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Crossborder Dynamics at the Southeastern Periphery of the European Union: The Unusual Case of Bulgaria's Ethnic Turkish Minority*

Boyka STEFANOVA[1]

University of Texas at San Antonio
Department of Political Science & Geography
Boyka.Stefanova@utsa.edu

Abstract. This paper examines the workings of Euroregionalism on the example of the border region between Bulgaria and Turkey. The region is characterized by diverse economic, political, and cultural factors: historical minority dynamics and significant migration flows, crossborder cooperation as a result of the EU's structural policies, and minority participation in national-level politics facilitated by dual citizenship rights. The paper finds that, in contrast to the premises of Euroregionalism, crossborder cooperation, market homogenization, and territorial-functional regimes have failed to alter the pattern of regional loyalties or contribute to the emergence of a distinctive regional-civic identity with demands for political voice at the subnational level. The disconnect between the homogenizing influences of crossborder programmes and the formation of a transnational political space is explained by Bulgaria's national model of minority representation. The established patterns of political participation of the ethnic Turkish minority at the national level have so far marginalized its potential regional loyalties and demands for autonomy or self-governance.

Keywords: Euroregionalism, ethnic Turkish minority in Bulgaria, EU structural policies, cross-border cooperation, exit-voice framework.

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Introduction

The macro-political view on the European Union (EU) posits European integration as a consecutive stage of state building, which affects the relationship between national centers and regions by altering the pattern of allegiances to and dependence on the authority of the state (Bartolini 2004, 2005). Ruggie (1993) contends that regional integration in Europe has relaced nation-state territoriality with a post-territorial political order. Borders in the EU are in the process of transition and diversification (Smith and Wistrich 2007a) as internal borders disappear, external borders reorganize, and an increasing number of territories gravitate towards EU membership. Research findings sugest that, in parallel with shifting borders, the structure and salience of regional demands – at the center, internally, and on the periphery – are likely to be reconfigured as well, in the direction of empowerment of the subnational level (Hooghe 1995).

The growing salience of transnational links and the prominence of regions as recipients of resources and management functions under the system of European governance is the essence of EU regionalism (Allen 2005; Anderson 2002; Bache 2008). It takes place both as a top-down and a bottom-up process. The top-down dimension is a product of the adaptation pressures of EU structural policies, whereby the member states create institutional arrangements involving the subnational level and, at the same time, resist the growing differentiation of territorial structures through devolution and decentralization (Keating 2000). This aspect of the process is primarily governance-based and, therefore, apolitical in nature, consistent with the welfare optimization nature of EU regional policy. From a bottom-up perspective, EU regionalism represents a more complex development. It functions as an economic and political resource. The process of regional participation in policy making and resource distribution is more political in nature. The capacity of economic resources associated with the EU's regional policies to serve the political objectives of subnational actors reshapes the model of EU regionalism from a problem-solving device into a framework for political action which transcends the boundaries and authority of the state. EU-induced regionalism tends to diversity collective identities by reinforcing local ones and by empowering political actors with an ethnoregional agenda (Anderson 1997). At the same time, the political model of regionalism is not necessarily of territorial-constitutional nature. Europe of the regions is not a federalist project, although it maintains a territorial dimension (Smith and Wistrich 2007b, p. 15).

The multifaceted processes of regional restructuring as a result of European integration have been studied extensively in Western Europe (Keating 1993, 1998; Loughlin 2007; Pasquier and Perron 2008, among others). The literature observes that the direction of influence is that of enhanced devolution, regionalization of politics, and empowerment of subnational actors (Keating and McGarry 2001,

McGarry and Keating 2006). Such outcomes have remained less pronounced in Eastern Europe. The EU's eastward enlargement has not simply extended its established model of regionalism to the new member states. State sensibilities and resistance to decentralization in the east has been more pronounced. At the same time, although institutional and governance change at the national level has been less visible in Eastern Europe, ethnopolitical dynamics at the subnational level have acquired increasing salience. The conflicting developments of minimal responsiveness to top-down EU pressures on behalf of the central authorities and active conversion of EU resources into political action on behalf of subnational actors are embedded in the legacy of territorial and historical discontinuities in the prevalent model of state building in Eastern Europe. Bulgaria is cited as a case in which the centralized style of territorial politics has remained largely unaffected by the conditionality and incentive structures of its EU accession (Nikolova 2008; Brusis 2010). The EU's regional policy, including its rules, institutional resources, and public policy requirements, has failed to induce a meaningful territorial restructuring in the direction of regional empowerment. From a bottom-up perspective, regional and minority demands for self-governance have failed to materialize as well (Spirova and Stefanova 2012).

Such findings represent a puzzle to the EU's enlargement model in Eastern Europe and the general conclusions about the political opportunities associated with its regional policies. Access to EU structural funds has required policy reform whose main components are strengthening of administrative capacity at the regional level, transfer of resources to local and regional actors, and a model of territorial decision-making based on a partnership between the state and the subnational level. As elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the polity effects of this process in Bulgaria have been the creation of institutional structures assisting the process of functional regionalization. However, in contrast to other cases, devolution or less formal arrangements for the regionalization of governance have not followed (Pasquier and Perron 2008, p. 11). Bulgaria's participation in cross-border programmes similarly has not created bottom-up demands for access to resources and transfer of policy-making competences to the regional level. This paradox is especially pronounced in the southeastern region of the country, which participates in a variety of cross-border initiatives between Bulgaria and Turkey, also a beneficiary of Structural funds in the process of its EU accession.

Bulgaria's southeastern border with Turkey combines attributes of cultural distinctiveness, significant cross-border flows, and visible political agency representing regionally specific minority interests. The region includes several ethnically mixed districts with a concentration of the ethnic Turkish minority above or around the national average (8.8%), adjacent both to the Kurdjali district (South-Central region) – a majority-minority district with the highest proportion of ethnic Turks in the district population (66.16%) – and to the border provinces of Edirne

and Kirklareli in Turkey, with which they share common cultural heritage and territorial distinctiveness.[2] The policy effects of the EU Structural funds combined with long-term migration patterns, however, have not significantly affected the formation of transnational networks, regional identities, or cross-border economic convergence. Such outcomes are at odds with the expectations of the regionalist perspective which posits the reinforcement of territorial cleavages through the growing salience of ethnoregional identities and deepening of the center-periphery conflict (Fournis and Pasquier 2008, p. 50).

The case of Bulgaria's ethnic Turkish minority in the context of increased cross-border mobility raises important questions. It challenges regionalist propositions about the empowerment of the regional layer of governance, restructuring of the center-periphery cleavage, and enhanced political mobilization of minority demands for compensation or self-governance (Pasquier and Perron 2008, p. 12). In line with the regionalist perspective of European governance (Pasquier and Perron 2008; Nikolova 2008; Scott 2005; Smith and Wiestrich 2007b), we should expect increased opportunities for transnational mobilization, local alliances, and reconfiguration of minority interests. Based on its cultural distinctivess as an ethnic minority group, ethnocultural solidarity and intercommunal cooperation around regional projects, we should expect the ethnic Turkish minority to develop regional loyalties and participate in a public sphere outside the national state potentially leading to the politicization of majority-minority relations in Bulgaria and demands for more direct regional competences in policy making. As neither such demands have materialized, nor has the Bulgarian state unequivocally embarked upon decentralization as a result of the adaptational pressures of the EU's structural policies, the unusual case of a lack of articulated regional interests and demands on behalf of the ethnic Turkish minority has yet to be explained.

Brusis (2010) has argued that the low level of ethnoregional mobilization and lack of political agendas favouring regional self-governance in Bulgaria is due to the absence of minority actors at the subnational level with a capacity for cross-border coalition building and the established tradition of participation of ethnic Turkish minority representatives in the national government. While such variables of political agency are a valid determinant of the strength of subnational mobilization (Hooghe 1995), they lack a reference to social structures. The political agency perspective does not sufficiently take into account the incidence of societal cleavages, historical legacies, the level of centralization of territorial governance, and factor mobility. Agency is embedded in an institutional setup and

[2] According to data from the 2011 Census, the ethnic Turkish minority constitutes 8.8% of the Bulgarian population (9.4% according to the 2001 Census). http://censusresults.nsi.bg/Reports/2/2/R7.aspx. See also Map 1.

depends on the relative correspondence between social structure and individual preferences. It is affected also by the differentiation of national political space as a result of the functional expediencies of European integration.

This paper examines the counter-intuitive dynamics of Euro-regionalism in the case of Bulgaria's Southeastern region from a structuralist perspective. It presents an argument that, instead of exploring the coalition-building strategies and access to government of ethnoregional actors, the level of ethnoterritorial mobilization may be explained by the embeddedness of regional interests in social structures, functional regimes, and territorial cleavages which collectively form a stable framework for political action and group conflict.

The proposition that the structure of political opportunities is at the origin of individual demands for 'voice' (representation) or 'exit' from the state is the essence of the macropolitical perspective on territorial relations in the European state system. It posits European integration as a consective stage of state building (Bartolini 2004, 2005). The macropolitical perspective argues that the intensity of minority demands, (ethno)-regional mobilization, and the relationship between centers and peripheries changes as a result of the structural features of substate territories, their resource endowment, and the opportunities for regional actors to convert cultural, economic, and institutional resources into political action (Bartolini 2005).

It is therefore analytically appropriate and empirically useful to place minority politics within a regionalist perspective and, conversely, examine the centrality of state authority, claims to self-governance, irredentism, and minority nationalism as a continuum of options and choices for structuring the relationship between substate territories and the state. For example, instead of uncompromising irredentist positions or demands for autonomy at the regional level, we are likely to observe a variety of minority demands for access to resources and representation (not necessarily incompatible with the state), as group identities are likely to diversify as well. The core theoretical expectation is in the direction of pluralism and diversity, not that of stability or intransigent minority demands.

The paper argues that the 'exit-voice' framework is better positioned to explain the lack of minority demands for self-governance in Bulgaria's case than political exchange models, electoral politics, or agency alone. It proceeds with an overwiew of the macropolitical model of territorial restructuring (Bartolini 2004) with reference to the regionalist perspective on European governance. Analysis then turns to examine the structural features of Bulgaria's Southeastern region and cultural, econmic and political resources in the context of cross-border flows between Bulgaria and Turkey, which determine the opportunities for political mobilization of ethno-regionalist interests. The paper finds that, given the political opportunity structure, the incentives of local for 'exit' from the state versus demands for 'voice' i.e., national-level representation, are limited, which explains

the absence of ethno-territorial demands on behalf of the ethnic Turkish minority in border regions.

Territorial restructuring and politicizing effects of EU regionalism: A framework of political opportunities for regional interests

EU regionalism is not simply a component of multi-level governance (Cole and Palmer 2008). The strengthening of the subnational level as a recipient of resources and access to policy making provided by the EU's structural policies is conducive to the politicization of regional identities. The link between the territorial and political aspects of regionalism is maintained by ethnoregional parties. The conventional view on Euroregionalism posits such parties as marginal, as the EU's regional policies have no political content and do not directly endow local actors with political objectives. However, if European integration is regarded as a consecutive stage of state building which reorders center-periphery relations and the functional bases of political conflict, regional dynamics should be relevant to the structuring of national political space. As a result of the otherwise non-political territorial aspects of EU regional policies as a process of multi-level governance, ethnoregionalism may be considered as a nontrivial political force.

First, European integration encourages regionalism as a political development (Bort 2005; Scott 2005). Regional policy does not require constitutional territorial restructuring through formal devolution. Its main objective is not the achievement of a constitutionalized 'Europe of the regions' but rather pragmatic effects: economic efficiency, convergence, and redistribution. The organizing perspective is that of governance, and not the creation of a new legal-territorial order. Governance, however, is not apolitical (Marcou 2002). It increases the sophistication of economic, political, and social networks at the regional level thus empowering local communities (Scott 2005, p. 90). The process has a transnational dimension. Participation in European governance and the implementation of EU structural policies affects the relationships between actors and institutions (Pasquier and Perron 2008). Such relationships are the essence of regionalism: a process of changing functionality of territorial institutions which promotes a given territory by granting more control to the local government. The EU's structural policies thus may be conducive to the emergence of transnational contexts for discourses on the role of regions (Bort 2005, p. 69). Ansell (2004, p. 13) has argued that, as a result of the interests and demands of social forces, territorial restructuring takes place in the direction of a retreat of the state. New layers of public claims over authority emerge. EU governance therefore affects the constitutive features of the European state system and the rebundling of territory. The corresponding hypothesis is that the position of regional actors is strengthened.

Furthermore, the Euroregional context increases the permeability of borders and regional openness. Bort (2005, p. 84) hypothesizes that Euroregional institutional cooperation may be conducive to solving the national problem of minorities by providing regional solutions. The underlying logic is that participation in collective crossborder activities leads to a higher demand for governance in such areas (Scott 2005, p. 91; Young 1997, p. 114). As a mechanism of regional policy, cross-border cooperation (CBC) most directly challenges state centrism by altering the concept of peripherality. The argument is that, through CBC, formerly peripheral regions become part of European regionalism.

The general perspective of regionalism in the context of European integration therefore acknowledges the repositioning of various categories of regions – national centers, interface, and peripheries – in the direction of strengthening of the subnational level. Regionalism, however, does not suggest a causal process which would link the macro-level of European governance and the articulation of political choice at the individual level. By contrast, a political opportunity structure approach may be better positioned to explain such relationship by outlining a causal mechanism, that of resource conversion, in order to bind together structural conditions/institutional context and individual preferences/allegiances to the state.

The macropolitical model of European integration: The Bartolini (2004) structural framework

Two competing and partly overlapping perspectives examine the societal impact of the territorial reordering of the system of rule through European integration: the structural features/individual choice framework (Bartolini 2004) and the political exchange/relational model (Tarrow 2004). Bartolini's macropolitical approach on European integration traces patterns of political conflict and territorial restructuring in the EU relative to the established framework of territorial politics in the nation state through the lens of societal cleavages and, primarily, the center-periphery cleavage. This approach blends together center-periphery territorial structures and political demands for exit (or 'voice') of the substate periphery from its subordinate relationship with the state (Hirschman 1981). By contrast, Tarrow's (2004) model of transnational political conflict moves away from the structural determinants of political claims, relying instead on a coalition-building framework embedded in the opportunities for political exchange. Bartolini's framework builds upon the work of Stein Rokkan on territorial politics in Europe (Rokkan 1999; Rokkan and Unwin 1982; Rokkan *et al*. 1987) extended to the politics of territorial restructuring in the EU. While the nation-state presupposes the coincidence of cultural, economic, and administrative boundaries and the centralization of loyalties as a result of the functional bases of political conflict, regional integration, as well as the internationalization of economic life in

general, progressively challenges the coincidence of cultural, economic, and politico-administrative boundaries.

Bartolini has argued that the opportunity for open requests for institutionalized territorial representation depend on the cultural, economic, political, and institutional resources of the substate territory. According to Bartolini (2004, 2005), its cultural resources increase in the presence of an outside or alternative support center based on ethnicity or religion. Cultural solidarities, while less flexible at the center, may span across borders in the ethnically mixed peripheral regions, decreasing the costs of exit options. Access to outside capital markets and economic integration with broader-than-national space of market transactions are economic resources creating opportunities for exit from the national center. As crossborder functional regimes develop and induce the territorial differentiation of regulatory orders, individuals, firms, and communities enter different jurisdictions (Bartolini 2004, p. 23). The options for exit from an integrated national economic, political, and cultural life increase. One of Bartolini's core analytical claims is that interface peripheral regions acquire more resources than external peripheral regions to generate demands for institutionalized territorial representation (Bartolini 2004, p. 38). As the relative attractiveness of the center is likely to diminish as a result of access to external resources, demands for relative independence or separatism may increase as well. The causal mechanism linking structural conditions and individual choice is that of converting economic, cultural, and (geo)political resources available to the substate level into political demands for revising the latter's relationship with the center.

According to this perspective, European integration represents a consecutive stage of territorial restructuring of the nation-state system by providing structural resources and a cross-border context for economic transactions, cultural affinities, and political demands. The EU's structural policies are central to this process, as they are specifically focused on the governance of territories, especially peripheries, and regional convergence. Devolution creates incentives for subnational units to acquire control over resources and decision-making, in turn structuring local forms of external representation (Bartolini 2004, p. 24). Such developments create a new opportunity structure for political action. The key question is whether the shift of functions to the transnational level results in the empowerment of certain areas of substate-level territorial organizations (Bartolini 2004, p. 27). According to Bartolini, territorial spaces with higher institutional autonomy and participation in administrative networks for the management of functional areas, such as EU functional regimes or crossborder cooperation, acquire diverse exit options based on external administrative resources (EU programming, twinning initiatives, and functional subsystems of governance).

National political competition also contributes to this outcome. Dealignment of traditional cleavages opens up space for the mobilization of local interests,

single-issue politics, and political entrepreneurship. This argument is important, as it suggests that the process of territorial restructuring in the EU, while causally significant, is not an entirely autonomous source of influence on substate territorial loyalties. The EU level of impact is filtered through the pattern of domestic political conflict.[3]

As a result of the interaction of structural features, external resources, and political preferences, peripheral regions and other substate territories acquire a variety of exit options for revising their relationship with the state. From low to high, such options vary from: a) increased supranational and interregional cooperation – an option compatible with the governance perspective on Euro-regionalism; b) demands for a larger share of state resources or devolution – options compatible with neoregionalism and liberal accounts of the 'Europe of the regions' perspective; and c) irredentism and forms of separatism, in which regional identities and loyalties subsume loyalties to the national center. The latter outcome is explained by the constructivist view that territorial configurations, such as the region or the nation-state, are socially constructed categories based on interaction and shared identities.

The table below outlines the determinants of exit options of substate territories and minorities based on the structural features and resources of a given territory:

Table 1. Mapping out the structure of opportunities of the substate territory

Structural features	Resources	Exit options
CULTURAL DISTINCTIVENESS (language, religion, ethnicity)	Strong extraterritorial center serving as a cultural focal point	**SEPARATISM**
	Monocephalic dominant-capital state versus polycephalic urban structure with strong peripheral centers	**IRREDENTISM**
ECONOMIC STRUCTURE (sectoral specialization, free trade)	Comparison across borders of the distributive efficiency of neighboring state or supranational center	**DEVOLUTION**
	Substate dependency on trade across border	
GEOPOLITICAL POSITION (external, enclave, interface, "failed" center-periphery)	Party system regionalization Crossborder functional regimes	**DEMANDS FOR A LARGER SHARE OF STATE RESOURCES**
INSTITUTIONAL DISTINCTIVENESS	Territorial differentiation of functional subsystems: economic district, labor, credit, salary differentiation, welfare regulations, education	**INCREASED SUPRANATIONAL/ INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION**

Source: After Bartolini (2004: 39).

[3] See also Marks and Steenbergen (2004).

Applied to the case study of territorial politics in the border region between Bulgaria and Turkey in the long-term process of its transition from an external into interface EU periphery, Bartolini's (2004, 2005) 'exit-voice' framework permits to gain a more in-depth understanding of the capacity for regional restructuring of ethnoterritorial relations in the context of regional integration. The EU borderlands represent a dynamic transnational space in which EU member states interact with applicant and candidate countries, otherwise not fully-fledged participants in the system of European governance. Cross-border cooperation (CBC) encourages community and identity-building beyond national allegiances and is compatible with EU values and principles.

The Southeastern EU border emerged in parallel with Bulgaria's accession to the EU (1998-2007) and Turkey's adoption of a EU-candidate status and accession negotiations (since 2002). The border region receives significant EU regional programming and is part of the EU-induced regional reforms in Bulgaria and Turkey, respectively (Brusis 2010; Massicard 2008; Nikolova 2008). Following Bartolini's hypothesis on territorial restructuring, we should expect the border region between Bulgaria and Turkey to acquire the attributes of an interface peripheral region. Furthermore, we should expect it to benefit significantly from EU regionalism and CBC, relative to other regions, such as centers, external peripheries, or internal regions (Bartolini 2004). How does this political opportunity affect established patterns of center-periphery relations? Have the preferences, allegiances, and demands of ethnoterritorial actors vis-à-vis the central authority of the state changed as a result?

Structural resources of Bulgaria's ethnic Turkish minority at the Southeastern border

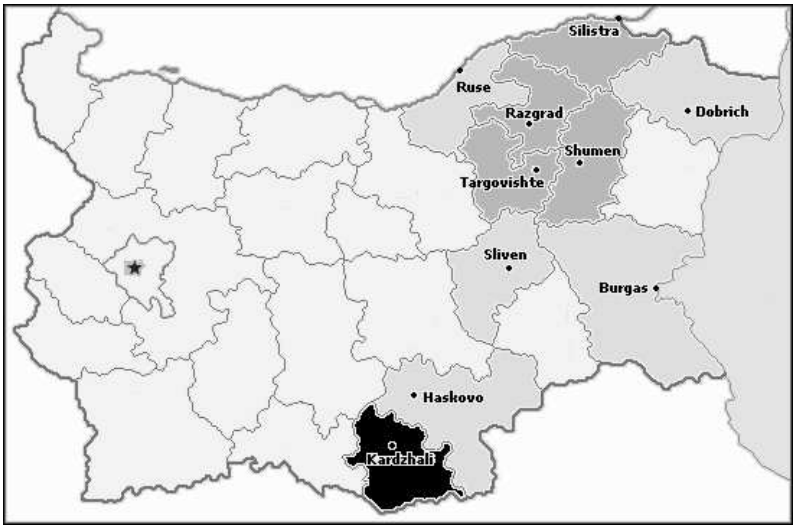
The Southeastern EU border between Bulgaria and Turkey is a complex ethnocultural, geopolitical, and economic configuration: a zone of expansion of European governance and territorial order and, at the same time, a region within centralized state structures. In line with the macropolitical perspective, we should expect that the inclusion of the region in European integration would affect the configuration of political space there. The relative position of the ethnic Turkish minority in the process would be determined by the interplay of structural and individual-level factors, combining resources and political agency.

Cultural distinctiveness

The demographic structure of the population in Bulgaria's Southeastern border region continues to reflect the long-term migration patterns between Bulgaria and Turkey. There have been several historical waves of Turkish

emigration from Bulgaria beginning with its 1878 independence from the Ottoman Empire. Around 350,000 Muslims (Turks, Pomaks, and Tartars) emigrated from Bulgaria between 1878 and 1912 as a result of the restrictive and discriminating policies of the Bulgarian state. Approximately 10,000-12,000 emigrated annually between 1913 and 1934 following an international agreement. A mass exodus of around 150,000 ethnic Turks took place in 1950-51 following forced land collectivization. Approximately 130,000 left for Turkey between 1968 and 1978 under the terms of a family reunification agreement. The biggest wave of occurred in 1989, when more than 310,000 Turks (exact numbers are unavailable) left Bulgaria due to the assimilation policies of the communist regime during the so called 'revival process' of coercive name changing and expulsion. The demographic structure of the population changed significantly as a result of minority emigration. Ethnic Turks comprised around 20% of the Bulgarian population in 1887. Their share fell to 8.6% in the 1950s (Zhelyazkova 1998, Chapter 1). It was estimated at 9.4% by the 2001 Census and at 8.8% by the 2011 Census.[4]

Map 1. The Ethnic Turkish Minority in Bulgaria by District, 2001 Census



Notes: Areas in black represent districts with more than 50% ethnic Turkish population. Grey: between 25 and 50%. Beige: between 10 and 25%. Background color: below 10%.
Source: Wikimedia resources. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Turkoj_en_Bulgario.png.

Political development had a similarly profound negative effect on the status of the ethnic Turkish minority in Bulgaria. Following the oppressive policies of the

[4] National Statistical Institute (Bulgaria), historical data (online). http://www.nsi.bg/index.php.

communist regime, it emerged as the most underprivileged ethnic group at the outset of Bulgaria's democratic transition. Forced emigration and name changing were discontinued but population movement across the Southeastern border persisted. Politically motivated emigration was replaced with economic migration during the 1990s, reflected in an exodus of 30,000-60,000 ethnic Turks annually.

According to post-2000 estimates, while significantly concentrated in Bulgaria's southeastern and northeastern districts, the ethnic Turkish minority has emerged also as a visible minority in Turkey. Concurrent census data indicate that 746,664 ethnic Turks resided in Bulgaria and between 326,000 and 480,817 in Turkey.[5] The number of Bulgarian citizens of Turkish descent in Turkey in 2005 was estimated at 326,000 when 120,000 of them voted in the Bulgarian parliamentary elections.[6]

Economic structures and resources

The demise of communism exposed the serious socioeconomic and political problems of Bulgaria's ethnic Turkish minority and especially its worsening economic prospects. Even though the ethnic Turkish population has been given full and equal rights, its economic status deteriorated after the fall of the communist regime in 1989. The adverse conditions persisted as a result of the lack of a national strategy for the economic development of the less advanced rural regions with high demographic concentrations of ethnic minorities (Maeva 2005). The transition to a market economy led to high inflation and unemployment rates in the ethnically mixed regions without a corresponding transfer to resources to offset the loss of economic opportunities. The withdrawal of state subsidies for the small textile companies, persisting problems in the field of tobacco growing and grain production, and less developed infrastructure in the Southeastern region, as well as land privatization and differences in the educational and professional status of the Turkish minority reinforced the structural features of a peripheral region with significant ethnic fractionalization.

The critical economic situation and limited employment opportunities in Bulgaria produced new flows of economic emigration among the ethnic Turkish minority. Since 1993, long-term emigration was been replaced with consistent short-term patterns. It takes place in two directions: the EU and Turkey. Most Turkish villages have established their own communities in Western Europe. Ethnic Turkish out-migration patterns are characterized by the presence of links between Bulgarian Turks permanently residing in Turkey and emigration to the EU. Most of them prefer

[5] According to the 2001 census in Bulgaria and the 2000 census on foreign-born population in Turkey.

[6] See also Bishku (2003) on historical estimates of demographic data.

to travel back to their native places in Bulgaria and then emigrate to Western Europe. Survey research has found that compact Turkish villages are well organized for the export of workers (Maeva 2005; Zhelyazkova 1998).

The economic resources of the region have lagged behind the national average, the center, and internal regions. As Table 2 below shows, the economic structure continued to rely on agriculture and traditional industrial structures. The share of services is lower than the national average by 11%. Conversely, agricultural production in the Southeastern and Southcentral region (6.7% and 9.0% in their respective regional gross value added) exceeds the national average. The border areas receive marginal flows of foreign direct investment, which reinforces the relative disconnect of the region from economic trends at the center and other regions.

Table 2. Center-periphery structure of economic activity (2007-2009): The Southeastern periphery relative to the national average and the center. Gross value added (GVA) by economic sector, current prices

Region/District	GVA agriculture		GVA industry		GVA services		GDP/capita (USD)	
	2007	2009	2007	2009	2007	2009	2007	2009
National average	5.6	4.9	32.4	31.3	62.0	63.8	5,497	6,408
Southcentral	9.4	7.3	39.0	38.3	51.6	54.2	3,946	4,451
Southeastern	6.7	5.8	43.2	43.1	50.1	51.1	4,476	5,282
Southwestern (capital city region):	2.0	1.5	25.8	26.4	72.2	72.1	3.946	4,451

Source: National Statistical Institute (Bulgaria), *Statistical Yearbook 2011*, pp. 500-503.

Table 3. Access to external economic resources: Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) by Region/District

Region/District	FDI Stock (thousand Euro)	FDI % of National total	FDI District % of Region
National Total	22,114,446.3	100.00	--
Southcentral	1,659,060.5	7.50	--
Kurdjali	67,859.4	0.30	4.09
Haskovo	66,708.9	0.29	4.02
Southeastern	2,728,916.2	12.33	--
Burgas	1,622,748.5	7.33	59.46
Sliven	468,443.5	2.11	17.16
Yambol	64,191.3	0.29	2.35
Southwestern (Region of capital city)	14,295,496.3	64.64	--
Sofia (capital)	12,466,818.5	56.37	87.20
Sofia (district)	1,319,848.6	5.96	9.23

Source: National Statistical Institute (Bulgaria), *Statistical Yearbook 2011*, p. 510.

Territorial politics. Regional distinctiveness of the party system

The cultural distinctiveness of the ethnic Turkish minority in Bulgaria was officially recognized in 1990 by the Social Council of Citizens, granting ethnic Turks full political rights, including freedom of religion, choice of names, free practice of cultural traditions, and access to education in the Turkish language. Despite cultural recognition, the institutional setup made no provisions for the creation of territorial structures of minority self-governance. On the contrary, the 1991 Constitution adopted a liberal-democratic model which prioritized individual rights. The Bulgarian Constitution remains restrictive towards group rights as an institutional referent for cultural and ethnic distinctiveness. The Constitution bans ethnic, regional, religious, and other non-functional foundations for political parties, although it adheres to the principle of political pluralism (Rechel 2007, 2009). According to Article 11 (4), 'there shall be no political parties on ethnic, racial or religious lines, nor parties seeking the violent seizure of state power'. The Constitution frames such expressions of collective identities as factors potentially undermining Bulgaria's territorial integrity and the unity of the nation (Article 44 (2)).[7] The Constitution bears no mention of the existence of ethnic minorities but at the same time prohibits privileges or restriction of rights on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic self-identity, gender, origin, and religion (as well as education, opinion, political affiliation, personal or social status, and property status).

The rules of electoral competition in Bulgaria similarly have restrictive effects on the presence of small and regional parties likely to address minority concerns. The Law on Political Parties prohibits parties which undermine the integrity of the state – an interpretation applicable to ethnopolitical parties which usually pursue regional and cultural autonomy.[8] Sporadic attempts for separatism expressed by segments of the ethnic Turkish minority elite at the outset of the postcommunist transition were neutralized through the creation of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) in 1990. Under the prevalent institutional rules, MRF emerged as a unique political actor. It was registered as a political organization with stated objectives to correct for the legacies of the assimilation of the Muslim and ethnic Turkish minority during communism and to contribute to the unity of the Bulgarian people in accordance with the Bulgarian Constitution, the European Convention for Human Rights, and international norms of equality and non-discrimination.[9]

Nationalist political actors have challenged the constitutionality of the MRF at several instances. The most significant demand for declaring a constitutional ban

[7] *Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria* (1991). http://www.parliament.bg/en/const/.
[8] See Law on Political Parties, as amended, *State Gazette* 28/2005.
[9] MRF Charter (online). http://old.dps.bg/cgi-bin/e-cms/vis/vis.pl?s=001&p=0061&n=&vis=.

on the party was raised in a petition to the Constitutional Court in October 1991.[10] The Court denied the petition. The deliberations found that the definition of an ethnic party did not apply to MRF as its membership was open to all citizens, and it did not seek usurpation of state power.

The presence of a constitutional ban on ethnic parties has not prevented the existence of the MRF as a party relevant to minority issues in Bulgarian politics. MRF has been able to gain a prominent place in electoral competition, parliamentary representation, and governing coalitions since 1990. Its importance as a power broker in the political process (1991-1997) and proximity to government through participation in governing coalitions (2001-2009) has been coterminous two with the moderation of its programmatic outlook and lack of autonomy demands (Warhola and Boteva 2003; Zhelyazkova 2001). Through the transition period, MRF maintained a high level of encapsulation of the ethnic minority vote, whereby historically 80-85% of its national vote share have been derived within the ethnic Turkish community.

According to Nikolova (2008, p. 97), the combination of a consistent electoral base comprised of minority voters and moderate centrism which rejects conceptions of territorial autonomy and collective rights is 'surprising', given the fact that regional autonomy was the object of political debate in the early 1990s in the border regions with Turkey (as well as the Kurdjali district). Nikolova refers to the lack of mobilization in favor of regionalization as a failure to initiate paradigmatic change in Bulgaria's territorial relations. This analysis explains the weak EU-induced effects in the direction of regionalization with the limited Europeanization of political parties in Bulgaria. However, from a macropolitical perspective the lack of ethnoregional mobilization may be attributed to the structural features of territorial politics in Bulgaria, the relative endowment of ethnic minorities with resources, and the limited territorial restructuring of national political space through EU governance.

Political agency

In its early history, MRF's political agenda was focused on securing full equality and political rights for all Bulgarian citizens, including members of ethnic minorities. The guiding proposition was that the democratic transformation of Bulgarian society could not automatically ensure individual rights and that purposeful political action, including through representation, was necessary to

[10] The Court found that there were no grounds to withdraw MRF's registration of April 1990 with the Sofia District Court. The Constitutional Court did not obtain the majority necessary to accept the claim to unconstitutionality. See Constitutional Court, Decision Number 4 of April 21, 1992 in *State Gazette* 35, April 28, 1992. http://www.constcourt.bg/Pages/Document/default.aspx?ID=33. On the deliberations of the Constitutional Court, see Ganev (2004), among others.

support the process. In the late 1990s, the MRF oriented its policy priorities from the political platform of rights and freedoms to programmatic objectives related to economic opportunities, participation, and better living standards for ethnic minorities. Both dimensions were compatible with a liberal ideology and with the EU's attributes of a liberal economic system based on non-discrimination, political equality, and diversity. The long-term reorientation of party priorities from politics to economics in its domestic policy agenda was linked to developing a pro-European profile and the standing presence of EU-related issues, such as infrastructure, agriculture, regional policies, and decentralized use of funds.

Bulgaria's EU membership was an opportunity for MRF to pursue a more definitive ideological identification as a liberal-centrist party. By the time of the first Elections for Members of the European Parliament in Bulgaria (2007), MRF had joined the Liberal International and the group of the Liberals in the European Parliament. MRF's electoral messages established a parallel between European values and principles of diversity, non-discrimination, and minority integration in domestic politics. MRF's programmatic outlook in national and European elections alike was based on the pursuit of national goals in line with European objectives. MRF applied a European dimension to its policy positions recasting the traditional center-periphery cleavage, the core of ethnocultural mobilization, through the lens of EU regional policy.[11] MRF was the first political actor to reorient its domestic policy agenda towards the programmatic nature of EU policy-making, especially in the domain of agriculture and regional development, with a view of gaining access to funding opportunities created by membership in the EU: the European Regional Development Fund, the Common Agricultural Policy, and pre-accession assistance (Spirova and Stefanova 2012).

Historical legacies and migration patterns have reinforced the solidarity and identification of the ethnic Turkish minority with political actors with a claim to represent its distinctive interests. Siaroff (2000) notes that during the 1990s, regional and religious cleavages, both of which are an element of territorial politics, remained the most politically salient cleavage after class, the traditional functional cleavage in Bulgarian party politics.

[11] See MRF's electoral programme for the 2009 European elections (online), http://www.dps.bg/cgi-bin/e-cms/vis/vis.pl?s=001&p=0437&g=.

The regional dimension of territorial restructuring of minority politics: The case of the Bulgaria-Turkey CBC region

The EU dimension of territorial structuring through CBC

European integration has been relevant to the constellation of regional interests and demands in Eastern Europe along three dimensions: the EU regime for protection of minority rights, the conditionality and incentive structure of the accession process which induced an institutional reform in the area of territorial structuring and regional financing, and the politicization of territorial interests, European governance tends to concentrate competences and resources at the regional level. Bulgaria has differed from this model of territorial restructuring due to the lack of adequate institutional adaptation. Although the administrative framework of the NUTS II system of territorial classification was introduced to ensure an adequate absorption of the Structural funds, the EU did not require substantive decentralization and effective transfer of political authority towards the regional level. Territorial reform resulted primarily in strengthened institutional capacity on behalf of the central government (Nikolova 2008, p. 92). The EU's structural policies did not alter the distribution of policy-making competences between the state and the subnational level. State centrism in territorial governance remained high with around 60% of municipal budgets distributed by the central government. Arrangements for the provision of EC pre-accession aid, including CBC, and, since 2007, Structural and Cohesion funding have been filtered through the national level. Subnational political actors have had limited incentives and opportunities to demand autonomy and self-governance, or to benefit from devolved competences (Brusis 2010).

This institutional framework set the context for the implementation of CBC in the process of Bulgaria's EU accession. Bulgaria was eligible for structural aid under the PHARE programme, including PHARE CBC. Since January 2004, the geographical scope of the CBC Programme has been extended to the Bulgarian borders with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Turkey. EU aid to Turkey was provided under a separate regulation on pre-accession financial assistance, adopted by the Council of the European Union in December 2001 (Council 2001). The regional programme with Bulgaria was the first EU crossborder cooperation scheme in which Turkey participated.

EU-funded CBC activities between Bulgaria and Turkey supported by European Union financing were launched in 2003. Three Financing Memoranda were signed over the period 2003-2006 between Bulgaria and the European Commission and implemented through CBC programmes. The External Border Initiative Programme (2003) financed people-to-people activities between Bulgaria and Turkey. The PHARE Cross Border Cooperation Programme between Bulgaria

and Turkey (2004) was available for project contracting until 30 November 2006. The 2005 Phare Cross Border Cooperation Programme was completed by 30 November 2007 (European Commission 2007a).

Map 2. The Bulgaria-Turkey crossborder region

Source: Bulgaria-Turkey CBC 2004-2006. Republic of Turkey (2004).

The 2007-2013 CBC Programme was financed jointly by the new European Territorial Cooperation objective (previously INTERREG) under the European Regional Development Fund, matched by an equivalent allocation of funds under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) for candidate and potential candidate countries, including Turkey (European Commission 2007b). The core concept of IPA CBC is that of 'cross-border benefit' (European Commission 2007a, p. 5). The cooperation area is determined in accordance with IPA rules set out in Regulation 1085/2006 whereby NUTS III regions are eligible for crossborder cooperation programmes.[12] The area includes the eligible districts of Burgas, Yambol, and Haskovo on the Bulgarian side and the Edirne and Kirklareli provinces on the Turkish side.

[12] The corresponding NUTS III administrative territorial units in Bulgaria are the districts established by the Law on the Administrative Territorial System. In Turkey the corresponding equivalent of NUTS III administrative territorial units are the provinces established by Decision of Council of Ministers No 2002/4720.

Key characteristics of the CBC region

The designated regions coincide with or are neighboring to administrative and electoral districts with higher or about the average national concentration of the ethnic Turkish minority. The geopolitical importance of the crossborder region is defined by its crossroads position connecting transportation and infrastructure links of European significance, all of which receive financing through EU structural aid and sectoral programmes.[13] The transnational element is reinforced by an EU strategy to establish a broader scope for CBC in the Balkan and Black Sea region, including multilateral networks.

In contrast to its geopolitical relevance and strong cultural distinctiveness, the economic profile of the CBC region is less coherent. The socioeconomic *potential* of the cooperation area, determined by demographic structures and economic and institutional resources, is different for the two sides. There is significant negative natural growth and out-migration on the Bulgarian side, as well as disparities between the three border districts in terms of depopulation of the rural areas. As a result, the human potential for economic development, especially in rural areas of the Bulgarian NUTS III districts, is decreasing. There is a relative demographic stability on the Turkish side, although the natural growth rate is below the national level of 12.9‰. The Turkish districts also face demographic challenges with out-migration to urban areas elsewhere.

The overall affinities between the Bulgarian and Turkish segments of the CBC region, while significant, are contradictory. There is a strong cultural distinctiveness but different linkages between cultural factors and economic and political realities. Cultural solidarity is based on common legacies, language, and ethnicity in the context of reconfigured political borders after Bulgaria's independence from the Ottoman Empire (1878) and the end of WWI. While the border remains an important migration crossing, the adjacent border regions of Turkey are not a preferred destination for ethnic Turks from Bulgaria due to long-

[13] For example, *EU Corridor 4* - Dresden/Nuremberg to Istanbul - crosses the cooperation area in of Haskovo district and Edirne and Kırklareli provinces; *Corridor 8* - Durres-Tirana to Burgas - crosses the programme area between Yambol and Burgas districts; *Corridor 9* - Helsinki to Alexandropolis - crosses the programme area in the district of Haskovo and passes by the province of Edirne; *Corridor 10* - Salzburg/Lubljana to Tessaloniki - crosses the programme area in the district of Haskovo. Other international roads that impact the cooperation area include *Road E 87* which starts from Odessa in Ukraine, passes through Romania and Bulgaria, enters Turkey and stretches up to Antalya. In the CBC region it passes through Burgas, Tzarevo, Malko Turnovo, Dereköy, Kırklareli and Babaeski. *Road E 80* links Turkey with the rest of Europe through the road infrastructure of Edirne and Kirklareli provinces. *Road D 100* connects Istanbul to Edirne and Bulgaria. The CBC region is simultaneously served by two Bulgarian National Transport Corridors: 'Black Sea' (border crossing Durankulak–Varna–Burgas–Malko Turnovo) leading towards the province of Kirklareli, and a second corridor (Silistra–Shoumen–Yambol–Elhovo–Lesovo–border crossing) leading towards the province of Edirne.

established emigration flows. The latter are directed towards Istanbul and Bursa, and sustained by family reunification (Dimitrova 1998).

The economic structure of the two segments of the border region is also different. The data below show the relative strength of industrial and employment trends which represent the resource base and incentive for common investment projects, shared business interests, and factor mobility. Industrial infrastructure is concentrated in urban centers in Turkey, and is more widely dispersed within medium and small production units in Bulgaria. The distribution of employment by economic sector is changing. NUTS II-level equivalents experienced a trend of declining shares of agriculture and rising shares of industry and services in 2004-2006.[14] Youth unemployment in the border regions in Bulgaria for the period 2001-2005 was 23.4%. It was 45.3% in the border regions of Turkey. Women's unemployment rates were also higher in Turkey with relatively similar overall unemployment rates (European Commission 2007b, pp. 12-14).

Table 4. The Bulgaria-Turkey crossborder region: Basic economic sectors and employment

NUTS III Level Equivalent	Employment in Industry %	Employment in Construction %	Employment in Services %	Employment in Agriculture %
BULGARIA				
District Burgas	26.35	8.66	59.91	5.08
District Yambol	31.78	4.82	55.79	7.61
District Haskovo	38.84	4.71	53.18	3.27
TURKEY				
Province Edirne	9.00	3.01	38.39	49.60
Province Kirklareli	17.81	2.79	31.21	48.20

Source: European Commission (2007b, p. 11).

According to the ethnoregionalist thesis, cultural distinctiveness, together with economic and institutional resources, is associated with a particular model of political agency which relies on a regional party structure serving minority interests. However, contrary to expectations, the economic (rather than cultural and ethnic) determinants of post-1989 emigration flows have affected the patterns of political participation in the border region which tends to oscillate between the two systems of national party competition. The cultural distinctiveness of the region remains isolated from the structure of political demands. Bulgaria's ethnic Turkish community benefits from the dual citizenship regime in Bulgaria and Turkey and has preserved its ethnic and political loyalties. Since 2001, opportunities for voting in Bulgarian elections on the territory of Turkey have expanded. Turkey

[14] TR 21 includes Edirne, Kirklareli, and Tekirdag.

continuously improves administrative structures to urge Bulgarian expatriates of Turkish origin to vote in Bulgarian elections. On the eve of the 2009 parliamentary elections, the Turkish authorities announced that they would extend expired documents of Bulgarian citizens residing in Turkey illegally, so that they would be able to return to Bulgaria to cast their vote, or vote in voting sections in Turkey without fearing that they would be arrested, prosecuted, or extradited.[15]

While crossborder in nature, the political identification of Bulgarian ethnic Turks residing in Turkey remains embedded in the patterns of domestic political conflict and electoral politics in Bulgaria and has failed to recreate a cross-border regional distinctiveness. The enmeshing of structural features and resources falls short of producing the vibrant transnational political space anticipated by the transnationalist literature as an 'unusual transnational social space of thousands of dual citizens moving back and forth, transferring goods, services, knowledge, biases, and values across the Bulgarian-Turkish border' (Özgür-Baklacioglu 2005, p. 324). The crossborder space is transnational only in cultural terms. It is structurally diverse as an economic area.

Politically, it remains embedded in national political competition and therefore lacks transnational features. As Table 4 demonstrates, the combination of structural features and economic, cultural, institutional, and political resources has determined only limited exit options for Bulgaria's ethnic Turkish minority and thus may explain the low-intensity, practically non-existent, demands for autonomy and self-governance.

The combination of substate territorial and political structures and resources at the disposal of Bulgaria's ethnic Turkish minority in the border region point to the conclusion that the opportunities for exit options and demands of the substate territory are limited. The cultural distinctiveness and geopolitical variables presuppose highly revisionist exit options. However, they do not possess a 'voice' potential due to economic, institutional, and political constraints. The lack of opportunities for partial exit or minority demands to that effect is due to the disconnect between the homogenizing influences of crossborder programmes and the prerequisites of a transnational political space, explained by Bulgaria's national model of minority representation which emphasizes individual rights and economic opportunities. Political mobilization at the national level largely exceeds the potential of regional community structures to alter allegiances and demands. The patterns of electoral participation of the ethnic Turkish minority in crossborder voting have so far marginalized any salient transnational regional loyalties and demands for regional autonomy or self-governance.

[15] 'Turkey Moves to Influence Bulgaria's Parliamentary Elections', *Novinite.com* (online), 1 July 2009. http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=105253.

Table 5. Exit options and political choice for the substate region of the Bulgarian ethnic Turkish minority

STRUCTURAL FEATURES OF THE TERRITORY	RESOURCES	EXIT OPTION AVAILABLE	ETHNIC TURK MINORITY "VOICE" /SUBSTATE TERRITORY DEMANDS
CULTURAL DISTINCTIVENESS (language, religion, ethnicity)	**STRONG EXTRATERRITORIAL CENTER SERVING AS A CULTURAL FOCAL POINT**	SEPARATISM	**N/A**
	Monocephalic dominant-capital state, **NO SIGNIFICANT PERIPHERAL CENTERS**	IRREDENTISM	**NOT POLITICALLY SALIENT** (AGENCY-BASED ONLY)
ECONOMIC STRUCTURE (sectoral specialization, free trade)	Comparison across borders of the distributive efficiency of neighboring state or supranational center: **REGIONAL DISPARITIES**		
	DEPENDENCE ON INFRASTRUTURE	DEVOLUTION	N/A
	NO SUBSTATE DEPENDENCY ON TRADE ACROSS BORDER	**DEMANDS FOR A LARGER SHARE OF STATE RESOURCES**	**COMPETITIVE ALLOCATION MODEL** BASED ON ELECTORAL STRENGTH
	NO PARTY SYSTEM REGIONALIZATION		
GEOPOLITICAL POSITION (external, enclave, interface, "failed" center-periphery)	Crossborder functional regimes: **INTERFACE REGION**		
INSTITUTIONAL DISTINCTIVENESS	Territorial differentiation of functional subsystems: economic district, labor, credit, salary differentiation, welfare regulations, education: **STRONG NATIONAL CENTER DOMINATION; DUAL CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS**	INCREASED SUPRANATIONAL, INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION	**AD HOC**

Source: Author's application of Bartolini (2004, p. 39).

Conclusion

The EU regional policy, and especially CBC, fulfills important cohesion and efficiency objectives for the new member states from Eastern Europe. However, the southeastern border demonstrates certain contradictory dynamics, at odds with expectations for the potential conversion of the resources of European governance into political action. According to Turnock (2002), CBC has had greater impact on the Northeastern EU periphery than in the East-Balkans region. Such dynamics do not suggest that the EU's integrative pressures have been weaker in Southeastern Europe. They indicate that territorial structuring and resources follow a different pattern based on economic, cultural, and political factors. A structuralist political opportunity model is thus well positioned to explain the outcome, without prioritizing either the EU-centered, top-down pressures or sunational, bottom-up political agency.

Bartolini's (2004) political opportunities framework, which binds together structural resources and individual preferences, offers important analytical advantages in explaining territorial restructuring and political mobilization in the context of European integration. It that the EU's territorial order and governance system alter majority-minority relations by restructuring the center-periphery cleavage and by increasing the options and demands of peripheral territories for exit from dependence on the state. The causal mechanism is that of converting economic, cultural, and (geo)political resources available to peripheral regions based on the structural features of the substate territory into political demands for revising the latter's relationship with the center. The extent of revisionism, ranging from direct participation, access to resources, self-governance, irredentism, to separatism, depends on the combination of structural factors and individual choice (Bartolini 2004, p. 39). The structural component presents a corrective to political opportunities and agency models (Brusis 2010; Tarrow 2004) which rely on the mobilization and coalition-building capacity of minority political actors to advance (ethno)regional demands, enter into crossborder coalitions and alliances with supranational actors, and use their access to government to achieve autonomy. Similarly, the structure-voice framework corrects for the unidirectional perspective on national adaptation prevalent in the EU enlargement literature which emphasizes the conditionality and incentives structure of the accession process.

The case of Bulgaria's ethnic Turkish minority fits well with the resources-demands framework. The combination of structural features and uneven distribution of economic, cultural, institutional, and geopolitical resources provides for a limited opportunity structure and exit options for the territory. As a result, despite its strong cultural distinctiveness and interface periphery status, the territorial profile of the Bulgaria-Turkey border region is likely to persist as a bifurcated substate region, rather than as a coherent transnational space.

While the original formulation of the 'exit-voice' framework does not specify whether the effects of the structural features and resources are additive, rank-ordered, or interactive, it may be concluded that they are collectively necessary for exit options and demands to materialize. Variation in their relative salience, as established in the case of Bulgaria's ethnic Turkish minority in the Southeastern crossborder region, points to the need for further research to determine the relative strength and potentially interactive effects of material and ideational structures as sources of political opportunities.

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