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No return to the borders of the past?

Cross-border nationalism and European integration in times of crises

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Abstract

This study examines how kin-minority parties respond to European integration. Kin-minority parties are political parties that claim to represent a national minority in the state where the minority lives (the host-state). At the same time, kin-minority parties claim that “their” minority is part of a larger nation that constitutes the national majority in a neighbouring state (the kin-state). The status of a kin-minority is not a priori given but is constituted by kin-minority parties’ continuous interactions with other actors in the kin-state and in the host-state.

European integration affects these interactions in three ways. It disperses sovereignty away from state centres; it perpetuates the geographical location of state borders and makes borders less disruptive to cross-border interaction; and it can modify collective identities by making them less antagonistic. Crises of European integration can partially reverse these processes. Kin-minority parties have three broad options for responding to these dynamics. They may adopt border-shifting, border-transcending or border-crossing approaches. Border-shifting parties reject the effects of European integration because it prevents them from pursuing the kin-minority’s territorial integration into the kin-state. Border-transcending parties endorse European integration because it facilitates the kin-minority’s accommodation within the host-state and cross-border cooperation with the kin-state. Border-crossing parties adopt a mixed approach, endorsing open state borders but rejecting other effects of European integration.

This study compares the dynamics of European integration and kin-minority parties’ responses in South Tyrol and Northern Ireland. It arrives at two key findings. Firstly, all kin-minority parties endorse European integration’s border-opening effects. Since the 1990s, border-crossing approaches have superseded border-shifting ones. Border-transcending parties’ endorsement of open state borders has been reinforced. This even holds true despite multiple crises of European integration. Secondly, the dispersion of sovereignty and the modification of collective identities do not significantly alter kin-minority parties. Border-transcending parties endorse these effects because of their pre-existing inclination towards cooperative politics. Border-crossing parties remain critical of these effects.

Lay summary

Representatives of some national minorities claim that “their” minority is part of a larger nation that constitutes the majority population in a neighbouring state. Given this national kinship between the minority and the neighbouring state, they are referred to as kin-minority and kin-state, respectively. Traditionally kin-minorities and the political parties that claim to represent them (kin-minority parties) have been suspected by commentators and political opponents to seek the kin-minority’s integration into the kin-state through the expansion of the latter’s territory. Nationalist parties in Northern Ireland, for instance, have favoured Northern Ireland’s integration into a united Irish nation-state alongside the Republic of Ireland.

The intensified cooperation between European states after the Second World War and the creation of the European Union (EU), known as European integration, however, have made the territorial expansion of European states unlikely. Most European states now accept the location of their state border and do not pursue the expansion of their territory. At the same time, state borders are now more open and less of an impediment to cross-border interaction. Passport controls, for example, have been abolished in the Schengen zone. Additionally, European integration can alter the internal organization of states and can make the relationship between kin-minorities and other political actors less antagonistic. For kin-minority parties, this means that European integration makes pursuing their kin-minority’s integration into the kin-state less feasible, while it opens up new opportunities for cooperation between the kin-minority, the kin-state and the state where the kin-minority resides.

This study asks how kin-minority parties adapt to these new opportunities and constraints. This is done by comparing kin-minority parties from the German-speaking kin-minority in South Tyrol, Italy and the Irish-nationalist kin-minority in Northern Ireland. Kin-minority parties’ reactions to the reversal of European integration, as has been the case with the United Kingdom’s exit from the EU (Brexit), is also assessed.

The study finds that all kin-minority parties endorse the Europe-sponsored opening of state borders. This is even true when borders are likely to become more disruptive again and the chances for shifting borders might increase in the longer run, as is the case with Brexit. However, only those kin-minority parties that have a priori favoured cooperation with their kin-state and their state of residence use Europe-related opportunities to foster such cooperation. Kin-minority parties with a traditionally more confrontational approach are critical of Europe-related opportunities that go beyond the opening of state borders.

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List of Abbreviations

CoE	Council of Europe
CoR	Committee of the Regions
CSCE	Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe
CTA	Common Travel Area
dF	die Freiheitlichen (the Freedom Party)
EC	European Communities
EEA	European Economic Area
EEC	European Economic Community
EFA	European Free Alliance
EGTC	European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
EP	European Parliament
EPP	European People's Party
EU	European Union
FPÖ	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Freedom Party of Austria)
GFA	Good Friday/Belfast Agreement
GUE/NGL	European United Left/Nordic Green Left
M5S	Movimento Cinque Stelle (Five Star Movement)
MEP	Member of European Parliament
NSMC	North South Ministerial Council
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
ÖVP	Österreichische Volkspartei (Austrian People's Party)
PES	Party of European Socialists
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
SEM	Single European Market
SF	Sinn Féin
SPÖ	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (Social Democratic Party of Austria)
STF	Süd-Tiroler Freiheit (South Tyrolean Independence)
SVP	Südtiroler Volkspartei (South Tyrolean People's Party)
UfS	Union für Südtirol (Union for South Tyrol)
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Introduction

“Nobody wants to return to the borders of the past, so we will make it a priority to deliver a practical solution as soon as we can [...]. But the message from the public before and during the referendum campaign was clear: Brexit must mean control of the number of people who come to Britain from Europe. And that is what we will deliver.”

(British Prime Minister Theresa May, 2017)

When British Prime Minister Theresa May outlined her government’s priorities for the United Kingdom’s (UK) withdrawal from the European Union (EU) in January 2017, she conveyed two contradictory messages. On the one hand, she was clear that she aimed to honour the motives that led many voters to support Britain’s exit from the EU in the 2016 “Brexit” referendum. Immigration and the UK’s perceived inability to control its own state borders within the EU were one of the key drivers for the Brexit vote (Goodwin and Milazzo 2017). The government’s response was to promise tighter policing of borders and more restrictions to cross-border movement once the UK would have left the EU. On the other hand, PM May acknowledged that her country, despite being divided from mainland Europe by water, shares a land border with the Republic of Ireland. This particular border, according to the PM, was straddled by “family ties and bonds of affection that unite our 2 countries [the UK and Ireland and] mean that there will always be a special relationship between us” (May 2017). This land border should not return to its “past” status. The promised closure of the UK’s borders should not apply there. In hindsight, resolving this contradiction and “soon” delivering “practical solutions” that would close the UK’s border but leave part of it open has proven difficult. Even since the UK has left the EU’s legal realm in January 2021, the management of the UK-Irish border has remained complex.

In that 2017 speech, Theresa May implicitly touched upon three broader dynamics. The observation of their interplay is the key motivation behind this study. Firstly, there is a notion that borders change over time. Borders can be more or less permeable. They can be an obstacle to movement across them, or they can facilitate said movement. They can constrain

certain actors or activities but might be irrelevant for others (Bartolini 2005). They also can symbolize different things to different people (Scott 2012). While some want to bring borders down, others see them as necessary for their safety and seek to fortify them. The UK's border with Ireland is now mostly invisible and can be crossed without constraints. In the past, it was the site of customs posts and military checkpoints; the latter being set up to contain protracted political violence on the island of Ireland (Nash et al. 2016).

Secondly, she referred to personal cross-border relations that provide for “special relationships” between bordering states. While these are broad terms that are also frequently used to refer to diasporic links or other close bilateral relations, the kind of bonds across the UK-Irish border are of particular interest here. These bonds are not restricted to individuals' private or family lives; they have a highly salient political dimension. In fact, a sizeable share of the population of Northern Ireland – the part of the island of Ireland that forms part of the UK – does not identify with the UK. Instead, they identify as Irish. Their national identity lies with the state on the other side of the UK-Ireland border. As such, they constitute a national minority in the state where they live, the UK, but they consider themselves to be part of a wider nation that forms the majority in a neighbouring state, Ireland. The national minority and the majority in the neighbouring state are connected by a form of national *kinship*. While such kinship is not predetermined by ethnicity, language or other “objective” patterns, it constitutes tangible and “real” ties between populations on both sides of a state border (Brubaker 1996, 55ff). Given their cross-border national kinship, I refer to the minority as *kin-minority* and to the neighbouring state as *kin-state* (see also Pogonyi 2017, Kovács 2020).

The phenomena of kin-minorities and kin-states are not restricted to the island of Ireland. Ties of national kinship straddle state borders across Europe. Examples include the Danish kin-minority in Germany, the Russian kin-minorities in the Baltics, the Swedish kin-minority in Finland, the Serbian and Croatian kin-minorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina or the Hungarian kin-minorities in multiple Central European states. This study focusses on two European kin-minorities that have taken largely different trajectories in post-Second World War Europe: the Irish kin-minority in Northern Ireland where conflicts about national identities led to political violence over the course of three decades; and the German-speaking kin-minority in South Tyrol, Italy whose political institutions have been appraised as a role model for the peaceful resolution of national conflicts (Wolff 2008).

The last point that PM May alluded to is the effects that membership in the European Union has on borders. The EU, and the process of European integration that has led to its existence,

make borders different from what they were in the past. European integration's effects on state borders can be summarized as two dynamics. On the one hand, European integration has made borders between states less contested and more universally accepted. Until the end of the Second World War, disputes over state borders and territory were a key driver of political conflicts, violence and war (Kornprobst 2008). Between 1870 and 1945 alone, the location of the border between France and Germany changed three times following devastating military conflicts. After 1945, European states successively settled their disputes over state borders and accepted the territorial status quo on the continent. The principles of the "Inviolability of [state] frontiers" and the "Territorial integrity of States" were later enshrined in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and made a precondition for new states' accession to the EU (Zacher 2001, 222). Hostilities over territories between states have since been significantly reduced (Kornprobst 2008). On the other hand, European integration has made state borders more open and permeable (Diez 2006). Passport checks are no longer carried out when crossing state borders within Europe's "Schengen zone" or the "Common Travel Area" between Britain, Ireland and adjacent islands. Within the Single European Market, individuals can choose to live, work and study in any member state, regardless of their nationality. The need for currency exchange has disappeared in the Euro zone where common European currency is used.

Research puzzle: Kin-minorities and European integration

This study observes the interplay between these phenomena. It inquires how European integration's effects on state borders impact on kin-minorities' relationship with their kin-states. Clearly, the increased openness of borders facilitates interactions between kin-minorities and their co-nationals abroad. European integration provides numerous opportunities for the expression of cross-border kinship by fostering cooperation across state borders. At the same time, however, the perpetuation of state borders precludes kin-minorities' integration into the territory of their kin-state. Within the EU and other European organizations, kin-states are unlikely to strive for the expansion of their territory to include their national kin.

Consequently, kin-minorities face a dilemma: either they accept to live in another state from their co-nationals in the kin-state and endorse those forms of cooperation that are provided through European integration; or they challenge the state border in the pursuit of

“irredentism”, that is, the claim to be integrated into the kin-state via the annexation of the territory where they live. This challenges the wide-spread consensus on Europe’s territorial status quo. The aim of this study is to inquire how kin-minorities respond to this dilemma.

In addressing this question, two caveats have to be taken into account. Firstly kin-minorities are not homogenous actors. How they respond to the opportunities and constraints that result from European integration is likely to be contested within the kin-minority. What is more, the preferred relationship with the kin-state and even the nature of kinship that links the kin-minority to the kin-state will be controversial among members of a kin-minority and those organizations who aim to represent it (Brubaker 1996, 55ff). This study resolves this issue by focussing on multiple political parties that claim to represent the same kin-minority. I refer to these parties as *kin-minority parties* (Utz 2019b).

The second caveat is owed to the nature of European integration itself. The process of European integration goes beyond modifying the nature of state borders. It also creates new political organizations above the level of the state such as the EU, the CSCE and its successor organization OSCE, or the Council of Europe. These organizations, and the EU in particular, make binding decisions that concern kin-minorities and their kin-states alike. Kin-minority parties can see this an advantage, given that the legal, economic and political frameworks in which they operate are increasingly aligned with those of their national kin abroad; or they can interpret this as a constraint, given that state and sub-state authorities are increasingly constrained in their autonomy to make political decisions (Elias 2009). Additionally, by incentivizing cooperation across state borders, European integration also facilitates cooperation between individuals and collectives of different national identities. Hence, it does not only provide kin-minorities with new ways of cooperating with their kin-state but also with the majority population in the state where they live, their host-state (Hooghe and Marks 2009, Risse 2010). Whether such cooperation should be endorsed is also likely to be contested among kin-minority parties.

To add even more to the complexity, European integration is not a uniform process. Brexit has made it abundantly clear that European integration and its effects on kin-minorities can also be reversed. Other “crises” of European integration have led to a less acute and durable reversal of European integration but nevertheless signalled that its effects can be dismantled. Examples include the temporary re-introduction of border controls during the Covid-19 pandemic and the 2015/16 migration crisis, or debates about the future of the Euro currency in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis (Hooghe and Marks 2019, Moravcsik 2018).

Research question

In light of these caveats, this study's research question can be specified as follows: How do kin-minority parties respond to the opportunities and constraints that result from European integration? More specifically, this study asks *how do kin-minority parties adapt their identities, goals, strategies and alliances to European integration and its potential reversal?*

By inquiring about kin-minority parties' identities, this study explores what kin-minority parties see as constitutive for their kin-minority and for the national kinship that links it to the kin-state. Goals means the ways in which kin-minority parties seek to express these identities. That is, which forms of Europe-sponsored cooperation do they seek with their kin-state? Or do they reject Europe-sponsored opportunities all together? Strategies refers to means through which kin-minority parties pursue their goals, particularly against the backdrop of (electoral) competition with other kin-minority parties. Finally, alliances refers to the forms of cooperation, such as coalition agreements, that kin-minority parties pursue with other actors in their kin-state and in their host-state.

The overarching hypotheses are that *European integration makes irredentism infeasible for kin-minority parties and provides them with alternative opportunities for cooperation with their kin-state and for emancipation from their host-state.* Conversely, the *threat of disintegration of European institutions limits alternative opportunities for cooperation with the kin-state and for emancipation from the host-state and incentivizes kin-minority parties to revert to irredentism.*

Case studies: South Tyrol and Northern Ireland

To answer this research question and to assess this hypothesis, this study explores the impact of European integration and its potential reversal on two kin-minorities and analyses kin-minority parties' responses to these changes. The first case study is on the German-speaking kin-minority in South Tyrol, Italy's northernmost province. South Tyrol was part of Austria-Hungary until the end of the First World War and continues to host a predominantly German-speaking population. The ties of cross-border kinship in the region are mostly shaped by linguistic similarities with Austria and the Austrian part of Tyrol, in particular. Tensions between Italy, Austria and the South Tyrolean kin-minority erupted in vandalism and sporadic acts of political violence but were resolved after protracted negotiations in 1969. This successful settlement preceded Austria's accession to the EU by almost thirty years. Since

Austria's accession in 1995, new forms of cross-border cooperation and of cooperative relations between Italy, Austria and the kin-minority have evolved. This has not been reversed during the 2015/16 migration crisis, when the northward movement of immigrants across the Italian – Austrian border and elsewhere in Europe called the passport control-free Schengen zone into question. The development of South Tyrol's kin-minority and its relationship with Italy and Austria has predominantly been shaped by the South Tyrolean People's Party (*Südtiroler Volkspartei*, SVP). The party obtained over 90 per cent of kin-minority members' votes for much of the post-1945 period (Holzer and Schwegler 1998, 158). Only since the 1990s, have smaller kin-minority parties challenged the SVP's identities, goals and strategies.

The second case study explores the Irish-nationalist kin-minority in Northern Ireland. The island of Ireland was politically divided in 1921 when the largest part of the island gained independence from the United Kingdom and went on to form the Republic of Ireland. The north-eastern part of the island, however, has remained part of the UK. The majority of Northern Ireland's population used to be Protestant and supported the region's continued union with the UK, while a sizeable minority of predominantly Roman Catholic background aimed at the political unification of the island within an independent Irish state. Political tensions between Northern Ireland's nationalist kin-minority and the unionist majority led to a protracted violent conflict between 1969 and 1998, known as the Troubles. The UK and Ireland's shared membership in European organizations from the 1973 onwards did little, at first, to resolve the conflict. The conflict's settlement in 1998, however, took place in a context where European integration made the state border on the island more permeable and facilitated cooperation among a range of actors. Demographic change, as to where Protestants and Catholics represent almost equally big shares of Northern Ireland's population, has also altered the region's political context (Kaufmann 2011). The UK's decision to withdraw from the EU, and the negotiations and implementation of the withdrawal risked jeopardizing the openness of the Irish border and of established forms of cooperation across the islands of Great Britain and Ireland.

The political aims of Northern Ireland's nationalist kin-minority and the means to achieve them have been severely contested between two kin-minority parties since the outbreak of political violence in the late 1960s and the subsequent restructuring of Northern Ireland's party system. The Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) has always supported democratic politics and rejected political violence. Contrastingly, Sinn Féin (SF) long facilitated and supported political violence by the terrorist Irish Republican Army (IRA) and

only endorsed exclusively peaceful politics as part of the 1998 settlement. After SF had renounced violence, it overtook the SDLP as Northern Ireland's biggest kin-minority party.

The comparison between South Tyrol and Northern Ireland sheds light on how kin-minority parties respond to European integration and its possible reversal in largely different environments. It shows that all kin-minority parties in the two cases endorse the Europe-induced openness of state borders, even if they continue to pursue the unification with their kin-state as a long-term goal. This endorsement is not mitigated by the crises or the reversal of European integration, as the case of Northern Ireland after Brexit uniquely demonstrates.

Structure of the thesis

This study is developed in four parts. Part I deals with terminological, theoretical and methodological questions; Part II elaborates on the case study of South Tyrol; Part III explores the case of Northern Ireland; and Part IV compares the two cases and provides concluding remarks.

In Part I, chapter 1 develops further on the concepts of kin-minority and kin-minority parties. It argues that kin-minorities are constituted through their constant interactions with actors in the kin-state and in the host-state. Chapter 2 elaborates on how European integration and its possible reversal affect the relationships between kin-minorities, their kin-states and their host-states. The chapter also highlights kin-minority parties' probable responses to these dynamics. Finally, chapter 3 operationalizes the concepts put forward in the two previous chapters and elaborates on the research design, the methods and the data used in this work.

In Part II, chapter 4 explores South Tyrol's kin-minority parties at the time of Austria's EU accession. It finds that, while providing new opportunities, accession predominantly perpetuated more longstanding dynamics of accommodating the kin-minority within Italy. Kin-minority parties were divided on how to respond to these trends. Chapter 5 analyses South Tyrol in the wake of the 2015/16 migration crisis, when Eurosceptic governments were in power in Austria and Italy. It finds that this trend has not reversed the permeability of the state border, which has been universally endorsed by kin-minority parties.

Part III starts with chapter 6 where European integration's effects on Northern Ireland's kin-minority parties' during the region's peace process are assessed. Despite substantial differences between kin-minority parties at the time, there was some convergence around the

endorsement of Europe-sponsored border-opening as an alternative to irredentism. Chapter 7 finds that there is continuation of said convergence, even against the backdrop of the UK's withdrawal from the EU. Both the pro-European SDLP and the formerly radically irredentist Sinn Féin defended the need to preserve the openness of the state border between Ireland and Northern Ireland in the context of Brexit.

In Part IV, chapter 8 compares the findings from the two case studies and concludes that the opening of state borders has a pervasive effect on European kin-minority parties, even if irredentism persists as a long-term aspiration or if European integration is reversed.

PART I

Theory & Methods

1. Kin-minorities, kin-minority parties & their context

The notion of the “nation-state” suggests that the boundaries of states and nations do or, at least, should coincide. The territorial expansion of states, as the predominant form of contemporary political organization, ought to be congruent with the settlement area of a nationally defined, homogenous population (Brubaker 2010). In such a constellation, the collective body of the nation is enabled to use the state as a vehicle to determine its own political affairs; the nation-state provides a certain consistency between rulers and the ruled (Gellner 2008, 1). However, this principle is hardly ever met in practice. Some state residents might be denied membership in the dominant nation, as happens frequently with recently arrived immigrants. Other residents resist their integration into the dominant nation of the state and identify as a national minority. Representatives of some national minorities attempt to meet the nation-state principle through secession from the state of which they are currently a part of and through the creation of their own nation-state. Among other national minorities, aims at closer ties with a neighbouring state that is dominated by co-nationals prevail.

This thesis looks at the last category. Given these national minorities’ links with their national kin in a neighbouring country, they have frequently been referred to as *kin-minorities* (Pogonyi 2017, Utz 2019b, Kovács 2020). Kin-minorities constitute a national minority in the state in which they reside (their host-state), while they evoke kinship with the dominant nation in a neighbouring kin-state. Brubaker (1996, 60) holds that the relationship between a kin-minority and a kin-state is “not given by the facts of ethnic demography”. Rather, it is the result of continuous interactions between the kin-minority, the kin-state and the host-state, in which actors closely monitor and respond to each other’s political actions. The relationship between kin-minorities, host-states and kin-states thus forms a mutually constitutive “triadic nexus”. The dynamics within the triadic nexus and their manifestation in legal, political, social and cultural norms enable or constrain kin-minorities’ political agency. This chapter sets out to investigate how political parties that claim to represent kin-minorities change their identities, goals, strategies and alliances in light of the dynamics within the triadic nexus. I refer to this category of political parties as *kin-minority parties* (see Utz 2019b). More

specifically, this chapter explores how kin-minority parties seek to modify their kin-minority' relationship with their respective host-state and their kin-state.

It proceeds in three steps. Firstly, it discusses the key concepts used in this thesis in more depth. Secondly, it reviews the literature on the interactions between kin-minorities, kin-states and host-states that enable and/or constrain kin-minorities' political agency. Thirdly, it introduces the literature on political parties and national minorities to examine kin-minority parties' possible identities, goals, strategies and alliances.

Definitions

This section discusses the key concepts of the host-state, the kin-state, the kin-minority and the boundaries that divide them. It starts out by problematizing the underlying themes of the state and the nation and arrives at working definitions for all four concepts.

Host-state

A *state* is characterized by an administration that “successfully upholds the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the maintenance of its order”(Weber 1968 [1922], cited in Coakley 2012, 7). In other words, a state possesses sovereignty within its own realm. The limits of this realm are defined by the other two key elements of statehood: a state's territory and a state's population (see Jessop 2016, 30ff). From this perspective, a state is a territorially bounded unit whose borders circumscribe the sphere of the state administration's influence and its population's settlement area.

Rokkan (1999) considered the state as the solidification of a centre's sphere of influence over surrounding peripheries. A centre is a “privileged location” where control over political, economic and cultural resources is concentrated (ibid. 110). Peripheries, in contrast lack the control over such resources. The specificity of nation-states that emerged in the 19th and early 20th century is that state centres aimed to dominate the political, economic and cultural sphere simultaneously. This led to the closure of state borders for a myriad of interactions with the outside world and to an increasing homogenization of political, economic and cultural relations inside states. However, resulting state-building projects have not progressed evenly throughout state territories. Some peripheries, such as Scotland have never been fully integrated into the political-legal realm of their state's centre. Other peripheries, such as the

Basque Country or Navarra, have maintained their own taxation systems and have partially resisted their economic integration with the centre. State centres' cultural outreach to adjacent peripheries has been far from perfect, too. For instance, Catholicism has remained the most widely spread religious denomination on the island of Ireland, the German language has never vanished in South Tyrol, and Catalan continues to be widely spoken along Spain's Mediterranean coastline and its hinterland.

The last point is of particular importance. This is because cultural traits, such as language or religion, can create a politically salient sense of community among individuals. More specifically, Gellner (2008, 55ff) argues that *nations* are constructed through the diffusion of "high cultures", such as a standardized written script, and the selective reinterpretation of certain pre-modern cultural traits under the banner of a "national tradition". Individuals identify themselves with cultural traits that are allegedly representative of the wider nation. Through this identification and actually existing cultural similarities, individuals are bound together in the nation as an "imagined community" (Anderson 2002). It is imagined because nations are too big for individual members to recognize each other personally. Yet, they do recognize their common belonging to the national community.

What distinguishes nations from other cultural communities is their pursuit of territorially defined sovereignty. Nations often strive to determine their own political affairs through establishing the congruence of national-cultural and political boundaries (Gellner 2008, 2). In numerous instances, this means that a nation seeks to establish its own state. The resulting *nation-state* serves as the political expression of the nation; the state's population is defined by its shared belonging to the titular nation of the state (Brubaker 2010). Thus, the efforts of centres to culturally integrate surrounding peripheries are not just projects of state-building. The diffusion of a state language, the promotion of "national" holidays or the teaching of standardized school curricula also serve the purpose of nation-building.

In numerous states, however, cultural traits other than those promoted by the state centre have persisted. These cultural traits of minority populations also have been used for nationalist mobilization. National identities that do not coincide with those of the titular, state-bearing, majority nations are a significant force in the peripheries of several states. Examples include Catalonia, the Basque Country or Scotland. For the states where these national minorities reside, this means that the settlement area of the state-bearing nation (for the above examples, the Spanish and the English or British nations) is smaller than the state territory (McGarry and O'Leary 2013, 366ff). Similarly, these states' total populations are bigger than the population

that identifies with the majority nation. The respective states “host” other nations than their majority nations. Hence, the states on whose territories the national minorities reside are referred to as *host-states*.

The above definitions come with one caveat. They tend to underappreciate the constant dynamics of state-building and nation-building. The Weberian tradition defines statehood in terms of ideal-types, while the Rokkanian tradition tends to consider national differences within states as “a legacy of the past and of incomplete integration” (Keating 2013, 8). However, processes of nation-building are a continuous enterprise for majority, state-bearing nations, as well as for national minorities. The traits that define a nation, the boundaries of who belongs to it and how they can be crossed by groups or individuals are the site of ongoing political contestation (ibid., 76ff). Similarly, the manifestations of statehood are not static. How sovereignty is exercised or how borders are policed varies markedly over time and between contexts (Jessop 2016). Different actors within states are more constrained by state borders than others (Bartolini 2005). Brubaker (1996, 63) stresses the dynamic and contested nature of state and nation-building (in the context of post-Cold War Central and Eastern Europe) to an extent that he prefers to speak of “nationalizing states” rather than host-states. Moreover, he argues that the different variants of state-building and nation-building are so controversial within host-states that they can only be conceptualized as a “loose and imperfect designation for a field of competing stances” (ibid., 62).

While Brubaker’s point is a useful reminder of the continuity of state-building and nation-building projects, the term host-state will be used in this study. Unlike “nationalizing state”, the latter appears to be a more neutral term that does not imply specific (assimilationist or other) policies on part of the majority nation. This allows for a more open-ended analysis of host-states’ interactions with other actors.

Kin-state

The above considerations about states and nations also apply to the *kin-state*. In the case of the kin-state, however, the incongruence of the boundaries of the state and the majority nation are reversed. The territory of the kin-state is smaller than the settlement area of the majority nation (McGarry and O’Leary 2013, 366ff). A part of the kin-state’s majority nation resides outside of the kin-state’s territory. In other words, the kin-state’s centre has culturally but not

politically integrated parts of a peripheral territory and its population (Rokkan 1999). The kin-state is tied to this population outside its state territory through a form of national kinship.

Brubaker (1996, 66f) highlights that, given the contested nature of state and nation-building processes, the implications of this constellation do not follow a uniform pattern. Some actors in the kin-state might aim at downscaling the nation-building project of the majority nation to match the political boundaries of the state. This would exclude the population outside the state from the imagined community that dominates the state and would ultimately render the notion of kin-state meaningless. Other actors might call for the territorial expansion of the state to include co-nationals abroad. Different positions might be dominant within putative kin-states at different points in time. This is exemplified by the different positions taken by Germany vis-à-vis German-speakers outside the territory of the respective German states throughout the 20th century. This included the brutal military expansion of the Third Reich, as well as rapprochement and cooperation between the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic during the latter half of the Cold War (Kornprobst 2008). Between these two extremes of adjusting either the boundaries of the nation or the state, there is a range of options that will be explored in more depth later in this chapter.

Kin-minority

Peripheries that are simultaneously reached out to by two competing centres have been conceptualized as “interface peripheries”. In particular, this concept has been used to describe territories that display strong cultural ties with one centre but that are politically integrated into the realm of another (state) centre (Rokkan 1999). The population of such interface peripheries tends to be susceptible to the nation-building process pursued by the culturally akin centre; that is, the state centre of the kin-state. This process stands in contrast to the nation-building sought by the majority nation of the state that the periphery belongs to politically.

Following the terminology introduced above, the population of such interface peripheries *constitutes a national minority in its host-state but belongs to a larger nation that constitutes the majority in the kin-state*. Some commentators have used the label “national minority” to refer to this phenomenon in order to differentiate it from “stateless nations” that do not constitute a majority in any state (Keating 2008, 631, see also Brubaker 1996, 60). Others have termed minorities with a kin-state “external minorities” to emphasise their political

exclusion from the kin-state's territory (Wolff 2002, 3). A third label to describe the same phenomenon is "kin-state minorities", to emphasize their links with a kin-state (Kymlicka 2007, 183). For the purpose of this study, I will use the term *kin-minorities* (see also Pogonyi 2017, Kovács 2020). The label kin-minority seems to be best suited given that it underscores the minority's kinship with co-nationals in the kin-state. It distinguishes this group from minorities without a kin-state for which the label "national minorities" has also been used (Elias 2009). At the same time, unlike "external minority" or "kin-state minority", it does not shift the emphasis to the kin-state. The minorities are not seen as an external "appendix" to the nation-state whose political boundaries do not fit the cultural ones. Instead, the kin-minority is granted agency in its own right.

The latter point warrants further attention. Several commentators tend to downplay kin-minorities' potential for autonomous action. Rather, they see kin-minorities predominantly as respondents to their kin-state's policies (Jenne 2004, Mylonas 2012, 35ff). In short, this argument holds that the more decisively majorities in the kin-state aim to integrate the kin-minority into their nation-building project, the more assertively will the kin-minority reject its integration into the host-state. This argument, however, suffers from two shortcomings. Firstly, it obscures the complexity of nation-building processes within the kin-minority. Like in the kin-state, the precise scale, the defining patterns and the very existence of national kinship tend to be contested among the putative members of the kin-minority (Brubaker 1996, 60ff). Secondly, there is no clear indication for why kin-minorities would be incapable or unwilling to act independently of their kin-state. Indeed, numerous studies demonstrate that the voting behaviour of kin-minorities tend to follow their own, internal patterns rather than stimuli from the kin-state (Mitchell et al. 2009, Csergő and Regelmann 2017, Pallaver 2018a, McGlinchey 2019). Since this thesis focuses on the agency of kin-minorities and the political controversies within them, it is warranted to deemphasize the role of the kin-state in the presented terminological choices.

Borders & boundaries

To summarize the above definitions, host-states, kin-states and kin-minorities are constituted by the mismatch of states' political-administrative boundaries and nations' cultural boundaries. Such boundaries have been described as demarcations between territories and/or groups along a range of societal functions. Generally speaking, boundaries are "locking-in mechanisms" (Bartolini 2005, 13) that facilitate interactions within them but that constrain

interactions across them. They produce an inside and an outside sphere. A nation's cultural boundaries, for instance, facilitate communication among individual members of a nation through a shared standardized language or shared references in popular culture. At the same time, national-cultural boundaries constrain communication between nations by delimiting the mutual intelligibility of languages or other cultural symbols.

In the sense that they are used in this study, following Bartolini's (ibid.) definition, boundaries are functionally specific. Hence, there can be cultural boundaries, as sketched above, political boundaries that demarcate the sphere of binding decisions taken by sovereign institutions, or economic boundaries that delimit the scope of market transactions. While these boundaries tend to have territorial manifestations like customs posts, border controls or the official use of national symbols in one territory but not in another, boundaries can also be non-territorial and entirely group-based. An example for the latter are the cultural boundaries between a kin-minority and the majority population of a host-state who are segregated within a shared territorial space, e.g. by attending different educational systems.

In contrast to boundaries, *borders* or *state-borders* refer to the geographical delimitation of nation-states. Borders tend to simultaneously entail the functions of multiple specific boundaries. Given that nation-state centres aim to simultaneously control economic, political and cultural relations, state borders are often the site where the geographical manifestations of different boundaries coincide. This makes state borders qualitatively different from functional boundaries (O'Dowd 2010). However, the confluence of functional boundaries at state borders is not universal, as the existence of kin-minorities demonstrate.

A key variable of boundaries and, by extension, borders, is their "permeability" or the extent to which interactions across boundaries are "screened, filtered and selected" (Bartolini 2005, 16). Boundaries can constitute different thresholds that need to be crossed by "outsiders" to be accepted within the territory or the collective that is circumscribed by said boundary. Different functional boundaries can either be permeable, open and soft, with low thresholds for cross-boundary interactions; or they can be impermeable, closed or hard, raising the threshold for interactions across them. Political boundaries, for instance, are open when political institutions grant access to outsiders such as the right to reside in a territory, or the possibility to participate in decision-making processes through elections. Closed political boundaries can be expressed through rigid visa regimes or the limitation of voting rights.

Critical for the permeability of boundaries is the relationship between the groups that are separated by a boundary. This has been conceptualized as different intensities of

securitization (Wæver 1993, Diez et al. 2008). Disagreements between the “in” group and the “out” group can lead actors on either side of a boundary to portray these disagreements as a security threat to the entire group in question. The threat posed by the respectively other group becomes constitutive for the identity of the own, securitized group. The more securitized relations across boundaries are, the more will the respective groups constitute their identities in demarcation from each other. This will lead to impermeable, closed, or “securitized” boundaries. For example, if the majority population in a host-state considers a kin-minority to be a threat (say, in the light of expected or actually occurring political violence), interactions between the two groups will be minimal or non-existent. “De-securitization”, in turn, describes the reversal of securitizing measures and discourses. It might lead to restricting disagreements to limited issues of cross-boundary interactions, rather than being constitutive for the respective groups. In its last stage, de-securitization can resolve conflicts by abolishing the disagreements altogether, leading to open and permeable boundaries (Diez et al. 2008).

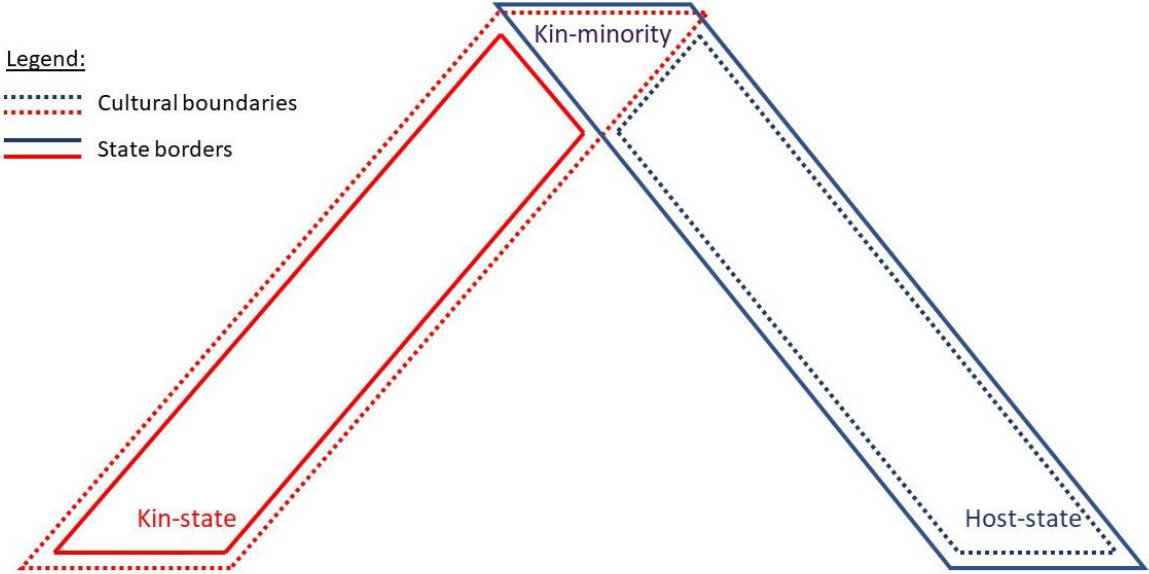
Interactions across boundaries, boundaries’ openness and the degree of their de-securitization are mutually reinforcing. Cooperation across boundaries will be facilitated by open, de-securitized boundaries. At the same time, cooperation will contribute to their openness and de-securitization (Diez 2006). For the purpose of this study, this means that kin-minorities’ interactions with their kin-states and their host-states, respectively, shape and are shaped by the nature of the cultural and political boundaries that divide and unite them. These interactions across boundaries enable and constrain kin-minorities’ own agency.

Opportunities for & constraints to kin-minority agency

As highlighted above, processes of state-building and nation-building are controversial between host-states, kin-states and kin-minorities and within each of these three entities. Actors within the kin-minority and within each state continuously monitor and interpret each other’s actions and adjust their own political agendas accordingly (Brubaker 1996). The respective political agendas define the host-state, the kin-state and the kin-minority beyond the previously outlined, general patterns and explain actors’ developments over time. For the agency of kin-minorities, this means that they do not automatically follow the inputs of kin-states. They can and do act autonomously. However, kin-minorities’ agency is enabled and/or constrained by their continuous interactions with kin-states and host-states. These interactions

constitute the very kin-minorities, kin-states and host-states and bind them together in a mutually constitutive “triadic nexus” (ibid.). This triadic nexus is depicted in Figure 1.1. It shows that cultural boundaries, displayed as dotted red lines, connect the kin-minority and the kin-state. These cultural boundaries cut across the host-state’s state border, the solid blue line, and expand beyond the kin-state’s state border, the solid red line. The host-state majority’s cultural boundary is depicted as the dotted blue line.

Figure 1.1: Triadic nexus between kin-minority, kin-state and host-state (own compilation)



In what follows, I review how kin-states and host-states interact with the kin-minority and with each other. These interactions can aim at reaching out *across* borders and boundaries, or they can aim at expanding or contracting borders and/or boundaries. This serves as a framework for the opportunities and constraints that emerge for kin-minorities’ agency along each dimension of the triadic nexus.

Kin-minority – kin-state relations

For kin-states, processes of state-building and nation-building can be contradictory. While state-building tends to focus on the assertion of sovereignty within the state’s political boundaries, nation-building potentially includes the kin-minority that resides outside its state borders. How, if at all, kin-states reach out to their kin-minorities is contested within the kin-

state (Brubaker 1996, 66f). Similarly, kin-minority actors will develop different goals and strategies about how the kin-minority should relate to the kin-state. This section reviews kin-states' possible policies vis-à-vis kin-minorities by disentangling the territorial components of state-building from the cultural elements of nation-building in the kin-state.

Nation-building across state-borders

Kin-states can include kin-minorities into their nation-building project without challenging the political boundaries between their own state territory and the host-state. This can be done in two broad ways that perpetuate the cultural boundaries of the nation beyond the state border: by directly fostering the ties between kin-state authorities and the kin-minority, or by indirectly strengthening the kin-minority's standing vis-à-vis the host-state.

The direct relationship between state authorities and a population has been conceptualized as *citizenship* (Bauböck 2005). Citizenship usually entails civil, political and social rights (Marshall 1950, 10ff). Civil rights guarantee citizens' freedom from the state. This includes freedom of expression, assembly or faith. Political rights entitle citizens to political participation in the state, most importantly through the right to vote and to stand in elections. Lastly, social rights entitle citizens to a certain standard of living by granting them access to public education or other welfare benefits. In most instances, kin-minorities are the citizens of their host-states (see Jackson-Preece 1998, 14ff). A kin-state can, however, establish legal ties between state institutions and a kin-minority by granting members of the kin-minority kin-state citizenship. Besides the aspect of citizenship rights, such legal bonds between the kin-state and the kin-minority can have an ideational and symbolic value that includes the kin-minority into the kin-state's nation-building project. The eligibility for kin-state citizenship can be defined either in ethnocultural or territorial terms (Stjepanović 2017, 5). Examples of the former include Italy and Hungary that give their respective citizenships to descendants of their co-nationals living in neighbouring territories when they meet certain criteria for language skills or provide evidence of their ancestry. An instance of the latter is Ireland whose citizenship is available to individuals who are born in Northern Ireland (ibid.).

However, members of kin-minorities are not always entitled to full citizenship rights in the kin-state, even if they are citizens of said state. Civil rights typically need to be guaranteed by the state where one is physically present. In the case of kin-minorities, this is the responsibility of the host-state. The kin-state, despite its national bonds with the kin-minority,

only has limited leverage to grant civil rights to the kin-minority (Aurescu 2011). Moreover, political rights can be linked to residency in a state. Irish citizens in Northern Ireland, for example, are not entitled to vote in elections in the Republic of Ireland (Bauböck 2005). The provision of social rights by kin-states rather than host-states, too, tends to be exceptional. In developed welfare states, social rights, such as access to public education and health care, tend to be granted by host-states regardless of citizenship (Soysal 1994, 119ff). So, while kin-state citizenship establishes legal ties between the kin-state and the kin-minority, the benefits of kin-state citizenship for a kin-minority, beyond the symbolic emphasis of adherence to the kin-state, are not clear-cut.

In addition, kin-states may also grant certain citizenship rights to members of a kin-minority without entitling them to full citizenship. Some kin-states allow privileged access to certain social rights for kin-minorities, such as facilitated access to the kin-state's labour market, the social welfare system or educational institutions. Hungary, for instance, combined several social benefits for Hungarian kin-minorities in its controversial "Status Law" in the early 2000s (Waterbury 2006).

Kin-states can also integrate kin-minorities into their majority's nation-building project by supporting kin-minorities' standing vis-à-vis the host-state. Kin-states can provide various forms of *financial, political or military support* for the kin-minority. Mylonas (2012, 32) distinguishes between a kin-state's "external interference" and its "external intervention" in kin-minority – host-state relations. The former describes (occasionally clandestine) support for the minority during low levels of conflict between the kin-minority and the host-state, such as funding for kin-minority media or other organizations (Waterbury 2020, 13ff). The latter means overt support during an escalation of kin-minority – host-state conflict, as occurred with the military involvement of Yugoslavia's successor states in support of their kin-minorities in the 1990s (Brubaker 1996, 69ff). Additionally, kin-states can play a mediating role between kin-minorities and their host-states by encouraging negotiations or by raising international awareness for the situation of "their" kin-minority (Cantir 2019). Austria, for instance, initiated two resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly to reinstate negotiations between Italy and the South Tyrolean minority in the 1960s.

All of these strategies focus on the politicization of perceived cultural similarities between the kin-state and the kin-minority and enable those kin-minority actors that seek stronger ties with the kin-state. These strategies do not *per se* challenge the status quo of the political-administrative boundary between the kin-state and host-state. As such, these measures reflect

the kin-state's acceptance of the incongruence between the borders of the kin-state and the boundaries of its titular nation's settlement area. One alternative option for the kin-state is to renounce the national ties between itself and the kin-minority. In this case, the kin-state excludes the kin-minority from its imagery of the majority nation and downscales its nation-building project in a way that corresponds with the border of the state. Sweden's longstanding non-intervention in the Åland islands is an example of this strategy (Cantir 2019). Alternatively, kin-states can pursue the opposite strategy and try to adjust the state border to the boundaries of the nation's settlement area.

Adjusting state borders to national boundaries

Kin-states can claim the territory that they perceive to be inhabited by the kin-minority in an attempt to achieve the congruence between state and nation. This has been conceptualized as *irredentism* (Kornprobst 2008, 9). Irredentism has also been used to describe kin-minorities' claims to secede from the host-state and to be integrated into the kin-state. In its historic meaning, irredentism refers to the inclusion of "unredeemed" territory (*terra irredenta*) into newly forming nation-states, especially in the context of Italian unification in the 19th century. In a more contemporary context, irredentism has frequently been associated with kin-states' expansionist foreign policies, such as the military expansion of Nazi Germany under the pretext of including ethnic Germans in Central and Eastern Europe into the "Reich", or Serbia's aggression against other nations in the former Yugoslavia (Saideman and Ayres 2008). However, kin-states can pursue irredentist policies to varying degrees. Not all expressions of irredentism are accompanied by military aggression or political violence. Some variants of irredentism, such as Ireland's constitutional claim to Northern Ireland before 1998, have a predominantly symbolic character and do not always materialize in consistent foreign policies vis-à-vis the kin-minority (Coakley 2017, 195f). Other kin-states try to balance irredentist rhetoric and the aforementioned efforts of cross-border nation-building with good neighbourly relations with host-states (Waterbury 2020). In post-1945 Europe, kin-states have shown a strong tendency to renounce irredentist claims and to accept the territorial status quo of their state borders (Zacher 2001, Kornprobst 2008).

Kin-minority – host-state relations

In the host-state, processes of state-building and nation-building frequently overlap in an effort to create a nation-state for and by the majority nation. Both processes tend to conflict with a kin-minority's attempt to pursue its own distinct national project. Yet, processes of state and nation-building can be analytically separated. Analyses of nation-building assess how the majority nation defines its own cultural boundaries, how it diminishes cultural differences within the majority and how this affects kin-minorities. Analyses of state-building deal with the host-state's assertion of sovereignty throughout the state territory. Most of the literature reviewed in this section builds on host-states' more general relationship with national minorities.

Kin-minorities and host-state majority nation-building

The national majority in the host-state can apply three broad strategies when dealing with national minorities (Jackson-Preece 1998, 30ff, Mylonas 2012, 21ff): assimilation, exclusion and accommodation. Assimilation describes the adaptation of the majority's culture and values on part of the kin-minority. It can take coercive forms such as the proactive abolition of public services and education in the minority language. Alternatively, liberal, "difference blind" policies may also lead to the kin-minority's assimilation into the host-state majority. In the longer run, assimilation abolishes the cultural boundary between the kin-minority and the host-state majority, and merges the kin-minority into the majority population. Exclusion affirms and hardens the cultural boundaries between the two national groups. It can be either physical or non-physical and includes the most violent forms of majority – minority interactions. Physical exclusion can take the form of deportations, ethnic cleansing or even genocide. Non-physical exclusion means the denial of citizenship rights to members of kin-minorities and their segregation from the majority population. Lastly, accommodation describes the acceptance and de-securitization of the cultural boundary between majority and minority nations within the host-state. It acknowledges national minorities' claims to their own national identity or to that of the kin-state and grants members of minorities individually, or minorities as collectives particular rights to preserve this identity. This can include facilitating measures for kin-minorities to establish political or cultural links with their co-nationals in the kin-state.

Assimilationist and exclusivist policies constrain kin-minorities' agency. Accommodation, on the other hand, enables it. Given that accommodation is the most relevant category of

minority – majority relations in the context of this thesis, I will not elaborate on strategies of assimilation or exclusion any further. Strategies of accommodation, in contrast, matter for the following reasons. The largest part of contemporary national minorities seek some form of accommodation from the host-state (Brunner and Küpper 2002). In liberal democracies, the accommodation of national minorities has become the dominant approach to majority – minority relations (Kymlicka 2007). Additionally, friendly, de-securitized relations between a minority’s host-state and a minority’s external supporter (in many cases, a kin-state) facilitate minority accommodation on the part of the host-state (Mylonas 2012, 189). Such de-securitized relations are, among other things, perpetuated through the common membership in supranational organizations like the EU, which will be examined in more depth in the following chapter.

The accommodation of national minorities is, in large part, addressed through the lens of “minority rights” or the “protection” of minorities (Jackson-Preece 1998, Marko and Constantin 2019). Some authors have tried to establish a “hierarchy” of minority rights (Brunner and Küpper 2002), mirroring the common assumption that minorities’ demands can be ranked from moderate to radical, with moderate demands aiming at a permeable boundary between national groups and radical ones aiming at harder boundaries. According to this approach, the most moderate form of minority accommodation guarantees non-discrimination and substantive equality for individual members of the minorities. This includes, among other things, the right to mother tongue education or the right to use minority languages for communication with state (or sub-state) authorities. A more encompassing way of aiming at equality for members of minorities is “affirmative action”. That is, minorities are treated more favourably, for example in the distribution of jobs in the public sector, to make up for previous injustices (see Schiek et al. 2007). Policies may also move beyond individual rights and address minorities as collective bodies. This can take the form of guarantees for representation in state or sub-state institutions, for instance through guaranteed seats in legislatures or through lower electoral thresholds for minority candidates (Reynolds 2005). Additionally, minorities can be granted various forms of self-government through non-territorial autonomy. This may include bodies of private or public law for the management of education or the media sector (Suksi 2015).

Consociationalism combines several of the aforementioned policies (Lijphart 1977). It aims at institutionalizing the cooperation across cultural boundaries by prescribing the inclusion of the majority nation and the kin-minority into political institutions. Typically, this combines

four elements: power-sharing between the majority and the minority nations in the executive, veto rules to protect “vital” interests of each nation, proportional representation in elections and proportional distribution of certain public goods (public sector jobs etc.), and autonomy for each national group to manage its own internal affairs (for instance, in education) (ibid.). Consociationalism does not only recognize the cultural boundaries between national groups but institutionalizes them by creating separate public spheres for the majority and minority nations. That is, consociationalism presupposes segregated cultural institutions such as schools or media and culturally segmented channels of political representation. On this basis, consociational arrangements for minority accommodation have been criticized for their perpetuation and potential closure of cultural boundaries that supposedly preclude the de-securitization between national majorities and minorities (McGarry and O’Leary 2007, McGarry and O’Leary 2006). However, “liberal” consociations take precisely this kind of criticism seriously and aim at cooperation across and autonomy within cultural boundaries without predefining the constitutive cultural patterns or the permeability of the boundary in question (ibid.). In a “liberal” consociational arrangement, for instance, students or parents can choose between the educational systems of the majority or the minority nation.

All of these policies aim at managing the relationship between different national segments of the host-state’s population. They do not affect the constitution of the host-state’s territory. Yet, national minorities, just like national majorities, raise a claim to territory by the very definition of their nationalist project (Gellner 2008, 1). Sovereignty over territory, thus, is a crucial point of contestation between the host-state and the kin-minority.

Territorial centre – periphery relations in the host-state

The territorial aspect of host-state – kin-minority relations can be understood in terms of a cleavage between the state centre and the periphery in which the kin-minority resides (Rokkan 1999). The host-state centre tends to strive for the integration of the kin-minority-populated periphery into its political, economic and cultural realm, to align these realms’ territorial boundaries at the state border. The kin-minority, in turn, is likely to resist these tendencies. This entails the kin-minority’s likely desire to preserve its cultural boundaries vis-à-vis the host-state majority, as outlined above. Yet it also includes the preservation or the establishment of the territory-based, political boundaries, so that the kin-minority can make binding decisions in what it perceives to be its homeland. The most radical way to accommodate this territorial claim by kin-minorities’ is to redraw the host-state’s political

boundary entirely in order to integrate the kin-minority-populated territory into the kin-state (irredentism), or to create a newly sovereign state (secession). This would amount to the dissolution of the host-state's territory.

However, political boundaries can also be adjusted within the host-state. Kin-state-populated peripheries can be granted *self-rule* within the host-state. That is, the host-state centre yields some of its sovereignty to authorities in a peripheral sub-state territory. The rationale behind territorial self-rule is that the boundaries that geographically delimit the scope of some political decisions align more closely with the cultural boundaries of the national groups within the host-state (Palermo 2015). This is not to say that political boundaries can be entirely congruent with cultural boundaries. Indeed, this is hardly ever the case, given that mixed demography and competing nation building projects in kin-minority-populated border regions will frequently leave some kin-minority members outside and non-kin-minority-members within self-ruling sub-state entities. Yet, the aim of territorial self-rule is to accommodate kin-minorities “through the classical logic of majority-based democracy, turning (national) minorities into (sub-national, territorial) majorities, or at least into much more consistent minorities” (ibid., 20f). Within self-governing sub-state entities, the aforementioned mechanisms for managing minority – majority relations might still apply. Northern Ireland and South Tyrol, for instance, both combine territorial self-rule with consociational arrangements at the sub-state level (Wolff 2004).

A major point of contestation in relation to territorial minority accommodation is the scope of territorial self-rule. That is, which aspects of sovereignty or which policy competences should be “devolved” from the host-state centre to the self-governing institutions? Swenden (2013, 69) suggests that while there is no blueprint for the territorial accommodation of national minorities, self-rule typically includes those competences that are vital for minorities' own nation-building projects and for the maintenance of the cultural boundaries between the minority and the host-state majority. This can include competences over education, culture and the provision of health or social care. Yet, the precise scope of sub-state entities' self-rule tends to result from political struggles between a variety of actors (Keating 2013, 99). These struggles do not only concern the cultural-territorial aspects of minority and majority nation-building but are also fought over different interpretations of effective policy delivery and influence at different levels of government (ibid.). Thus, self-rule can be understood as a dynamic concept that is shaped by the interactions between kin-minority actors in the periphery and host-state actors at the centre. Self-rule at the sub-state level provides kin-

minorities with opportunities for autonomous political action within limited political and territorial boundaries.

Arrangements for sub-state self-rule can be complemented by mechanisms for *shared rule*. That is, the host-state centre can provide for mechanisms through which self-governing sub-state entities can influence decision-making at the centre (Hooghe and Marks 2016, 153). This can happen through formalized, intergovernmental arrangements between the sub-state and the host-state centre executives like Italy's State-Regions Conference (McEwen et al. 2018), or through informal interactions between sub-state and host-state representatives at the party political level (Elias and Tronconi 2011, 3ff). Institutions for shared rule can provide kin-minorities with additional opportunities to interact with the host-state centre.

Kin-state – host-state relations

The bilateral relations between kin-states and host-states do not directly influence kin-minority parties' agency. Similarly, kin-minority parties have no direct impact on these relations. The relationship between the two states, however, provides background conditions that shape kin-minority parties' identities, goals, strategies and alliances. In particular, the manifestation of the border between the two states enables or constrains kin-minority parties' options.

The incongruence between a kin-state's political-administrative boundaries and its cultural-national boundaries has led some scholars to assume that *irredentism* is a kin-state's default position vis-à-vis a host-state (Saideman and Ayres 2008, 3ff). From this perspective, kin-states are likely to challenge the territorial status-quo in an attempt to incorporate the kin-minority into its state territory. Conversely, host-states are expected to reject irredentist claims in favour of the status quo. Given the resulting conflict of interest between kin-states and host-states, irredentism is depicted as an inherently destabilizing force that is prone to escalate into violence between states and between national groups (Horowitz 1985, Saideman and Ayres 2008).

However, kin-state – host-state relations cannot be reduced to a dichotomy between irredentism and the acceptance of the territorial status quo. This is, not least, demonstrated by kin-states' aforementioned strategies of cross-border nation-building. The dynamics between kin-states and host-states can be better conceptualized through different degrees of securitization and de-securitization, as outlined above (Wæver 1993, Diez et al. 2008).

Irredentist claims by the kin-state will likely be interpreted by the host-state as a security threat, leading to the securitization of the interstate relations. This will lead to a closure of the state border and to an impediment to cross-border interactions. Contrastingly, the acceptance of the state border by the kin-state is likely to diminish perceptions of threats to the host-state's border and will incentivize de-securitized interstate relations. As a result, the state border will become more permeable and allowing for cross-border interaction and cooperation (Diez 2006). This will also allow for intensified interaction between the kin-state and the kin-minority and, possibly, for mutually sanctioned forms of cross-border nation-building.

Taking kin-minority agency seriously: the concept of kin-minority parties

The interactions between kin-minorities, kin-states and host-states create opportunities for and constraints to kin-minorities' agency. How kin-minorities interpret and act upon these opportunities and constraints tends to be contested within the kin-minority itself. Following Bourdieu, Brubaker (1996, 61, emphasis in original) describes the heterogeneity within kin-minorities as a "*field of differentiated and competitive positions or stances* adopted by different organizations, parties, movements, or individual political entrepreneurs". This thesis focuses specifically on political parties that claim to represent kin-minorities. This focus is warranted given that political parties "synthesize the various elements of identity and channel diffuse territorial sentiments into more specific political programmes" (Keating 2013, 89). Consequently, *kin-minority parties* contribute to the construction of the kin-minority as such and give agency to their putative kin-minority (Utz 2019b).

Kin-minority parties resemble the wider group of "regionalist" (de Winter and Türsan 1998, Massetti 2009, Mazzoleni and Mueller 2016), "ethno-regionalist" (De Winter and Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro 2002, Türsan 1998), "regional nationalist" (Van Atta 2003), "peripheral" (Rokkan and Urwin 1982), "autonomist" (Elias and Tronconi 2011), "non-state-wide" (Pallarés et al. 1997) or "minority nationalist" (Lynch 1996, Elias 2009) parties. All these labels, despite slight variations in their emphases, refer to political parties that aim to mobilize culturally distinct peripheries against the state and nation-building projects of their host-states. Kin-minority parties do this as well. However, the notion of kin-minority party underscores a kin-minority's theoretically and empirically relevant links to a state-bearing majority in a kin-state. In other words, a kin-minority party is a political party that *claims to represent a national minority that it perceives to be part of a bigger nation that constitutes the majority in*

a neighbouring kin-state. Consequently, kin-minority parties are likely to seek “their” kin-minority’s demarcation from the host-state, while they aim at closer political and cultural ties with the kin-state.

The remainder of this chapter disentangles kin-minority parties’ agency into four categories: identities, goals, strategies, and alliances. Identities define what kin-minority parties see as constitutive for their kin-minority and for the national kinship that links it to the kin-state. They also differentiate the kin-minority from the national majority in the host-state. Goals means the ways in which kin-minority parties seek to express these identities. That is, which forms of cooperation do they seek with their kin-state, and how do they want their kin-minority to differ from the host-state? Strategies refers to means through which kin-minority parties pursue their goals, particularly against the backdrop of (electoral) competition with other kin-minority parties. Finally, alliances refers to the forms of cooperation, such as coalition agreements, that kin-minority parties pursue with other actors in their kin-state and in their host-state.

Kin-minority parties’ identities

Kin-minority parties’ identities are “the ontological claim[s], that the nation and people in question exists and is conscious of existing” (Keating 2015, 36). They can be conceptualized as kin-minority parties’ selective interpretations of “pre-existing, historically inherited proliferation of cultures or cultural wealth” (Gellner 2008, 55) that the perceived members of the kin-minority have in common and that constitutes them as a *group*. The interpretation and appropriation of these cultural patterns constitutes who belongs to the kin-minority and to the wider nation in the kin-state. Such identities include, for instance, the perception that a common language spoken by the kin-minority and the majority in the kin-state is an expression of shared nationhood on both sides of the state border. Conversely, identities also determine who is excluded from the nation. Most importantly, they differentiate the kin-minority from the majority in the host-state.

In this sense, kin-minority parties resemble “ethnic parties” (Horowitz 1985). Ethnic parties exclusively appeal to one particular “subset of a country’s population but not the whole” (Chandra 2011, 154). They exclude parts of the host-state population based on allegedly objective, ethnic or cultural criteria (such as race, language or religion) (*ibid.*). However, the collective identities that kin-minority parties evoke tend to be nested within complex

hierarchies of several possible collective identities (Wimmer 2008). Individuals may associate with different collectives at the same time. For instance, they may equally strongly associate with a community at the sub-state level and with a state's majority nation, or they can prioritize one identification over the other (Guinjoan and Rodon 2015). Collective identities can also be "blended". This is, multiple identities of different levels are mutually constitutive for each other (Risse 2010). The complexities of collective identities indicate that national kinship can be constructed at several political levels. Kin-minority parties can perceive kinship between the kin-minority and co-nationals abroad to be constituted at the level of a macro-region (for instance, the "German-speaking world"), at the level of a kin-state (Austria) or at the level of a neighbouring sub-state entity (Tyrol) (see Utz 2019b). What matters is that these affiliations are not portrayed as mutually exclusive but as compatible and/or complementary forms of cross-border identities that unite the individual members of the kin-minority and their national kin on the other side of a political boundary in one imagined collective cross-border nation.

Identities do not only concern collective entities but also kin-minority parties' *conceptions of territory*. They concern the boundaries of the interface periphery that the kin-minority claims as its "homeland" and the periphery's long-run relationship with the competing centres of the host-state and the kin-state. Some kin-minorities claim a clearly demarcated territory for "their" nation, as is the case with nationalists on the island of Ireland. Other kin-minority parties may use different concepts of their "homeland" to refer to territorial claims at different scales. Different historical and contemporary scopes of regions such as Catalonia, Bavaria or Tyrol, for instance, are each assigned particular meanings by political parties (Keating 2013, 78). Similarly, identities also form kin-minority parties' imagery of what differentiates their "homeland" from the rest of the host-state and what links it to the kin-state. Illiberal, exclusive versions of kin-minority nationalism tend to portray the interface periphery in question as the exclusive settlement area of an ethnocultural group that is inaccessible to outsiders, including to members of the host-state majority. Such a variety promotes closed cultural boundaries and securitized relations between the kin-minority and other national groups. Liberal, inclusive versions, in turn, assign the population of their region "the kind of civic virtue that underpins social capital" (ibid., 77). This depicts the territory as a more open space to the host-state majority and other groups that do not *a priori* identify with the kin-minority. Such a construction of identity coincides with open, de-securitized cultural boundaries (Kymlicka 2001).

Kin-minority parties' goals and strategies

Kin-minority parties' goals refer to their preferences about how the kin-minority should be located within the triadic nexus. They define which particular forms of minority accommodation kin-minority parties will seek from their host-state, and which cultural and political ties the kin-minority ought to seek with the kin-state. In other words, goals describe the way in which the kin-minority, as part of a larger nation, aims to exercise sovereignty over a certain territory and people. This is not to say that kin-minority parties exclusively pursue goals that are related to sovereignty. Questions of socioeconomic distribution, gender or the environment also frequently shape kin-minority parties' agendas. Yet the issue of sovereignty and the kin-minority's relationship with the kin-state and the host-state constitute kin-minority parties' "core business" (Hepburn 2009, 482), which justifies this study's narrow definition of goals.

Strategies determine how kin-minority parties present their goals to different audiences at different points in time. They follow kin-minority parties' "electoral logic" (Toubeau and Massetti 2013, 302). That is, strategies are the means through which kin-minority parties seek to reconcile their goals with their aim to appeal to voters and to be elected to public office (Strøm and Müller 1999). While kin-minority parties' pursuit of goals, votes and offices can be complementary and mutually reinforcing, these three endeavours can also conflict and compel parties to make trade-offs. For example, when kin-minority parties seek to be part of a coalition government, they will present their goals in a way that is acceptable to prospective coalition partners. This, however, might be at odds with the preferences of kin-minority parties' potential voters and might come at the detriment of the parties' electoral success (ibid.). Strategies help kin-minority parties to navigate these trade-offs. Kin-minority parties can selectively emphasize certain elements of their goals, while downplaying others. They can, for instance, stress the need for the expansion of territorial self-rule within the host-state, while only making scarce references to cooperation with the kin-state, or vice versa. Kin-minority parties can also frame aspects of their goals in different ways by justifying them with different narratives (Elias et al. 2015).

The distinction between kin-minority parties' goals and strategies reflects the wider differentiation between political actors' "logic of appropriateness" and "logic of consequentiality" (Börzel and Risse 2003). The distinction is conceptually important, since it highlights that kin-minority parties do not only develop their goals within the context of the

triadic relationship between the kin-minority, the kin-state and the host-state, but also against the backdrop of electoral competition with other parties. However, this study will assess kin-minority parties' goals and strategies as one analytical category and will not aim to disentangle goals and strategies in the empirical analysis. This is justified for two reasons. Firstly, it has been acknowledged that the "logic of appropriateness" and the "logic of consequentiality" simultaneously influence political actors' behaviour (ibid., 74). This makes it difficult to operationalize the distinction for empirical analyses. Secondly, kin-minority parties might also consciously blur their goals and strategies, and flexibly redefine their goals to strategic requirements as they emerge (Walker 2018).

Kin-minority parties' goals and strategies have group-based and territorial aspects. Through their *group-based goals and strategies*, they aim to reach out to different parts of the population in "their" territory. These goals and strategies define the form of minority accommodation that the kin-minority party aspires to, and who should benefit from it. Kin-minority parties can aim to reinforce the difference between the kin-minority and the host-state majority in an attempt of "ethnic outbidding". This means that the party exclusively targets individuals who it perceives as members of the kin-minority and that it radicalizes the political claims that it supposedly makes on their behalf (Horowitz 1985). This tends to translate into more far-reaching claims for minority accommodation or even irredentism. Alternatively, a kin-minority party can moderate the demands that it makes on behalf of its kin-minority in an effort of "ethnic underbidding". This can coincide with a party's attempt to reach out to voters of the host-state majority, or to individuals who do not identify with either group, or both. This strategy has been referred to as "lateral underbidding" (Zuber 2011) or "nonethnic counterbidding" (Coakley 2008). In addition, kin-minority parties can combine intransigent demands for their kin-minority on some issues with more moderate positions on other issues (Mitchell et al. 2009). Different kin-minority parties that aim to represent the same kin-minority are likely to apply different strategies to reach out to their potential constituencies. Hence, they will pursue different goals concerning minority accommodation and its beneficiaries, even though their identities might coincide.

Kin-minority parties' *territorial goals and strategies* define how the kin-minority should exercise self-rule on a territorial basis. The bulk of the literature, including aforementioned accounts on "ethnic outbidding", assumes that demands for self-rule can be classified along a continuum that stretches from moderate to radical (Jenne 2004, Massetti 2009, de Winter 1998, Dandoy 2010). Although these accounts differ slightly in their classifications, they

agree on the following hierarchy. The most moderate goals that parties can voice are calls for non-territorial minority accommodation. Demands for territorial self-rule within the host-state are more radical. Secession or irredentism constitute the most radical options that kin-minority parties can demand, with some parties even reverting to political violence to pursue these goals. Some contributions subsume irredentism to secessionism; that is, the creation of a new state in which the national minority would then constitute the majority (Jenne 2004, Massetti 2009).

This is understandable for two reasons. Firstly, irredentism and secessionism both entail the territorial breakup of the host-state. Secondly, many accounts on the party politics of national minorities do not single out kin-minority parties as a distinct category, leaving kin-minority parties' interactions with kin-states largely undertheorized. To my knowledge, only two accounts on minority nationalist parties explicitly acknowledge that the territorial strategies of kin-minority parties are qualitatively different from parties that represent national minorities without a kin-state. De Winter (1998, 207) singles out "irredentist parties" that "favour annexation of their region to another nation-state with a similar cultural identity". Dandoy (2010) further differentiates between "irredentist" parties and "rattachist" parties. In his definition, irredentist parties seek the creation of a new state, based on the unification of secessionist territories from multiple host-states, while rattachist parties demand the integration of their territory into a pre-existing kin-state. The latter category corresponds with de Winter's definition of irredentist parties. Given that de Winter's take on irredentist parties is more in line with the wider literature on irredentism (see above), I will follow his terminology and will not apply Dandoy's admittedly useful but unconventional differentiation.

The concept of irredentist parties, however, does not account for the full range of goals and strategies that kin-minority parties can utilize regarding their territory's links with their kin-state. Various forms of cross-border cooperation between kin-minorities and their kin-states have also been shown to contribute to the accommodation of kin-minorities within host-states (Mabry et al. 2013, Cantir 2019). Certain links between the kin-minority and the kin-state, like citizenship rights granted by the kin-state or financial support for minority organizations, fall short of irredentism but can complement arrangements for kin-minority self-rule. Kin-minority parties are likely to include these measures into their goals. Irredentism is only the most radical goal that kin-minority parties can aspire to.

Kin-minority parties' strategies as well as changing institutional environments lead to variations in parties' goals over time. In addition, kin-minority parties' goals are frequently ambiguous or even contradictory. For instance, kin-minority parties can pursue accommodation in the host-state in the shorter run, while seeking unification with the kin-state in the longer run (see Massetti 2009).

Kin-minority parties' alliances

Kin-minority parties will, in most instances, have to form alliances with a variety of actors to further their goals and strategies (see Elias and Tronconi 2011). Alliances with representatives of the host-state majority will be necessary for the implementation of kin-minority parties' desired variants of kin-minority accommodation and self-rule in the host-state. These alliances can take the form of ad hoc cooperation on certain policies, "confidence and supply" agreements for minority governments or even coalition agreements. In consociational power-sharing arrangements, coalitions between kin-minority parties and parties of the host-state majority serve as a form of kin-minority accommodation and make such alliances mandatory (McGarry and O'Leary 2006). Alliances between kin-minority parties and host-state majority representatives can be formed in a variety of different arenas, such as state or sub-state parliaments, power-sharing executives, or intergovernmental conferences.

Kin-minority parties' alliances with actors from the kin-state tend to be more informal, as most kin-minority parties are only formally represented in their host-state. Informal alliances with political parties or office holders from the kin-state, however, can serve to demonstrate a shared sense of national identity or can be used to advocate certain policies on either side of the state border.

The dynamics within the triadic nexus create opportunities for certain forms of alliances, while they constrain others. When the relations between kin-minorities, kin-states and host-states are securitized, kin-minority parties' ability to form alliances will be constrained. Alliances with kin-minority parties will be perceived as a threat by other actors. Additionally, kin-minority parties will have no incentives to cooperate with actors who they perceive as a threat to their kin-minority constituency. De-securitization, however, allows for kin-minority parties' alliances with a range of political parties and office holders from the kin-state and the host-state. Which alliances kin-minority parties pursue is likely to depend on the alliances' "viability" (Budge and Laver 1992); that is, on the emphases that kin-minority parties put on

different goals and strategies, and whether these emphases are accepted or rejected by potential allies.

Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter has defined kin-minority parties as political parties that claim to represent a national minority that they perceive to be part of a bigger nation which constitutes the majority in a neighbouring kin-state. While kin-minority parties pursue a separate nation-building project from the majority in their host-state, they seek closer cultural and political ties with the majority nation in their kin-state. The means through which kin-minority parties can achieve this depend on the wider, trilateral interactions between the kin-minority, the kin-state and the host-state. The next chapter reviews how European integration influences this triadic nexus and what this means for kin-minority parties' identities, goals, strategies and alliances.

2. European integration & kin-minority parties

Kin-minority parties' identities, goals and strategies are enabled and constrained by the interplay between the kin-minority, the kin-state and the host-state. European integration changes the dynamics between these three entities. For example, it has made travelling from one state to another easier, given the abolition of passport controls in the Schengen Zone and the introduction of the Euro currency. Interactions between national kin on both sides of state borders have hence been facilitated. At the same time, the member states of European organizations are unlikely to shift their borders with other members. This discredits irredentist positions and precludes kin-minorities' integration into their kin-state. This chapter explores the dynamics of European integration in more depth to identify kin-minority parties' possible responses to the Europe-induced changes in their environment. In particular, it aims to establish how kin-minority parties might adapt their identities, goals, strategies and alliances against the backdrop of the integration process.

This is done in four steps. Firstly, this chapter reviews European integration's effects on processes of state and nation-building. It underscores that European integration has gradually shifted economic, political and cultural functions away from the centres of nation-states and has partially opened up the borders of states and the cultural boundaries of nations. At the same time, European integration makes the shifting of state borders unlikely and perpetuates borders' geographical location. Secondly, this chapter examines how European integration has changed the relationships within the triadic nexus between kin-minorities, kin-states and host-states. European integration facilitates interactions across state borders and national boundaries and challenges traditional dynamics of centre – periphery relations by opening up new spaces for cooperation. At the same time, it radically restricts irredentist claims. Thirdly, the effects of crises of European integration and the potential for disintegration are assessed. It is argued that crises do not necessarily reverse the effects of European integration but that they can lead to a complex interplay between demands for disintegration, further integration or the preservation of the status quo. Lastly, the chapter develops a framework to analyse how kin-minority parties may adapt their identities, goals, strategies and alliances to these changing dynamics. Kin-minority parties are likely to interpret the Europe-induced opportunities and constraints in different ways. Border-shifting parties continue to insist on

irredentist positions and aim to reinforce the importance of state borders, while border-transcending parties attempt to use European integration to overcome the state border that divides the kin-minority from the kin-state. A third category, border-crossing parties, take a middle position and use European opportunities selectively to facilitate cross-border cooperation, while being sceptical of other aspects of the integration process.

European integration as the restructuring of states and nations

European integration has been conceptualized as the restructuring of centre – periphery relations in Europe at a continental scale (Bartolini 2005). The institutions of the European Union that are created through the integration process constitute “a new centre” above the level of the nation-state (Haas 2004 [1958], 16). In the previous chapter, a centre has been defined as a “privileged location” where control over economic, political and cultural resources is concentrated (Rokkan 1999, 110). This section reviews the effects of centre formation at the European level on the processes of state-building and nation-building. It concludes that European integration contributes to the dispersion of economic, political and cultural functions across multiple centres “above” and “below” the level of state centres. Relatedly, European integration softens the demarcations between different economic, political and cultural spheres, leading to a de-securitization of state borders and of cultural boundaries between nations.

European integration as centre formation

European integration can be portrayed as the formation of a *new centre above the level of the nation-state* (Haas 2004 [1958], 16). The new centre, composed of a variety of European organizations and their institutions, partially assumes the competences of nation-state centres. While the centres of nation-states merged the control over economic, political and cultural affairs for their endeavours of state and nation-building, the European centre only controls selected elements of each of these functions. Consequently, European integration does not mirror the formation of state centres at a higher level but *disjoins nation-states' simultaneous control over economic, political and cultural affairs* (Bartolini 2005). Different functions are now managed at different levels of government. The rationale behind the centre formation at the European level and the dynamics between state centres and the new European centre have been interpreted in a number of different ways.

Neofunctionalists, for instance, hold that the creation of a new centre at the European level starts with entrusting “supranational”, European institutions with authority over economic policies, where the benefits of interstate cooperation are the most evident (Haas 2004 [1958]). This was illustrated by the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community that integrated the management of these industrial sectors. Neofunctionalists expect that further economic, political (and sometimes cultural) functions will be gradually integrated at the new, European centre as well. This has been conceptualized as “spill-over effects”. Externalities of economic sectors whose regulations are already integrated in European institutions will create demands for further integration from actors in other sectors. Under certain circumstances, the integration of economic sectors will bring about political integration across states and will lead to a shift of cultural loyalties to the supranational, European centre (Niemann et al. 2019, Lefkofridi and Schmitter 2015, Risse 2005).

Jessop (2016) views European integration as part of a wider transformation of contemporary states. According to him, the nation-state is just one out of many possible “spatiotemporal fixes”, in which the relationship between societal functions and territory remains stable for a certain period. Since contemporary economic activities increasingly take place in arenas beyond the level of nation-states, they are also managed at the European level. Consequently, European organizations above the state level contribute to the formation of “different economic and political spaces and forces located at different scales [that] compete to become the primary or nodal point of [...] state power” (ibid., 125).

Similarly, Bartolini (2005, 117ff) argues that European integration leads to centre formation at the continental scale on some dimensions but not on others. “Spill-over” is not expected to occur across the entire range of state functions. Adapting Rokkan’s (1999) model of centre – periphery relations, he holds that the institutions of the EU form a new centre for the regulation of a vast range of economic activities, restricting state centres’ autonomous management of economic affairs. This includes, for instance, state aid to firms, control over interest rates or subsidies for underdeveloped regions that are now decided at the European level. In the political domain, the picture is patchier. Policing, and particularly the policing of state borders with other member states, is coordinated at the European level. Conversely, individuals’ political rights, such as suffrage, mainly depend on their affiliation with states through legal citizenship, not on individuals’ links with Europe (Bauböck 2005). Channels of political representation through political parties are predominantly organized at the state level

as well (Ladrech 2002). In the cultural domain, the centres of nation-states or culturally differentiated peripheries remain the main reference points for identity formation.

What adds to the complexity of European centre formation is that European integration proceeds unevenly across European states, affecting some state centres more than others (Schimmelfennig et al. 2015). The Schengen Zone that guarantees the abolition of passport controls at internal borders, for instance, does not comprise all member states of the EU but also includes states from outside the Union. Similarly, the Euro is the currency of only 19 out of 27 member states, and of some associated micro-states.

The partial formation of a new, European centre and the disintegration of control over economic, political and cultural functions across levels of government has three effects on processes of state-building and nation-building that are relevant in the context of this study. Firstly, it changes centre – periphery relations at the state level and allows for a more general dispersion of sovereignty away from state centres. Secondly, it de-securitizes state borders that previously demarcated state centres’ spheres of influence, perpetuates their geographical location and makes them more permeable. Lastly, it softens the boundaries between national communities and allows for simultaneous affiliations with multiple collective identities.

Dispersion of sovereignty and European integration

The unbundling of economic, political and cultural functions resulting from European integration prevents state centres from reaching out to their peripheries in each of these domains with the same intensity. Consequently, sub-state authorities might obtain more leeway from their host-state centres in those policy fields that are no longer a state competence, while new constraints for self-ruling entities might emerge from the European centre. State centres themselves tend to respond to these tendencies by adapting the internal territorial organization of their states, for instance, by granting more self-rule to sub-state entities or by providing new mechanisms for shared rule to channel sub-state entities’ interests at the European level (Hooghe and Marks 2016, 153).

Overall, the confluence of European centre formation and a growing trend towards territorial self-rule across a wide range of European states (ibid.), lead to a *dispersion of sovereignty* or to a “rescaling” of states, understood as “the migration of economic, social, and political systems of action and of regulation to new spatial levels, above, below, and across the nation-state” (Keating 2013, 6). State centres that used to concentrate control over economic and

political resources are now in competition with other locales that assume key functions in these domains. These new, potentially competing centres can all be evoked by different actors, including by kin-minority representatives, as legitimate sources of authority, sovereignty and collective identity (Keating 2015, 37f).

However, the precise relationship between European integration and sub-state self-rule is complex and often contradictory. On the one hand, European integration provides sub-state authorities with new institutional and economic opportunities for autonomous action. On the other hand, political functions that were previously held by sub-state units are now managed at the European level. Moreover, much of sub-state units' interactions with European institutions is mediated through their host-states (Keating 2013, 6).

One EU policy instrument that has typically been associated with opportunities for sub-state entities are structural funds. Eligibility for money from these funds depends, among other things, on macro-economic indicators at the sub-state level. The European Commission frames its so-called Cohesion policy around the principles of "subsidiarity" and "partnership" (Brunazzo 2016). This led commentators and sub-state representatives to expect the strengthening of direct links between supranational and sub-state institutions, helping the latter circumvent the influence of the host-state centre. Some host-states, in turn, deemed the creation of sub-state entities necessary for being eligible for structural funds. However, the European Commission's policies do not give sub-state entities *per se* any additional leeway vis-à-vis their host-states. Rather, the inclusion of sub-state authorities into processes related to cohesion policy reflects their previously obtained level of self-rule (Keating et al. 2015).

Other perceived opportunities for peripheries are represented by the Committee of the Regions (CoR). The CoR was created with the 1992 Treaty on European Union (the "Treaty of Maastricht") as a representative organ of sub-state entities at the European level. Representatives of national minorities often appraised this step as the creation of a potential Second Chamber at the European centre, that would give them a new channel to emancipate themselves from host-states (Hepburn 2008). However, the heterogeneity of interests within the CoR and its merely consultative function vis-à-vis other EU institutions has so far limited its impact at the European centre (Keating et al. 2015, 455, Carroll 2011). Simultaneously, sub-state authorities' representational offices in Brussels that have mushroomed over the last three decades have been shown to serve predominantly informal and symbolic purposes (Keating et al. 2015, 453). Conversely, sub-state entities' most effective way to exert influence at the European centre tends to be through their host-state centres, if the latter so

allow. Sub-state entities, for instance, can influence their host-state government's position at the EU level through mechanisms of shared rule and, in some instances, can even represent their host-state in the Council of the EU (Keating et al. 2015, Falcone 2015).

Some authors have tried to capture the dispersion of sovereignty with the concept of "multilevel governance", suggesting that different levels of government as well as public and private actors interact in novel, non-hierarchical ways (Hooghe and Marks 2003, Bache and Flinders 2004). However, state centres continue to be important, as is evidenced, among other things, by the intergovernmental logic of some EU institutions like the Council of the EU and state centres' role in mediating sub-state units' influence at the EU level. Hence, state centres and centres above and below the state interact and compete with each other in complex ways. This has a direct impact on state borders and affects kin-minorities' interactions with their kin-states and their host-states.

The opening and perpetuation of state borders

State borders can be understood as the territorial limits of a state centre's political, legal and administrative influence. In the ideal-type configuration of the nation-state, these borders also coincide with the economic boundaries that circumscribe a "national" market or a currency system, as well as with the cultural boundaries of the state's titular nation. As outlined in the previous chapter, processes of state and nation-building pursue the homogenization of economic, political and cultural aspects within state borders, while aiming to differentiate the nation-state from spaces outside its borders.

When the management of economic, political and cultural functions is dispersed, state centres' ability to construct boundaries around their respective functional realms is reduced. The transfer of macroeconomic decision-making from state centres to the European level, for instance, inhibits states to charge tariffs for the import of goods into their state territory. Thus, the partial creation of a centre above the state correlates with a partial opening of state borders. This makes borders more permeable for those goods, services or rights that are managed at the European level.

The precondition for this *opening of state borders* (and the concurrent dispersion of state functions) is their *de-securitization and the acceptance of their territorial location*. Crucially, at the outset of European integration, state borders within Western Europe had lost much of their military significance. The Cold War and the creation of the North Atlantic Alliance

(NATO) shifted the main security threat of Western European states away from their mutual state borders to the interface between the Western and the Eastern blocs. In other words, early European integration took place under “a new international constellation with a transfer of sovereignty that encapsulated the historical European state rivalries into two regional subsystems (Western and Eastern), both of which were integrated within larger blocs (Atlantic and Soviet)” (Bartolini 2005, 119). Moreover, cooperation between the two blocks and the subsequent integration of Central and Eastern Europe into the Western block directly contributed to the mutual recognition of state borders. The 1975 Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe explicitly upholds the principles of the “Inviolability of [state] frontiers” and the “Territorial integrity of States”. In the 1990s, the EU declared the solution of outstanding border conflicts a prerequisite for EU accession (Zacher 2001, 222). Thus, shifting the focus of security threats away from interstate relations in Europe, has helped de-securitize the borders between European states. Simultaneously, it facilitated the mutual recognition of state borders within Europe. It has, thus, delegitimized irredentist claims by European states against one another (Kornprobst 2008).

The de-securitization and perpetuation of European state borders has been key to their partial opening. If state actors had continued to consider other states a security threat (as they did before the end of the Second World War), this perception would have impeded the shifting of economic and political competences to the European level (Diez 2006). State centres would have continued to seek control over the economic and political spheres and over the policing of their respective boundaries. Yet, the de-securitization of interstate relations has allowed for the pooling of authority over a range of economic and political issues at a new centre. In those fields that are now managed at the European level, the significance of state borders has been dramatically reduced. This is true, for instance, regarding customs and tariffs that have been entirely abolished within the Single European Market, or regarding the monetary policy of those member states that have introduced the Euro. In these fields, state centres do no longer have the means to demarcate their territory from that of other (member) states. Trade or financial transactions are not disrupted by tariff or currency boundaries at state borders (Bartolini 2005).

Consequently, state borders constitute less of a barrier for interactions between states. They have become more permeable and easier to cross. This is predominantly true for economic exchanges, given the “Four Freedoms” of goods, services, capital, and people within the Single Market (Young 2015). Individuals can now live, work or study in any EU member

state without having to surmount additional economic or legal hurdles. In the political realm, the abolition of border controls in the Schengen Zone, the harmonization of visa regimes and states' cooperation in Justice and Home Affairs have also made border crossings within Europe easier. Having to show one's passport at an EU internal border is no longer the norm.

In short, European integration has made state borders less disputed and more permeable at the same time. Diez (2006) describes this as the "subversion paradox", given that functional cooperation across state borders has subverted their political divisiveness. Crucially for this study, European integration has largely discredited irredentist demands by European states against one another. The vast majority of kin-states in Europe now accepts the territorial status-quo, which divides kin-states from their kin-minority (Kornprobst 2008). At the same time, cooperation between kin-minorities and kin-states is facilitated through the opening of state borders.

However, just like the creation of the European centre, the opening of borders only partially modifies the significance of states. State centres can still establish boundaries in those domains over which they exercise authority. Individuals' political rights, for instance, continue to be linked to state citizenship. Other than in local and European elections, suffrage in one EU member state does not entitle to suffrage in another one. Likewise, the cultural boundaries of nations have not lost their relevance. They have been transformed by the dispersion of sovereignty and the softening of state borders in their own, particular ways.

Softening of cultural-national boundaries

Nation-building includes the homogenization of localized cultures and symbols within the wider nation and the drawing of boundaries between nations through their demarcation from each other (Gellner 2008). European institutions do not engage in such cultural homogenization. The symbols of European institutions, like the twelve-star flag or the "Ode to the Joy" anthem, are not supposed to supersede national symbols. Provisions for the protection of national minorities put forward by the EU, the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) are designed to constrain the excesses of majority nation-building but need to be implemented by member states (Kymlicka 2007, Galbreath and McEvoy 2012). Hence, unlike in the economic and political spheres, centre formation in the cultural sphere has only taken place to a near-negligible extent at the European level.

The lack of cultural centre formation notwithstanding, European integration still can exert two interrelated effects on existing national identities. Firstly, the *boundaries of collective national identities may become more permeable*, mirroring the de-securitization and softening of economic and political boundaries. If state borders or national boundaries are securitized, the other side of the border is considered to constitute an existential threat to one's own state or nation. The identity of the securitized nation hence becomes constituted in demarcation to other nations. Exchanges with members of other nations are deemed a threat to the very identity of the national community. Consequently, the cultural boundaries of the nation will be impermeable, closing off the national community from outsiders. This yields illiberal, exclusive variants of nationalism that are incompatible with cultural diversity within their own boundaries (Kymlicka 2001).

As European integration de-securitizes borders and facilitates interactions across the borders of nation-states, this may also impact national identities. They might no longer be constituted in demarcation to the "other" nation across the border (Diez et al. 2008, 28). Instead, the constitutive elements of the national identity may shift to other, possibly more inclusive symbols. This may make the nation's cultural boundaries "softer" and more permeable, giving rise to liberal versions of nationalism that can accommodate diversity within their boundaries (Kymlicka 2001). Such a transformation of national-cultural boundaries requires wider societal transformations than the elite-driven opening of economic or political boundaries. Thus, the softening and de-securitization of national boundaries is likely to be a more subtle and long-term process than economic and political integration. Yet, if the process is successful, it is one of the most pervasive transformations that European integration can bring about, given that it is capable to lastingly resolve antagonisms between national groups by making them more inclusive and compatible with each other. Diez et al. (2008, 4ff) point to the cultural boundary between the French and German nations to exemplify this point. While this relationship had been deeply securitized in the early 20th century, contributing to the outbreak of two World Wars, post-1945 Franco-German cooperation has become a driver for political and economic integration in Europe. This cooperation has substantially redefined German and French perceptions of the own and the respectively other nation.

The second effect that European integration can have on national identity indirectly stems from the dispersion of sovereignty across several levels of government. The European centre, its institutions and symbols can serve as a reference point for a *European identity*. This is not to say that European identities are likely to supersede national ones. Rather, individuals'

European identities tend to be “added on” to their national ones (Risse 2010, 23). Identification with one collective or another does not need to be mutually exclusive. Identification with different levels can be related hierarchically, with one identity being stronger than the other, or they can be blended and mutually constitutive (ibid.). Hence, identification with “Europe” is possible, even if this does not entail a weakening or even the abolition of national identities. Moreover, association with Europe or its institutions is possible without these institutions’ engagement in efforts of cultural homogenization. For example, survey data suggests that 50 to 60 percent of Europeans identify somehow with Europe. At the same time, between 40 and 50 percent of respondents identify predominantly with their nation-state and display a weaker, subordinate identification with Europe in addition to this. Throughout Europe, only a negligible minority identifies exclusively with Europe or more strongly with Europe than with other communities (ibid., 40). Simultaneous affiliations with multiple levels of government have also been found between the state and the sub-state level in numerous European regions (Keating 2013, 80f).

There is a strong correlation between the softening of national boundaries and the diffusion of multiple, compatible identities (Hooghe and Marks 2009, Risse 2010). Individuals who identify with Europe, even as a subordinate affiliation, tend to subscribe to more inclusive or liberal versions of their national identity. Such individuals tend to be cosmopolitan in outlook, to hold liberal societal values and to favour immigration and multiculturalism. The boundaries of their national identities can be described as soft or permeable, given these individuals’ acceptance of (some degree of) diversity within their national community. This group tends to favour a strengthening of the European centre and supports further European integration.

On the contrary, there continues to be a substantial share of individuals in all European states that exclusively identifies with their nation and holds no identification with Europe (or other levels of government). Such individuals tend to hold illiberal values, are sceptical of interactions with other national communities and are dismissive of immigration and multiculturalism. These individuals perceive the boundaries of their national community as hard and impermeable, cherishing cultural homogeneity within their nation. This group tends to be sceptical of European integration (ibid., Kriesi et al. 2012).

To sum up, European integration, understood as the formation of a new centre at the European level, has three effects that are relevant for kin-minorities and their relationship with their kin-states and host-states. Firstly, it disperses sovereignty across several levels of government, modifying the role of nation-state centres and peripheries. Secondly, it perpetuates the

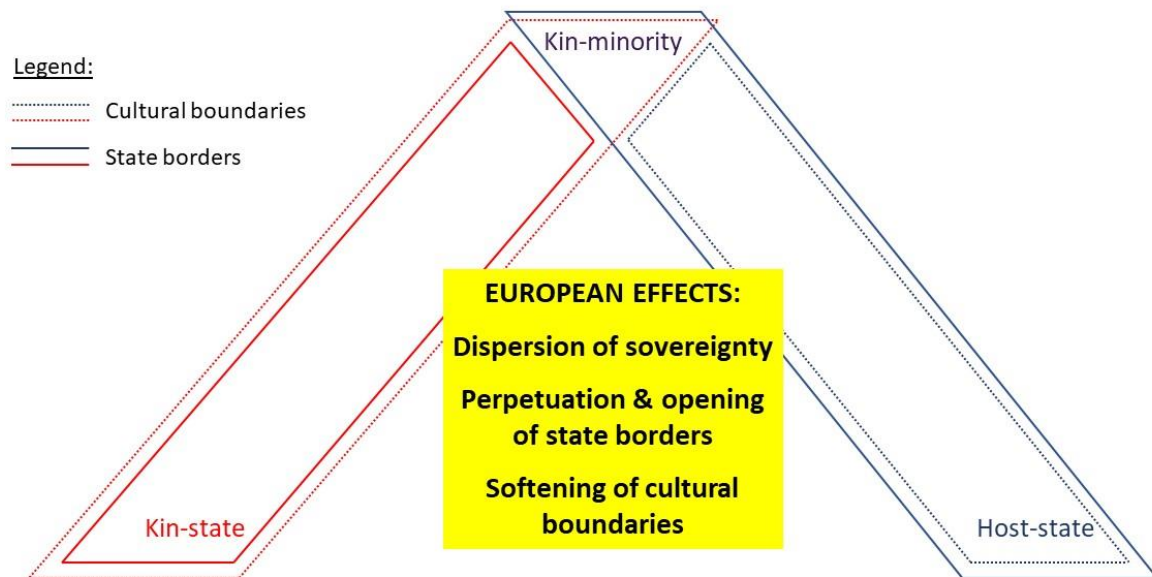
location of state borders and makes them more permeable. Lastly, European integration softens the boundaries of national identities and makes affiliations with multiple collective identities more feasible. The next section assesses, how these dynamics affect the relationship between kin-minorities, kin-states and host-states.

European integration & the triadic nexus

European integration's impact on the relationship between kin-minorities, kin-states and host-states has received increasing scholarly attention over the last two decades. Some authors focus on the impact of European provisions for minority rights such as the CoE's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) or the work of the OSCE's High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) (Kymlicka 2007, Galbreath and McEvoy 2012). Others take a wider perspective on European institutions' agency and argue that they constitute an additional pillar within the relationship between kin-minorities, kin-states and host-states (Smith 2002, 2019, Krasniqi 2013). A third approach highlights European integration's more subtle and indirect influence on kin-minorities and the involved states (Csergő and Regelman 2017).

The framework that I present here builds on assumptions of this last approach. It assesses how European integration impacts each dimension of the triadic nexus between kin-minorities, kin-states and host-states. The dispersion of sovereignty, the perpetuation and opening of state borders and the softening of national-cultural boundaries all have distinct effects on each dimension of the nexus. This is summarized in Figure 2.1. The lines that depict boundaries and borders in this Figure are thinner than in the original Figure 1.1. This is to symbolize that while borders and boundaries do not disappear due to European integration, they can become softer, more permeable and less of an obstacle to interactions throughout the triadic nexus. I hypothesize that these Europe-induced effects incentivize kin-minority parties to renounce irredentist claims, given the perpetuation of state borders. At the same, kin-minority parties can be expected to seek accommodation within their host-states and to pursue cross-border cooperation with their kin-state as a result of opening state borders, the dispersion of sovereignty and the softening of cultural boundaries.

Figure 2.1: Europe-induced effects on the triadic nexus (own compilation)



Kin-minority – kin-state relations

European integration precludes the option of irredentism. Most kin-states in the OSCE space, and particularly EU member states, accept the status quo of their borders (Kornprobst 2008). They do not aim to integrate the “homeland” of their kin-minority into their state territory. However, the softening of state borders and cultural boundaries, as well as the creation of new political fora beyond the state level have opened up new spaces for cooperation between the kin-minority and the kin-state. This cooperation can be based on cultural patterns related to nation-building across state borders and on territorial patterns that aim at cooperation between the kin-state and sub-state authorities that claim to represent the kin-minority.

Mobility and cultural cross-border cooperation

The de-securitization and softening of state borders allow for new forms of cross-border cooperation and enhanced mobility across state borders. This provides new opportunities for collaboration between the kin-minority and the kin-state. The general increase in cross-border activities throughout Europe mitigates the particularism of interactions between the kin-minority and the kin-state and contributes to their de-securitization.

The “Four Freedoms” of the EU’s Single Market facilitate the mobility of member state citizens throughout the EU and the associated states of the European Economic Area (EEA). Citizens can live, work or study in the entire EEA and must not be discriminated against based on their citizenship (Young 2015). The abolition of passport controls in the Schengen Zone furthers cross-border mobility as well. Moreover, the creation of the Single Market has been accompanied by the introduction of the “European citizenship”, which entitles citizens of all EU member states to most civil and social rights in all other member states. Only political rights, such as suffrage, still predominantly depend on national citizenship (Delanty 1997).

These trends *facilitate interactions* between members of the kin-minority and of the kin-state majority. The resulting exchanges can strengthen the cultural ties between the kin-minority and the kin-state majority and can be utilized in processes of cross-border nation-building (Schiek 2018). For instance, kin-minority members can be educated at universities in the kin-state, using the common “national” language as the language of instruction. At the same time, EU-sponsored mobility embeds kin-minority – kin-state interactions in a wider context of European cross-border cooperation, making them less of an anomaly. Referring to the previous example, the EU encourages and subsidizes students who study in states other than their state of origin. Additionally, the expansion of civil and social rights to all EU citizens renders the utilitarian advantages of kin-state citizenship for kin-minority members largely obsolete. If kin-states grant citizenship to their kin-minority for symbolic reasons, the legal effects of this step will be minimal. The “*mainstreaming*” of *cross-border mobility* is likely to contribute to the de-securitization of interactions between the kin-minority and the kin-state. The more common it is to cross European borders, the less these border-crossings will be considered a threat, even if they entail efforts of cultural cooperation between alleged co-nationals (Diez 2006).

Increased cooperation between the kin-minority and the kin-state can also take place at the European level itself. European institutions provide *arenas for common political actions* between kin-minority and kin-state representatives. Here, cooperation tends to have a twofold effect as well. On the one hand, publicly visible cooperation can be interpreted as the pursuit of a “common national interest” that straddles state borders. On the other hand, such cooperation tends to be part of broader coalitions at the European level, which can legitimize kin-minority – kin-state interactions to other actors and make them less controversial. Kin-minority representatives’ actions in the European Parliament are an illustrative example for

this kind of cooperation. The Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament encourage cooperation across state borders, privileging “transnational party federations” that are formed of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from at least one fourth of all member states. These party federations tend to cluster around broad ideologies, as is the case with the Christian-democrat and conservative European People’s Party (EPP) or the Party of European Socialists (PES) (van Hecke 2010). Party federations can include MEPs from the kin-state and from kin-minority parties. This provides MEPs with a platform through which they can jointly pursue their shared agenda. MEPs’ informal networks that extend beyond their formal affiliations, for instance through “intergroups”, create additional spaces for potential cooperation between kin-minority and kin-state representatives (Gómez-Reino 2018, 139).

Territory-based cross-border cooperation

State rescaling, paired with the opening of state borders, allows for cross-border cooperation at several levels of government. Additionally, European institutions actively encourage cross-border cooperation between sub-state units. This cooperation can be utilized as means to strengthen the ties between a kin-minority and its kin-state. Two kinds of initiatives are particularly important.

Firstly, there are *financial incentives* for cross-border cooperation, mainly as part of the EU’s wider structural funds. The EU’s Interreg funding programmes that have run since 1990 are a case in point. These funding schemes support infrastructure projects and other investment across European borders at various levels of government (Keating 2013, 67). On the island of Ireland, the EU has set up special funding programmes for the border counties in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland to support the peace process in the region (Hayward and Wiener 2008). The shared management of such cross-border funds can be interpreted by kin-minority and kin-state actors as rapprochement between polities that are populated by the same cross-border nation.

Secondly, European institutions provide *legal instruments* to foster cross-border cooperation between sub-state entities. The EU’s 2006 Regulation on a “European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation” (EGTC) provides a legal framework that enables sub-state authorities to form cross-border entities with a distinct legal personality (Engl 2016). In its updated version, this regulation defines an EGTC’s possible tasks as the “facilitation and promotion of territorial cooperation to strengthen Union economic, social and territorial cohesion, and the

overcoming of internal market barriers” (Committee of the Regions 2020). Moreover, the Council of Europe agreed on the “European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation”, or “Madrid Convention” in 1980. This document stipulates that the signatory states should facilitate cross-border cooperation between sub-state entities. However, the Convention only gives very limited de-facto leeway to sub-state entities and reaffirms host-state governments’ role in the implementation of the precise provisions (Gänzle, 2016). The limited impact of these initiatives notwithstanding, they can be vested with a high symbolic value for nation-building across state borders.

In addition to Europe-sponsored initiatives, kin-minority-run sub-state authorities and kin-state officials can engage in a number of cooperative arrangements that relate to European integration in several ways. This can take the form of joint lobbying efforts to European institutions, possibly including sub-state representations in Brussels (Keating et al. 2015, 453), or informal forms of sub-state cooperation that complement European initiatives. For example, several sub-state entities from Italy, Austria, Switzerland and Germany created the “Working Group of the Alps” (*Arge Alp*) in 1972 to coordinate policies of mutual interest such as environmental protection or infrastructure planning (Plangger 2018).

Kin-minority – host-state relations

The dispersion of sovereignty and the softening of political and cultural boundaries are likely to affect group-based and territorial aspects of kin-minority – host-state relations. Broadly speaking, the former tends to translate into a de-securitized, cooperative relationship between the kin-minority and the host-state majority. The latter signifies novel possibilities for sub-state entities’ self-rule and shared-rule.

Kin-minority – host-state majority relations

Members of the kin-minority as well as members of the host-state majority may share a European identity. As has been argued above, such a European identity is unlikely to replace national identities but adds another layer to the identification with the kin-minority or the host-state majority, respectively. At the same time, identification with Europe tends to correlate with less stringent demarcations of collective identities and with more liberal forms of nationalism. Consequently, individuals who identify as European are less likely to perceive their national identity as antagonistic to other national groups within the host-state. These

changes may manifest themselves in three different ways that are relevant for kin-minority parties.

Firstly, members of the kin-minority and the host-state majority will share certain European institutions as *common reference points* for the creation of their collective identities. Among other things, they are both likely to accept European norms of human rights and minority rights (Cianetti and Nakai 2017). This sets a baseline for the peaceful interaction between the majority and the kin-minority and for the possible accommodation of the kin-minority within the host-state. Ultimately, this may lead to rapprochement and cooperation between the kin-minority and the host-state majority.

Secondly, European institutions provide *new fora for cooperation* between the kin-minority and the host-state majority. At the European level, interactions between the two groups can take place beyond the minority – majority distinction that is likely to prevail at the level of the host-state. After all, in European institutions, no national group constitutes a majority. Most importantly perhaps, the European Parliament can provide representatives of the kin-minority and the host-state majority with a platform for cooperation beyond national distinctions. Transnational party federations, by definition, include MEPs from several national backgrounds and might include kin-minority and host-state majority representatives.

Thirdly, decision-making processes at the European level might *incentivize cooperation* between kin-minority and host-state majority representatives at the host-state level. This may be the case when issues discussed at the EU level lead to a convergence of interests between national groups within the host-state. Resulting cooperation may take place in the host-state parliament or through informal links between representatives of the kin-minority and the host-state majority.

As alluded to above, identification with Europe and the corresponding, softening effects on collective identities are not universal. Rather host-state majorities and kin-minorities are likely to be internally divided over the degree to which their respective identities are compatible with Europe and liberal versions of nationalism.

Host-state centre – periphery relations

The dispersion of political functions across several levels of government has changed the dynamics between host-state centres and interface peripheries that are inhabited by kin-minorities. It provides new rationales for sub-state units' self-rule and shared rule. Moreover,

European institutions form a new arena for actors from the sub-state entities. Three broad effects can be observed.

Firstly, the softening of cultural and political boundaries and related processes of de-securitization make territorial self-rule for kin-minorities less contentious, given that the self-governing unit is no longer prone to irredentist claims (Kymlicka 2007, 182ff). Hence, in Western Europe, *territorial self-rule* has become a common form of minority accommodation as an indirect result of European integration. Moreover, European policies such as the cohesion funds have incentivized some states to decentralize state functions and to grant self-rule to sub-state entities (Keating 2013, 100ff). Several minority nationalists have applied these incentives as an additional argument to demand the expansion of territorial self-rule (Hepburn 2013).

Secondly, sub-state entities are likely to seek cooperation and intensified shared rule with their host-state centre. If sub-state authorities want to influence policies that are managed at the European level, they are incentivized to cooperate with the host-state. Sub-state entities' input through shared rule mechanisms can influence their host-state's positions at the European level, for instance, in the Council of the EU (Keating et al. 2015). Thus, sub-state authorities' strive to influence European policies may translate into closer cooperation with the host-state. This will be facilitated by the Europe-induced softening of the cultural boundaries between the kin-minority and the host-state majority.

Thirdly, sub-state authorities can try to advance their goals directly at the European level. This can be done through the Committee of the Regions or through direct representations in Brussels. In the CoR, sub-state representatives tend to vote along the lines of their host-states' preferences (Hönnige and Kaiser 2003). This suggests previous coordination and cooperation between sub-state authorities regardless of representatives' national-cultural identities. Sub-state offices in Brussels help expand sub-state authorities' networks beyond the host-state. They are symbolically important, since they allow sub-state authorities to display their presence at the European level and to claim EU-related political gains, even if they are not related to the work carried out by such offices. Direct sub-state representation at the EU level rarely allows for sub-state governments' substantive influence on EU policies (Keating et al. 2015, 453).

Kin-state – host-state relations

In the previous section, the de-securitization of interstate relations has been found to be a precondition for European integration. Only if state actors do not consider another state to be a security threat, are they likely to pool sovereignty with the other state at a superordinate centre. This superordinate centre formation, in turn, is responsible for the partial opening of state borders. Those domains that are controlled by the new centre can no longer be utilized by state centres to demarcate their state territory from other states. So, the more competences a kin-state and a host-state transfer to the European level, the more open the border between them will be. A more open state border will facilitate interactions between actors from the kin-state and the host-state, including the kin-minority.

From this follows that most of the Europe-induced changes to kin-minority – kin-state and kin-minority – host-state relations are contingent upon the kin-state's and the host-state's participation in the European integration process. The two states' integration into European organizations is the backdrop against which European integration creates opportunities for and constraints to kin-minority agency. These background conditions are likely to unfold gradually. The more intensively host-states and kin-states participate in the processes of European integration, the more far-reaching the effects of de-securitization, state rescaling, and the softening of political and cultural boundaries will be. Three steps of integration are particularly important.

Firstly, kin-states' and host-states' integration into European security structures is key for the de-securitization of interstate relations. Shared NATO membership restricts the military threat that one state can constitute to another, given the organization's shared defence mechanisms (Bartolini 2005, 119). Membership in the OSCE requires the acceptance of the territorial status-quo of state borders, which delegitimizes irredentist claims and de-securitizes state borders (Zacher 2001, 222). Moreover, the latter organization and the Council of Europe bind their member states to certain standards of human rights and minority rights. This makes host-states responsible for the wellbeing of their citizens, including kin-minorities, and restricts kin-states' unilateral interference and intervention on behalf of their kin-minorities (Aurescu 2011). The OSCE's High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) is tasked with preventing ethnic conflicts through diplomatic means. The OSCE has also issued a number of guidelines for minority – state relations such as the 1999 “Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life” or the 2008 “Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations”. The CoE's European

Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) guarantees individuals a range of civil and political rights, its European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) encourages the protection and promotion of minority languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) stipulates certain standards for minority rights (Galbreath and McEvoy 2012). These measures make the actions of kin-state and host-state actors more predictable (Sperling and Webber 2014). In particular, they constrain kin-state's military support for the kin-minority and the kin-minority's exclusion or assimilation on part of the host-state. This fosters the de-securitization of kin-state – host-state relations.

Secondly, economic integration between the kin-state and the host-state removes the boundaries for economic interactions between the two states. Most importantly, membership in the Single Market, through EU or EEA membership, guarantees the free flow of goods, services, capital, and people between the two states (Young 2015). The main implication for individuals is that they can live, work or study throughout the Single Market. Within the Economic and Monetary Union, the need for currency exchange when crossing state borders has also been abolished. Moreover, actors in EU member states are eligible for several funding schemes, including those that further cross-border cooperation.

Thirdly, political integration allows for joint access to and possible cooperation in European decision-making fora. Cooperation between state governments is particularly intense in the Council of the European Union, where most decisions are agreed consensually between EU member state governments, even if Qualified Majority Votes were possible (Hayes-Renshaw 2017, 93f). Cooperation in the EP follows ideological lines, rather than state affiliations (Hix et al. 2007). Yet, the EP brings together kin-state and host-state representatives from a variety of ideological backgrounds and compels them to cooperate in transnational party federations (van Hecke 2010). Additionally, political integration further contributes to the opening of state borders. This is most obvious in the case of the Schengen Zone.

Kin-states' and host-states' integration along these dimensions is unequal. The OSCE and the CoE include all EU member states but also other states. Only some members have signed or ratified the various provisions for minority protection. NATO and the Schengen zone only include some EU members and other states too. Lastly, the Euro has only been adapted by some EU members but not by others. These partial overlaps of affiliations with European institutions have been described as “variable geometry” (Bartolini 2005) or “differentiated integration” (Schimmelfennig et al. 2015). The aforementioned effects of European integration are limited when a kin-state and a host-state are integrated into European centre to

different degrees. The economic boundary between a member of the Euro zone and a non-member, for instance, will be harder than between two EMU member states. This constrains European integration's border-opening effects. In sum, the extent to which European integration provides opportunities to and constraints for kin-minorities is likely to depend on kin-states' and host-states' respective relationship with the European centre.

Crises and the potential for European disintegration

So far, I have elaborated on European integration as an incremental process of centre formation and its effects on the relationship between kin-minorities, kin-states and host-states. From this perspective, Europe moves gradually towards closer integration. However, numerous crises of European integration have led to competing conclusions about a potential halt to or the reversal of European integration. These debates have gained momentum over the last decade in light of the Eurocrisis, rising levels of scepticism over further integration, debates over migration to the EU and the UK's decision to leave the EU.

Despite their different origins, what crises of European integration have in common is that they challenge established "ways of doing things". European organizations' "ability to function can no longer be taken for granted" in light of a crisis (Boin et al. 2016, 5). This is due to crises' three defining characteristics (ibid.). Firstly, crises constitute a threat to the institutional status quo. They question the constitution of the European centre and the effects of European integration on state centres, borders and cultural boundaries. For instance, advocacy for relocating economic or political competences from the European centre back to state centres on part of multiple member-state governments can threaten the current level of dispersion of sovereignty and calls other actors' aspirations to further integration into question. Secondly, crises create a sense of urgency. They require imminent responses. Longstanding destabilizing factors within the European Union such as the dysfunctional migration management in the Schengen zone only constitute a crisis when key actors perceive a pressing need to rectify the dysfunctionality. In the case of migration management, this is what happened during the migration crisis of 2015/16 (Hooghe and Marks 2019, 8ff). Lastly, crises are characterized by a high degree of uncertainty. The causes, consequences and potential solutions to a crisis are, at least initially, unknown. This makes crisis responses prone to political contestation.

Hence, reactions to recent crises of European integration have not been uniform. While established relationships between European organizations, states and/or national groups are unsettled in times of crises, their resulting post-crisis reconfiguration can take various forms. Three broad scenarios are possible (Riddervold et al. 2021, 8ff, for a more fine-grained typology of crisis responses see Lefkofridi and Schmitter 2015). One response to a crisis can be further integration. In this scenario, relevant actors such as state governments deem the strengthening of the European centre to be an appropriate crisis response. This leads to a further shift of competences from the state or sub-state level to the European centre. The pooling of debt to issue grants to member states during the Covid-19 pandemic (the “Next Generation EU” programme) exemplifies such a shift (Schulz 2020). In a second scenario, European organizations and member states apply established mechanisms to address new crises. This can be the case when relevant actors disagree on appropriate responses to a crisis and the status quo prevails after the threat posed by a crisis peters out. This has been the case, for instance, when the Eurocrisis did not lead to the integration of Euro zone members’ fiscal policies, or to the disintegration of the Euro zone (Lefkofridi and Schmitter 2015). Lastly, disintegration is also possible. In this scenario, the competences of the European centre are weakened and European integration’s effects on the relationship between kin-minorities, kin-states and host-states are reversed. The UK’s withdrawal from the EU constitutes a case of such disintegration.

Given that these three scenarios are broad ideal-types, crisis responses can also blend elements of further integration, continuity and disintegration. This is the case when different responses are taken in different policy fields, or when some actors opt for closer integration while others opt out. The “differentiated integration” regarding the EMU and the Schengen zone is an example of such opt-outs (Schimmelfennig et al. 2015, Schimmelfennig 2019).

In short, crises of European integration do not *per se* lead to disintegration or to a reversal of European integration’s effects on states, borders and nations. Neofunctionalists and historical institutionalists argue, for instance, that the likelihood for disintegration to materialize as a long-term response to a crisis is small (Niemann et al. 2019). This is because earlier decisions by state governments and European organizations in favour of integration are likely to influence subsequent crisis responses. This “path dependency” makes the prevalence of the status quo or further integration a more probable approach to crises than disintegration (Riddervold et al. 2021, 10f).

However, demands for disintegration have been a common response to recent crises among individuals and political parties who promote exclusive national identities and who do not embrace a European identity (Hooghe and Marks 2009). Such demands have been conceptualized as “Euroscepticism”, with different variants thereof aiming at different types of disintegration. This can reach from demands for a state’s opt-out from certain European policies, to calls for a member-state’s withdrawal from the EU or even demands for a break-up or substantial overhaul of the European Union in its current form (Kopecký and Mudde 2002, Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a, Heinisch et al. 2021). The rise of such Eurosceptic demands in numerous European states increases the likelihood of European disintegration and is likely to prevent further integration (Hooghe and Marks 2019).

Disintegration’s effects on kin-minorities’ environment

When demands for disintegration become dominant among certain constituencies or when disintegration actually materializes as has been the case with Brexit, European integration’s effects on the triadic relationship between kin-minorities, kin-states and host-states can, at least in part, be reversed. However, disintegration or a rise in Eurosceptic demands do not equal a return to the *status ex ante* of the triadic nexus. Rather demands for disintegration and the preservation of European integration’s effects on kin-minorities’ environment will interact in complex ways. This has been exemplified by the lengthy negotiations about the UK’s withdrawal from the EU (Schimmelfennig 2019) or by the moderation of Eurosceptic demands once Eurosceptic parties strive to enter government coalitions (Fallend 2008, Heinisch et al. 2021).

For the dispersion of sovereignty, this means that disintegration can but does not necessarily lead to a re-concentration of political, economic or cultural competences at state centres. Rather, the weakening of the European centre is likely to cause new contestations between state centres and sub-state entities. The UK’s withdrawal from the EU, for instance, has “repatriated” state functions from the European centre to the UK. The distribution of these repatriated competences between the state centre and sub-state entities has been heavily disputed between levels of government (McEwen 2020). Initial plans by the UK government to concentrate competences for retained EU law at the state centre have been decisively opposed by sub-state authorities. Concessions on the part of the state centre now give sub-state entities influence over repatriated competences within the realm of their self-rule but continue to be opposed by some sub-state representatives (ibid., 8).

Regarding the possible reversal of European integration's effects on state borders, the evidence is also mixed. The perpetuation of state borders seems to persist against the backdrop of European disintegration. The Irish government, for instance, has been reluctant to call the location of the land border between Ireland and the UK into question, even after the latter had left the EU and although bilateral agreements between Ireland and the UK provide for a possible referendum on shifting the border between the two states to include Northern Ireland into the Republic (Tannam 2020). However, the de-securitization and opening of state borders can be reversed when Eurosceptic actors portray cross-border interactions as a threat and demand impediments to such interactions. This is exemplified by the constraints to the free movement of people that have been put in place since the UK has left the EU (Lutz 2021). Similarly, during the migration crisis of 2015/16 or at the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic, multiple Schengen states re-introduced border controls and other impediments to cross-border mobility. This happened without previous coordination with neighbouring countries or European organizations, as would be required by the Schengen acquis (Boffey 2021, Ceccorulli 2019).

Lastly, the relationship between European disintegration and national identities is also diffuse. Exclusive national identities with hard demarcations vis-à-vis other national groups have been identified as a cause of Euroscepticism and as a driver for demands for disintegration (Hooghe and Marks 2009, Stockemer et al. 2019). However, given that the "direction of the causal arrows is rather unclear concerning the correlation between European identity and other [inclusive] values" (Risse 2010, 47), disintegration or the threat thereof might also fuel exclusive national identities.

For the triadic relationship between kin-minorities, kin-states and host-states, this means that disintegration can, at least partially, reverse the effects of European integration outlined above. When kin-state governments promote exclusive identities and voice Eurosceptic demands, for instance, kin-minority representatives might be compelled to cooperate with them outside European channels. This would undermine the Europe-induced "mainstreaming" and de-securitization of kin-minority – kin-state interactions. The same could be true when new obstacles to cross-border interactions, such as border controls, are re-introduced. Similarly, self-rule for kin-minorities might come under stress when the dispersion of sovereignty is being reversed in the host-state, or when the relations between the kin-minority and the host-state majority are re-securitized in light of different preferences over European integration and disintegration.

In short, I hypothesize that demands for the disintegration of European institutions limits kin-minorities' opportunities for cooperation with the kin-state and for emancipation from the host-state. This is likely to incentivize kin-minority parties to revert to irredentism. The next section assesses how kin-minority parties will adapt their identities, goals, strategies and alliances to the opportunities and constraints that result from European integration and possible disintegration.

Irredentism or cooperation? Kin-minority parties' responses to European integration

Europe's effects on each relationship within the triadic nexus create novel dynamics between the kin-minority, the host-state and the kin-state. Kin-minority parties will adapt their identities, goals, strategies and alliances to this changing environment. The characteristics of this new environment can be summarized as follows. The mutual recognition of state borders by kin-states and host-states prevents irredentism. This constrains kin-minority parties' potential claims for unification with the kin-state. The opening of state borders creates new opportunities for kin-minority parties to seek stronger cross-border ties between their kin-minority and the kin-state. Lastly, the softening of cultural boundaries and the rescaling of states create new opportunities for kin-minority parties to pursue their kin-minority's accommodation within the host-state. In sum, European integration constrains irredentism but facilitates the accommodation of kin-minorities and their cross-border aspirations within the host-state. Demands for the reversal of European integration, in turn, constrain kin-minority parties' opportunities for accommodation within the host-state and for cross-border cooperation with the kin-state, and are likely to incentivize kin-minority parties to return to irredentist positions.

Three broad strands in the literature have aimed to conceptualize the relationship between political parties and their changing European environment. Firstly, the literature on the "Europeanization" of parties has looked at how political parties' adapt policy positions or internal organizational patterns at the domestic level to the EU (Mair 2000, Ladrech 2002, Poguntke et al. 2007, Ladrech 2010). Others within the Europeanization school have been more concerned with parties' work in the EP (Hix and Lord 1997, Hix et al. 2007) and with the formation of transnational party federations (van Hecke 2010, Gómez-Reino 2018). Some effort has been made to combine these perspectives (Mair 2006). Secondly, the literature on Euroscepticism has emphasized that European integration is contested between political

parties, with some parties rejecting the integration process *per se*, while others take a more nuanced approach (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b, Pirro and Taggart 2018, Kopecký and Mudde 2002). Others have shown that support for European integration correlates with parties' ideological positions on other dimensions (Hooghe et al. 2002, Marks et al. 2002, Hooghe and Marks 2009). Lastly, the literature on “European regionalism” has focused specifically on how parties that represent national minorities navigate Europe-sponsored opportunities and constraints (Keating 2001, Elias 2009, Hepburn 2013, Jolly 2015).

The following conceptual framework draws selectively on insights from all three strands. This helps conceptualize how kin-minority parties adapt their identities, goals, strategies and alliances to their changing European environment.

Multi-layered identities and softening cultural boundaries

Identities are implicit, taken-for-granted ascriptions that distinguish the kin-minority from the majority in the host-state and connect it to the kin-state. Kin-minority parties can envision their kin-minority as an inclusive entity whose identity can be “nested” in or “blended” with multiple, simultaneous ascriptions. This is likely to correspond with liberal values and “soft” cultural boundaries that allow for the possible integration of outsiders. Alternatively, kin-minority parties can think of their kin-minority and their wider nation's identity as exclusive, leaving little to no room for associations with other collective identities. This correlates with illiberal values and “hard” cultural boundaries that deny access to outsiders (Hooghe and Marks 2009).

In the case of kin-minority parties that hold inclusive, liberal identities, European integration is likely to “add on” another layer of identity. Kin-minority parties are unlikely to modify their image of the kin-minority or their cross-border nation *per se*, but they might embed it in a wider collective group of “Europeans”. Association with the new, European centre may complement the previously held identity. The restructuring of states and the possible creation of new levels of government below the state may also constitute new reference points for kin-minority parties' identities. For instance, kin-minority parties may utilize Europe-sponsored institutions for cross-border cooperation to strengthen regional varieties of cross-border identities.

Conversely, kin-minority parties that adhere to exclusive identities are unlikely to associate their kin-minority or their cross-border nation with a wider concept of Europe. Rather, such

kin-minority parties tend to be sceptical of the European integration process (ibid.). Only in the long run, the latter category may accept the de-securitization of relations between national groups and the “softening” of boundaries of collective identities (Diez et al. 2008, 28).

Goals and strategies: border-shifting, border-crossing or border-transcending?

Kin-minority parties’ goals and strategies define how they aim to position their kin-minority vis-à-vis the host-state and the kin-state and how they frame and justify these aspirations. By precluding irredentism and opening up new opportunities for cooperation between the kin-minority and state actors at the same time, European integration enables the feasibility of some goals and strategies while it dismisses others. Eurosceptic demands, in turn, are likely to call cooperation between the kin-minority and state actors into question. This may facilitate irredentist goals and strategies. Kin-minority parties that hold inclusive, liberal identities are likely to accept Europe-sponsored opportunities and accept the constraints that result from the integration process. Conversely, illiberal, exclusive identities will make kin-minority parties more sceptical of these opportunities. As has been highlighted in the previous chapter, kin-minority parties’ goals and strategies might at times be ambiguous or even contradictory (Masseti 2009).

Three broad goals and strategies can be identified. Kin-minority parties can oppose European integration and aspire to irredentism by shifting existing state borders. I label them *border-shifting parties*. Kin-minority parties can be ambiguous about European integration and selectively embrace its effects on their kin-minority. Given that these parties may aspire to irredentism but endorse facilitated cross-border interactions at the same time, I refer to them *border-crossing parties*. Lastly, *border-transcending parties* support European integration in its current shape and hope that further integration will make state borders and, in some cases, cultural boundaries obsolete. This outlook leads them to renounce irredentism, or transforms their irredentism into an abstract, long-term aspiration.

Border-shifting parties are openly irredentist. They aspire to secession from the host-state and to the integration of their kin-minority’s homeland into the kin-state. Consequently, these parties reject key patterns of European integration. Their position on European integration has been described as “hard Eurosceptics” (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b) or “Eurorejects” (Kopecký and Mudde 2002). In particular, these parties oppose European integration on the grounds that it contributes to the stabilization of the territorial status quo of state borders and

inhibits their irredentist ideas. Additionally, border-shifting parties are also likely to oppose the dispersion of sovereignty away from state centres. Their preference tends to be the concentration of political and cultural functions at the centre of the nation-state that they aspire to join; that is, the kin-state. They will promote impermeable cultural boundaries between the kin-minority and other groups and discredit multiple simultaneously held collective identities. In competition with other kin-minority parties, border-shifting parties are likely to pursue strategies of ethnic outbidding. If border-shifting parties present ideas for cooperation in Europe, these are largely incompatible with current forms of European integration. This is, for instance, the case with concepts of a “Europe of the Peoples” (*Europa der Völker*) that has been favoured by some far-right parties (Kopecký and Mudde 2002).

Border-crossing parties embrace some parts of European integration but are sceptical towards others. Their positions have also been described as “soft Euroscepticism” (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b) or “Europragmatist” (Kopecký and Mudde 2002). In particular, border-crossing parties are sceptical of multi-layered identities and of the dispersion of state functions across multiple levels. Instead, they prefer the nation-state as a focal point of sovereignty and collective identity. Consequently, they pursue irredentist or (in some instances) independentist goals. For these kin-minority parties, cooperation throughout Europe should take a predominantly intergovernmental form, in which state centres remain sovereign vis-à-vis European institutions. However, border-crossing parties appreciate some of the opportunities provided by European integration. They are particularly supportive of the opening of state borders and the facilitation of cross-border mobility. For instance, they may appreciate the Schengen acquis or the Euro. They also use European institutions to further their irredentist goals, for example through legal remedies in the context of European minority and human rights, or through networking with potential allies in the EP or other fora. Independentist border-crossing parties consider European integration to lower the costs for independence, since it externalizes the costs for monetary, trade and other policies (Keating 2001, 56f). As an intermediate solution, border-crossing parties may also endorse Europe-sponsored opportunities for minority accommodation and self-rule within the host-state. In competition with other kin-minority parties, border-crossing parties will combine exclusive collective identities with more liberal positions that are compatible with some elements of European integration (see Mitchell et al. 2009).

Border-transcending parties’ goals are the most compatible with the opportunities offered by European integration. They revoke irredentist ideas and accept the perpetuating effects that

European integration has on state borders. Consequently, they tend to seek accommodation and self-rule within the host-state. Border-transcending parties embrace European integration's softening effects on state borders and cultural boundaries. They welcome the opening of state borders and aim to exploit these Europe-sponsored opportunities for closer cooperation with the kin-state and their co-nationals there. These parties appreciate the dispersion of sovereignty across several levels of government since they expect this to allow for more comprehensive self-rule for the kin-minority within the host-state. Border-transcending parties differ in their expectations regarding the extent to which states and their borders will be transformed. Some are content with policies that facilitate cross-border mobility, such as Schengen, funding for cross-border projects or EGTCs, and consider them a substitute for irredentism. Others aspire to the simultaneous expansion of competences of European and sub-state institutions, which would ultimately diminish the relevance of nation-states. This has often been condensed in the concept of the "Europe of the Regions" (Hepburn 2008). More radical parties adapt theories of a "borderless world" (Ohmae 1989) or "new medieval" constellations (Friedrichs 2001) in which states and their borders are expected to lose their significance all together. Resulting goals presented by parties have been conceptualized as "post-sovereign" positions (Keating 2001) or "post-nationalism" (Cunningham 1997). The inclusive positions of border-transcending parties are likely to lead to strategies of ethnic underbidding in competition with other kin-minority parties, meaning that their goals will be less confrontational vis-à-vis the host-state majority than that of competing parties (Coakley 2008, Zuber 2011).

These three sets of kin-minority parties' goals and strategies represent ideal-types. Many kin-minority parties will pursue goals and strategies from multiple, sometimes contradictory categories.

New arenas and alliances

The dispersion of sovereignty across several levels of government creates new arenas in which kin-minority parties can pursue their goals and cooperate with actors from the host-state and the kin-state. In addition, the de-securitization of cultural boundaries is likely to make alliances between kin-minority parties and other actors more feasible. Kin-minority parties' goals and strategies are likely to influence which alliances kin-minority parties form in which arenas.

Border-shifting parties are most constrained concerning possible arenas. Their exclusive identities and likely rejection of host-state institutions will make these parties reluctant to engage in institutions of the host-state. They may, for instance, refuse to participate in the host-state parliament, in self-rule institutions that are provided by the host-state centre or in arrangements for shared rule. They might also reject European arenas such as the European Parliament. Border-shifting parties' opportunities to build alliances will thus be limited. In extreme cases, alliances will be non-existent or be restricted to limited informal encounters with other actors.

Border-crossing parties are more receptive to possible arenas they might engage in and to the alliances that they can form. For instance, they may engage in European and sub-state institutions, while rejecting their participation in host-state institutions. The alliances that they form in these respective environments will also be selective and may vary between arenas.

Border-transcending parties are likely to engage in all possible arenas, including host-state and European institutions. Given their support for softening demarcations between national groups, they will be relatively unconstrained in their ability to form alliances. They may, for example, enter into coalitions with parties that represent the host-state majority or support host-state governments externally.

Conclusion

This chapter assessed the impact of European integration on the triadic nexus between kin-minorities, kin-states and host-states. It argued that European integration perpetuates the geographical location of state borders, while making them more open and permeable. Simultaneously, European integration contributes to a dispersion of state functions across levels of government and softens cultural boundaries. Crises of European integration and demands for disintegration can reverse these Europe-induced dynamics.

Kin-minority parties can respond to these changes in three broad ways. Border-shifting parties reject Europe-induced changes and adhere to irredentism; border-crossing parties endorse some elements of European integration, while being sceptical of others, applying a somewhat ambiguous strategy; border-transcending parties endorse Europe-sponsored opportunities and reject irredentism. The next chapter presents a framework of analysis for the assessment of these dynamics in South Tyrol and Northern Ireland.

3. Research design & methodology

The previous chapters have defined the concepts of kin-minority parties and their identities, goals, strategies and alliances. These are likely to change against the backdrop of European integration that affects the relationship between the kin-minority, the kin-state and the host-state. This chapter operationalizes these concepts to make them applicable for the subsequent empirical analysis. More specifically, this chapter outlines how the research question that guides this study will be addressed. The overarching question is: *How do kin-minority parties adapt their identities, goals, strategies and alliances to European integration?* In line with the multifaceted effects of European integration, this question can be disentangled into three dimensions. Firstly, how do kin-minority parties react to the simultaneous perpetuation and opening of state borders? Secondly, how do kin-minority parties adapt to the restructuring of states that affect their host-state and their kin-state? Lastly, how do kin-minority parties adapt to the possible softening of cultural boundaries?

The presented research design does not aim to establish a causal relationship between European integration and kin-minority parties' identities, goals, strategies and alliances. Rather, it assesses how kin-minority parties interact with their wider environment in the kin-state and the host-state. This environment is affected by and contributes to the dynamics of European integration. This chapter consists of four sections. Firstly, it returns to the conceptual framework presented earlier and links it to the underlying research questions. Secondly, the chapter elaborates on the comparative research design and justifies the case selection. Thirdly, it reviews methods of data collection and data analysis. Lastly, it reflects on the limitations and challenges of the research design.

Kin-minority parties within their contexts: assumptions and hypotheses

This study is based on constructivist assumptions (Brubaker 1996, 67f). The key concepts discussed earlier such as the kin-minority, the kin-state, the host-state or the boundaries that divide them are not *a priori* given, but are constituted by the interactions of actors that claim to represent the respective communities. Similarly, the opportunities and constraints that stem

from European integration are the result of potentially competing interpretations of changing dynamics between the kin-minority, the kin-state and the host-state. Consequently, kin-minority parties and their identities, goals, strategies and alliances are part of two interrelated contestations that constitute the very kin-minority and the context within which it exists (ibid.). Firstly, kin-minority parties aim to assert their identities and goals *internally*, vis-à-vis other potential representatives of the kin-minority. That is, they seek to establish their interpretation of what constitutes the kin-minority and how it should relate to the kin-state and the host-state respectively within their own potential constituency. This interpretation may be challenged by other kin-minority parties or other societal actors that claim to represent the kin-minority (or that question its existence). Secondly, kin-minority parties represent their identities and pursue their goals *externally*, vis-à-vis actors in the host-state and the kin-state. These actors are likely to accept or challenge kin-minority parties' identities and goals to varying degrees.

Kin-minorities as units of analysis

Hence, kin-minority parties' identities and goals, and the strategies and alliances that they apply to pursue them cannot be analysed in isolation from their wider context. The *units of analysis* have to extend beyond the individual kin-minority party to include the *kin-minority in its constitutive context*. Within the wider kin-minority, kin-minority parties serve as "parts of a pluralistic whole" (see Sartori 2005 [1976], 23) that comes into being through kin-minority parties' interactions with their environment and their selective interpretation of this environment. To add to the complexity, kin-minority parties are not monoliths. They tend to be heterogenous organizations that combine different positions. However, if not stated otherwise, this study will focus on the identities, goals, strategies and alliances of a kin-minority party's "dominant faction" (see Harmel and Janda 1994). This entails a focus on those positions that are dominant within the respective kin-minority parties, rather than elaborating on possible party-internal divisions.

Consequently, the empirical assessment of kin-minority parties must combine two interrelated perspectives. On the one hand, it needs to be analysed how the kin-minority, the kin-state and the host-state interact with each other, and how European integration changes these interactions. This is what constitutes the opportunities and constraints that kin-minority parties simultaneously help create through their interpretations and that they respond to. On the other hand, one needs to assess kin-minority parties' identities, goals, strategies and

alliances against the backdrop of these opportunities and constraints. Thus, the overarching research question *about how kin-minority parties adapt to Europe-sponsored changes of state borders, cultural boundaries and the dispersion of state functions* needs to be addressed in two steps. The first step assesses how the effects of European integration on borders, boundaries and states manifest themselves in each case. The second step asks how kin-minority parties' interpretations of these changes affect their identities, goals, strategies and alliances.

Towards a framework of analysis

This section elaborates further on this gradual approach. At the same time, it presents hypotheses based on the literature assessed in the previous chapter. These hypotheses do not aim to predict a causal relationship between variables. Rather, they serve as tentative answers to the research questions and aim to outline possible relationships between the factors that have been discussed earlier (della Porta 2008, 206)

The overarching expectation rests on the assumption that European integration changes the relationships within the triadic nexus and presents new opportunities and constraints for kin-minority parties. In particular, I hypothesize that *European integration makes irredentism infeasible for kin-minority parties and provides them with alternative opportunities for cooperation with their kin-state and for emancipation from their host-state*. Conversely, the *threat of disintegration of European institutions limits alternative opportunities for cooperation with the kin-state and for emancipation from the host-state and incentivizes kin-minority parties to revert to irredentism*.

Assessing opportunities and constraints

To assess these assumptions, the first part of the analysis links back the research question to the framework of the triadic nexus and evaluates Europe-induced opportunities and constraints faced by kin-minority parties. It asks how the perpetuation and opening of state borders, the softening of cultural boundaries and the dispersion of state functions affect the relationships between the kin-minority, the kin-state and the host-state in each case. At the same time, it evaluates how these relationships change if European integration reverses; that is, when the European centre (partially) disintegrates. The precise opportunities and constraints for kin-minority parties that result from European integration are likely to vary

across cases. They will also not manifest themselves equally for different kin-minorities (see Ladrech 2010). Consequently, the assessment of opportunities and constraints within the triadic nexus starts from the overarching effects of European integration on state borders, cultural boundaries and state functions, and explores how these effects combine and unfold in each case.

Opportunities for and constraints to *kin-minority – kin-state relations* are assessed by analysing how the manifestation of the state border between the kin-minority and the kin-state has changed over time. It asks what economic, political and legal obstacles for crossing the border are in place, and which ones have been removed. Additionally, it assesses the legal, financial and political tools that kin-minority parties use or and aim to use to cooperate with their kin-state. Kin-minority – kin-state relations are likely to be dominated by territory-based cooperation between state and sub-state authorities in cases where the latter have assumed substantial state functions and where they are dominated by kin-minority parties. In cases with more limited sub-state competences, cultural cooperation based on individual contacts or cooperation between parties and/or other organizations is likely to prevail.

Kin-minority – host-state relations asks about the particular forms of minority accommodation within the host-state and their development over time. This can entail territorial forms of self-rule, or group-based or individual-based variants of minority rights. These relations will tend to be channelled through state and sub-state authorities where kin-minorities are accommodated through territorial self-rule. Where territorial self-rule is less developed, these relations are likely to rely more on direct relations between kin-minority parties and representatives of the host-state majority.

Lastly, *host-state – kin-state relations* will be assessed by asking about each state's participation in the "variable geometry" of European organizations. I expect that European integration provides kin-minority parties with more alternatives to irredentism, the more closely the host-state and the kin-state are integrated into European institutions. This is, the more state functions the two states have shifted to the European centre, the more incentives there will be for kin-minority parties to renounce irredentism and to seek alternative goals and strategies. Conversely, if the host-state or the kin-state opt for disintegration, for instance by leaving the European Union, Europe-sponsored opportunities will be limited and incentives for irredentism may emerge.

Assessing kin-minority parties' responses

Kin-minority parties that claim to represent the same kin-minority are likely to respond differently to the opportunities and constraints presented by European integration. The second step of the analysis, thus, assesses how kin-minority parties adapt their respective identities, goals, strategies and alliances to their changing environment.

The analysis of kin-minority parties' *identities* asks about the allegedly defining features of the kin-minority and the wider cross-border nation. That is, what are the politicized, cultural patterns that the members of the national community share? What differentiates the kin-minority and the kin-state majority from other nations? And what does it take, according to the kin-minority party, to become a member of the nation? If kin-minority parties conceive their kin-minority to be embedded within a hierarchy of multiple affiliations (for instance, regional and national at the same time), certain European attributes might be added to that identity and demarcations vis-à-vis other national groups may soften.

Kin-minority parties' *goals and strategies* will be analysed by asking about parties' preferred forms of minority accommodation and forms of cooperation with the kin-state. That is, what kind of language rights, power-sharing, autonomy, devolution or other do kin-minority parties demand from their host-state; and how do they link these demands with developments at the European level? Conversely, what sort of relationship do kin-minority parties seek with the kin-state? What kind of policies do they aim to coordinate across the border? Which mechanisms should be applied for this coordination? How, if at all, is this coordination and cooperation linked to European developments? And, most importantly, do kin-minority parties seek unification with the kin-state in addition to such forms of cooperation? Or do they consider such cooperation to be a substitute for irredentism?

When there are more opportunities available for a kin-minority's accommodation within the host-state and for its cooperation with the kin-state, a kin-minority party is more likely to renounce irredentist goals. In other words, more open state borders, softer cultural boundaries and a greater dispersion of state functions will provide incentives for kin-minority parties to pursue border-transcending goals and strategies. On the contrary, closed state borders, hard cultural boundaries and the concentration of state functions at state centres are likely to create incentives for border-shifting, irredentist goals and strategies. Border-crossing goals and strategies are likely to result from the availability of mixed opportunities. Furthermore, a kin-minority party's identity is likely to influence the party's interpretation of available opportunities. If a party identifies with Europe, it is more likely to perceive Europe-induced

changes as opportunities to pursue its goals and strategies than when it adheres to exclusive, national identities.

Kin-minority parties' *alliances* will be assessed by asking about the arenas in which kin-minority parties engage; and, by evaluating who they cooperate with in these arenas. Questions that guide this analysis are, in which elections do kin-minority parties stand? If elected, do they accept their mandate? Which groupings do elected party representatives join? With whom do they tend to coordinate their votes? If applicable, which coalitions do kin-minority parties form? These patterns can be expected to follow kin-minority parties' goals and strategies. Border-shifting parties are unlikely to seek alliances with other actors and to engage only in a limited number of arenas, while border-crossing parties will be more pragmatic. Lastly, border-transcending parties are the most willing to enter alliances in several arenas, even with actors from the host-state.

Comparative research design and case selection

The above presented questions will guide the analysis of two Western European kin-minorities and the parties that claim to represent them. I will assess the German-speaking population of South Tyrol, in the northernmost province of Italy on the border to Austria. Additionally, I analyse the Irish-nationalist population of Northern Ireland, which to date constitutes a part of the United Kingdom.

By comparing kin-minority parties from these two regions, this study aims at establishing a "middle range theory" (Sartori 1970), which intensively explores the two cases in question and seeks to generate findings that are applicable to a limited set of cases beyond the case selection. More specifically, this study seeks to arrive at a better understanding of the relationship between European integration, kin-minority nation-building and party politics. It does so by exploring these relations in South Tyrol and Northern Ireland in order to establish more general factors that influence the interplay between European integration and kin-minority parties' identities, goals, strategies and alliances. These factors are likely to be relevant for the wider universe of cases of European kin-minorities and their interactions with European integration and possible disintegration. Consequently, this comparative study aims to arrive at findings that can subsequently be tested in other, related contexts. These include, but are not limited to, the Swedish kin-minority in Finland, the Russian kin-minorities in the

Baltics, the various kin-minorities in Yugoslavia's successor states, or the Hungarian kin-minorities in various Central European states.

Cross-case comparison through contrasting contexts

This study pursues these objectives through a qualitative, context-sensitive comparison of the two case studies. This approach is justified because it strikes a balance between the empirical detail of a single case study and the creation of “more robust theory because the propositions are more deeply grounded in varied empirical evidence [from two cases]. [...] [I]t is easier to determine accurate definitions and appropriate levels of construct abstraction from multiple cases” (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007, 27).

This will be achieved through a “contrast of contexts”-comparison between the two cases. This method studies each case as “a complex and unique sociohistorical configuration in its own right” but utilizes ideal-type concepts to guide the investigation of each case (Skocpol and Somers 1980, 178ff). The use of ideal-type concepts does not lend itself towards establishing precise causal relations between different factors, or towards law-like generalizations that apply across a range of different contexts. However, ideal-type concepts help structure empirical data and allow logically feasible relationships between elements of the empirical data to be established. They “enable limited generalization about historical divergence, pointing to different patterns of process and structure in history. Such generalizations go beyond the uniqueness of historical events” (della Porta 2008, 206).

More specifically, the ideal-type concepts in this study are deduced from the diverse strands of literature that has been reviewed in the previous chapters. These ideal-type concepts are the perpetuation and opening of state borders, the softening of cultural boundaries, the dispersion of sovereignty and demands for disintegration. Each of the empirical chapters assesses whether and how these concepts unfold in the contexts of South Tyrol and Northern Ireland and how they affect the respective kin-minority parties' identities, goals, strategies and alliances. This is done by addressing the nuanced sub-questions outlined above for each case at two different points in time (see below). In the final chapter, these findings will be condensed to refine these themes and to establish what impacts their manifestation in different contexts. As such, this comparative study is “tightly scoped within the context of an existing theory, and [builds on] qualitative data to offer insight into complex social processes” (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007, 26).

Case selection

The cases of South Tyrol and Northern Ireland are chosen to maximize the contrast between the different contexts in which kin-minority parties respond to European incentives. This helps to explore each kin-minority in its constitutive context, while being able to abstract ideal-types and their manifestations at a more general level (Skocpol and Somers 1980, 178ff). The two cases differ on at least three relevant dimensions that are likely to influence kin-minority parties' identities, goals, strategies and alliances. Firstly, they differ regarding their historic relationship between centres and peripheries (Rokkan and Urwin 1982). Centres of political, economic and cultural power have always been dispersed in South Tyrol's Central European proximity, allowing for a multitude of overlapping interactions between these centres and South Tyrol. In the case of Northern Ireland, state-building in the host-state and the kin-state has been marked by one single centre respectively (ibid.). Secondly, the temporal confluence of European integration and dynamics within the triadic nexus differs markedly. South Tyrol is part of a founding member of the European Communities. In 1972, South Tyrol obtained territorial autonomy and comprehensive legislation for minority protection was put in place. Austria, as South Tyrol's kin-state, only joined the EU in 1995, after issues over the kin-minority were largely resolved with Italy. Ireland and the United Kingdom both joined the EEC in 1973 at the height of the political conflict in Northern Ireland. The violent conflict only was resolved with the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement in 1998, after quarter of a century of shared EU membership. Thirdly, the effects of crises and disintegration diverge significantly between South Tyrol and Northern Ireland. EU-related conflicts between South Tyrol, Italy and Austria are usually confined to minor issues and are resolved swiftly. Examples include South Tyrol's resistance to contribute disproportionately to the consolidation of Italy's budget in 2012, debates about border checks on the Austrian-Italian border during the refugee crisis in 2015/16, or border closures during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. In contrast, the UK has been the first member state to leave the EU in January 2020. The status of Northern Ireland and its border with Ireland have been a point of major contestation within the region, within the UK and between the UK government and the EU. Northern Ireland's exit from the EU provides a unique case in which the effects of European disintegration on kin-minority parties can be observed and contrasted to more common experiences of European integration.

Assessing within-case developments: the role of critical junctures

In addition to the cross-case comparison between South Tyrol and Northern Ireland, kin-minority parties' responses to European integration will be observed in diverging contexts due to within-case variation over time. In other words, as the relationships within the triadic nexus unfold against the backdrop of European integration, kin-minority parties will face different opportunities and constraints at different points in time.

I assume that kin-minority parties' constitutive contexts undergo changes during "critical junctures" (Thelen 1999, 388ff) that will stabilize opportunities and constraints for subsequent periods of time. This means, the relationship between kin-minorities, kin-states and host-states will not be permanently in flux. Rather, certain opportunities and constraints will be created during critical junctures and will then remain in place until they are modified during new critical junctures. Developments during and after critical junctures are likely to lead to convergence or divergence between cases (ibid.).

Based on previous knowledge of the two cases, I identify two critical junctures in the institutional development of South Tyrol and Northern Ireland that can be expected to have a lasting impact on kin-minority parties. The aforementioned, two-step analysis will be applied at each critical juncture to assess each kin-minority in two different temporal contexts. These critical junctures coincide with two broad phases of European integration that I have identified in earlier work (Utz 2019b).

The earlier two critical junctures coincide with the Treaty of Maastricht of 1992. Numerous commentators and politicians interpreted the Maastricht Treaty and the preceding 1986 Single European Act as an intensification of the European integration process. This (often erroneously) raised expectations that minority – state relations would be radically redefined (Hepburn 2008). In this phase, South Tyrol's Statute of Autonomy, the constitutional document that guarantees far-reaching self-rule for the kin-minority, was fully implemented in 1992. Moreover, Austria joined the EU in 1995. Both events have reconfigured the environment of kin-minority parties in South Tyrol (Grote 2012, 121ff). In Northern Ireland, the negotiation and subsequent implementation of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement of 1998 created a context that embedded the relationship between the Irish-nationalist kin-minority, the host-state and the kin-state in a new constitutional framework (Coakley and Todd 2020, 339ff).

The two latter critical junctures coincide with intensifying perceptions of crises and disintegration (Hooghe and Marks 2019, Schimmelfennig 2018). In South Tyrol, demands for disintegration increased when Eurosceptic, populist governments came to power in Austria and Italy in the wake of the 2015/16 migration crisis (Heinisch et al. 2021). In Northern Ireland, the UK’s withdrawal from the EU following the 2016 Brexit referendum has significantly altered the context in which the kin-minority, the host-state and the kin-state had been embedded for almost 5 decades (Gstöhl and Phinnemore 2021).

The four critical junctures and parallel European developments are summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Conjuncture of institutional development at the European and regional level (own compilation based on Utz (2019b)).

Dynamics of EU integration Regional developments	Intensive integration (1990s)	Crises/disintegration (2010s)
South Tyrol	Complete implementation of Autonomy, EU accession of Austria	Migration crisis, Eurosceptic governments
Northern Ireland	Peace Process, Good Friday/Belfast Agreement	Brexit negotiations

Variation between kin-minority parties

Having defined the cases and the time spans under scrutiny, one additional delimitation needs to be made. Not all political parties in South Tyrol and Northern Ireland are kin-minority parties. In the words of the definition established earlier, not all parties claim to represent the respective national minority and perceive it as part of a bigger nation that constitutes the majority in the kin-state. Political parties that do not meet this definition will not be analysed in depth. This excludes state-wide parties, regional parties that associate with the majority of the host-state, or regional parties that do not claim to share a national identity with the majority in the kin-state. It also excludes “civic parties” or “multi-ethnic parties” that actively mobilize the members of the kin-minority and members of other communities (Murtagh 2020, Piacentini 2019). While these excluded parties themselves have agency and might influence kin-minority parties’ goals, strategies and alliances, they will be treated as part of the wider

context within which kin-minority parties operate. In addition, this study will disregard “micro parties” without representation in legislative bodies at the sub-state level, even if they would formally qualify as kin-minority parties. In light of these delimitations, this study analyses three kin-minority parties in South Tyrol and two kin-minority parties in Northern Ireland. They are summarized in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: List of kin-minority parties in South Tyrol (after 1990) and Northern Ireland (own compilation)

	Kin-minority parties		
South Tyrol	<i>Südtiroler Volkspartei</i> (SVP), South Tyrolean People’s Party	<i>die Freiheitlichen</i> (dF), the Freedom Party	<i>Union für Südtirol/ Süd-Tiroler Freiheit</i> (UfS / STF), Union for South Tyrol, South Tyrolean Independence
Northern Ireland	Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)	<i>Sinn Féin</i> (SF), We Ourselves	

I will elaborate on the translation of party names (and other linguistic issues that I encountered over the course of this study) later in this chapter. One remark is warranted on the historical development of two of these parties since different parties have gone under similar names at different times. By *Union für Südtirol*, I mean the party that existed in South Tyrol between 1989 and 2007. I consider the *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit* to be the successor of this kin-minority party, since the remaining part of the UfS gradually reduced its cross-border nation-building efforts and ceases to qualify as a relevant kin-minority party (Pallaver 2018a, 270). By *Sinn Féin*, I mean the party that was known as “Provisional Sinn Féin” after the party split in 1970 and that is now represented in the Northern Ireland Assembly and Dáil Éireann.

The kin-minority parties under scrutiny represent a variety of ideological backgrounds. They include one centre-right (SVP), one centre-left (SDLP), two right wing (dF, UfS/STF) and one left wing (SF) party. Political parties’ position on the socioeconomic “left-right” dimension have been shown to correlate with their positions on European integration. Centre-

left and centre-right parties are likely to be pro-European. They can be expected to promote a European identity in addition to their national one. Contrastingly, parties on the left and right fringes of this spectrum tend to be more Eurosceptic and are unlikely to promote a European identity (Hooghe et al. 2002, Hooghe and Marks 2009).

To sum up, the comparative research design outlined in this section allows for the analysis of two kin-minorities that are represented by five kin-minority parties at two different points in time.

Data collection and analysis

I assess kin-minority parties' interpretations of opportunities and constraints and their identities, goals, strategies and alliances based on two main sources of data. On the one hand, I analyse official party documents, such as policy papers and party manifestos, on the other hand, I analyse semi-structured interviews with party representatives. Both sources are conventionally used in qualitative research that explores the relationship between party politics and European integration (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a, 5, Hepburn 2008, 541, Elias 2009, 14). Additionally, I draw on data from secondary literature on the two cases, background interviews with academics from the regions, media coverage and transcripts of parliamentary debates to triangulate my data.

Party documents

I retrieved party documents from kin-minority parties in South Tyrol on a research trip to Bolzano from May to June 2018. These documents were accessed through four channels. Firstly, the Provincial Archive of South Tyrol (Südtiroler Landesarchiv/Archivio provinciale) holds a large stock of original printed material produced by the SVP and a more limited stock of printed material produced by the UfS. These collections also contain a less substantial amount of documents produced by other kin-minority parties in the region, printed material for internal use within the respective parties and correspondence of party representatives with other stakeholders. The internal documents and correspondence were used to obtain background information on official party positions. Secondly, the Digital Collection of the Dr. Friedrich Teßmann Library in Bolzano allows for access to a vast range of historic South Tyrolean newspapers (Teßmann digital 2020). This helped retrieve various editions of the

SVP's party newspaper "Volksbote" that was published until 1995 and served to communicate the party's main positions. Thirdly, two anonymous colleagues kindly shared some of the document data that they had collected on political parties in South Tyrol for previous research. Lastly, I retrieved more recent party documents from party websites or was sent digital versions of party documents by party representatives upon request. In sum, I collected 94 party manifestos, policy papers, relevant correspondence or other relevant documents from the SVP, dF and the UfS/STF. The translations of these documents from German to English are my own.

Documents from kin-minority parties in Northern Ireland were consulted during two research trips to Belfast, one between April and May 2018 and one between November and December 2018. I accessed the documents through three sources. Firstly, I consulted the largest part of the documents from the Northern Ireland Political Collection at Linen Hall Library Belfast. This collection includes party programmes, policy papers and similar publications from all political parties in the region. Secondly, I examined documents from the Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN 2019), which provides a more easily accessible but limited collection of digitized party manifestos. Thirdly, I obtained recent documents directly from party websites. Documents from these three sources amounted to 159 documents from the SDLP and SF. The digitized archive of SF's party newspaper "An Phoblacht" provided additional insights on this party (anphoblacht.com 2020). Yet, I did not use it systematically to assess SF's identities and goals, since other sources usually provided more in-depth information.

In both cases, I continued to consult the most recent party documents from party websites after my respective research trips. I selected party documents on the basis that they deal with the kin-minority's position within the wider triadic nexus or that they make an explicit reference to European politics. This led to the exclusion of several documents that were concerned with local political issues, even though some of them include references to European policies such as funding for local projects. The availability of documents varied between cases and parties. Documents for the SDLP and SF were widely available and easily accessible thanks to the comprehensive collections at Linen Hall Library and CAIN. There are vast documents covering the SVP but administrative procedures to gain access are more burdensome. Documents from the UfS are comprehensive and easily accessible, but unsystematic cataloguing required extra work to identify relevant pieces. Lastly, dF's documents are not accessible through conventional platforms, which made me rely more heavily on alternative sources.

For all parties, party documents were indicative for how kin-minority parties' perceive opportunities and constraints in their environment. In some instances, these documents include explicit links between European integration and the kin-minority parties' identities, goals and strategies; in other instances, this relationship was rather implicit.

Interviews

I conducted 42 semi-structured interviews with representatives of political parties in South Tyrol, Northern Ireland, Austria and Ireland. All interviews were guided by a similar set of questions, derived from the aforementioned analytical framework. Yet the questions in each interview were adapted to the respective interviewee. This helped retrieve information to which the individual interviewees had privileged access, based on their experience as political activists at a certain point in time and on their institutional position. Interviews lasted between 28 minutes and two hours, depending on the interviewees' availability and their willingness to share relevant information.

I chose interviewees based on three criteria. Firstly, I aimed at interviewing individuals who are or were directly involved in European politics. This included MEPs and their aides, EP candidates and party spokespersons for foreign or European politics. Secondly, I aimed to interview a diverse set of representatives of each party to cover different perspectives from within the parties. This diversity was reflected in terms of gender, age and position within the party hierarchy. Lastly, I interviewed a number of retired politicians in an attempt to learn about their retrospective assessment of kin-minority party politics.

Interviews in South Tyrol were carried out between May and June 2018 and included five interviews with SVP representatives, three with dF representatives, two with UfS/STF representatives and one with a defector from the STF. Additionally, I carried out five interviews with representatives of state-wide and regional parties. This included one interview each with representatives of the Partito Democratico (PD), Grüne/Verdi/Vërc (Greens), L'Alto Adige nel Cuore (a regional splinter group of the neo-fascist Fratelli d'Italia), the Movimento 5 Stelle (who defected later in 2018) and one interview with a former independent politician.

Interviews in Austria took place in Vienna between July and August 2018 and included one representative of the Österreichische Volkspartei (ÖVP), three representatives of the

Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (SPÖ) and one of the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ).

Interviews in Northern Ireland were carried out on two occasions, in May 2018 and between November and December 2018. These trips led to four interviews with representatives of the SDLP and four interviews with representatives of SF. In addition, I interviewed six politicians from other political parties in Northern Ireland to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of party politics in the region. This included interviews with representatives of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), the Alliance Party, the Green Party and the Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV). Representatives of the largest party in Northern Ireland, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), were not available for interviews.

Between October and December 2018, I also conducted interviews in Dublin in order to investigate the relationships between politicians across the island of Ireland. This included three interviews with representatives of SF that were elected in the Republic of Ireland, two interviews with representatives of Fine Gael and two interviews with representatives of Fianna Fáil.

Due to limited resources, I refrained from carrying out interviews with party representatives at the state level of the respective host-states. This delimitation is compensated through interviews with state-wide and unionist parties at the sub-state level, and through an intensive review of secondary literature that will be reflected in the empirical chapters.

I recorded 24 interviews and subsequently transcribed key sections of these interviews manually. For the remaining 18 interviews, I took handwritten notes during the interview and subsequently digitized these notes. I varied between these two techniques for three reasons. Firstly, in some cases recording was not possible for reasons of confidentiality. In that case, notetaking was the only available option. Secondly, some interviews could only be conducted via phone since some interviewees were not available for interviews in person. For technical reasons, this precluded recording as well. Thirdly, following diverging advice on interviewing techniques by senior colleagues, it was my aim to utilize both techniques to establish their advantages and disadvantages in the context of this study. My retrospective intuition is that notetaking led to more informative interviews with more junior party members, whereas more senior politicians were more willing disclose information even when they were recorded.

I conducted all interviews in South Tyrol and Austria in German. All subsequent translations of these sources are my own. Quotes from interviews will be anonymized throughout this thesis.

Secondary sources & additional data

The collection of party documents and interviews was accompanied by a series of informal conversations with academics from both regions throughout the study. These conversations were particularly helpful in the early stages of data collection. They served to expand my pre-existing knowledge of the cases, to detect relevant party documents and to narrow the scope of potential interviewees. Due to the often ad hoc and informal character of these conversations, I did not record the details of these conversations.

The abovementioned documents and interviews include some data that does not reflect the temporal focus of this study. This data provides insightful background information but is not systematically presented in the empirical chapters. This includes data on the SVP that reaches back to the 1940s and the party's first engagement with European politics in the 1970s. It also includes comprehensive data on the SDLP and SF since their (re)formation in the early 1970s.

In addition to the aforementioned data, I selectively draw on media coverage and transcripts of parliamentary debates at the sub-state, state and European level. I do not analyse these sources systematically in the context of this study. Rather, I draw on these sources to illustrate key themes that emerge from the analysis of other data. A part of these sources stems from a previous study, in which I coded and analysed speeches in the provincial parliament of South Tyrol (Utz 2016).

Lastly, the empirical analysis builds on an intensive review of secondary sources that assess European integration's effects on South Tyrol and Northern Ireland, respectively. While this secondary literature is reviewed more closely in the subsequent parts of this study, one caveat needs to be addressed here. The availability of secondary sources varies significantly between the two cases. There is a wealth of secondary literature on Northern Ireland, even on most recent events. Contrastingly, secondary sources on South Tyrol are substantially more limited and (with a few notable exceptions) contributions from political scientists are particularly rare. In light of this imbalance, the analysis of the South Tyrolean case rests more heavily on insights from related disciplines such as law and on my own interpretation of primary data than in the case study on Northern Ireland.

Data analysis

In line with the “contrast of context”-comparison, the data analysis has been guided by the deductively established ideal-type effects of European integration (Skocpol and Somers 1980, 178). As outlined above, these ideal-types include Europe-induced changes to state borders, cultural boundaries and state functions.

These broad concepts have informed the manually conducted, thematic analysis of the primary data. Thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun and Clarke 2006, 79) that gives an active role to the researcher in establishing themes and linking them to ideal-types. This is particularly useful for this study, given that it allows to find, assess and interpret multiple different expressions of kin-minority parties’ identities, goals, strategies and alliances in their respective cultural and political contexts. More rigid, standardized categorizations of primary data (see Helbling et al. 2010) would not have provided this flexibility, as my previous work on a related topic has shown (Utz 2016).

Thematic analysis can be adapted to a number of theoretical and methodological needs. In this study, it is used to provide a detailed and nuanced account of those aspects of the empirical data that speak to the theory-driven ideal-type concepts. Hence, the analysis is by definition selective and does not give a comprehensive account of all the themes detected in the primary data (Braun and Clarke 2006, 83). Moreover, the analysis addresses the “latent level [that] goes beyond the semantic content of the data” (ibid., 84). It interprets the relevant data beyond explicit utterances and establishes themes against the backdrop of the theory-driven research question.

In particular, themes were established in three steps. Firstly, individual parts of the data were attributed to each of the theory-inspired ideal-type effects of European integration. By parts of data, I mean semantically coherent parts of text. Their length can vary from individual sentences to multiple paragraphs or longer sequences of spoken text, in the case of interviews. Secondly, the different parts of data were divided into whether they expressed endorsement or rejection of the ideal-type effects of European integration. Lastly, the parts of the data that clustered around the endorsement or the rejection of one particular effect of European integration were attributed one or more themes, depending on the homogeneity of the elements of the data. After the thematic analysis, the different parts of the data were linked back to the theory-inspired categories of kin-minority parties’ identities, goals, strategies and alliances. This attribution depended on the precise content of the data element in question.

Table 3.3 summarizes the most relevant themes and how they relate to the ideal-type concepts of Europe-induced effects. In brackets, the table presents examples of how kin-minority parties refer to the respective themes. Themes in *italic* are typically referred to only implicitly by kin-minority parties.

Table 3.3: Ideal-type concepts and thematic equivalents in primary data (own compilation)

Themes of kin-minority party response Ideal-type effects of European integration	Endorsement	Rejection
Perpetuation of state border	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Implicit</i> (cooperation across borders) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plebiscite (self-determination, border poll)
Opening of state borders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Endorsement for specific policies</i> (disappearance of border controls) • Need to preserve open border (no return to borders of the past) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient to support cross-border kinship (still too many administrative hurdles)
Dispersion of sovereignty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-rule (devolution, autonomy) • Opportunities at EU centre (achievements in EP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constraint to the will of nation (EU is undemocratic)
Softening cultural boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim to cooperate across national boundaries (work the common ground) • Diversity as an asset (multiple cultures enrich the region) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat of assimilation/exclusion (majority works to our detriment) • Neat separation of national groups (defence of segregation)

Limitations & challenges

The methodological choices outlined above come with a number of limitations and challenges. The main limitations can be summarized as temporal and linguistic. In the remainder of this chapter, I elaborate on each of them and outline how I aim to mitigate their impact.

Temporal limitations and challenges of synchronous research

As emphasized above, this study investigates kin-minorities and the parties that aim to represent them at four different critical junctures. Thelen (1999, 389) highlights that critical junctures explain how “‘common’ international events or trends translate into different challenges in different countries as a result of their intersections and interactions with ongoing domestic processes”.

For the critical junctures in the 1990s, the starting points and endpoints can be defined retrospectively, based on primary and secondary data. The starting point for both cases is the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht. The endpoints are Austria’s EU accession in 1995 and the first election to the Northern Ireland Assembly after the 1998 Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, respectively. Data from outside these respective timespans is selectively included in the analysis to illustrate long-term trends.

However, defining the starting points and endpoints of the two more recent critical junctures is more challenging for two reasons. Firstly, the starting points of these two critical junctures are contested. There is no agreement among academic commentators about the scope, severity and timing of recent crises in European integration (Moravcsik 2018, Hooghe and Marks 2019, Riddervold et al. 2021). Hence, secondary literature does not lend itself to identify unanimously common European trends that delimit the timing of these junctures. Secondly, certain developments that define these critical junctures have been unfolding over the course of this research and are, in part, still ongoing at the time of writing (March 2021). This is exemplified by realignment in the Italian and Austrian party systems that both affect the context of South Tyrol’s kin-minority parties. The problem is even more apparent in the case of the negotiations about the UK’s withdrawal from the EU. Most of the data on Northern Irish kin-minority parties was collected in 2017 and 2018; that is, at a time when several possibilities concerning the region’s future relationship with the EU were debated and kin-minority parties had to adapt to possible changes in opportunities and constraints at a high

pace. Thus, research has been carried out simultaneously with political events, which prevented retrospective assessments of longer trends. This required a more inductive approach to limiting the timespan under scrutiny and flexibility to include new developments as they unfolded. For pragmatic reasons, the analysis of the South Tyrolean case starts with Austria's re-introduction of border controls during the migration crisis in September 2015 and ends with the exit of the Eurosceptic Lega from the Italian government in September 2019. The analysis of events in Northern Ireland considers the timespan from the 2016 Brexit referendum until the initial phase of the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland in February 2021. Data from outside these timespans is selectively included in both case studies to illustrate long-term trends.

Linguistic challenges & position of the researcher

Reflecting on the use of different languages and language varieties in the context of this study is particularly important in relation to data collection and the presentation of empirical data. Challenges concern the comparability of data gathered across linguistic boundaries and the political connotations of certain languages (or varieties) in particular contexts.

Data collection in South Tyrol and Austria was (almost) exclusively conducted in German. Having grown up in Austria myself, German was the self-evident language of communication with representatives of South Tyrolean kin-minority parties and parties in Austria. With South Tyrolean representatives belonging to the Italian language group, interviews were also conducted in German, since political elites in the region are unreservedly bilingual and my active command of Italian is limited. The use of German during data collection in the region came with two limitations. Firstly, since this research project has been conceptualized in English, an additional effort had to be made to explain the aims of this study to interviewees. Translations of key concepts like “nation” (“Nation”, “Volk”) or “territory” (“Territorium”, “Gebiet”, “Land”) have their own, contested connotations in German. Other concepts, in particular “kinship”, do not have an equivalent in German at all. Consequently, I adapted interview requests and questions to the educational background and institutional position of individual interviewees. In so doing, I sought a balance between informing interviewees transparently about the aim of the research in which they participated, and interacting with them in a context-sensitive and accessible way.

The second issue that arose as a German-speaking researcher in South Tyrol is the possibility of being associated with one of the local language groups. However, explaining my personal background as an Austrian based in Scotland largely mitigated this pitfall. Additionally, my Austrian variety of German is clearly distinct from local dialects in South Tyrol (or the Austrian part of Tyrol), which put me into the position of an informed outsider, rather than an insider in the region.

During data collection in Northern Ireland, no issues linked to translation occurred. Research was entirely conducted in English. Yet the aforementioned considerations concerning communication with interviewees also applied here. Academic concepts had to be adapted to interactions with interviewees who act in a predominantly non-academic environment. Issues of being associated with particular political positions did not result from my personal background. Rather, the focus of the study *per se* led some interviewees to assume that my personal standpoint would be compatible or incompatible with their position on European integration. In particular, some interviewees vocally defended their support for Brexit but were largely dismissive about more detailed interview questions concerning European integration. Representatives of the DUP did not react to interview requests at all. These issues did not surface during interviews with representatives of the SDLP and SF, which meant that I could comprehensively collect data on the main objects of the study.

When presenting empirical data, terminological choices may also be value-laden. In order to present my data with minimal bias in the subsequent chapters, I outline the rationale for my terminological decisions. In the context of South Tyrol, some terms, like the names of political parties, only come in one of the official local languages. In this case, I will use the original version and the English translation interchangeably (as in *Südtiroler Volkspartei* and South Tyrolean People's Party). Acronyms will be used in their original forms (like in SVP). Problems arise when the locally used terminology for semantically identical objects differs between German and Italian, as is the case with toponyms. Both versions come with a certain political connotation. Here I follow two strategies. Where it exists, I will use terminology that is established in the English language, such as in "South Tyrol" (translated from the German *Südtirol*, not the Italian *Alto Adige*) or "Bolzano" (the Italian name of the city, not the German *Bozen*). If there is no common term in English, I will use both German and Italian terms.

In Northern Ireland, the linguistic differences are smaller. However, certain terms tend to be associated with one community or the other. Examples include Derry/Londonderry or Good Friday Agreement/Belfast Agreement, with the former reflecting nationalist and the latter

unionist terminology. In this case, I use both versions simultaneously. For Northern Ireland itself, I use the region's official name, even though some members of the kin-minority reject the term.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the study's main hypothesis that expects that European integration makes irredentism infeasible for kin-minority parties and provides them with alternative opportunities for cooperation with their kin-state and for emancipation from their host-state. Conversely, the disintegration of European institutions is expected to limit alternative opportunities for cooperation with the kin-state and for emancipation from the host-state and is likely to incentivize kin-minority parties to revert to irredentism. Starting from this hypothesis, the chapter operationalized key factors of kin-minority parties' interactions with their kin-states and their host-states and argued that kin-minority parties can only be empirically analysed in their wider, constitutive context.

The following empirical chapters will analyse the empirical data following this framework of analysis. Each chapter will set out by reviewing kin-minority parties' opportunities and constraints and will then assess their identities, goals, strategies and alliances.

PART II
South Tyrol

4. South Tyrol & Austria's EU accession

Introduction: The case of South Tyrol

South Tyrol, Italy's northernmost province, was historically located in what Rokkan (1999, 145f) describes as the European "city belt" or "trade belt"; an agglomeration of cities that stretches from the Mediterranean, across the Alps, to the mouth of the Rhine. Among these cities, economic, political and cultural power has always been dispersed, which left considerable leeway for competing processes of state-building and nation-building. Contemporary South Tyrol was part of the historic County of Tyrol until the end of the First World War. The county comprised German-speaking, Italian-speaking and Rhaeto-Romance ("Ladin") populations. Consequently, Italian and German nation-building efforts, including their respective fascist and National-Socialist excesses, both aimed to integrate parts of historic Tyrol. This was added to a wide-spread regional identity that, across linguistic boundaries, has been built on Catholic-conservative values (Steurer 1993). After the Second World War, explicit efforts to build an Austrian national identity in demarcation to the German nation also affected the German-speaking population of the Tyrolean lands (see Thaler 2001). These complex, competing and sometimes overlapping nation-building projects allowed for multiple affiliations of South Tyrol's German-speaking kin-minority that became incorporated into the Italian host-state by the end of the First World War.

This chapter assesses how South Tyrol's kin-minority parties adapted their identities, goals, strategies and alliances against the backdrop of two interdependent developments in the 1990s. Firstly, 1992 marked the completion of a two-decades-long implementation process of comprehensive measures for kin-minority accommodation by the Italian host-state. This included extensive territorial self-rule, power-sharing between the local national groups at the sub-state level, and far-reaching cultural autonomy and linguistic rights. Upon the implementation of these measures, kin-minority parties were compelled to review their future goals and strategies. Secondly, Austria, whose government had substantially supported the South Tyrolean kin-minority since the 1960s, joined the European Union in 1995. This opened up new opportunities for the construction of cross-border kinship and for more immediate goals and strategies of cross-border cooperation. At the same time, Austria's accession to the EU precluded some goals that kin-minority parties had previously pursued.

This chapter is structured as follows. The next section provides a brief overview of South Tyrol's political history in the 20th century to contextualize this analysis. The second part reviews how Austria's EU accession and wider developments of European integration have altered the triadic relationship between the South Tyrolean kin-minority, the Austrian kin-state and the Italian host-state. The third part of the chapter analyses how South Tyrol's kin-minority parties have responded to the opportunities and constraints that resulted from these Europe-induced changes. The chapter finds that all South Tyrolean kin-minority parties construct cross-border kinship on a variety of levels, reflecting the dispersion of sovereignty that has historically marked the Tyrolean lands. However, only South Tyrol's dominant kin-minority party, the *Südtiroler Volkspartei* (South Tyrolean People's Party, SVP), has developed a European identity and embraces European integration's effects on South Tyrol. The smaller kin-minority parties are more sceptical of European integration, and particularly of its de-securitizing effects on kin-minority – host-state majority relations.

Historical context

The historical County of Tyrol was divided at the disintegration of Austria-Hungary in 1918. The Northern and Eastern parts, including the historical capital of Innsbruck, became part of the Republic of Austria and formed the *Bundesland* Tyrol within the wider federal structure of the new, predominantly German-speaking state. The area South of the Brenner Pass became part of Italy. This region was culturally more diverse; its northern part, which is now South Tyrol, was dominated by German-speakers. The population of the southern part, now the province of Trento or *Trentino*, was predominantly Italian-speaking. The significantly smaller Ladin population was concentrated in the eastern part of the region. South Tyrol's ethnic demography changed significantly when Italy's fascist regime aimed to assimilate its German-speaking population between 1922 and 1943. This included the settlement of ethnic Italians in the region and reduced the share of the German-speaking population from close to 90 to just over 60 per cent (astat 2011). This situation was not altered by the Nazi occupation of the region between 1943 and 1945, despite their preferential treatment of German-speaking collaborators (Steurer 1993, Grote 2012, 35ff).

The newly re-instated Republic of Austria revoked its irredentist claims vis-à-vis South Tyrol in 1946. This was based on a bilateral agreement between Austria and Italy that assured the mutual recognition of the state border and prescribed “special provisions to safeguard the ethnical [sic] character and the cultural and economic development of the German-speaking

element” (Gruber-De Gasperi Agreement 1946) on the part of Italy. However, indirect discrimination against the South Tyrolean kin-minority continued after 1946 and led to growing discontent and to sporadic outbreaks of political violence in the 1960s (Grote 2012, 99ff).

Intensified activism on part of the Austrian government and subsequent negotiations between Italy, Austria and South Tyrolean representatives changed the situation and led to a comprehensive agreement known as the “South Tyrol Package” (*Südtirolpaket*) in 1969 (ibid., Cantir 2019). The Package comprises complex legal safeguards for kin-minority accommodation, including far-reaching territorial self-rule for South Tyrol (officially the *Autonomous Province of Bolzano*), mandatory power-sharing between German and Italian-speakers in the provincial executive, the proportional allocation of public goods to members of the language groups (public sector jobs, housing etc.) and sectoral autonomy for the language groups in sectors such as education or media (Alber and Zwilling 2014). The Package deal contributed to a significant de-securitization of the relations between South Tyrol’s kin-minority, the Austrian host-state and the Italian kin-state (Carlà 2018, Pallaver 2014). However, the complete implementation of the Package’s detailed legal provisions took until 1992 and was only concluded in the context of Austria’s imminent accession to the EU in 1995.

Despite significant changes in South Tyrol’s post-Second World War kin-minority accommodation, the kin-minority’s party political representation has – until very recently – been marked by considerable continuity. The *Südtiroler Volkspartei* (South Tyrolean People’s Party, SVP) was able to establish itself a predominant party immediately after Italy’s return to democracy (see Sartori 2005 [1976], 171). The SVP obtained an absolute majority of votes in all provincial elections between 1948 and 2003, gaining the regular support of up to 90 per cent of the kin-minority (Holzer and Schwegler 1998, 158). The SVP’s socio-economic orientation is marked by Christian democracy and conservatism. However, the party claims to be the representative of all German and Ladin-speakers in South Tyrol, regardless of left-right preferences. Due to its electoral success and its continued domination of South Tyrol’s provincial institutions, the SVP has successfully claimed to be the sole representative of the kin-minority in interactions with the host-state and the kin-state. Consequently, the SVP was one of the main architects of the *Südtirolpaket* and its related provisions (Pallaver 2018a, 83ff). In the most recent provincial elections in 2018, the SVP obtained 41.9 percent of the votes.

Smaller kin-minority parties began to emerge in the 1970s and have established themselves more permanently since the 1990s. The *Union für Südtirol* (Union for South Tyrol, UfS) and *die Freiheitlichen* (the Freedom Party, dF) have continuously been represented at the provincial level under different names since 1993. Both parties aim to outbid the SVP with varying strategies (see below). Yet, between 1993 and 2003, they only obtained between 4.8 and 6.8 per cent, and 6.1 and 2.5 per cent of the provincial votes, respectively. Cross-communal voting – that is, kin-minority members voting for host-state majority parties and vice versa – has been rare in South Tyrol. Only interethnic parties such as the left-liberal *Grüne-Verdi-Vërc* have successfully reached out to kin-minority members. They obtained close to 7 percent of the votes in the 1990s (Pallaver 2018a, 279ff).

The next section analyses how the environment in which the SVP, the UfS and dF were operating changed in the context of Austria's EU accession.

The EU accession of a kin-state: opportunities and constraints in South Tyrol's triadic nexus

Austria's EU accession accelerated and perpetuated dynamics between South Tyrol, its kin-state and its host-state that had already begun with the accommodation of the South Tyrolean kin-minority in 1969. The state border between the two states became more permeable and less disputed, and relations between the kin-minority and the two states became increasingly de-securitized. In addition, the dispersion of state functions increased with the Treaty of Maastricht and Italy's constitutional reforms. This section elaborates on these changes.

Kin-minority – kin-state relations

European integration and Austria's striving to EU accession intensified and accelerated three trends in kin-minority – kin-state relations that have been discernible since the 1969 South Tyrol Package. Firstly, the de-securitization of relationships within South Tyrol's triadic nexus limited Austria's interference on behalf of the kin-minority and made it more contingent on other foreign policy goals, especially on EU accession. At the same time, Austria's EU accession facilitated and mainstreamed kin-minority – kin-state interactions, leading to further de-securitization. Secondly, the dispersion of sovereignty created new opportunities for kin-minority – kin-state cooperation at the European and at the sub-state level, yielding new perceptions of cross-border kinship. Lastly, the opening of the state border

between South Tyrol and its kin-state further facilitated cross-border cooperation and the de-securitization of relationships. These trends had an impact on group-based and territorial relations.

Group-based interactions

Kin-minority – kin-state interactions had been substantially securitized before the kin-state, the host-state and the SVP reached agreement on the South Tyrol Package. Sporadic terrorist attacks by South Tyrolean splinter groups, a high Italian police presence in South Tyrol and restrictive visa regimes constrained cross-border interactions (Gehler 2005a, 312ff). These restrictions gradually loosened as progress regarding the trilateral negotiations on kin-minority accommodation and the 1969 Package deal de-securitized South Tyrol's triadic nexus. Nevertheless, until the late 1980s, official kin-minority – kin-state interactions focused mainly on Austria's interference on behalf of the SVP and on the implementation of the Package deal (Steininger 1997, 486f).

When the Austrian government began the process of EC accession in the wake of the Cold War in 1989, the de-securitization of kin-minority – kin-state relations and accommodation of the South Tyrolean kin-minority was far advanced. At that point, the dominant view among Austria's political elite was that the 1969 Package was de-facto fully implemented (ibid., 513ff). Consequently, they reduced their interference on behalf of the kin-minority and pushed its representatives, especially the SVP, to officially confirm that their goals for kin-minority accommodation had been met. The Austrian government expected the SVP's acknowledgement that the Package's implementation was "concluded" to be crucial for its own ambition to join the EC. This temporarily constrained kin-minority – kin-state cooperation over some limited policy details of which the SVP thought that more comprehensive safeguards for the kin-minority were needed. In the longer run, however, Austria's more contingent interference was necessary to obtain Italy's consent to the 1995 EU enlargement, and to allow for Austria's integration with the European centre (Gehler 2005b, 721ff). This contributed to a further de-securitization of relationships once the "conclusion" of the Package's implementation had officially been certified by Austria, Italy and the SVP in 1992. As one former Austrian politician who was involved in this process recalled,

"The 'conclusion' of the Package was [...] a precondition for successfully finalizing the accession negotiations [with the EC]. We all knew exactly: [Austria] had already

applied for association with the EU in 1966, which was blocked by the Italians because of [disagreements over South Tyrol...]. So, we knew that we had to finish the negotiations about the Package, so we could finalize the negotiations about EU accession [...]. For the Austrians altogether, the accession to the Union was more important [than satisfying the SVP's demands...]. For us [their demands] were peanuts but for the South Tyroleans they were infinitely important [...]. And they got it all. We haven't conceded anything to get into the Union, into the EC; but we would have conceded, if it had been necessary” (Interview in Vienna, 17 July 2018).

Once Austria had joined the EEA in 1994 and the EU 1995, the state border between South Tyrol and its kin-state opened substantially due to the freedom of movement of people, goods, services and capital in the Single Market. Moreover, in 1997 Austria abolished border controls with adjacent Schengen states (at that time, Germany and Italy). This made previous, special arrangements that regulated limited fields of cooperation between South Tyrol and Austria such the *Accordino*-trade agreement obsolete (see Engl and Zwilling 2013, 124), given that the new European arrangements entailed a much more comprehensive liberalization of cross-border interactions. Hence, Austria's EU accession did not only facilitate kin-minority – kin-state interactions through its border-opening effects but also led to their further de-securitization by embedding them in a wider, mainstream framework of liberal border policies.

Additionally, the dispersion of sovereignty and Austria's affiliation with the European centre post-1995 allowed kin-minority and kin-state representatives to jointly engage in a range of European fora from which Austria had previously been excluded. This included the EP, where South Tyrolean representatives encountered new opportunities for alliances with Austrian EP delegations. At times, this superseded kin-minority parties' earlier alliances in the EP with fellow German-speakers from the Federal Republic of Germany; for instance, the traditionally close relationship between the SVP and the Bavarian CSU (Christian-Social Union) became less relevant in light of the SVP's alliances with the Austrian Christian democrat ÖVP (*Österreichische Volkspartei*) (phone interview with former MEP, 08 June 2018).

These new opportunities for kin-minority – kin-state alliances, and Austria's integration with the European centre more generally, also allowed for new conceptions of cross-border kinship. Before the 1990s, South Tyrol's dominant kin-minority party had favoured a rather diffuse cross-border identity such as “South Tyroleans' commitment to the German cultural heritage” (SVP 1972). When the Austrian state became more firmly embedded in European

institutions and the cross-border relationship between the kin-minority and the kin-state was further de-securitized, the SVP more openly evoked “South Tyrol’s spiritual and cultural belonging to the Fatherland of Austria” and Austria’s role as South Tyrol’s “protective power” (*Schutzmacht*) (SVP 1993, 8). Accordingly, the SVP’s MEP at the time underscored that he was a “representative of an Austrian minority” (Ebner 2004, 37). One former Austrian politician explained this shift the following way: “This has to do with Austria’s economic and political success [...]. Therefore [the South Tyrolean elites] clearly confess to this [Austrian kinship]. This had not existed for a long time. The EU is key to Austria’s development as a state, economically, politically and culturally” (Interview in Vienna, 17 July 2018).

Territorial cooperation

As alluded to in the introduction, sovereignty had always been diffuse in the Tyrolean lands, where regional identities and various nation-building processes were intertwined (Steurer 1993). With the perpetuation of the European centre and the final implementation of South Tyrol’s territorial autonomy in 1992, this dispersion was further institutionalized. In combination with the border-opening effects of Austria’s EU accession, new opportunities for kin-minority – kin-state cooperation were created on several levels of government. These were further facilitated by the de-securitization of kin-minority – kin-state relations after the Package’s implementation. Given the SVP’s domination of South Tyrol’s sub-state institutions, opportunities for territorial kin-minority – kin-state interactions favour predominantly the SVP, with other kin-minority parties being frequently excluded.

At the state level, a variety of informal contacts between officials at Austria’s federal level and at South Tyrol’s sub-state level shifted from dealing with the implementation of the Package to cooperation on more functional issues (Pallaver 2013, 113). Europe-induced de-securitization and coinciding interests on European policies, such as agriculture, have helped this shift. However, Austria’s federal level has maintained institutions that had *inter alia* been designed to coordinate diplomatic actions against Italy with the South Tyrolean kin-minority. These include the “Department for South Tyrol and Southern Europe” in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Austrian parliament’s “Subcommittee for South Tyrol” (see BMaA 1996).

At the sub-state level, Europe-induced effects provided opportunities to intensify kin-minority – kin-state cooperation between South Tyrol and the Austrian Land Tyrol. Informal bodies for

cross-border cooperation had already been in place between the two sub-state entities since the 1970s, most prominently the “Working Group of the Alps” (*Arge Alp*) (Plangger 2018). With the Europe-related opening of the state border and the further de-securitization of cross-border relations, such initiatives gained new momentum. Sub-state authorities on both sides of the state border called for the creation of a “European Region of Tyrol” (SVP 1993, 10). This resulted in an agreement for closer cooperation between South Tyrol, Tyrol and Trentino based on the CoE’s “Madrid Convention” which institutionalized regular shared sessions of their sub-state parliaments (the so-called “Triple Assembly”) and sub-state executives (Engl 2014, 341). While the policy relevance of this cooperation has been limited (Perkmann 2007), it demonstrates the far-reaching de-securitization between the kin-minority, the kin-state and the host-state majority. Unlike previous attempts of sub-state cross-border cooperation, the “European Region of Tyrol” in the 1990s included the Italian-dominated Trentino and has not been centred on “Germanic” patterns of cross-border kinship (see Morrow 1992).

The European level provided an additional opportunity for territorial cooperation between the kin-minority and the kin-state. Tyrol, South Tyrol and Trentino coordinate their sub-state authorities’ representation in Brussels where they opened a shared office for the “European Region of Tyrol” in 1995. Although this sub-state representation is legally divided into three separate departments for each sub-state entity and only has a shared secretariat (alpeuregio.org 2020), its symbolic value for the expression of South Tyrol’s kinship with the Land Tyrol is significant. This becomes evident through the host-state government’s initial opposition against the shared office, based on the fear that it might ignite irredentist sentiments in South Tyrol (Ebner 2004, 52ff).

Kin-minority – host-state relations

De-securitization between the South Tyrolean kin-minority and the Italian host-state majority has been discernible since the 1969 South Tyrol Package (Carlà 2018). The Package also entailed a modification of centre – periphery relations by substantially expanding South Tyrol’s territorial self-rule. European integration furthered these processes by offering additional incentives for kin-minority – host-state majority cooperation and for the further expansion of South Tyrol’s territorial autonomy.

Group-based interactions

The relationship between the kin-minority and the host-state majority within South Tyrol since the 1970s has been marked by two trends. On the one hand, there has been substantial de-securitization between the two national groups that has facilitated regular interactions and cooperation between them. In a 1991 survey, 53.4 percent of South Tyroleans from both groups thought that cohabitation between German and Italian-speakers was “a minor problem compared to the past” (Carlà 2018, 265). At the elite level, this has been evidenced by the stable working relationships between the kin-minority SVP and a number of host-state majority parties, for instance, in the sub-state executive (Pallaver 2018a, 181).

On the other hand, this de-securitization has taken place against the backdrop of the segregation of the two national groups, indicating that the cultural boundary between them has not substantially softened. The rate of intermarriage between the groups is low, and knowledge of the respectively other language is limited among some parts of the population (ibid.). This is also reflected in voting patterns where the role of intercommunal voting is negligible (Pallaver 2014, 387). Institutionally, the segregation between South Tyrol’s kin-minority and the host-state majority is perpetuated through the consociational structures at the sub-state level. This is reflected through power-sharing requirements in the sub-state executive and the distribution of public goods to members of the local national groups based on a quota system (*ethnischer Proporz*) (Alber and Zwilling 2014).

The effects of European integration have intensified the former trend and have worked against the latter. European integration has furthered de-securitization by providing substantial common ground between representatives of the kin-minority and the host-state majority. In particular, the neofunctionalist variant of European integration has been equally endorsed by the SVP and by all centrist host-state parties. This underpinned the cooperation between the SVP and Italian Christian democrats during the time of the Package negotiations and the subsequent implementation phase (Scantamburlo and Pallaver 2015, 157). After the collapse of the Italian party system in 1992, that included the disintegration of the *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC) and coincided with the Package’s “conclusion”, the SVP continued to seek alliances with pro-European host-state parties. These parties also tended to support soft cultural boundaries between the kin-minority and the host-state majority (Pallaver 2018a, 196ff, Quaglia 2008). At the state and sub-state levels, these alliances mainly included Italian centre and centre-left parties; at the European level, the SVP found more common ground with the centre-right EPP (see below). For smaller kin-minority parties, common kin-minority

– host-state majority interests at the European level were more limited, partially due to these parties’ lack of representation and influence beyond the sub-state level (see below).

At the same time, Europe-induced de-securitization has called into question the principles of South Tyrol’s arrangements of kin-minority accommodation through segregation. The rules of the Single Market prohibit the discrimination among individuals based on their affiliation with a national group. This implicitly contributes to de-securitization through mainstreaming the relations between members of national groups as part of their wider interactions within the market. However, South Tyrol’s “ethnic quota” system for the allocation of public goods rests precisely on the categorization of individuals into national groups and on the (negative) discrimination of individuals if the targeted “ethnic quota” has not been met (Toggenburg 2008). Consequently, the European Court of Justice has required some modifications to South Tyrol’s system of kin-minority accommodation such as a more liberal handling of language certificates for public sector jobs (see the cases “Bickel and Franz” and “Angonese v Cassa di Risparmio di Bolzano SpA”) (ibid.). This presents an opportunity for kin-minority parties who endorse softer cultural boundaries with the host-state majority. At the same time, it constrains kin-minority parties who favour hard cultural boundaries between national groups.

Territorial relations

The dispersion of sovereignty away from the host-state centre proceeded with variable intensities throughout Italy’s post-Second World War history. Italy has been a founding member of the European Communities and of NATO, linking the state persistently to developments at the European centre (Brighi 2013, 91ff). Simultaneously, Italy’s 1948 constitution created two tiers of sub-state entities (*regioni* and *province*). The competences of the upper tier, the regions, have gradually been expanded since the 1970s (Basile 2019, 34ff). Additionally, South Tyrol and, to a lesser degree, other sub-state entities hosting national minorities have obtained territorial self-rule as part of special provisions like the South Tyrol Package (Palermo and Wilson 2014).

This dispersion of sovereignty was intensified in the 1990s. The European centre assumed additional competences with the Treaty of Maastricht and subsequent treaties. This also affected competences that had previously been in the realm of South Tyrol’s self-rule such as public subsidies or environmental protection (Obwexer et al. 2015). At the same time, the full implementation of the South Tyrol Package perpetuated South Tyrol’s self-rule. Bilateral

negotiations between the South Tyrolean authorities and the host-state centre after 1992 yielded further expansions of sub-state self-rule in numerous policy fields like in taxation or in the management of hydroelectric powerplants (Autonomous Province of Bolzano/South Tyrol 2005).

These changes in territorial relations were underpinned by the de-securitization between the kin-minority and the host-state majority described above. The de-securitization between the two national groups has changed much of the rationale behind South Tyrol's territorial self-rule. At the time of the Package deal, self-rule served predominantly as a tool for the South Tyrolean kin-minority to manage its own affairs within the boundaries of the Autonomous Province (and within the constraints of the consociational power-sharing provisions). With the advance of Europe-sponsored de-securitization, self-rule has become increasingly driven by functional considerations about the territorial scope of different policies, making territorial self-rule more of a goal in itself (Palermo 2015, 17). This de-securitization of centre – periphery relations has also been evidenced by Italy's more encompassing drive towards decentralization that has augmented the level of self-rule for all of its upper-tier sub-state entities, most significantly as a result of a constitutional reform in 2001 (Peterlini 2012).

Consequently, the de-securitization of kin-minority – host-state relations and wider dynamics for the dispersion of sovereignty provided new opportunities for kin-minority parties to pursue territorial self-rule within the host-state. At the same time, some constraints to territorial self-rule resulted from the shift of sub-state competences to the European centre.

South Tyrol's kin-minority parties have only had limited opportunities to mitigate these latter constraints through participation at the European centre. The most important fora of shared rule between South Tyrol and the host-state centre, the bilateral commissions for the implementation of self-rule provisions (the *Sechser-* and *Zwölferkommission*), have no explicit European function (Alber and Zwilling 2014). The multilateral State-Regions Conference (*Conferenza Stato-Regioni*), a forum of regular and highly formalized meetings between state and sub-state governments, was assigned a consultative role in Italy's EU-related policy-making in 1997. However, the Conference has not reflected South Tyrol's exceptional level of self-rule within the host-state and its impact on Italy's EU-related policy tends to be limited (Falcone 2015). South Tyrol's direct influence through its representation in the CoR or through its office in Brussels has been cautiously categorized as “lobbying with uncertain outcomes” (Zwilling 2019)

Kin-state – host-state relations

In the bilateral relations between South Tyrol's kin-state and host-state, de-securitization and economic integration conditioned each other and gradually led to the rapprochement between the two states. This was crucial for the 1969 trilateral agreement on kin-minority accommodation in South Tyrol. Austria's EU accession perpetuated these processes and led to further political integration with Italy and the opening of the border between the two states.

The first important step of de-securitization between South Tyrol's kin-state and host-state occurred against the backdrop of military integration of the Western block and perpetuated the border between the two states. Immediately after the Second World War, the Western Allies aimed to strengthen the anti-communist Italian government, while Austria's irredentist claims were neither supported by the Western Allies nor the Soviet Union. This compelled Austria to revoke irredentist claims and to accept the existing state border that left South Tyrol with Italy. In turn, the Italian government guaranteed to accommodate the South Tyrolean kin-minority within its territory (Pallaver 1993). The underlying bilateral treaty of 1946, known as the Gruber-De Gasperi Agreement, constituted the foundation of all subsequent engagements between the kin-state and the host-state over South Tyrol. Crucially, Italy's lacking implementation of kin-minority accommodation as envisioned by the 1946 Agreement led Austria to initiate two resolutions by the United Nations General Assembly in 1960 and 1961. This triggered constructive negotiations between the kin-state and the host-state over what would eventually become the South Tyrol Package (Grote 2012, 99).

The agreement on the South Tyrol Package brought the de-securitization between the two states to a new level. After 1969, Italy lifted its previous veto on negotiations between the EC and Austria. This allowed for closer economic integration between Austria and the EC, including Italy, under the scope of several sectoral trade agreements (Gehler 2009, 77ff). Austria's full integration into the EC would not have been possible at that time, given that it would have conflicted with the state's "permanent neutrality" during the Cold War (Beyer and Hofmann 2011).

The dynamics of de-securitization and economic integration further intensified once Austria applied for EC membership in 1989 and continued beyond Austria's EU accession in 1995. Cross-border interactions became de-securitized as part of the border-opening effects described above such as the SEM's Four Freedoms or Schengen. With the introduction of the Euro currency in Italy and Austria the economic boundary between the two states softened even further after 1999. The de-securitization of kin-minority – host-state relations is also

apparent in their bilateral engagements regarding South Tyrol. After the “conclusion” of the South Tyrol Package’s implementation in 1992, the Austrian and Italian governments continuously promoted South Tyrol as a best-practice model of minority accommodation, particularly in light of the democratization in neighbouring Central European states and the escalating ethnic conflicts in the Balkans (Gehler 2005b, 743). Additionally, the two state governments regularly consulted and informed each other over South Tyrol-related policies. Typically, this took the form of formal correspondence between ministries or embassies (BMaA 2001).

Kin-minority parties’ responses

South Tyrol’s kin-minority parties have always capitalized on the possible overlaps and contradictions between German and Austrian nation-building, a cross-border Tyrolean identity and pride in South Tyrol’s own autonomous institutions. The creation of a European centre and its impact on the triadic relationship between the kin-minority, the host-state and the kin-state have led the SVP, the UfS and dF to adapt their identities, goals, strategies and alliances in different ways.

Identities

The main cultural pattern that all South Tyrolean kin-minority parties evoke for the construction of their identity is the German language, which demarcates the kin-minority from the Italian-speaking host-state majority. Other widely shared cultural patterns in South Tyrol, such as the Catholic faith, do feature in some constructions of identity but are also shared widely by members of the host-state majority. The division between kin-minority and the host-state majority along linguistic lines is also enshrined in the institutional set up of the South Tyrol Package. It segregates the local cultural sub-systems, for instance in the education sector, based on individuals’ “Declaration of Belonging to a Language Group” (*Sprachgruppenzugehörigkeitserklärung*) (Alber and Zwilling 2014). Starting from the primarily linguistic distinction between the kin-minority and the host-state majority, South Tyrol’s kin-minority parties have constructed distinct imageries of the kin-minority’s identity. These reflect affiliations with the European centre and the Europe-induced softening of cultural boundaries to varying degrees.

Südtiroler Volkspartei

The SVP's identity has been marked by the dispersion of sovereignty that has shaped the Tyrolean lands throughout the 20th century. The strengthening of the European centre and Austria's EU accession perpetuated this multi-layered identity in the 1990s. The SVP, however, has been more ambiguous about its vision of the cultural boundaries between the kin-minority and the host-state majority.

As becomes evident from the party's name, the *Südtiroler Volkspartei* has always considered the South Tyrolean kin-minority as a distinct entity within a wider national group. Yet the boundaries of this wider nation have been constructed at different levels of government, spanning different political boundaries. Three distinct layers have been particularly important for the SVP's construction of cross-border identity. Firstly, the most salient level, especially before the 1990s, was the SVP's construction of kinship at the sub-state level. Here, the party underscored the kin-minority's belonging to a wider group of German-speaking Tyroleans. This regional kinship related to notions of the historic County of Tyrol but excluded Italian-speakers in the Trentino (Grote 2012, 91ff). Secondly, the SVP evoked the kin-minority's "German cultural heritage". Through this notion, the SVP created a link between the South Tyrolean kin-minority and the much wider group of German-speakers throughout Europe. This pattern of identity referred to a cultural nation instead of a particular, territorially defined entity. Remarkably, before the Package's full implementation and Austria's rapprochement with the EU in the 1990s, the SVP refrained from explicitly referring to a particular kin-*state*. Thirdly, as early as in the 1970s, the SVP evoked a European layer of identity and vocally supported "all efforts to lead the European Communities from economic to political integration [...] which should lead to a European federal state" (SVP 1972). The following quote further exemplifies the SVP's multi-layered identity prior to Austria's EU accession.

"The SVP highlights the close spiritual and cultural relationship with the whole Land of Tyrol. The SVP considers South Tyroleans' commitment to the German cultural heritage and the preservation of its values a fundamental pillar for the safeguarding of our ethnic group [...] The preservation of our people's future can only be organized through the cooperation [...] of all South Tyroleans in close kinship with the all-Tyrolean space" (SVP 1972).

With Austria's accession to the EU and the related de-securitization of South Tyrol's triadic nexus, the SVP added an explicit "Austrian" layer to its construction of identity. In addition to

the multiple other layers of kinship, the SVP began to depict its cross-border identity in relation to a kin-state, rather than only a culturally defined nation. Hence it began to evoke Austria as South Tyrol's "protective power" (*Schutzmacht*). This shift was helped by the full implementation of the Package that made such references possible without raising concerns about irredentism in the host-state. Moreover, the SVP explicitly linked its cross-border identity with the kin-state to its European identity and hoped that the former could materialize within the post-Maastricht EU. Hence, the party urged that this identity should be expressed through the continuation and intensification of the

“cooperation between South Tyrol and Austria, in particular with the Bundesland Tirol [...] in the context of Austria’s EC accession [...]. The close cooperation between South Tyrol and Austria will also constitute the foundation for the cosmopolitan development of Tyroleanness and for the cultural identity of the South Tyroleans in the future” (SVP 1993, 9).

The SVP's endorsement of multiple layers of identity notwithstanding, its construction of the cross-border nation's cultural boundary was ambiguous. On the one hand, the SVP embraced the de-securitization between the kin-minority and the host-state majority, pointing towards a softening of its identity's cultural boundaries. The party emphasized the opportunity "that the united Europe [will contribute] to the maintenance of peace by overcoming nationalism and borders" (SVP 1993, 7). Accordingly, the SVP supports the Italian-dominated Trentino's participation in the "European Region of Tyrol" and close cooperation between the kin-state and the host-state. On the other hand, the SVP claimed that the "South Tyroleans distinguish themselves from the titular nation [*vom Staatsvolk*] linguistically, culturally as well as through customs and traditions" (*ibid.*, 11), alluding to the party's continued preference for hard boundaries between the two national groups. Consequently, the SVP has been unwilling to substantially reform the consociational provisions that segregate the kin-minority and the host-state majority, even in light of these provisions' incompatibility with European norms (Toggenburg 2008).

Union für Südtirol

The UfS's construction of identity was also built on the dispersion of sovereignty in South Tyrol's environment. However, European integration did not substantially affect the UfS' identity. The party supported hard cultural boundaries between the German-speaking kin-

minority and the Italian host-state majority. Additionally, the UfS' evocation of a "federal Europe" bore little resemblance to European organizations as they actually existed in the 1990s (UfS 1989, dF and UfS 1994).

The UfS considered its concept of the "South Tyrolean People" to be nested within wider, Tyrolean and Austrian identities. However, the UfS was much less ambiguous than the SVP in evoking Austria as South Tyrol's kin-state and Austria's majority population as their national kin. As one UfS representative put it,

"returning to Austria is predominantly our concern [...]. We also feel that we are Austrians" (Interview in Bolzano, 12 June 2018).

This is also reflective of the hard cultural boundaries that the UfS envisioned to exist between the German-speaking, Austrian cross-border nation and the Italian host-state majority. For the UfS, the antagonism between these two national groups was constitutive for its own national identity, pointing to its lack of endorsement for the Europe-induced de-securitization between the two groups. The party, for instance, considered the institutional segregation of the linguistic groups in South Tyrol as a first, essential step towards a prospective, more clear-cut separation. In this context, the UfS vocally rejected "political compromises that threaten and, in the long run, surrender the basic interests of the South Tyrolean people" (UfS 1989) and was apprehensive about Europe's impact on South Tyrol's consociational institutions. Similarly, the UfS portrayed German-speaking South Tyroleans as the majority in their homeland, which, according to them, should never have been a part of Italy. The Italian-speaking population, thus, was portrayed as a subversive minority within South Tyrol, not as a legitimate part of its population, which is exemplified by the following quote.

"Real cohabitation can only exist if the historical and cultural identity of the land is recognized by all and the freely expressed will of the majority of the ancestral population is respected" (UfS 1989).

die Freiheitlichen

European integration also had a limited effect on dF's construction of identity. The party more frequently alluded to a European identity than the UfS. However, this conception of Europe was also largely irreconcilable with existing European institutions. Additionally, dF were also sceptical of softening cultural boundaries, albeit for different reasons than the UfS.

dF's identity was multi-layered in the sense that it considered the distinct South Tyrolean kin-minority to be embedded within a wider Tyrolean identity. Additionally, the party promoted strong ties with the larger Austrian nation, with one interviewee claiming that "we [South Tyroleans] are a land that has been separated from Austria" (Interview in Bolzano, 14 June 2018). dF has been committed to this Austrian identity since its foundation in 1992. At that time, the populist radical right Austrian Freedom Party (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, FPÖ) that was closely involved in dF's foundation also dropped its German-nationalist rhetoric and became a vocal supporter of Austrian national identity (Frölich-Steffen 2004).

dF's relationship with the European level was more ambiguous. In numerous interviews, dF representatives explicitly confirmed their European identity. At the same time, dF was continuously critical about the actual manifestations of European integration. One former party leader highlighted that "the South Tyroleans certainly see Europe as something positive. Yet there is a big difference between Europe and the EU" (Interview in Bolzano, 11 June 2018). This indicates that dF does not demonstrate allegiances to existing European institutions but rather to a culturally defined, exclusive variant of European identity.

Contrastingly, dF's opposition to Europe-induced de-securitization was unequivocal. The party promoted hard cultural boundaries to delimit the kin-minority from other national groups. dF's main focus was to demarcate South Tyroleans from immigrants, rather than from the host-state majority. In this, dF closely resembled other European populist radical right parties, such as the FPÖ (Mudde 2007, 63ff). The following quote exemplifies this:

"Of course, the enforcement of the Schengen Agreement helped to move on more forcefully with the cooperation between the parts of Tyrol. But it comes with – and we have warned of this from the beginning – a disadvantage. Through the opening of borders, criminality becomes borderless and organized crime will spread all over Europe [...]. The South Tyrolean Freedomites are not the only ones who say that South Tyrol is not a country of immigration" (Leitner, debate in Provincial Parliament, 14 July 1998).

dF also promoted hard cultural boundaries between the kin-minority and the Italian host-state majority; although this was done somewhat less vocally. The party did not challenge the institutional segregation of South Tyrol's language groups and was sceptical of the Trentino's role within sub-state institutions for cross-border cooperation. The party's chairman "did not believe that one can simultaneously organize North Tyrol, East Tyrol, South Tyrol and the

Trentino in this European Union. Historically, this would not be explicable. [Only] North, East and South Tyrol belong together” (Leitner, debate in Provincial Parliament, 12 January 1995).

Goals and strategies

All South Tyrolean kin-minority parties constructed their kin-minority’s identity on a linguistic basis, with relatively minor differences concerning the construction of kinship and the kin-minority’s relationship with the host-state majority. Starting from these largely overlapping identities, however, the SVP, the UfS and dF adopted diverging goals and strategies against the backdrop of their kin-state’s EU accession.

Südtiroler Volkspartei

The SVP’s goals and strategies can be summarized as *border-transcending*. The party had ruled out irredentism since 1946. This stance was reinforced as Europe-induced dispersion of sovereignty, border-opening and de-securitization opened up new opportunities. Within the new European environment that emerged in the 1990s, the SVP aimed to establish institutional expressions of its cross-border identity at multiple levels of government and sought a new rationale for the expansion of South Tyrol’s territorial self-rule.

The SVP’s desired relationship between the kin-minority and the kin-state has predominantly been based on territorial cooperation. This is understandable given the SVP’s domination of South Tyrol’s self-governing sub-state institutions. The party pursued these goals at two different levels of government, emphasizing distinct aspects of Europe-induced opportunities. Firstly, the SVP aimed at closer cross-border cooperation at the sub-state level between South Tyrol, Tyrol and (in most instances in the 1990s) the Trentino. This goal built heavily on the SVP’s endorsement of the dispersion of sovereignty and on the expectation that state borders could be transcended within a “federal Europe of the Regions [...] in which borders are increasingly overcome” (SVP 1993, 1). Against this backdrop, the SVP aimed to establish a “multilingual, federal European Region of Tyrol” (SVP 1993, 10). The SVP’s notion of a “multilingual” region in this context is particularly striking, given that it highlights the SVP’s support for the de-securitization between the two linguistically defined national groups in the Tyrolean lands. It contradicts most of the SVP’s previous concepts of sub-state cross-border

cooperation that had been predominantly driven by more exclusive concepts of a Germanophone Tyrolean identity (see Köchler 1972).

The SVP's goal for a "European Region of Tyrol" materialized in more structured cooperation between South Tyrol, the Trentino and the Austrian Tyrol such as the regular shared sessions of their sub-state parliaments and sub-state executives (Engl 2014, 341), and their common representation at the European centre (Ebner 2004, 52ff). Although the SVP was aware of the limitations of these forms of cooperation, and of South Tyrol's limited influence at the European level more generally, the party hoped that the "European Region" would emerge into a more powerful political entity as the effects of European integration evolved further. As South Tyrol's former First Minister stated,

"All three countries – the Land of Tyrol, South Tyrol and the Trentino – are threatened by state centralism and enforced conformity [...]. The future European Region of Tyrol should not only be a protective cloak [...] but should become the political frame for the common will of the three countries and their inhabitants, to give them a voice in Rome, in Vienna, and especially in Brussels." (Durnwalder, debate in Provincial Parliament, 10 January 1995).

Secondly, the SVP aimed to express its kinship through closer cooperation between South Tyrol and the Austrian state level. This is in line with the de-securitized kin-minority – kin-state relations and the opening of the state border that also allowed for the more explicit expression of the SVP's Austrian identity. Along with its border-transcending aspiration that states and their borders would become increasingly obsolete, the SVP hoped that the gradual opening of the border between South Tyrol and Austria would proceed to allow for "the effects of the annexation of 1919 [to be] overcome" (SVP 1993, 9) without engaging in irredentism. However, the SVP also recognized the continued importance of member states in the EU's constitutional set-up and emphasized that Austria's membership would provide South Tyrol with a reliable ally in its intergovernmental fora (see Pahl, debate in Provincial Parliament, 09 January 1990). Once Austria had joined the EU, the SVP was quick to realize that its initial border-transcending goals for kin-minority – kin-state cooperation had overstated the opportunities available within the post-Maastricht EU. Yet, the party mainly adhered to these goals to underbid its electoral competitors from the UfS and dF.

Unlike the SVP's somewhat unrealistic goals for rapprochement with its co-nationals in the kin-state, the dispersion of state functions and the de-securitization of kin-minority – host-

state relations allowed the party to pursue more substantial goals for self-rule within the host-state. The processes of de-securitization resulted in the SVP's shift from a largely "defensive" rhetoric about the "preservation" of the South Tyrolean people (see SVP 1972) to the more assertive goal of a "dynamic autonomy" (SVP 1993, 1). This indicates that the SVP no longer considered the host-state majority as a threat to the kin-minority. Territorial self-rule was not needed to assure the continued existence of the South Tyrolean kin-minority. Instead, the SVP increasingly justified its goal for the "dynamic" expansion of self-rule in functional terms. As one former South Tyrolean minister explained,

"dynamic autonomy means that you have to adapt to the requirements of a changing society. Society is changing and this creates new desires [for regional competences]. Since the Package Closure in 1992 we have taken various important steps. Since the constitutional reform and the reform of the Statute of Autonomy in 2001, the Provinces of South Tyrol and Trentino have gained in importance [...]. Now we have additional competences in the university and education sector, in labour market policies..." (Interview in Bolzano, 1 June 2018).

In addition to the SVP's functional justification of the allocation of state functions at the sub-state level, the party explicitly linked the goal of self-rule expansion to European integration. This is evidenced by the party's notion of the "Europe of the Regions" and the somewhat diffuse hope that European integration would automatically lead to a further expansion of sub-state competences. The perceived relationship between self-rule and European integration was also articulated in several interviews, for instance by an SVP MEP who highlighted the role of de-securitization for South Tyrol's self-rule arrangements:

"The expansion of the Autonomy has only been possible in the context of European unification. If the peoples of Europe had been hostile to each other, the [Gruber-De Gasperi] Agreement would never have been implemented. Also, the [Conclusion of the Package] was indivisibly linked to Austria's desire to join the EU" (Interview 2 in Bolzano, 15 June 2018).

The changes of the SVP's goals in the early 1990s were predominantly an adaptation to changing context conditions in South Tyrol's environment such the Package Conclusion or Austria's imminent EU accession. Yet, they also took place against the backdrop of growing opposition to the SVP within the kin-minority. The other two kin-minority parties aimed to outbid the SVP by opposing the Package Conclusion and by presenting more far-reaching

goals for South Tyrol's emancipation from the host-state. In response to this, the SVP was incentivized to present more realistic goals that, at the same time, went beyond what the party had already achieved through the implementation of the South Tyrol Package and the Statute of Autonomy in 1992. One leading SVP member summarized this the following way.

“The starting point of these concepts [that different South Tyrolean parties present] isn't different. All want maximum sovereignty. But we take the path of internal self-determination because it's the only thing that's feasible” (Interview 1 in Bolzano, 15 June 2018).

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The UfS mainly interpreted the effects of European integration as a constraint to its goals. The party promoted hard cultural boundaries between the kin-minority and the host-state majority. It continued to consider the host-state as an existential threat to the kin-minority. Thus, the UfS' overarching objection to European integration was based on its scepticism of the de-securitized relationship between the kin-minority and the kin-state on the one hand, and the host-state on the other. Therefore, the party can be categorized as a *border-shifting party*.

The precise expressions of the UfS' border-shifting goals were frequently contradictory and varied between their long-term aspirations and their more immediate concerns. In the long run, the party pursued the somewhat ambiguous goal of “self-determination” (UfS 1989). In articulating this goal, the UfS did not rule out that “self-determination” could entail the creation of an independent South Tyrolean state. However, the party's Austrian identity and several statements by party members specified that “self-determination” in the UfS' sense amounted to the irredentist goal of unification with Austria. Regarding this goal, the UfS was again ambiguous about what kind of relationship it desired between South Tyrol and the existing Bundesland Tyrol. While some sources demanded the unification within one Bundesland (UfS 1995), others recognized that South Tyrol should have “special arrangements” within an enlarged Austrian state (Interview in Bolzano, 7 June 2018).

Its irredentism notwithstanding, in the shorter run the UfS pursued more comprehensive self-rule for South Tyrol within its host-state. The party's position on this was also inconsistent. On the one hand, the party continuously warned that the provisions of the South Tyrol Package might be undermined, and demanded that certain parts of the Package must be made “inviolable” to assure the continuous protection of the kin-minority (UfS 1989). Accordingly,

the UfS' opposed Austria's and the SVP's verification of the Package's full implementation and argued that substantial aspects of kin-minority accommodation were still pending (UfS 1992). On the other hand, the UfS claimed that the South Tyrol Package itself did not sufficiently guarantee self-rule and kin-minority accommodation and thus demanded a "real autonomy" instead (UfS 1989).

These contradictory goals also led to different interpretations of European integration and its resulting opportunities and constraints. In particular, the UfS was divided over the effects of Austria's EU accession. The arguments of one faction can clearly be categorized as border-shifting. This faction rejected the Europe-sponsored perpetuation of the state border between Austria and Italy and dismissed the opportunities of the corresponding border-opening effects. They interpreted the dispersion of state functions as a constraint to South Tyrol's self-rule, rather than as an opportunity. It was feared that state and European centres would gain authority at the expense of South Tyrol's autonomy. In line with this argument, this faction held that the European centre was unaccountable to sub-state entities and that the European Union was too centralistic. The following statement is representative of these positions.

"South Tyrol was intentionally sacrificed by the SVP and the so-called protecting power on the altar of the EC. And this sacrifice was crowned by the Maastricht Treaty [...]. The European Union acknowledges the national identity of the twelve member states, and not of the peoples, who live in Europe [...]. This gives a carte blanche to assimilate the minorities that are not compatible with that identity [...]. And by joining [the Union] and becoming a partner of the Maastricht Treaty, Austria recognizes [...] the national identity of Italy, including South Tyrol, and [recognizes] the supremacy of the Treaty of Maastricht over the [Gruber-De Gasperi Agreement]" (Benedikter, debate in Provincial Parliament, 13 January 1994).

The competing view within the UfS more closely resembled border-crossing goals in that it acknowledged the opportunities of Europe-induced border opening but otherwise aspired to a European environment that radically differed from actual European institutions. This faction supported Austria's EU accession and ignored Europe's border-perpetuating effects. It was also critical of the EU's alleged unaccountable centre but hoped that the EU could be a starting point for the creation of a "Europe of the Peoples and Regions [where] Tyrol is entitled to its place as a naturally grown region" (UfS 1995). At one point, this faction even went as far as to suggest that the EU would supervise a referendum in which South Tyroleans

could decide whether they wanted South Tyrol to remain a part of Italy, or whether it should join Austria (ibid.).

In competition with other kin-minority parties, the UfS pursued a clear strategy of ethnic outbidding. This is evident from its insistence on hard cultural boundaries and the resulting emphasis on self-determination.

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dF interpreted the opportunities and constraints that resulted from European integration in a rather inconsistent way. dF endorsed the opening of state borders and the dispersion of sovereignty and hoped that this would facilitate the creation of a cross-border “Region of Tyrol”. At the same time, it was sceptical about the creation of a European centre and considered this process as a threat to South Tyrol’s self-rule. The party took a low profile regarding the softening of cultural boundaries. While dF was opposed to making cultural boundaries more permeable, it consciously avoided capitalizing on the dichotomy between the kin-minority and the host-state majority, in order to differentiate its own goals from that of the UfS. Given dF’s simultaneous endorsement of opening state borders and criticism of other effects of European integration, the party’s goals can be categorized as *border-crossing*.

dF’s goal for kin-minority – kin-state relations in the 1990s was the establishment of a so-called “Region of Tyrol”. The party conceptualized this after its 1992 opposition to the “conclusion” of the South Tyrol Package’s had remained ineffective. Nevertheless, dF’s “Region of Tyrol” has always remained a rather diffuse concept. On the one hand, the party held that Europe’s border-opening effects would help create such a Region. In this sense, the concept does not appear irredentist but rather as an intensified form of sub-state cross-border cooperation (dF 1993). On the other hand, dF argued that the “Region of Tyrol” should be constituted of “all parts of Tyrol on the basis of the right to self-determination” (ibid.). This alludes to South Tyrol’s secession from Italy and to its unification with the (possibly independent) rest of the Germanophone parts of the historic Tyrol.

dF was also inconsistent in its assessment of whether European integration would facilitate the creation of a “Region of Tyrol”. In some statements, the party appreciated Europe’s border-opening effects and even hoped that a revision of the CoE’s “Madrid Convention” could facilitate relevant forms of cross border cooperation (ibid.). On other occasions, dF criticized that the European centre and state centres undermined South Tyrol’s self-rule and

delimited opportunities for cross-border cooperation. The following quote in which dF's former party leader simultaneously embraces and dismisses the Treaty of Maastricht illustrates this contradictory stance:

“The European Region of Tyrol [...] is not possible in today's conditions. You must tell people the whole truth [...] All in all, the Treaty of Maastricht was a victory of nation-states and not a victory of the regions [...]. Nevertheless, I say, it is a step in the right direction. But one has to make sure that the conditions are changed so that this European Region of Tyrol that I and that many people in this country wish for can take concrete shape” (Leitner, debate in Provincial Parliament, 8 February 1994).

Interestingly, in the early 1990s, dF's goals concerning South Tyrol's relationship with the kin-state and the host-state did not play a prominent role in the party's wider discourse. This was the result of an explicit strategy with which dF wanted to pursue more radical goals than the SVP but wanted to differentiate itself from UfS' perceived overreliance on identity and territory-related goals. As a former party leader explained,

“The Freedom Party wanted to build on a completely new concept [...]. It was crucial to call out to the citizens the SVP's weaknesses in other fields, not only regarding South Tyrol's [constitution]. Only if the citizens would see that the SVP does not represent their interests in other fields (like nepotism, clientelism, despotism even at the local level, longstanding mismanagement of public funds, especially for social policies etc.) then they would believe us that the SVP also represents them poorly on [constitutional] questions. The citizen needs a party that cares about all his interests, which had been completely missing [with the UfS]” (Leitner 2009).

Against this backdrop, dF's border-crossing goals appear to be mostly inspired by the strategic need to strike a balance between outbidding the SVP, while being distinguishable from the UfS. In order to achieve this, dF selectively made use of the opportunities provided by European integration but also vocally criticised Europe-related constraints for the kin-minority.

Alliances

South Tyrol's kin-minority parties' access to various political fora has been highly unequal. This has impacted their ability to form alliances with actors from the kin-state and the host-

state. The SVP has been represented in legislatures at all levels of government, including in the European Parliament, and has used this extensively to cooperate with kin-state and host-state actors. Contrastingly, the UfS and dF have been largely limited to representation at the sub-state level and thus have been constrained in their ability to form alliances.

Südtiroler Volkspartei

The SVP has participated in all fora to which it has been elected (Pallaver 2018a, 177ff). Across levels of government, the SVP's alliances have been driven by two competing rationales. Firstly, the SVP claims to be an "ethnic catch all-party" (*ethnische Sammelpartei*) representing all German (and Ladin)-speaking South Tyroleans across ideological boundaries. This is reflective of the securitization that marked kin-minority – host-state relations for several decades after the SVP's foundation, and that is still occasionally utilized by the SVP to mobilize (potential) voters under the banner of the kin-minority's unity (Pallaver 2014, 388). Following this rationale, the SVP seeks alliances in the kin-state and the host-state across ideological boundaries. Secondly, however, within the SVP conservative and Christian democrat tendencies have always prevailed. As South Tyrol's triadic nexus has become more de-securitized, this ideological tint has increasingly informed the SVP's alliances.

The SVP's "catch all-party"-rationale incentivized the party to form alliances with the kin-state's two main parties, the Social democrat SPÖ (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs*) and the Christian democrat ÖVP (*Österreichische Volkspartei*). These two parties have formed a Grand Coalition for most of Austria's post-Second World War history, making alliances with both parties essential to ensure access to decision-makers at the state level. While most of the contacts between the SVP and Austrian politicians took place informally, some more formalized encounters had a high symbolic value. The so-called "South Tyrol Meetings" (*Südtiroltreffen*) between Austrian state, Tyrolean sub-state and SVP officials, for instance, underscored the kin-state's cross-partisan support for the SVP's goals vis-à-vis the host-state during the implementation phase of the South Tyrol Package (Steininger 1997, 486). The SVP continued to demand a "uniform policy on South Tyrol [... by] all democratic parties that exist in Austria" (SVP 1993), even after the Package's full implementation, when relations were substantially de-securitized.

However, the de-securitization of the kin-minority – host-state relations and the SVP's increasingly functional justifications for South Tyrol's self-rule delimited the SVP's demand

for uniform kin-state policies. From the mid-1990s onward, kin-state interference appeared no longer fundamental to assure the accommodation of the South Tyrolean kin-minority. Consequently, the SVP's alliances with kin-state parties became increasingly driven by the party's more strategic and ideological rationale. This resulted in an intensification of contacts between the SVP and the ÖVP and in a simultaneous reduction of contacts between the SVP and the SPÖ. One example of this shift was that informal cooperation between the SVP and ÖVP-dominated sub-state governments in the wider Tyrol became more frequent on a range of issues, while coordination with Austria's federal government was gradually taking a lower profile (Pallaver 2013, 120ff). One SVP interviewee explained the impact of de-securitization on the changing alliances with kin-state actors as follows:

“Today there is a new generation of politicians [in Austria]. They see South Tyrol as a successful neighbour and treat South Tyrol accordingly. This is a good thing because the South Tyroleans have to overcome their role as victims. If we tell [the Austrians] ‘please, please, look after us’, no one will believe us anymore. The younger generation in South Tyrol doesn’t feel oppressed. So, it’s good that we are considered successful partners by the Austrians and Germans, and not as someone who is seeking help” (Interview 2 in Bolzano, 15 June 2018).

In the host-state, the SVP participates in elections, accepts its mandates and forms alliances at all political levels (local, provincial and state). The only exception to this rule is its participation in the host-state government. While the SVP tends to externally support Italian state governments, it has never accepted a portfolio at the state level, even when it held the balance of power in the host-state parliament. This was for the SVP to highlight the boundary between kin-minority representatives and host-state institutions.

Despite the substantial de-securitization of kin-minority – host-state majority relations, the SVP's alliances with host-state actors across all levels of government have mainly focused on their partners' positions on territorial self-rule and on minority protection, making parties' left-right position a secondary consideration. Typically, host-state parties that are sympathetic to the SVP's goals on territorial and cultural issues also share its support for European integration and its effects on the host-state. Consequently, compatible interpretations of European integration have helped build alliances between the SVP and host-state parties. This was particularly true for the cooperation between the SVP and *Democrazia Cristiana*. The two parties were working together in South Tyrol's sub-state power-sharing executive from 1948 until the latter's dissolution in 1994, and were the main architects of the host-state-

internal aspects of the South Tyrol Package (Scantamburlo and Pallaver 2015, 157, Pallaver 2018a, 181). After 1994, the volatility of the Italian party system compelled the SVP to frequently forge new alliances with host-state parties. Nevertheless, the SVP's rationale for cooperation with host-state actors remained the same. The SVP cooperated with a number of centre and centre-left parties at the state and the sub-state level, all of which supported a further dispersion of sovereignty away from the host-state centre and the de-securitization of kin-minority – host-state relations (Pallaver 2018a, 177ff).

At the European level, some contradictions in the SVP's alliances emerged since the party aimed at close cooperation with the Austrian Christian democrats, while maintaining some flexibility regarding its alliances with host-state parties. After the disintegration of the DC, the SVP formed electoral coalitions for European elections with a minor, state-wide Christian democrat party to ensure its election to the EP. This coalition, combined with the SVP's alliances at the provincial and at the state level, led to a divergence between the SVP and Italy's newly emerging main party in the centre-right spectrum, Forza Italia (Pallaver 2018a, 208). At the same time, the SVP intensified its relationship with other European centre-right parties, particularly with the ÖVP in the EP. In 1996, the SVP formally obtained an observer status in the European People's Party (EPP), the European party federation of Christian democrats and conservatives (Jansen and van Hecke 2011, 64).

For the SVP and the Tyrolean ÖVP, this alliance at the European level presented two, mutually reinforcing opportunities. Firstly, it allowed them to pursue common functional interests in an arena in which cooperation across state borders was the norm. This contributed to “mainstream” and to further de-securitize the cooperation between the SVP and kin-state actors. Secondly, cooperation within the EPP allowed the SVP and the ÖVP to pursue their border-transcending goals and to use the dispersion of state functions to express their shared identity across state borders. In addition to the SVP's new alliance with the ÖVP in the EP, the former continued to maintain close relationships with other German-speaking representatives, particularly with the Bavarian CSU (phone interview with former MEP, 08 June 2018).

Union für Südtirol

The UfS' alliances with parties in the kin-state and the host-state were significantly more constrained. Besides the incompatibilities of the UfS' identity and goals with those of other

parties, the UfS was also constrained by its limited representation across several levels of government. The party had no representatives at the state or the European level, nor could it participate in any governmental fora. In interviews, UfS representatives claimed that they maintained constant contact with all parties in Austria. The UfS claimed that this was necessary to establish a broad understanding for the situation in South Tyrol among kin-state representatives, which resembles the SVP's position before the mid-1990s. However, other than the far-right FPÖ, all Austrian parties show little interest in the UfS' border-shifting goals and consider only the SVP, based on its substantial electoral mandate, as the legitimate representative of the kin-minority.

The UfS refused to cooperate with parties that represented the host-state majority but regularly formed electoral coalitions with minor autonomist parties from other parts of Italy for EP elections. In 1994, UfS and dF ran together with the Union Valdôtaine. These EP candidatures have never been successful (Pallaver 2018a, 219). The UfS was a member of the European Free Alliance (EFA) at the European level until the UfS' disintegration in 2007. Due to its relatively small size, the UfS played a subordinate role within EFA (see Gómez-Reino 2018, 120ff).

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dF's alliances with parties in the kin-state and the host-state have been more complex. The FPÖ played a key role in the foundation of dF in 1992. Some interviewees claimed that the FPÖ initiated the foundation of dF. Others held that the original incentive came from South Tyrolean politicians whose efforts were subsequently supported by the FPÖ. The sequence of these events notwithstanding, dF and the FPÖ shared their rejection of the South Tyrol Package's "conclusion", their strategically motivated criticism of governing elites and of an allegedly unaccountable European centre (Fallend 2008). These overlapping goals allowed for a close alliance between dF and the Tyrolean branch of the FPÖ. This was, among other things, expressed in organizational terms. dF's party leader was represented in the Tyrolean FPÖ's party executive and vice versa (Pallaver 2013, 123). In the 1990s, dF's alliances with other parties in the host-state were limited to the electoral coalition for the 1994 EP election. Other options for building alliances were constrained by dF's absence in institutions beyond the provincial level and by dF's exclusive identity. For dF, the European level resulted in constraints for the formation of alliances, rather than in opportunities. In the 2000s, the relationship between dF and the FPÖ was severely strained, due to the latter's participation in

a European party federation with other far-right groups, including Italian neo-fascists. This was fiercely rejected by dF and led to dF's withdrawal from some shared fora (ibid.).

Conclusion

This chapter showed that European integration and Austria's accession to the EU intensified and perpetuated dynamics within South Tyrol's triadic nexus that had been discernible since 1969. The de-securitization of cross-border interactions between South Tyrol and its kin-state reached a new level once Austria had joined the EU. Similarly, relations between the kin-minority and the host-state majority became more cooperative as part of a wider dispersion of sovereignty within Italy. These findings demonstrate that European integration does provide kin-minority parties with new opportunities for cooperation with their kin-state and with their host-state – even if these opportunities build on pre-existing relationships between kin-minorities, kin-states and host-states.

Not all South Tyrolean kin-minority parties accepted these new opportunities as alternatives to irredentism. Only the SVP that had developed a European identity since the 1970s endorsed all Europe-sponsored opportunities and aimed to exploit them to further its border-transcending goals. South Tyrol's smaller kin-minority parties, the UfS and dF, put a higher emphasis on the constraints that Europe-sponsored dynamics posed to their exclusive identities. The Europe-induced, de-securitized relationships in the UfS' and dF's environment, however, diluted these parties' irredentism and made their goals appear inconsistent and contradictory throughout the 1990s. The next chapter analyses South Tyrolean kin-minority parties against the backdrop of multiple crises of European integration.

5. South Tyrol & the rise of Euroscepticism

Introduction

Austria's EU accession and the simultaneous accommodation of the South Tyrolean kin-minority took place in an environment in which European integration had gained new momentum. The Single European Act and the Treaty of Maastricht had shifted new competences to the European centre. At the same time, European organizations were also developing new norms for minority protection in the wider European space. This provided the context for the SVP's border-transcending goals and for the UfS' and dF's insistence on securitized kin-minority – host-state relations.

The context of South Tyrol's relationship with its kin-state and its host-state that is the starting point of this chapter is markedly different. In the aftermath of the post-2008 financial crisis and the 2015/16 migration crisis, support for Eurosceptic parties rose in South Tyrol's kin-state and host-state. In Italy, the populist Five Star Movement (*Movimento 5 Stelle*, M5S) and the far-right League (*Lega*, previously *Lega Nord*) formed a government coalition in mid-2018. The most significant commonality between the otherwise ideologically distant parties was their populist rejection of allegedly “unaccountable elites”, including at the European level (Basile and Borri 2018). In Austria, the Christian democrat ÖVP and the far-right FPÖ formed a coalition at the federal level in late 2017, after the ÖVP had adopted much of the far-right's anti-migration and anti-EU rhetoric (Liebhart 2020).

Both governments objected to the level of European integration at the time and aimed at retaining competences from the European centre to the state level, although with different emphases (Heinisch et al. 2021). Italy's Eurosceptic government, for instance, continuously questioned Italy's membership in the Economic and Monetary Union (Di Quirico 2020). Its Austrian counterpart aimed to relocate state functions from the European centre to the level of the member states under the banner of “subsidiarity” (Austrian Federal Government 2017). Among other things, this was reflected in the Austrian government's mistrust of Europe-sponsored kin-minority – kin-state cooperation, which materialized in plans to unilaterally grant German-speaking South Tyroleans access to Austrian citizenship (ibid., 33). Both governments took unilateral steps to control their state borders against the backdrop of the

migration crisis; in Austria's case even before the far-right FPÖ had joined the federal government (Murphy and Binnie 2017, theguardian.com 2021).

The Eurosceptic demands voiced by South Tyrol's kin-state and host-state governments between 2015 and 2019 present an opportunity to assess kin-minority parties' responses to potential European disintegration. The hypothesis for this scenario is that the threat of disintegration disincentivizes kin-minority parties to utilize Europe-sponsored forms of cooperation with their kin-state and their host-state. Instead, kin-minority parties can be expected to revert to irredentist goals and strategies outside European channels. These expectations are substantiated by the fact that Austria's announcement to re-introduce border controls, or Italy's threat to leave the Euro zone put Europe-sponsored opportunities for de-securitized kin-minority – kin-state interactions under stress. Moreover, Austria's unilateral plans to grant full citizenship to members of the South Tyrolean kin-minority provided kin-minority parties with opportunities to strengthen kin-minority – kin-state ties outside established, European channels of cross-border interaction.

In contradiction to this hypothesis, this chapter finds that South Tyrolean kin-minority parties do not reject Europe-induced opportunities in light of demands for disintegration by the kin-state and host-state governments. Instead, it shows that Euroscepticism did not lead to a substantial reversal of European integration's effects in South Tyrol. Demands for disintegration by the two governments have, for the largest part, been counterbalanced by the path-dependency of Europe-induced effects on the triadic relationship between South Tyrol, its kin-state and its host-state. Moreover, demands for disintegration came to a halt, once the FPÖ and the Lega had left their respective government coalitions in mid-2019 following two unrelated government crises (Eberl et al. 2020, Conti et al. 2020b).

Kin-minority parties' identities, goals, strategies and alliances predominantly reflect this continuity of European integration's effects in their environment. In particular, South Tyrol's kin-minority parties have converged around the endorsement of Europe's border-opening effects, despite recurrent announcements of re-introduced border controls. Their assessment of other Europe-induced opportunities continues to differ. This has led the SVP, which remains by far the most electorally successful party in South Tyrol, to adapt its border-transcending goals only mildly to new context conditions. The *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit* (South Tyrolean Liberty, STF), a successor party to the UfS, has come to endorse Europe-sponsored border-opening but otherwise remains critical of European integration's effects. dF, which has grown to be South Tyrol's second biggest party during most of the 2010s, is ambiguous about

most aspects of European integration but unequivocally supports Europe-sponsored open state borders between South Tyrol and Austria.

The next section of this chapter elaborates on how Eurosceptic demands for disintegration and the persistence of European integration's effects have affected the relationship between the South Tyrolean kin-minority, its kin-state and its host-state. Subsequently, kin-minority parties' responses to these dynamics will be analysed in more detail.

Continuity despite crises in South Tyrol's triadic nexus

Kin-minority – kin-state

Europe-induced opportunities for cooperation between South Tyrol and its kin-state expanded throughout the 2000s and 2010s. At the same time, the incumbency of Eurosceptic governments in the host-state and the kin-state threatened to reverse this trend. Consequently, group-based and territory-based cooperation between the kin-minority and the kin-state display both continuities and disruptions post-2015.

Group-based interactions

Europe-induced de-securitization and border-opening have been supported by all mainstream parties in the kin-state and by South Tyrol's largest kin-minority party since before Austria's EU accession. This has established a longstanding consensus that Europe-induced opportunities for kin-minority – kin-state relations complement and strengthen existing forms of kin-minority accommodation in South Tyrol. The Austrian government even came to endorse the de-securitization of South Tyrol's triadic nexus to a degree that it viewed the local sub-state institutions for self-rule "a common good of all three language groups in South Tyrol" (BMEIA 2014). Additionally, these trends were considered the best guarantors for close political, economic and cultural links between the South Tyrolean kin-minority and the Austrian kin-state majority (ibid., SVP 2013, 46).

The European centre has never been directly involved in South Tyrol's kin-minority – kin-state majority relations. However, its consolidation and the expansion of its competences have further contributed to the opening of the state border and to a further de-securitization of relationships. Perhaps the most visible border-opening European policy since 2000 has been the introduction of the Euro. The shift of competences over monetary policy to the European

level made the border between South Tyrol and Austria more permeable and less noticeable. This has served as an opportunity for kin-minority parties to highlight the kin-minority's intensified links with the kin-state, while it has also embedded these links within wider economic relations in Europe (see below). Other European policies, such as the abolition of roaming charges for mobile phones or European funding for large-scale cross-border infrastructure projects, have had similar effects (bbt-se.com 2020).

This longstanding trend of facilitating and de-securitizing kin-minority – kin-state interactions was disrupted when the Austrian government engaged in unilateral cross-border nation-building and aimed to circumvent Europe-sponsored channels of kin-minority – kin-state interactions. More precisely, the kin-state government planned to grant Austrian citizenship to German and Ladin-speaking South Tyroleans in addition to their Italian citizenship (Austrian Federal Government 2017, 33). This was reflective of the far-right FPÖ's exclusive national identity and of its scepticism towards the European centre. The FPÖ explicitly “strive for the unity of Tyrol and commit to South-Tyrol's right [to] self-determination” (FPÖ 2011) and do not consider the effects of European integration, including individual rights derived from European citizenship, as providing sufficiently strong links between the kin-minority and the kin-state.

The Austrian kin-state's unilateral nation-building efforts threatened to reverse the de-securitization of kin-minority – kin-state interactions in three ways. Firstly, the Austrian government planned to entitle only German and Ladin-speaking South Tyroleans to kin-state citizenship but to exclude Italian-speakers in South Tyrol from this privilege. This would have contradicted European integration's implicit mechanisms of de-securitization through mainstreaming the relationship of individuals within the Single Market. Moreover, the Austrian government never made clear by which standards it would determine individuals' entitlement to kin-state citizenship. Any potential option to determine individuals' entitlement, however, would have singled out one part of South Tyrol's population over another, reversing the softening of cultural boundaries between the kin-minority and the host-state majority in the province (Pallaver 2018b). Secondly, the intention to grant Austrian citizenship to the kin-minority had not been discussed with South Tyrol's host-state in advance. This led to a temporary disruption of the de-securitized relations between the kin-minority and the kin-state on the one hand and the host-state on the other, given that all host-state majority parties rejected Austria's unilateral efforts of cross-border nation-building (Saeed 2017). Lastly, Austria's plans for kin-state citizenship for South Tyroleans

contradicted European norms on “National Minorities in Inter-State Relations” that had been specified in the OSCE’s “Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations”. The recommendations explicitly call on kin-states to ensure that “a conferral of citizenship [to a kin-minority] respects the principles of friendly, including good neighbourly, relations and territorial sovereignty, and [kin-states] should refrain from conferring citizenship *en masse*” (OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities 2008, 7, emphasis in original).

For South Tyrol’s kin-minority parties, the threat to de-securitization based on the kin-state’s unilateral nation-building provided both opportunities and constraints. The kin-state’s move offered the opportunity to pursue border-shifting goals outside European channels. It allowed for the expression of cross-border kinship without regard to the de-securitizing processes that had prevailed in South Tyrol’s triadic nexus since the South Tyrol Package. However, the kin-state’s cross-border nation-building also constrained border-transcending goals that build precisely on this de-securitization.

These opportunities and constraints faded with the end of the ÖVP-FPÖ government in mid-2019. Subsequent governments have once again endorsed de-securitizing relations with South Tyrol and Italy within European channels (BMEIA 2020). Additionally, a 2019 opinion poll in South Tyrol showed that the wider kin-minority population never had a big appetite for kin-state citizenship. 63 percent of South Tyroleans (among all language groups) rejected the idea of becoming Austrian citizens (Michael-Gaismair-Gesellschaft 2019).

Territorial cross-border cooperation

Europe-induced border-opening was the key effect that underpinned the further de-securitization of South Tyrol’s triadic relationship after Austria’s EU accession. This has become visible through policies like the introduction of the Euro or the abolition of border controls in the Schengen zone. Particularly the latter has resulted from, and has further advanced, the de-securitization of state borders and interstate cooperation on the regulation of cross-border flows (Diez 2006). At the same time, the Schengen acquis shifted securitizing practices such as border controls to the Schengen zone’s external boundary. In relation with the dispersion of sovereignty, these policies also have also allowed for an intensification of territorial cross-border cooperation at the sub-state level.

The 2015/16 migration crisis undermined these processes and led to a partial closing and re-securitization of state borders within the Schengen zone (Ceccorulli 2019). This re-

securitization was based on some Schengen member state governments' perception that countries at the Schengen zone's external boundary were incapable of controlling the movement of people across that "shared" boundary. Central and Northern European member states like Hungary, Germany or Denmark considered cross-border flows of people from Southern "first entry" countries, such as Greece and Italy, as a threat to their states' security. Consequently, they reintroduced checks on the movement of people at state borders and, in some instances, installed additional physical infrastructure at the border. While the Schengen acquis allows for the temporary reintroduction of border controls at state borders under a set of exceptional circumstances, this ought to happen in coordination with other member states and the European Commission. During the migration crisis and in its aftermath, such coordination has not always occurred, which has contributed to the re-securitization of border-related policies within the Schengen zone (ibid.).

In this context, the Austrian government threatened to reintroduce border controls with Italy on multiple occasions. Temporarily, Austria even developed plans to deploy soldiers on the Austrian-Italian border to deter unauthorized border crossings by non-EU citizens. These plans were not coordinated between the Austrian and Italian governments and led to sporadic tensions between the two states (Murphy and Binnie 2017). The kin-state's announcements constrained Europe-induced opportunities for kin-minority parties. Similar to the kin-state's unilateral cross-border nation-building, the indication that Europe-induced border opening is reversible has called into question European channels of kin-minority – kin-state interactions and limited the feasibility of border-transcending or border-crossing goals and strategies.

In the longer run, however, Austria's announcements of reintroducing border controls have fallen short of re-securitizing the border. To date, actual controls have been bilaterally coordinated, targeted searches in the wider border area (Interview in Vienna, 17 July 2018).

This is in line with the continuous de-securitizing and border-opening dynamics that novel European initiatives have had on territorial cooperation between South Tyrol and its kin-state. Despite the temporary re-securitization of state borders during and after the migration crisis, the EU has actively supported cross-border cooperation at the sub-state level. This included the passing of the regulation on "European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation" (EGTCs), which allowed South Tyrol's sub-state authorities and their counterparts in the Trentino and the Austrian Tyrol to institutionalize their earlier concept of the "European Region of Tyrol". The resulting "EGTC Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino" contributes to the long-standing de-securitization of sub-state cross-border cooperation. It does so by explicitly recognizing the

multilingual character of the entity and by embedding South Tyrol's cooperation with its kin-state within a wider European network of sub-state cross-border initiatives. As of 2020, there have been 69 EGTCs in Europe. While EGTCs' aims vary depending on their statutes, they all promote cross-border cooperation in limited fields of economic or cultural policies. They cannot, however, explicitly support efforts of cross-border nation-building (Engl 2016).

While the EGTC further mainstreams and de-securitizes South Tyrol's cross-border cooperation at the sub-state level, it also limits the scope of possible cooperation to pre-defined policy fields. This reduces the practical relevance of the EGTC and means that it is more likely to serve as a symbolic opportunity for kin-minority parties to express their cross-border kinship through European channels. The limitations of the EGTC also demonstrate the constraints of Europe-induced state rescaling and border opening on sub-state cross-border cooperation (ibid).

Kin-minority – host-state relations

The formation of a Eurosceptic government in the host-state questioned the European centre as a common reference point for representatives of the kin-minority and of the host-state majority. This constrained kin-minority parties in their cooperation with representatives of the host-state majority. Territorial patterns of kin-minority – host-state relations, however, have largely been marked by continuous de-securitization and the further expansion of sub-state self-rule.

Kin-minority – host-state majority relations

The long-running de-securitization between South Tyrol's kin-minority and the Italian host-state majority has been facilitated by the pro-European consensus among the two groups' political representatives. The SVP and all main host-state majority parties welcomed the formation of a European centre and the wider effects of European integration (see above). However, in the 2010s, this common European ground narrowed significantly. This has constrained opportunities for kin-minority – host-state majority cooperation at the elite level, while the main underpinnings of de-securitization have remained intact. Public opinion also indicates that the majority of South Tyrol's population from both national groups continues to endorse de-securitized relationships (Carlà 2018, 265).

At the elite level, divergence on European issues between the kin-minority and parts of the host-state majority began to surface with the post-2008 financial crisis, which hit Italy disproportionately harder than South Tyrol or its kin-state (Mayr 2010). This divergence was exacerbated by the 2015/16 migration crisis (Conti et al. 2020a). While the pro-European SVP has continued to dominate kin-minority politics, both crises have turned European integration and the domestic influence of the European centre into a polarizing issue among the host-state majority. In response to this, new Eurosceptic state-wide movements like the M5S emerged, and older political parties like the Lega reinforced their Euroscepticism. Only the host-state's main centre-left party remained committedly pro-European (ibid.). With the 2018 general election and the formation of the M5S-Lega government, Eurosceptic tendencies became temporarily dominant among the Italian host-state majority (Basile and Borri 2018). During that government's incumbency, threats to disregard European norms, or to reverse Europe's economic integration were common. Among other things, the populist coalition continuously questioned Italy's membership in the EMU and even considered the reintroduction of a parallel currency in Italy (Di Quirico 2020). These Eurosceptic tendencies notwithstanding, neither the M5S nor the Lega based their Euroscepticism on a construction of identity that explicitly antagonized the kin-minority. The M5S's position has been incoherent on matters of identity, and its candidates in South Tyrolean sub-state elections have even included kin-minority members (Angelucci 2018). The Lega mainly constructed its identity in opposition to non-European immigrants and to allegedly unaccountable European elites but not to the kin-minority (Albertazzi et al. 2018).

Hence, the rise of Eurosceptic parties within the host-state majority has not reversed the de-securitization between the kin-minority and the host-state majority. However, it has reduced the opportunities for kin-minority – host-state majority cooperation on European issues such as economic policies. For those kin-minority parties that are also critical of European integration, the recent tendencies within the host-state majority have provided novel opportunities for cooperation on Eurosceptic platforms.

Kin-minority – host-state centre relations

The dispersion of state functions away from the state centre towards the sub-state level continued throughout the 2000s and 2010s. South Tyrol's self-rule was gradually expanded during this period. This process was facilitated by Europe-sponsored de-securitization but was not directly related to developments at the European centre. Similarly, de-securitization also

underpinned informal cooperation between South Tyrol's sub-state authorities and the host-state centre. Nevertheless, South Tyrol's formal opportunities to exert influence at the European centre, either directly or through mechanisms of shared rule, remained limited (Zwilling 2019). These longstanding patterns were not reversed during the incumbency of the M5S-Lega government.

The recent expansion of South Tyrol's self-rule resulted from cooperative, bilateral negotiations between sub-state authorities and the host-state government. Usually, such expansion comes about through mutually agreed decrees to the South Tyrol Package that devolve specific competences to South Tyrolean authorities. Between 2001 and 2018, 37 decrees on a diverse range of policy fields were passed (Utz 2019a, 330). Predominantly, they included rather technical issues such as the organization of administrative courts or the management of national parks (BMEIA 2020). This proves that the distribution of competences between South Tyrol and its host-state centre has become primarily a matter of functional considerations, and less of kin-minority – host-state antagonism.

This continuing trend of de-securitized kin-minority – host-state centre relations is also evidenced by numerous instances of informal cooperation between the host-state government and the SVP-dominated sub-state authorities. South Tyrolean authorities, for instance, supported several constitutional amendments proposed by host-state governments in the 2010s (Larin and Rögglä 2016). All of these proposals would have modified the representation of territorially defined constituencies or mechanisms of shared rule between Italy's sub-state entities and the centre. Hence, these proposals were coordinated with South Tyrol's sub-state authorities in advance and, if needed, included exceptions to preserve South Tyrol's special status within the host-state. This informal cooperation was also continued, although to a lesser degree, during the M5S' term in government (rainews.it 2020). Other instances of regular informal engagements between South Tyrol and the host-state centre have included bilateral agreements on the Province's financial arrangements. These engagements have also been marked by de-securitization and cooperation, with one notable exception. South Tyrol's sub-state government vehemently resisted the participation in host-state-wide austerity measures after the financial crisis, claiming that the Province would meet the EMU's stability criteria anyway (BMEIA 2020, BMEIA 2014). While these bilateral engagements have proven very effective for the assertion of South Tyrol's interests at the host-state level, formal levels of shared rule remain underdeveloped. This constrains South Tyrol's influence

at the European centre through its host-state, and has not been mitigated by the sub-state authorities' direct representation in Brussels (Zwilling 2019).

For kin-minority parties, these tendencies mean that opportunities for the expansion of self-rule and for cooperative relations with the host-state centre prevail. Occasional dissent between the kin-minority and the host-state majority, regarding austerity or the future of the EMU for example, have not re-securitized the relationship between the two groups. This disincentivizes border-shifting goals and strategies and privileges border-transcending ones.

Kin-state – host-state relations

The integration of South Tyrol's kin-state and host-state into European organizations has mainly been marked by continuity. Austria and Italy have thus far participated in all key steps towards further European integration; for instance in the creation of the European Stability Mechanism or in the "Next Generation EU" recovery funds during the Covid-19 pandemic (see Lefkofridi and Schmitter 2015, ANSA 2020). Since more recent steps towards further integration have not strengthened the European centre at the same pace as in the 1990s and early 2000s, their effects on the opening of state borders have been more limited. However, these steps have perpetuated the de-securitized relationship between the kin-state and the host-state and the permeability of their shared state border. Eurosceptic governments in both countries questioned this situation and temporarily limited the Europe-induced opportunities that South Tyrol's kin-minority parties can utilize. However, they have not been able to permanently reverse the effects of European integration.

The economic integration between South Tyrol's kin-state and host-state was called into question by the M5S-Lega government's ambiguous position on Italy's EMU membership (Di Quirico 2020). This stands in contrast to the Austrian government's clear commitment to the EMU. Even during the government participation of the FPÖ, the Austrian government highlighted that Austria "is an integral part of the European Union and of the common currency, the Euro" (Austrian Federal Government 2017, 12). While these diverging positions on EMU membership threatened to harden the economic boundary between South Tyrol and its kin-state, the path-dependency of Italy's integration with the Euro zone has prevented such a hardening (Niemann et al. 2019). Subsequent Italian governments have been endorsing closer economic integration in Europe, with Italy's participation (ANSA 2020, Pisani 2021).

Thus, economic integration and the resulting permeability of the economic boundary between South Tyrol's kin-state and host-state persist.

Threats to the political integration between South Tyrol's kin-state and host-state over the unilateral introduction of border controls were also only temporary and did not affect the de-securitized relations between the two states in the longer run. Despite Italy's initial criticism of Austria's plans to re-introduce border controls, cooperative approaches to the policing of the state border prevailed. This was even true when both states were governed by Eurosceptic coalitions given the dominance of anti-migration positions in both governments at the time, and their shared commitment to rigorous controls on Schengen's external boundaries (reuters.com 2018).

Austria's unilateral efforts of cross-border nation-building, the most divisive topic between South Tyrol's kin-state and host-state in recent years, did not actually question either state's overall commitment to European integration. The policy has only ever been formulated as a vague intention, and corresponding plans turned out to be short-lived. They have not left a lasting impact on kin-state – host-state relations.

Kin-minority parties' responses

Despite some disruptions in the relationships between the kin-minority, the kin-state and the host-state as a result of Eurosceptic demands, kin-minority parties' identities, goals, strategies and alliances have mainly been marked by continuity. While kin-minority parties' adaptations to novel Europe-induced opportunities and constraints have been minor, they all point in the same direction: they converge towards border-crossing goals. The border-transcending SVP increasingly has accepted the limitations of Europe-induced opportunities and has become increasingly critical of some of these constraints. Contrastingly, the previously border-shifting UfS has been transformed into the more moderate STF that has selectively endorsed Europe-induced opportunities. dF's evaluation of European opportunities has remained inconsistent.

Identities

There is considerable continuity in the way South Tyrol's kin-minority parties portray the identity and cross-border kinship of their kin-minority. Language has remained the foremost marker of differentiation between the kin-minority and the host-state majority. This has

allowed for a multi-layered construction of kinship that is also, in the case of the SVP, compatible with a European identity.

Südtiroler Volkspartei

Since the 1990s, the SVP has largely adhered to its understanding of what constitutes the South Tyrolean kin-minority and how it relates to its national kin abroad. Minor shifts reflect the continued de-securitization between the kin-minority and the host-state majority which have somewhat softened the SVP's preferred cultural boundaries between the two groups.

The SVP's multiple layers of identity and cross-border kinship have been perpetuated by the further dispersion of sovereignty in South Tyrol's environment, such as the expansion of sub-state self-rule or the creation of new bodies for sub-state cross-border cooperation. The party has been viewing the South Tyrolean kin-minority as part of a wider Tyrolean and Austrian collective identity and underscored South Tyroleans' embeddedness in a wider European identity. Like in the 1990s, the SVP claimed that the kin-minority's identity is constituted by "South Tyrol's spiritual and cultural belonging to Austria, to the German language area and to the Central European cultural space" (SVP 2016, 8). However, the SVP has increasingly acknowledged that the dispersion of sovereignty does not necessarily lead to the political integration of the kin-minority and its national kin abroad. Thus, the SVP's previous aspiration that South Tyrol's cultural belonging to Austria could be realized within a "Europe without borders" (SVP 1993, 8) has given way to calls for a "close relationship" (SVP 2016, 9) *across* existing state borders.

Regarding the kin-minority's demarcation from the host-state majority, the SVP's identity has undergone some adaptations that reflect the continued de-securitization between the two groups. This trend has not been disrupted by the temporary re-securitization of cultural boundaries in the wake of Austria's more assertive cross-border nation-building. The SVP has begun to put more emphasis on peaceful cohabitation and cooperation between the two national groups and has become less vocal about the need to "safeguard" the kin-minority within the host-state (SVP 2018b, 16). Consequently, the SVP endorsed multilingualism and portrayed it as an asset for South Tyroleans, rather than as a threat of assimilation. The party explicitly linked this trend to European integration and held that cooperation across cultural boundaries was inspired by, and served as a role model for, the European integration process (SVP 2016, 10). Against this backdrop, some sources have even called for a more "flexible

application” of the institutionalized segregation of the kin-minority and the host-state majority (SVP 2013, 65). Yet, these calls have remained rare within the SVP and de-securitization, for the most part, has stopped short of calling the institutional segregation of national groups into question. The more wide-spread view within the party has been that policies like the linguistic quota system should remain a “fundamental pillar” of South Tyrol’s political system and should “not [be] up for discussion” (SVP 2018b, 16).

Süd-Tiroler Freiheit

The STF has adhered to the same identity and construction of kinship as its predecessor UfS. The party has upheld a hard cultural boundary between the German-speaking kin-minority and the Italian-speaking host-state majority. The party has continuously rejected any attempts to soften this boundary. At the same time, the STF has promoted a multi-layered identity that nests German-speaking South Tyroleans within a wider group of Tyroleans and Austrians. European integration, in particular the de-securitization and softening of cultural boundaries between national groups, has not affected the STF’s understanding of the kin-minority’s identity. On the contrary, the STF has considered its identity to be reinforced through the kin-state’s cross-border nation-building efforts outside European channels.

The STF has been viewing the host-state majority as a threat to the kin-minority’s identity and argued that a clear separation between the two groups was paramount for the latter’s continued existence. The party has consistently underscored that the kin-minority’s assimilation into the host-state majority was imminent if no countermeasures were taken. The STF, for instance, has been very vocal in its demand for the abolition of Italian place names which it traced back to allegedly “fascist degrees” (STF 2018, 1), or in its rejection of multilingual education (ibid.). One interviewee articulated this the following way:

“Italy still subtly seeks the assimilation of the South Tyroleans [...]. Italy wants to keep South Tyrol down and, unfortunately, they succeed. Even the autonomy doesn’t help us because, ultimately, we have to break away from this alien-national [sic] state” (Interview in Bolzano, 12 June 2018).

Compared to its predecessor, the STF has even been more eager to underscore its cross-border kinship at multiple levels of government and to reinforce its belonging to the wider Tyrol and to Austria. This is reflected in the party’s name, symbolism and goals. The party spells *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit* with a hyphen and not in line with the conventional spelling of *Südtirol*. This

is to highlight South Tyrol's belonging to a bigger Tyrolean territory and culture. Additionally, the STF has used symbols such as the Austrian flag to convey its message and ardently supported Austria's unilateral cross-border nation-building (STF 2021b). The STF has only made scarce references to Europe in its definition of the kin-minority or of cross-border kinship. The party, thus, has not been promoting a European identity regardless of its multi-layered perception of South Tyrolean identity.

die Freiheitlichen

dF's construction of the kin-minority's identity has also been marked by continuity. The party has been favouring hard cultural boundaries between the German-speaking kin-minority and other groups, and has been critical of European integration for its boundary softening effects. Like in the 1990s, dF has been particularly eager to demarcate the kin-minority from immigrants, while being more ambiguous about the demarcation between the kin-minority and the host-state majority. Regarding the former relationship, dF has considered the allegedly culturally homogenous kin-minority to be undermined by non-European migrants, particularly from a Muslim background. This has led the party to call for a *de facto* closure of the EU's external borders and to accuse the European centre of inaction in the field of border controls (dF 2018c). Regarding the latter relationship, dF has been endorsing the segregation between the kin-minority and the host-state majority and has warned that a softening of the cultural boundary between the groups could lead to the kin-minority's assimilation. Contrastingly, however, dF has also emphasized the importance of peaceful cohabitation between the kin-minority and the host-state majority within South Tyrol, and has frequently referred to the example of Switzerland where a shared territorial identity straddles linguistic boundaries (dF 2018a). Accordingly, the relationship between linguistic and territorial aspects in dF's construction of a South Tyrolean identity remains unclear.

Regarding its construction of kinship, however, dF has explicitly placed the kin-minority within wider Tyrolean and Austrian – that is, German-speaking – collectives. The Austrian component has been particularly salient through dF's support for the kin-states cross-border nation-building initiative (dF 2018d). dF's references to a European layer of identity have been vague. European identity has only been evoked in demarcation from non-European immigrants and, hence, has not formed a constitutive element of the kin-minority's identity in dF's approach.

Goals & strategies

All South Tyrolean kin-minority parties display considerable continuity in their goals and strategies. Most adaptations were only minor and did not affect kin-minority parties' overall approach to their relationship with the kin-state and the host-state, respectively. However, these minor adaptations all point towards a similar direction, indicating some convergence around border-crossing goals and strategies. While the SVP now blends border-transcending goals with border-crossing elements, the STF has substituted its border-shifting goals with border crossing elements. dF's inconsistent goals can also be categorized as border-crossing.

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For the SVP, *border-transcending goals and strategies* have prevailed. The party endorsed the persistence of European integration's effects on South Tyrol and on its relationship with the kin-state and the host-state. However, the temporary disruptions in Europe-induced de-securitization, or the threat thereof, incentivized the SVP to downscale some of its expectations about Europe-related opportunities. This has shifted its goals and strategies somewhat towards the *border-crossing* category.

These tendencies become clear from the SVP's preferred relationship between South Tyrol and its kin-state at the state and sub-state level. At the sub-state level, the SVP has adhered to the concept of the "European Region of Tyrol" as an expression of its cross-border kinship within the Tyrolean lands. The framework of the EGTC has provided for a tangible foundation of this concept in European law and has been applauded by the SVP as "European Region's institutionalization" (SVP 2013, 46). Moreover, the inclusion of the Trentino into EGTC and the recognition of all three sub-state units in the title of the "EGTC Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino" highlights the SVP's continued endorsement of further de-securitization between the kin-minority and the host-state majority in the adjacent province.

At the same time, the SVP has become increasingly aware of the limitations of sub-state cross-border institutions such as the EGTC. The dispersion of sovereignty and the opening of state borders have not gone as far as the SVP had previously expected. The party acknowledged the resulting challenges for sub-state cross-border cooperation and partially blamed Eurosceptic tendencies across Europe for this limitation. Hence, one SVP MEP claimed that:

“the Europe of the Regions is an idea that hasn’t moved on. And we see this in the nationalization [sic] over the last few years. This hasn’t been a positive development” (Interview 2 in Bolzano, 15 June 2018).

The SVP has also been aware that these constraints to cross-border cooperation at the sub-state level have limited the EGTC’s acceptance as an expression of kinship among their kin-minority constituency. Its resulting strategy has been to combine its earlier border-transcending goals with new, less far-reaching border-crossing goals. Instead of pursuing a cross-border sub-state entity that gradually undermines the relevance of states, the SVP has begun to promote the reduction of state centres’ influence in concrete policy fields. A former SVP MP described this strategy in the following way:

“The European Region is a realistic way to unite the parts of Tyrol but we shouldn’t overestimate it. The administration and legislation in the different parts of Tyrol is still very different. Yet, it facilitates practical cooperation for instance in education, transportation or in environmental questions” (Interview in Branzoll/Bronzolo, 12 June 2018).

The SVP’s goals for kin-minority – kin-state cooperation at the state level have similarly been marked by continuity and have only cautiously been updated to recent developments. The SVP has continued to emphasize Austria’s “protective function” for the kin-minority but has more explicitly pursued “cooperation *across* borders” or “cooperation with neighbouring states” (SVP 2016, 8, emphasis added), rather than a “Europe *without* borders” where “the effects of the annexation of 1919 [could be] overcome” (SVP 1993, 9). This reframed goal reflects the SVP’s realization that European integration opens state borders but does not supersede them. SVP interviewees were also aware that their previous, border-transcending goals had not acknowledged the border-perpetuating effects of European integration and, hence, required adaptation. One SVP MEP arrived at this judgement based on the experience of another national minority in Europe:

“Secession or border shifts are probably harder in the EU. Possibly they would be easier without the EU. If needed, Italy would defend its territorial integrity. Assertions to the contrary are myopia on part of the opposition. We see that with Catalan independence that cannot be implemented quite so easily” (Interview 2 in Bolzano, 15 June 2018).

Yet, the SVP has insisted that Europe-induced opportunities are the only option to seek closer cultural and political relations with the kin-state. Consequently, the SVP was critical of the kin-state's unilateral cross-border nation-building and its announcements to reverse the opening of the state border. Regarding the former issue, the SVP was ambiguous, given that some members of the SVP had themselves demanded the option of kin-state citizenship on several occasions (rainews.it 2019). However, when the Austrian government specified its plans, the SVP was sceptical of the re-securitizing effects that this policy might have and warned that it was likely to work against Europe-induced ways of kin-minority – kin-state cooperation. South Tyrol's First Minister asserted that:

“[cross-border nation-building] cannot work if it all is charged with revanchist thoughts [...]. If this is done wrongly, it is a dangerous issue [...]. Not everyone [in Vienna] has understood this signal [...]. [Kin-state citizenship can only be an option] if it is arranged peacefully and in dialogue with Italy. And in a European spirit. It must not happen at all costs” (Kompatscher, quoted in Gruber 2018).

Likewise, the SVP has unanimously supported the preservation of Europe's border-opening effects on the state border with Austria. The party was highly critical of the kin-state government's repeated announcements to re-introduce border controls with Italy and emphasized that cooperation within wider European frameworks were the only option to ensure the openness of the border. In the words of an SVP sub-state minister:

“We clearly advocate a European solution to this question. Austria's considerations of border controls were really a slap in the face for us. It did hurt us. We have always said to the Austrians, ‘coordinate in a way that unilateral actions are not needed’. After all, the Brenner pass is more than the border between Austria and Italy but a symbol for all of Europe” (Interview 1 in Bolzano, 15 June 2018).

The SVP's adherence to predominantly border-transcending goals has also been apparent in its preferred relationship with the host-state. The party has endorsed the expansion of self-rule for South Tyrol within the host-state and the de-securitization between the national groups that enables this dynamic. The SVP framed its desired relationship with the host-state as “full autonomy” (as opposed to earlier calls for “dynamic autonomy”) and has become more explicit about which competences it wants to be devolved. In particular, the SVP has recently demanded “the competence to conclude contracts under international law within [the Province's] own field of competences” (SVP 2016, 8). This was supposed to give the kin-

minority more far-reaching opportunities for cross-border cooperation (ibid.). The SVP has persistently linked its goal of “full autonomy” to the wider opportunities that it sees in Europe-induced state rescaling. It has done so by demanding “maximum self-government for South Tyrol and the inclusion of our land into an all-European development” (SVP 2013, 8).

Accordingly, the SVP vocally opposed the host-state government’s Euroscepticism and has portrayed any weakening of the European centre as detrimental to the kin-minority’s own self-rule. In particular, the SVP was extremely critical of the host-state’s lack of commitment to Italy’s EMU membership; not least because the SVP considered the Euro a key element of Europe-induced border-opening and as a facilitator for kin-minority – kin-state cooperation (SVP 2013, 46). Consequently, when the SVP was confronted with the host-state’s potential exit from the EMU, the party opted to prioritize South Tyrol’s EMU membership over cooperative relations with the host-state. In an election manifesto that was compiled at the height of the tensions between the host-state government and the European Commission, the SVP stated somewhat exaggeratedly that:

“[a]lso in Italy, exit from the European Union or the Schengen Area do no longer seem to be off the table. We will take all conceivable steps to demarcate ourselves from such tendencies; if necessary, also through independence vis-à-vis state initiatives” (SVP 2018b, 40).

In interviews, however, SVP politicians were more pragmatic and signalled that despite disagreements with the host-state government, de-securitized and constructive kin-minority – host-state relations were crucial to protect the kin-minority’s interests. The SVP’s assertive statements in defence of European integration were qualified on the basis that unilateral actions against the host-state’s Euroscepticism would be infeasible. A leading party member stated that:

“we would need to stay in the Eurozone in any case, even if Italy leaves. We know that legally this wouldn’t be possible. We consciously take a populist stance here to set an example. But it is clear that in South Tyrol there is zero support to go back to the Lira” (Interview 1 in Bolzano, 15 June 2018).

The delicate balance between the SVP’s continued endorsement for European integration and its desire to maintain stable and constructive relations even with Eurosceptic actors has also been reflected in the SVP’s alliances across levels of government (see below). In competition with other kin-minority parties, the SVP has emphasized that its border-transcending goals

were the only feasible and pragmatic way to express the kin-minority's identity. In so doing, the SVP has been pursuing an underbidding strategy, while justifying the limitations of its own goals by pointing to the kin-minority's constraints within its wider triadic environment.

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The STF pursues irredentism as a long-term goal. In line with this approach, the STF has been an ardent supporter of the kin-state's unilateral cross-border nation-building. At the same time, the STF has endorsed some elements of Europe-induced border-opening. Unlike in the 1990s, the STF has been more united in viewing these effects as opportunities for their short-term goals. This increasingly superseded the STF's border-shifting goals and strategies with *border-crossing* ones. This shift notwithstanding, the STF's strategy in competing with other kin-minority parties has been to outbid them with goals for a clear-cut demarcation between the kin-minority and the host-state.

As a long-term goal, the STF has pursued a vaguely specified, irredentist agenda and has been calling for South Tyroleans' right to "self-determination". Unlike its predecessor, the STF has not been explicitly denouncing Europe's border-perpetuating effects. Rather, the STF has mostly ignored Europe-induced constraints to its irredentist goals and has taken a low profile on wider European developments. In its recent election manifestos, references to Europe have been rare and very general (STF 2018). In line with this approach, the STF was highly enthusiastic about the kin-state's unilateral cross-border nation-building. In fact, the kin-state's plan to grant Austrian citizenship to the kin-minority aimed to fulfil one of the STF's long-standing demands for more assertive cross-border nation-building (STF 2015). The STF expected that kin-state citizenship would automatically give the kin-minority the right to vote and the right to stand in elections in the kin-state (ibid.), although Austria's plans for the expansion of citizenship have never been very detailed in this respect. Somewhat misleadingly, the STF explicitly stated that it did not consider unilaterally imposed kin-state citizenship to contradict European norms. Rather it insisted that existing individual rights in the EU provided an insufficient link between the kin-minority and the kin-state and that:

"A European citizenship – although welcomed in principle – is no substitute for dual [Italian-Austrian] citizenship in South Tyrol because it would not strengthen [our] legal position as Austrian minority within the Italian state [...]. Additionally, a single European citizenship will not be politically viable in the next decades" (ibid.).

Yet in the shorter run, the STF has welcomed European integration's border-opening effects, given that they facilitate interactions between the kin-minority and the kin-state majority. Consequently, the party has endorsed policies such as the common currency, the Schengen system and the abolition of roaming fees. The explicit support for these policies clearly differentiates the STF from its UfS-predecessor. However, the STF has argued that Europe's border-opening effects are insufficient and that they can only be welcomed as transitional arrangements:

“The development at the border is positive. It's no longer as noticeable when you cross the border because there are no checks anymore and the currency is the same [...] But to say that open borders are conducive to minority protection would be hypocrisy. Despite permeable borders it does matter in which state an ethnic group lives” (Interview in Bolzano, 12 June 2018).

The STF used Austria's announcements of introducing border controls to underscore that Europe-induced border opening was insufficient to ensure kin-minority – kin-state interactions and that, in the longer run, only irredentism was a feasible option for South Tyrol. As one party member stated:

“from an Austrian view, I understand the demands for border controls with Italy. It shows, once again, that South Tyrol is on the wrong side of the border. One could also carry out these controls further South [...]. There you see that the entire EU is failing on this issue” (Interview in Bolzano, 12 June 2018).

The party has followed the same line of reasoning regarding the rescaling of states and its position on the kin-minority's current accommodation within the host-state. The STF has argued that territorial self-rule and minority accommodation were an acceptable, yet intermediate step on the way towards “self-determination” (STF 2018). Europe-sponsored cross-border cooperation between sub-state entities has been dismissed as inefficient, and as an attempt by the SVP to distract the kin-minority from the feasibility of the STF's goal of “self-determination” (STF 2021a).

die Freiheitlichen

Among South Tyrolean kin-minority parties, dF's goals and strategies have been the most inconsistent. The party interpreted the effects of European integration in largely contradictory

ways. Two contradictions are particularly striking. Firstly, dF has endorsed the opening of state borders, based on the resulting facilitation of kin-minority – kin-state interactions. At the same time, the party has been calling for closed political and cultural boundaries to shield the kin-minority and the kin-state from non-European immigration. Secondly, dF considered the European centre to be a constraint to South Tyrol’s self-rule, while it simultaneously sought more self-rule for the kin-minority within the EU. Some of dF’s contradictory goals display continuity over time, while other goals are relatively recent or have been periodically revised. These diachronic changes are not primarily owed to Europe-sponsored dynamics in dF’s environment but stem from the party’s strategy to simultaneously outbid the SVP and to underbid the STF on issues like minority accommodation and self-rule. Due to its selective endorsement of Europe-sponsored opportunities, dF classifies a *border-crossing party*.

dF’s aim to closer cooperation between the kin-minority and the kin-state has led the party to endorse Europe-induced border-opening effects. The party has considered them as an opportunity for the realization of its multi-layered cross-border identity. Against this backdrop, the party has not only endorsed publicly visible policies such as the Euro but has also acknowledged more subtle forms of Europe-sponsored cross-border cooperation. Hence, dF has taken a rather nuanced approach to initiatives like the EGTC or the transmission of Austrian broadcasting in South Tyrol (dF 2018b). It supported these initiatives in principle but criticized them for not being comprehensive enough. Accordingly, dF also supported the kin-state’s unilateral cross-border nation-building efforts, which it viewed as a supplement to Europe-induced opportunities. For dF’s party leader:

“dual citizenship [...] fulfils a patriotic function that contributes to the strengthening of the Austrian minority’s identity in Italy [...]. In addition, one has to emphasize the liberal spirit [of this policy], given that the decision to apply for dual citizenship lies exclusively with the eligible South Tyroleans who will have the right to choose” (dF 2019).

However, while the party supported open borders with its kin-state, dF has otherwise been highly critical of Europe’s border-opening effects. The party considered impermeable state borders as an effective and desired way to reduce immigration and accused the EU of having failed to control its external borders. As such, dF took a contradictory position on open state borders in the context of the migration crisis. The party simultaneously applauded and condemned the kin-state’s threat of renewed border controls with Italy. A former party leader summarized this contradictory stance as follows:

“[The evaluation] of border controls lies in the eye of the beholder. South Tyrol isn’t particularly happy if Austria introduces controls at the Brenner pass. Yet I also understand Austria. The position of the Austrian and, above all, of the Hungarian government has set something in motion in Europe. Initially, everyone in Europe ranted about Orbán but today everyone in the EU is glad that Hungary and Austria acted that way. But yes, the disappearance of border posts on the Brenner pass was a highly symbolic act for South Tyrol. And free movement across the border is, of course, a great thing” (Interview in Bolzano, 11 June 2018).

Similar contradictions have been evident in dF’s goals regarding its preferred kin-minority – host-state relationship, and the role that the Europe-induced dispersion of sovereignty could play in this process. Since the early 2010s, the party has been pursuing some form of territorial self-rule to which it refers as the “Free State of South Tyrol”. Initially, dF promoted this concept as an independent, multilingual South Tyrolean state (dF 2012). More recently, however, dF has conflated this independentist concept with calls for a more open-ended discussion to redefine South Tyrol’s relationship with the host-state (dF 2018a). dF has not made assumptions about whether European organizations will either help or hinder these goals. Rather, dF has portrayed South Tyrol’s independence as a way to safeguard those elements of European integration that it endorses and that have allegedly been at risk in the host-state. This concerned predominantly the common currency that dF supported on the basis of its border-opening effects. In its 2018 electoral manifesto, the party stated that:

“Many renowned economists predict the liquidation [sic] of the Euro. For South Tyrol, the Brenner pass would again turn into a currency boundary, which would be entirely unacceptable. [This is] an important reason for an, at least, fully autonomous framework, that would allow for South Tyrol’s independent development in this case” (ibid.).

In line with this position, dF has been keen to highlight that South Tyrol, regardless of its exact future status should stay in the EU and should preserve the border-opening elements of European integration. This position stands in stark contrast to dF’s interpretation of the European centre as a constraint to South Tyrol’s self-rule. Since the mid-2000s, dF has heavily criticized the alleged unaccountability of European Union and has called for European competences to be exercised at lower levels of government, preferably at the self-governing sub-state level. A frequent point of criticism, for instance, has been that the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy does not take the particularities of Alpine farming into account, which

should instead be regulated autonomously by South Tyrolean authorities (dF 2018d). In the 2014 EP elections, dF even campaigned together with the Lega not only based on their shared anti-migration platform but also based on the Lega's slogan at the time: "Basta Euro!" (Lega Nord and dF 2014).

Alliances

Opportunities to form alliances with other actors have varied significantly between South Tyrol's kin-minority parties. The SVP has had access to actors across levels of government in the kin-state, the host-state and at the European centre. Against the backdrop of continuing de-securitization, the SVP has used this opportunity for increasingly particularistic alliances. Contrastingly, the lack of representation beyond the sub-state level and the rejection of de-securitized relations with other actors constrain the STF's and dF's opportunities for cooperation.

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The continued de-securitization of the relations within the triadic nexus has given the SVP more flexibility to form alliances in accordance with its ideological preferences and strategic considerations. This trend has not been reversed by the Eurosceptic demands in the kin-state and the host-state. The SVP has been participating in all governmental and legislative fora, apart from the host-state government.

The SVP's alliances with actors in the kin-state have followed an almost entirely ideological and strategic rationale that is unrelated to "safeguarding" the kin-minority and its identity. Accordingly, the party has mostly abandoned its cross-partisan engagements with Austrian political parties. Instead, the SVP has privileged close links with its Christian-democrat counterpart, the ÖVP. Contrastingly, links between the SVP and other kin-state parties have further weakened, especially since the end of the Social democrats' government participation at the Tyrolean sub-state level in 2013 and at the Austrian state level in 2017. Several interviewees explained this trend with the socialization of a new generation of SVP members that has been helped by the de-securitized environment since the 1990s. According to these sources, SVP politicians who have assumed their offices after Austria's EU accession tend to pursue more particularistic interests in their interactions with the kin-state, rather than seeking

broad support from the kin-state for the allegedly threatened kin-minority. One Austrian Social democrat MP outlined this the following way.

“Even the SPÖ people in the Land parliament in Innsbruck have hardly any contacts in South Tyrol [...]. In fact, [the SVP leader...] came to Vienna and called me one and a half years ago. He [requested a meeting]. And I said, I’m [available], call me any time while you’re here. He came, didn’t get in touch and left. He hasn’t gotten in touch since. That’s no way of cooperating. With [ÖVP leader Sebastian] Kurz he meets uninterruptedly. There are constant contacts with the ÖVP, with the ministries. But not with us MPs or with our party. This didn’t exist under [the SVP’s] previous leaderships [...]. [They] were absolutely keen on having good relations with everybody. The young generation [...] does no longer have a sense for other contacts [than with the ÖVP].” (Interview in Vienna, 7 August 2018).

This long-standing trend has not been hindered by the ÖVP’s shift to the right or by its short-lived coalition with the far-right FPÖ. The SVP’s alliances with the ÖVP have taken two concrete forms. Firstly, there has been close cooperation between the parties as vote and office seekers. Among other things, this materialized in the ÖVP’s support for the SVP in sub-state elections (SVP 2018a). Secondly, there have been intergovernmental contacts between South Tyrolean and Tyrolean sub-state authorities, where the longstanding domination of the two sub-state entities by the SVP and the ÖVP, respectively, has blurred the role of office holders and party representatives. These encounters have frequently taken place within the symbolic framework of the “European Region of Tyrol”, even if the legal structures of the EGTC have not been utilized. One recent example for such intergovernmental contacts with symbolic reference to the “European Region” was the implementation of mass testing for Covid-19 in South Tyrol. When comprehensive testing took place in the Province, the loosely coordinated presence of an Austrian fact-finding mission was applauded by the kin-minority and the kin-state as “a symbol of the lived European Region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino” (europaregion.info 2020). Such encounters frequently include representatives of the Austrian federal government or from the Trentino.

The continued de-securitization of relationships has also impacted the SVP’s links with actors in the host-state. In recent years, the SVP has not chosen its allies exclusively based on their position on territorial self-rule and on kin-minority accommodation. More strategic considerations, such as the SVP’s need to maintain a stable working relationship with the host-state centre regardless of the incumbent parties, have significantly impacted the SVP’s

alliances as well. Consequently, the SVP has softened its commitment to exclusively cooperate with the host-state's centre-left parties that most vocally support self-rule, minority rights and European integration (see Pallaver 2018a, 177ff). After elections at the state and the sub-state level in 2018, for instance, the SVP formed a governing coalition at the sub-state level with the Lega, partially to ensure continued access to the host-state government. The lack of common ground between the SVP and the Lega, not least on issues of European integration, constituted some obstacles to cooperation during coalition negotiations (rainews.it 2018). Ultimately, however, the SVP-Lega coalition agreement referred to the advantages of European integration and of its border-opening and sovereignty-dispersing effects on multiple occasions. Contrary to the Lega's actions at the host-state centre, the agreement even featured the sub-state government's explicit support for "the process of European unification [and] the *common European currency*" (provinz.bz.it 2019, 6, emphasis added).

The changes in the SVP's alliances have also manifested themselves at the European level. The SVP and the ÖVP have cooperated increasingly closely, often to a degree that resembles the two parties' fusion at the European level. On some occasions, the SVP MEP has even acted as if he was part of the Austrian EPP delegation; for instance, when he was presented as the ÖVP's specialist for agricultural policies on the EPP's website during the EP's eighth legislative term (eppgroup.eu 2018). Other examples for this cooperation include the ÖVP's support for the SVP's EP candidate in 2014, when the candidate was presented as the prospective "common representative of the European Region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino" (meinbezirk.at 2014); or the SVP MEP's membership in the Tyrolean ÖVP's executive branch (ibid.). Some of this visible cooperation, however, has petered out since the ÖVP's turn towards more Eurosceptic positions and a significant reshuffle of its representatives after the 2019 EP election (oevpklub.at 2020).

The SVP's alliances with host-state parties at the European centre have also been following a pattern of increasingly particularistic, de-securitized relations. The SVP formed electoral coalitions with the Italian centre-left for EP elections throughout most of the 2000s and 2010s, based on the latter's endorsement for de-securitization and the dispersion of sovereignty. In the most recent EP election in 2019, however, the SVP chose to form an electoral pact with Silvio Berlusconi's centre-right party, despite previous tensions between the two parties over kin-minority accommodation and self-rule (Kofler 2019, derstandard.at 2006).

Süd-Tiroler Freiheit

Like its predecessor UfS, the STF has been constrained in its access to arenas in which it can form alliances with actors from the kin-state and the host-state. The party has only been represented at the sub-state and local levels. Consequently, the STF's alliances with kin-state actors have merely consisted of informal contacts with political parties. In line with its securitized identity that sees the kin-minority under constant threat, the STF has claimed to be in regular contact with all major parties in the kin-state except for the Greens. This is supposed to ensure comprehensive kin-state support for the kin-minority's wider goals (Pallaver 2013, 123). However, only the FPÖ has confirmed such links and has remained the only kin-state party that has supported the STF's border-shifting goals (email interview, 2 August 2018).

Following the same rationale of securitization, the STF has not formed alliances with representatives of the host-state majority. Yet the party has held some contacts with the representatives of other national minorities in the host-state, such as the representatives of Slovenes in Friuli or French-speakers in the Valle d'Aosta. Many of these contacts have been channelled through the European Free Alliance, which the STF had re-joined in 2009 (EFA 2021).

The STF's alliances at the European level, mostly within EFA, have been highly contradictory. On the one hand, the party has been publicly emphasizing its membership in EFA. This has been in line with the STF's recent border-crossing goals and its endorsement of some elements of European integration. The party, for instance, referred to its alliances with liberal minority nationalists (such as the Catalan *Esquerra Republicana*) to underscore its support for the Europe-sponsored dispersion of sovereignty (STF 2019). On the other hand, the STF's support of hard cultural boundaries has been at odds with the liberal societal and cultural values that have recently been prevailing within EFA (Gómez-Reino 2018, 120ff). The STF has also been highly critical of EFA's cooperation with the European Greens in the European Parliament. The STF viewed the Greens' endorsement of soft cultural boundaries as a fundamental threat of assimilation. The following quote from an interview with a STF representative exemplifies this tension:

"We have also complained to EFA about [the fact that] as long as we work with the Greens, there will be no change. The Greens, all over Europe, support state fascism [sic] and are hostile towards us minorities [...]. We also try to avoid that EFA shifts further to the left [...]. I think it's a pity that EFA included topics like gender or

abortion in their manifesto [...]. But I'm afraid we wouldn't find other associates"
(Interview in Bolzano, 12 June 2018).

These contradictions in the STF's alliances at the European level notwithstanding, the party has been keen to be embedded within a wider network of European parties. The STF has frequently referred to independence referendums in Scotland and Catalonia that were supported by local EFA member parties as examples for its own goal of "self-determination" (STF 2019).

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dF, too, has only been represented at the sub-state and the local level, constraining its ability to form alliances beyond informal interactions. The party's alliances have been more particularistic than the STF's, reflecting dF's less securitized relationship with other actors. After significant disruptions of the relationship between dF and the FPÖ in the 2000s, dF has restored its largely informal relationship with its "sister party" in the kin-state throughout the 2010s. Both dF and the FPÖ confirmed that they cooperated closely on a range of issues and that they were each other's primary partner in the kin-state and the kin-minority, respectively. This close relationship has not been disrupted by the FPÖ's simultaneous cooperation with the STF (email interview, 2 August 2018). After all, all three parties have taken similar positions on the kin-minority's identity and related cultural policies, such as cross-border nation-building. Moreover, dF and the FPÖ both consider the European centre as a constraint to the kin-minority's self-rule and have rejected the softening of cultural boundaries, particularly vis-à-vis immigrants (Fallend 2008, Heinisch et al. 2021).

dF's alliances with representatives of the host-state majority have been limited to sporadic cooperation. Given dF's limited success outside the sub-state arena, the party has been aware of the constraints to alliances at other levels of government, particularly at the European level. One interviewee even admitted that "a statement [about a strategy at the European level] would be presumptuous. We are a local party in a land of half a million people" (Interview in Bolzano, 5 June 2018). Consequently, dF has not used the European level to build lasting alliances with actors from the kin-state or the host-state. The only exception was the 2014 EP election, when dF formed an electoral coalition with the Lega. This alliance built on the two parties' shared scepticism of the European centre and on their opposition to immigration (Lega Nord and dF 2014). While this alliance between two right-wing parties proves the

pervasiveness of the de-securitization between the kin-minority and the host-state majority, one interviewee cautioned that:

“Cooperation with Italy-wide party always causes us a headache. We do have contacts with the Lega and we are close in many questions. But as I said, it causes a headache” (Interview in Bolzano, 5 June 2018).

In the 2019 EP election, dF and the Lega did not renew this alliance.

Conclusion

This chapter took as its departure point the hypothesis that the Euroscepticism of the Austrian and Italian governments would constrain Europe-induced opportunities for South Tyrolean kin-minority parties. It was expected that these trends would incentivize kin-minority parties to revert to irredentism. The presented empirical data, however, rejects this hypothesis. Eurosceptic demands by right-leaning coalitions did not materialize in disintegration. Rather, the effects of European integration such as the de-securitization of the kin-minority's relationship with the kin-state and the host-state have prevailed and unfolded further in South Tyrol, even against the backdrop of crises in European integration.

Kin-minority parties' identities, goals, strategies and alliances reflect this continuity. In particular, all South Tyrolean kin-minority parties endorsed the opening of the border with the kin-state in the 2010s. This has made border-crossing goals and strategies kin-minority parties' default approach. This demonstrates that, in the longer run, the Europe-induced opening of state borders discredits border-shifting, irredentist goals. Kin-minority parties do not revert to such irredentist approaches even when Eurosceptics call for a return to closed borders and offer alternative, extra-European forms of cross-border nation-building.

PART III

Northern Ireland

6. Northern Ireland, Europe & the peace process

Introduction

Northern Ireland comprises six counties in the north-east of the island of Ireland. It became a separate political entity in 1921. Immediately after Ireland gained independence from the United Kingdom and formed the Irish Free State, Northern Ireland seceded from it and chose to stay a part of the UK. The Free State that went on to form the Republic of Ireland in 1949 has had a predominantly Roman Catholic population. Northern Ireland has comprised a predominantly Protestant population with a sizeable Catholic minority. While religious denominations on the island of Ireland have not always overlapped with political aspirations, they have been a resource for competing nation-building projects (English 2006, 118ff, Mitchell 2006a). Catholicism has become associated with Irish nationalism and the desire for a polity that spans the entire island. Protestantism in Northern Ireland is closely linked to British nationalism and the desire to maintain the political union between Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Coakley 2008, 772ff, Coakley 2020). The relationship between Northern Irish nationalists (Catholics) and unionists (Protestants) has been interpreted in multiple, sometimes competing ways, giving varying priority to ethnic, geopolitical, religious and socioeconomic factors (Ruane and Todd 1996, McGarry 2001). While acknowledging these complexities, this work analyses the predominantly Catholic nationalist community as the kin-minority within the host-state of the UK. The Republic of Ireland constitutes the nationalists' kin-state (see English 2006, 375).

This chapter assesses Northern Ireland's kin-minority parties' interactions with Europe-induced opportunities and constraints in the context of emerging kin-minority accommodation in the 1990s. In that decade, Northern Ireland was subject to two simultaneous processes. Firstly, the Northern Ireland peace process ended long-standing political violence between the kin-minority and the host-state majority in the region. It culminated in the creation of new political structures for the government of Northern Ireland through the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement (GFA) in 1998. Secondly, European integration intensified in the wake of the Treaty of Maastricht, making the effects of European integration in Northern Ireland more

pervasive than during the previous two decades of joint UK-Irish EEC membership. This chapter explores the interaction between these two processes by assessing changes in Northern Ireland's triadic relationship between the nationalist kin-minority, the Irish kin-state and the UK host-state from 1992 to 1998. This determines Europe-induced opportunities and constraints for kin-minority parties' identities, goals, strategies and alliances that are subsequently analysed.

The chapter finds that the Europe-sponsored opening of the state border between Northern Ireland and Ireland is endorsed by both of Northern Ireland's kin-minority parties. However, the two kin-minority parties differ widely in their interpretation of other aspects of European integration. The Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), the larger kin-minority party until 2001, developed a strong European identity. It embraced Europe-sponsored de-securitization between states and national groups to a degree that makes its domestic goals and strategies almost indistinguishable from its take on European politics. Contrastingly, Sinn Féin (SF) has come to support Europe's border-opening effects only after abandoning its complete rejection of European integration. This shift has been part of SF's wider acceptance of democratic politics and the party's rejection of political violence in the 1990s. SF's scepticism vis-à-vis other effects of European integration, such as the dispersion of sovereignty and de-securitization of cultural boundaries, prevailed until after 1998. The chapter starts out by briefly providing the wider historical context for the subsequent analysis.

Historical context

In the first decades after the partition of the island of Ireland, no attempts were made to accommodate the kin-minority in the UK host-state. Rather, until the 1960s, the kin-minority's exclusion from various of political, social and economic rights was wide-spread. Electoral laws, access to the labour market and to social provisions such as housing all tended to privilege the unionist host-state majority in Northern Ireland. Territorial self-rule provisions were designed to give the host-state majority a permanent dominant status within the sub-state entity of Northern Ireland (Tonge 2002, 19ff). The Republic of Ireland as a kin-state officially pursued an irredentist agenda vis-à-vis Northern Ireland, claiming in Article 2 of its 1937 Constitution that "[t]he national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and the territorial seas". However, the main political actors in the kin-state refrained from translating this constitutional aspiration into precise irredentist policies (Coakley 2017).

By the late 1960s, the nationalist kin-minority's resistance against its exclusion from political, social and economic rights led to the formation of the Civil Rights Movement (Bosi 2008). The host-state majority-dominated sub-state authorities enacted a number of reforms in response to the Movement. Yet, they were largely rejected by the kin-minority as being too limited; and by sections of the host-state majority as being too far-reaching (ibid.). The resulting polarization between segments of the kin-minority and of the host-state majority led to escalating political violence between the two local national groups and to the deployment of the British Army in Northern Ireland (Tonge 2002, 35ff). The violent conflict, known as the Troubles, lasted from 1969 to the GFA in 1998, although tensions remained thereafter. Over the course of the Troubles, more than 3600 people lost their lives. Violent acts were committed by paramilitary organizations that claimed to represent the kin-minority and the host-state majority, respectively, as well as by the host-state's security forces (Smyth 2006). The deteriorating security situation in Northern Ireland led to the abolition of territorial self-rule in 1972 and to the concentration of political functions at the host-state centre (known as "direct rule") (Walsh 2018, 38). Subsequently, several attempts to restore self-rule and to accommodate the kin-minority in Northern Ireland failed against the backdrop of the highly securitized relationship between the kin-minority and the host-state majority (Tannam 2001).

This happened in the context of the UK's and Ireland's simultaneous accession to the EEC in 1973. Membership in the EEC and later in the EU helped decrease Ireland's economic and political dependence on the UK, while shared membership also contributed to an intensification of friendly relations between the two states (Hayward 2009). Legally, some patterns of integration had persisted between the two countries after Ireland's independence. Irish citizens, for example, have always had access to more encompassing citizenship rights in the UK than other foreign nationals. Additionally, despite the security measures during the Troubles, formal passport controls have never been carried out between Ireland and the UK thanks to an informal arrangement known as the Common Travel Area (CTA). The only suspension of the CTA occurred during the Second World War (Ryan 2001).

These bilateral links notwithstanding, closer kin-state – host-state cooperation to resolve the political conflict in Northern Ireland only materialized with the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985. The Agreement formalized kin-state – host-state cooperation regarding the politics of the Northern Ireland and, at the same time, led the kin-state implicitly to reject its irredentism (Coakley and Todd 2020, 106ff). This set the stage for the peace process of the 1990s that culminated in the GFA. In 1998, the GFA was approved by large majorities in referendums in

Northern Ireland and Ireland (Hancock 2011). The GFA set up a range of new institutions for the government of Northern Ireland that aimed to restructure three sets of relationships across the islands of Great Britain and Ireland. The first “strand” of the GFA mirrors the consociational aspects of earlier attempts to conflict settlement and prescribes power-sharing between kin-minority and host-state majority representatives in self-governing sub-state institutions. The second strand institutionalizes cross-border cooperation between Northern Ireland and Ireland in the so-called “North South Ministerial Council”. The third strand manages bilateral relations between the UK and Ireland and includes the former’s sub-state authorities into the regular meetings of the “British-Irish Council”. Additionally, the GFA recognizes and legitimizes the kin-minority’s aspiration to unification with the kin-state through the possibility of a referendum in both parts of the island of Ireland. Such a referendum has to be organized by the UK government when it appears likely that a majority in Northern Ireland would support unification with Ireland. This clause needs to be read against the backdrop of a declining share of self-declared unionists among Northern Ireland’s population, and a growing proportion of individuals who consider themselves to belong neither to the nationalist kin-minority nor to the unionist host-state majority (bbc.co.uk 2019). At the same time, the GFA assures the kin-state’s acceptance of the state border for as long as such a majority in favour of Irish unification is unlikely to materialize. The kin-state’s acceptance of this solution was underscored by the revocation of irredentist claims from the Irish constitution (Wolff 2001, Tannam 2001).

The outbreak of the Troubles also led to the formation of new kin-minority parties in Northern Ireland. The largely ineffective Nationalist Party dissolved and in 1970, the Social Democratic and Labour Party was founded. The SDLP comprised former members of the Nationalist Party, leading figures from the Civil Rights Movement and independent, left-wing representatives of the kin-minority (Campbell 2013, 428ff). The SDLP secured the largest share of kin-minority votes until 2001, uniting those kin-minority voters who aimed at kin-minority accommodation by peaceful means. This made the SDLP the second largest party in Northern Ireland after the dominant host-state majority Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) (Mitchell et al. 2009, 398f).

The second kin-minority party that secured electoral relevance in the longer run is Sinn Féin. While numerous groups have used this label throughout the 20th century, this work refers to the organization that upon its re-organization in 1970 was known as “Provisional Sinn Féin”. SF entered electoral contests for kin-minority votes in 1981 against the backdrop of the

hunger strikes of imprisoned members of the terrorist Irish Republican Army (IRA). Previously, the party had exclusively supported violent means to pursue its political goals (Maillot 2005, 24ff). However, since the IRA's ceasefires of 1994 and 1997, SF has abandoned its support for political violence. By 2001, SF's vote share among kin-minority voters surpassed the SDLP's. Since then, SF has established itself as the largest kin-minority party in Northern Ireland (Murray and Tonge 2005).

Cross-communal voting in Northern Ireland has been rare, despite sporadic attempts by the SDLP to reach out to moderate members of the host-state majority, and an electoral system that was initially expected to allow for the splitting of votes among moderate parties from both national groups. Some smaller parties that do not identify with either the kin-minority or the host-state majority have had some limited success among kin-minority voters. These include the liberal Alliance Party, the Green Party and the far-left People Before Profit (Murtagh 2020).

The next section assesses how the SDLP and SF's environment changed as a result of the concurrent peace process and intensified European integration in the 1990s.

Northern Ireland's triadic nexus during the peace process

Kin-minority – kin-state

Despite the host-state and the kin-state's shared membership in multiple European organizations, the Republic of Ireland officially adhered to its irredentist claim over Northern Ireland until 1998. This irredentist claim in the kin-state's constitution stands in sharp contrast with the norms promoted by the European centre. However, the kin-state has *de facto* recognized the state border that separates it from the kin-minority since 1985. The Anglo-Irish Agreement signed that year between the host-state and the kin-state governments affirms that the border between the two states will only be modified "with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland" (Coakley and Todd 2020, 208f). The existence of such a majority was unlikely in the then foreseeable future. Against this backdrop, the effects of European integration reinforced the de-securitization of the relationship between the kin-minority and the kin-state, helped soften the state border between the two parts of Ireland and provided new opportunities for cooperation between them.

Group-based cooperation

The land border between Ireland and the UK had been heavily securitized during the Troubles. Particularly the host-state security forces and the unionist host-state majority viewed kin-minority – kin-state interactions as an existential threat to their physical security and to the territorial integrity of the host-state. Thus, the state border was militarized and cross-border interactions were restricted by host-state and kin-state security forces (Nash et al. 2016, 10). However, consecutive kin-state governments lent political support only to those segments of the kin-minority that sought minority accommodation through peaceful means. The alliance of such “constitutional” nationalists from the kin-state and the kin-minority was one incentive for more radical parts of the kin-minority to cease political violence in 1994. Direct talks between the leaders of the SDLP and SF were crucial in this respect (McLoughlin 2010, 153ff). Simultaneously, the kin-state abandoned its irredentist aspiration and accepted that only separate majorities within Northern Ireland and the kin-state should be able to effectuate a shift of the state border. This condition, known as the “principle of consent”, became enshrined in the GFA and in the kin-state’s constitution in 1998 (Coakley 2017). The GFA further stipulates that if majority consent for the unification of Northern Ireland and Ireland appears likely, the UK government is obliged to organize a referendum on Irish unification. The agreement, however, does not specify by which standards this likelihood will be assessed.

The 1994 ceasefire and the kin-state’s revocation of irredentism led to a gradual de-securitization of the relationship between the kin-minority and the kin-state. Cross-border interactions have been largely facilitated by the de-securitization and de-militarization of the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland that followed the ceasefire. Previously closed roads were reopened and security checkpoints at the border were gradually removed during the 1990s (Nash et al. 2016, 109ff). Additionally, de-securitization has allowed for the legitimization and institutionalization of some forms of cross-border nation-building on part of the kin-state through the institutions of the GFA. Most significantly, the GFA recognizes “the birthright of all the people of Northern Ireland” to hold Irish or British citizenship, or both; even if this does not entitle residents of Northern Ireland to vote in the kin-state.

European integration has not caused but has significantly facilitated and reinforced this far-reaching de-securitization of kin-minority – kin-state interactions in the 1990s. Four Europe-induced effects are particularly important (see Lagana 2021, 105ff). Firstly, the completion of the Single European Market in 1992 made customs checks along the state border obsolete.

This reduced the disruptiveness and the physical manifestation of the border between the kin-state and the kin-minority in addition to the withdrawal of security forces from the border (Hayward and Wiener 2008, 44). Secondly, the accompanying “Four Freedoms” facilitated cross-border interactions in addition to the de-militarization of the border. Even though parts of the host-state majority still considered the kin-state as a security threat and remained suspicious of cross-border interactions, the resulting mainstreaming of kin-minority – kin-state interactions within the Single Market have contributed to a further de-securitization of this relationship (ibid.). Thirdly, the expansion of economic and social citizenship rights to all EU citizens undermined the practical relevance of kin-state citizenship for the kin-minority. This has turned kin-state citizenship into a largely uncontested tool to accommodate the kin-minority’s identity within the host-state (Stjepanović 2018, 100, Schiek 2018). Lastly, the EU has financially supported cross-border projects and projects that further the de-securitization between the national groups within Northern Ireland through the so-called PEACE programmes. The initial release of the funding was conditional on the ceasefires of paramilitaries. During the first funding period of PEACE, between 1995 and 1999, the EU spent 400 million Euros in Northern Ireland (Murphy 2014, 52).

The European centre also provided common fora for cooperation between kin-minority and kin-state representatives. Most importantly, the European Parliament has been used as a common platform for kin-minority and kin-state MEPs to address issues of mutual interest. Even when kin-minority – kin-state interactions were highly securitized domestically, the SDLP’s MEP and his counterparts from the kin-state used the EP to shift wider European attention to the situation of the kin-minority in Northern Ireland. This occurred across the boundaries of European party federations (Hayward 2006).

Territorial cooperation

The dispersion of sovereignty across levels of government has been evidenced by the creation of territorial self-rule for Northern Ireland through the GFA. In contrast to the pre-1972 self-rule arrangements, the institutions set up by the GFA institutionalized the relationship between the Northern Irish sub-state entity and nationalists’ kin-state. The GFA’s “North-South” institutions are not based on European legal provisions, such as the EGTC regulation. However, their institutional set-up has been inspired by institutions at the European centre and play an important role for the administration of the EU’s funding for cross-border activities.

The most prominent institution for territorial cooperation between Northern Ireland and the kin-state is the “North South Ministerial Council” (NSMC). The NSMC deals with political issues of mutual interest to the two parts of Ireland. It follows a European template regarding its composition and its function. Its composition is modelled after the Council of the EU in that it meets in sectoral formats that bring together relevant ministers from Northern Ireland’s sub-state government and from the Irish government, aiming at cooperative decision-making across political boundaries (McLoughlin 2009, 612). Plenary meetings of the two governments focus on more general aspects of territorial cross-border cooperation. The NSMC is also supported by a permanent secretariat (Murphy 2014, 139). Regarding its functions, the NSMC tends to deal with technical, rather uncontentious issues of territorial cross-border cooperation. As such, it resembles the Europe-inspired neofunctionalist ideas of initiating cooperation in limited areas, with a potential to subsequent expansion of joint decisions into other areas (Tannam 2006). One of the areas of cooperation directly links the NSMC with the European centre. European funding for cross-border cooperation such as Interreg or parts of the PEACE programmes are managed by the “Special EU Programmes Body” (SEUPB) that is accountable to the NSMC (Murphy 2014, 142ff).

Both Northern Irish kin-minority parties interpreted these EU-inspired institutions as an opportunity for intensified kin-minority – kin-state interactions. Given that they were created through the GFA that also envisages a possible border shift through the “principle of consent”, these forms of cross-border institutions were not seen as incompatible with peacefully pursued irredentism. The functionality of territorial cross-border bodies has, however, been severely constrained, partially due to the obstruction by unionist parties in Northern Ireland (Murphy 2014, 139). This has made the NSMC a somewhat dysfunctional tool for kin-minority – kin-state interactions. This could not be counterbalanced through the sub-state entity’s direct representation at the European centre, which is politically tightly linked to the host-state centre and allows only for limited kin-minority – kin-state coordination in Brussels (ibid.).

Kin-minority – host-state relations

European integration facilitated cooperation between the kin-minority and the host-state majority through its financial support for the peace process. However, European integration has not significantly softened or de-securitized the cultural boundaries between the two groups. On a territorial level, European integration made some aspects of self-rule for

Northern Ireland less contentious, while cooperation between the sub-state entity and the host-state centre on European issues was rather limited.

Group-based aspects

Unlike in other regions, EU institutions got directly involved in kin-minority – host-state majority relations in Northern Ireland by supporting the domestic peace process through the PEACE programmes (Murphy 2014, 52). However, this engagement or other effects of European integration did not establish the European centre as a common reference point for the kin-minority and the host-state majority during the peace process. Within the kin-minority, the SDLP has been most vocal about its endorsement of the European centre and the compatibility of its European allegiance with other patterns of identity. It hence interpreted the potential for shared European identities as an opportunity for future kin-minority – host-state majority cooperation (see below). This interpretation has only been shared by the cross-community Alliance Party (Tonge 2020). Parties that represent the host-state majority in Northern Ireland have traditionally rejected a European identity and tended to see the dispersion of sovereignty in Europe as a constraint to their exclusive identities (Murphy 2009, Ganiel 2009). They all favoured hard cultural boundaries vis-à-vis the kin-minority. SF has had a more mixed interpretation concerning the opportunities and constraints provided by a shared European identity. Over the course of the peace process, it has adopted some elements of the SDLP's interpretation, but it remains sceptical of softening cultural boundaries (see below).

These differences notwithstanding, kin-minority parties and parties of the unionist host-state majority have used fora at the European centre as a site for cooperation on a number of issues during the 1990s. This is particularly true for the EP, that was considered by the SDLP MEP as an opportunity to cooperate with MEPs from the host-state majority. Such cooperation, for instance, concerned common interests regarding Northern Ireland's agriculture or the creation of the PEACE programmes. Additionally, shared membership in the Party of European Socialists (PES) has provided for institutionalized links between the SDLP and the British Labour Party (Interview 1 in Derry/Londonderry, 6 December 2018). However, the SDLP also used the EP to cooperate with host-state majority representatives outside "its own" party federation and maintained close links even with the radical unionist MEP from the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). SF's exclusion from the EP until 2004 precluded it from this opportunity (Murphy 2014, 82).

Domestically, European incentives, and particularly the prospect of funding, have also created opportunities for cooperation between kin-minority parties and the host-state majority. These materialized especially after the creation of self-rule sub-state institutions through the GFA and the availability for funding for agriculture, infrastructure projects and other domains (ibid.). However, on some occasions such cooperation did not materialize despite financial incentives from EU institutions. Especially the funding of projects that concerned sensitive issues relating to the kin-minority's or the host-state majority's respective identities such as a proposed "Conflict Resolution Centre" at the site of a former prison turned out to be divisive rather than conciliatory for the relationship of the two national groups (ibid., 110).

Centre – periphery relations

Territorial self-rule was granted to Northern Ireland with the 1998 GFA, after earlier forms of self-rule had failed (Tannam 2001). Crucially, Northern Ireland's post-1998 sub-state institutions prescribe mandatory power-sharing between the host-state majority and the kin-minority in the sub-state government. Parties that obtain a certain share of seats in the sub-state parliament are entitled to posts in the Northern Ireland Executive. Key decisions at the sub-state level have to be taken jointly by the two national groups (Walsh 2018, 39ff).

This has taken place against the backdrop of a wider dispersion of sovereignty in Europe and throughout the host-state. On the one hand, the European centre was strengthened through the Treaty of Maastricht and accompanying policies; on the other hand, in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, institutions for self-rule have been created in the late 1990s. These parallel developments can be interpreted as a shift of sovereignty away from the host-state centre (Keating 2001). The SDLP (as well as other sub-state parties in other parts of the UK) have accepted much of this interpretation and have endorsed it as an opportunity to emancipate the kin-minority from the host-state (Hepburn and McLoughlin 2011). SF has been more sceptical about this rescaling of the host-state and has been more eager to emphasize the constraints that result from state rescaling in general, and for the sovereignty of the kin-state that it aspires to join in particular (see below).

Yet, self-rule for Northern Ireland did not merely follow a wider UK or Europe-wide trend. All relevant actors in the kin-state, the host-state and among the kin-minority agree that territorial self-rule, although for many an "unhappy compromise" (Walsh 2018, 46), was a key component of the peace process (Murphy 2014, 76, Nagle 2018, 398). Consequently, the

additional competences that have been devolved to Northern Ireland since 1998, such as policing and judicial affairs, are related to managing the legacy of the Troubles, rather than following a functional rationale of allocating competences across levels of government (Perry 2011).

The consensus for territorial self-rule notwithstanding, the mandatory cooperation between the kin-minority and the host-state majority within sub-state institutions has frequently been hampered. This has oftentimes made self-rule institutions dysfunctional and has even led to their temporary suspension on several occasions. This has shifted political functions back to the host-state centre in 2000, between 2002 and 2007, and (*de facto*) between 2017 and 2020, depriving kin-minority parties of a key arena for political action (Coakley and Todd 2020, 453ff).

When Northern Ireland's sub-state institutions are functional, the inclusive nature of the sub-state executive gives all relevant kin-minority parties access to consultative intergovernmental fora with the host-state centre. For the coordination of the host-state's position on European policies, these relations were officially managed through the multilateral "Joint Ministerial Committee on Europe" (JMC[E]). The policy influence of this forum was, however, minimal and kin-minority parties did not consider it to constitute an opportunity for the realization of their goals (Murphy 2014, 97ff). Only in some limited policy fields, such as agriculture, could this limitation be mitigated through informal, bilateral contacts between sub-state and host-state representatives.

Northern Ireland's direct links with the European centre provided some leeway for autonomous sub-state action. The region's members of the CoR, for instance, could be decided by sub-state authorities. In addition, sub-state ministers could participate in certain formations of the EU Council, which was particularly relevant in the realm of agriculture (*ibid.*, 101ff). Ultimately, however, these patterns are not reflective of a rescaling of Northern Ireland's host-state, given the need for sub-state representatives to act in line with wider UK policy preferences at the European level. This restriction was also true for Northern Ireland's direct representation at the EU (*ibid.*, 136). Moreover, sub-state authorities' ability to exploit opportunities directly at the European level were constrained by the limited political experience of kin-minority and unionist host-state majority representatives. In sum, the arrangements for self-rule and shared rule created by the GFA provided very limited opportunities for kin-minority parties to pursue their goals independently from the host-state.

European policies or direct representation at the European level could not mitigate these more general constraints.

Kin-state – host-state relations

The shared membership of Northern Ireland's kin-state and host-state in European organizations preceded the de-securitization of their bilateral relations. The two states joined the EEC in 1973 during the height of the Troubles. At that point, the two states offered fundamentally opposed interpretations of the situation in Northern Ireland (Coakley and Todd 2020, 526ff). Thus, the de-securitization between Ireland and the UK cannot be traced back to European integration. However, the intensification of European integration in the late 1980s facilitated the de-securitization of the triadic relationship between the kin-state, the host-state and the kin-minority that was crucial for the peace process. Additionally, the kin-state's and the host-state's economic and political integration with the European centre furthered the opening of the state border between them. This came in addition to previous levels of bilateral integration that had resulted from Ireland's continued participation in some UK policies after its independence (Ryan 2001).

Lasting kin-state – host-state cooperation over the government of Northern Ireland was initiated with the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement. The Agreement led to a substantial de-securitization of bilateral relations and paved the way for the two states' joint approach to the subsequent peace process. This was done by agreeing on two fundamental principles (Coakley and Todd 2020, 7f). Firstly, the Republic of Ireland accepted the state border with Northern Ireland by recognizing the "principle of consent"; that is, the border would only be modified through majority consent of the population of Northern Ireland. This meant that Ireland *de facto* revoked its irredentist position. Secondly, the Irish government was given a consultative role in the politics of Northern Ireland. This was institutionalized through a permanent Intergovernmental Conference. These two principles were reconfirmed as part of the GFA. The GFA further institutionalized kin-state – host-state cooperation by reforming the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, and through the creation a British-Irish Council that includes representatives of the UK's sub-state entities and Crown dependencies, including from Northern Ireland (ibid., 347).

While these de-securitizing processes have largely taken place outside of European fora, the two states' shared participation in European organizations facilitated them in at least three

ways. Firstly, the intergovernmental structures at the European level (the European Council and the Council of the EU) have guaranteed regular encounters between kin-state and host-state representatives. These encounters have fostered personal relationships between government representatives, helped de-securitize bilateral relations and facilitated the kin-state and the host-state's joint approach to kin-minority accommodation and conflict resolution (Hayward and Wiener 2008, 41). Secondly, the two governments have referred to their states' cooperation in European organizations and the need to intensify this cooperation in all key bilateral documents on Northern Ireland since 1985 (*ibid.*). Cooperation at the European level served as an additional rationale for cooperating on issues concerning Northern Ireland (Guelke 2017, 45ff). Thirdly, European legal provisions that are binding on both states have created a baseline for kin-minority accommodation and other rights protection in Northern Ireland. Debates about a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland after 1998, for instance, took the CoE's European Convention on Human Rights as the smallest common denominator (Dickson 2010, 366).

In addition to these de-securitizing effects, the kin-state and the host-state's economic and political integration with the European centre contributed to the opening of the state border between them. Particularly the creation of the Single European Market decreased the disruptiveness of the economic boundary between Northern Ireland's kin-state and its host-state. The removal of customs checks on the border after 1992 decreased the border's symbolic value and contributed to the de-securitization of interstate relations (Nash et al. 2016, 109ff). Pre-existing integration between Ireland and the UK, such as the passport controls-free Common Travel Area, furthered these processes even outside European channels (Ryan 2001). At the same time, economic integration also had hardening effects on the border between the kin-state and the host-state. Ireland's participation in the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) ended the parity between the kin-state's and the host-state's respective currencies, and linked the Irish pound to other currencies in the EEC from 1979 (Honohan 2019, 39ff). The UK decided not to participate in the ERM. The currency boundary between the two states became further perpetuated with the introduction of the Euro in Ireland and the UK's decision to opt out of the common currency (Hodson 2015, 192ff).

Kin-minority parties' responses

Identities

The nature of the conflict in Northern Ireland has been contested among analysts and political representatives (McGarry 2001, Ruane and Todd 1996). During the peace process, kin-minority parties were compelled to express their interpretation of the conflict and, hence, of what they perceived as the defining patterns of their putative kin-minority constituency. In the respective sources, the SDLP and SF offered contrasting images of the nationalist kin-minority's identity. Yet, both kin-minority parties considered the aspiration to a unified political entity that comprises the entire island of Ireland as the kin-minority's defining pattern.

Social Democratic and Labour Party

Since its creation, and especially since the late 1970s, the SDLP had always endorsed a European layer of identity. Allegiance to the European centre was considered as an overarching and shared affiliation of the kin-minority and the respective majorities in the kin-state and the host-state. The SDLP was convinced that this shared identity would transform the ways of doing politics for all actors in the triadic relationship between the nationalist kin-minority, the Irish kin-state and the UK host-state. This would lead to the reconciliation between these groups of actors. Consequently, the SDLP, and particularly its long-standing leader, John Hume, continuously referred to the European centre as a template for the potential transformations of identities within Northern Ireland. In so doing, Hume was eager to draw on the experience of de-securitization, reconciliation and cooperation between France and Germany within European institutions.

“Europe itself has suffered centuries of bloody conflict. In this century alone, the peoples of Europe have been locked in the savagery of two world wars [...]. Yet 34 years after the Second World War, as a result of an agreed process, they have been able to create one parliament to represent them, one community – and the Germans are still Germans, the French are still French. They, too, have a unity in diversity. Is it too much to ask that we on this small island do precisely the same thing?” (Hume 1979).

The SDLP leadership reiterated this example on multiple occasions, and intensified its public commitment to a European layer of identity throughout the peace process – to the extent that it (unsuccessfully) suggested the EU Commission’s direct involvement in the post-conflict government of Northern Ireland (SDLP 1992a).

The effects of the dispersion of sovereignty on the SDLP’s identity, however, were limited. Apart from the SDLP’s endorsement of a European layer of identity, the party’s defining pattern of the kin-minority and of national kinship remained overwhelmingly single-layered. The SDLP promoted an identity in which the kin-minority was predominantly defined by its aspiration to political unity with the kin-state. Even if the SDLP’s precise nature of this desired political unity was highly complex (see below), this orientation towards the kin-state centre left little space for alternative patterns of identities. The kin-minority was seen as an integral part of the wider cross-border nation, without any cultural distinction from the kin-state majority. During the peace process, the SDLP defined its understanding of the kin-minority’s identity and kinship in the following terms:

“The nationalist identity defines itself as Irish and not British. Nationalists are, and feel themselves to be, part of the broader Irish nation. Until the border artificially divided them, northern nationalists were indistinguishable from the rest of the nation [...]. Nationalists aspire to participate in a wider Irish political system no less strongly than unionists assert their right to have their British identity expressed in a British system” (SDLP 1997a).

Against the backdrop of this single-layered identity, Europe’s effect on the cultural boundaries of the SDLP’s identity are somewhat paradoxical and, in fact, contradictory. On the one hand, the SDLP’s allegiance to the European centre led the party to promote soft cultural boundaries. It was enthusiastic about the prospect that a common European identity would eventually blur the distinctions between the kin-minority and the host-state majority. This is exemplified by statements like the following that have frequently been classified as “post-nationalist”, even by SDLP representatives themselves (Cunningham 1997).

“That common ground [between national groups] – largely economic – is virtually identical North and South in the new Europe [...]. By working the common ground, the old poison will be extracted from our relationships. The distrust will evaporate as well as the prejudices and fears as we spill our sweat together and not our blood and in a generation or two we will evolve into a completely new Ireland born of

agreement, built by our common toil and totally respectful of our diversity” (Hume 1990).

On the other hand, the SDLP was unwilling to revisit the defining patterns of the nationalist kin-minority, or to soften its demarcation from the host-state majority. A shared political project with the kin-state remained the cornerstone of the SDLP’s construction of identity. While this identity is inclusive of the host-state majority in Northern Ireland in that it depicts them as “fellow Irishmen” of a different political tradition (ibid.), the SDLP was clear that “nationalists [cannot] be expected to forego an expression of their deepest aspirations [to political unity with Ireland]” (SDLP 1997a). The ratification and implementation of the GFA did not change the SDLP’s identity at the end of the 1990s.

Sinn Féin

The defining pattern of SF’s identity, too, was the kin-minority and the kin-state majority’s joint aspiration to political unity of the island of Ireland. SF did not consider the kin-minority as a distinct entity within the wider cross-border nation on the island of Ireland. In order to substantiate this perceived homogeneity of the Irish nation, SF consistently refused to call the two jurisdictions on the island by their official names. Rather, it would refer to “26 counties” (for the Republic) and to the “6 counties” or “the North” (for Northern Ireland), to highlight that it perceived these entities as illegitimate divisions of a wider Irish entity. SF refers to itself and to affiliated organizations as a “republican” movement that aims to establish a united Irish nation-state in opposition to the British monarchy.

In contrast to the SDLP, SF’s construction of identity was entirely single-layered and uneffaced by the Europe-induced dispersion of sovereignty. The party continuously dismissed any allegiance to the European level. Instead, SF perceived the dispersion of sovereignty away from state centres and the creation of the European centre as a threat to their exclusive Irish identity. On this basis, SF even demanded the island of Ireland’s “negotiated withdrawal from the EC” until the late 1980s (SF 1989, 4). Only with the entrenchment of the European centre in the wake of the Maastricht Treaty, did SF change this position and accepted membership in “the European Union as a political reality” (SF 1994b, 2). However, this shift did not lead to an endorsement of any kind of European identity. SF continued to reject any patterns of identity that diluted its construction of the Irish nation, including at the European level. In its manifesto for the 1994 EP election, the party warned

“about the dangers for Ireland in the European Union. Increasingly the ability of the Irish people to exercise control over the political, economic and military decisions affecting their lives will be ceded to the unaccountable structures of the European Union” (ibid.).

Similarly, SF also rejected any explicit allegiances to the sub-state level, once self-rule for Northern Ireland was established as part of the GFA. While SF accepted Northern Ireland’s sub-state institutions in the context of the wider peace process and was eager to participate in them, the party underscored that the true expression of its identity were the links between the kin-minority and the kin-state that became institutionalized through the GFA, such as the right to Irish citizenship or the NSMC (SF 1998b). In the words of then party leader Gerry Adams,

“Irish republicans have an emotional and an understandable political as well as a constitutional block to participation in a [sub-state] Stormont parliament. [But] the seats in the cross border bodies, which have the power to make and implement policy on an all Ireland basis [...] rightly belong to our electorate” (Adams 1998).

In line with this exclusive, single-layered identity, SF also adhered to hard cultural boundaries to demarcate the kin-minority and the kin-state majority from the host-state majority. In the party’s view, the cultural boundaries of the Irish nation were congruent with the territorial boundaries of the island of Ireland. The unionist host-state majority in Northern Ireland was typically not seen as a nation in its own right, but as a part of the Irish nation that was dependent on allegedly artificial and illegitimate political, economic and cultural ties with the UK host-state centre (SF 1994a).

Goals and strategies

Despite their common aspiration to a united political entity on the island of Ireland, the SDLP and SF developed starkly contrasting goals and strategies. The SDLP’s European identity led the party to endorse European integration’s effects to a degree that shaped the entirety of its domestic goals. SF completely rejected Europe-induced opportunities at the beginning of the peace process but gradually came to endorse Europe’s border-opening effects.

Social Democratic and Labour Party

The SDLP has never fully renounced irredentism. However, since the late 1970s, the party has evoked irredentism mainly as a long-term aspiration that constitutes the kin-minority's identity. The SDLP's more immediate goals and strategies have been a more complex redefinition of the kin-minority's relationship with the kin-state and the host-state, and between the two states themselves. The SDLP held that such a full-fledged redefinition of the "totality of relationships" within and beyond Northern Ireland was necessary to end political violence in the region. To this end, the party endorsed all Europe-sponsored opportunities, even to an extent that made its endorsement for European integration indistinguishable from its domestic goals. Hence, the SDLP classifies as a *border-transcending party*.

The SDLP's border-transcending goals and strategies are evident in the party's desired relationship between the kin-minority and the kin-state. By the 1980s, the SDLP had moved away from explicitly calling for a united Irish nation-state that incorporated the entire island of Ireland (see SDLP 1973). Instead, it advocated "new relationships within Ireland" that would only come about in the context of radically redefined relations between national groups in Northern Ireland and between the islands of Ireland and Great Britain (Hume 1986). In contrast to a "united Ireland", the SDLP labelled this concept a "new Ireland" (SDLP 1992b) or an "agreed Ireland" (Hume 1990, 12). This wholistic approach to restructuring political relations across the islands later translated into the three "strands" of the 1998 GFA (Tannam 2001, 505).

European integration provided three essential opportunities for the SDLP to develop these border-transcending goals and strategies. Firstly, the SDLP was enthusiastic about Europe's border-opening effects. It expected that continued shifts of sovereignty from state centres to the European centre would consistently decrease the importance of the state border between Northern Ireland and its kin-state. The party hoped that this process would intensify to a degree where its aspiration to political unity between the kin-minority and the kin-state would be met almost by virtue of European integration itself (Hume, 1990, 6). Secondly, the SDLP endorsed the potential for Europe-induced de-securitization that, in its view, would result from the cooperation between Northern Ireland and its kin-state in the context of European organizations. To emphasise the importance of de-securitized relationships within the island, the SDLP highlighted that "the real problem is not a piece of earth [that is divided]. It is the people and, in the real Ireland, Irish people are divided and cannot brought together by guns and bombs" (Hume 1986). This position was also a clear rejection of SF and the IRA's

strategy to pursue irredentism through physical force. Lastly, the SDLP saw the institutions at the European centre as a template for cross-border institutions on the island of Ireland, given that they provided a forum for peaceful political decision-making among representatives from multiple jurisdictions and national backgrounds (SDLP 1992a, 8).

The party summarized its endorsement for these Europe-induced opportunities in an argument that closely resembled neofunctionalist interpretations of European integration itself. Although the SDLP didn't explicitly refer to neofunctionalism in its public statements, the party argued that cooperation between Northern Ireland and Ireland should start from uncontested issues where the two entities (and the two national groups) had obvious common interests. Once such cooperation was institutionalized, political integration and, thus, integration between the kin-minority and the kin-state would follow (Utz 2019b, 396). In the words of the SDLP's former party leader:

“[Changes to UK-Ireland relations are] happening in a context where borders are going down all over Europe, where borders including the Irish one will be no more than county boundaries and where the common economic ground between both parts is increasing daily and will be virtually identical in the Single Europe [...]. Wouldn't it be one of the great ironies if the only sign of a border anywhere in the European Community were the military checkpoints on the Irish border maintained by an IRA campaign?” (Hume 1990, 6).

The SDLP achieved significant aspects of these border-transcending goals for kin-minority – kin-state relations through the peace process and the simultaneous intensification of European integration. These parallel processes allowed for the opening and the de-securitization of the state border and for the institutionalization of territorial cross-border cooperation through the NSMC. However, the SDLP did not substantially modify its goals for kin-minority – kin-state relations once this was achieved. This was because the SDLP considered European integration, and particularly the host-state's integration into the European centre to be too limited to diminish the disruptiveness of the state border. Against this backdrop, the SDLP demanded, for instance, Northern Ireland's participation in the EMU, to abolish “the monetary frontier [that] runs across our island” (SDLP 2004). Similarly, the SDLP argued for the expansion and strengthening of the NSMC and other cross-border bodies that, according to a former SDLP leader, had remained “completely underdeveloped [after their creation]. They haven't achieved what they should and could have achieved”, given the host-state

majority's reluctance to engage in them (Interview 1 in Derry/Londonderry, 6 December 2018).

Uniquely among the kin-minority parties in this study, the SDLP extended its border-transcending goals also to detailed preferences for kin-state – host-state relations. In this respect, the party endorsed opportunities for bilateral cooperation at the European centre and for Europe-induced de-securitization and border-opening. The SDLP was convinced that only de-securitized, cooperative relations between Ireland and the UK could provide a framework, in which the kin-minority could be successfully accommodated (Hume 1979). While the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement was a steppingstone in this regard, the SDLP (and the two state governments) further pursued this goal to underpin the peace process up to the GFA and beyond. Accordingly, the SDLP supported the revocation of irredentist claims from the kin-state's constitution as part of the wider 1998 settlement (SDLP 1997a, 7). The GFA's British-Irish Council, similar to the NSMC, institutionalized much of the SDLP's border-transcending goals but fell short of the party's expectations as soon as it became operational. The British-Irish Council did serve, in the SDLP's evaluation, as a visible expression of the de-securitized relationship between the kin-state and the host-state post-GFA. Yet, it did not evolve into a forum that could maintain cooperative relations between authorities in its own right. In the words of a former SDLP party leader

“When you look at the North-South structures, and the East-West, the British-Irish axis, that was all about cooperation, economic and social and cultural [...]. Of course, the identities are accommodated, but then you build on the accommodation of identities by accommodating the interests. So that was all there. The European experience had been a conditioner for that [...]. We also had ideas for specific areas for British-Irish cooperation. But unionists were never tabling any ideas, so we never tabled ours [...]. So, the North-South and East-West haven't developed in the way in which they should or could” (Interview 1 in Derry/Londonderry, 6 December 2018).

The SDLP's goals for kin-minority – host-state relations drew heavily on European opportunities, too. The party applied Europe-inspired concepts of de-securitization and cooperation to its desired relationship between the kin-minority and the host-state majority. The SDLP was ambivalent about the extent to which cultural boundaries between the two nations should soften (see above). However, its endorsement for de-securitization informed its demand for power-sharing and cooperation between them at the prospective sub-state level.

During the negotiations on the GFA, the SDLP demanded that the prospective Northern Ireland sub-state institutions

“must respect and reflect the identity and ethos of both [national] traditions [...]. [They] should guarantee that parity of esteem is afforded to the major traditions in Northern Ireland, symbolically and administratively [...]. In addition, the importance of the European and International dimensions has become strikingly clear in recent times. Both have a significant part to play in underpinning the peace process, and supporting any agreed new arrangements which may result from these negotiations” (SDLP 1997b).

This resulted in the GFA’s consociational arrangements for the sub-state level. Once these were established, the SDLP aimed to use the sub-state institutions to address a number of socioeconomic issues within Northern Ireland (SDLP 1998). However, the SDLP has always emphasized that the relationship between Northern Ireland and the host-state centre needs to be embedded in the wider triadic context of the kin-minority, the kin-state and the host-state (what it called the “totality of relationships”). The party was highly sceptical of territorial self-rule without additional safeguards for the kin-minority, given its experience of host-state majority domination at the sub-state level pre-1972. Consequently, the SDLP was ambivalent about the dispersion of sovereignty away from state centres. While it endorsed the strengthening of the European centre for the reasons discussed above, the party insisted that any “settlement cannot be devised within an exclusively [sub-state] Northern Ireland context” (SDLP 1997a). Consequently, the SDLP has never been overly optimistic about the possible effects of interactions between Northern Ireland’s self-ruling sub-state authorities and the European centre. The party only endorsed vague notions of a “Europe of the Regions” that were mainly built on funding opportunities for regional development (SDLP 1990).

In competition with Northern Ireland’s second relevant kin-minority party, the SDLP underbid SF with its clear rejection of physical force and its insistence on border-transcending goals. At the same time, the SDLP was eager to convince SF of some of its own goals to bring an end to the violent conflict (McLoughlin 2010, 153ff).

Sinn Féin

Over the course of the peace process, SF’s goals and strategies changed radically from *border-shifting* to *border-crossing*. The party moved away from its support for a violent

restructuring of the entire political landscape on the island of Ireland. This was superseded by SF's recognition of the Republic of Ireland as nationalists' kin-state and of the unionist host-state majority as a legitimate political actor in Northern Ireland. Additionally, SF began to reject political violence and gradually endorsed Europe-sponsored opportunities, particularly for the opening of state borders. This replaced SF's earlier repudiation of European integration. At the same time, the party has failed to critically reflect on its past, which leads to a frequent conflation of progressive border-crossing goals with more traditional border-shifting elements.

SF's goals regarding kin-minority – kin-state relations began to transform from the mid-1980s onwards. Up to that point, SF pursued *border-shifting goals* in that it aimed to establish the congruence of state borders and of the nation's cultural boundaries in opposition to Europe-induced opportunities. The party considered the state institutions of the Republic of Ireland as delegitimate, based on their *de facto* acceptance of the island's political partition. Consequently, it aimed at a complete overhaul of political institutions through violent means, in order to establish “a new society throughout the whole of Ireland whereby the conquest of centuries would be totally undone” (SF 1979). SF believed that most aspects of European integration were incompatible with the Irish nation-state that it aspired to. This belief was based on SF's exclusive national identity that saw any dispersion of sovereignty away from the prospective nation-state as a constraint to the political will of the Irish nation. Additionally, SF interpreted the EC more generally as a constraint to democracy and to its isolationist, left-wing socioeconomic policies. The party claimed that Ireland had

“more in common with the developing countries of the world (where two-thirds of the world's population live) than we have with the rich club of former colonial powers in the EEC” (SF 1979).

SF's approach to kin-minority – kin-state relations changed towards more *border-crossing goals* with the party's gradual engagement in electoral politics (at first, alongside of what it called the “armed struggle”) and the initial progress of the peace process in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Regular interactions between the SF and the SDLP leaderships at the time were crucial in this respect (Maillot 2005, 48). SF continued to aspire to “national self-determination”, that is, irredentism based on the reconfiguration of existing political institutions. However, the party began to acknowledge the Republic of Ireland as Northern nationalists' kin-state that could support and intervene on behalf of the kin-minority. This was

reflected, among other things, in the credibility that SF lent to the kin-state government in its interaction with the SDLP in 1988:

“[W]e propose that Sinn Féin and the SDLP jointly issue a call to the Dublin and London governments for them to consult together to seek agreement on the policy objective of Irish reunification” (SF 1988).

With the GFA, SF had acknowledged the Republic as nationalists’ kin-state to a degree that the party accepted cross-border nation-building on part of the Republic as an interim solution before irredentism could be achieved. The party pursued these goals within the new institutional parameters of the GFA, based on the recognition of the kin-minority’s right to Irish citizenship. On these grounds, SF argued that the kin-minority should be able to exercise full citizenship rights, including the right to vote in certain elections in the kin-state. Moreover, SF underlined the importance of cooperation between representatives of the kin-minority and the kin-state for the peace process and beyond. In the words of SF’s manifesto for the first post-GFA sub-state election:

We believe that it was the positive unity of purpose between Hume/Adams and the Irish government that brought the peace process to this point. We are calling for nationalist unity to continue in the forthcoming elections in order to maximise nationalist strength in the assembly and on the All-Ireland Ministerial Council. In the new political situation that is developing, Sinn Féin is working to build a bridge to unity and independence. In this transitional phase, it is vital that institutions in the 26-County state play their full part [...]. Partition and the British presence does not restrict the Irish government from ensuring that full and equal rights are extended to citizens in the Six Counties” (SF 1998b).

SF’s recognition of and demands for cooperation with the kin-state were accompanied by the party’s increasing acceptance of the European centre. Most importantly, the party abandoned its previous calls for leaving the EC. Instead, the party began to reconsider its complete rejection of the dispersion of sovereignty. In an internal paper that discusses possible opportunities related to the consolidation of the European centre through the treaty of Maastricht, a leading member argued that

“[i]t must make us pause to think when Mrs Thatcher and Sinn Féin appear on the surface to take a similar nationalist stance on the E.C. and in the defence of ‘national

sovereignty' [...]. A reactionary withdrawal behind national borders in the name of national unity is not only outdated but also ineffective” (SF 1992b).

The same paper acknowledged that Europe’s border-opening effects could constitute an opportunity for the rapprochement between the kin-minority and the kin-state. European integration’s precise effects on state borders were still poorly understood by SF at that time, given that its previous rejection of the European centre had limited the party’s overall engagement with European affairs. Hence, SF did not address particular developments of European integration and their impact on the state border but rather cautiously argued that

“[p]erhaps the key issue to address in Ireland is the possible impact of the E.C. on the partition of the country [...]. Certainly, the economic logic of integration does not lead automatically to an end to partition as the SDLP professes to believe, although it does create a certain anti-partitionist dynamic as some Unionists rightly fear. At the very least this provides us with openings that may not have been sufficiently recognised” (ibid., emphasis added).

The caveats in this statement indicate that SF’s endorsement of these opportunities continued to be limited and contested within the party. Border-shifting elements were still prominent among SF’s goals. Other sources at the time argued that European integration would “copperfasten [Ireland’s] partition” (SF 1992c, 8) rather than affect Northern Ireland’s political relationship with the kin-state; or warned that the EU’s “anti-democratic bodies [...] will be [...] eroding further the power of nation states” (SF 1992a, 8). Similarly, factions within SF rejected the dispersion of sovereignty downwards, interpreting self-rule for the sub-state level equally as a constraint to its border-shifting goals. Unlike other kin-minority parties at that time, SF rejected the Committee of the Regions and claimed that it was “the ideological vehicle of the European Commission, it is their creation designed to bypass the national parliaments which the Commission regards as redundant” (ibid., 9). The contradictions between SF’s traditional, border-shifting and more innovative border-crossing goals were explained by a proponent of the latter position in the following way:

“That was a big debate. In fact, it was a huge debate [...]. And if it comes to it, we’re not afraid to change direction if a particular strategy is not producing the results that we feel that it needs [...]. [Yet] it was hardly accurate to describe [my intervention] as an embrace of the European project. We were looking what we could get out of it. And

it was very much a conditional engagement” (Interview 2 in Derry/Londonderry, 6 December 2018).

Throughout the 1990s and particularly after the GFA, border-crossing goals gained dominance within SF. By the early 2000s, the party overwhelmingly endorsed the Europe-induced opening of economic and political boundaries. SF even demanded the introduction of the Euro in Northern Ireland “to establish an all-island currency” (SF 2004, 22), despite fierce previous opposition (SF 1999a). Moreover, it endorsed European funding for cross-border projects for their “enormous potential to develop the all-Ireland dimension that is critical to the republican agenda” (SF 2004, 25). However, somewhat contradictorily, the party continued to see the Europe-sponsored dispersion of sovereignty as a constraint to its long-term irredentist commitment given that

“[t]he bottom line for Sinn Féin is that democracy is built upon the sovereignty of the people expressed in the form of the democratic nation-state” (ibid., 12).

SF’s gradual endorsement of previously rejected opportunities is also apparent regarding its goals for kin-minority – host-state relations. At the outset of the peace process, SF deemed that the host-state centre exercised colonial rule and military occupation over the kin-minority. Consequently, the party held that any solution to the political situation in Northern Ireland should be based on a bilateral engagement between the Irish nation (and SF as its representative) and the host-state centre. The unionist host-state majority in Northern Ireland was not granted any legitimacy in this interpretation. In line with its irredentist goal, SF demanded Northern Ireland’s political and economic dissociation from the host-state and framed this as “British withdrawal” (SF 1987). By the time the GFA was agreed, SF had moved to accept Northern Ireland’s position within the host-state in the medium run and only aimed at irredentism “as part of a rolling process” (SF 1998a). Consequently, SF accepted territorial self-rule within the host-state by agreeing to engage in “every aspect of the [Good Friday] Agreement” (SF 1998b), including the newly created sub-state institutions. Simultaneously, SF changed its goal concerning the relationship between the kin-minority and the local, unionist host-state majority. Instead of denying the legitimacy of the latter’s identity, SF vocally campaigned for “equality” between the two national groups. This new “equality agenda” included multiple socioeconomic and cultural aspects (Maillot 2005, 102ff). However, in post-GFA Northern Ireland it explicitly aimed at the accommodation of the kin-minority within the new sub-state institutions. In its 1998 election manifesto, SF demanded that

“[w]e need a partnership based on equality, which will empower and improve the quality of life of all citizens by being open, inclusive and democratic; Equality must be central to all aspects of life – in political institutions, in the judiciary, in the civil service, in public bodies and in a new policing service”(SF 1998b).

This shift, too, was underpinned by SF’s increasing endorsement of European opportunities. In particular, SF believed that the European centre would delimit the influence of the host-state centre on individuals in Northern Ireland and would hence facilitate the kin-minority’s accommodation. The dispersion of sovereignty away from state centres, of which SF was so sceptical about in an Irish context, was welcomed if it meant a constraint on the UK state and on the unionist majority population. These European constraints on the host-state were framed as issues of equality and rights for the kin-minority within the host-state:

“There was a recognition there that Europe was important in terms of our rights issues [...]. Europe was an important outlet, because other than that our only legal remedy was through the British court system, and that’s where it stopped. We didn’t expect the British state to ever do justice to people here [...]. And the GFA, if you read it, there is more script in it devoted to rights issues than perhaps anything else. And that was a recognition that nationalists had lived as second-class citizens, that Irish-identity people had lived as second-class citizens in this state. And we didn’t look to the British state to defend those rights, we looked to Europe to defend those rights, we looked to the Irish government to assert our rights. [...]. So, Europe became important” (Interview in Newry, 28 November 2018).

SF’s shift from border-shifting to border-crossing goals were also evident in its competition with the SDLP. SF outbid the other kin-minority until the more advanced stages of the peace process, particularly through its endorsement of physical force to pursue its border-shifting goals. Once SF moved to reject political violence and SF adopted more border-crossing elements, it engaged in a more mixed strategy. It aimed to outbid the SDLP on some issues, such as its support for long-term irredentism, while adapting many of the SDLP’s own positions like the acceptance of temporary kin-minority accommodation within the host-state (McGlinchey 2019).

Alliances

At the beginning of the peace process, the SDLP and SF had a fundamentally opposed approach to representation in democratic fora. While the SDLP participated at all levels of government and built encompassing alliances to advance its border-transcending goals, SF rejected such participation and practiced a policy of “abstentionism”. Only as de-securitization proceeded, both kin-minority parties engaged more comprehensively in democratic fora and SF began to work against its political isolation in the kin-state, the host-state and at the European centre.

Social Democratic and Labour Party

In line with its border-transcending goals, the SDLP has consistently participated in all political fora to which it has been elected (except for the Northern Ireland Assembly in the 1980s). Given the entanglement of the SDLP’s domestic goals and its enthusiasm for Europe-sponsored de-securitization, most of the SDLP’s cooperation included a “European component”. This means that the SDLP either alluded to the necessity to cooperate to follow the European model of de-securitization and reconciliation; or that the party used common interests with its counterparts at the European level as a framework for closer cooperation domestically. Across fora of interaction, the SDLP’s alliances followed two logics. On the one hand, the party’s aim to de-securitize the political situation in Northern Ireland incentivized it to build broad support for its border-transcending goals and to engage with as wide a range of actors as possible. On the other hand, the SDLP’s centre-left orientation drove the party to seek alliances with likeminded parties in the kin-state, the host-state and at the European level.

The SDLP’s relationship with the actors in the kin-state aimed to assure that the kin-state government’s support for the nationalist kin-minority was not a matter of partisan division. To this end, the SDLP tried to convince all parties in the kin-state of its border-transcending goals and of the necessity of de-securitizing the “totality of relationships” between the kin-minority, the kin-state and the host-state. The resulting alliances between the SDLP and the two (conservative) main parties in the kin-state were predominantly based on close informal links. Formalized relationships that reflected the SDLP’s cross-party alliances with kin-state actors were only temporarily institutionalized in the 1982-1984 “New Ireland Forum”. This format brought together the SDLP and the three relevant kin-state parties at the time (Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and Labour) to establish a joint Irish nationalist approach to the situation in

Northern Ireland. Parts of the Forum's report reflected the SDLP's border-transcending goals and alluded to de-securitization of interstate relations in Europe as a template for Northern Ireland (New Ireland Forum 1984, Article 2.1). This short-lived, institutionalized alliance between the SDLP and the three kin-state parties informed all subsequent kin-state governments' positions on cross-border nation-building and irredentism, in that they adapted substantial elements of the SDLP's border-transcending goals and ultimately revoked Ireland's constitutional claim to irredentism. In the assessment of one former SDLP leader, the New Ireland Forum

“was about challenging nationalist thinking in a sense; certainly challenging physical force Republicanism but also about challenging Unionism and the British government to say ‘Look, there is a different way of looking at things and of working together’ [...]. And essentially, it provided the basis on which the then Irish government [...] negotiated the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985. That agreement, in my view, provided the context in which the peace process subsequently happened” (Interview 1 in Derry/Londonderry, 6 December 2018).

Since the later stages of the peace process, the GFA, and especially the NSMC, provided a new forum for cross-partisan alliances between kin-minority parties and kin-state actors. In addition, the NSMC was purposefully modelled after European examples of functionalist integration. However, given the NSMC's limitations discussed above, the SDLP did not emphasize it as a site of forging alliances with kin-state actors. Besides the SDLP's cross-partisan alliances with kin-state actors, all interviewees emphasized that they had a privileged relationship with the Irish Labour Party, based on their shared Social democrat values. In addition to close informal ties, the relationship between the SDLP and the Irish Labour Party is institutionalized through their common membership in the PES (ibid.).

Similar to its cross-partisan alliances with kin-state actors, the SDLP aimed to promote its border-transcending goals through broad alliances with host-state actors. This was significantly facilitated by the kin-minority and the host-state majority's shared interests at the European level. Importantly, European funding for Northern Ireland was welcomed by all parties in Northern Ireland, despite the unionist host-state majority parties' scepticism of the European centre. The SDLP consciously sought to intensify the resulting cooperation with to de-securitize its relationship with them (Murphy 2014, 82). According to one interviewee, John Hume was even reluctant to announce the EU's launch of the PEACE funds unless the

MEPs from unionist parties would join him in doing so (Interview 1 in Derry/Londonderry, 6 December 2018).

At the host-state centre, where Northern Irish unionist parties play a subordinate role, the SDLP similarly engaged in cross-partisan cooperation. This was particularly true during the early years of the peace process when the host-state government was dominated by the Conservative party. At that stage, the SDLP maintained a number of informal links to persuade the host-state government of its border-transcending goals and of the necessity to de-securitize kin-minority – host-state relations. These informal links, while not directly linked to European incentives for de-securitization, were critical for convincing the host-state government to engage more comprehensively in negotiations with the kin-minority, including with SF (McLoughlin 2010, 146ff). At the same time, the SDLP has always had a closer, more formalized alliance with the British Labour Party. Besides numerous informal links, the SDLP coordinated its actions in the host-state parliament with its Social democratic counterpart on crucial votes. This alliance was particularly important at the time the GFA was agreed and Labour was in government in the UK. Yet the SDLP also emphasized that

“The SDLP has always taken the Labour Party whip in Westminster. But [...] we’re a separate party. So, when Labour was in opposition, we sat on the opposition benches; and when Labour was in government we were not part of the government, we’ve sat on Labour’s side again, on the government’s side but not bound by the whip in any way” (Interview 1 in Derry/Londonderry, 6 December 2018).

The GFA and related reforms within the host-state created additional fora through which the SDLP could have engaged with host-state actors over European issues, such as the JMC(E) or the British-Irish Council. However, the SDLP’s limited role within the power-sharing sub-state government and these institutions’ political limitations (see above) prevented these fora from turning into relevant sites of kin-minority party – host-state alliances. The situation was somewhat different within the new sub-state power-sharing government, where individual representatives from the SDLP and the UUP did engage on European issues and acted “effectively [as] ‘Europe’ Ministers” (Murphy 2014, 105).

At the European level, the SDLP reinforced its alliances with kin-state and host-state actors proactively in the EP. For the SDLP, these alliances in the EP had three advantages. Firstly, the EP served the SDLP as a forum to address functional issues that were supported by the kin-minority and the unionist host-state majority alike. This is reflected by their cooperation

on securing European funding for Northern Ireland and the slow de-securitization that resulted from this cooperation (ibid., 82). Secondly, the EP was the only forum where kin-minority and unionist host-state majority representatives came together, and where kin-minority representatives were not a priori marginalized. This was, among other things, due to the SDLP's consistent affiliation with the PES, while unionist MEPs had no such institutionalized network. Lastly, due to its close relationship with the two conservative parties from the kin-state, the SDLP also had access to their respective party federations, particularly to the EPP through Fine Gael. This extensive network helped the SDLP promote its border-transcending goals at the European level which was, among other things, reflected in the EP's 1984 report on the Northern Ireland conflict (Hayward 2006, 268).

Sinn Féin

Despite SF's scepticism of the dispersion of sovereignty, the party came to view the European centre as a new, promising forum to engage in and to build political alliances. During the peace process, this change occurred in parallel with SF's acceptance of and engagement in domestic political fora at the state and sub-state levels. Traditionally, SF had rejected democratic means of engaging in kin-state and host-state institutions. The party did not stand in elections, as part of its aim to delegitimize the host-state and the kin-state alike. This strategy changed in the early 1980s, after SF candidates got elected to the UK parliament in the exceptional circumstances of IRA prisoners' hunger strikes. Subsequently, SF's engagement in political fora was marked by "abstentionism"; that is, elected SF candidates would not accept their parliamentary mandates. Only in the latter half of the 1980s, SF gradually abandoned its abstentionist strategy and began to actively engage in an increasing number of elected bodies. By the time of the GFA, SF candidates accepted their mandates in all fora, except for the UK host-state parliament (Maillot 2005, 21ff). The effects of European integration only had a limited impact on SF's alliances in domestic fora.

SF takes a special position concerning its relationship with actors in the kin-state. SF is the only party in this study that is organized as a kin-minority party in the host-state and as a party of the national majority in the kin-state. The party is keen to portray itself as one, unified organization across the island of Ireland and as the only party that represents the Irish nation in Northern Ireland and the Republic. As such, SF in Northern Ireland does not have the same incentive to seek alliances with actors in the kin-state as other kin-minority parties.

The party, thus, does not depend on Europe-induced opportunities to this end. Instead, SF has sought to establish itself as a viable political actor in the kin-state.

At the time of the peace process, however, the party's leadership was dominated by members of the Northern kin-minority, and the largest part of its political efforts were directed at the political situation in Northern Ireland (Maillot 2005, 26). SF was only modestly successful in gaining a political foothold in the kin-state, where it had abandoned abstentionism in a controversial internal vote in 1986 (ibid., 27). SF's first TD (Irish Member of Parliament) only got elected in 1997, when the peace process had substantially advanced. Against this backdrop, SF's relationship with other actors in the kin-state had two dimensions. Firstly, SF engaged in informal links with the kin-state government throughout most parts of the peace process. This was due to SF and the Irish government's interest to end political violence in Northern Ireland and to assure the kin-minority's accommodation within the new institutional structures there (Coakley and Todd 2020, 208ff). In this setting, SF acted as a representative of a segment of the Northern kin-minority. SF was excluded from more formalized engagements with the kin-state government before it proved its rejection of political violence. SF did not, for instance, participate in the New Ireland Forum. SF's relationship with the kin-state government was, however, institutionalized through the former's role in the Northern Ireland power-sharing executive and the GFA's cross-border institutions. While SF was aware of these institutions' limitations, the party did consider them as a valuable forum for kin-minority – kin-state alliances, despite on a highly technical and abstract level. In this context, SF also appreciated Europe's border-opening effects that facilitated the work of the NSMC. In the words of a SF sub-state minister,

“The all-Ireland bodies that we created would have been more bureaucratically difficult if we weren't both members of the European Union. And [...] because of the Single Market, the Customs Union the borders would disappear. That coincided, actually, with our peace process [...]. You know we have a two-states development as an island over almost a hundred years now, and certainly up to the 1990s. Some 70 years, we developed back-to-back [...]. So, the use of the North-South bodies, and the North-South Ministerial Council is to try and remove those kinds of administrative and bureaucratic barriers to cooperation” (Interview in Newry, 28 November 2018).

Secondly, within the Republic of Ireland, SF has been an electoral and ideological competitor to other political parties. Different positions between SF and most of its competitors on European integration were a key component of this competition. Unlike, the pro-European

Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and Labour, SF consistently highlighted the allegedly negative effects of the dispersion of sovereignty on the Republic. The party campaigned against all revisions of the EU Treaties that require approval by referendum in Ireland. Thus, SF used the effects of European integration not to forge alliances with (other) actors within the kin-state but to differentiate itself from what it considered to be the “establishment” (Maillot 2009).

Regarding SF’s relationship with actors in the host-state, European integration provided little incentives for alliances. Between SF and representatives of the unionist host-state majority in Northern Ireland, some cooperation on European issues developed once SF entered the sub-state power-sharing institutions. This has happened, in particular, around questions of regional and PEACE funding, as well as agriculture. This has de-securitized the relationships between SF and the host-state majority to some degree, giving SF representatives, among other things, the opportunity to represent the entire Northern Ireland Executive at EU Council meetings as part of the UK delegation (Murphy 2014, 105). However, SF did not exploit overlapping interests on European matters to build strong alliances, and significant differences between itself and unionist host-state majority parties remain, even on the use of some European funding (ibid. 110).

Contrastingly, at the host-state centre, SF maintained several informal contacts with actors who shared its scepticism of the European centre. This included particularly left-leaning individuals within the British Labour Party. Shared Euroscepticism was not a driver for these contacts. However, a similar, nation-state-focused understanding of sovereignty and akin economic analyses facilitated the cooperation between SF and the left fringes of the Labour Party (Bean 2007, 74ff). These contacts preceded public negotiations between SF and other actors in the host-state, particularly with the Conservative-led government at the time. When the host-state government engaged publicly with SF in the wake of the 1994 IRA ceasefire, these negotiations were solely focussed on the situation in Northern Ireland. European integration did not play a role (SF 1994a). SF’s continued abstentionism at the host-state parliament additionally complicated alliances around a wider range of issues, including Europe-related policies.

However, SF did aim to use the European level to broaden its alliances with actors that were sympathetic about its irredentist goals outside the host-state and the kin-state. Even when SF did not have a representative in the EP before 2004, the party published an analysis of European party federations and their members in an attempt to identify potential allies (SF 1999b). This preparation for representation at the European level mirrored SF’s increasing

acceptance of political institutions across different levels of government. In this context, the European centre, and the EP in particular, was seen as yet another forum where SF could pursue its border-crossing goals. In the words of a former EP candidate,

“The isolation [of SF by other actors] was almost total in the early 1970s. By the late 1980s, we were as often in Westminster, lobbying both Tories and Labour politicians to engage with us [...]. Those early platforms just continued to grow and develop as we moved into the political mainstream ourselves as a political party [...]. It was part of the move towards electoralism, and it wasn’t a partial decision, it was a total decision. So, I suppose if there was a bottom line, it was [that we would stand for elections to] each and every forum, including British elections, where the Irish people had the opportunity to elect their representatives [...]. We would never attend or give allegiance to a British Parliament. But we would go to a European Parliament because Ireland was a signatory” (Interview 2 in Derry/Londonderry, 6 December 2018).

Yet until the electoral success of a SF EP candidate in 2004, these considerations remained hypothetical.

Conclusion

This chapter confirms the hypothesis that European integration facilitates kin-minorities’ accommodation in their host-state and offers kin-minority parties an alternative to irredentism. The Northern Irish peace process has been substantially supported by the opening of the land border between Northern Ireland and nationalists’ kin-state. Additionally, the dispersion of sovereignty helped the creation of new, consociational institutions at the sub-state level. These dynamics that culminated in the 1998 Good Friday/Belfast Agreement helped bring political violence in Northern Ireland largely to an end. The cultural boundary between the kin-minority and the host-state majority has, however, not substantially softened.

Both relevant kin-minority parties in Northern Ireland endorsed these Europe-sponsored dynamics, although to very different degrees. The SDLP’s European identity, its border-transcending goals and strategies and its broad alliances with actors from across the political spectrum reflect the party’s unconditional endorsement for European integration and its domestic effects since the 1970s. Contrastingly, SF’s endorsement for Europe-sponsored

opportunities remained mostly limited to its border-opening effects. The party remained sceptical of the dispersion of sovereignty or the softening of cultural boundaries. Nevertheless, SF's shift to border-crossing goals and strategies underpinned the party's renunciation of political violence and significantly contributed to ending the Troubles.

7. Northern Ireland & Brexit

Introduction

Northern Ireland's kin-minority parties had a mixed record of endorsing Europe-sponsored opportunities of de-securitization and border opening during the peace process of the 1990s. The SDLP pursued border-transcending goals to a degree that its support for European opportunities was indistinguishable from its domestic agenda. Contrastingly, SF underwent a significant change from pursuing "Euroreject", border-shifting goals to embracing a border-crossing agenda as part of its wider acceptance of democratic political institutions.

This chapter analyses continuities of, and disruptions to, these developments in light of the UK's decision to withdraw from the EU. The process of the UK's withdrawal, commonly referred to as "Brexit", has to date been the most far-reaching instance of European disintegration. Consequently, the dynamics that unfolded in the aftermath of the 2016 referendum on the UK's EU membership offer a unique opportunity to study kin-minority parties' responses to European disintegration. The hypothesis in such a scenario suggests that disintegration incentivizes kin-minority parties to dismiss European opportunities and to revert to irredentist goals outside European channels. Based on the experience of the SDLP and SF, this chapter argues that this is not the case. On the contrary, the host-state government's Euroscepticism and its decision to abandon institutions at the European centre perpetuated and strengthened kin-minority parties' endorsement for European opportunities.

This chapter covers the period between the UK's decision to leave the EU in June 2016 and the early phases of the implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement between the UK and the EU in February 2021. It starts out by providing an overview of the debates on Brexit and on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland that was agreed between the EU and the UK ahead of the latter's withdrawal. Subsequently, the effects of Brexit on the relations between the nationalist kin-minority, the Irish kin-state and the UK host-state are assessed. This sets the stage for the analysis of the SDLP's and SF's responses to this changing environment.

Brexit and the emergence of the Northern Ireland Protocol

The Conservative-led UK government announced its intention to hold a referendum on the state's membership in the EU after its election in 2015. The decision was taken based on the Conservative Party's electoral strategies and party-internal considerations (Bale 2018). The host-state government did not consider the referendum's potential implications for Northern Ireland and the GFA (Phinnemore 2020, 633). The overwhelming expectation among all political parties in the UK, including in Northern Ireland, was a referendum outcome in favour of continued EU membership (Murphy 2018, 22ff). When the referendum took place in June 2016, this was, indeed, the outcome in Northern Ireland and Scotland where 56 and 62 per cent, respectively, voted to remain in the EU. In the UK overall, however, 52 per cent of the valid votes were cast in favour of leaving the EU.

Partially due to the expectation of a "remain" victory, the UK government had not prepared the details of what withdrawal from the EU would entail and what future relationship the UK would seek with the EU (Jones 2019). The extent to which the effects of European integration on Northern Ireland's nationalist kin-minority would be reversed remained unclear after the referendum. The resulting uncertainty remained even after the UK government had entered formal negotiations about its withdrawal with the European Commission in mid-2017 (Phinnemore 2020, 635). This was further exacerbated by divisions within the governing Conservative Party and its weakened political mandate after the 2017 general elections (Aidt et al. 2019). Only after multiple changes in leadership and a decisive electoral victory in December 2019, could the Conservatives complete the negotiations on the UK's disintegration from the European centre (Cutts et al. 2020).

The EU, in contrast, pursued a unified and consistent approach in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum. The goals of the Irish kin-state were predominantly represented by the European Commission who negotiated the terms of the UK's withdrawal from the EU on behalf of the 27 remaining member states. From the outset of the negotiations with the UK, the EU and its remaining member states transparently outlined their principles and, among other things, emphasized that

“the Union is committed to continuing to support peace, stability and reconciliation on the island of Ireland. Nothing in the [UK's withdrawal] Agreement should undermine the objectives and commitments set out in the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts [...]; the unique circumstances and challenges on the island of Ireland will require flexible and imaginative solutions. Negotiations should in particular aim

to avoid the creation of a hard border on the island of Ireland, while respecting the integrity of the Union legal order. Full account should be taken of the fact that Irish citizens residing in Northern Ireland will continue to enjoy rights as EU citizens” (European Council 2017).

After prolonged controversies, the UK left the EU in January 2020, and the Single Market and the Customs Union in January 2021. Northern Ireland left the EU alongside its host-state. However, the “Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland” annexed to the UK’s Withdrawal Agreement with the EU ensures Northern Ireland’s continued *de facto* membership in the Single Market for goods and in the EU’s Customs Union. These provisions require the continued application of substantial parts of EU legislation in Northern Ireland. In particular, Northern Ireland continues to be subject to those parts of the EU *acquis* that are relevant for the free movement of goods such as sanitary and phytosanitary rules or environmental standards (Phinnemore 2020, 637f). Through these rules, the Protocol has prevented the hardening of the state border between Northern Ireland and its kin-state by avoiding the need for physical infrastructure at the border. However, less “visible” obstacles for cross-border interactions (for instance for services) have emerged as a result of disintegration (*ibid.*, 641). Moreover, given Northern Ireland’s continued alignment with parts of the European centre’s legislation and Great Britain’s simultaneous disintegration from it, the Protocol requires new controls for the movement of goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, specifically for animal and plant-based products or if goods are at risk of entering the wider Single European Market through Northern Ireland (Hayward 2021). This has created a new economic boundary between Northern Ireland and the rest of its host-state and has led to resounding critique of the Protocol on part of the unionist host-state majority (bbc.co.uk 2021).

Northern Ireland’s sub-state institutions played no formal role in reaching this agreement between the UK and the EU. On the one hand, this was owed to the UK’s sub-state entities’ limited input in the entire Brexit process. This also constrained the appreciation of Scottish and Welsh sub-state interests (McEwen 2020). On the other hand, and more significantly, Northern Ireland’s sub-state institutions were defunct during the largest part of the Brexit process between the 2016 referendum and the 2020 withdrawal. Disagreements between SF, by then the dominant kin-minority party, and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) over the handling of a corruption scandal led to the dissolution of the sub-state power-sharing government in early 2017 (Murphy and Evershed 2020, 465). The two parties only agreed to

share power alongside the SDLP, Ulster Unionists and the Alliance Party in early 2020, after the Withdrawal Agreement between the UK and the EU had been finalized (Hayward and Phinnemore 2020). The Northern Ireland Protocol, however, grants Northern Ireland's sub-state legislature the opportunity to vote on the continued application of the Protocol's border-opening elements in regular intervals of four or eight years, depending on whether it is approved by a simple majority or by a majority from both national groups (Phinnemore 2020, 637f).

The next section assesses more closely how the developments after the 2016 Brexit referendum have altered the triadic relationship between Northern Ireland's kin-minority, the Irish kin-state and the UK host-state. This determines the resulting opportunities and constraints for Northern Ireland's kin-minority parties.

Northern Ireland's triadic relationship under pressure

Kin-minority – kin-state relations

European disintegration in the context of Brexit has had a paradoxical effect on kin-minority – kin-state relations on the island of Ireland. On the one hand, there was a wide-spread consensus that the key effects of European integration on kin-minority – kin-state relations must be preserved. Representatives of the kin-minority, the kin-state and the host-state all consistently emphasized that the openness of the state border and the de-securitization that had been facilitated by European integration needed to be continued (Murphy 2018, 123ff). On the other hand, the host-state's decision to withdraw from significant institutions at the European centre aimed to undo some of these effects, and to harden the UK's state border with remaining EU member states (McCall 2018). These contradictory aspirations were partially reconciled with the Northern Ireland Protocol. During the time of data collection, an earlier version of the Protocol was controversially discussed under the label of the Northern Ireland "backstop" (instituteforgovernment.org.uk 2020). The debates concerning the Protocol and the backstop affected cross-border nation-building as well as future territorial cooperation between Northern Ireland and its kin-state.

Preserving citizenship right: group-based effects

European integration had facilitated the de-securitization and legitimization of cross-border nation-building on the island of Ireland after the GFA. Northern Irish individuals' birthright to hold the kin-state's citizenship if they so wished had not significantly altered kin-minority members' civic, political or social rights in the context of shared UK and Irish EU membership. With Northern Ireland's withdrawal from the EU, this situation was no longer secured. EU citizens' rights in the UK as well as the UK citizens' rights in the EU needed to be re-negotiated (Schiek 2018).

Two approaches by the EU and the kin-state have shaped the debates about citizenship and cross-border nation-building on the island of Ireland in light of European disintegration. Firstly, there was a general need to clarify the status of EU citizens after Brexit. This, implicitly, contributed to further mainstream and de-securitize kin-minority – kin-state relations in a wider European setting after Brexit. This approach did not single out the kin-minority's status post-Brexit and subsumed Irish citizens in Northern Ireland under the wider category of EU citizens. EU negotiators declared that “[s]afeguarding the status and rights of the EU27 citizens and their families in the United Kingdom and of the citizens of the United Kingdom and their families in the EU27 Member States is *the first priority* for the [Brexit] negotiations “ (European Council 2017, emphasis added). The preservation of EU citizens' rights in the UK, and vice versa, was crucial for continued mobility and exchange between Northern Ireland and nationalists' kin-state. Negotiating the future of kin-state and host-state citizenship as part of a more general European approach avoided stressing the particularity of kin-minority – kin-state relations.

The second approach to kin-minority – kin-state relations was more particularistic and aimed explicitly at maintaining the rights of kin-minority members who are Irish citizens in Northern Ireland. In this respect, the EU had abandoned its conventional approach of implicitly de-securitizing matters of contested national identities by alluding to more general concepts such as non-discrimination or functional cooperation. Rather, the European Commission had accepted Ireland's role as the nationalist kin-minority's kin-state and was determined to safeguard the accommodation of the kin-minority and of those elements of cross-border nation-building that were sanctioned by the GFA. The EU's support for “Irish citizens residing in Northern Ireland” (see quote above) directly reflects the Irish government's assurance

“[t]o the nationalist people in Northern Ireland [...] that we [the Irish government] have protected your interests throughout these negotiations. Your birth right as Irish citizens, and therefore as EU citizens, will be protected [...]. You will never again be left behind by an Irish Government” (Varadkar 2017).

This approach acknowledged that the accommodation of the kin-minority in Northern Ireland after Brexit might not be protected solely through more general EU-UK arrangements. Instead, the EU and Ireland sought particular safeguards for those kin-minority members who have acceded to the kin-state’s cross-border nation-building and who hold Irish citizenship. Many of these individuals’ rights were previously guaranteed through their status as EU citizens in another EU member state. For the post-Brexit period, however, the kin-state government aimed to assure that these kin-minority members could still exercise their full civic, political and social rights within Northern Ireland, without having to rescind their Irish citizenship or having to accept the citizenship of the host-state. In the 2019 Withdrawal Agreement this particularism is acknowledged in the Protocol that states that “[t]he United Kingdom shall ensure that no diminution of rights, safeguards or equality of opportunity, as set out in [...] the 1998 Agreement [...] results from its withdrawal from the Union, including in the area of protection against discrimination” (Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland 2019, Art 2.1).

Both approaches demonstrate that the kin-state and the EU have been committed to preserve Europe-induced opportunities for kin-minority – kin-state interactions, even if this entailed divergence from the EU’s implicit de-securitizing effects. Consequently, opportunities for kin-minority parties to pursue Europe-induced links with the kin-state were not diminished by European disintegration. Moreover, the EU’s particularistic approach to individual kin-minority – kin-state links has not led to a re-securitization of these links. Rather, the divergence of rights between EU and UK citizens in the wider EU has made the question of individuals’ citizenship more a matter of utilitarian considerations than one of affiliation with a national community. This is reflected in a 20 per cent increase in applications for Irish, and hence, continued EU citizenship in Northern Ireland after the 2016 referendum (dfa.ie 2017).

In terms of common representation at the European centre, however, disintegration did have a direct, constraining effect on kin-minority – kin-state relations. With the UK’s withdrawal from the EU, Northern Ireland’s host-state is no longer represented in European fora, such as the EP or the EU Council. Thus, kin-minority party representatives have been deprived of the

possibility to seek alliances and pursue common interests with their kin-state counterparts at the European level.

Preserving an open border: territorial cooperation

The host-state government's decision to leave the EU aimed at hardening its state borders and to curtail the Four Freedoms of the Single Market, particularly for the movement of people. Consequently, the UK sought to not only leave the EU but also the SEM and the EU Customs Union (May 2017). Both measures could entail the re-introduction of customs posts and other physical infrastructure to control the quality of goods that enter and exit the SEM. The removal of such infrastructure in the 1990s was precisely what had contributed to the opening and de-securitization of the border between Northern Ireland and its kin-state in conjunction with the peace process (McCall 2018). Thus, Brexit threatened to profoundly disrupt European integration's border-opening effects and the de-securitization of the state border between Northern Ireland and Ireland. In other words, Brexit jeopardized fundamental Europe-induced opportunities for territorial kin-minority – kin-state cooperation.

The precise effects of Brexit on the Irish border, however, remained unclear and highly contested until the final stage of the withdrawal negotiations between the UK and the EU. This was mainly due to internal controversies within the host-state government and legislature, and their inability to reconcile three contradictory claims. Firstly, as alluded to above, the host-state aimed to harden its state borders as part of its withdrawal from the EU (ibid., 298). Secondly, the host-state government repeatedly insisted that it wanted to preserve the openness of the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland to preserve the border-opening and de-securitization that underpinned the peace process (UK Government 2017). Lastly, the host-state initially insisted that its future relationship with the EU, including border arrangements, should apply uniformly to the entire UK, with no exceptions for Northern Ireland (bbc.com 2018b). Contrastingly, the EU and Ireland's position was consistent in that they aimed at mitigating the border-closing and securitizing effects of Brexit more generally; and in their commitment to apply "flexible and imaginative solutions [...] to avoid the creation of a hard border on the island of Ireland", while protecting Ireland's place within the EU (European Council 2017). Northern Ireland's sub-state institutions did not take a stance in this debate, given the collapse of the power-sharing coalition in early 2017. The only exception was a letter from the First and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland to the UK

Prime Minister, in the wake of the 2016 referendum, that highlighted the importance of an open border with Ireland (executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk 2016).

Only after longstanding infighting, the UK government abandoned the last of the three claims above and agreed to a differentiated treatment of Northern Ireland after Brexit. These differentiated provisions, laid out in the Northern Ireland Protocol, assure the continued application of key EU legislation in Northern Ireland and maintain its *de facto* membership in the SEM for goods and in the Customs Union. Consequently, the Protocol helps avoid the need for additional checks and physical infrastructure on the border between Northern Ireland and nationalists' kin-state (Phinnemore 2020, 641). It maintains Europe-induced border-opening and border de-securitizing effects on the state border. Additionally, other instruments of kin-minority – kin-state cooperation will also remain in place. This concerns, among other things, the Common Travel Area that avoids passport controls between Ireland and all of the UK, the NSMC and its implementation bodies, and some funding provisions such as PEACE that will now be continued under the label “PEACE PLUS” (seupb.eu 2021). Crucially for the longer run, the Protocol safeguards the GFA's “principle of consent” that allows for a united Ireland if a majority in both parts of the island so wishes. In this scenario, all of Ireland would again become a part of the EU (Murphy 2018, 115).

The preservation of these Europe-induced effects notwithstanding, the threat of a harder and re-securitized border between the nationalist kin-minority and its kin-state presented two contradictory opportunities for kin-minority parties. On the one hand, the looming re-securitization of the border could be interpreted as a constraint to Europe-induced border-transcending or border-crossing goals. In this logic, Brexit provided an opportunity for the rejection of Europe-induced opportunities and enabled border-shifting, irredentist goals and strategies. On the other hand, the EU and Ireland's insistence on an open, de-securitized border, and the arrangements of the Protocol provided continued opportunities for Europe-induced kin-minority – kin-state cooperation.

Kin-minority – host-state relations

While key European effects on kin-minority – kin-state relations could be preserved, European disintegration and the UK's withdrawal from the EU have substantially reversed Europe-induced effects on kin-minority – host-state relations. This is apparent regarding the relationship between the kin-minority and the unionist host-state majority in Northern Ireland

whose representatives have taken opposing positions on Brexit. Additionally, the host-state centre's aim to reverse the dispersion of sovereignty at a time when Northern Irish sub-state institutions were defunct has altered centre – periphery relations within the host-state.

Re-securitization over European issues: group-based effects

The kin-minority and the unionist host-state majority have traditionally had different interpretations of the European centre. A softening of the cultural boundaries between the two groups had not occurred against the backdrop of European integration. The European centre did only serve as a common reference point for a limited range of issues, such as funding opportunities. The Brexit referendum campaign and the subsequent events dissipated much of this already narrow common ground. This led to a further hardening of the cultural boundaries between the kin-minority and the unionist host-state majority and to a re-securitization of the relationship between the two groups (Murphy and Evershed 2020, 463).

In the 2016 referendum, the two kin-minority parties, SDLP and SF, and the cross-community Alliance Party and Green Party all campaigned for the UK to stay in the EU. Contrastingly, the biggest unionist party DUP supported withdrawal from the UK. The second-biggest unionist party UUP was divided before the referendum and supported Brexit after the 2016 plebiscite (McCann and Hainsworth 2017, 328ff, Coakley 2020, 364). Voters' choices in the referendum also largely followed their national identity. 89 per cent of kin-minority members (who in surveys describe themselves as “nationalist”) supported remaining in the EU, while only 35 per cent of self-declared unionists supported this option. 70 per cent of individuals describing themselves as belonging to “neither” national group – since the late 2000s the largest segment of Northern Ireland's population (bbc.co.uk 2019) – also supported remain. In sum, this amounted in the 56 per cent majority in favour of “remain” in Northern Ireland (Coakley and Garry 2016).

The kin-minority's and the unionist host-state majority's different assessments of the European centre became more outspoken in the context of the referendum. European integration turned it into a point of contestation, further division, and securitization between the two national groups, rather than a shared reference point or an incentive for cooperation. These divisions were further exacerbated by three subsequent developments. Firstly, kin-minority parties and unionist host-state majority parties provided different interpretations of the referendum outcome and pursued largely opposed goals during the Brexit negotiations.

Kin-minority parties (and cross-community parties) stressed the fact that a majority of voters in Northern Ireland had voted to remain in the EU. On this basis, they argued for Northern Ireland's continued affiliation with core aspects of the European centre, regardless of the host-state's prospective relationship with the EU (see below). Contrastingly, unionist host-state majority parties emphasized the overall referendum result in the UK and demanded that its withdrawal from the EU should apply equally to all parts of the state. They rejected several proposals of differentiated treatment for Northern Ireland after Brexit, including the Northern Ireland Protocol (Murphy 2018, 127ff). At the time of writing (March 2021), unionist parties called for the suspension and renegotiation of the Protocol. This happened against the backdrop of former paramilitaries' threats of violence against officials who were implementing the Protocol (McClements 2021). Secondly, the collapse of Northern Ireland's sub-state power-sharing institutions deprived kin-minority and host-state majority parties of a crucial democratic forum for deliberation. After 2016, kin-minority and host-state majority representatives had no formal forum where they could have sought common positions on Brexit and its potential challenges or opportunities for Northern Ireland. The joint letter by the DUP First Minister and the SF deputy First Minister in August 2016 was the only engagement between the parties on imminent European disintegration (Murphy and Evershed 2021, 8f). Attempts to restore power-sharing were unsuccessful for as long as the details of Brexit remained unclear (dfa.ie 2020). Lastly, kin-minority and unionist host-state majority relations were further strained as a result of the DUP's support for the UK government after the 2017 general election. That election left the Conservative Party without a majority in parliament and compelled it to seek external parliamentary support for its minority government from the DUP. For kin-state and kin-minority representatives, the host-state government's reliance on the DUP undermined the host-state centre's impartiality in Northern Ireland sub-state politics that had been a key pillar the peace process (Murphy and Evershed 2020, 469).

European disintegration has limited kin-minority parties' opportunities for cooperation with the host-state majority. The relationship between the two national groups has been re-securitized, and the cultural boundaries between them have hardened. This hampers a shared approach to several matters, not least to Brexit and to the implementation of the Protocol. More generally, European disintegration constrains the kin-minority's opportunities for accommodation within the host-state by undermining common reference points and incentives for cooperation. Kin-minority parties' endorsement of European opportunities now alienates them from the host-state majority. This has only been partially mitigated by the growing success of the pro-European, cross-community Alliance party that has cooperated closely with

Northern Ireland's kin-minority parties during the Brexit negotiations (Hayward 2020, see below).

Dysfunctional and circumvented: centre – periphery relations

The UK's decision to leave the EU was, to a large degree, driven by the desire to reverse the dispersion of sovereignty across levels of government. The exclusive identification with the state centre and the suspicion towards the European centre was epitomized by the "Leave" campaign's rallying cry to "take back control" (McCall 2018, 298). The implications of this claim for sub-state entities' self-rule and shared rule were at first unclear and then, as the details of Brexit materialized, constraining.

Regarding Northern Ireland's self-rule, the most immediate constraint was the collapse of the sub-state power-sharing government against the wider backdrop of Brexit. While disagreements over Brexit were not the cause for the collapse of power-sharing, the re-securitization between national groups hindered the formation of a new sub-state government (Murphy and Evershed 2021, 8f). This impeded territorial self-rule during the entire period of the Brexit negotiations between 2017 and 2020 and might cause persisting problems for power-sharing in Northern Ireland. Additionally, the repatriation of competences from the European centre to the host-state as part of Brexit also constrains sub-state self-rule (Dogan et al. 2020). Competences that have previously been shared between the EU and the sub-state level have partially been attributed to the host-state centre. Sub-state legislation that was formerly embedded in wider European frameworks are now subject to potentially more constraining legislation from the host-state. Rules on product standards in one UK sub-state entity, for instance, are now trumped by less restrictive standards in other sub-state entities or at the state centre (ibid., 6f).

This is aggravated by sub-state entities' limited shared rule during and after the UK's withdrawal from the EU. For the sake of the Brexit negotiations, the "Joint Ministerial Committee (European Negotiations)" (JMC-EN) was created for consultation and possible coordination between the host-state centre and sub-state authorities from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (McEwen 2020, 5). However, the JMC-EN has not been able to make binding decisions, and among sub-state administrations, there was a "general consensus that the JMC(EN) did not work well – and certainly not as had been anticipated at the start. The devolved administrations perceive there to be too little sharing of information by the UK

government and an outstanding need for better prioritisation of issues as they come for quadrilateral consideration” (Hayward et al. 2020, 41). For Northern Ireland, the benefits of consultations in the JMC(EN) were further diminished by the absence of a functional sub-state administration. Once, Northern Ireland’s sub-state institutions were reinstalled, they withheld their legislative consent for the host-state centre’s legislation on leaving the EU (ibid., 7), which, however, only had a symbolic effect.

After the UK’s withdrawal from the EU, shared rule for Northern Ireland continued to be limited, given the deficiencies in the UK’s intergovernmental relations and the host-state centre’s increased power after the repatriation of competences from the European centre (Keating 2020). Additionally, by force of the Northern Ireland Protocol, those parts of EU legislation that regulate the free movement of goods will continue to apply in Northern Ireland, without sub-state institutions’ continuous possibility to influence said legislation through the host-state. However, the Protocol provides for some inputs of the sub-state institutions into its operation through the Joint Committee between the UK and the EU, through the NSMC or through the consent mechanism that foresees a vote on the future application of Protocol’s provisions on cross-border movement every four or eight years. The UK government will also be consulted on EU legislation that applies to the Northern Ireland Protocol through the Joint Consultative Working Group (Hayward et al. 2020, 18, 45ff). In light of the diverging assessments of the Protocol between kin-minority and host-state majority parties, however, a coordinated approach to implementing and applying the Protocol appears unlikely as of March 2021.

For kin-minority parties, the Brexit-related constraints to territorial self-rule and shared rule has diminished the opportunities to engage with the host-state centre through established political channels. Fora for cooperation that were established as part of the GFA and wider provisions did not serve their purpose during and after the Brexit negotiations. This has left kin-minority parties with merely informal means of engaging with the host-state centre and, indeed, the European centre.

Kin-state – host-state relations

Shared membership in European organizations constituted the backdrop against which the de-securitization of bilateral relations and the (temporary) perpetuation of the state border occurred. The UK’s withdrawal from the EU has led to a substantial reversal of these trends.

While the key tenets of these bilateral relations, as specified in the GFA, persist and are safeguarded through the Northern Ireland Protocol, there is now less economic and political integration between the two states, and signs of re-securitization have begun to surface.

The UK's withdrawal from the EU has been preceded by its government's gradual detachment from cooperation with the Irish government over Northern Ireland issues. Although kin-state – host-state cooperation has always been critical for the political stability and security in Northern Ireland since the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement, the conservative host-state government of the 2010s considered the peace process to be concluded and largely refrained from bilateral engagements on Northern Ireland (Coakley and Todd 2020, 536). The GFA's interstate bodies largely fell in disuse when sub-state institutions were up and running between 2007 and 2017. The British–Irish Intergovernmental Conference stopped meeting after 2007 (*ibid.*, 532), and UK Prime Ministers have not participated in the British-Irish Council after that date (McEwen 2017, 678). While there was more commitment to bilateral engagement on part of the Irish government (as can be seen through Taoisigh's continuous attendance of the British-Irish Council), its primary focus during much of the 2010s was on economic recovery, rather than on engagement with kin-minority issues (*ibid.*, Coakley and Todd 2020, 536).

Against the backdrop of this decreasing bilateral engagement on Northern Ireland, the 2016 Brexit referendum and subsequent negotiations led to a partial re-securitization of bilateral relations. Continuous claims by the governing Conservative Party to review the UK's commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights, despite the Convention's underpinning for the GFA, has called the common ground between the host-state and the kin-state into question (IIEA 2017). Racist remarks about Ireland by some Conservative party members have aggravated this re-securitizing trend during the Brexit negotiations (bbc.com 2018a). At the time of writing, the Northern Ireland Protocol “ensure[s] that [there will] no diminution of rights, safeguards or equality of opportunity” after Brexit. Yet, disagreements between the governments over the implementation of the Protocol have not led to a de-securitization of political relations by early 2021 (Darmanin et al. 2021).

The UK's disintegration from the EU has also led to a significant economic and political disintegration between Northern Ireland's host-state and kin-state. This has occurred despite the kin-state's continuous opposition to Brexit, which has led the Irish government to proactively take a stance in the 2016 referendum campaign and, subsequently, to champion the UK's continued membership in the Single Market and other key elements of political and

economic integration (Murphy 2018, 111). In light of the UK's withdrawal from these European realms, however, common kin-state – host-state representation in European fora such as the EU Council or the EP no longer occurs. The Four Freedoms no longer apply for exchanges between the UK and Ireland. Goods and services are now subject to restrictions if they are traded between the two states. Yet, by virtue of the GFA and the Northern Ireland Protocol, bilateral institutions such as the Common Travel Area and the British-Irish Council remain in place. Additionally, the Protocol maintains key parts of economic integration between Northern Ireland and the kin-state, while requiring controls for goods that are traded between Northern Ireland and the host-state (Hayward 2021). While this situation preserves the border-opening opportunities for kin-minority parties discussed above, the resulting disruptions constrains the cooperation between kin-minority parties, the host-state and the host-state majority's unionist representatives in Northern Ireland.

Kin-minority parties' responses

Identities

Both the SDLP and SF continued to view the aspiration to political unity on the island of Ireland as the defining pattern of the kin-minority. Previous trends, like the SDLP's strong identification with the European centre or SF's hesitant endorsement of softening cultural boundaries have persisted, despite Brexit's disruptive effects on the kin-minority's environment.

Social Democratic and Labour Party

Despite the disruptions of European integration caused by Brexit, the SDLP's identity has been marked by continuity. Key patterns of the party's identity have persisted since the peace process. In response to Brexit, the SDLP's commitment to a European layer of identity has been invigorated, and its endorsement for the softening of cultural boundaries has become more explicit. Nevertheless, the SDLP has continued to view the Irish nation and the goal of political unity as the primary reference point for the kin-minority's identity.

The SDLP has consistently highlighted its European identity and reinforced this during its 2016 referendum campaign for continued EU membership and beyond. Given that 56 per cent of the Northern Ireland electorate voted to remain in the EU, the SDLP claimed that it

represented these pro-EU votes by virtue of its European identity and that its unambiguous allegiance to the European centre distinguished it from all other Northern Ireland parties. Consequently, the party argued against European disintegration and for Northern Ireland's continued allegiance to and membership in the EU. The SDLP continued to emphasize that European integration provided a template for de-securitization and the softening of cultural boundaries that needed to be applied in Northern Ireland, and that must not be jeopardized by disintegration. In its manifesto for the 2019 general elections, the party stated that:

“[t]he SDLP is proud of our history as the most pro-European party on this island. While others opposed the principles of European integration, our leaders were inspired by the European Union as the world's most successful peace project [...]. We voted to remain [...]. SDLP MPs will use every parliamentary, legal and diplomatic tool at our disposal to stop Brexit” (SDLP 2019, 4, emphasis added).

In its recent documents, the SDLP has underscored that the collective who “voted to remain” is not confined to the kin-minority but that support for the European centre and for continued EU membership has come from both national groups in Northern Ireland (although to different degrees). As such, the party tried to reach out “across traditional party and community divides [...] to replicate the progressive cross-community coalition that secured a remain vote here [in Northern Ireland] in 2016” (ibid., 1). This attempt to evoke cooperation across the cultural boundaries between the kin-minority and the host-state majority to pursue common interests at the European level resembled the SDLP's “post-nationalist” identity of earlier decades. That is, the party hoped that a shared allegiance to the European centre would help to overcome the differences between the two national groups, to incentivize cooperation and to ultimately soften the cultural boundaries between them. While the SDLP has been mindful of the re-securitizing effects of disintegration, it has also considered the pro-EU majority in Northern Ireland as an indication for this softening of cultural boundaries, at least among some sections of the two national groups. In the words of one former SDLP leader, Europe:

“was the conditioning context in which some of the brutal language that we were used to and the fixed notions and the absolutisms of the two nationalisms were able to blur” (Interview 1 in Derry/Londonderry, 6 December 2018).

The SDLP's endorsement for these soft boundaries between the kin-minority and the host-state majority has also been reflected in the SDLP's continuous engagement in the host-state

and sub-state institutions, and in the party's cooperation with moderate unionists in the aftermath of the 2016 referendum (bbc.com 2016). However, the SDLP continues to consider the defining pattern of the kin-minority to be the aspiration to political unity with the kin-state. The SDLP has highlighted that this aspiration must not be mitigated by Brexit, and that a united Ireland, brought about by a referendum as stipulated in the GFA, would remain a member of the EU (SDLP 2017, 7).

Sinn Féin

SF's identity has continued to focus exclusively on the Irish nation which, in SF's view, is composed of the population of the island. Despite the party's reinforced acceptance of the European centre and of sub-state institutions in Northern Ireland, the dispersion of sovereignty has not been reflected in SF's construction of identity. However, the de-securitization of the relationships between the kin-minority, the kin-state and the host-state has somewhat softened SF's depiction of the cultural boundaries between the kin-minority and the host-state majority. These trends, that had already been discernible before the Brexit-referendum, have not changed as a result of European disintegration.

SF's position on the European centre has emerged since the peace process and has become more nuanced since the referendum on the Treaty of Lisbon in the Republic of Ireland (Maillot 2009, 567f). Yet, the Brexit referendum and the subsequent negotiations urged SF to take an even clearer position on its preferred relationship between the kin-minority and the European centre. This position can be summarized as follows: The kin-minority and the kin-state majority – qua the Irish nation – should be in the EU and participate at the European centre. However, a European identity, and less so the European centre in its current form, are not constitutive for the Irish nation. SF's manifesto for the 2016 Northern Ireland sub-state election that took place briefly before the Brexit referendum was indicative of this position. The manifesto only included one brief paragraph on "Ireland in Europe" (SF 2016a, 17). There, SF promised to "[c]ampaign against Brexit" and, at the same time, to "resist the dilution of national sovereignty and to protect the competencies of the Member States" (ibid.). This relationship between SF's Irish identity and the European centre has been consistent across policy fields. SF accepts the kin-minority and the kin-state majority's affiliation with the European centre but resists any further strengthening of the latter, given SF's conviction that the (united) nation-state ought to be the ultimate expression of the Irish nation. In the words of a former SF MEP:

“We believe that decisions that affect communities should be made as close as possible to them. So, there are some areas of work that need to be dealt with at a pan-European level. We accept that [...]. But if they are better delivered on a national, or a regional, or a local level, then that’s where they should actually be decided. Fundamentally, it’s about democracy. People need to be able to affect political change” (Interview in Dublin, 27 October 2018).

Similarly, SF has been committed to work within Northern Ireland’s sub-state institutions and has regularly campaigned on its achievements in the Northern Ireland executive (SF 2016a). However, the party has also consistently emphasized that it does not consider Northern Ireland to be a distinct entity, or the kin-minority to have a separate identity within the wider cross-border nation. The party’s rejection of the denomination of “Northern Ireland” persists and references to prospective political unification of the island have been ubiquitous in the party’s publications (see, for instance SF 2016c). Before Northern Ireland lost its MEPs with Brexit, SF presented its MEP in “the North” as part of its wider national, Irish delegation (Utz 2019c).

The cultural boundaries that SF depicts between the Irish nation and the host-state majority in Great Britain have remained hard. It sees the Irish and British nations, as defined by the geography of their respective islands, as entirely separate nations (SF 2016c, 10). This is, among other things, reflected in SF’s interpretation of the 2016 Brexit referendum result. SF has viewed the “remain” vote in Northern Ireland as the expression of an entirely different political entity from the vote in the rest of the host-state. According to this view, the Irish nation has opted for its own constitutional framework within the EU by voting for the GFA in referendums North and South. This vote has supposedly been reaffirmed by the 2016 “remain” vote in the “North”, and is unaffected by the result in England and Wales. A leading Northern SF politician claimed that

“the issue for us is, we had a referendum. We took a position here in Ireland, as part of Ireland. And that’s been ignored” (Interview in Newry, 28 November 2018).

Nevertheless, some changes have occurred regarding SF’s view of the demarcation between the kin-minority/kin-state majority and the unionist population in Northern Ireland. While SF has been considering unionists to be part of the Irish nation, it has become more openly in favour of accepting and accommodating their British national identity within a hypothetical,

united Irish nation-state. One policy document summarized this somewhat contradictory depiction of the Irish nation's cultural boundaries in the following words:

“The Orange tradition is an Irish tradition and the British identity of many people in the North must be accommodated in an agreed, united Ireland” (SF 2016c, 8).

This reflects SF wider acceptance of the political status-quo but cannot be traced back to a Europe-induced softening of cultural boundaries. Unlike the SDLP, for instance, SF has not made explicit references to the cross-community nature of Northern Ireland's “remain” constituency.

Goals & strategies

Faced with the threat of hardening borders as a result of Brexit, Northern Ireland's kin-minority parties adopted surprisingly similar goals and strategies. The SDLP and SF both aimed to preserve Europe's border-opening effects on the island of Ireland, arguing against any hardening of the border between Northern Ireland and its kin-state. Both parties suggested that this should be secured through some kind of “special status” for Northern Ireland after the host-state's withdrawal from the EU. Contrary to aforementioned hypothesis, European disintegration has not incentivized kin-minority parties to return to more radical, irredentist goals.

Social Democratic and Labour Party

In line with its European identity and endorsement for soft cultural boundaries, the SDLP has continued to pursue *border-transcending goals and strategies*, even in the context of European disintegration. Its endorsement of Europe-induced opportunities has shaped all of the party's territorial and group-based goals, to a degree that makes its endorsement of European integration frequently indistinguishable from its preferred relationship with the kin-state and the host-state. However, the party has become somewhat more outspoken about the limitations of this border-transcending approach. In light of the host-state's withdrawal from the EU, the SDLP prioritized the continuation of Northern Ireland's border-transcending links with the kin-state and the European centre over cooperation and with the host-state centre and the “Brexiters” segments of the host-state majority. Despite the SDLP's preference for

Northern Ireland's continued or renewed EU membership, it has seen large parts of its goals realized through the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Regarding the kin-minority's relationship with the kin-state, the SDLP has been unequivocal about its goal to preserve Europe-induced border-opening effects and the border-transcending elements of the GFA. For the SDLP, any post-Brexit arrangement needed to include safeguards for the border-opening institutions that had been created before or during the period of shared UK-Irish EU membership. This included the Four Freedoms of the Single Market, the Customs Union, the Common Travel Area, and the GFA's North-South institutions like the NSMC (SDLP 2017, 6). The SDLP's preferred option would have been to achieve this through the continuation of the host-state's EU membership, or through its association with the European centre akin to the Single Market membership of the EEA states (SDLP 2019, 4). Such an arrangement would have safeguarded the de-securitization of the triadic relationship between the kin-minority, the kin-state and the host-state under a wider UK-EU arrangement.

However, this had been ruled out by the UK government from the beginning of the Brexit negotiations (May 2017), which led the SDLP to demand a "special status" for Northern Ireland (SDLP 2017, 6). The arrangements for open state borders between Northern Ireland and nationalists' kin-state should be preserved by Northern Ireland's continued access to the Single Market and other institutions, regardless of the rest of the host-state's relationship with the European centre. In other words, the SDLP prioritized the continuity of Europe-sponsored border-opening and de-securitization of kin-minority – kin-state relations, over de-securitized interactions with the host-state, once the latter were no longer available within a European framework. The SDLP pursued this goal, although it was acutely aware that it would potentially undermine the de-securitization of kin-minority – host-state interactions. One former party leader alluded to this by referring to the terminological sensitivities related with the concept of "special status":

"post-Brexit [referendum] there was a lot of argument about whether Northern Ireland should have 'special status'. And there were people within unionism saying, 'no we don't like the word special'. And Europe doesn't like the idea of anything being special [...]. The Irish government would be sensitive not to use the word 'special status' themselves [...]. So, you had 'particular', 'unique', 'bespoke', all sorts of words other than 'special'" (Interview 1 in Derry/Londonderry, 6 December 2018).

Regardless of these terminological considerations, the kin-state and the EU shared the SDLP's view that the openness of the state border and the de-securitization of kin-minority – kin-state relations needed to be given priority if they could not be maintained through a more general, mainstreaming approach to EU-UK relations after Brexit. This has been reflected in the EU's approach to the Brexit negotiations (see above) and in the Northern Ireland Protocol that claims to “address the unique circumstances on the island of Ireland through a unique solution” (Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland 2019). Although the Protocol does not entail all the goals that the SDLP had put forward under its concept of “special status”, the SDLP has been largely supportive of the Protocol. One SDLP MP stated that the earlier “backstop” version of the Protocol

“is a very accurate reflection of the concerns that we have. It reflects essentially the language and the thoughts that we used” (phone interview, 04 December 2018).

Where the Protocol in its current form does not live up to the SDLP's goals is on the idea that Northern Ireland should maintain its representation at the European centre through its close relationship with the kin-state. During the Brexit process, the party called for a continued “all-island representation in the European Parliament, Committee of the Regions and other European institutions to enable a direct dialogue between them and Northern Ireland” (SDLP, 2017, 6). Similarly, the SDLP also suggested that the GFA's cross-border institutions should be utilized to maintain Europe-induced border-opening and Northern Ireland's representation in Europe. The party demanded that:

“the scope of the [NSMC] must be urgently reviewed and expanded to enhance Northern Ireland's views at relevant EU meetings [...]. Regardless of the overall UK position on the Single Market and Customs Union, [the cross-border elements] of the Agreement can and must be used to enable North-South parity and equivalence and allow us an all-island single market for specific sectors” (ibid.).

However, the European centre does no longer serve as a forum for joint kin-minority – kin-state representation, and Northern Ireland's sub-state institutions' input into the day-to-day application of the Protocol is minimal (Hayward et al. 2020). Nevertheless, the SDLP has endorsed the Protocol, based on its continued border-opening effects (bbc.com 2021). In the longer run, however, the SDLP has been aspiring to irredentism by means of a referendum, as laid out in the GFA. In this context, the SDLP has emphasized that a hypothetical united Ireland would automatically be part of the EU and that “Northern Ireland is the only part of

the UK that can rejoin the EU without going through Article 49 of the Lisbon Treaty [that requires member states' unanimous consent for EU expansion]" (SDLP 2017, 7). At the same time, the SDLP has been cautious to present its demands for a referendum on Irish unity as a long-term goal and has warned about making hasty decisions on this issue (Holland 2021).

The SDLP's goals for kin-minority – host-state relations have been more ambiguous, given that its border-transcending goals are no longer applicable to most of these interactions. On the one hand, the SDLP has aimed to maintain the de-securitized relationship between the kin-minority and the host-state majority. This is in line with the party's support for soft cultural boundaries between the kin-minority and the host-state majority and its wider border-transcending approach of seeking common ground with all relevant actors in Northern Ireland. Accordingly, the SDLP aimed to build "a progressive cross-party coalition [with host-state majority representatives] to stop Brexit and stop [Prime Minister] Boris Johnson" (SDLP 2019, 4) at the host-state level. Similarly, at the sub-state level, the SDLP campaigned to find agreement between the kin-minority and the host-state majority to restore territorial self-rule when it was disrupted between 2017 and 2020. This was despite the party's acknowledgement that:

"[t]here are several fault lines that risk the stability and sustainability of a future [sub-state] Executive. Key among these are the relationships between leaders and parties which have become frayed over a period of years. A priority must be resetting the relationships between parties to work together in our substantial common interests" (SDLP 2019, 23).

On the other hand, the SDLP recognized that the feasibility of de-securitized kin-minority – host-state relations, based on common European reference points, has become severely limited. Against this backdrop, the SDLP clearly prioritized its allegiance to the European centre and to the kin-state over concessions to the Eurosceptic elements in the host-state. On a group-based dimension, the SDLP harshly criticized the "Conservative government, propped up by the DUP, [that] will not hesitate in dismantling that architecture [of the GFA] to achieve their selfish ambition of a reckless Brexit" (SDLP 2019, 2). On a territorial basis, the SDLP rejected the re-concentration of state functions at the host-state centre. The party warned that the host-state's withdrawal from the European centre would also delimit territorial self-rule at the sub-state level. Consequently, the party demanded safeguards for Northern Ireland's self-rule, akin to its concept of "special status", for the post-Brexit period. This was to

“to ensure there can be no interference in [sub-state] matters at Westminster [... and to] provide for a 'non retrogression clause' in respect of any applicable rights or environmental protection standards which will be under the Assembly's devolved competence and no longer subject directly to EU law” (SDLP 2017, 9).

These demands have not been addressed in UK's post-Brexit legislation (Dougan et al. 2020). However, the SDLP has endorsed the continued application of EU law in Northern Ireland, despite the sub-state institutions' limited input into these rules. Additionally, the SDLP has accepted the disruption of interactions between Northern Ireland and the rest of the host-state that result from the diverging application of EU law. In this context, the SDLP has called on host-majority representatives to “work together to resolve some of the difficulty” in the implementation of the Protocol (newsletter.co.uk 2021).

In competition with SF, the SDLP has pursued a mixed strategy since the 2016 Brexit referendum. On the one hand, the SDLP has tried to underbid SF by highlighting its own border-transcending goals, its track-record as a pro-European party and its constructive engagement in all available political fora. This happened in a context in which the SDLP had lost a significant share of votes to SF. In the 2017 general elections, the SDLP had lost all their seats in the host-state parliament, perpetuating a longstanding downward trend that could only be reversed in the 2019 general elections (McGlinchey 2019). On the other hand, given SF's increasing acceptance of European integration and the severity of Brexit on the constitutional set-up of Northern Ireland, the two kin-minority parties (and other pro-European parties) cooperated on an informal basis throughout most of the Brexit process (see below).

Sinn Féin

SF has largely continued its previous trend of moving towards *border-crossing goals and strategies*, despite the disruption of Europe-induced opportunities. Similar to the SDLP, SF argued to preserve Europe's border-opening effects on the island of Ireland and called for a “designated special status” for Northern Ireland. However, SF's endorsement of Europe-related opportunities has remained conditional. In line with its single-layered identity, SF considers a united nation-state to be the only legitimate expression of its national identity. Consequently, its goals have continued to contain border-shifting elements: The party has

been ambivalent about the re-securitization of kin-minority – host-state relations and has implicitly aspired that such re-securitization would facilitate its irredentist goals.

SF's goals for kin-minority – kin-state relations have been influenced by the party's endorsement of Europe's border-opening effects. In light of European disintegration, SF argued that these effects need to be secured through a "designated special status" (SF 2016b). This concept resembled the SDLP's proposal for a "special status" in that both aimed to mitigate the disruptiveness of the state border with the kin-state after Brexit. Both parties claimed that they were first to develop this approach. The most significant difference in SF's goal was that the party had championed Northern Ireland remaining in the EU as a sub-state entity of a (then prospective) non-member state (ibid.). This reflected SF's interpretation of the referendum result, according to which the people in the "north of Ireland" had voted to remain in the EU, and the demand that this decision should be honoured. Consequently, at the initial phase of the Brexit negotiations, SF explicitly called for a "designated special status *within* the European Union" (ibid., emphasis added). Implicitly, however, SF's focus has been on maintaining Europe's border-opening effects to ensure facilitated kin-minority – kin-state interactions, regardless of membership status. When elaborating on individual policies, SF has been more concerned about Northern Ireland's continued access to or participation in certain EU programmes or policies, in order to minimize the disruptiveness of the state border, rather than on Northern Ireland's ties with the European centre. The party, for instance, demanded Northern Ireland's continued "access to the single market which allows for the free movement of *our people, goods, services and capital on a north/south basis* and between the other member states of the EU" (ibid., 2, emphasis added). Similarly, SF proposed Northern Ireland's continued representation at the European centre mainly to secure a joint platform for the kin-minority and the kin-state. The representation of distinct Northern Irish interests post-Brexit was only subordinate to SF's emphasis on fostering the representation of the cross-border "national interest" in Europe. Accordingly, SF demanded that "there should be at least 3 more MEPs for Ireland when the 6 County population is factored into consideration [and the UK delegation has left the EP]" (ibid., 3); and that "the Irish Government as a Member State of the EU [would] be a strong voice for the whole island of Ireland, [...] in order to defend the national interest" (ibid., 7).

SF has seen its goal of a "designated special status" largely realized in the Northern Ireland Protocol, which it has referred to as "the least worst Brexit option, which will protect jobs, trade and avoid a hardening of the border" (SF 2019a, 5). Given SF's lesser focus on the

representation of Northern Irish interests at the European centre, the party has not seen the lack of Northern Irish input into the implementation of the Protocol as a constraint to its goal. Rather, SF has claimed that the Northern Ireland Protocol and preceding proposals reflected its own significant informal input into the EU-UK negotiations after the 2016 referendum (see below).

The implications of European disintegration beyond its potential significance for the state border featured less prominently in SF's goals. Most importantly, SF has been ambivalent about the possible re-securitization of the kin-minority's relationships with the host-state majority. While the party did warn that Brexit might have negative effects on Northern Ireland's peace process, the party did not discuss publicly what these negative effects might entail and how they could be mitigated (SF 2016b, 5). SF's indifference about Great Britain's future relationship with the European centre is also demonstrated by the party's endorsement of both, the "backstop" version of the Northern Ireland Protocol (that would have linked all of the UK to the EU Customs Union) and the current, more particularistic version of the Protocol (Hayward 2020, 50f). This indifference indicates that the party has not aimed to maintain the de-securitization of relationships that had resulted from the Europe-related mainstreaming of interactions within Northern Ireland's triadic nexus. Rather, SF deliberately sought to single out Ireland's kin-minority – kin-state relations within the wider UK-EU post-Brexit settlement. A former SF MEP concisely summarized this in the following terms:

“So, what would constitutional special status look like? It would mean that the North would remain part of the Customs Union, and the Single Market, and relevant EU policies such as CAP, cohesion... all those EU policies in line with the rest of Ireland, while still constitutionally being part of British jurisdiction until such day that we can actually convince the majority of the North to vote for unity. That's it, in its most simple terms” (Interview in Dublin, 27 October 2018).

SF's disregard for the preservation of Europe-induced de-securitization also surfaced in the more Eurosceptic, border-shifting elements of the party's goals that saw Brexit as a catalyst for irredentism. This stands in contrast to SF's attempts to preserve the effects of European integration through “designated special status” but is in line with the party's exclusive national identity. SF's Eurosceptic, border-shifting goals have only been vaguely articulated in its Brexit-related public statements and the logic behind them has usually not been disclosed. In its policy documents and manifestos, for instance, SF professed its commitment to the “principle of consent” as laid out in the GFA and merely hinted that European

disintegration could be an opportunity to achieve its irredentist goal in a more immediate way. This is exemplified by statements like the following:

“The Brexit crisis has created unprecedented political uncertainty across the entire island. Irish citizens in the north who voted to remain must not be dragged out of the EU against their wishes. The Good Friday Agreement sets out a pathway for Irish reunification through a unity referendum. In the wake of the Brexit vote, there is growing support for such a referendum” (SF 2019a, 6).

What SF has rarely made explicit is the rationale behind this expectation; that is, why has SF expected Brexit to lead to growing support for irredentism? The answer was given by multiple interviewees who alluded that the negative economic, political and social consequences of Brexit might alienate some unionists in Northern Ireland from the host-state centre and might make them more sympathetic to joining the Republic of Ireland, hence ensuring continued EU membership. As one former leading SF member pointed out:

“speculating about that at this stage can be dangerous. But it is possible [...] to see a scenario of no agreement on Brexit [between the UK and the EU], the British crashing out, and people firmly of fairly decided British position and identity being encouraged, or maybe even being compelled in these circumstances to consider whether in fact they might be better off [...] identifying with their Irish identity. In circumstances where there isn't an exit [from the EU] that gives them any soft landings at all but actually threatens their social and economic wellbeing, then there would be an option sitting on the table. And some of them clearly will have a look at it. In terms of, why not exercise our right to become Irish citizens and de facto members of the EU. And that broad scenario, which we haven't got to, plays into Sinn Féin's original project, which is to win majority support for constitutional change [i.e. irredentism]” (Interview 2 in Derry/Londonderry, 6 December 2018).

The first sentence of this quote shows that SF has been acutely aware of the risks entailed in such a scenario. After all, Brexit has led to a re-securitization of the relationship between the kin-minority and the unionist host-state majority and could exacerbate a return of political violence in Northern Ireland (Murphy 2018, 91ff, Creighton 2021). Some SF members would have been willing to accept this risk and saw potential economic and political hardship among the unionist community as an opportunity to achieve their irredentist goal. However, the party was wary of publicly embracing this opportunity and of risking its image as a party that

constructively works towards a referendum on Irish unity in line with the GFA's provisions. This explains why SF has only vaguely linked the prospect of European disintegration and its possible negative effects to its border-shifting goals. Instead, the party has publicly highlighted the border-crossing concept of "designated special status" at the expense of overly aggressive calls for irredentism. One SF member explained the balance between these goals the following way:

"I think we've taken a very responsible approach. We could have said, 'yeah, go, have your bad Brexit deal, and then we'll reap the benefits of that'. But I think what we've done is much more responsible, which is to say, in the first instance, a good Brexit deal is the best option. Even though a good Brexit deal might not push people towards reunification, but if there is a bad Brexit deal, if there is a negative impact, then all of that will play into the debate about reunification and the coming [border] poll"
(Interview in Dublin, 01 November 2018).

In terms of party competition, SF has combined strategies of outbidding and cooperating with the SDLP. On the one hand, SF's ambivalence around Brexit's negative effects and its hints to its Eurosceptic, border-shifting goals are reflective of ethnic outbidding. This is underpinned by SF's much more frequent and detailed calls for a referendum on Irish unity than the SDLP's (SF 2016c). On the other hand, the parallels between SF's and the SDLP's proposals for post-Brexit "special status" have been striking, and both parties have seen their endorsement of an open border realized through the Northern Ireland Protocol. These overlaps facilitated cooperation between Northern Ireland's kin-minority parties in the wake of the 2016 Brexit referendum. Despite SF's stagnation in the 2019 general election (Hayward 2020, 52), this strategy has helped perpetuate SF's position as the dominant kin-minority party in post-Brexit Northern Ireland.

Alliances

Brexit has had a paradoxical effect on kin-minority parties' alliances. On the one hand, Brexit has constrained alliances by excluding kin-minority parties' engagement in European fora like the EP and by re-securitizing their relationship with host-state actors. On the other hand, the broad consensus regarding the mitigation of Brexit's effects on the island of Ireland outside the host-state facilitated the SDLP's and SF's engagements with actors from the kin-state and

at the European level. Additionally, opposition to Brexit allowed for unprecedented cooperation of pro-European parties within Northern Ireland.

Social Democratic and Labour Party

The threat of European disintegration incentivized the SDLP to build broad alliances with actors in the kin-state, the host-state and at the European level to promote the preservation of Europe's effects on Northern Ireland. In this effort, the SDLP was constrained by two factors. Firstly, the suspension of sub-state institutions in 2017 deprived the SDLP of a crucial forum to forge alliances and of the opportunity to act as an official representative of the sub-state entity. Only with the restoration of self-rule in 2020, did the SDLP regain these opportunities. Secondly, the party's declining electoral success has limited the SDLP's representation in political fora across levels of government. Since 2004, the SDLP has not been elected to the EP; in 2017, the SDLP lost its three seats in the UK parliament, only two of which could be regained in 2019. These constraints have limited many of the SDLP's alliances to informal encounters with other actors. Additionally, the latter constraint incentivized the SDLP to engage in short-lived partisan alliances with kin-state actors ahead of the local and European elections in 2019.

The SDLP's alliances with actors from the kin-state have largely followed the SDLP's earlier, cross-party approach. In light of imminent disintegration, the SDLP aimed to promote its border-transcending goals across a wide range of actors. This has been done through numerous informal links, since before the 2016 referendum. Additionally, the kin-state government also created a more formalized forum to consult actors from Northern Ireland and the from kin-state on the potential consequences of disintegration. The resulting "All-Island Civic Dialogue" brought together political parties and civil society representatives in a number of different formats (oireachtas.ie 2019). Despite the SDLP being only one out of many participants in this "Dialogue", the party described this forum as an effective engagement with kin-state actors where its border-transcending goals could be promoted. As one of the SDLP participants of the "Dialogue" recalled:

"The Irish government [had] obviously looked at the threats [of Brexit for Ireland before the referendum...]. But it wasn't as though they were saying 'if this goes, we want the backstop'. They didn't have that finesse to that degree at that stage. What they were saying, as we were saying, that a vote to leave would have a material impact

on aspects of the GFA, and not just fringe aspects of the Agreement [...]. We wanted to have those things addressed, and the Irish government did create that platform for All-Island Dialogue that brought together the different sectoral voices and the parties. So, it was often in that context that the case for ‘special status’ [was being raised...]. So, that’s where we were able to gain traction around the idea for post-Brexit not just protecting the Agreement but actually using the Agreement as a way of answering a lot of the questions” (Interview 1 in Derry/Londonderry, 6 December 2018).

While these cross-party alliances helped the SDLP to promote its border-transcending goals in the kin-state, the party also forged more partisan alliances during the Brexit process. These somewhat inconsistent alliances served predominantly to demonstrate the SDLP’s commitment to strong kin-minority – kin-state links, and to counter outbidding by SF who already has a visible presence on both sides of the border. This resulted in two forms of cooperation. Firstly, the SDLP leadership entered into a “partnership” agreement with the then-opposition Fianna Fáil ahead of the 2019 local elections. This agreement was rather vague and did not prevent the SDLP from small electoral losses. Moreover, the agreement was controversial within the SDLP, given that it undermined the SDLP’s cross-party alliance with kin-state actors, and because it questioned the SDLP’s social democrat credentials (Irish Times 2019). Secondly, in the 2019 EP election, former SDLP leader Mark Durkan ran as a candidate for the incumbent Fine Gael in the Dublin constituency. In his ultimately unsuccessful campaign, Durkan claimed that he would represent his kin-state constituency, as well as Northern Ireland in the EP (finegaele.ie 2019). Commenting on these alliances, a former SDLP leader who was not involved in them noted that:

“I think that’s a response of ours to what has happened in terms of [declining] electoral fortunes. And people see that we are actually merging into an all-island [party competition with SF]. So how do you deal with that, and deal with that electorally? [...] I suppose that they [the parties in the South] always saw us as sort of their party in the North. All of them [Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour] did. But now that relationship is going to change. We’re forced into that because of electoral fortunes. And maybe, our project is over, maybe our project ended with the GFA. But I don’t think so!” (Interview in Belfast, 27 November 2018).

Both alliances between the SDLP and kin-state parties petered out after the respective elections (Hughes 2020). Their limited success notwithstanding, they indicate that the SDLP has been thinking more strategically about kin-minority – kin-state interactions. Unlike during

the peace process, the de-securitization of these relationships and the related integration of SF into constitutional politics are no longer among the SDLP's primary concerns.

The SDLP's more strategic relationship with other parties was also reflected in its issue-based relationship with SF on Brexit, despite the two parties' fierce electoral competition. The two kin-minority parties and two pro-European cross-community parties, Alliance and the Greens, cooperated informally to mitigate the lack of sub-state authorities' official input into the Brexit negotiations. In this respect, the threat of European disintegration led to an unprecedented alliance of kin-minority and cross-community parties around a common European cause, and around the need to preserve Europe-induced open borders and de-securitization, in particular. The four parties issued a number of joint statements over the course of the Brexit negotiations, demanding continuing ties between Northern Ireland and the European centre and the preservation of the open border with Ireland (McCormack 2018). The four parties also jointly supported the Northern Ireland Protocol, once it had been negotiated (SF 2019b). Additionally, the parties engaged in direct talks with EU officials during the Brexit negotiations (Hughes 2018). This was particularly important for the SDLP, given its lack of representation at the European level since 2004.

For the 2019 general election the SDLP's alliance with other pro-European parties went even further when it agreed with SF and the Greens not to run against each other in a number of constituencies to maximize the electoral prospects of Northern Irish pro-EU candidates. This resulted in a slight gain in votes and in the SDLP's re-entry in the host-state parliament. Additionally, this alliance helped the four pro-EU parties to win a majority of Northern Ireland constituencies and to outnumber the DUP, which lost its relevance for government formation at the host-state centre (Hayward 2020).

The SDLP's wider engagement with the unionist host-state majority has been marked by the re-securitization described above. Despite the restoration of the sub-state power-sharing government and the parties' (mostly) joint approach to the Covid-19 crisis during 2020, the SDLP leadership does not consider cooperation with unionist parties sustainable as long as the latter oppose the Northern Ireland Protocol (newsletter.co.uk 2021). Additionally, the SDLP's alliances with actors at the host-state centre have been strained, too, as a result of Brexit-related re-securitization. In the 2019 general elections, the SDLP explicitly campaigned against the Conservative Prime Minister with the slogan "Stop Boris [Johnson]. Stop Brexit" (SDLP 2019). The traditionally closer links with the UK Labour Party have also come under

pressure, given the Labour's opposition to the UK's Withdrawal Agreement and the Northern Ireland Protocol (Hayward 2020, 51).

Sinn Féin

SF's priority on preserving Europe's border-opening effects incentivized the party to broaden its political alliances in the kin-state, the host-state and at the European level. This was facilitated by the compatibility of SF's border-crossing goals with the majority views on Brexit in the kin-state and at the European centre. However, SF's competition with other parties in the kin-state, the suspension of sub-state institutions in Northern Ireland, and its rejection of the host-state parliament have also limited SF's alliances to mainly informal encounters. Nevertheless, SF has claimed that its input into UK-EU negotiations has been critical to achieve the Northern Ireland Protocol and has referred to it as "the special status [that] the protocol gives us" (SF 2021).

SF's relationship with actors in the kin-state have been marked by two developments. Firstly, on a more general level, SF has significantly expanded its own presence in the Republic of Ireland since the 2010s. In the 2020 general election, SF, for the first time, became the most-voted party in the Republic, and the second biggest party in terms of parliamentary seats (Little 2021, 719). SF's criticism of the European centre and of Ireland's political establishment after the 2011 financial crisis has been critical for this electoral success (O'Malley and FitzGibbon 2015). Against this backdrop, SF has become a fierce competitor to other parties in the kin-state, while also trying to present itself as a feasible coalition partner. Yet, Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil have hitherto ruled out coalitions with SF (Little 2021, 720). The growing political success in the kin-state and political stasis in Northern Ireland have shifted much of SF's attention to politics in the former. This has been reflected in the markedly more nuanced manifestos that SF produces for elections in the Republic and in the Dublin-based party leadership that replaced the Northern party elite in 2018 (ibid., 715, Hayward 2020, 51).

Secondly, and more specifically related to looming European disintegration on the island of Ireland, SF has cooperated with actors in the kin-state to preserve Europe's border-opening effects. This cooperation included SF's participation in the "All-Island Civic Dialogue", as well as more informal engagements between SF and the Irish government (SF 2018). The latter took place on a bilateral level and in multilateral formats between Northern Ireland's

four pro-EU parties and the kin-state government. SF evaluated this alliance with the Irish government ambivalently. On the one hand, SF claimed that the Irish government had done too little to persevere an open state border on the island of Ireland. In one document, SF accused the kin-state government that its “approach to the Brexit negotiations to date has been totally inadequate and lacking any detail” (SF 2017, 3). On the other hand, SF acknowledged that the Irish government had ultimately taken a very similar approach to its own and applauded the government’s success in promoting this position at the European centre. All SF interviewees emphasized that Brexit was too important an issue to be exploited for party competition and that close cooperation between kin-minority parties and kin-state actors was required to mitigate its negative effects. As one interviewee summarized:

“Well, [cooperation] can always be improved. But in the context of the pattern of engagement over a large number of years, there has never been better cooperation [between SF and the Irish government than on Brexit...]. I dare say that, left to their own devices, without having to engage or negotiate with ourselves [SF], the Irish government would have taken, generally speaking, the right position. But maybe not as forceful or strongly as we required. But they weren’t being outflanked by us in terms of the national debate on the island of Ireland. I think we have to acknowledge that they fought a good fight here [in the Brexit negotiations]. [Simon] Coveney, the [Irish] foreign minister, in particular, has been very solid and very straightforward, and very robust about the transparency of his position in relation to what he’s saying to the British, or what he’s saying to the EU” (Interview 2 in Derry/Londonderry, 6 December 2018).

By the same token, SF endorsed the intensified cooperation with other pro-EU parties in Northern Ireland and claimed that this cooperation effectively amplified its calls for a “designated special status”. This was helped by the overlaps of the pro-EU parties’ goals, especially their focus on open state borders, and by SF’s dominant position within this four-party alliance. Moreover, SF interviewees continuously underscored that Northern Ireland’s pro-EU parties represented the region’s majority from the 2016 referendum.

“The remain parties, who are the majority and who represent the majority of opinion here in the North of Ireland [...] they go as a body of four main parties to all the engagements with the Irish government, with the European Union and with the British government [...]. They work out the platforms for each engagement beforehand and agree on the agenda. It’s not necessarily a partnership of equals but it certainly is an

effective partnership, notwithstanding the electoral rivalries. These parties have, in their wider interest, have found it easy and practical to work together and collaborate” (Interview 2 in Derry/Londonderry, 6 December 2018).

The importance and effectiveness of this pro-EU alliance have been echoed by interviewees from all other participating parties. The resulting electoral pacts for the 2019 general election (see above) helped SF retain seven MPs, including by winning the traditionally unionist constituency of North Belfast (Hayward 2020, 51f). Despite this electoral mandate, SF has continued to abstain from the host-state legislature.

Within the wider politics of the host-state, the re-securitization between the kin-minority and the unionist host-state majority as a result of Brexit constrained cooperation between SF and unionist parties. This was most apparent in the failure to form a sub-state power-sharing government during the entire duration of the Brexit negotiations. These constraints were exacerbated by SF’s mistrust against the host-state government while it relied on the votes of the DUP. In the words of a former SF MEP:

“We’re gonna have a difficult job ahead, in terms of reaching a negotiated settlement with the DUP in that current framework. Because they’re involved in what I would describe as a toxic deal with the [conservative] Tory government [...]. The Tories are in that agreement only for so long as they have to be [...]. But in the interim, the DUP are emboldened [...]. They want to be seen as hard-line to such an extent that they’re willing to sacrifice the economic well-being of the people who vote for them through a bad Brexit deal [...]. [So, for us] the primary priority [...] is undoubtedly addressing the issues that have arisen as a result of Brexit [...]. After that, we do want to see the [sub-state] institutions up and running, but only on the basis that they’re fit for purpose” (Interview in Dublin, 27 October 2018).

While some of these obstacles were overcome with the formation of new governments at the host-state and the Northern Ireland sub-state level in December 2019 and January 2020, respectively, re-securitization and fundamental disagreements over the Northern Ireland Protocol between SF and the unionist host-state majority have remained and impeded cooperation (see SF 2021).

Contrastingly, SF’s alliances at the European level have been solidified in the context of European disintegration. The party’s opposition to disintegration, and to a hardening state border in particular, created a common ground between SF and a range of actors at the

European centre. This helped de-securitize relationships between SF and other actors that had previously been suspicious of the party's former involvement with political violence. The resulting alliances took two main forms. Firstly, SF and Northern Ireland's other pro-European parties regularly engaged informally with the European Commission and especially with the Commission's Brexit negotiating team. While this relationship continued to be marked by SF's scepticism vis-à-vis the European centre, the party acknowledged that the common goal to preserve an open state border on the island of Ireland facilitated this informal cooperation. As one leading SF member in the Republic pointed out:

“Right now, there is a confluence of interests of what the centres of power in the EU want, and what this peripheral member state [Ireland] wants. And that's good, that's the nature of power relations [...]. But their [the EU's] interests vis-à-vis our negotiating position with Britain could change, and therefore, we could be sacrificed [...]. While we absolutely welcome the solidarity that is currently expressed with Ireland from [Michel] Barnier's [EU Brexit] negotiating team and the other power centres of the EU institutions, we're not gonna bank on that” (Interview in Dublin, 01 November 2018).

Secondly, SF used its presence in the EP to promote its border-crossing goals through more formal channels. This worked through SF's European party federation, the left-wing “European United Left/Nordic Green Left” (GUE/NGL), as well as through engagements with representatives of other party groups. These alliances were facilitated by a broad consensus in the EP about the necessity to mitigate the effects of European disintegration on the island of Ireland. As a former SF MEP stated:

“There are just neutral observers [in the EU institutions] who politically engage but who are apart from the process [of negotiating the Northern Ireland Protocol]. But they look at the island of Ireland. And their answer is the same as ours [...]. Immediately after the Brexit referendum, we initiated a dialogue with MEPs from across the political spectrum. We engaged from across the political groups and from across all member states, and we met with hundreds of MEPs at this stage. And by and large, our position has been accepted as credible and as the only realistic option to address the issues relating to the border” (Interview in Dublin, 27 October 2018).

While the consensus to preserve Europe's border-opening effects between Northern Ireland and Ireland has borne fruit through the Northern Ireland Protocol, the UK's withdrawal from

the EU has led to the termination of Northern Ireland's representation in the EP. This has deprived SF of a forum where its kin-minority and kin-state representative could act jointly and present themselves as members of the same Irish national party, despite being formally elected in different EU member states (Utz 2019c). However, given SF's limited focus on a distinct Northern Irish representation at the European centre, the party has not explicitly problematized this constraint. Rather, in her last intervention in the EP, SF's outgoing Northern Irish MEP alluded to SF's irredentist goals and to the GFA and the Northern Ireland Protocol's provisions to allow for a prospective united Ireland within the EU. Hence she concluded that "[t]here is no doubt that the day will come when Irish MEPs from the north will be back in the European Parliament" (Anderson 2020).

Conclusion

The evidence analysed in this chapter rejects the hypothesis that disintegration incentivizes kin-minority parties to revert to border-shifting, irredentist goals. Even in light of the host-state's withdrawal from the EU, the relocation of competences at the state centre, the re-securitization of kin-minority – host-state majority relations and a potentially hardening border with the kin-state, Northern Ireland's kin-minority parties endorse Europe's border-opening effects and accept the kin-minority's accommodation in the host-state. This is true for the SDLP that has continuously held on to its European identity, its border-transcending goals and strategies and its broad alliances across Britain and Ireland. More surprisingly, even SF has continued to defend Europe's border-opening effects on the island of Ireland despite its opposition to any identification with the European centre and party members' awareness that Brexit could have presented an opportunity to revert to border-shifting strategies.

This continuity in kin-minority parties' identities, goals, strategies and alliances could be observed against the backdrop of the lengthy negotiations between the UK's Eurosceptic government and the remaining EU 27. While these negotiations yielded the preservation of Europe's border-opening effects between Northern Ireland and nationalists' kin-state, other substantial effects of European integration in Northern Ireland such as the de-securitization of kin-state – host-state majority relations have partially been reversed. The concluding chapter embeds this chapter's findings into this study's wider comparative results.

PART IV

Comparison & conclusion

8. Comparison & conclusion

Part I of this study presented a tentative answer to the research question, *how kin-minority parties adapt their identities, goals, strategies and alliances to European integration and possible disintegration*, based on existing literature on nationalism, borders, party politics and European integration. I hypothesized that European integration makes irredentism infeasible for kin-minority parties and provides them with alternative opportunities for cooperation with their kin-state and for emancipation from their host-state. Moreover, I expected that the threat of disintegration of European institutions limits alternative opportunities for cooperation with the kin-state and for emancipation from the host-state and incentivizes kin-minority parties to revert to irredentism. This chapter assesses this hypothesis in light of the empirical evidence from South Tyrol that has been presented in Part II, and from Northern Ireland in Part III.

The empirical evidence from the two case studies confirms the first part of the hypothesis. Kin-minority parties in South Tyrol and Northern Ireland have indeed shifted away from irredentism, or only hold on to irredentism as a long-term aspiration. They all accept their kin-minority's accommodation within the host-state and cross-border cooperation with the kin-state. In contrast to this, the second part of the hypothesis needs to be substantially qualified. Eurosceptic demands by their host-state or their kin-state's governments and the resulting threat of disintegration does not lead kin-minority parties to revert to irredentism. Instead, kin-minority parties from both South Tyrol and Northern Ireland aim to preserve European integration's border-opening effects to maintain existing forms of cross-border cooperation with the kin-state and the kin-minority's accommodation in the host-state. This holds true even when kin-minority parties assume that the hardening of the border with the kin-state would facilitate their long-term irredentist aspirations, as has been shown with Sinn Féin during the Brexit process.

These findings apply across the largely different contexts in which European integration and Euroscepticism have unfolded in South Tyrol and Northern Ireland, respectively (Skocpol and Somers 1980). In particular, Europe-induced border opening has had a transformative effect on kin-minority parties' goals, strategies and alliances despite differences in historic centre-periphery relations, in the levels of securitization, and in the integration of the respective states into the European centre.

The remainder of this chapter compares the impact that the perpetuation and opening of state borders, the dispersion of sovereignty, the softening of cultural boundaries and the demands for disintegration have had in South Tyrol and Northern Ireland. This sets the stage for a comparative analysis of kin-minority parties' responses to these dynamics. The chapter concludes by embedding these findings within the wider literature on European integration, borders, nationalism and parties and while also presenting possible starting points for future research on cross-border nationalism.

European integration's effects on kin-minorities and their environment

European integration has affected each dimension of the triadic nexus between kin-minorities, kin-states and host-states. The precise manifestation of European integration's effects differs alongside pre-existing dynamics within the triadic nexus in each case. The comparison of evidence from South Tyrol and Northern Ireland demonstrates two generalizable patterns.

Firstly, the comparison shows that the perpetuation, de-securitization and opening of state borders effectively transform the relationship between kin-minorities, kin-states and host-states across largely different context conditions. These effects discredit kin-minority parties' potentially irredentist, border-shifting goals and strategies, and incentivize them to accept the location of state borders in the short and medium term. European integration's effects on state borders largely persist despite Eurosceptic demands for disintegration, at least between kin-minority populated regions and their kin-states.

Secondly, evidence from South Tyrol and Northern Ireland demonstrates a strong correlation between the dispersion of sovereignty and the de-securitization and softening of cultural boundaries. These two effects of European integration are contingent on pre-existing dynamics between the kin-minority, the kin-state and the host-state. Where sovereignty has historically been dispersed, as is the case in South Tyrol, collective identities are constructed at multiple levels. Such multi-layered identities facilitate the de-securitization of relationships between national groups. This is because the demarcation between two groups that define themselves and each other in varying terms is likely to be more fluid than when in-groups and out-groups are only associated with one particular set of characteristics. The case of South Tyrol shows that European integration reinforces pre-existing patterns of the dispersion of

sovereignty and the softening of cultural boundaries. This also allows for a deeper integration with the European centre and for a higher resilience to Eurosceptic demands.

Conversely, in places where sovereignty has historically been concentrated, as was the case during substantial phases of state and nation-building in Britain and Ireland (Rokkan and Urwin 1982), the identities promoted by political parties tend to be single-layered. Such identities are likely to be more exclusive and are prone to hard, securitized demarcations from out-groups (see Risse 2010, Hooghe and Marks 2009). In these conditions, the Europe-induced dispersion of sovereignty or the softening of cultural boundaries only unfolds to a limited degree. This can hinder a state's comprehensive integration into the European centre and exacerbates Eurosceptic demands for disintegration (Schimmelfennig et al. 2015, Henderson et al. 2017). This section further illustrates these general conclusions by returning to the empirical findings from Parts II and III.

Perpetuation and opening of state borders

All kin-minority parties analysed in this study endorse Europe's border-opening effects, even if they are critical of European integration's other effects or even if they seek irredentism in the longer run. This underscores that the opening of state borders has pervasive effects on the interactions between the kin-minority and their co-nationals in the kin-state. Moreover, this fact makes the opening of state borders, at least between kin-states and kin-minority-populated regions, resilient to reversal. Kin-minority parties are likely to push back against calls for border closures and will seek the perseveration of Europe-induced border-opening. This is demonstrated by the continued application of Schengen rules on the Austrian-Italian border, despite the re-introduction of passport controls between Austria and Hungary, and Austria and Slovenia; or by the Northern Ireland Protocol that preserves the open state border for goods and people between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

In both cases, the perpetuation of the state border was a precondition for the de-securitization and the opening of the respective borders. Moreover, in both cases this perpetuation was closely linked to wider European developments, although in largely different contexts. In South Tyrol, the state border was acknowledged by all actors against the backdrop of the looming Cold War and Western Europe's military integration in 1946 (Pallaver 1993). Subsequently, irredentism has never been a realistic option for South Tyrolean kin-minority parties. In Northern Ireland, increased interaction between the kin-state and the host-state

governments after their simultaneous accession to the EEC in 1973 furthered the mutual acceptance of the “principle of consent”. The “principle of consent” perpetuates the state border until a majority in both jurisdictions of the island of Ireland vote for unification. This allows kin-minority parties to pursue irredentism as a long-term aspiration without questioning the current status-quo of the border.

While these processes began outside the realm of the European Union and of Europe’s post-Cold War minority rights regime (Galbreath and McEvoy 2012), European integration boosted the subsequent opening and de-securitization of state borders. The de-securitization of the Austrian-Italian border began with the trilateral agreement on the South Tyrol Package in 1969 but has been intensified by substantial border-opening since Austria joined the EU in 1995. This border-opening is underpinned by shared Austrian-Italian membership in the SEM, the Schengen zone and the EMU. The two states’ “symmetric” integration into the European centre has not been reversed despite Eurosceptic demands on part of both governments.

In Northern Ireland, the acceptance of the “principle of consent”, particularly by the militant factions of the kin-minority such as SF, has allowed for the de-securitization and opening of the state border since the 1994 ceasefires. Once these actors had committed themselves to participate in the peace process and to accept its principles, including the cessation of violence, security infrastructure at the border was no longer needed. The opening and de-securitization of the border was helped by the UK’s and Ireland’s common membership in the SEM. This made controls for goods at the border obsolete and complemented pre-existing, informal arrangements for the free movement of people within the Common Travel Area between the UK, Ireland and adjacent islands (Ryan 2001). These arrangements abolished the need for physical infrastructure at the land border between Northern Ireland and Ireland altogether. This achievement has been carefully preserved in spite of Brexit, by virtue of the Northern Ireland Protocol (Phinnemore 2020).

Dispersion of sovereignty

The dispersion of sovereignty or the “rescaling” of states has been defined as “the migration of economic, social, and political systems of action and of regulation to new spatial levels, above, below, and across the nation-state” (Keating 2013, 6). In the context of this study, it refers to the integration of kin-states and host-states into the European centre and to the relocation of state functions to the sub-state level. Neither in South Tyrol nor in Northern

Ireland has host-state or kin-state integration into the European centre been a substantial driver behind sub-state self-rule. European integration has, however, underpinned and reinforced domestic dynamics of centre – periphery relations. In South Tyrol, European integration has helped perpetuate pre-existing sub-state self-rule and to de-secure the relations between levels of government. In Northern Ireland, European institutions have supported self-rule as a means for incentivizing cooperation and de-secure between the local national groups. The success of this effort in Northern Ireland has been limited and has been partially reversed with Brexit.

In South Tyrol's proximity, sovereignty has always been dispersed. State centres never monopolized political decision-making. This is demonstrated by Austria's federal state structure as well as by South Tyrol's and the Trentino's exceptionally broad self-rule within Italy (Rokkan and Urwin 1982). Moreover, South Tyrol has been part of a founding member of the European Communities and has since participated in every step of further European integration. Once Austria joined the EU in 1995, South Tyrol's kin-state also participated in all subsequent steps of European integration. This has allowed for a synchronized integration of South Tyrol's kin-state and host-state into the European centre, with both states participating in the SEM, the EMU and the Schengen zone from the earliest possible dates. The two states' integration into the European centre has not been reversed during temporary crises or the incumbency of Eurosceptic parties.

Territorial self-rule for South Tyrol has been perpetuated with the full implementation of the South Tyrol Package in 1992 that was precipitated by Austria's imminent EU accession. The full implementation of the Package included the devolution of a vast range of state functions to South Tyrol and the trilateral acknowledgment of these measures by the host-state, the kin-state and by kin-minority-dominated sub-state authorities. Post-1992, South Tyrol's self-rule has gradually been expanded within the context of wider political de-centralization in Italy. European integration has helped this process by providing a new, functional rationale for the reallocation of state functions across levels of government. This has transformed the original purpose of South Tyrol's territorial self-rule: the realignment of political and cultural boundaries at the sub-state level (Palermo 2015, 17). The new, more inclusive *raison d'être* for territorial self-rule has been mutually reinforcing with the de-secure of kin-minority – host-state majority relations. The longstanding dispersion of sovereignty in the Tyrolean lands and its perpetuation through European integration provides South Tyrol's kin-minority parties with multiple possible levels where identities and cross-border kinship can be

constructed. This is further intensified by the pluricentricity of the German language that allows for multiple cultural reference points for cross-border kinship (Auer 2013).

The starting point for the dispersion of sovereignty in Northern Ireland is markedly different. Northern Ireland's kin-state and host-state simultaneously joined the European Communities in 1973 but their degree of integration diverged with subsequent steps of further European integration and, uniquely, disintegration. While both states were committed to participation in the Single European Market as it took shape in the early 1990s, the UK has never been a part of the Economic and Monetary Union. The UK's exit from the EU has substantially exacerbated this "differentiated integration" between Northern Ireland's kin-state and host-state (Schimmelfennig 2019). Since 2021, the UK has largely excluded itself from the European centre, including from those aspects that extend beyond the realm of EU member states such as the Single Market and the Customs Union (Gstöhl and Phinnemore 2021). The Republic of Ireland, in turn, remains part of all these arrangements. One exception concerns the Schengen zone that neither the UK nor Ireland have joined. Instead, passport controls have been avoided through the bilaterally agreed Common Travel Area that is explicitly preserved by virtue of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Regarding sub-state self-rule, the UK was a centralized state until the 1990s (Mitchell 2006b), and sub-state self-rule in the Republic of Ireland continues to be limited (Callanan 2020). Several previous attempts of granting self-rule to Northern Ireland had failed due to the highly securitized relationship between the nationalist kin-minority and the unionist host-state majority (Wolff 2001). When Northern Ireland's self-rule was established as part of the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, this happened against the backdrop of a more encompassing restructuring of the UK state. In Scotland and Wales self-governing institutions were set up simultaneously, and European integration intensified in the wake of the Treaty of Maastricht. However, the dispersion of sovereignty in the Northern Ireland context continued to be constrained for two reasons.

Firstly, Northern Ireland's self-rule was part of the wider 1998 peace settlement that created a range of new institutions for the restructuring and de-securitization of the triadic relationship between the kin-minority, the kin-state and the host-state. In this context, self-rule was predominantly a vehicle to enable power-sharing between the kin-minority and the unionist host-state majority, in order to foster cooperation and de-securitization between the two groups (Walsh 2018, 35ff). The functional reallocation of policy competences was only a subordinate consideration. This is also reflected by the post-1998 devolution of policing and

judicial powers that are closely linked to the management of the conflict, rather than to functional pressures. European organizations have also acknowledged and supported the particular rationale for Northern Ireland's self-rule. This can be seen in the EU's PEACE funds or the EU's insistence on agreeing and implementing the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Secondly, the exercise of Northern Ireland's territorial self-rule has been significantly restricted by the recurrent dysfunctionality of its sub-state power-sharing institutions. Continuing tensions and only limited de-securitization between the kin-minority and the host-state majority have repeatedly made cooperation in the power-sharing executive infeasible. This has led to the suspension of self-rule institutions on multiple occasions since 1998. Most recently, diverging interpretations of Brexit and the Northern Ireland Protocol have contributed to the re-securitization of kin-minority – host-state majority relations and obstructed the working of sub-state institutions between 2017 and 2020.

These limitations to the dispersion of sovereignty in Northern Ireland constrain kin-minority parties' autonomous actions at the sub-state level. More importantly, the limited dispersion does not lend itself towards the construction of multi-layered, de-securitized identities, leaving only the kin-state centre as a key reference point for the construction of cross-border kinship.

Softening of cultural-national boundaries

European integration's direct impact on cultural boundaries is minimal. European organizations do not *per se* challenge the consociational arrangements that institutionalize cultural boundaries in both South Tyrol and Northern Ireland. The legally required modification of consociational mechanisms in South Tyrol (Toggenburg 2008), or the effects of EU-financed cross-community projects in Northern Ireland do not significantly change the boundaries between kin-minorities and host-state majorities (Murphy 2014, 110).

However, the softening of a nation's cultural boundaries constitutes European integration's "most indirect but – if successful – also most persuasive" effect on a kin-minority's relationship with its host-state and its kin-state because it supports "a (re-)construction of identities that permanently sustains peaceful relations between [them]" (Diez et al. 2008, 28). Soft, de-securitized cultural boundaries can change every aspect of interaction between the kin-minority and other actors. As has been argued above, these indirect, boundary-softening

effects closely correlate with the dispersion of sovereignty across levels of governments and related, multi-layered constructions of identities (Hooghe and Marks 2009, Risse 2010).

These multi-layered identities have been identified in the case of South Tyrol's kin-minority parties. There, the dispersion of sovereignty has always allowed for a multi-layered construction of the kin-minority's cross-border identity. Kin-minority parties, and especially the South Tyrolean People's Party, have never considered the kin-state centre as an exclusive cultural reference point or as the sole locus of sovereignty. European integration has intensified this tendency. This allows for the expression of cross-border kinship in ways that are not considered an (irredentist) threat by the host-state majority; for instance, through cooperation at the sub-state level or in the European Parliament. These forms of kin-minority – kin-state engagements even include some elements of the host-state majority (Italian-speakers in South Tyrol and in Trentino), which fosters cooperation and de-securitization and further dilutes fears of irredentism. At the same time, the dispersion of sovereignty facilitates the kin-minority's acceptance of accommodation within the host-state. Extensive territorial self-rule allows for the kin-minority's identification with the sub-state level and limits the political and cultural leverage of the host-state centre on the kin-minority. Hence, fears of assimilation into the host-state majority are minimal and have decreased the necessity to perpetuate hard cultural boundaries (Carlà 2018). Moreover, the de-securitized, soft boundaries between the kin-minority and the host-state majority have been facilitated by longstanding cooperation at the elite level, not least on European issues (Pallaver 2014). Particularly the SVP's record of cooperating with host-state parties across all levels of government contributes to the continued de-securitization of kin-minority – host-state majority relations in South Tyrol. This trend persists despite Eurosceptic tendencies at the host-state centre and among small fractions of the kin-minority.

In Northern Ireland, however, the limitations to the dispersion of sovereignty constrain Europe's indirect de-securitizing effects. The ongoing centralization of state functions in the kin-state, and the limitations to sub-state self-rule in the host-state, do not lend themselves to the construction of identities at multiple levels. The kin-state centre remains the main reference point for kin-minority parties' cross-border kinship on the island of Ireland. Cross-border arrangements like the North South Ministerial Council or the kin-minority's right to hold Irish citizenship exclusively relate to the kin-state but not to any other level of government. The frequent dysfunctionality of sub-state institutions also prevents kin-minority parties from promoting allegiances with the sub-state level. Similarly, for the unionist host-

state majority in Northern Ireland, the host-state centre or obsolete conceptions of an exclusionary sub-state entity prevail as reference points for their identity (Murphy and Evershed 2020, Coakley 2020). This results in the kin-minority's and in the host-state majority's respective identities being constructed in demarcation from each other. The hard cultural boundary between the two national groups and their explicit differentiation from each other constitutes the identities that are promoted by most Northern Ireland parties for their respective nations.

Additionally, the European centre does not constitute a common reference point for the kin-minority and the host-state majority. Only the Social Democratic and Labour Party (and some cross-community parties) have acknowledged the de-securitizing potential that shared allegiances to the European centre could have for kin-minority – host-state majority relations. All other Northern Ireland parties, including SF, are sceptical of the European centre and favour the kin-state's and the host-state's centres, respectively, as the exclusive locus of sovereignty and identity. Northern Ireland's disintegration from the European centre as a result of Brexit exacerbates this lack of soft cultural boundaries and has led to a re-securitization between the two groups. Particularly for the unionist host-state majority, the UK's withdrawal from the EU has reinforced perceptions of sovereignty and identity as being exclusively linked to the host-state centre (Murphy and Evershed 2020).

Crises and disintegration

Crises of European integration, such as the post-2008 financial crisis or the 2015/16 migration crisis have incentivized Eurosceptic demands among several European constituencies (Hooghe and Marks 2019). However, lasting disintegration has rarely materialized as a response to these crises. In this sense, the UK's withdrawal from the EU is an exception (Moravcsik 2018) that reverses parts of the UK's *a priori* imperfect integration with the European centre. And even in light of the UK's disintegration, European integration's border-opening effects have largely been preserved in both South Tyrol and Northern Ireland. The continued openness of state borders accommodates kin-minority parties' persistent endorsement of cross-border cooperation with their kin-states and prevents their return to irredentist, border-shifting goals and strategies.

In South Tyrol's host-state and kin-state, Eurosceptic governments have never aimed at their respective state's withdrawal from the European centre, or the disintegration of European

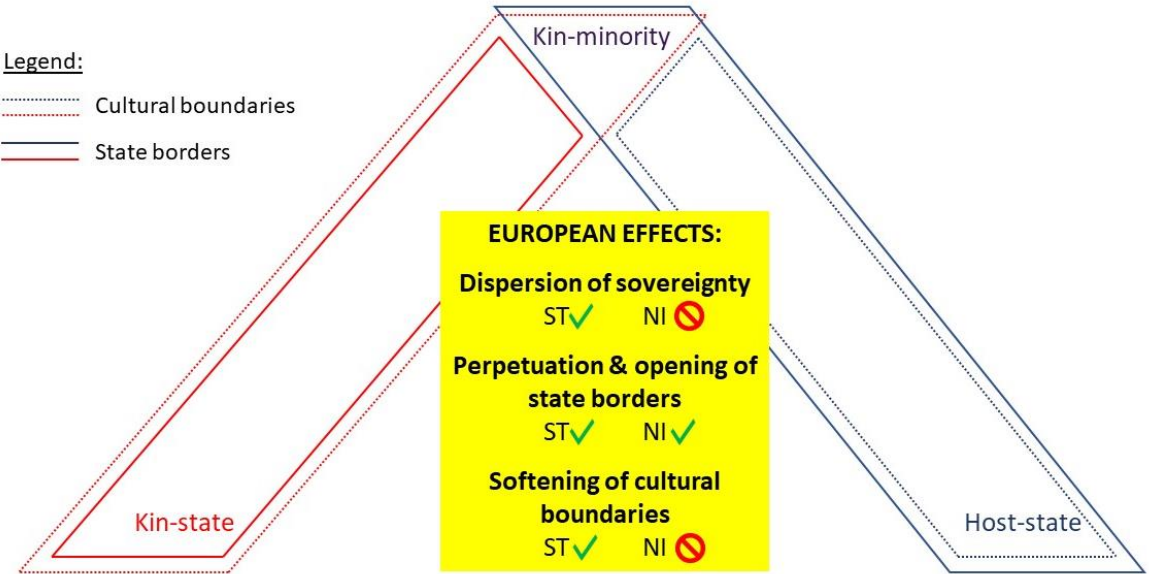
organizations. Rather, Eurosceptic demands aimed at the relocation of specific competences such as monetary policies or the policing of borders from the European centre to state centres (Heinisch et al. 2021). Alternatively, the Austrian and Italian governments acted unilaterally upon policies that would otherwise require coordination with other states or the European Commission, as has been the case with border controls or the potential access to citizenship for South Tyroleans. All of these Eurosceptic initiatives, however, turned out to be short-lived or did not move beyond the planning stage. Ultimately, during the period under scrutiny in this study, Italy and Austria's encompassing integration into the European centre has proven resilient to Eurosceptic demands and has prevented European disintegration in South Tyrol's environment. Hence, Europe-induced de-securitization, border-opening or the dispersion of sovereignty have not been reversed in the case of South Tyrol.

Contrastingly, Northern Ireland's host-state and kin-state, have embarked on diverging trajectories in light of crises of European integration. Continuous Irish governments have portrayed a European identity as complementary with Irish national identity (Hayward 2009). Eurosceptic demands have never shaped government policy in Northern Ireland's kin-state, even in light of the detrimental financial crisis (Galpin 2017). In the UK, and particularly in its largest sub-state entity England, an exclusive national identity has substantially driven the demand for disintegration and, ultimately, for the government's policy to withdraw from the EU (Henderson et al. 2017). Substantial parts of Northern Ireland's unionist majority have supported this withdrawal (Coakley 2020). The disintegrative effects of the decision to leave the EU have turned out to be more disruptive than many had suggested at the initial phases of the Brexit process (Doherty et al. 2017). The UK has also left arrangements that partially extend beyond the realm of EU member states, like the Single Market or the Customs Union. This substantial disintegration has unsettled the already limited dispersion of sovereignty in Northern Ireland's proximity and has hardened and re-securitized the cultural boundaries of between the kin-minority and the unionist host-state majority. The UK's disintegration from the European centre notwithstanding, substantial parts of Europe's border-opening effects have been preserved at the land border between Northern Ireland and nationalists' kin-state. The installation of physical infrastructure along the border has been avoided through the Northern Ireland Protocol. Therefore, European integration's most transformative effect on kin-minority parties remains in place on the island of Ireland.

Figure 8.1 summarizes these comparative findings. It highlights that the perpetuation and opening of state borders has underpinned transformative dynamics in South Tyrol and

Northern Ireland regardless of processes of disintegration. Furthermore, it demonstrates that the dispersion of sovereignty and the softening of cultural boundaries has only had significant impacts in South Tyrol, even before Brexit began to materialize.

Figure 8.1: Europe-induced effects on the triadic nexus in South Tyrol and Northern Ireland (own compilation)



The next section builds on these findings and shows how kin-minority parties in South Tyrol and Northern Ireland have responded to these differentiated effects of European integration.

Kin-minority parties’ responses

The varying manifestations of European integration in South Tyrol and Northern Ireland have provided kin-minority parties with mixed opportunities and constraints. All kin-minority parties endorse the Europe-induced opening of state borders and consider it as an opportunity for the realization of their respective goals and strategies. This is true even for kin-minority parties who are critical of European integration’s other effects. The endorsement of Europe-induced border-opening also persists in spite of European disintegration, as can be seen in Northern Ireland’s kin-minority parties’ calls for a “special status” after Brexit.

The dispersion of sovereignty and the softening of cultural boundaries is only endorsed by those kin-minority parties that have *a priori* held de-securitized, multi-layered identities; that is, the SVP and the SDLP. SF and South Tyrol's smaller kin-minority parties have remained critical of these effects. In the case of Northern Ireland, SF's criticism resonates with the wider shortcomings of sub-state self-rule and de-securitization; in South Tyrol, criticism of these dynamics remains a marginal phenomenon.

Identities

Kin-minority parties' identities remain relatively stable, despite the influence of European integration or disintegration. The content of kin-minority parties' constructions of identity does not change. South Tyrol's kin-minority parties, for example, still see the German language as the defining pattern of the kin-minority and of its cross-border kinship; Northern Ireland's kin-minority parties show the same continuity regarding the aspiration to political unification of the island of Ireland.

European integration does, however, reinforce pre-existing patterns of identity in those kin-minority parties that promote soft, de-securitized cultural boundaries. For those parties, notably the SVP and the SDLP, European integration provides another layer of "belonging" for their kin-minorities and their co-nationals abroad. The SVP and the SDLP both explicitly refer to their respective kin-minority and the wider cross-border nation as "European" and see European institutions as an expression of this identity. This helps the SVP to further the de-securitization of South Tyroleans' identity, given that numerous representatives of the host-state majority share a similar European identity. In the longer run, this shared European identity among elites from South Tyrol's both national groups has not been mitigated by Eurosceptic demands. For the SDLP, this European identity helped find common ground with other representatives only to a limited degree. While Northern Ireland's political parties have cooperated to secure financial means from the EU, parties of the unionist host-state majority have never shared the SDLP's European identity. Since the Brexit referendum, unionist parties' increasingly overt rejection of the European centre has turned the SDLP's European identity even into a source of further division and re-securitization.

For kin-minority parties that promote hard, securitized cultural boundaries, European integration has had little effects on their identities. They oppose the de-securitization of the cultural boundaries between kin-minorities and host-state majorities that is indirectly

furthered by European integration. While these parties may refer to their kin-minority and to the wider cross-border nation as “European”, their conception of Europe is mostly incompatible with the European centre as it currently exists. Such exclusive identities are promoted by the Union for South Tyrol/South Tyrolean Independence, the South Tyrolean Freedom Party and by Sinn Féin. In South Tyrol, where the dispersion of sovereignty has had transformative effects on the relationship between the kin-minority, the kin-state and the host-state, these identities remain marginalized. In the 2018 provincial election, these parties combined obtained only 12 per cent of the votes, compared to the SVP’s 42 per cent (landtag-bz.org 2018). In Northern Ireland, where the kin-minority’s identity is more exclusively constructed at the nation-state level, SF’s exclusive identity has resonated widely with kin-minority voters since the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement. Once political violence had abated, the majority of kin-minority voters has considered SF to be a more trustworthy defender of their community’s interests than the SDLP (Mitchell et al. 2009, McGlinchey 2019).

Goals and strategies

Kin-minority parties’ goals and strategies reveal that the opening of state borders is the most universally acknowledged and endorsed effect that European integration exerts on kin-minorities and their environment. Europe’s border-opening effects are not only endorsed by kin-minority parties with a European identity but even by those kin-minority parties that reject, soft cultural boundaries or the dispersion of sovereignty.

This largely discredits Eurosceptic border-shifting goals and strategies. The complete rejection of European integration based on its border-perpetuating effects is no longer a feasible option for kin-minority parties. The opening of state borders is so pervasive that it cannot even be denied by those parties who seek irredentism in the longer run. Even if kin-minority parties criticize Europe-induced border opening as not being comprehensive enough, they acknowledge its merits and seek to exploit the resulting opportunities for cooperation with the kin-state. This (gradual) endorsement of Europe-induced border-opening and the simultaneous rejection of border-shifting goals can clearly be seen in SF’s development during the peace process, or in the UfS/STF’s changing goals and strategies after Austria’s accession to the EU. SF had rejected European integration based on the European Communities’ alleged imperialist character. Yet when the completion of the Single Market made customs posts and other border infrastructure disappear from the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, the claim that European integration would “copperfasten [Ireland’s]

partition” (SF 1992c, 8) seemed increasingly implausible. Ultimately, SF even revoked its opposition to the Euro and campaigned for its introduction in Northern Ireland to soften the economic boundary with the kin-state. Similarly, the UfS/STF came to terms with Austria’s EU membership once hypothetical debates about shifting the state border were outweighed by the noticeable benefits of the border’s openness. Kin-minority parties also do not revert to Eurosceptic, border-shifting goals if Europe-induced border-opening is threatened by Eurosceptic demands. This is demonstrated by SF’s campaign for a “special status” for Northern Ireland after Brexit, by the party’s endorsement of the Northern Ireland Protocol, and by the STF’s and dF’s opposition to Austria’s plans to reintroduce border controls during the migration crisis.

These findings show that European integration makes border-crossing goals and strategies kin-minority parties’ “default position”. All kin-minority parties endorse the Europe-induced opening of state borders even if they are critical of European integration’s other effects. SF has never endorsed the softening of cultural boundaries or the dispersion of sovereignty. The party persistently calls for radical reforms of European institutions as they currently exist and continues to see Northern Ireland’s sub-state institutions as a transitory arrangement to a united Ireland. The UfS/STF take a similar position in South Tyrol. dF’s incoherent goals and strategies also entail a mix of criticism and appraisal for the effects of European integration. The party’s endorsement of Europe-induced border-opening effects are, however, a consistent component of its goals and strategies.

The goals and strategies of those kin-minority parties who endorse a European identity go beyond the border-crossing “default position”. These are border-transcending parties who do not only aim at the opening of the state border as a transitory solution but who seek integration across borders as a goal in and of itself. This is the case with the SVP and the SDLP. The two parties have been developing a distinct European identity since the 1970s (Utz 2019b) and believe that their cross-border kinship can best be expressed in the context of Europe-induced open state borders and de-securitized relations across cultural boundaries. Against this backdrop, the SVP has pursued the concept of the “European Region of Tyrol”, a loose entity to organize cross-border cooperation between South Tyrol, the Austrian Tyrol and the Italian-dominated Trentino. European initiatives such as the “Madrid Convention” or the “European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation” have provided limited opportunities to institutionalize this multilingual cross-border entity. The SDLP, in turn, has promoted the reconfiguration of relations between the kin-minority, the kin-state and the host-state along

neo-functionalist lines. The SDLP hoped that limited forms of cooperation between these entities would gradually develop into peaceful relations across the islands of Ireland and Great Britain, thereby following the wider pattern of reconciliation in post-war Europe. Much of this thinking is reflected in the three-stranded institutional structure of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement. Both parties the SVP and the SDLP were required to acknowledge the limitations of their respective border-transcending approaches in light of Eurosceptic claims in Austria, Italy and the UK. Nevertheless, the SVP and the SDLP have continued to portray their respective goals and strategies as realistic alternatives to their competitors more radical, border-crossing goals.

Alliances

Kin-minority parties' alliances depend on the interplay of their identities, goals and strategies. Additionally, a kin-minority party's ability to form alliances can be constrained by the party's electoral performance. That is, if a party lacks representation in certain fora, its ability to form alliances at that level of government will be limited. On this basis, three broad categories of alliances can be identified.

Firstly, there are kin-minority parties who support hard, securitized cultural boundaries and who seek to perpetuate said boundaries. These kin-minority parties do not engage in alliances with other actors. If they do so, their allies will be like-minded actors from the same national group, for instance a party in the kin-state. In this category, cooperation across the cultural boundary does not occur. These kin-minority parties will exclude themselves from possible coalitions or electoral pacts and, even if they are elected to certain fora, they might engage in a boycott. The main example for these quasi non-existent alliances is SF before the peace process, particularly when it refused to participate in democratic politics all together. SF's "abstentionist" policy in the host-state parliament still reflects this approach. The UfS and STF's alliances also fall into this category. However, in this case electoral constraints and the inability to form electoral pacts are an additional constraining factor.

Secondly, kin-minority parties that operate in a securitized environment but aim for de-securitization seek to build broad alliances with actors in the kin-state and the host-state and also engage across levels of government. This can be seen in the SDLP's continuous outreach across partisan divisions, or in the SVP's alliances until Austria's EU accession. Both parties have sought cross-party support for their respective cause in the kin-state and have tried to

avoid partisan divisions over kin-minority – kin-state cooperation. Regarding alliances with host-state actors, these parties seek a balance between broad, cross-partisan engagement and staying close to these actors that are more sympathetic to their goals for kin-minority accommodation. This is exemplified by the links between the SDLP and the Labour Party, or between the SVP, *Democrazia Cristiana* and later the Italian centre-left. In the context of Brexit, SF has also followed this rationale in expanding its alliances in Northern Ireland and at the European level to push for continued open state borders.

Lastly, if cultural boundaries are successfully de-securitized, kin-minority parties engage in partisan alliances with ideologically close parties. This happens at all levels of government. It is best exemplified by the SVP's increasingly close relationship with Austria's Christian democrats, at the expense of previous cross-partisan alliances; or by the SVP's rapprochement with the Italian centre-right. This rationale is also reflected by dF's electoral pact with the Lega for the 2014 European election and by the SDLP's cooperation with Fianna Fáil for the 2019 local election.

Conclusion

In the introduction of this study, it was assumed that European integration confronts kin-minority parties with a dilemma: either kin-minority parties revoke irredentism and endorse those forms of cross-border cooperation and minority accommodation that are facilitated by European integration; or, they pursue irredentism against Europe's border-perpetuating effects.

The cases of South Tyrol and Northern Ireland show that the choice for kin-minority parties is more complex. No kin-minority party in either of the two regions is seeking immediate irredentism outside European channels. This option has, indeed, been precluded by the border-perpetuating effects of European integration. However, kin-minority parties selectively endorse Europe-sponsored opportunities, particularly open state borders, while sometimes remaining critical of Europe's other effects. Only those parties who have *a priori* held inclusive identities subscribe fully to Europe's de-securitizing effects and accept that the dispersion of sovereignty helps their kin-minority's accommodation in the host-state.

These findings are illustrative of two wider patterns of European integration's effects on borders and nationalism. Firstly, they show that the perpetuation and opening of state borders constitute a viable alternative to potentially violent irredentism. Even if kin-minority parties

still adhere to irredentism as a long-term aspiration, open state borders provide them with an opportunity to express their cross-border identity within existing constitutional parameters. When state borders are open, kin-minority parties tone down their irredentist goals (that is, they revoke border-shifting goals) and instead seek more moderate forms of cross-border nationalism. Even in light of possible border closures, kin-minority parties do not return to overt irredentist demands. This insight is crucial for the future management of state borders in Europe, especially as their openness is repeatedly being called into question in moments of crisis.

Secondly, this study shows that European integration's impact on kin-minorities' identities is limited. Kin-minority parties that adhere to exclusive identities and that support hard cultural boundaries are not susceptible to adapting a European identity or to fundamentally reconsidering their relationship with other national groups. This may disappoint the expectations of those who hope for a more multicultural Europe in which the boundaries between nations are increasingly blurred. However, kin-minority parties' universal endorsement of open state borders and their rebuttal of violent irredentism suggest that European integration has far-reaching, durable effects on kin-minorities even without increasing the permeability of the cultural boundaries that divide Europe's nations.

These outcomes have significant implications for the future study of kin-minorities and kin-minority parties. Crucially, kin-minority parties have been shown to constitute a distinct group of political parties that differ from state-wide parties or parties that represent national minorities without a kin-state in multiple ways. For instance, kin-minority parties' takes on European integration clearly distinguish them from state-wide parties, given that kin-minority parties interpret the integration process primarily based on its effects on state borders. Numerous state-wide parties that support hard cultural boundaries and that promote exclusive national identities reject European integration all together (Hooghe and Marks 2009). They are "hard Eurosceptics" (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b) or "Eurorejects" (Kopecký and Mudde 2002) who aim at the disintegration of the European centre in its current form or at their state's withdrawal from the European centre. For kin-minority parties, this position has been *de facto* precluded. Their endorsement for open state borders in Europe incentivizes them to endorse European integration even if this contradicts their exclusive identities. Unlike with state-wide parties, party positions on identity and cultural values only influence kin-minority parties' views on European integration to the extent that liberal, inclusive identities

heighten kin-minority parties' expectations about Europe's mainly positive effects on their kin-minority.

In this sense, kin-minority parties resemble those political parties that claim to represent national minorities without a kin-state. These minority nationalist parties evaluate European integration primarily based on their interpretations of Europe's effects on their preferred form of minority self-rule (Elias 2009, 24). Other issues, such as socioeconomic or environmental questions, or cultural values beyond minority – majority relations, only play a subordinate role for both minority nationalist and kin-minority parties' assessment of European integration (ibid.).

Nevertheless, kin-minority parties cannot merely be subsumed under the concept of minority nationalist or regionalist parties. This study has clearly demonstrated that kin-minority parties' "core business" (Hepburn 2009, 482) goes beyond the centre – periphery cleavage (Lipset and Rokkan 1967) that has shaped the study of minority nationalist parties in Europe. More specifically, kin-minority parties develop concrete goals and strategies for the management of their "interface peripheries" between two potentially competing centres of state and nation-building (Rokkan 1999). The spectrum of these possible goals and strategies is not covered by narrow categories like "irredentism" (de Winter 1998) or "rattachism" (Dandoy 2010). Rather, future studies on the party politics of kin-minority nationalism will have to combine insights from research on minority nationalism and theories on borders and boundaries. The distinction between border-shifting, border-crossing and border-transcending parties that I have suggested in this study might be a starting point for further theory-building. For instance, these concepts could be refined by applying them to cases where there is currently no territorial self-rule for kin-minorities.

Beyond the realm of party politics, this study demonstrates that kin-minorities' political agency reflects the opportunities and constraints that result from kin-minorities' continuous interactions with their kin-states and their host-states. The triadic nexus (Brubaker 1996) that conceptualizes kin-minorities, kin-states and host-states as mutually constitutive, heterogenous entities remains a powerful device for the wholistic study of cross-border nationalism. Moreover, Brubaker's theory emphatically defies pre-existing assumptions about kinship and nationhood by depicting these concepts as permanently contested and "radically *relational*" (ibid., 68; emphasis in original). The example of South Tyrol, where kinship has been constructed interchangeably at the level of sub-state regions, states and cultural communities, clearly shows the merits of this approach.

Furthermore, this study has unequivocally demonstrated that kin-minorities are autonomous actors in their own right. While kin-minority parties (and their voters) are embedded in the triadic relationship with the kin-state and the host-state, kin-minorities do not merely respond to political incentives or disincentives from the kin-state (pace Jenne 2004). Future conceptualizations of irredentism and cross-border nation-building will need to combine the assessment of kin-states' foreign policies with theories of kin-minority agency and dynamics of regional integration. This study of kin-minority parties' responses to European integration can be a building block in this more encompassing endeavour.

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