

# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1 Research interest and research question

The presence of radical right parties has become the norm in European democracies, even though large parts of the public reject their ultra-nationalist and illiberal ideology. In 2000, when the conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) invited the radical right Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) to become a junior partner in the Austrian government, all member states of the European Union (EU) sanctioned Austria. This drastic measure indicates that political elites in Western Europe viewed radical right parties as pariahs, even after two decades of substantial electoral success. The external intervention, however, remained largely inconsequential for Austria's position in the EU, and it did not prevent the ÖVP from further cooperation with the radical right. Since this pivotal event, the participation of radical right parties in government, either in Austria or in other Western European EU member states, has not triggered such a diplomatic outcry.

The story of radical right parties participating in government coalitions is somewhat different in the Central and Eastern European EU member states. Despite limited electoral success and organisational instability (Minkenberg 2002, 336, 2017; Mudde 2005a), radical right parties have entered government from the onset of the post-Communist transformation. The first governments that included radical right parties were formed in Estonia, Romania, and Slovakia in the early 1990s, but their government participation has remained neither limited to these countries nor to this time period. Contrary to the events described in Austria, the government participation of radical right parties in this region never caused similar protestations from European political elites.

In the past three decades, radical right parties have thus had the opportunity to directly influence political developments from the highest public office in many Central and Eastern European countries. Moreover, when radical right parties participate in government, this indirectly impacts national party systems by shifting the policy positions and narratives of their competitors to the right—even after they have left office (Pytlas and Kossack 2015; Pytlas 2016; Minkenberg et al. 2021). In light of these facts, the present study seeks to answer the following research question:

What explains the government participation of radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe in the first three decades after the fall of Communism?

## 1.2 Research overview and argumentation

### Theoretical framework

The formation of governments with radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe has received very limited scholarly attention (Fagerholm 2021). Nevertheless, by combining the research on radical right parties and the formation of government coalitions, this study draws on the literature from two established branches of comparative politics. Regarding the research on radical right parties, Cas Mudde (2007, 2) notes that works on this party family “might already outnumber the combined total of books on all party families together”. He is quick to add, however, that there is still much to discover. The central areas of research on radical right parties include topics such as their ideology (Ignazi 1992; Minkenberg 1998; Mudde 2000b; Carter 2005; Pirro 2016), organisational structure (Art 2011), and the societal demand for these parties, often in view of explaining their success or failure at the polls (Scheuch and Klingemann 1967; Betz 1994; Kitschelt and McGann 1995; Norris 2005; Meguid 2005, 2008; Mudde 2010; Minkenberg 2013; Pytlas 2016). More recently, scholars have devoted increasing attention to the impact of radical right parties on politics and society (Williams 2006; W. M. Downs 2012; Minkenberg 2015a, 2015b; Pytlas and Kosack 2015; Minkenberg et al. 2021), including their participation in government in Western European democracies (Minkenberg 2001; Bale 2003; Heinisch 2003; Akkerman 2012; Akkerman and Lange 2012; Zaslove 2012). It took about a decade before researchers also started paying attention to radical right parties in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe (Ramet 1999; Beichelt and Minkenberg 2002; Mudde 2005b) and yet another decade for more comprehensive comparative studies to emerge (Minkenberg 2009, 2015b; Pirro 2016, 2017; Pytlas 2016; Minkenberg et al. 2021).

The most comprehensive study on the participation of radical right parties in coalition governments focuses only on Western Europe (de Lange 2008). De Lange finds that the same criteria which explain mainstream party participation in government—namely parties’ pursuit of public office and the goal of implementing their preferred policies—also apply to the radical right. More precisely, the ideological distance of radical right parties to the *formateur*<sup>1</sup>, particularly on the issue of im-

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1 The *formateur* of a coalition is the party that leads coalition bargaining and usually also appoints the prime minister. In some countries, constitutional provisions comprise the formal appointment of a *formateur*, mostly by the head of state, whereas in others the *formateur* is selected on the basis of a code of conduct in the country’s political arena.

migration, and their seat share in parliament, determine whether or not they enter government or remain in opposition (de Lange 2008, 119; see also de Lange 2012).

Two political developments also influence the participation of radical right parties in government in Western Europe (Bale 2003; de Lange 2008). The rise of green and radical right parties caused party systems to become increasingly polarised, pitting left-wing and right-wing camps against one another. In this environment, conservative and Christian democratic parties were often unable to form centre-right majorities without involving radical right parties. Furthermore, in order to win back voters centre-right parties shifted their policy positions towards those of the radical right, particularly with regard to immigration. Thus, the electoral success of the radical right, coupled with their impact on mainstream parties' policy positions, paved the way for radical right parties to enter government in Western Europe.

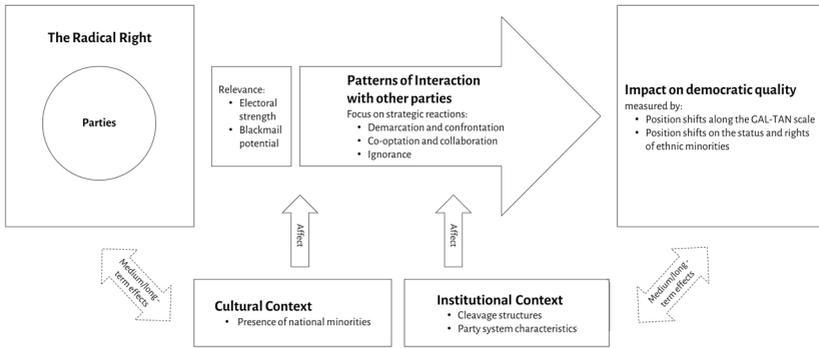
The only comparative study of government formation which includes a discussion of radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe is an analysis of 22 European countries which focuses on all radical—left and right—parties (Fagerholm 2021). This study provides some support for the importance of ideological and electoral factors for explaining radical right parties' inclusion in, and exclusion from, government. Yet, due to the broad scope of the study and because the results are based on only a few cases from Central and Eastern Europe which are skewed by the Latvian case, the conclusions remain rather tentative. Therefore, the author himself emphasises the need for further research (Fagerholm 2021, 16).

Existing research on party competition with radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe offers alternative explanations for why these parties' gain entrance into government coalitions so frequently. Minkenberg and several co-authors, for instance, develop a model (see Fig. 1) for assessing the impact of radical right parties on other parties' policy positions, the political culture, and the quality of democracy, focusing in particular on processes of interaction between radical right parties and their competitors (Minkenberg 2015a, 2017; Minkenberg et al. 2021; see also Meguid 2005, 2008). The model does not distinguish between electoral and post-electoral party competition, such as government formation (Benoit and Laver 2006, chap. 2), but it does highlight the general importance of mainstream parties' strategic reactions to the radical right. The model also illustrates that whether mainstream parties cooperate with, or distance themselves from, the radical right depends on a number of factors, including the perceived (electoral) threat of radical right parties, their policy positions, the configuration of party systems, and the cultural context. Thus, more general research on party competition with the radical right in Central and Eastern Europe points to similar explanatory factors as the research on government formation with radical right parties in the western part of the continent.

Research into coalition politics provides another point of reference for this study (for an overview, see Laver and Schofield 1998; Kropp, Schüttemeyer, and Sturm 2002b; Müller, Bergman, and Strøm 2008). Within this literature, the formation

of coalition governments has been one of the earliest and most prominent puzzles that scholars have tried to solve. Initially, researchers sought to predict the composition of coalitions after a given election, while other works tried to explain the participation of individual parties in government (de Winter and Dumont 2006).

Figure 1.1: Model of party competition with radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe



Source: Minkenberg et al. 2021, 651.

The mainstream of coalition research follows a context-sensitive rational choice approach. Hence, scholars believe that coalition formation results from parties' strategic choices in the pursuit of office and policy, which are constrained by contextual factors, such as the institutional environment, the configuration of party systems or historical trajectories (de Swaan 1973; Strøm 1990a; Strøm, Budge, and Laver 1994; Müller and Strøm 1999, 2000b; Kropp, Schüttemeyer, and Sturm 2002a; Mitchell and Nyblade 2008).

Research on coalition formation focuses mainly on Western European democracies, and studies on Central and Eastern Europe are still rather rare (Grotz and Weber 2011; Döring and Hellström 2013; Savage 2014, 2016; Bergman, Ilonszki, and Müller 2019a). However, one of the more general insights found in these works is that the rich theoretical body of coalition research can be applied in Central and Eastern Europe as well. Furthermore, there is substantial agreement that office-oriented and contextual factors play an important role in explaining government formation in Central and Eastern Europe (Grotz and Weber 2011; Döring and Hellström 2013; Savage 2016). The influence of policy-related factors, by contrast, remains disputed. While most works subscribe to a predominantly office-oriented notion of coalition formation in Central and Eastern Europe (Döring and Hellström 2013; Savage 2016;

see also Bergman, Ilonszki, and Müller 2019a), one study finds empirical evidence showing a significant relationship between parties' policy positions and participation in government (Savage 2014). Savage (2014, 558) argues convincingly that the frequently observed irrelevance of programmatic competition in Central and Eastern Europe results from a mis-conceptualisation of the region's policy space, which cannot be adequately captured by the classic (Western European) left-right dimension.

### **The radical right and party competition in Central and Eastern Europe**

This brief overview of research on radical right parties and coalition formation suggests that the characteristics and preferences of political parties play an important role in government formation, as does the context of coalition bargaining. Therefore, specific features of Central and Eastern European radical right parties, as well as the social and political context, must be taken into account when attempting to explain their path(s) to power. Though the present study assumes that radical right parties, and the political processes underlying party competition in the democratic Central and Eastern European countries, function equivalently to those in Western Europe, it acknowledges that the region's post-Communist, context-specific characteristics must not be ignored (Pytlas 2018; see also Minkenberg 2002, 2015a, 2017; Pirro 2016; Mudde 2017).

The first important difference between Western and Central and Eastern Europe concerns the conditions under which radical right parties emerged in both parts of the continent. In Western Europe, the rise of radical right parties is often seen as a counter-reaction to the post-materialist value changes that began in the 1960s (Ignazi 1992, 2003; Minkenberg 1998; see also Inglehart 1977). In Central and Eastern Europe, they emerge after 1989 in the context of a "triple transition", which included the mammoth tasks of building new economic and political systems in new—or at least newly independent—nation states (Offe 1991; see also von Beyme 1996; Elster et al. 2000). In both parts of the continent, massive modernisation surges accompanied the emergence of the radical right, and they were even more severe in Central and Eastern Europe than in the West (Beichelt and Minkenberg 2002; Pytlas 2016; Minkenberg 2017). Due to the importance of state- and nation-building during the post-Communist transformation, the issue of national identity is also highly salient in Central and Eastern Europe (Offe 1991; von Beyme 1996; Bunce 2005). In such an environment, nativist ultranationalism, the ideological core of the radical right, has resonated with political and societal actors since the onset of the transformation process.

Second, the party systems of Central and Eastern Europe are peculiar in terms of their structural and content dimensions, and this distinguishes them from their Western European counterparts. On the structural level, post-Communist party systems consisted of wholly new parties, with the exception of Communist successors

and few revived historical parties (von Beyme 1996, 127–29; Cabada, Hloušek, and Jurek 2014, 53; see also Ágh 1998; Elster et al. 2000). However, parties did not compete in a *tabula rasa* situation, even in the early phase of the transformation (Elster et al. 2000, 131). Detailed party programmes were often unavailable during this period and individual personalities enjoyed considerable influence over the political process, but political parties formed around certain core values that provided voters and other parties with some guidance from the outset (Hloušek and Kopeček 2010, 9–10). The familiarity with parties and their positions had increased markedly after a decade's worth of party competition, elections, and the government participation of different political forces (Ágh 1998; Toole 2000; Pop-Eleches 2010). Hence, by the turn of the millennium, it became possible to speak of a basic level of party system institutionalisation in the region, even though the level of stability was considerably lower than in the established Western European democracies (Enyedi and Casal Bértoa 2018; Emanuele, Chiamonte, and Soare 2020).

Third, the conceptualisation of the policy space is particularly important when it comes to the ideological configuration of Central and Eastern European party systems. The crucial issue here is the nature and alignment of cleavages, or divides (Deegan-Krause 2007), which structure party competition. There is a broader debate about whether or not it is possible to apply the classic left-right dimension to Central and Eastern Europe and whether the socio-economic and socio-cultural divides that constitute this dimension are predominantly reinforcing or rather cross-cutting (Kitschelt et al. 1999; Beichelt 2001; Marks et al. 2006; Deegan-Krause 2007; Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2009; Casal Bértoa 2014; Cabada, Hloušek, and Jurek 2014). The view here is that socio-economic and socio-cultural divides are reinforcing in some countries and cross-cutting in others. Therefore, this study opts for a two-dimensional conceptualisation of policy space, using both a socio-economic and socio-cultural dimension (see also Chapter 2). Thus, the issue of their alignment is not predefined by the researcher but becomes an empirical question. Moreover, the regime divide, which represents the contestation between the successor parties of the Communist regime and the oppositional forces, has constituted an overarching conflict dimension in Central and Eastern Europe. Particularly during the early years of the post-Communist transformation, this divide had the potential to overshadow other socio-cultural and socio-economic conflicts (Beichelt 2001; Grzymała-Busse 2001).

### Basic argument

The basic argument of this study is grounded on the premise that, despite the specific features of post-Communist democracies, radical right parties and party competition in Western and Central and Eastern Europe are fundamentally, and functionally, equivalent. Thus, the study argues that the government participation of Central and Eastern European radical right parties depends on their strategic

choices in pursuit of policy and office as well as the context in which they operate. More precisely, the seat share of these parties in parliament, their ideological distance from the formateur, particularly with regard to socio-cultural issues, and the configuration of the party systems, explain why they enter government or remain in opposition.

In light of the aforementioned specifics of the Central and Eastern European context, however, this basic argument needs to be qualified. The main reason for these qualifications is the development of post-Communist politics and societies during the course of the transformation process. The regime divide and the mammoth task of overseeing the triple transition severely impacted the region particularly in the first post-Communist decade. Against this background, three specifications shall be made to the basic argument concerning the early phase of the transformation:

- 1) Due to the importance of state- and nation-building, as well as the high salience of nationalism immediately after 1989, radical right parties were never required to undergo a process of normalisation before entering government. In contrast to their Western European counterparts, they do not have to achieve great success at the polls or shift the ideological positions of their competitors towards their own before being considered as viable coalition partners by mainstream parties.
- 2) The regime divide, and the corresponding opposition in the party system, plays a dominant role in government formation in the post-Communist democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, which can overshadow socio-cultural or socio-economic differences between parties. This can benefit radical right parties if they are in the same camp as the formateur, but it can be counterproductive if they are not. Because the opposition based on the regime divide is affective, rather than ideological and issue-based<sup>2</sup>, it differs from the conflicts over immigration that helped radical right parties gain power in many Western European party systems. Most importantly, Central and Eastern European radical right parties cannot automatically be assigned to a specific camp based on their ideology which results in a wider range of potential coalition partners than in Western Europe.
- 3) In the early years of the post-Communist transformation, both the socio-cultural and the socio-economic dimension play a central role in government formation with radical right parties. Reforming the entire economic system was

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2 The opposition between competing political camps entails affective and/or ideological elements. Affective polarisation refers to “the extent to which groups dislike each other”, whereas ideological or issue-based polarisation concerns “the extent to which they disagree with each other” on particular policies (Nugent 2020, 2–3; see also Iyengar et al. 2019; Wagner 2021).

such an essential part of the transformation process that governments could hardly afford major disagreement on their approach to economic policy. Hence, similar positions on socio-cultural issues alone are not sufficient for parties to form a government together during this transformational period.

These specifications of the basic argument indicate that government formation with radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe is a complex process. Hence, this study argues that explaining this outcome requires paying close attention to the interplay of party characteristics, ideological preferences, and party system configurations.

### 1.3 Research design

The present study is located in the sphere of medium-level concepts and middle-range theories, the classic domain of the comparative method in political science (Sartori 1970, 1040–46; Lane and Ersson 1996, 5–6; Lauth, G. Pickel, and S. Pickel 2009, 69). It involves theory-testing and theory-generating elements (Gerring 2017, 263–70). It draws on existing theoretical knowledge in the field of government formation, in part even with radical right parties, and puts these theories to a test in the context of Central and Eastern European democracies. The main goal of this study, however, is to identify different patterns—or configurations of factors—that explain why Central and Eastern European radical right parties enter government or remain in opposition. Hence, it applies a configurational approach that investigates the interaction of different explanatory factors and their impact on a specific outcome rather than testing the probabilistic effects of independent variables on dependent variables. Since fairly little is known about the interactions between the individual factors that explain the outcome of government formation with radical right parties, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, this study also pursues a theory-generating approach when examining these complex causal relations.

Given the aim to shed light on the variety of patterns that explain why Central and Eastern European radical right parties enter government or remain in opposition, a diverse case selection will be applied. More precisely, cases were selected in order to show variation with regard to each potential explanatory factor, or even configurations of factors, as well as the outcome (Seawright and Gerring 2008; see also Gerring 2017, 89–91). For this reason, the study examines government formation in countries from various regions of Central and Eastern Europe: the Visegrad Four from Central Europe, the Baltic states of Estonia and Latvia, and Bulgaria and Ro-

mania from Southeastern Europe.<sup>3</sup> Analysing government formation in eight countries from three different parts of Central and Eastern Europe should prevent the study from generating an explanation that applies only to a specific sub-region. The analysis covers the first three decades after the fall of Communism, more precisely the period from the first free elections in each respective country in the early 1990s until the end of 2020. These criteria produce a total of 48 cases, in which radical right parties were present in parliament and thus had the chance to enter government.

The research design faces the challenge of integrating a relatively large number of cases with a configurational approach that is usually the domain of case studies (Müller, Bergman and Strøm (Müller, Bergman, and Strøm 2008, 33–35; see also Ragin 1989; King, Keohane, and Verba 1994; Brady and Collier 2004; Gerring 2017). It attempts to ease the trade-offs between small-N and large-N research (Gerring 2017, chap. 11; see also Chapter 4) with the help of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). Charles Ragin developed this method particularly for such medium-N settings with the aim of combining “the best features of the case-oriented approach with the best features of the variable-oriented approach” (Ragin 1989, 84; see also Ragin 2000, 24–26; Rihoux 2009; Schneider and Wagemann 2012). However, the reason for choosing this method is not only the number of cases, but also the fact that QCA, as a configurational case-oriented method, is particularly well suited for investigating causal complexity beyond individual case studies. Here, QCA has an advantage over statistical methods because it preserves the specific configuration of the cases throughout the analysis. Thus, the cases do not disappear behind individual variables (Ragin 1989, x; Schneider and Wagemann 2012, 76–78; Marx, Rihoux, and Ragin 2014, 120).

Integrating case-specific configurations into a structured, cross-national analysis of a medium-to-large number of cases still comes at a cost. It is almost impossible for a researcher to investigate this many cases with the analytical depth that is characteristic of comparative case studies. Therefore, in order to obtain the level of familiarity with the cases required to interpret the configurations of explanatory factors in a meaningful way, it is necessary to limit the number of conditions. The selection of these conditions will be based on existing theoretical knowledge about government formation in Central and Eastern Europe and with radical right parties across the continent. Moreover, even with regard to the limited number of explanatory factors, the present study cannot dig as deep into causal mechanisms as

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3 The former Yugoslav republics of Croatia and Slovenia are not included, because Tito's Yugoslavia began challenging the hegemony of the Soviet Union during the Stalinist era and developed much more independently from Moscow than either the Central and Eastern European satellite states or the Baltic Soviet republics (Rothschild 1993, chap. 3). Additionally, Croatia only gained independence in 1995 after four years of war and it entered the EU in 2013, several years later than the other member states in the region.

is possible in single, or small-N comparative, case studies which use process tracing or similar methods. The primary goal of this study is to investigate the causal relationships at play in government formation with radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe. However, it will also address the causal mechanisms that connect the individual explanatory factors in the various explanatory patterns, though only to a limited extent. Thus, in terms of Gerring's (2017, 244) typology of trade-offs between small-N and large-N research, the research design charts a middle path between causal depth and breadth as well as between the study of causal effects and causal mechanisms.

Furthermore, the research design reflects the assumption that the patterns of government formation with radical right parties may vary over time. It divides the period under investigation into two phases, namely the time before and after the so-called "third-generation elections" (Pop-Eleches 2010). Third-generation elections are those elections that take place after parties from the two main political camps in a given country have been in power at least once. This allows both voters and political competitors to better assess their policies as well as their strategic behaviour, which is a key prerequisite for structured party competition (Savage 2016; see also Sartori 1976). The first third-generation elections in all eight countries took place around the year 2000, so this threshold, more or less, distinguishes between the first post-Communist decade and the two following decades, when Central and Eastern European party systems reached a basic level of consolidation. Moreover, democracy and market economy had also been firmly established by this time, at least on a procedural level, and all countries had begun formal accession negotiations with the EU (Beichelt 2004; Vachudova 2005).

## 1.4 Contributions and limitations

### Contributions

The present study contributes to the existing research on party competition in several respects. First, it provides original empirical insights into the process of government formation with radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe. Here, the study confirms the tentative conclusions from the existing research (Fagerholm 2021) by showing that electoral results and ideological preferences of radical right parties play an important role in explaining why they enter government or remain in opposition. Yet, additional findings also explain how these factors interact with each other and with the configuration of the party system.

More precisely, the study reveals that the patterns of government formation with radical right parties in the early years of the post-Communist transformation differ significantly from those in the consolidating decades. It finds a clear transformational pattern that results from the triple transition's impact on the nascent party

systems of Central and Eastern Europe. In this period, radical right parties' proximity to the formateur on both the socio-economic and socio-cultural dimensions is a necessary condition for government participation. The electoral weakness of most radical right parties at this stage is certainly no advantage, but it does not prevent them from entering government in the fragmented party systems of the region either. Moreover, the regime divide affects government formation in the period before the first third-generation elections, even if it does not divide party systems into two oppositional camps that are unable to form coalitions together.

After the turn of the millennium, the patterns of government formation with radical right parties in Central and Eastern Europe increasingly resemble those in the western part of the continent (Bale 2003; de Lange 2008, 2012). The existence of a deeply polarised opposition in the party system, originating mostly from conflicts other than the regime divide, and the ideological distance from the formateur on the socio-cultural dimension, become the most important factors for explaining government formation. The importance of the radical right's seat share in parliament also increases in this period. However, the high degree of fragmentation that still exists in many Central and Eastern European party systems continues to help electorally weak radical right parties to gain access to power.

Although this study primarily focuses on radical right parties, it also contributes to the research on government formation more broadly. In addition to generating new empirical insights, it advances the discussion about concepts and methodological approaches within this discipline. Most importantly, it confirms that a time- and context-sensitive approach contributes analytical value to the study of party competition in Central and Eastern Europe (Ekiert and Hanson 2003b). The results show that there are indeed substantial differences in the explanatory patterns of government formation with radical right parties before and after the first third-generation elections. This aspect should be relevant for other areas of comparative politics and social science research in Central and Eastern Europe and beyond. Western European democracies, for instance, have also witnessed dramatic contextual changes during the past decades, such as the post-materialist value change since the late 1960s, the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989/90 or the economic crisis in the late noughties, which could also prove to be pivotal turning points upon closer examination (Inglehart 1977; Hernández and Kriesi 2016).

Moreover, the findings present insights into the connection between the fragmentation of the party system and the seat share of radical right parties in parliament as well as the interaction between their socio-economic and socio-cultural positions. These findings improve our knowledge about the strategic decisions of radical right parties and their competitors during party competition unrelated to government formation and, thus, about the impact of the radical right on politics and society in Central and Eastern Europe. The study also emphasises the importance of causal complexity and a configurational approach. In most cases, the outcome

of government formation can only be explained when focusing on the interaction of different explanatory factors. QCA has proven to be a useful tool for this type of investigation.

## Limitations

Like all comparative empirical research, this project has certain limitations. First, as a study with a medium number of cases, it sacrifices some analytical depth in order to identify cross-national explanatory patterns. At the same time, however, the case-based research design and the regional focus set limits on the generalisability of the results. Therefore, the present study aims only to attaining internal validity (Gerring 2017, 232, chaps. 9–10). However, in light of the presumed functional equivalence between Western and Central and Eastern Europe, the results of this study should offer some theoretical insights to scholars interested in studying government formation with radical right parties in Western Europe as well.

Second, the study works with a theory-based analytical model and aims to explain the participation of radical right parties in government with the help of the conditions specified therein. Even though country-specific case studies make up a sizeable part of the study, they remain purely descriptive. They serve primarily to introduce the cases and to gather the data required for the comparative analysis. Thus, the country case studies do not attempt to inductively identify further explanatory factors or to comprehensively illuminate the causal mechanisms behind the formation of governments with radical right parties in individual countries.

Third, the study shares a common feature with the vast majority of academic research on the formation of government coalitions in that it essentially views coalition negotiations as a black box. It does not attempt to trace processes that take place largely behind closed doors. This task can only be completed using individual case studies (e.g. Müller 1999) or large-scale international research projects that have the necessary resources for a large number of qualitative interviews with high-level politicians in numerous countries. This project simply lacks the resources for such an undertaking.

Fourth and finally, the study deals exclusively with the formation of governments. It neither examines the cooperation between coalition parties while they are in office nor does it investigate the direct and indirect effects that radical right participation in government has on politics, society, or the radical right parties themselves. However, by explaining the formation of governments with radical right parties, it contributes to a better understanding of the processes that lead to these effects.

## 1.5 Outline of the study

As a first step, the next two chapters present the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in this study. Chapter 2 provides a definition of radical right parties and discusses the characteristics of this party family in Central and Eastern Europe. It goes on to address the development of the post-Communist party systems in order to introduce the context in which government formation with radical right parties takes place. The chapter also discusses similarities and differences between radical right parties and party systems in Central and Eastern and Western Europe, thus identifying where context-specific modifications are necessary. Chapter 3 is dedicated to theories of coalition formation. It provides an overview of the most important theories found in the discipline and assesses whether these have received empirical support in Western and in Central and Eastern Europe.

The research design and methodology are the subject of Chapter 4. This chapter starts by outlining the general features of the research designs found in the literature on government formation and introducing QCA as the principal research method of this study. It then identifies the most promising explanatory factors based on the discussions found in Chapters 2 and 3 and combines them into an analytical model. As a last step, the chapter discusses the operationalisation of the individual components of the analytical model.

The empirical section begins with the descriptive country case studies in Chapters 5 and 6, which follow a uniform structure based on the factors specified in the analytical model. Chapter 5 covers Central Europe, and Chapter 6 discusses the Baltic and Southeastern European countries. Chapter 7 summarises the data and carries out the calibration of set membership. This procedure generates a uniform dataset from the empirical data presented in the two previous chapters, which is necessary to prepare the data for analysis with QCA.

On the basis of this dataset, Chapters 8 and 9 provide a comparative analysis of government formation with radical right parties. Chapter 8 covers the period before the first third-generation elections, and Chapter 9 the two consolidating decades. As is usual in QCA, this analysis aims to identify necessary and sufficient conditions for the participation of radical right parties in government. In line with good practice in QCA (Schneider and Wagemann 2010), the negative outcome—the exclusion of radical right parties from government—is examined separately. In conclusion, Chapter 10 summarises the results and compares the patterns found in the two periods under investigation. It then discusses the implications of these findings for studying radical right parties and party competition.

