karasimeonov 2017b, 16).

6.4 Romania

6.4.1 Government formation with radical right parties in Romania

The radical right repeatedly entered the Romanian parliament during the 1990s and 2000s. Two radical right parties, the Greater Romania Party (PRM) and the Party of Romanian National Unity (PUNR), won seats in the first free elections in 1992.[3] The Democratic National Salvation Front (FDSN), main successor of the Romanian Communist Party, won the 1992 parliamentary elections. Unlike in 1990, however, the party fell short of a majority, in part because a reform-oriented wing, led by Petre Roman, formed the Democratic Party (PD) (Gabanyi 1998, 251). The lower house of the Romanian parliament comprised seven parties and electoral alliances, as well as 13 representatives from different minorities. Neither the PD, nor the parties from the anti-Communist opposition in the Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR), wanted to cooperate with president Iliescu's FDSN. Thus, the FDSN's choice of potential coalition partners was rather limited, mostly to the radical right parties, which had already supported Iliescu's presidential candidacy (Gallagher 1995, 219). The FDSN ultimately formed a single-party minority government under prime minister Nicolae Văcăroiu, which was officially supported by the PRM, the PUNR, and the orthodox Communist, Socialist Party of Labour (PSM). This government underwent a re-formation in 1994, when the PUNR became a junior partner and received seats in the cabinet (Gallagher 1994, 30–32; Shafir 1999, 216; Autengruber 2006, 70–71).

The 1996 general elections removed the old elites from power. The CDR won the election, receiving 30 per cent of the vote. The FDSN, now renamed Party of Social Democracy in Romania (PDSR), scored 21.5 per cent and came in second. The CDR comprised several liberal and conservative parties, the largest of these being

3 Whether the 1992 Romanian general elections can be considered fair, free, and democratic is disputed. Observers noted some irregularities (Carey 1995), but there was no conclusive evidence of systematic manipulation (Autengruber 2006, 70).

the Christian Democratic National Peasants' Party (PNŢCD). Thus, PNŢCD candidate Victor Ciorbea became the formateur and designated prime minister. He led an oversized coalition with other parties from the CDR, such as the National Liberal Party (PNL) and the National Liberal Party – Democratic Convention (PNL-CD), as well as Petre Roman's PD, the Social Democratic Party of Romania (PSDR, not to be confused with the PDSR), and the Hungarian minority party, Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR). The formateur never considered a coalition with the radical right parties, PRM and PUNR (Autengruber 2006, 72–74).

This ideologically heterogenous, multi-party coalition re-formed several times during the legislature, including two changes of the prime minister. The PNL-CD and the PD, for instance, left the coalition in 1997 and 1998, respectively. Also in 1998, Ciorbea was replaced as prime minister by another PNŢCD politician, Radu Vasile. In 1999, the independent Governor of the National Bank of Romania, Mugur Isărescu, was elected prime minister, and the PD rejoined the coalition (Autengruber 2006, 74–75; Ștefan 2019, 407). Overall, the four-year term saw three different prime ministers and seven government coalitions, each with a slightly different partisan composition. The radical right parties, PRM and PUNR, were constantly in opposition. In order to avoid inflating the number of cases from a single country, the study includes only the Ciorbea I and the Isărescu I governments from this period.

In the 2000 general elections, the incumbent parties were punished for their inconsistent behaviour in office. The PDSR emerged as the clear winner of the elections with 36.6 per cent of the vote. The party secured a comfortable advantage over the radical right PRM, which came in second with 19.5 per cent—one of the best results of a radical right party in Central and Eastern Europe to date. The PUNR, in contrast, dropped out of parliament and never recovered from this defeat. Even though the PDSR and the PRM controlled a comfortable majority in parliament, they did not renew their cooperation from the early 1990s (Autengruber 2006, 74; Pop-Eleches 2008, 470). In fact, the PDSR joined the liberal and conservative parties in their cordon sanitaire vis-à-vis the radical right (Cinpoeş 2015, 288). Instead of cooperating with the PRM, PDSR's Adrian Năstase formed a minority government that was supported by the Hungarian minority party, UDMR, and the liberal PNL (Popescu 2003, 332; Gabanyi 2005).

In 2004, government formation was strongly influenced by the presidential elections, which were held together with the parliamentary elections. Traian Băsescu, joint candidate of the PNL and the PD, edged out former PDSR prime minister Năstase in the second round of the presidential race, whereas the PDSR, again renamed Social Democratic Party (PSD), came in first in the parliamentary elections. However, Băsescu used his constitutional powers to nominate PNL's leader, Călin Popescu Tăriceanu, to be the formateur of the new government. Popescu Tăriceanu successfully forged a minority coalition consisting of the PNL, the PD, the UDMR,

and the Romanian Humanist Party (PUR) which initially contested the election in an alliance with the PSD (Gabanyi 2005, 4–5; Stan and Zaharia 2007). After the PNL and the PUR left the coalition due to internal conflicts in 2007, the remaining two-party minority coalition continued in office until the end of the term, relying on the informal support from the PSD (Stan and Zaharia 2008). The PRM continued to be ostracised by the other parliamentary parties, and spent its last term in parliament on the opposition bench (Cinpoeş 2015).

The governments that were formed in Romania when radical right parties were present in parliament, were predominantly minority governments and often included a relatively large number of parties (see Table 6.16). This observation is true for governments with and without radical right parties, and it continues after the PRM dropped out of parliament in 2008 (Ştefan 2019). None of the three coalitions that were formed without radical right participation between 2000 and 2008, when data on party ideology is available, were minimal connected winning or minimal range coalitions on the socio-economic or socio-cultural dimensions. They did not fulfil the majority criterion required for both formats, and in 2000 and 2004, there were socio-economically and socio-culturally more homogeneous coalitions available to the parties. The qualitative data on the ideological positions of the FDSN/PDSR and the two radical right parties indicates that the ideological range of the 1992 and 1994 governments was rather small (see below). However, due to the lack of positional data for all parliamentary parties, it is impossible to determine whether these governments meet the ideological criteria for minimal connected winning or minimal range coalitions. However, since both of them are minority governments, they do not fulfil the majority criterion required for these formats.

6.4.2 The configuration of the Romanian party system

Fragmentation

Table 6.17 shows that the fragmentation of the Romanian party system had been constantly declining between 1992 and 2008 (Enyedi and Casal Bértoa 2018). In 1992, the effective number of parliamentary parties was still relatively high (4.8). From a purely mathematical perspective, the bargaining situation after the 1992 elections was quite complex, because the seven parties in parliament could form ten different minimal winning coalitions.[4] In 1996 the number of parliamentary parties decreased to 4.2, but the six parties and electoral alliances in parliament still faced a bargaining situation of moderate complexity. Due to the relatively even distribution of seats, none of them was close to a majority, and most of the possible minimal winning coalitions comprised three or more parties.

4 This number is based on a conservative count, considering the CDR as a single entity and excluding the 13 minority representatives in the legislature.

Table 6.16: Format and ideological range of governments in Romania

Formation year	Cabinet name and parties*	Radical right party		Coalition type**	Minimal range***		Minimal connected winning	
		Name	*Status*		*Socio-economic*	*Socio-cultural*	*Socio-economic*	*Socio-cultural*
1992	Văcăroiu I FDSN, (PUNR), (PRM), PSM)	PRM	Support party of a single-party minority government	MinSP	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
		PUNR	Support party of a single-party minority government					
1994	Văcăroiu II PDSR, PUNR, (PRM), (PSM)	PRM	Support party of a minority government	MinC	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
		PUNR	Junior partner in a minority coalition					
1996	Ciorbea I PNŢCD, PNL, PNL-CD, PD, PSDR, UDMR	PRM	Opposition	Surplus	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
		PUNR	Opposition					
1999	Isărescu I PNŢCD, PNL, PD, PSDR, UDMR	PRM	Opposition	MWC	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
		PUNR	Opposition					

2000	Năstase PDSR, (PNL), (UDMR)	PRM	Opposition	MinSP	No 3.30 (1.18)	No 3.27 (2.36)	No	No
2004	Popescu Tăriceanu I PNL, PD, UDMR, PUR	PRM	Opposition	MinC	No 2.80 (2.50)	No 3.23 (3.00)	No	No
2007	Popescu Tăriceanu II PNL, UDMR	PRM	Opposition	MinC	No 1.28 (2.50)	No 1.00 (3.00)	No	No

Source: Own compilation based on data from Casal Bértoa 2021; Bergman, Ilonszki, and Müller 2019a; Jolly et al. 2022.

* Parties in parentheses = support party of a minority government.

** Abbreviations: MWC = minimal winning coalition, MinSP = single-party minority government, MinC = minority coalition government, Surplus = oversized coalition.

*** Values indicate the ideological range between the most distant parties in government, including support parties of minority governments. Values in parentheses indicate the smallest possible ideological distance of a majority government.

Table 6.17: Fragmentation of the Romanian party system

Formation year	Total number of parliamentary parties	Effective number of parliamentary parties
1992	7	4.8
1994	7	4.8
1996	6	4.3
1999	6	4.3
2000	5	3.6
2004	4	3.4
2007	4	3.4

Source: Own compilation based on data from de Nève 2010; Casal Bértoa 2021; Nordsieck 2021.

In 2000 and 2004, the fragmentation drops significantly to 3.6 and 3.4 effective parliamentary parties, respectively. This reflects a new situation in which the number of actual parties in parliament decreased further, resulting in a more manageable number of possible minimal winning coalitions. However, electoral alliances complicate coalition bargaining in Romania because they are mainly vote-winning instruments and do not necessarily entail a commitment to cooperate in government after elections. Government formation in 2004 is a case in point. If the PSD and the PUR had continued their alliance in parliament, they could have joined together with almost any other party, and this coalition would have controlled a majority. Instead, the PUR broke away and decided to enter a four-party minority coalition led by the oppositional PNL.

Bipolar opposition

The Romanian party system of the early 1990s was structured by bipolar opposition rooted in the regime divide (Ştefan 2019, 397). In 1990, the oppositional forces and their electoral alliance, CDR, stood no chance against the National Salvation Front (FSN), the predecessor of the FDSN. After the violent overthrow of Communism in 1989, the FSN formally distanced itself from Ceauşescu but remained in control of the former regime's resources (Autengruber 2006, 146). The FSN's structural advantage won the party a landslide success in 1990, which is the main reason why these elections are considered neither free nor fair. In the run-up to the 1992 elections, however, the FSN split—the hardliners formed the FDSN and the reform-oriented members established the PD. The latter credibly distanced themselves from the Communist regime and sided with oppositional camp. The bipolar opposition that ran between CDR and PD on one side and the FDSN and some small

parties rooted in the former regime, like the radical right PRM, on the other, remained deeply polarised until the late 1990s (Gabanyi 1997, 194; Autengruber 2006, 147; Pop-Eleches 2008, 468–69) (see Table 6.18).

This regime divide was reflected in various political conflicts, such as the issue of the country's economic transformation. Here, FDSN, PRM, and PUNR preferred incremental reforms, while the opposition camp favoured a swift transition to a capitalist market economy. The opposition between the two camps also entailed an ethnic divide over the rights of the Hungarian minority in the country and Romania's relations with neighbouring Hungary. The party of the Hungarian minority, UDMR, was also a part of the opposition camp, while the national Communist camp, and most importantly the radical right parties, held anti-Hungarian views (Gabanyi 1997, 194–98; Autengruber 2006, 147; Cabada, Hloušek, and Jurek 2014, 97; Cinpoeş 2015, 287). Thus, socio-economic and socio-cultural divides were aligned in the Romanian party system.

Table 6.18: Bipolar opposition in the Romanian party system

Formation year	Bipolar opposition in the party system
1992	Bipolar opposition based on the regime divide; coalitions across camps were impossible
1994	Bipolar opposition based on the regime divide; coalitions across camps were impossible
1996	Bipolar opposition based on the regime divide; coalitions across camps were impossible
1999	Regime divide began to thaw; coalitions across camps became possible
2000	Regime divide began to thaw; coalitions across camps became possible
2004	Regime divide had largely disappeared; no bipolar opposition
2007	Regime divide had largely disappeared; no bipolar opposition

Source: Own compilation.

Due to the moderation of the FDSN/PDSR, which began distancing itself from its Communist past and its nationalist rhetoric in the late 1990s, this bipolar opposition has gradually waned. After its electoral victory in 2000, the party continued the economic reforms initiated by the previous government, indicating a reduction in tensions between camps, as well as a centripetal thrust in the party system (de Nève 2002, 309; Fesnic and Armeanu 2010). In 2000, the PDSR minority government was already tolerated by the oppositional UDMR. Hence, while coalitions across camps were impossible for most of the first post-Communist decade, a gradual thawing

of inter-camp relations began at the end of the 1990s, stimulated by parties' shared interest in joining the EU and NATO (Ștefan 2019, 397).

6.4.3 Characteristics and preferences of Romanian radical right parties

Parliamentary strength

In the 1992 general elections, the two radical right parties, PRM and PUNR, received more than ten per cent of the total votes and a corresponding number of seats in the chamber of deputies (see Table 6.19). The PUNR was clearly the stronger of the two parties, winning 7.7 per cent of the vote compared to 3.9 per cent for the PRM. The Romanian electoral system included only a three per cent threshold, so the PRM's vote share, although low, was sufficient to secure 16 parliamentary seats. With seat shares of 4.7 and 8.8 per cent, however, the radical right parties had limited opportunities to contribute to a majority coalition in parliament. In 1996, the PUNR suffered substantial losses, whereas the PRM improved marginally, but neither one gained more than five per cent of the vote, making them the smallest parties in the Chamber of Deputies.

Table 6.19: Election results and parliamentary strength of radical right parties in Romania

Formation year	Party	Vote share (in %)	Representation in parliament	
			Number of seats	*Seat share (in %)*
1992	PRM	3.9	16	4.7
	PUNR	7.7	30	8.8
1994	PRM	3.9	16	4.7
	PUNR	7.7	30	8.8
1996	PRM	4.5	19	5.5
	PUNR	4.4	18	5.2
1999	PRM	4.5	19	5.5
	PUNR	4.4	18	5.2
2000	PRM	19.5	84	24.3
2004	PRM	13.0	48	14.4
2007	PRM	13.0	48	14.4

Source: Nordsieck 2021.

The PUNR's downward trend continued, and the party dropped from parliament in 2000. The PRM, in contrast, won almost 20 per cent of the vote and 25 per cent of the seats, good for second place in the 2000 parliamentary elections. The PRM could have made a sizeable contribution to a parliamentary majority; however, the established parties placed it behind a cordon sanitaire making government participation impossible. In 2004, the PRM won 13 per cent of the vote and 14.4 per cent of the seats in parliament. However, this result marked the beginning of the party's electoral decline. The PRM failed to pass the threshold of representation in 2008 and has not returned to parliament since.

Ideological distance to the formateur

The radical right: PRM and PUNR

The main feature of the PUNR's ideology was its outright hostility towards the Hungarian minority in Romania, which included verbal attacks and even calls for violence during the ethnic tensions of the early 1990s. The PUNR wanted to curb the rights of the Hungarian minority in the education sector and to restrict the use of the Hungarian language. The party also supported banning the UDMR and resettling Hungarians in their kin state. Anti-Semitism and racism against Roma were secondary to the party's anti-Hungarian agenda but still part of its ideological platform. The party even made irredentist claims, for instance proposing to re-annex parts of Bukovina and Bessarabia (Gallagher 1995, chap. 6; Shafir 1999, 214–17; Andreescu 2003, 30–31; Adamson, Florean, and Thieme 2011, 319–20).

The PRM held similar socio-cultural positions, but prioritised them differently. Irredentism was more prominent in the party, as its name—Greater Romania Party—already suggests. Moreover, the PRM targeted Roma and Jews rather than Hungarians. Party leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor, often referred to as Ceauşescu's "court poet" (Shafir 1999, 214), was notorious for his anti-Semitic writings and hate speech. He called for the deportation of Roma to labour camps, denied the Holocaust publicly, and supported the rehabilitation of Marshall Antonescu, the leader of Romania's fascist Iron Guard which ruled the country from 1940 to 1944 (Shafir 1999, 214–16; Ţurcanu 2010, 5–7; Adamson, Florean, and Thieme 2011, 320–22).

Both radical right parties were situated left of centre on the socio-economic dimension, but the PRM was clearly the more anti-reformist and protectionist of the two. The PRM was rather sceptical towards the transformation of the economic system to a capitalist market economy and called for a comprehensive welfare state. If privatisation had to take place at all, the party wanted it to benefit Romanian, or at least post-Soviet, investors. Even more racist and nationalist was the party's demand to expropriate Hungarian and Jewish-owned businesses (Gabanyi 1997, 222; Adamson, Florean, and Thieme 2011, 321).

The PUNR was generally more moderate but also supported expropriating Hungarians and favouring Romanian investors during the process of privatisation, particularly the Communist nomenklatura (Gabanyi 1997, 231). Gallagher (1997, 31) describes the party's socio-economic platform as "inconsistent" compared to other Romanian parties at this time, and this resonates with the party's perception as an anti-Hungarian, single-issue movement (Andreescu 2005, 186). Moreover, the PUNR's somewhat blurry socio-economic platform might also be a result of the party's focus on its stronghold in Transylvania, where it attempted to ensure that party members and affiliates profited directly from political and economic transformation processes.

Both Romanian radical right parties have been clearly influenced by the national Communist legacy of the Ceauşescu regime, which created "a cultural system where extreme nationalist themes, symbols and ideas occupied a prominent position" (Cinpoeş 2015, 286). The PRM in particular invoked this legacy as a justification for both its nationalism and its reluctance towards economic and political transformation. But PUNR's leader, Gheorghe Funar, also adopted the clientelistic practices and ideological positions of the old regime (Gallagher 1995, chap. 6). In sum, the PRM and the PUNR are clearly located on the nationalist-authoritarian end of the GALTAN dimension and on the left side of the socio-economic spectrum. Since the PUNR is slightly more moderate on both dimensions, the party receives a GALTAN score of 9.0 and an LRECON score of 3.0, whereas the PRM is placed at 9.5 and 2.0 (see Table 6.20).

The formateurs: FDSN/PDSR, PNŢCD, and PNL

The governments in the 1992 and 2000 legislatures were formed by the FDSN, later renamed PDSR. As a successor of the Romanian Communist Party, the FDSN was deeply rooted in the national Communist Ceauşescu regime. In the early 1990s, the party favoured slow and gradual economic reforms at the "lowest possible social cost" (Văcăroiu 1993, in Ionescu 1993, 17). They hoped to achieve this goal by using measures such as very limited privatisation and state subsidies for key industries. The PDSR only reorganised itself into a centre-left, social democratic party, fully accepting Romania's transformation to a capitalist market economy and committed to integrating into NATO and the EU in 1997, after being replaced in government. However, the PDSR never abandoned the goal of creating a strong welfare state (Gabanyi 1997, 224; Bugajski 2002, 846–47; de Nève 2002, 66–67; Pop-Eleches 2008, 470; Vachudova 2008, 871).

Table 6.20: Socio-economic and socio-cultural distance between radical right parties and formateurs in Romania

Formation year	Parties	Socio-economic position	Socio-cultural position
1992	PRM FDSN	(2.00) (2.50) distance: 0.50	(9.50) (7.50) distance: 2.00
	PUNR FDSN	(3.00) (2.50) distance: 0.50	(9.00) (7.50) distance: 1.50
1994	PRM PDSR	(2.00) (2.50) distance: 0.50	(9.50) (7.50) distance: 2.00
	PUNR PDSR	(3.00) (2.50) distance: 0.50	(9.00) (7.50) distance: 1.50
1996	PRM PNŢCD	(2.00) (6.00) distance: 4.00	(9.50) (5.50) distance: 4.00
	PUNR PNŢCD	(3.00) (6.00) distance: 3.00	(9.00) (5.50) distance: 3.50
1999	PRM PNŢCD	(2.00) (6.00) distance: 4.00	(9.50) (5.50) distance: 4.00
	PUNR PNŢCD	(3.00) (6.00) distance: 3.00	(9.00) (5.50) distance: 3.50
2000	PRM PDSR	1.82 2.45 (3.00) distance: 1.18	9.73 6.27 distance: 3.46
2004	PRM PNL	2.20 7.50 distance: 5.30	9.50 4.10 distance: 5.40
2007	PRM PNL	2.20 7.50 distance: 5.30	9.50 4.10 distance: 5.40

Source: Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Jolly et al. 2022), amended by the author. Values in parentheses indicate author's placement based on a qualitative assessment of party positions.

The socio-cultural positions of the FDSN in the early 1990s were quite close to the radical right. In addition to the party's authoritarian style of government, "nationalism was the tool of choice" for the FDSN (Cinpoeş 2015, 287); however, Iescu and his party were more moderate than the PRM and the PUNR in this regard (Gallagher 1995, chap. 4; Andreescu 2003, 2005). By the end of the decade, the party toned down its nationalist rhetoric markedly and distanced itself from the radical right (Bugajski 2002, 843; Pop-Eleches 2008, 470; Vachudova 2008, 871).

In light of these positions, the FDSN/PDSR receives a score of 2.50 on the socio-economic dimension and 7.50 on the GALTAN dimension in 1992 and 1994. The 2002 CHES wave covers the party's positions in 2000, but its placement at 2.45 on the socio-economic dimension seems a bit low, given the reforms it made since the late 1990s. Its LRECON score is therefore adjusted to 3.00 in 2000.

The CDR came to power after the 1996 general elections. The PNŢCD was the strongest party in this alliance and thus also the party of the prime minister and the formateur. The PNŢCD is also considered the formateur of the 1999 government because it continued to be the largest individual party in the coalition. The party dates back to the pre-Communist period, making it one of the few successful historical parties in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 (Bugajski 2002, 839, 852–853). The PNŢCD is Christian democratic in name and ideology. After the tentative economic reforms of the previous government, the party aimed at accelerating Romania's transformation to a market economy, including more extensive privatisation. Overall, however, the PNŢCD adopted a social market economy, seeking to balance free market economics with social security (Gabanyi 1997, 219–20; Bugajski 2002, 852–53). The party's conservative profile was reflected by its preference for a constitutional monarchy and an "enlightened patriotism [*aufgeklärter Patriotismus*]" (Gabanyi 1997, 218), which valued national identity but differed from the exclusive nationalism of the radical right. The PNŢCD remained committed to minority rights and sought reconciliation with the Hungarian minority in the country (Gabanyi 1997, 219–20). It also stood for democratic values, the rule of law, and Western integration. Thus, the party receives centre-right LRECON and GALTAN scores (6.00 and 5.50, respectively), which are typical for the Christian democratic party family.

Due to the active intervention of President Băsescu, the PNL became the formateur of the 2004 government and maintained this role in the 2007 re-formation. The party was clearly positioned on the liberal end of the socio-economic dimension. Once in government, the PNL liberalised the tax code and introduced a flat tax (Gabanyi 2005, 6; W. M. Downs and Miller 2006). Despite its liberal economic programme, the PNL did not want to abandon the welfare state completely because the majority of the Romanian electorate was rather left-leaning. The party also held relatively liberal socio-cultural views. More than other Romanian parties, it supported minority rights and criticised the dominant role of the Romanian Orthodox Church

in politics and society (Grecu et al. 2003). These positions are also reflected in the PNL's CHES scores, which place the party at 7.50 on the socio-economic and 4.10 on the socio-cultural dimension.

6.4.4 Summary

The radical right entered government in Romania in the early 1990s, when the regime divide structured party politics. Using the resources of the old regime, the FDSN won the 1992 elections comfortably. Unlike in 1990, however, the party was no longer capable of winning an absolute majority on its own. Given the deep regime divide, the FDSN depended on the support of other parties from the national Communist camp in order to retain executive power. Notably, these parties included the two radical right parties, PRM and PUNR. Thus, as members of the governing coalition, the radical right parties contributed to slowing down the transformation process in Romania.

In 2000, the PUNR dropped out of parliament while the PRM tallied almost 20 per cent of the vote. Compared to the early 1990s, however, the Romanian party system had changed markedly. The regime divide was waning and the PDSR had distanced itself from its former radical right ally in order not to jeopardise Romania's integration into NATO and the EU. Thus, the PRM found itself ostracised by the other parties at the peak of its electoral success and had no other option but to remain in opposition. Due to the inability of its leader to deal with the cordon sanitaire, the PRM continuously lost support and dropped out of parliament in 2008 (Adamson, Florean, and Thieme 2011, 322; Cinpoeş 2015, 288–89). Neither the PRM nor any other radical right party has entered the Romanian parliament since. This does not mean, however, that radical right personalities or politics are absent from the Romanian party system. Indeed, there is a widespread trend of "political cruising" and "casual intolerance" (Cinpoeş 2015, 290–91), meaning that politicians, including radical right ones, frequently switch party allegiances and that Romanian parties struggle to distance themselves from intolerance and discrimination.