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WHAT DRIVES ETHNIC PARTY MOBILISATION?

Empirical Evidence from the Sorbs and Danish
Minority in Germany

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Abstract

The victory of the Südschleswigsche Wählerband (SSW) in the 2021 federal elections in Germany highlighted a striking gap in German politics – while some recognized national minorities are represented by an ethnic party in parliament, others are not. The aim of the thesis is to analyse this gap and understand why only some ethnic groups manage to successfully mobilise an ethnic party. To do so, I am conducting a qualitative comparative case study between the *Danish minority*, who has been represented by the SSW on the state level for over 60 years and now even on the federal level, and the *Sorbs*, who have never been represented by an ethnic party despite the existence of Sorbian ethnic parties throughout history. Specifically, I am testing Koev's (2019) original theory, which assumes that the historical background (historical presence, territorial attachment, and history of dominance/autonomy) of a group influences the success of an ethnic party. I conduct a causal reconstruction analysis through which I am analysing the underlying social mechanisms that link the historical background of a group to the success of their ethnic party. Alternative theories derived from the literature are also tested for. I conclude that in the cases at hand, the history of dominance/autonomy exhibits the most significant difference between the two groups, while the existence of a kin-state of the Danish minority also plays an influential role. By creating a macro-micro-macro model with the variables, I can identify the micro-mechanisms that explain how this history led to the successful mobilisation of the SSW, which are missing in the case of the Sorbs.

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Administrative and Ethnic Maps



Source: Bundesministerium des Innern, 2014



Source: Eurominority, retrieved 2022



Source: *The Economist*, 2012



Source: *Kulturministeriet*, 2022

1. Introduction

“Political representation is fundamental to a well-functioning democracy. [...] at its best, it evokes the *demos* fundamental to democracy.”

- Laura Montanaro (2019: 201)

In September 2021, Germany voted for its new federal parliament, the *Bundestag*. While the election brought many changes – such as a new Chancellor after a 16-year Merkel reign, and catapulting the previously strongest party, CDU, into opposition – one surprise winner emerged: a member of the *Südschlewsigsche Wählerverband* (SSW; South Schleswig Voter’s Association) won a seat in the new parliament. The SSW is not only a regional party, as the name may suggest, but specifically was founded as a party of the Danish and Northern Frisian minorities in Germany, both groups residing in the northern federal state of Schleswig-Holstein. This victory meant that for the first time in over 60 years, a minority/ethnic party was represented on the federal level, meanwhile the SSW has been represented on the state level in Schleswig-Holstein uninterrupted since 1958.

Germany is home to only four recognized national minorities: the Danish and Frisian minorities, the Sorbs, and the Sinti and Roma. As such, the surprising victory stands in stark contrast to the political representation of the other territorially-concentrated ethnic group – the Sorbs¹. The Sorbs are a Slavic ethnic group found in Lusatia, a historic region spanning parts of Brandenburg and Saxony, as well as Poland. From an outside perspective, the Sorbs and Danish minority² are similar in several aspects – they are territorially concentrated, they fulfil the criteria to be recognized as national minorities in Germany, and they are similar in size of population (between 50,000 to 60,000) – yet only the Danish minority is regionally and nationally represented with its own party. This is not necessarily because the Sorbs do not want party representation; an ethnic party for the Sorbs exists – the Lusatian Alliance. But the party has not been able to enter into state parliamentary elections, and its membership is rather small.

¹ The Sorbs (*Sorben* in German) are also commonly referred to as Wends/Wendish people (*Wenden/Wendisch* in German) in the state of Brandenburg. For the purpose of this thesis, I will refer to the group solely as Sorbs/Sorbian in English.

² The Danish minority is referred to as the ‘Danish minority’ by the German government and by the group itself. Therefore, this is how I will call the group as well, as it presupposes their status as a group within Germany and distinct from the Danes in Denmark.

In the literature, ethnic political mobilisation is often measured as the existence, entry in elections and electoral success of ethnic parties (Koev, 2019: 230; Gherghina & Jigla, 2011: 51-52). Thus, while ethnic parties are not the only channel for ethnic groups to gain political say and presence, they do highlight and encourage the political mobilisation of ethnic groups. As such, the different levels of representation of the Sorbs and Danish minority in Germany, despite being quite similar groups, constitute an interesting case study in the field of political ethnic mobilisation and representation, which has so far received no academic attention as a case and can therefore contribute empirical evidence to the theoretical debate. Following these observations, this thesis is concerned with the following research question:

What can explain the difference in ethnic party mobilisation between the Sorbs and Danish minority in Germany?

For many theorists and politicians, the representation of the people is a fundamental part of democracy and good governance. By considering and including the will and interests of the people in the governing process, governments ensure that they rule by the standards once so simply put forward by Abraham Lincoln – of the people, by the people, and for the people. However, the concept of representation is not that simple; in fact, it is a complex area of study that has for decades preoccupied theorists who have put forward different definitions and theories of representation. One of the most influential bodies of work on representation is arguably Hanna Pitkin's book *The Concept of Representation* (1968), in which she conceptualizes different types of representation, which to this day constitute the basis of many scholarly articles and works on representation.

One subfield of representation that comes a little short in Pitkin's work, however, is the representation of ethnic minority groups. The study of ethnic representation has nevertheless been picked up by a variety of scholars, who investigate different types of ethnic representation (e.g. Lončar, 2016; Williams & Schertzer, 2019) and ethnic party formation (e.g. Bernauer & Bochsler, 2011; Gherghina & Jigla, 2011; Koev, 2019, 2022). In the European context, most empirical studies investigate the representation of ethnic groups in post-communist Eastern Europe (e.g. Nedelcu & DeBardeleben, 2015; Lončar, 2016; Gherghina & Jigla, 2011), larger ethnic groups with considerable political influence (e.g. the Catalan and Basque in Spain – see Miley, 2014), or immigrant ethnic minorities in Western Europe (e.g. Togeby, 2008; Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013). However, smaller ethnic groups in Europe often receive less attention.

This could be due to the fact that oftentimes their share of the population is so marginal, that they would not even be included in some of the most referenced large-N studies on ethnic groups such as Fearon's (2003) study of ethnic fractionalisation, or Bernauer and Bochsler's (2011) study of ethnic parties in Central and Eastern Europe. The measure of how many ethnic groups exist, and how many members each have, is quite complicated, in Europe and elsewhere in the world. Many European countries, including Germany, do not permit the national recording of ethnic identification, and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) includes a self-identification clause, which affirms that "individuals have the right to decide themselves whether they wish to be identified as belonging to a national minority, and which one(s)" (COE, 2021). According to estimates, however, around 14% of Europeans (Pan & Pfeil, 2002) or 8% of EU-citizens (EP, 2018) belong to national minorities, and while in many countries their numbers are marginal, they nevertheless deserve to be properly represented in a democracy.

The nature of the case permits a qualitative, cross-sectional comparative case study in a Most Similar Systems Design. While on the outset the two groups have similar characteristics, the analysis aims to discover the differences between the groups which can explain the disparity in ethnic party mobilisation that has been observed. In order to understand where to look for these differences, I will identify common theories in the literature regarding ethnic party mobilisation. The puzzle this thesis wants to address is what characteristics ethnic groups/national minorities need to possess in order to successfully mobilise ethnic parties, and therefore, why some groups succeed in this endeavour while others do not. By drawing upon Koev's (2019, 2022) original theory, which assumes that ethnic groups with a certain historical background (historical presence, territorial attachment, and history of dominance/autonomy) are more successful in mobilising ethnic parties, I have the following hypothesis: the Danish minority is more successful in mobilising an ethnic party than the Sorbs because of their historical background as defined by Koev.

The thesis aims to test this hypothesis vis-à-vis existing alternative theories regarding what factors (including the existence of a kin-state, share of population, electoral institutions, and presence of far-right party) contribute to ethnic party mobilisation. I do not want to presuppose that ethnic parties are the only channels of representation; it is up to the members of the groups to decide how they want to be represented, and whether they find ethnic parties to be the desired model of representation. Nevertheless, members of both groups do organise in the form of a

party – the SSW for the Danish minority, and the Lusatian Alliance for the Sorbs – of which only one is able to continuously count successes on communal, state, and federal levels. Therefore, this operationalisation of mobilisation does find footing in the case at hand. In order to thoroughly analyse this case, the thesis will be structured as follows: in the next chapter, I will review relevant literature on ethnicity, ethnic representation, and ethnic party formation and mobilisation, divided into two sections respectively. As there is no precedent for this case in the literature, I can only draw upon theoretical literature and empirical studies with a similar aim. Following the literature review, I will outline the theoretical framework, in which I will define the main and alternative theories and how they will be applied to the analysis. Afterwards, I will introduce the research design of this study, which is divided into three sections. First, the selection of the specific cases will be explained in further detail. Then, I will describe the method used for the analysis, based on Mayntz's (2004) causal reconstruction approach. Lastly, the data collection and selection methods will be presented. The chapter on research design is followed by the qualitative analysis and discussion of the findings. The thesis ends with a summary and conclusion.

2. Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is twofold – on the one hand, by reviewing the existing literature on the topic of ethnic party mobilisation, I can highlight the gap that exists in the literature that I attempt to fill with this thesis. On the other hand, I can identify the theories that other scholars in this field have put forward, which I will test in the analysis. This literature review is divided into two sections: first, I will review how others have conceptualised ethnicity and ethnic groups, and apply these conceptualisations to the Sorbs and Danish minority. In the second section will look closer at how and why ethnic parties form, and at the conditions and characteristics necessary for successful ethnic party mobilisation. As there are no precedent studies on the two groups at heart of this thesis, there is no section on the case itself in the literature review.

2.1 What are Ethnic Groups?

Ethnic groups are the protagonists of this thesis and inform all parts of the analysis. But the concept of ethnicity is not a given; if we want to understand why these groups seek representation, we need to understand ethnic identity. Indeed, ethnicity is a concept whose

definition is up for debate, and sometimes equated to the concept of a nation (Gherghina & Jigla, 2011: 51; Reinhardt, 2011). Possibly one of the most cited works on the concept of ethnicity is Chandra's (2006) review and analysis of the different definitions that are prominent in the literature. As to why a definition of ethnicity or ethnic group is necessary, Chandra (2006: 398) explains that "a definition tells us how to evaluate and build theories about ethnic identity—and concepts based on ethnic identity, such as ethnic diversity, ethnic riots, *ethnic parties*, ethnic voting, and so on—as an *independent variable*" (emphases added). She goes on to explain that most such theories are based on the assumption that some ethnic groups possess certain characteristics which determine the outcome, but it is necessary to define whether such characteristics "can reasonably be associated with ethnic identities" (ibid.). The definition proposed by Chandra, informed by previous definitions and often used in the current literature, is rather simple yet broad: ethnicity is an identity category based on descent-based attributes (Chandra, 2006: 400). These attributes are restricted, but not fully defined, as they encompass many different characteristics that are in one way or another related to descent. Because of this broadness and vagueness, Chandra concludes that (at least when defined in this way) ethnic identity, as opposed to other descent-based identities, cannot substantially explain certain outcomes when ethnic identity is used as an independent variable and as such 'has not been shown to matter' (ibid.).

Of course, this is not quite relevant for this thesis, as ethnic identity is not the independent variable here; rather, ethnic party mobilisation is the dependent variable that I am investigating, and historical background is the independent variable. As such, it is not the identity itself which I hypothesise to be the determining factor whether a group is successful in mobilising. Yet, the specific characteristics summarized as historical background (namely historical presence, territorial attachment, and a history of autonomy; I will explain this in more detail in the next chapter), are all descent-based characteristics. As such, the extent to which Chandra's conceptualisation matters in this thesis is how to define and understand what an ethnic identity or group is; more specifically, what attributes must a group or individual possess to be understood as ethnic. These attributes are restricted as follows: "(a) They are impersonal—that is, they are an "imagined community" in which members are not part of an immediate family or kin group; (b) they constitute a section of a country's population rather than the whole; (c) if one sibling is eligible for membership in a category at any given place, then all other siblings would also be eligible in that place; and (d) the qualifying attributes for membership are

restricted to one's own genetically transmitted features or to the language, religion, place of origin, tribe, region, caste, clan, nationality, or race of one's parents and ancestors" (Chandra, 2006: 400). However, when considering the legal provisions in Germany in regards to ethnic group membership, then those attributes can only partially be taken into account. While (a) and (b) can be applied, (c) and (d) can legally not be controlled.

If Chandra's definition can only partially be applied, then we may look at a more case- and country-specific conceptualisation. Germany is of course home to many ethnic groups, the majority of which are immigrant groups. Since the Sorbs and Danish minority are national minority groups, we should look at how those are defined, as opposed to just any ethnic group. As already mentioned, ethnic groups are sometimes equated to nations, or more specifically 'subnations', which Gherghina and Jigla (2011: 51-52) attribute to Kymlicka's definition of a nation as "a historical community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and culture." Within the context of Germany, this definition would apply to the recognized national minority groups and not immigrants, as the latter do not have a historical community within Germany, are not institutionally complete, or occupy a given territory (seeing as they are spread out across the country). Kymlicka's (1995) definition of a nation, and more specifically multinationalism, is also the topic of Reinhardt's (2011) article, in which she uses Kymlicka's definition to criticise his application of his own definition. More specifically, Reinhardt (2011) criticises that Kymlicka uses Germany as an example of a 'mononational' country, when, according to his own theory, Germany should be understood as a 'multinational' country – that is, Germany is composed of more than one 'nation'. Reinhardt describes that Kymlicka defines a nation based on "objective cultural markers such as language, territory and history, on a political-institutional aspect and on the concept of the 'societal culture'", which is "rooted in social life – that is, in schools, media, economics and politics" (Reinhardt, 2011: 779; Kymlicka, 1995). Furthermore, she points out that Kymlicka regards national minorities as such "when they are constitutionally recognised as national minorities" (ibid.). According to Reinhardt, then, the Sorbs and the Danish minority fulfil these criteria, meaning they can be understood as separate nations within Germany, making Germany a multinational state. As to why Kymlicka does not recognise Germany as a multinational state then, Reinhardt posits that he simply has not considered the two groups (or the Frisians) since they have not been mentioned in the book in question at all (Reinhardt, 2011: 777). Whether this was intentional or purely due to ignorance is not clear. This does, however,

illustrate how often the mere existence of the Sorbs and the Danish minority is forgotten or not taken into consideration in the existing literature on ethnicity and ethnic representation.

To conclude this section, an ethnic group can be understood as a group of individuals with shared descent-based attributes and who do not make up an entire population of a country, which specifically in the case of Germany are institutionally recognised groups that have a societal culture. Genetic or inherited attributes, as partially suggested by Chandra (2006) do not (and cannot legally) play a substantial role in group membership; rather, the customs and traditions, the shared language, memories and values (Reinhardt, 2011: 779; see also: Brito Vieira & Runciman, 2008: 86, 110) are integral parts to define an ethnic group, or ‘nation’. And exactly these shared attributes must be represented in schools, media, economics and politics in order to ensure and highlight the truly multinational character of Germany. In the case of the Sorbs and Danish minority, the shared traditions, language and homeland, as well as their official statues in Germany, are the main attributes that define their identity as a group, and collective memory of their history is an integral part as well, which we will see later in the thesis.

2.2 What is Ethnic Political Mobilisation?

The thesis analyses the representation of the Sorbs and Danish minority in Germany, with a focus on ethnic mobilisation in the form of ethnic parties. However, there are several ways in which ethnic minority groups can be represented besides ethnic parties, and just because one group is not represented by a dedicated party, it does not mean the group is not represented at all. For example, Bird (2004) argues that there is no one-size-fits-all form of ethnic representation, but some of the mechanisms for ethnic representation include: “proportional representation, guaranteed minority seats, reduced thresholds for representation of minority parties, minority legislative vetoes, and administrative, advisory and consultative bodies” (see also: Hayat, 2019: 151). One cannot say that any of these mechanisms is more or less successful or meaningful than the other, because mechanisms are dependent on the nationally specific context (ibid.).

Interestingly, the forms of representation listed by Bird are very formal, institutional mechanisms. In the broader literature, however, there are two opposing (but not necessarily conflicting) sides to the debate of ethnic representation: formal, institutional, elected representation versus informal, non-institutional, unelected representation (for arguments how

they could conflict or complement each other, see: van den Bovenkamp & Vollaard, 2019: 201, 206-7). Both groups enjoy several forms of informal, non-institutional, unelected representation through various organisations and associations, many of which are members in the cultural umbrella organisations of the Domowina (for the Sorbs) and the SSF (for the Danish minority). Both groups also enjoy formal and institutional representation, for example through the Minority Council (*Minderheitenrat*), in which representatives of the four recognised national minorities come together to deliberate regarding minority issues and to represent their interests vis-à-vis the German Federal Government.

The main difference, thus, lies in the elected representation, or more specifically, the political mobilisation in the form of ethnic party formation, electoral entry, and success. According to Strijbis and Kotnarowski (2015: 457-58), ethnic parties are usually simply defined as parties that represent and promote the interests of one (or more) ethnic groups (which we have defined earlier), as opposed to majority parties that claim to represent the whole nation-state or regionalist parties, who represent the entire population of a certain region (see also: Fagerholm, 2016: 307). Gherghina and Jigla (2011: 52-53), however, argue that ethnic parties are defined as parties that are considered ethnic by the public and by the party itself, and furthermore often go beyond the mere representation of the group's interests to take on other policy areas as well. For the sake of simplicity and by combining both definitions, I define an ethnic party as a party that is endogenously and exogenously considered to represent (a) certain group(s) with the primary goal of promoting such group(s)'s interests, and may go beyond these interests to also tackle other issues.

Many (traditional) representation theorists find elected representation to be the most legitimate type (for arguments against this assumption, see: Saward, 2006, 2019), which Pitkin (1967: 39, 55-57) calls the 'formalistic' view. It incorporates institutionally legitimate mechanisms to *authorise* politicians to act as representatives (by electing them into office) as well as to hold them *accountable* (by either re-electing them or not) (van den Bovenkamp & Vollaard, 2019: 198). Nevertheless, elected representation does not necessarily need to occur in the form of ethnic parties; 'descriptive' (meaning in this case belonging to either group) or 'substantial' (meaning they truly act in favour of furthering the group's interests) representatives (Pitkin, 1967: 60, 116 ff.) can be elected through the channels of other parties as well. Therefore, in the next subsection, I will look at theories as to why ethnic groups may choose to form ethnic parties vis-à-vis opting for entering the electoral arena through majority

parties. Following, I will look at the theories put forward in the literature regarding why some ethnic parties are more successful in mobilising than others.

2.2.1 What are Reasons for Ethnic Party Formation?

Before we look into why some ethnic parties are more successful in mobilising than others, we should first inquire into why ethnic groups choose to be represented by ethnic parties rather than by other means. Of course, this should start off by pointing out that ethnic groups are not “internally homogenous and externally bounded unitary collective actors” and that they “consist of individuals who are at the same time members of different groups and whose identities, opinions, and attitudes are shaped through various life experiences and contacts within and outside of the group” (Lončar, 2016: 705). On the one hand, this is to point out that when I write ‘ethnic groups choose’, it is a very generalising statement that may only apply to parts of a group. It should rather be read as ‘some members of an ethnic group choose’, because at least in the cases at hand, members from both groups have been involved in ethnic party formation efforts, but not all members of the groups support such parties (see also: Zuber, 2013: 191-92; Montanaro, 2019; Brito Vieira & Runciman, 2008: 81; Warren, 2019: 41). On the other hand, Lončar’s statement illustrates how ethnic groups are composed of different identities that can have different political interests and thus may vote for different political parties. An ethnic party, then, might not be able to substantially cover all the policy areas beyond ethnic/minority issues that the various voters from ethnic groups are passionate about.

To rewind, members of ethnic groups can have varying interests that they feel are better represented by other (majority) parties. Furthermore, majority parties can still have the ethnic group’s interests in mind, even if it is not the platform that the party runs on. As pointed out earlier, descriptive and substantive representation can occur through electing members of ethnic groups into political office through majority parties. If that is so, then why are ethnic parties even relevant? Several studies (Lončar, 2016; Dunning & Nilekani, 2013; Jensenius, 2013) suggest that descriptive representatives within majority parties identify more strongly with their respective party than their ethnic group, and thus promote the party’s interests before the group’s interests. If the interests and issues of ethnic groups are largely ignored or otherwise not (properly) tackled by the majority parties, the need to mobilise an ethnic party might then be more pronounced. In fact, Gherghina and Jigla (2011) find that, at least in post-Communist countries, the presence of formal and informal discrimination increases ethnic party formation,

and the presence of anti-minority parties increases the likelihood of ethnic party formation as well. Thus, according to the literature, it is the need to promote a group's interests in the face of formal and informal discrimination, and the knowledge that descriptive representatives within majority parties first and foremost represent their respective party's interests, that drives the formation of ethnic parties. Nevertheless, in the case of the Sorbs and the Danish minority, both groups have already formed ethnic parties, but it is the electoral success (or lack thereof) of such parties that we are interested in. So, how has the literature theorised the success of ethnic party mobilisation?

2.2.2 What are Conditions for Successful Ethnic Mobilisation?

Ethnic party success is, indeed, an area of study that has drawn the attention of many theorists and, accordingly, there are several theories as to why some ethnic parties may be more successful in mobilising than others. One common approach to theorising ethnic party success is by looking at the electoral system. It is often argued that *electoral laws that are accommodative* to ethnic parties increase the likelihood of ethnic parties entering parliaments; proportional representation is usually considered to be the most accommodative electoral system, and further accommodations such as lowered thresholds for ethnic parties increase this likelihood as well (Nedelcu & DeBardeleben, 2015: 388-89). Nedelcu and DeBardeleben (ibid.) further argue that in a proportional representative system, the number of electoral districts may influence ethnic party success, as having more districts enables parties to 'cater to regional interests', especially if an ethnic group is more concentrated in a specific region. Similarly, Bochsler (2011) argues that the territorial concentration of an ethnic group increases its likelihood for successful mobilisation within a certain electoral district, seeing that territorial concentration increases the group's share of the population in a certain region. Bernauer and Bochsler (2011: 742) also posit that the electoral laws must be 'permissive' and that the share of population of an ethnic group, at least within a certain electoral district, should, logically, pass the electoral threshold to be successful. However, both Nedelcu and DeBardeleben (2015) and Bernauer and Bochsler (2011) find that it is not solely the electoral system and laws that can explain ethnic party success; it can merely explain why ethnic parties have the opportunity to compete in elections in the first place.

Instead, Nedelcu and DeBardeleben (2015: 393-94) argue that the way ethnic minorities are treated by the majority parties shapes the way in which ethnic parties campaign and what

kind of policies they are promoting. Similarly, Gherghina and Jigla (2011) argue that *formal* and *informal discrimination* from the state or *other parties* increases the need to mobilise. On the contrary, Bernauer and Bochsler (2011) do not find evidence for systemic influence of political competitors on the formation and success of ethnic parties.

Instead, using game-theoretical models and the political opportunity structure approach, they argue that ethnic parties calculate their expected electoral success and based on their expectations either join the competition or do not (ibid.). Tavits (2012) and Ishiyama and Stewart (2019) argue that *organisational strength* and *capabilities*, respectively, are crucial for ethnic party success in post-communist Europe. While both cross-country large-N studies find statistically significant support for the theories, the authors are careful not to overestimate the role played by organisational strength/capabilities, explaining that it only “makes a discernible difference, other things equal” (Tavits, 2012: 95).

Another explanation put forward by Gherghina and Jigla (2011) is the existence of and support from a *kin state*. At least in combination with discrimination against the ethnic group, the authors find that financial and organisational support from a kin state increases the likelihood for an ethnic party to form and be successful (ibid.) While not explicitly mentioned as a mechanism for ethnic party success, Strjabis and Kotnarowski’s (2015) large-N study also shows that ethnic groups with a kin state are more successful in mobilising ethnic parties than groups without a kin state (see the table on page 464). This is a factor also noted by Koev (2022: 86), who argues that kin states, especially those who are in close geographical proximity, can boost the ethnic party’s success through organisational or financial aid.

Nevertheless, Koev (2022) finds that while kin states surely do have a positive impact on ethnic party success, as does share of population, there is a factor that has so far been largely ignored by the literature and which greatly contributes to ethnic party emergence and success – the historical background of the group. Historical presence, territorial attachment, and history of dominance/autonomy are three characteristics that, if a group possesses them, increase the likelihood of a group to successfully mobilise in the form of an ethnic party (Koev, 2019, 2022). Exactly because of its novelty, Koev’s theory is what I will test with the cases at hand. In the next chapter, I will take a closer look at his theory, explain how I aim to contribute to the understanding of how historical factors may influence ethnic party mobilisation, and formulate my hypothesis based on this theory.

3. Theoretical Framework

While the previous chapter focused on earlier debates on the topic of ethnic representation and mobilisation, this chapter will discuss how I will move forward and build on these debates, and what theoretical considerations this thesis is based on. As already mentioned, the theory that I will test in this thesis is Koev's (2019, 2022) theory positing that what he summarises as historical background of an ethnic group influences the group's success in mobilising an ethnic party. I am testing his theory explicitly vis-à-vis what other authors have theorised which I have discussed in the previous chapter, as I hypothesise that his theory constitutes the most important difference between the two groups. In the next section, I will review and explain Koev's theory and findings. Following, I will explain how his theory and findings apply to the case of the Sorbs and Danish minority, and based on this understanding, will formulate the hypothesis and alternative explanations that I want to analyse in this work.

3.1 Historical Background

In his 2019 work, Koev introduces an original theory regarding ethnic party mobilisation in Europe, which argues that the historical background of an ethnic group influences the formation, electoral entry and success of ethnic parties. In this work, Koev (2019) tests through a cross-country quantitative study whether ethnic groups who are native to their homeland, have territorial attachment, and a history of dominance or autonomy are more successful in mobilising than groups who do not possess these characteristics. Indeed, Koev finds support for his theory, seeing that groups who possess any or all of these characteristics, and especially a history of dominance/autonomy, are more likely to form an ethnic party that successfully enters into elections. In his subsequent 2022 work, Koev quantitatively tests his theory again, this time against other variables such as population share, existence of a (bordering) kin state, and electoral disproportionality. He finds that historical presence and history of dominance/autonomy are key variables in explaining ethnic party electoral entry and success, even when controlling for other major variables. Only when looking at electoral success, which he operationalises as vote share, and discounting electoral entry, does Koev find that population share is the main statistically significant indicator for ethnic party success, while historical presence and dominance/autonomy lose significance. Now, it might not be surprising that ethnic groups receive a smaller share of the vote if the group's share of the population is also

small. Nevertheless, the presence of the characteristics summed up as historical background does have a statistically significant influence, more so than population share and existence of kin state, on the emergence and electoral entry of ethnic parties, which is the logical prerequisite for ethnic party success, and, furthermore, successful ethnic parties do exhibit these characteristics. So, what exactly are these characteristics, and how can they explain success?

The first characteristic is *historical presence*, or being *native* to the country of residence. This simply means that the group has historically resided within the country that it currently resides in, even before said country officially became the modern nation-state that it is (Koev, 2019: 234). This could be because throughout time, country borders have moved after conflict or the fall of empires, etc. According to Koev (ibid.), being native to the country reduces the feeling of needing to assimilate to the culture of the home-country, as the group did not end up there by choice but by forces out of their control. As such, an own party may seem as the more appropriate choice to promote the group's interests, than doing politics through mainstream parties, which could be seen as assimilation (ibid.).

The second characteristic is *territorial attachment*, which interrelates with historical presence. Ethnic groups that are native to the country may be spread out, meaning they have no specific attachment to a region (an example being the Roma people across Europe, who typically can be found in any region of a given country). A group with territorial attachment, however, can be, and always has been, found within a specific region, or territory, and may thus have claims to autonomy in this specific region (Koev, 2019: 236). Indeed, Koev argues that if a group sees a region as their 'historical home', they may recognize themselves as a separate nation of the state that they live in, and thus feel to have a right to self-governance within this territory, which is more easily achieved with a party (ibid.).

The third and last characteristic is a *history of dominance* or *autonomy*. This factor describes that the group in question has, at some point in history but for a substantial amount of time, comprised the dominant group or enjoyed autonomous self-rule *within* the territory that the group currently resides in (Koev, 2019: 237). The group may have a history of dominance or autonomous self-rule, if the region that they currently live in used to be a separate state than the home-state; perhaps the region belonged to an empire or used to be part of a neighbouring state that has since lost this territory, for example after war. In the latter scenario, for example, the group may be part of the majority of the country the region formerly belonged to, and as such, the group would have been dominant within their current region during a time when the

borders were different. According to Koev, then, this experience of having been dominant/having self-governed, even if a long time ago, may give the group a more pronounced need of having to promote their rights as a separate political entity (ibid.). Koev explains that the possession of at least one, if not more, of these characteristics “ultimately impacts political strategy through two mechanisms: it lends itself to stronger ethnic identities and a stronger sense of group rights” (ibid.). With that in mind, an ethnic party that promotes the group’s interests and rights should be more successful if the group has a historical background that legitimizes and supports the group’s claim to political representation and strengthens the group’s identity as a nation.

3.2 Application of Theory and Hypothesis

In the above section, I have summarised Koev’s theory of historical background factors that influence an ethnic party’s formation, electoral entry and success. Before I can test this theory, however, I must look at the limitations of the cases at hand. I should first point out that Koev’s level of analysis, in both his studies, does not perfectly line up with my two cases. Koev analyses the political mobilisation of ethnic groups at a national level; he looks at the electoral entry and success of ethnic groups in national elections. While it is possible to apply these findings to my case study since the SSW has made it into the federal parliament, it may be more interesting to understand also why the SSW has been successful on the state-level, seeing that the SSW has been represented within the state parliament for over 60 years continually (having just secured another term in the parliament in the 2022 state elections), while only having been represented on the national level since last year. The Sorbs, on the other hand, have not been able to enter state elections with their own ethnic party, let alone even attempt to contest the federal elections. Thus, where my analysis differs, but may also contribute to Koev’s theory, is that I will also be looking at state elections, not only federal elections. As such, the share of population will also differ depending on the level of analysis, as the groups are territorially concentrated and will have a higher share of the population within their respective regions than they do on the national level.

À propos, in his studies, Koev has only included ethnic groups that make up at least 1% of the country’s population “in order to exclude groups with limited potential to influence national politics” (2022: 87; 2019: 240). The groups of interest of this thesis both comprise such a marginal percentage of the population of Germany, that they would not be considered in

Koev's study, and would have a 'limited potential to influence national politics'. But, if the level of analysis is the state level, for example, the groups may have more potential to influence regional politics due to their now increased share of the population.

Lastly, I may also point out that when I talk about the success of ethnic parties, it is not quite defined what I mean by that. Koev defines success as acquiring at least one legislative seat without the help of quotas (2022: 94; 2019: 245) (plus an additional operationalisation as vote share, used only in his alternative model where discounting electoral entry). He does not define whether other 'preferential rules', such as lowered thresholds, are also excluded from his analysis. Nonetheless, both groups at hand enjoy an exemption from the 5% threshold in German elections (federal and partially state), and as such, my analysis may differ in this aspect too. Furthermore, due to the nature of the case, I expand the operationalisation of 'success' loosely to include electoral entry as well, seeing that one group 'succeeded' both in entering into contest in state and federal elections *and* securing at least one seat in both parliaments, while the other group has not even 'succeeded' in entering into elections. This is possibly a very case-specific definition; however, it acutely fits into Koev's theory and study, as he himself notes that "many of the same variables predict both [ethnic party] entry and success" (2022: 95), finding great overlap between these two dependent variables.

To sum up, my empirical analysis differs in a few aspects from Koev's empirical studies. However, I do not find these differences to present any difficulties when applying his theory to my chosen cases. Quite the opposite – I believe that my analysis is a valuable contribution to Koev's theory, regardless of the outcome. Either, his theory can also be applied to analyses at the state/local level, or his theory may be limited to the national level and nationally 'significant' groups (or the case might be an outlier and neither of these statements are true). I am also positive that by conducting a small-N qualitative study, I can look more closely into the mechanisms behind his theory, if it happens to explain the case at hand, of course; I will come back to this in the methods chapter. As such, having laid out some of the limitations and contributions that come with applying Koev's theory to the case of the Sorbs and Danish minority, I will now describe how I will use this theory moving forward.

The goal of the thesis is to understand what differences between the Sorbs and the Danish minority explain the difference in ethnic party mobilisation. Drawing upon Koev's (2019, 2022) innovative theory and large-N quantitative study of ethnic party mobilisation, the hypothesis that I will qualitatively test is the following:

H1: The Danish minority is more successful in mobilising an ethnic party than the Sorbs because of their historical background as defined by Koev.

First, I will look into which of the characteristics identified by Koev are relevant in the cases at hand. These characteristics, summarised in the category of historical background, include whether a group is native to their home-state, have territorial attachment, and a history of autonomy or dominance. Second, I will test this hypothesis vis-à-vis other factors/theories that are prevalent in the literature (and have been identified in the previous chapter), and which have also been tested by Koev, but which I do not hypothesise to be relevant factors in the case of the Sorbs and Danish minority. Those alternative factors that I will test are:

- *Existence of kin state* (see: Gherghina & Jigla, 2011; Strijbis & Kotnarowski, 2015; Koev, 2022: 86);
- *Share of population* (see: Bochler, 2011; Koev, 2022: 88);
- *Electoral institutions* (see: Nedelcu & DeBardeleben, 2015: 388-89; Bernauer & Bochler 2011: 742);
- *Presence of anti-minority/far-right parties* (see: Nedelcu & DeBardeleben, 2015: 393-94; Gherghina & Jigla, 2011; Koev, 2022: 86-87).

4. Research Design

The thesis takes a deductive approach and aims at testing existing theories of ethnic party mobilisation. As such, the previous two chapters lay the groundwork for the analysis by identifying existing theories in the literature and defining the core concepts. In the following, I will explain my case selection, as well as my chosen methods for the analysis and data collection, respectively.

4.1 Case Selection

As already mentioned in previous sections in this paper, the Sorbs and Danish minority in Germany are two cases that have not received much academic attention. Due to some of their similar characteristics (population, territorial concentration, country of inhabitancy) yet different level of ethnic party mobilisation, they constitute an interesting case study. The surprising victory for the SSW in September 2021 further highlights the current relevancy of this case. As for why I have chosen those two groups for the comparison instead of the other

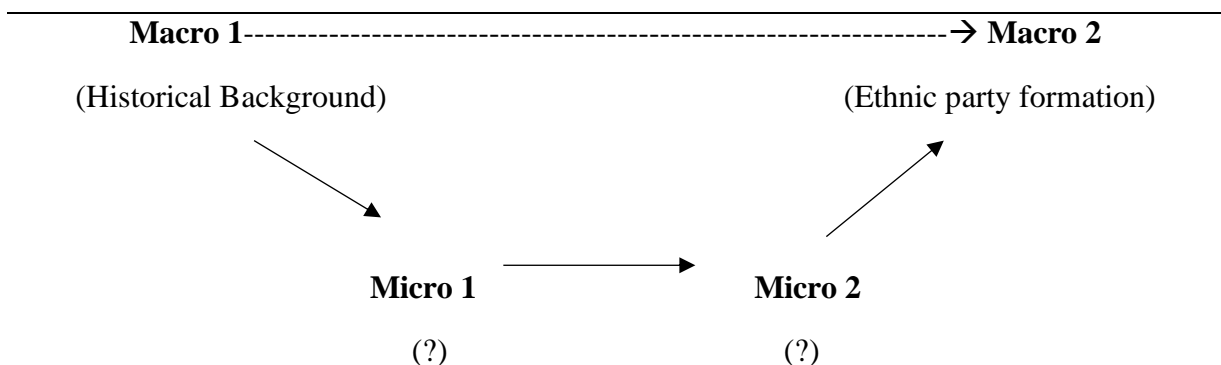
recognized national minorities in Germany, there are a few reasons. First, the Sorbs, Danish and Frisian minority groups are all territorially concentrated groups and are all similar in size of population (between 50,000 to 60,000); the Sinti and Roma on the other hand have a possibly much larger population (there are no official records of ethnicity, but estimates range anywhere from 70,000 to 300,000) (Open Society Institute, 2002) and are territorially spread out throughout Germany, meaning they fall under several state jurisdictions and have no territorial claims to self-determination. In the same vein, Sinti and Roma also have nomadic roots (which the others do not), and an estimated 100,000 Sinti and Roma in Germany do not have a German passport (Open Society Institute, 2002). While a most different systems design comparison between the Sinti and Roma and the Sorbs could be an interesting topic as well, the common denominator in this case would simply be the absence of a successful ethnic party, which I do not find to be a strong motivator for a case study.

Second, even though the SSW represents both the Danish and Frisian minorities, I have chosen the Danish minority for the comparison because of the history of the SSW. Before the SSW was founded, the Danish minority had been politically represented in parliament by the Danish minority organisation Sydslesvigsk Forening (SSF; South Schleswigian Association) up until 1948, when the British military government in Germany ordered the foundation of a party for the political representation of the Danish minority (SSW, retrieved 2022). Only then did the Frisian minority join the representation efforts. Furthermore, the SSW originally, in its early years, hoped for a reunification with Denmark, and the exemption from the 5%-threshold in elections was granted to the SSW following the Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations (ibid.). Thus, while the SSW represents both groups, its history and roots make a stronger case for analysing and comparing the mobilisation of the Danish minority. Nevertheless, a comparison between the Sorbs and Frisian minority may also be interesting for future research on national minority representation and mobilisation in Germany. Lastly, the reason I am focusing solely on groups within the same country, and not a cross-national comparison, is twofold: first, by focusing on two groups in the same country, I can discard factors such as national level of democracy or legal definitions of national minorities as independent variables. Secondly and relatedly, Bird (2004) argues that cross-national comparisons are 'less meaningful', since micro-level factors that affect ethnic representation in one country do not translate into other countries, seeing that every country has its own history and conceptualisation of ethnicity and ethnic groups.

4.2 Method of Analysis and Conceptualisation

To analyse the differences in political mobilisation between the Sorbs and Danish minority, I am conducting a qualitative, cross-sectional comparative two-cases study in a Most Similar Systems Design. The method of analysis will be kept simple: based on the earlier mentioned theories identified in the literature, I will test my hypothesis and alternative factors by looking at whether the different factors are present in the two cases, and how their presence or lack thereof influences ethnic party formation and success. Where the two cases differ, I will investigate further how and why they differ, and how, based on the theories, this supposedly affects the difference in mobilisation between the two groups. By looking at empirical and primary data, I want to look at the social *mechanisms* of how certain factors and characteristics influence ethnic party formation, electoral entry and success, not merely whether they seem to have an influence. According to Mayntz (2004: 241), social mechanisms “state *how*, by what intermediate steps, a certain outcome follows from a set of initial conditions” (emphasis in

Figure 1. Macro-Micro-Macro Model of Sociological Explanation



Source: Adapted (and adjusted) from Mayntz (2004).

original). Mayntz (2004: 248) explains the importance of analysing social mechanisms by referring to the macro-micro-macro model of sociological explanation (see: Figure 1). Essentially, while quantitative studies can establish correlational relationships between two macro-phenomena (in my case, the historical background of a group, and the formation/success of an ethnic party), they are limited in explanatory power (Mayntz, 2004: 238). What they lack is the *social mechanisms* that explain how one macro-phenomenon (the context; the *explanans*) leads to another macro-phenomenon (the outcome, the *explanandum*) (Mayntz, 2004: 244).

These social mechanisms can be understood as micro-phenomena; how has one macro-phenomenon (Macro 1) created individual/group action situations (Micro 1), which in turn influenced individual/group behaviour (Micro 2), which led to the macro outcome (Macro 2) (Mayntz, 2004: 247-49). She explains that quantitative correlational analyses can be used as a ‘point of departure’ to which one can “critically [develop] an alternative to [...] by adding the causal link” (Mayntz, 2004: 244), this ‘causal link’ being the social mechanism. In that sense, I am using Koev’s correlational analysis of the two macro-phenomena historical background and ethnic party formation/success, and exploring the social mechanisms behind this correlation by conducting a, what Mayntz (2004) calls, ‘causal reconstruction’ analysis.

The analysis will be divided into three sections: in the first two sections, I will analyse my hypothesis according to Koev’s theory, followed by analysing the alternative factors. Those two sections can be understood as a sort of ‘results’ or ‘findings’ section, where I will empirically test whether the main and alternative factors are, in fact, present in the two cases at hand, and what social mechanisms underlie how these factors relate to ethnic party mobilisation. Those results will be summarized and the differences between the two groups illustrated in tables. The third section, accordingly, serves as the discussion, where I will review and discuss my findings according to the theory, and what conclusions we can draw from them.

I conceptualise the different variables as follows: the dependent variable (and thus macro-level outcome) in this thesis is *ethnic party mobilisation*, which I operationalise as ethnic party entry and success in parliamentary elections, both on the state and federal level. This operationalisation, as discussed earlier, is in line with several scholars, including Koev (2019, 2022; see also: Gherghina & Jigla, 2011). The main independent variables (macro-level context) that I am testing are what Koev (2019, 2022) defines as *historical background*, which summarises historical presence, territorial attachment, and history of autonomy. How these factors are operationalised has been discussed in Chapter 3.1, as I will take on Koev’s definition of these factors. The alternative independent variables are operationalised as follows: *existence of kin state* is simply understood as the existence of a nation-state whose majority population is ethnically related to the minority group in question, and which the minority group identifies with. *Share of population* is, obviously, operationalised as the share that the group constitutes of the country’s/state’s population. I will look at both the country’s and state’s population, as I am using both levels in my analysis. *Electoral institutions* are implied to be electoral institutions that have laws in place which in one way or another are favourable to the formation and

electoral entry and success of ethnic parties in particular. And lastly *presence of anti-minority/far-right parties*, which suggests the presence of a party that overtly harbours anti-minority (not necessarily targeted against the national minorities but minorities in general) sentiments in state/federal parliaments.

4.3 Data Collection Method

The data I am using for the analysis primarily consist of primary sources, such as national and state laws and statutes, international treaties and policy documents, qualitative and statistical data from government agencies/ministries, as well as interviews. The relevant national and state laws include: The Federal Elections Act (*Bundeswahlgesetz*) as well as the State Election Acts (*Landeswahlgesetze*) of Schleswig-Holstein, Saxony and Brandenburg, the Saxon Sorb Law (*Sächsisches Sorbengesetz*), the Sorbs/Wends Law in Brandenburg (*Sorben-/Wenden-Gesetz*), and the Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations (*Bonn-Kopenhagener Erklärungen*). These official documents, as well as further information such as status reports, are all available to the public and can be accessed through the internet. The different state laws specifically will be used to compare the legal opportunities, standings and rights of the two groups in order to detect possible legal obstacles and differences. A few secondary sources, specifically the websites of the SSW and SSF, are also used for additional information.

The aforementioned interviews have been conducted by myself with a total of five representatives of the Sorbs and the Danish minority³. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, which gave me the opportunity to ask a number of prepared questions but also allow for deviations from the script in order to reiterate a point or ask follow-up questions. The interviewees are members/speakers/founders⁴ of the five main representative bodies/organisations of interest of the two groups: the Sydslesvigsk Forening (SSF) and Südschleswigsche Wählerverband (SSW) of the Danish minority, and the Domowina, Serbski Sejm and Lusatian Alliance of the Sorbs⁵. The purpose of these interviews is to get an account

³ The interviews have been conducted in German, and have been transcribed and translated into English by the author.

⁴ Throughout the text, I will not refer to the interviewees by name, to retain a level of anonymity. However, all interviewees have given me consent to use their names in my thesis, which can be found in the appendices.

⁵ The SSF and Domowina are the recognized cultural umbrella organisations of the Danish minority and Sorbs, respectively. The SSW and Lusatian Alliance are the ethnic parties of the groups, respectively. The Serbski Sejm is a 2018-founded Sorbian parliament, but without official recognition.

from first-hand experiences with representing and mobilising the two groups, to understand the legal and social situation, obstacles, frustrations and opportunities, and to gain new perspectives on the struggles, the wants and needs, and what the future may hold for the groups. More importantly, as I am not a member of either group myself, I would reinforce the notion of exclusion and misrepresentation by not allowing Sorbian/Danish perspectives and voices to be represented in this thesis. It should be noted, however, that the accounts from the interviews can be biased and in some instances, are subjective understandings of the situation in question. It furthermore should be noted, that while the interviewees hold positions such as press speaker, the validity of their opinions and understandings nevertheless becomes subject to the question at heart of this thesis: whether they can truly speak for/on behalf of the Sorbs/Danes. Nonetheless, I find the data gathered from the interviews to be crucial contributions to the understanding of ethnic representation and mobilisation, and to this thesis in particular.

5. Analysis

In the preceding chapters, I have established the theoretical foundations that this thesis is built upon. Common theoretical approaches regarding ethnic groups and ethnic party mobilisation have been discussed in the literature review, and Koev's (2019, 2022) original theory has been discussed in the theoretical framework chapter. This chapter now aims at applying Koev's theory to an empirical case study by testing the hypothesis laid out earlier in the thesis. As such, I will now test whether the Danish minority is more successful in mobilising an ethnic party than the Sorbs due to their historical background, versus other commonly theorised, alternative factors. For the sake of clarity and easy comparison, I will analyse the Sorbian and the Danish minority cases at the same time, and divide the analysis up into sections corresponding to the different factors that I am looking at. This allows the reader to recognise the difference (or lack thereof) between the two cases, and thus, which factors do, in fact, influence the success of the groups' mobilisation efforts. As I am looking at historical factors, first and foremost, we can expect a path dependency effect. The aim of conducting a causal reconstruction analysis is then to identify the underlying social mechanisms that explain this path dependency – how did a macro-phenomenon in the past lead to a macro-phenomenon in the present. The analysis will be divided into three sections: the first section will analyse the two cases according to the theory put forward by Koev by investigating whether the factors necessary for successful mobilisation are present, to what extent, and how these factors potentially affect the success. The second

section will explore the alternative factors as put forward by several other theorists in this area of study. I am hypothesising that these alternative factors should not have a discernible effect on the success of mobilising *in the case at hand*. The findings of the analysis will then be discussed in the subsequent third section, where I will draw conclusions based on the findings from the first two sections.

5.1 Historical Background of the Sorbs and Danish Minority

The characteristics summarised as historical background, that Koev (2019, 2022) theorises to be relevant factors in ethnic party electoral entry and success, are the historical presence of the group within the country they now reside in, territorial attachment, and a history of dominance or autonomous self-rule in its current region of inhabitancy. In this section, I will look into each factor separately but at the both groups simultaneously in order to fully draw out the similarities and differences between the groups. In order to stay within the scope of the thesis, I will only analyse the micro-level mechanisms of a factor when it highlights a considerable difference between the groups. Based on these findings, Table 1 summarizes and illustrates the similarities and difference between the Sorbs and Danish minority.

5.1.1 Historical presence

The *Sorbs* have a documented history of settling in what today constitutes the Federal Republic of Germany since the 6th century, around 1500 years ago. The Sorbs, then comprised of several Slavic tribes, settled between the Baltic Sea and Ore Mountains, and have survived cultural assimilation attempts during the Nazi regime and other times (Minderheitensekretariat, retrieved 2022). Today, the Upper and Lower Lusatian Sorbs remain in Germany as two groups with similar yet distinct Sorbian languages, as well as a sometimes-argued third language group in mid-Lusatia, speaking the Schleife dialect, which is sometimes considered to be its own language (according to several interviewees). Throughout the history of today's Germany, the Sorbs had also been inhabiting different 'countries'; the Sorbs had settled in the region predating the Holy Roman Empire, and the German Empire, and furthermore, the Upper Lusatian Sorbs in Saxony at some point lived in the Kingdom of Saxony, while the Lower Lusatian Sorbs in Brandenburg belonged to Prussia. Therefore, it is undeniable that the Sorbs are native to Germany, having settled in the region long before the modern nation-state has been formed.

Table 1. Historical Background

	<i>SORBS</i>	<i>DANISH MINORITY</i>
<i>Native to home-state</i>	Yes. The Sorbs have been inhabiting Germany since the 6 th century AD.	Yes. Due to the redrawing of the German-Danish border, the Danish minority has been integrated into Germany in 1864 without immigration.
<i>Territorial attachment</i>	Yes. The Sorbs have settled in the Lusatia region since the 6 th century AD.	Yes. The South-Schleswig region has always been inhabited by ethnic Danes, before and after the border change.
<i>History of dominance/autonomy</i>	No. The Sorbs have not constituted the majority population or enjoyed autonomous self-rule.	Yes. Before the redrawing of the border, the Danes in South-Schleswig constituted the dominant ethnic group, and thus, were ruled by their kin group.
<i>Represented by ethnic party</i>	No.	Yes.

Additionally, according to some of the interviewees, the facts that the Sorbs are native to Germany, came to the region as several tribes, and were forced to assimilate during the Nazi era are often used as arguments, among others, that the Sorbian people constitute an indigenous people (see also: Pjenkova, 2021), although this identification is not prevalent among the entire Sorbian population. Nevertheless, this (at the minimum perceived) indigeneity binds the Sorbian people to Germany, and thus solidifies claims to political representation. As Williams and Schertzer (2019: 680-81) argue, indigenous groups that have faced ‘explicit systemic discrimination’ have “legitimate claims to political representation”, and that indigenous identity is “defined through a process of self-identification of Indigeneity”, which further is a “political identity held as a response to the legacy of relations between a people and a settler colonial state.” Thus, whether or not one understands the Sorbian people as an indigenous people, it is evident that the settlement of the Sorbs predates the modern nation-state of Germany and accordingly, they have a historical claim to representation.

The *Danish minority* has quite a different historical presence in Germany. While the Sorbs have settled in their region centuries ago and have lived through several border changes that have not affected their status as an ethnic minority, the Danish minority only exists *because* of border changes, which directly created their status as an ethnic minority. Schleswig (*Slesvig* in Danish), the region that the Danish minority inhabits, always had a sizable Danish population, especially in the north. Both ethnic Danes and ethnic Germans have lived in the region, but throughout history, Schleswig has predominantly belonged to Denmark and, at times, at least to the Danish King as a fief. Nonetheless, the coexistence of the two ethnicities in the region led to conflict from time to time, and only after the Second Schleswig War in 1864 between Denmark on one side and Prussia and Austria on the other, did Schleswig eventually fall into the hands of Prussia, and ultimately Germany (SSF, retrieved 2022a). Following the First World War, a referendum held in the northern part of Schleswig in 1920 solidified the current Danish-German border, when the majority of people living on the German side of the current border voted to remain in Germany, while people on the Danish side voted to return to Denmark (*ibid.*). As such, the Danish minority that exists in Germany today is not an ethnic minority group that came into being as a result of group migration, but as a result of borders ‘migrating’ (which ultimately also created a German minority on the Danish side of the border). This means that the Danish minority is native to Germany, since the group has lived in its region before it became part of Germany, and thus before the modern nation-state of a federal Germany was formed. Similar to the Sorbs, the Danish minority also faced hardships because of their language during the Nazi regime; however, according to the SSF (retrieved 2022a), they were not persecuted because the German government desired a ‘good relationship’ with Copenhagen.

To sum up, both groups are clearly native to Germany and have a historical presence that predates the formation of modern Germany, even if their histories could not be more different. In that vein, both groups have legitimate claims to representation as autochthonous peoples in Germany, as which they are officially recognized. Although there is no discernible (agreed upon) difference between the concepts of autochthony and indigeneity in the broader social scientific discipline, the groups are widely regarded as autochthonous groups in Germany, while only parts of the Sorbian community also claim indigeneity. Some of the interviewees argue that the reluctance to claim indigeneity is the result of negative (i.e. less ‘civilised’) connotations of the term ‘indigenous’. Since both groups are native to Germany, this macro-level factor does not seem to play a relevant role in ethnic party formation in this case. However,

since the three historical background factors are interrelated, I will come back to the significance of historical presence and indigeneity in 5.1.3 when analysing the micro-level mechanisms.

5.1.2 Territorial attachment

Territorial attachment goes hand in hand with historical presence, as one group cannot have territorial attachment unless they have a historical presence in that territory. As has become clear in the previous subsection, both groups' historical presence is, in fact, tied to a specific territory or region. The *Sorbs* settled in the region of Lusatia (*Łužyca/Łužica* in Lower-/Upper Sorbian, *Lausitz* in German) when they first came to settle in today's Germany. It is in this region where the Sorbs have built communities, villages, and institutions, but also have faced discrimination and expulsion. For example, over 130 villages with a majority of Sorbian speakers have been destroyed over the past 70 years for the sake of lignite mining. The interviewees told me that with the loss of these villages, the Sorbian people have also lost part of their territory and thus, part of their home. Not only that, they have lost territory where they can freely speak their mother tongue with the majority of their neighbours, which led to the Sorbian people being more spread out throughout Lusatia and losing part of their language and identity. Exactly because of this loss of territory, some Sorbian representatives argue, the Sorbs have territorial claims to representation and reparations.

The *Danish minority*, similarly, always inhabited the region of South-Schleswig (*Sydslesvig* in Danish), since it used to be a region of Denmark. The territorial attachment of the Danish minority to South-Schleswig, thus, is related to its becoming an ethnic minority in Germany. The region is still characterized by its Danish history. For example, the *Flensborghus* (Flensburg House), where the SSF, SSW and FUEN, among others, are located today, was built in the 18th century from the bricks of the torn-down Duburg castle (SSF, retrieved 2022b). The region is also characterized by its border to Denmark, which over the past decades has virtually become obsolete. The interviewees told me that, at least pre-Covid, border controls were incredibly rare, and with Danish and German elements and languages on both sides of the border, the line that separates Germany from Denmark became blurred. Furthermore, many members of the Danish minority live or work in Denmark, and travel between the two countries on a daily basis.

The territorial attachment also means for both groups that they have claims to self-organisation within this territory, and to freely live out their culture in this territory, as they have for hundreds of years. This means that both groups have claims to (a) the official right and freedom to speak their respective languages in public institutions; (b) public places and spaces with bilingual signage with the traditional names given in the respective languages; and (c) cultural and educational organisations/institutions that foster the maintaining of traditions, languages and culture within the settlement area. While the groups were able to realise these claims in their respective territories, representatives from both groups have told me that the current extent to which they are present and realised is not enough. While (a) is mainly legally realised in both regions, and even extended beyond their settlement area into Kiel (Holstein) for the Danish minority, it is not always practically realised. The interviewees emphasised that in order to be able to speak one's own language in a public institution/office, there must be an employee that speaks that language as well. If no bilingual public servants are employed, this right cannot be properly exercised, which constitutes discrimination. Similarly, while bilingual signage can be found in both regions, the extent to which, for example, city names are presented in both German and Danish/Sorbian leaves room for improvement. In fact, both groups complain that a majority of bilingual signs clearly emphasize the German over the minority language names, as can be seen in the examples below. Lastly, both groups have thriving cultural and educational organisations within their region; however, the capabilities of both are somewhat restricted by the state or federal governments, especially in the educational sector.



A sign in Lusatia of the historical city of Bautzen
Source: Richter-Zippack, 2021



A sign in Schleswig of the historical city of Flensburg
Source: Nordschleswig, retrieved 2022

To sum up, both groups have resided in their respective region for centuries and thus have territorial attachment and legitimate claims to representation and self-organisation within their respective territory. Since problems with self-organisation persist, this could constitute a reason for wanting to politically mobilise, at least *regionally*, in order to gain greater influence on the capabilities that are granted to the two groups. Yet, only the Danish minority is mobilised in the form of an ethnic party, while the Sorbs are not. Therefore, the territorial attachment of an ethnic group cannot alone be a crucial macro-factor in the decision to form an ethnic party. If it is not the historical presence or territorial attachment of an ethnic group, in the present case, then there are no micro-level mechanisms that are necessary to be looked at in this thesis. However, as stated earlier, I will come back to this point in the next sub-section, as territorial attachment is related to the history of dominance/autonomy in this case.

5.1.3 History of dominance/autonomy

So far, both groups fulfil two of the characteristics that Koev theorises to affect ethnic party electoral entry and success, and as such, neither can explain the difference between the two groups. The first two characteristics are interrelated, and the third one can be tied into historical presence and territorial attachment as well, seeing that a group's history of dominance or autonomy most likely would be tied to the region that they are residing in. This is the characteristic that displays the starkest contrast between the two groups yet, as the Sorbs do not have a history of dominance or autonomy while the Danish minority does.

Going back in history, the *Sorbs* have been under German control since the 10th century. Before this, the Sorbs lived mainly free east of the Frankish Empire, but there is no record of an organised political structure during this time. Part of the reason for this could be that there were several Sorbian/Slavic tribes in the region, with different languages/dialects, of which only today's Upper and Lower Lusatian Sorbs have kept their traditions and culture (BLPB, 2022; Sachsen, 2022). After falling under German authority, the Sorbs have also been introduced and assimilated to Christianity, which characterises many of the traditions that the Sorbs have been able to keep alive (*ibid.*). Ever since the 10th century, the region of and around Lusatia saw more and more Germanisation and the building of German villages and cities, which reduced the area in which the Sorbs could freely speak Sorbian, who were several times throughout history forced to speak the German language and assimilate into the German culture

(ibid.). Since then, the Sorbian people have not enjoyed the freedom of autonomy or self-rule, and have not constituted the majority population anywhere besides individual towns.

Whether one wants to consider the Sorbian history before the 10th century and takeover of German authorities as a history of autonomy is questionable. Since there is no recording of actual Sorbian self-*rule*, who rather lived as free peasants, and if there was, it would be over a millennium ago before many of the Sorbian traditions even came into being, I do not consider the Sorbs to have a (substantial) history of dominance or autonomy. Furthermore, the Christianisation of the Sorbs started under German control, and the Catholic and Protestant churches both had a significant influence not only on Sorbian traditions and holidays, but also on the conservation and transmission of the Sorbian languages and cultures until today. Therefore, I do not consider any pre-Christian history of autonomy, if there really was any, to be a relevant factor in the case of the Sorbs, simply because it was too long ago and would have been the history of a Sorbian nation with different traditions and cultures. Rather, the history of the Sorbs attests to a constant assimilation to the German colonial state, which nevertheless demonstrates the endurance of the Sorbian people and speaks for the indigeneity and legitimate claim to representation of the Sorbian nation.

The history of the *Danish minority* looks quite different. As with the first two characteristics, the history of dominance or autonomy is directly related to the border change in 1864. To recall, this factor describes that the group in question has experienced either dominance or at least autonomous self-rule *in the region that they currently inhabit*. Since the region that the Danish minority lives in today used to be part of Denmark, it is quite obvious that any ethnic Danes living in this region prior to the redrawing of the border were, by definition, part of the majority population; i.e. they were the dominant ethnicity of the country that they lived in at the moment, even if they did not constitute the dominant ethnicity in the specific region itself. In the same vein, since the region belonged to Denmark and was thus ruled by ethnic Danes, one could say that the Danish population experienced self-rule in South-Schleswig. This history of dominance and self-rule of the Danish minority in the region of South-Schleswig is somewhat recent then, at least when compared to the Sorbs, which demonstrates a clear difference between the Danish minority and the Sorbs in regards to their historical background.

The reason why it matters *when* the group experienced dominance or self-rule is because of what type of political institutions or organisations were in place at the time. As pointed out

before, there is no record of an organised political structure of the Sorbs before the 10th century. Therefore, even if they did somehow autonomously self-rule, there were no mechanisms and structures that could influence how the Sorbs would politically mobilise today. In contrast, before the ethnic Danish population in South-Schleswig got integrated into Germany, they experienced an organised and collective political structure headed by their kin group. Even though such structure is not comparable to the political structure in the region today, it does certainly lend support to the theory that having previous experience with self-rule influences how the group may choose to politically mobilise in the future. After previously having been the most influential political actor in the region, it does make sense to mobilise in a manner that emulates the position they once had as far as the current system allows – a political actor that wields some influence, for example by being represented in parliament.

Of course, it should be pointed out that this is certainly a subconscious, indirect result of the group's history, especially when considering the party SSW was founded more than 80 years after the redrawing of the border, and thus nobody involved in its foundation could have been (consciously) alive prior to the accession to Germany. Nevertheless, when compared to the results of Koev's (2022) large-N study, the history of dominance or autonomy does seem to be an influential factor, more so even than historical presence. This attests to the theory of path dependency, which assumes that history matters and that events in the past influence how things play out in the future. To illustrate this point further, because of the several forced assimilation attempts vis-à-vis the Sorbs throughout their history, the group was often forced to build any collective structures outside of the political sphere in order to keep their (language) communities and traditions alive but without provoking the national authorities. Such non-political collective structures persist today, such as the many cultural and educational organisations that have taken on the (formal) role of representing the interests of the Sorbs. In the entire history of the Sorbs, no political party with explicit ties to the Sorbs has managed to wield any influence, and thus, the Sorbs have no collective memory of wielding political power, which may explain why there is no collective pursuit of mobilising in the form of a party. It is simply not a legacy of the Sorbian nation, as it is in the case of the Danish minority (see also: Brito Vieira & Runciman, 2008: 113-114).

In contrast to the first two historical factors, the history of dominance/autonomy presents a significant difference between the groups. So, what are the micro-mechanisms underlying the influence of this macro-phenomenon on ethnic party formation and success? Having been ruled

by their own kin group in the past, the Danish minority has a collective memory of being treated equally to other members of their kin in their territory; this of course changed after being integrated into Germany. While the Danish minority voted to remain in Germany in 1920, meaning they have felt largely at home at this point, this changed after WWII, after having faced discrimination because of their ethnic identity. One of the interviewees recalled:

“After the Second World War, there were many people, my grandfather being one of them, who thought ‘now we are going back home!’ The SSF [the main cultural organisation, who took over the role of political representative at the time] had over 100,000 members at that time. Now it has 16,000. There were many people who were fed up, and they wanted to belong to Denmark. But it was said that the motivations for why they wanted this were wrong, and that it would only lead to unrest, when what we needed was stability. And then came the Bonn-Copenhagen declarations, with which people came to terms with, and which basically afforded us all rights.”

He continued:

“After the Second World War, there was only the SSF and who also did the political representation. So, they [the British military government] said: ‘you have to choose, you cannot do culture and politics at the same time, that is too much of a conflict of interests’. So, the responsibilities were split up. [...] There was also a consideration whether we should have our own party, or strategically place politicians in the big parties.”

So, how can we interpret that according to the macro-micro-macro model? Indeed, when the responsibilities were split, and the newly founded minority party SSW split from the cultural organisation SSF, the SSW originally followed the pursuit of reuniting with Denmark, before the 1955 Bonn-Copenhagen Declaration enshrined the minority’s rights in the region. Even though only 28 years before the creation of the party the minority voted to remain in Germany, significant parts of the ethnic group now desired to reunite with the state where they would be ruled by their kin. The minority was ‘fed up’ with the inequality that it now faced in its home territory. Back when the territory belonged to Denmark, and also for a period of time after 1864, the people could freely speak their mother tongue, practice their traditions, send their children to Danish schools, etc. When all of this was being threatened by the Nazi regime, while at the same time ethnic Danes were sent to war to fight for the German side, the people collectively perceived that they are being treated unequally, and if they were being ruled by their kin again, this would not happen in the future (SSF, retrieved 2022a). This deprivation of equal treatment,

the collective memory of having equal rights when they were the majority and ruled themselves, constitutes what we may understand as the first micro-phenomenon; individuals found themselves in a situation that they felt required action.

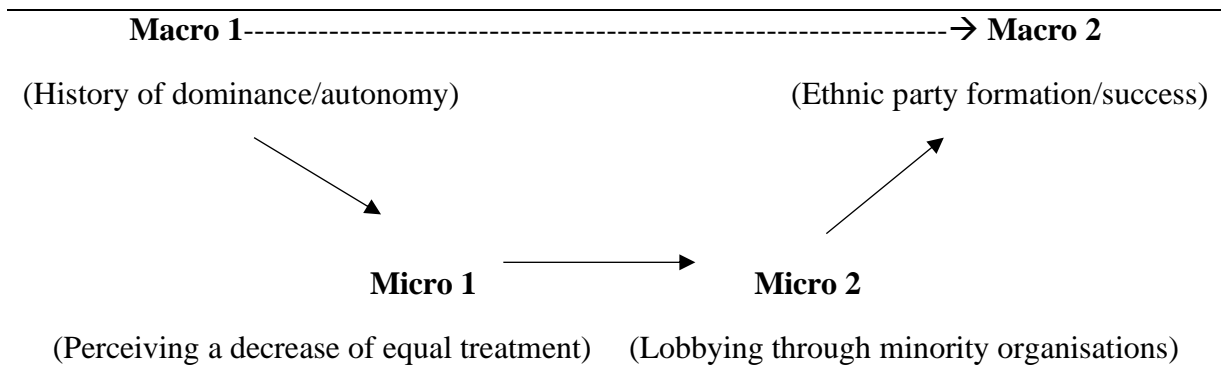
The SSF, the main organisation of the Danish minority that existed at time after being created in 1920, experienced a huge demand after WWII. More people than ever (in the past and future) sought membership in the organisation. The people were fed up with the inequality and treatment from the German state and sought to express their disdain through organised membership. The SSF was the closest institution the minority had to a political representative and harbour of culture. Thus, by joining the SSF, the people could experience some of their culture and rights again, while at the same time symbolising that they are unhappy, that they would rather be Danish again. Although Denmark shut down the idea of re-integrating South-Schleswig into its country (SSF, retrieved 2022a), the new strength of the SSF was a clear sign that the Danish minority wanted change. This flocking to and lobbying through the SSF can be understood as the second micro-phenomenon; the people feel the need to organise in order to right the wrong they are experiencing. As a result of this increase in membership, and the representation of Danish interests the SSF had to take on, the British military government demanded that the political representation be undertaken by a separate institution. When the organisation was considering whether an ethnic party or membership in bigger parties was the better strategy, it ultimately decided to create a party. Since many people were still infatuated with the idea of reuniting with Denmark, it might seem paradoxical to join *German* parties to defend Danish interests and minority rights. Furthermore, one Danish representative told me, when asked about the benefits of having an ethnic party instead of sending minority politicians to join mainstream/majority parties:

“There are a couple of politicians in other parties, for example the Greens and FDP, who are also Danish. [...] And they try to give the minority the platform to speak, but when you look at their elections programme, then there is barely any of it left. [...] In essence, they are just another drop in the sea. This actually makes clear why it is important to have an own political representation. It is great that we have people in other parties; it helps us to initiate conversations and find a certain common ground. This is really helpful. But nothing or very little really comes out of it. [...] If we would rely on it, then we would end up with a situation like 2009, when the CDU lowered only our subsidies. And that’s when the SSW is needed, who has strong parliamentary standing, and who shuts that down”.

While his assessment regards the current situation of the ethnic party and Danish minority, similar concerns could have been brought up in 1948 (see also: Montanaro, 2012: 1098). And as argued before, the people had one main goal in mind – the reunification with Denmark – which could not be consolidated with German majority parties. This was apparent, when the Danish political representation scored an incredible 9.3% of the vote in 1947 (before the SSW was founded and the SSF contested in the election instead). In the following election, the SSW lost a little bit of the Danish minority electorate, but still scored 5.5% of the vote in the very first parliamentary election it contested.

To sum up and conclude this section, it seems that of the three factors that Koev summarises as historical background and finds to be indicators of ethnic party success, only the history of dominance or autonomy constitutes a relevant factor, as it is the only significant difference *in this case*. By analysing the data from my interviews through causal reconstruction to identify the micro-level mechanisms that underlie the correlation between history of dominance/autonomy and ethnic party formation/success, we have found support from the interviews that there are underlying systematic factors on the individual/group level, that link the two macro-phenomena (see: Figure 2). In the Danish minority case, this can be understood as follows: the group experienced dominance/autonomy when the region was still a part of Denmark (Macro 1). When the region was integrated into Germany, but the minority was still free to speak Danish and practice Danish traditions, there was solely a cultural organisation, no extensive pursuit of reuniting with Denmark, since the group still felt at home. But once the group faced discrimination based on its Danish identity, the group perceived the unequal treatment it was exposed to; something they would not face if they were still ruled by their kin (Micro 1). This was a situation the group no longer wanted to endure. Thus, people flocked to join the SSF in order to lobby for accession to the Danish state (Micro 2). When this was not possible, and they were required to politically organise separately from the cultural organisation, the ethnic party SSW was formed and immediately scored a significant result in the state election (Macro 2).

Figure 2. Macro-Micro-Macro Model: History of dominance/autonomy



Source: Adapted (and adjusted) from Mayntz (2004).

Of course, the Sorbs have experienced unequal treatment as well; they were forced to assimilate and to give up their language/traditions several times throughout history. The difference is, however, that they have not had the experience of being treated equal in the past like the Danish minority does when they were ruled by their own kin, when they were ruling themselves. In other words, the macro-level trigger for mobilisation in the form of an ethnic party is missing in the case of the Sorbs. According to a representative, the Lusatian Alliance was founded as a successor of the early Wendish People's Party⁶, with the goal of establishing political representation. But with the foundation of the Sorbian parliament, the Serbski Sejm, the party became less active, since the main goal of the founders was to have a 'legitimate and democratic political representation', which they saw in the Serbski Sejm. From the interviews, I was not able to pick up on any sentiment that resembles the micro-mechanism that we have identified in the Danish case – neither during the foundation of the Wendish People's Party nor of the Lusatian Alliance have people perceived a decrease (i.e. a change) in equal treatment; the people were treated just as (un)equal as before.

⁶ The Wendish People's Party (*Wendische Volkspartei*) was active in the years between 1919 and 1933, when the Weimar Republic granted more rights to the national minorities, before the NSDAP took over and prohibited the party.

5.2 *Alternative Factors*

The alternative factors, suggested by other theorists and also partially tested by Koev, include the existence of a kin-state, the share of population of the ethnic group, the electoral institutions and laws in place, and whether a far-right/anti-minority party is represented in parliament. As in the previous section, this section will be divided according to the variables/factors I am looking at, while analysing the Sorbs and Danish minority simultaneously. Table 2 illustrates, again, the similarities and differences between the Sorbs and Danish minority, this time including the alternative factors, and juxta positioning them to findings from the previous section on the historical background.

5.2.1 **Existence of kin-state**

The existence of a kin-state as a relevant factor for ethnic party mobilisation has been pointed out by many theorists (Gherghina & Jigla, 2011; Strijbis & Kotnarowski, 2015; Koev, 2022: 86). Evidently, the existence of a kin-state demonstrates a significant difference between the Sorbs and the Danish minority, more so than any other of the alternative factors. The *Sorbs* do not have a kin state. At no point in history have the Sorbs had their own nation-state, and the Sorbs do not constitute the majority population of any other nation-state. It may be interesting to point out, however, that there is a small population of Lusatian Sorbs in both Poland and the Czech Republic, and that Sorbian organisations and institutions regularly work together with Polish and Czech organisations and institutions. That is partially because the Sorbian languages are related to their neighbouring languages; Lower Sorbian is more similar to Polish and Upper Sorbian is more similar to Czech. My interview partners explained that such cooperation with Poland and the Czech Republic is primarily based on cultural and educational exchanges, for example the Lusatia Glow⁷ initiative, or through teacher exchange programmes with the aim of strengthening the conservation and teaching of the Sorbian languages. Nevertheless, this cooperation does not equal the existence of a kin-state and the associated benefits such as financial and political support, especially since the Sorbs in Germany, in terms of numbers, far outweigh the Lusatian Sorbs in Poland and the Czech Republic combined. Another interesting

⁷ Lusatia Glow is a European integration initiative, organised by three regional organisations in the Lusatia region in Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic, in cooperation with the EU and Slavonic Europe. It aims to connect and integrate cross-border minorities in Lusatia.

Table 2. Alternative Factors

	<i>SORBS</i>	<i>DANISH MINORITY</i>
<i>Historical background</i>	No. The Sorbs only possess two of the three characteristics – historical presence and territorial attachment.	Yes. The Danish minority possesses all three characteristics – historical presence, territorial attachment, and history of dominance.
<i>Alternative Factors</i>		
<i>Existence of kin-state</i>	No. The Sorbs do not have a kin state.	Yes. The Danish minority's kin state is Denmark.
<i>Share of population</i>	Low significance. The Sorbs represent only around 0,9% of the population in Saxony and 0.8% in Brandenburg, while they represent around 0.07% of the German population.	Low significance. The Danish minority represents only around 1.7% of the population in Schleswig-Holstein, while they represent around 0.06% of the German population.
<i>Electoral Institutions</i>	Partially favouring ethnic parties. In Brandenburg and on the federal level, but <i>not</i> in Saxony, ethnic parties enjoy exemption from the 5%-threshold in parliamentary elections.	Favouring ethnic parties. In Schleswig-Holstein and on the federal level, ethnic parties enjoy exemption from the 5%-threshold in parliamentary elections.
<i>Far-right party</i>	Present. The far-right AfD is present in both, the federal parliament and the parliaments of Brandenburg and Saxony.	Partially present. The far-right AfD is present in the federal parliament, but was not re-elected into the parliament of Schleswig-Holstein in May 2022.
<i>Represented by ethnic party</i>	No.	Yes.

aspect brought up by one of my interviewees was that, in light of the lack of a kin-state, one may even consider the debate whether Germany is the ‘motherland’ of the Sorbs, *if* Germany acknowledges that it is, in fact, a multi-national state (see also: Reinhardt, 2011). However, in terms of ethnic kin-state, the Sorbs clearly are not the kin of another nation-state.

The Danish minority, clearly, does have a kin-state – Denmark. As with all the previous factors we have looked at, the Danish minority’s connection to Denmark is obviously a given because of its previous belonging to Denmark before the borders changed. The current relations to the Danish state bring many advantages to the Danish minority that none of the other national minorities in Germany enjoy to this extent – this includes of course financial aid and international support in political questions/issues. For example, the backing and support from the Danish state was necessary for the development of the Bonn-Copenhagen declarations and the subsequent exemption from the 5%-threshold in elections. According to one of my interviewees, the support from Denmark was so crucial because Germany was not necessarily set on appeasing to the Danish minority; instead, the ‘door opener’ for the declarations was

“Germany’s intention to join NATO and Denmark had a veto right. And the Danish head of government at the time said to the German chancellor at the time ‘if you want to join NATO, you need to sort out the situation at the border’. And then the German side was a bit more motivated to meet with the Danes and sort it out. There was not an exuberant goodwill behind it, but to a certain extent it was a necessity.”

Furthermore, Denmark has helped the Danish minority when they have faced discrimination from the German or Schleswig-Holstein government, by applying public international pressure. One example brought up by an interviewee was that when the Schleswig-Holstein government lowered the subsidies for school students in 2009 during the financial crisis, but only for the Danish minority students, several Danish politicians in Denmark publicly called out this discrimination, which of course applied some pressure on the state government.

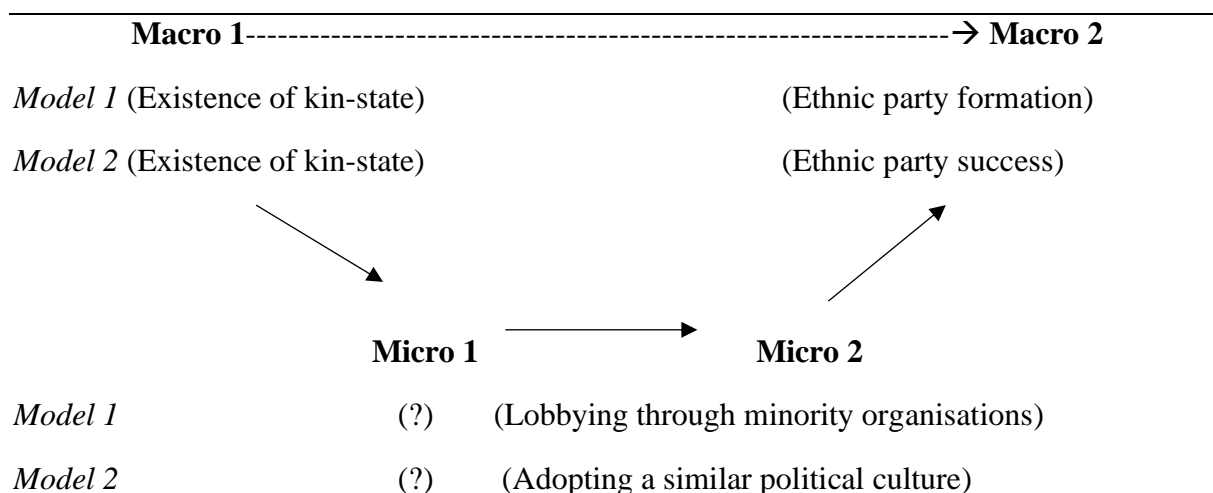
However, the representatives of the Danish minority that I have interviewed also made sure to point out that having a kin-state is not always beneficial, and the politics of Denmark do not always align with the politics of the SSW. According to one interviewee, people in Schleswig, and especially tourists, often are interested in the Danish characteristics of the region, but they do not know about the actual Danish minority that lives there. On the one hand, this makes it harder to represent the minority’s interests, when people are blissfully unaware of their existence. According to an interviewee, “many people ask if we feel so Danish, why don’t

we move back to Denmark. But we are in our home region, it is the border that has moved.” And on the other hand, both Danish interviewees claim it bears unintended consequences when, for example, German parents decide to send their children to Danish schools in order for them to become bilingual and being able to later study in Denmark, but without actually being informed about the implications of committing to the Danish minority and identity.

The opinion regarding the importance of a kin-state among my interview partners from the Sorbs is split. On the one hand, one interviewee said that he believes that “the difference between kin-state and non-kin-state group played a bigger role in the past.” He argues that the Sorbs today are financially and institutionally supported by the federal and state governments, even if there are still a lot of deficits in terms of self-determination. On the other hand, other representatives believe that the lack of a kin-state presents a deficit that the Sorbs cannot completely make up for, even with some support from the Polish and Czech Lusatian Sorbs. One interviewee emphasised the need for the Sorbs to strengthen their understanding of themselves as a nation, which could, at least to some extent, make up for the lack of a kin-state. Another interviewee, however, pointed out that at the end of the day, the Sorbs are always “at the mercy of the German authority”, while the Danish minority is backed by the political support from the Danish state.

To sum up, the Sorbs do not have a kin-state, while the Danish minority does. The financial and political support from a kin-state does seem to help in the defence of the minority group’s rights and interests, whether directly or indirectly. But if it helps with the formation and electoral success of an ethnic party is not entirely clear. The SSW was not formed because of any type of involvement from the Danish state; rather, the British military government after WWII contributed to the formation of the party. But of course, as we have already discussed in the previous section, the party was indirectly formed because of the endeavour to reunite with the kin-state. Furthermore, the politics of the SSW and of the Danish government do not align in several policy areas, even if the SSW is broadly modeled after the ‘Scandinavian political culture’ (SSW, retrieved 2022). If we were to refer back to the macro-micro-macro model, it would be a little more complex to identify the micro- and macro-phenomena, especially because there seems to be a different effect of kin-state on ethnic party formation than on ethnic party success (see: Figure 3). In the first model, we lack a micro-phenomenon, a trigger like we have in the model established in the section on history of dominance. In the second model, we cannot find an actually significant and explanatory mechanism at all for the case at hand. As mentioned

Figure 3. Macro-Micro-Macro Model: Existence of Kin-state



Source: Adapted (and adjusted) from Mayntz (2004).

before, in the case of the Danish minority, the history of dominance/autonomy is directly related to the existence of a kin-state. As such, this factor should not be disregarded; rather, we should look closer into the interrelation between those two macro-phenomena. I will come back to this in section 5.3.

5.2.2 Share of population

The importance of the share of the population for the electoral success of an ethnic party has been pointed out by Bochsler (2011), as well as Koev (2022: 88). Furthermore, as discussed earlier, it is quite obvious that if a party does not reach a certain percentage of the overall votes, it cannot gain a seat in parliament, at least if there is no reserved seat or ‘basic mandate’ (*Grundmandat*) in the state or federal parliament. The exemption from the electoral threshold affords an ethnic party better chances to actually win a seat in parliament, but there is still a ‘natural’ threshold – there is only a limited number of seats in parliament, consequently, the party still needs to gain a certain percentage of the votes that allows the party to win at least one seat.

Both the Sorbs and the Danish minority only represent a marginal percentage of the German population, both on the federal and state level. But it must be noted that, as pointed out earlier, there is no official record of ethnic belonging in Germany, and as such, all numbers regarding size of population of the groups are only approximate numbers. On the federal level,

the *Sorbs* represent around 0.07% of the entire population of Germany. Even if all Sorbs were to vote for an ethnic party, they could not reach a significant vote share on the federal level. In comparison to the Danish minority, the Sorbs have another disadvantage, since the group is divided between the states of Brandenburg and Saxony. So, while the Sorbs are estimated to be around 60,000 in population, compared to the Danish minority which is estimated to be a little smaller with around 50,000 people, the Sorbs are not concentrated within one state with their population. Instead, it is estimated that only around 20,000 Sorbs live in Brandenburg, which represents around 0.8% of the population of Brandenburg, and around 40,000 Sorbs live in Saxony, which corresponds to around 0.9% of the population in the state. This means neither on the federal nor on the state level do the Sorbs represent even 1% of the population, meaning that solely in terms of numbers, their share of the population is rather insignificant in the political arena.

The *Danish minority* makes up around 0.06% of the population of the entire country of Germany. In Schleswig-Holstein, on the other hand, the Danish minority represents around 1.7% of the population, which is more or less twice as much as the share of the population of the Sorbs in Brandenburg or Saxony. That is obviously because the Danish minority is not divided among two federal states but is concentrated within one. This gives the Danish minority another advantage compared to the Sorbs. It may also be worth to point out that, according to one interviewee, the number of the Danish minority population is mainly an estimate of the Danish population in the region of Schleswig, which may exclude the Danish minority population that has moved out of the historical region and now lives in Holstein or even Hamburg. As such, there are estimates that the Danish minority may actually comprise up to 100,000 people, but this number is not an official estimate from the state or country. Nevertheless, even according to the official estimate, the Danish minority makes up a more significant percentage of the population on the state level than the Sorbs do, but the Danish share of the population is still generally low.

Regardless, in theory, the Danish minority would have a better chance of gaining at least one seat in its state parliament if the entire Danish population voted for a Danish ethnic party and with the exemption from the 5%-threshold, since the group could still pass the 'natural' threshold of a representative parliament. In reality, the SSW is a party for both the Danish and Frisian minority, so another approximately 50,000 people in Schleswig-Holstein may feel represented by the party and vote for it. Furthermore, not only Danes or Frisians vote for the

SSW. In the state elections from May 2022, the SSW reached 5.7% of the vote in Schleswig-Holstein, which surpasses the official estimate of the population share of both groups combined, even if the Danish minority were actually composed of up to 100,000 people. Not only that, but we can assume that not all the members from the two minority groups voted for the SSW but also for other parties that they may feel to represent their individual interests better⁸ (Lončar, 2016: 705; Zuber, 2013: 191-92).

Ultimately, we can see that the Danish minority again has an advantage vis-à-vis the Sorbs as they are concentrated within one state while the Sorbs are split up among two states, which drastically affects their population share on the state level. On the federal level, both groups' population share is insignificant. However, looking at the election results of the Schleswig-Holstein election in May 2022, we can see it is not only the members of the minority groups that vote for the party, but also other people in the region. Therefore, we can conclude that while a more concentrated population share surely supports the success of an ethnic party, it is the party's politics that can mobilise even non-group-members that matters more for their success. From the interviews, I have also not picked up on any indication that the share of population is a significant factor for party formation. Ultimately, the two groups have a similar population in their respective region, and since the Lusatian Alliance is a party for all Sorbs in the region, on both sides of the state border, we cannot find substantial evidence that the share of population is a crucial macro-phenomenon for the formation of ethnic groups.

5.2.3 Electoral institutions

Electoral laws and institutions matter for ethnic parties, because they determine to what extent ethnic parties can participate in the electoral arena in the first place. Especially when the minority groups make up a low or even insignificant part of the population, electoral laws must accommodate ethnic parties (Nedelcu & DeBardeleben, 2015: 388-89; Bernauer & Bochsler 2011: 742) in order to give them a chance for electoral and parliamentary entry before they can over time become established members of the parliament, like they are now in Schleswig-Holstein.

⁸ Especially since members from the Danish minority are also politically active within other parties in the region, for instance the Green party. Thus, it would be foolish to assume that all minority group members would only vote for the SSW.

On the federal level, the same laws apply to any and all ethnic parties of the recognized national minorities. According to §6 Art. 3 of the Federal Elections Act, the allocation of seats from state lists only considers parties that obtain at least 5% of the votes or have won direct mandates⁹ in at least three constituencies; parties of national minorities are exempt from these restrictions (BWahlG). This means that a party of a national minority only needs to win a certain percentage of votes within the state that they are active in, in order to be entitled to a seat from the state list. During the 2021 Bundestag election, the SSW won 3.2% of the Second Votes¹⁰ in Schleswig-Holstein, which entitled the party to one mandate on the state list and, accordingly, one seat in the German parliament, even though the party only won around 0.1% of the national vote. The same exemption would apply to a Sorbian party. However, as the Sorbs are living in two federal states, the Sorbian party would need to pass the natural threshold that would entitle them to a mandate on the state list in at least one of the states they live in. This is a bureaucratic hurdle for an ethnic party, since the division caused by state lines decreases the possible vote share within constituencies and federal states, and thus hinders the surpassing of the natural threshold for state list mandates.

On the state level, the same rules apply in two of the three states in question. In Schleswig-Holstein, §3 Art. 1 of the State Elections Act specifically mentions that parties of the *Danish minority* are exempt from the 5%-threshold and other restrictions in state parliamentary elections (LWahlG). Interestingly, the Act only mentions the Danish minority, and not the Frisian minority, which is most likely a relic from the Bonn-Copenhagen declaration which was the catapult for ethnic party exemptions, but which only regarded the Danish minority. Even though the SSW surpassed the 5%-threshold in the latest state election, it had not been able to do so in any previous elections¹¹ while still securing seats in the state parliament, meaning the party has greatly benefited from the exemption in the past. One interviewee has emphasised the importance of the exemption for the success of the SSW, but rather as a mechanism that

⁹ As of 2022, there are 299 constituencies in Germany. Each constituency allocates one seat in parliament to the candidate with the most votes, also known as a direct mandate. If a party does not reach 5% of the vote, but wins a direct mandate in at least three constituencies, it will still be allocated those seats. An example would be Die Linke party in the 2021 newly elected Bundestag, who did not reach 5% but won three direct mandates.

¹⁰ The so-called Second Vote (*Zweitstimme*) is one of two votes of each voter. While the First Vote (*Erststimme*) is cast for a candidate in the constituency, the Second Vote is cast for the state list, which is later used to allocate seats in the parliament proportionally to the state lists.

¹¹ Except in 1947 and 1950, before the introduction of the 5% threshold in 1950.

compensates for the inequality and “undemocratic element of elections.” Essentially, he argues, the 5%-threshold is an undemocratic element which wastes all the votes for parties that do not reach this threshold, and a truly proportional democratic election would rely on the natural threshold of parliament. Nonetheless, this argument only refers to the current state of elections in Germany. The exemption did not contribute to the formation of the party at all, seeing that the exemption was introduced several years after the SSW was founded and succeeded in elections.

In Brandenburg, §3 Art. 1 of the State Elections Act also specifically mentions that state lists submitted by any party or otherwise political association of the Sorbs is exempt from the 5%-threshold party restrictions in state elections (BbgLWahlG). The elections act of Brandenburg, with its 20,000 Sorbs, is thus much more accommodating than the elections act of the state of Saxony, with twice as many Sorbs. In fact, there is no mention of the Sorbs or national minorities in the Saxony State Elections act at all (SächsWahlG). The Saxon Sorbs Act also does not mention any exemptions or other accommodations for the Sorbs in parliamentary state elections (SächsSorbG). The Sorbian parliament, the Serbski Sejm, does actually advocate for introducing the exemption in Saxony as well. However, according to one interviewee, it was not the lack of exemption that hindered the electoral entry of the Lusatian Alliance in the Saxony (and Brandenburg) state elections in 2019. Instead, the party did not manage to overcome other bureaucratic hurdles due to the lack of time to fully focus on the elections. He explained: “this is unfortunately an uncomfortable side effect of voluntary activities; you just never have the opportunity or time to intensively look into the legal provisions and regulations, so that at the end, you still stumble over some kind of hurdles.”

As a sole consolation, §6 of the Saxon Sorbs Act does describe how the Sorbs are to be represented in the state parliament. Each election term, the Saxon parliament elects a Council for Sorbian Affairs (*Rat für sorbische Angelegenheiten*), with five members, of which the candidates can be suggested by Sorbian associations (SächsSorbG). This council has the right to be heard when the parliament makes decisions that regard or otherwise affect the Sorbian population (ibid.). In addition to the election accommodations, the state of Brandenburg also has a similar Council for Sorbian Affairs in its parliament, which is described in the Sorbs/Wends Act (SWG). In contrast to the Sorbian Council in the Saxon parliament, however, the members of the Sorbian Council in Brandenburg are elected by a Sorbian umbrella organisation instead of the state parliament itself (ibid.).

To sum up, the states of Schleswig-Holstein and Brandenburg have accommodative electoral institutions where parties of minority groups are exempt from the 5%-threshold. The state of Saxony does not have an accommodative electoral law, and any codified parliamentary representation of the Sorbs is elected by the state parliament itself, while in Brandenburg, the group at least elects its council itself. Similar to Schleswig-Holstein and Brandenburg, minority parties enjoy the exemption from the 5%-threshold also on the federal level, which allowed the SSW to win a seat in the federal parliament. A Minority Council (*Minderheitenrat*) with members from each of the recognized national minority groups is also represented on the federal level, with support from the Minority Secretariat (*Minderheitensekretariat*), however, unlike the Sorbian councils in Brandenburg and Saxony, the Minority Council is not codified in any laws.

Nonetheless, when simply comparing the two groups, it does not seem that accommodative electoral institutions influence whether a minority group forms an ethnic party, and whether it (successfully) enters into elections. Despite non-accommodative electoral laws in Saxony, the Lusatian Alliance exists in the state as well. In contrast, the party has not been able to enter into parliamentary elections in Brandenburg, even though the state does have accommodative laws. In Schleswig-Holstein, the SSW has won seats in the 2022 state parliamentary election, with or without accommodative electoral laws, as the party has surpassed the 5%-threshold regardless. It may be worth considering the possibility, then, that it is rather the tradition of having a party in parliament that affects ethnic party success. Such tradition was only possible in Schleswig-Holstein, however, because the SSW had previously benefited from the accommodative electoral laws.

5.2.4 Far-right party

The representation of a far-right party harbouring anti-minority sentiments in parliament, whether state or federal, could be a relevant factor for the formation and success of an ethnic party, since it may increase the feeling of needing to push against such discriminating narratives in the parliament with an own party (Nedelcu & DeBardeleben, 2015: 393-94; Gherghina & Jigla, 2011; Koev, 2022: 86-87). In Germany, the far-right populist Alternative für Deutschland (AfD; Alternative for Germany) is the only party represented on federal and state levels that fits this factor. On the federal level, the AfD has won 10.3% of the votes in the 2021 election, which corresponds to 83 seats in the Bundestag. On the state level, the far-right party

has won 23.5% of the votes (23 seats) in the 2019 election in Brandenburg, 27.5% of the votes (38 seats) in the 2019 election in Saxony, and only 4.4% of the votes (and thus no seats) in the 2022 election in Schleswig-Holstein¹².

By simply looking at these numbers, the theory that the parliamentary representation of a far-right, anti-minority party increases the likelihood of ethnic party formation and success does not seem to ring true. In fact, it would seem that the opposite is true – the only state with an ethnic party has just voted out the far-right party, whereas the two states where the AfD has a stronghold do not have a successful ethnic party. However, this factor can only be considered when we consider the time lag. If the presence of a far-right, anti-minority party in parliament leads to the formation and success of a minority party, then the success of the minority party can only be seen in the upcoming election, at the earliest. So, let's go back in time.

The AfD was only founded in 2013. This means that in all three states, the AfD has only contested in elections twice each, while on the federal level the AfD has contested thrice. The SSW, however, was founded over 70 years ago, and has successfully contested in state elections for over 60 years. The only other times a far-right party was represented in parliament in Schleswig-Holstein, prior to the foundation of the AfD, was once in 1992 (by the *Deutsche Volksunion*, DVU; German People's Union), once in 1967 (by the neo-Nazi *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, NPD; National Democratic Party of Germany), and consecutively in 1950 and 1954 (by the *Deutsche Partei*; German Party). Each time, however, the SSW had already been represented in parliament before the far-right party had won seats, and thus, this theory does not apply to the case of the *Danish minority*.

In Brandenburg, a far-right party besides the AfD has been represented in parliament in 2004 and 1999 (by the DVU). The Saxon parliament has seen far-right representation consistently since 2004 (until 2009 by the NPD, followed by the AfD in the next election). None of these elections were followed by successful entry of an ethnic party in either state. Thus, again, the theory does not find any support in the case of the Sorbs. However, it should also be pointed out that Brandenburg and Saxony were both part of the GDR, so neither state had any free elections before 1990, meaning neither a far-right party, nor an ethnic party would have been able to (successfully) contest in any elections. Therefore, we would only be able to

¹² When I began writing this thesis, the AfD was still represented with 5 seats and 5.9% of the vote in the parliament of Schleswig-Holstein.

find support for the theory in the *Sorbian* case in the future, now that the AfD is quite successful and strong in the two states. It should further be pointed out that the AfD has so far not explicitly expressed anti-national-minority sentiments; their anti-minority rhetoric primarily targets immigrant minorities. The party has even used the existence of the Sorbs in their favour with a provocative elections poster, which depicted three women in traditional Sorbian, Black Forest and Bavarian clothing, and the slogan “Colourful Diversity? We already have it!” (Dassler, 2017). The Domowina and other Sorbian associations have distanced themselves from this message, and harshly criticised the poster and the abuse of their existence to discriminate against other minorities (ibid.).

While on the state level, we can once again notice a difference between the Danish minority and the Sorbs, we cannot find any evidence for the theory that the parliamentary representation of far-right parties increases the likelihood of formation and success of ethnic parties. The SSW predates any far-right representation in modern state parliamentary elections, whereas in Brandenburg and Saxony, modern and free elections have only taken place since 1990 and have seen several instances of far-right representation, which so far has not resulted in a successful ethnic party in the region.

5.3 Discussion

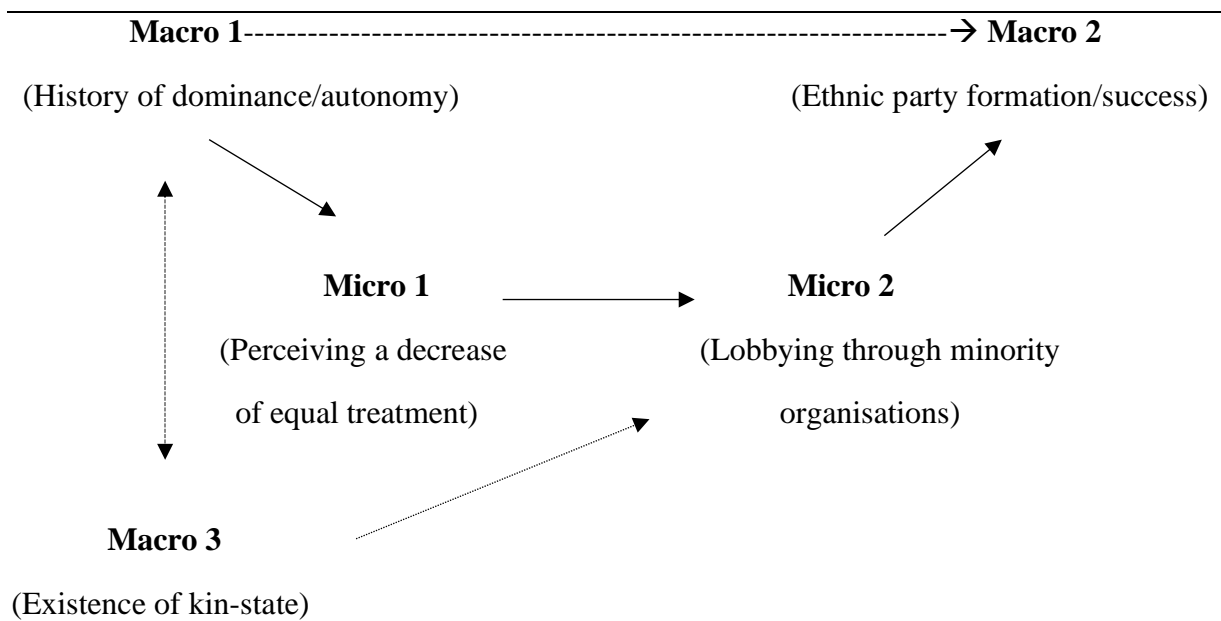
In the analysis, we were able to highlight some of the key differences between the Sorbs and the Danish minority. The first factors that we looked at, historical background and existence of kin-state, showcase the most significant difference between the two groups, and are factors that are independent of the federal or state level. They are factors that we can only look at on the individual group level. While all the other factors showcase partial differences between the groups on the state level, there are not many differences on the federal level. On the federal level, neither share of population, electoral institutions, nor existence of far-right parties can explain the difference between the Sorbs and the Danish minority. On the state level, however, we can witness more differences that seem to support the formation and success of ethnic parties. More specifically, the Danish population has a more concentrated population and thus a larger population share in the state of Schleswig-Holstein, making it easier for an ethnic party to surpass any natural electoral threshold. The explicit exemption from the 5%-threshold in parliamentary elections in Schleswig-Holstein further favours ethnic parties and their electoral

entry and success. The existence of far-right parties in parliament does not constitute a factor, on either level, that can explain the formation and success of ethnic parties.

What's interesting is that the two factors on the state level that could potentially explain the difference – population share and electoral institutions – are both results of the division of the Sorbs among the two federal states Brandenburg and Saxony. If the group were concentrated in only one state, let us say in Brandenburg, then neither of those two factors would constitute a difference to the Danish minority. This division between the two states is an exogenous factor; it is the result of historical drawings of state borders long after the Sorbs had settled in Lusatia. The division is directly related to the colonial German state that took over the region of Lusatia after the Sorbs were already settled in it, denying the group their right to autonomy. I would thus argue that while those two factors do constitute minor factors in the likelihood of forming successful ethnic parties today, they are directly related to the historical background of the group, meaning that once again, we can see how path dependency plays a relevant role in the formation and success of ethnic parties.

This directly brings me to the other alternative factor we have analysed and find to constitute a significant difference – the existence of a kin-state. The Danish minority has a kin-state – Denmark – while the Sorbs do not. Here, again, we can draw a direct link to the historical background of the group. The Danish minority would not have had any history of dominance of autonomy if it was not for the fact that the group lives in a region that formerly belonged to Denmark. At the same time, if it was not for the redrawing of the border, the Danish minority would not exist in Germany as it does today in the first place. By trying to build a macro-micro-macro model using the existence of a kin-state as the *explanans*, I am struggling to find the micro-phenomena, specifically the individual action situations, that connect the two macro-phenomena. Furthermore, while the existence of a kin-state is related to the history of autonomy and thus plays an important role in what exactly the minority group was lobbying for (the reunification) prior to the formation of the SSW, there is not an actual individual/group behaviour phenomenon related to the kin-state that leads to the success of the party. Instead, the existence of a kin-state seems to play the role of another macro-level factor, which influences the micro-level behaviour but not necessarily leads to it. In Figure 4, I am illustrating how the existence of a kin-state can play an influential role, *in the case of the Danish minority*, but does not actually constitute the *explanans* of the model.

Figure 4. Macro-Micro-Macro Model: History of dominance & kin-state



Source: Adapted (and adjusted) from Mayntz (2004).

By revisiting the results from the analysis, where we were able to identify significant differences that have an effect on ethnic party formation/success – i.e. history of autonomy and existence of kin-state – and then combining those results according to the macro-micro-macro model, I could build a model that includes all relevant macro- and micro-phenomena (Figure 4). The history of autonomy and existence of kin-state are directly interrelated, yet the first micro-mechanism, perceived decrease of equal treatment, resulted only from the loss of autonomy. The subsequent behaviour of the group, the second micro-mechanism, is an action that followed the first micro-phenomenon and is furthermore influenced by the third, exogenous macro-phenomenon, the kin-state. This third macro-phenomenon only plays a role, though, *because* of its relation to the first macro-phenomenon.

6. Conclusion

After observing that the Danish ethnic party is successful on the state and federal level, while the Sorbian ethnic party is not, the thesis asked the research question: What can explain the difference in ethnic party mobilisation between the Sorbs and Danish minority in Germany? After testing Koev's (2019, 2022) original theory, by conducting a comparative case study in a most similar systems design and applying the causal reconstruction approach based on the

macro-micro-macro model (Mayntz, 2004), I was able to find support for my hypothesis – the difference in historical background between the two groups contributes to the explanation of why one group was and is able to successfully mobilise an ethnic party, while the other is not. Furthermore, by controlling for alternative theories/factors that I have identified in the literature review, I was able to find support for the argument that the difference in historical background matters more (but not necessarily entirely) than the differences in the existence of kin-state, share of population, electoral institutions, and presence of far-right parties, *in the case of the Sorbs and Danish minority at least*.

Although the Sorbs and Danish minority both have a historical presence and territorial attachment in Germany, only the Danish minority also has a history of dominance/autonomy. The Danish minority is also the only of the two groups that is represented by an ethnic party on the state and federal level. The first micro-mechanism that explains the relation between the history of autonomy and successful ethnic party mobilisation is the perceived decrease in equal treatment *as opposed to when the group still ruled themselves*, and the potential fear of such inequality reoccurring *when the group cannot rule itself*. I am using the word ‘perceived’ because I argue it is the *conscious perception* of that *change* in equality that matters, not only the inequality itself. Furthermore, both groups did and do experience unequal treatment, but only the Danish minority has the relevant collective memory of being equals at some point in history. This situation then led to people wanting to express their identity and desire to reunite with the kin-state, where the group would be ruled by its kin again. Only this micro-phenomenon is also influenced by the existence of a kin-state, which is interrelated with the history of autonomy, since it constitutes the basis of what the group was now lobbying for. This collective organising and lobbying eventually led to the decision, after being told to separate politics from culture, to form an ethnic party, which immediately scored significant results in state elections.

These are two macro-phenomena that are absent in the case of the Sorbs, who do not have an ethnic party representing their interests on either federal or state parliamentary level, even though an ethnic party does exist. Therefore, we can conclude that, compared to the other factors that were tested, the history of autonomy plays a significant role in the mobilisation of an ethnic party, and that the existence of a kin-state is imbedded in this processes as an interrelated influence. Nonetheless, I want to note that this does not mean it is impossible for

the Sorbs to ever achieve ethnic party representation; it simply means that there is a lack of macro-factors that make it easier for a group to collectively rally behind an ethnic party.

It must be noted, however, that these results only apply to the two cases tested; the results cannot be quantified unless tested for in more case studies. This thesis solely intended to examine the social mechanisms underlying the results of Koev's theory/analysis, in the very specific case of the Sorbs and Danish minority. However, it might present a point of departure for future research with similar case studies. Due to the restrictions of this thesis, I could only include a handful of alternative factors. Future research may also examine what role the language division (Upper versus Lower Sorbian), religious division (Catholic versus Protestant) and conflict between organisations (Domowina versus Serbski Sejm) play in the case of the Sorbs – all factors that were brought up in the interviews as well, but which I was not able to analyse further in this thesis. Another factor that could be examined may be international involvement, for example from the British military government and its involvement in the formation of the party, or the role of the EU, which is perceived differently by the Danish representatives versus the Sorbian representatives.

So, what are the policy implications that we can derive from these results? Essentially, it comes down to the protection and realisation of minority rights. As we were able to see from the interviews, the main benefit of having an ethnic party in parliament (versus being represented within majority parties) is being able to voice concerns and to intervene in decisions that would discriminate or disadvantage the group, from within and not only through a consultative body (see also: Lončar, 2016; Dunning & Nilekani, 2013; Jensenius, 2013). If such an ability is missing in parliament due to unsuccessful mobilisation, minority rights must otherwise be enshrined. Governments must realise that the absence of a (successful) ethnic party does not mean that the group is completely satisfied with its situation; it simply could be the result of historical factors that impede on the mobilisation of the group. Therefore, Germany, alongside other European states, must ensure that the rights and protections of ethnic groups and minority languages, as can be found in the FCNM and ECRML of the Council of Europe, are fully implemented and upheld. Furthermore, the self-identification of members of the Sorbs as indigenous must, according to the ILO No. 169 and UNDRIP, be seriously considered by the German state, as there are legitimate claims to indigeneity. To conclude, in the words of one of my interviewees, the protection of minority rights is so crucial to global governance, because “minority policies are peace policies.”

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8.2 Relevant laws and treaties

Federal Elections Act: Bundeswahlgesetz (BWahlG), 1993. Latest amendment from 2021.

Schleswig-Holstein Elections Act: Wahlgesetz für den Landtag von Schleswig-Holstein

(Landeswahlgesetz - LWahlG), 1991. Latest amendment from 2021.

Brandenburg Elections Act: Wahlgesetz für den Landtag Brandenburg (Brandenburgisches

Landeswahlgesetz - BbgLWahlG), 2004. Latest amendment from 2019.

Saxony Elections Act: Gesetz über die Wahlen zum Sächsischen Landtag (Sächsisches

Wahlgesetz – SächsWahlG), 2003.

Saxon Sorbs Act: Gesetz über die Rechte der Sorben im Freistaat Sachsen (Sächsisches Sorbengesetz – SächsSorbG), 1999.

Wends/Sorbs Act (Brandenburg): Gesetz über die Ausgestaltung der Rechte der Sorben/Wenden im Land Brandenburg (Sorben/Wenden-Gesetz - SWG), 1994. Last amendment from 2018.

Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations (1955).

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (2007).

ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO No. 169) (1989).

COE Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) (1998).

COE European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) (1992).

8.3 Interviews

For the interviews, I have chosen to contact people who are representatives of some of the main organisations/institutions of the Sorbs and Danish minority that I deem relevant for the thesis. This means political parties, main umbrella organisations and other political representatives. My interview partners, who all have given me consent to use their name in my thesis, are:

- Hanzo Wylem-Keł; Founder of the Lusatian Alliance and member of the Serbski Sejm.
- Marcel Brauman; Press officer and personal assistant of the chairperson of the Domowina.
- Dr. Měrcin Krawc; Member of the Serbski Sejm and chair of the state working group “Sorbs/Wends” of the SPD in Saxony.
- Rasmus Meyer; Press spokesman of the Sydslesvigsk Forening (SSF).
- Per Dittrich; Party spokesman of the Südschleswigsche Wählerverband (SSW).