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# The Impact of Minority-Majority Districts: Evidence from Ukraine

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**Abstract:** How do minority-majority districts affect the voter behavior of minorities and election of minority candidates in Ukraine? Studies on minority-majority districts in the American politics literature suggest that such districts are instrumental to election of minority candidates. Very few scholars have extended such research to other countries. This article examines the impact of minority-majority districts on electoral outcomes in Ukraine, in which ethnicity is apparently a salient issue but ethnic identity is complicated by multiple cleavages based on ethnicity, language, and region. Using district-level census and electoral data, the relationship between the ethnic composition of an electoral district and election of minority candidates is examined.

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What impact, if any, does the concentration of ethnic minorities into so-called minority-majority districts have on the election of ethnic minorities? The numerous studies on minority-majority districts in the United States suggest that such districts are instrumental to the election of minority candidates. Similarly, studies of minority representation in the comparative politics literature suggest that geographic concentration is a primary factor promoting minority representation in ethnically divided states, particularly when single-member-district (SMD) electoral systems are used (see, for example, Barkan, 1995). However, while the impact of geographic concentration on minority representation and ethnic voting is often asserted or presumed, very few studies have systematically examined their effect outside the American context (for an exception, see Banducci et al., 2004). This article seeks to fill this gap in the literature through a study of the election of minority candidates in SMD contests within the mixed electoral system used in the 2002 Ukrainian parliamentary election.

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Ukraine provides a particularly interesting test case for theories on the inclusion of ethnic minorities in democratic polities for many reasons. First, Ukraine has a relatively large minority population (one of the largest in Eastern Europe and Eurasia) that is geographically concentrated in the eastern and southern parts of the country, thus making the issue of geographic concentration and minority-majority districts relevant in that country. Second, unlike many countries in Eastern Europe and around the world with large ethnic minorities, Ukraine does not have successful ethnic parties that appeal exclusively to a particular ethnic group or set of ethnic groups.<sup>2</sup> Instead, parties with wider ideological, economic, and regional appeals, such as the Communist Party and a regional party based in the east, have made ethnic Russians and Russian-speakers a core but by no means exclusive part of their broader constituencies (see Barrington, 2002; Hesli, Reisinger, and Miller, 1998). Third, while the ethnic cleavage is a key voting cleavage in Ukraine it is not the only or even, necessarily, the most prevalent division that separates voting constituencies. Moreover, ethnic divisions are complicated by competing and overlapping ethnic, linguistic, and regional identities that may mitigate the effects of geographic concentration. Finally, Ukraine is a crucial country from a geopolitical context, straddling a vital political, military, and economic corridor (especially in terms of natural resources) connecting Western Europe to Russia. As a potential NATO and EU candidate, and a democratizing state with an ethnically diverse population, Ukraine is an important case with which to study the transition to democratic rule. In short, Ukraine offers a chance to examine the role that geographic concentration plays in minority representation and ethnic mobilization within a new democracy with a dramatically different type of ethnic cleavage than the United States, the most common case used for detailed analysis of this issue.

Our article seeks to examine the extent to which the minority-majority districts (defined here as districts with 45 percent or less ethnic Ukrainians), geographic concentration more generally, and region affected the election of minority deputies in the SMD tier of Ukraine's mixed electoral system in the 2002 legislative election. Drawing upon the extensive literature on the American context and the minority empowerment theory (Banducci et al., 2004), we expect minority-majority districts to be positively correlated with the election of ethnic minorities. This article proceeds by first surveying the literature on minority representation, drawn mainly from the American context. We then take a close look at the context of Ukraine's

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<sup>2</sup>Horowitz defines an ethnic party as a party that "derives its support overwhelmingly from an identifiable ethnic group ... and serves the interests of that group" (1985, p. 291), while Chandra bases her definition of an ethnic party on the nature of its public appeal to voters—"an ethnic party is a party that overtly represents itself as a champion of the cause of one particular ethnic category or set of categories to the exclusion of others, and that makes such a representation central to its strategy of mobilizing voters" (2004, p. 3). None of the major Ukrainian parties qualify as an ethnic party on either of these grounds, since ethnic Ukrainians constitute a majority of legislators from every party, even those electing a large proportion of Russians, and no major party appeals to an ethnic minority to the exclusion of ethnic Ukrainians.

electoral geography in general and the 2002 parliamentary elections in particular. In our final section, we examine the connection between the geographic concentration of minorities and minority representation using a district-level analysis of SMD contests in the 2002 Ukrainian parliamentary elections.

## THEORIES OF ETHNIC ELECTORAL MOBILIZATION

### The American Context

The mechanisms by which ethnic minorities gain representation in American single-member district (SMD) elections have garnered considerable scholarly attention. With the adoption of the 1982 amendments to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (and the subsequent Supreme Court *Gingles* decision of 1986), it has been possible to construct so-called minority-majority districts, where the minority population (either African-American or Latino in the American context) makes up the majority of the voting-age population in said district. These legal decisions culminated in widespread ethnic-based gerrymandering and a groundswell of research on the effects of minority-majority districts on turnout, vote choice, and substantive (as opposed to purely descriptive) representation.

The benefits and drawbacks of minority-majority districts for minority representation are well documented in the American context. On the positive side, Mansbridge (1999) identifies the “communicative advantages” of minority representation where minority citizens will be more comfortable about access to their co-ethnic representatives and thus become more politically involved and attuned. Popkin (1991) shows that voters rely on informational shortcuts when making a decision about candidates, suggesting that race and ethnicity are a primary voting cue. Bobo and Gilliam (1990), Tate (1993), and Barreto (2007) argue that minorities are “empowered” by the success of their co-ethnic candidates, thus increasing participation. Cain (1992) argues that the legitimacy of the democratic system is at stake when minorities are excluded.

Critics of minority-majority districting often emphasize the trade-off between substantive representation (defined as an aggregate policy benefit for the minority discernible through a study of Congressional voting records) and descriptive representation (defined as the proportion of minority representatives in the legislature).<sup>3</sup> While this particular debate is quite lively and crucial for the US context, our article will not address

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<sup>3</sup>The main argument against descriptive representation is that it is often achieved in spite of substantive representation. Cameron, Epstein, and O'Halloran (1996), Swain (1993), and Lublin (1997), among others, show this trade-off. One of the most well developed arguments for the US context is the idea that racial gerrymandering authorized by the Supreme Court is often achieved on the ground by coalitions formed by Republicans and African-American Democrats. While increasing African-American representation, such tactics also decrease the overall Democratic representation in Congress, causing a negative result in minority substantive representation.

it in the Ukrainian case.<sup>4</sup> More relevant to our case are the causal mechanisms behind the election of minority candidates in SMD contests emanating from different levels of geographic concentration of ethnic minorities. On this score the evidence is overwhelming—districts with a critical mass of minority voters are crucial to the regular election of minority candidates in the United States at all levels of government—national, state, and local (see, for example, Cameron, Epstein, and O'Halloran, 1996).

## Minority-Majority Districts and Minority Representation

The most direct and primary effect attributed to minority-majority districts is the election of ethnic minorities in single-member-district elections. All other benefits for the minority population—greater substantive representation, higher voter turnout, greater knowledge and interest in politics, and a stronger sense of the legitimacy of the political system—presumably emanate from increased numbers of minority representatives.

Under an SMD system, the ethnic character of electoral districts becomes the major factor influencing the likelihood of minority representation. When minorities are geographically concentrated, single-member-district elections allow an ethnic party to become one of the two major parties in its “home districts” or pressure major parties to run minority candidates to attract the ethnic vote. Barkan argues that in Africa, this geographically polarized voting pattern enables plurality systems to produce legislative representation for minorities that is as proportional to their share of the population as PR systems would be (Barkan, 1995, pp. 106–116).

Scholars of American politics have long noted that minority representation in districts with concentrated minority populations was a function of both minority mobilization and majority backlash. In general, studies of American minority-majority districts have suggested that a threshold exists where the majority population is dissuaded from mobilizing against minority candidates and the minority population is convinced that mobilization in favor of such candidates will be effective. V. O. Key (1949) in his seminal book *Southern Politics* shows how districts with a high proportion of African-Americans were often represented by legislators with strongly conservative voting records because of white backlash (combined, no doubt, with the effective disenfranchisement of minority voters). Keech (1968) reaches a similar conclusion, arguing that the relationship between the percentage of a minority (African-Americans, in his study) and the form of representation is in fact *curvilinear*. Keech argues that once the minority population reaches a certain critical level the minority population will mobilize, but not before. Lublin (1999) considers the 30–50 percent level

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<sup>4</sup>In part, this debate is less central in Ukraine because ethnic-based gerrymandering is less prevalent. Little is known about the criteria used to draw electoral district boundaries in Ukraine and other post-communist states but we presume that minority-majority districts in Ukraine are “naturally occurring” rather than consciously created by officials in charge of establishing the boundaries of electoral districts.

of minority population in districts to be crucial as it can incite the national majority to mobilize against the concentrated minority; a study by Voss (1996), however, seeks to downplay the impact of white backlash.

Scholars have also noted the importance of considering the voting behavior of all minority groups (not just the group identified with the minority representative) when explaining minority representation. Grofman and Handley (1992) argue that a combined minority population above 50 percent is a virtual precondition for minority candidate success in the United States. Voss (1996) illustrates the importance of looking at the overall minority figures (thus taking into account the Latino vote when studying African-Americans) and not just concentrating on one minority, since the voting behavior of other mobilized groups can affect the electoral fortunes of minority candidates. Majority acceptance of minority candidates also plays into the formula since any degree of support from (national) majority voters means that a minority candidate needs less support from his or her co-ethnics. Consequently, Barreto, Segura, and Woods conceive of minority-majority districts in more flexible terms as "electoral districts drawn with a sufficient minority population so that the minority population can elect a candidate of choice, usually candidates of like race or ethnicity" (2004, p. 65).

This debate over the threshold necessary for minority representation is even more complicated for the Ukrainian context. First, the ethnic dimension of the voting cleavage in Ukraine is a complex combination of ethnic, linguistic, and regional identities (Barrington, 2002), which produces several different ethnic-based combinations (e.g., Russian-speaking Ukrainians, Ukrainian-speaking Russians, and other minorities with more or less cultural proximity to the two major ethnic groups). These multi-ethnic identities complicate the presumption of straightforward ethnic voting that underlies the theory of minority representation through minority-majority districts. Second, unlike the American context, Ukraine's SMD contests experienced multi-candidate rather than two-candidate competition. Ukrainian SMD elections had an average effective number of parties (at the district level) of 5.99 in the 1998 election and similar levels of candidate proliferation in 2002 (Moser and Scheiner, 2004). Such party proliferation significantly lowers the electoral threshold of representation. Indeed, during the 2002 election, the winning SMD candidate averaged only 35 percent of the vote. Therefore, in the Ukrainian case a small but mobilized minority that concentrates its vote on a single candidate could win because the majority splits its vote among a plethora of other viable candidates. In short, in cases where SMD elections do not constrain competition to two major parties, the "sufficient minority" needed to elect a co-ethnic candidate may be much lower than in the American case. For the purposes of this study, we operationalize a minority-majority district as any district in which non-Ukrainians make up 45 percent or more of the population. We believe this is a conservative estimate of what constitutes a minority-majority district in the Ukrainian context.

## THE ELECTORAL GEOGRAPHY OF UKRAINE

### The Ukrainian Context

As the events of the Orange Revolution (November 2004–January 2005) unfolded, the world media scrambled to introduce to the Western observer the issue of Ukrainian ethnic and linguistic division. The southern and eastern parts of the country were seen as more “pro-Russian,” with considerable numbers of ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainians living there, while the western half was seen as “pro-Western” and supportive of the “Orange” forces, led by the presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko. As a BBC article from January 2005 explained, “The bitterly fought election exposed deep splits between south-eastern regions, where support is high for Mr Yanukovych, and western and central Ukraine which largely backs Mr Yushchenko” (*BBC*, January 23, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4198957.stm>).

Ukraine’s complex history, and especially its nineteenth-century state-building efforts, has left the country geographically, ethnically, and culturally divided. Wilson argues that “in both Russian and Habsburg Ukraine, Ukrainophilism had to compete with rival ‘Little Russian’ or straightforwardly Russophile movements” (1997, p. 27). The 2001 census shows the Russian minority making up 17.3 percent of the total population, a considerable drop from 22.1 percent in 1989, but still a sizable minority. The Russian population is concentrated in the southern and eastern oblasts:—Luhans’k (39 percent), Donetsk (38.2 percent), Kharkiv (25.6 percent), Zaporizhzhia (24.7 percent), Odessa (20.7 percent), Dnipropetrovs’k (17.6 percent), Kherson (14.1 percent), and Mykolaiv, (14.1 percent)—and also in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (58.3 percent) and in the cities of Kiev (13.1 percent) and Sevastopol’ (71.6 percent) (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2001). Several other, smaller minority groups also reside in Ukraine, such as Hungarians (concentrated in Transcarpathia), Tatars (concentrated in Crimea), and Jews (who are geographically dispersed), and have co-ethnics who have been elected to the Verhovna Rada, the national legislature.

Also notable in the 2001 census is the linguistic divide, with 14.8 percent of Ukrainians citing Russian as their first language, meaning that about 30 percent of Ukrainian citizens consider Russian their mother tongue. However, it is important not to confuse bilingualism with the bi-ethnic divide since “the ethnic and linguistic divides between the Ukrainian and Russian spheres do not coincide” (Wilson, 1997, p. 21). In this article, we concentrate our research on ethnic minorities who self-declared a non-Ukrainian ethnic identity in the 2001 census rather than other cultural or linguistic categories (e.g., Russian-speakers), because of data constraints and in order to maintain methodological and conceptual rigor with a clearly delineated category of ethnic identity.

## Ethnicity and Political Contestation in Post-Communist Ukraine

The literature on Ukrainian ethnic divisions is often divided on the issue of level of discontent and political mobilization among minorities (primarily ethnic Russians). Recktenwald concludes that the Russian minority does not hold “ethnocultural grievances” as such, but rather that “socioeconomic and political factors determine the salience of group identity and political action” (2000, p. 57). He notes that the Russian minority became disillusioned with the independent Ukrainian state as their advantaged socioeconomic and political positions began to decline with the “realities of living in a new state that embodied the symbols of the Ukrainian titular nation” (Recktenwald, 2000, pp. 60–61). Recktenwald goes on to posit that the first party to profit from appeals to the Russian minority was the Communist Party, as it articulated “a political agenda reflecting Soviet-style values in domestic and foreign policies and by exploiting ethnocultural, socioeconomic, and political grievances, particularly among Russian-speakers and the people of southern and eastern Ukraine” (2000, p. 62).

In his 2002 survey of the subject, Taras Kuzio concludes that “ethnic relations have remained stable, are good, and are improving” (Kuzio, 2002, p. 12). Weller argues in his study that “ethnic conflict in Ukraine is the exception, however, not the norm, and these incidents remain fairly isolated” (2002, p. 72). Weller, in fact, notes that high numbers of both Ukrainians and Russians (99.2 and 97.7 percent, respectively, in a 1998 survey) respond that there is a “great deal or quite a lot” in common between the two groups (2002, p. 81).

However, studies analyzing the relationship between the Ukrainian and Russian ethnic groups in Ukraine from a perspective of *potential conflict* (such as those of Kuzio, 2002, and Weller, 2002) do not discount the potential effects that ethnicity can have on non-violent mobilization, particularly voting. Of course, ethnic divisions can exist without outright evidence of conflict. Thus, while Ukraine is unlikely to face the “Yugoslavia” scenario of violent ethnic conflict, there is evidence that ethnic identity plays an important role in political contestation and voter behavior; and, consequently, the demography of ethnicity may have a significant impact on minority representation in the country’s newly democratic environment.

Yet there is even some debate over the role ethnicity plays in contemporary Ukrainian electoral politics, with several studies confirming the salience of ethnicity and others discounting it. Weller (2002), for example, notes that the presidential elections “confirm the existence of increased electoral polarity, at least reflected in the 1995 data, along an ethnic, linguistic and regional dimension” (Weller, 2002, p. 93). Other research shows that there is considerable difference along ethnic and linguistic lines in terms of what kind of foreign policy ought to be pursued, either pro-Western or pro-Russian (Shulman, 2002). Several other studies of voting behavior and political attitudes in Ukraine have emphasized the role of ethnic, linguistic,

and regional factors (Hesli, Reisinger, and Miller, 1998; Birch, 2000; Barrington, 2002). However, in a detailed study of the 2002 parliamentary elections, Paul D'Anieri illustrates that Ukraine is "a more 'normal' country than has typically been appreciated, in that it is dominated primarily by a left-right cleavage" (2007, p. 119). D'Anieri concentrates mostly on voting among deputies *within* the parliament, concluding that "parties from the same region do not vote together. So despite the strong regional flavor of Ukraine's party system, parties in parliament are driven primarily by left-right rather than by linguistic or ethnic issues" (2007, p. 114).

Despite the competing findings cited above, the policy battles and election rhetoric of post-Soviet Ukraine strongly suggest that ethnicity has been a salient political issue. Early efforts by President Kravchuk at state-building involved nationalist strategies that were not welcomed by the Russian minority. Laws on the use of Ukrainian as the sole official language, the use of the blue and yellow flag, and the anthem "Ukraine Has Not Yet Perished" all were seen as overly nationalist by the Russian minority. In fact, these overt nationalist symbols led to one of the largest victories for the Communist Party in the 1994 parliamentary elections. Picking up on the strategy used by the Communist Party, Leonid Kuchma, who campaigned in the 1994 presidential elections on issues appealing to the Russian minority, such as rebuilding close ties with Russia and making Russian an official state language, defeated the incumbent Kravchuk in the second round of the two-round majoritarian election (Yekelchyk, 2007, p. 201; see also Kuzio, 2006). Kuchma would go on to build a powerful political machine that centralized power in the executive branch and dominated Ukrainian politics (Kubicek, 1994; Levitsky and Way, 2002). The "Russian card" would also be an important strategy of the presidential candidate Viktor Yanukovich, Kuchma's designated successor, in the hotly contested 2004 presidential elections. He offered "to make Russian an official language, to allow dual citizenship, and to simplify voter-registration procedures for Ukrainian citizens in Russia" (Petrov and Ryabov, 2006, p. 155).

While Kuchma based his political machine at least partly on strong support from the pro-Russian parts of the country, the sources of the emergent democratic opposition to his increasingly authoritarian style of rule were primarily economic in nature. Important economic interests were a key catalyst for the coagulation of an anti-Kuchma movement. Economic oligarchs left outside of the leadership circle sought to unify the disparate (and nominally) democratic opposition (Karatnycky, 2006). A further important rallying cry was the abduction and murder of opposition journalist Heorhiy Gongadze in 2000, which set the stage for the first electoral setback of Kuchma's political machine in the 2002 elections.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Kuchma's For a United Ukraine did manage to win the elections, but the contest was clearly a setback as the opposition gained considerable momentum and finally managed to unify behind Viktor Yushchenko.

**Table 1.** Regional Distribution of Parties' Support, 2002 Parliamentary Elections<sup>a</sup>

Party/bloc	Percentage of party's overall proportional representation vote received in:			
	East	South	Central	West
United Ukraine	56.7	14.9	16.3	11.9
Communist	49.1	26.9	17.7	6.3
Social-Democratic Party	37.9	27.6	18.4	16.1
Socialist	26.1	11.9	53.1	8.9
Our Ukraine	10.6	5.9	25.8	57.6
Tymoshenko	14.5	6.6	36.9	41.9

<sup>a</sup>Source: This table is (with very little adaptation) taken from D'Anieri (2007, p. 108).

The trigger for the unification of the anti-Kuchma forces in the run-up to the 2002 parliamentary election was the protests by the opposition in the winter of 2000–2001. While these protests eventually fizzled out, they were enough of an incentive for Viktor Yushchenko (dismissed as Prime Minister in April 2001), socialist Oleksandr Moroz, and the powerful oligarch/politician Yulia Tymoshenko to unify as a bloc (although they still campaigned separately) for the 2002 elections. The results of the election were a narrow victory by the pro-Kuchma party “For a United Ukraine.” Kuchma’s party won mainly through the single-member-district elections, which accounted for one-half of the seats elected in Ukraine’s mixed electoral system at the time. However, Kuchma’s party had a miserable showing in the proportional representation portion of the election (which chose the other 225 out of 450 seats in the Rada). This signaled the prospect for a Yushchenko victory in the presidential contest two years later. Table 1 shows the parties contesting the 2002 elections and their regional bases of support (D’Anieri, 2007).

As noted above, in terms of ethnic allegiance, it is important to keep in mind that none of the main parties were overtly (or even primarily) “ethnic” in character. Kuchma’s United Ukraine, the Communist Party, and the Social-Democratic Party of Ukraine (United), were, however, certainly more attuned to the concerns of the Russian minority than the parties based in western Ukraine, particularly Yushchenko’s bloc. They were also more “left leaning” and therefore appealed to the industrialized areas of the country, notably southeastern Ukraine. This fusion of ethnic, economic, and regional interest representation of parties further complicates the picture of how these different factors influence electoral politics. Clearly, parties had regional bases of support (see Table 1), but how much

specific ethnic identities versus regional or economic interests affected vote choice is difficult to disentangle (see Barrington, 2002).

This article sheds new light on the role of ethnicity in Ukrainian elections by examining how minority concentration influenced the election of individual minority deputies as opposed to analyses of ethnic electoral politics based on individual voters' support for political parties or parties' legislative voting record. Arguably, ethnic identity has a unique and central impact in candidate-centered, single-member-district elections because these contests involve choices among individuals and thus allow voters to register ethnic solidarity through support for a co-ethnic candidate rather than a party offering a multitude of appeals. This is particularly true in countries, like Ukraine, that lack ethnic parties, which explicitly make direct and exclusive appeals to ethnic minorities and thus provide a more overt co-ethnic electoral option. In such a context, it is conceivable that ethnic cleavages may be less discernible in public opinion or support for specific parties yet may still be highly salient in the election of individual legislators.

## THE DATA

This study is based on aggregate data on ethnicity and electoral results from post-communist Ukraine. The ethnicity data come from the 2001 Ukrainian census, which was the first conducted in post-Soviet Ukraine (the last census having been published in 1989).<sup>6</sup> The census information was combined with the 2002 parliamentary election results collected by the Ukrainian Central Election Commission.<sup>7</sup> We also managed to gather information on the ethnic identity of most Ukrainian legislators elected in 2002 through published parliamentary handbooks and expert analysis by Ukrainian scholars.<sup>8</sup>

## GEOGRAPHIC CONCENTRATION AND MINORITY REPRESENTATION

Considering the American experience, we would expect minority representatives elected in Ukraine's SMD elections to come from districts made up of large proportions of ethnic minorities. The presumption is that ethnic minority candidates rely primarily on the votes of co-ethnics, and thus the election of such candidates in SMD elections requires a plurality of minority voters within the electoral district (for non-American cases, see Barkan, 1995, and Chandra, 2004). However, in contrast

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<sup>6</sup>Census data on the ethnic composition of Ukrainian raions were collected by Robert Moser during fieldwork in Ukraine in 2004 and then aggregated up to the level of electoral districts.

<sup>7</sup>The results of the 2002 Parliamentary Elections are available on the Ukrainian Central Election Commission website ([www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vd2002/webproc0e](http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vd2002/webproc0e)).

<sup>8</sup>The ethnic identity of Rada deputies was gathered by Igor Markov and Taras Danenko.

**Table 2.** Representation of Ethnic Groups and Ethnic Composition of SMD Districts<sup>a</sup>

	No. of SMD deputies elected	Average percentage of Ukrainians in district	Average percentage of co-ethnic minority group in district
Ukrainians	131	82.3	82.3
Russians	31	63.3	29.7
Tatars	1	94.0	0.0
Hungarians	1	70.0	22.0
Other	13	68.7	7.7

<sup>a</sup>Source: Authors' data.

to the United States, the representation of minorities in Ukraine was not restricted to minority-majority (or even “minority-plurality”) electoral districts. While geographic concentration clearly has some impact on the election of minorities, there does not seem to be a hard-and-fast threshold at which minorities get elected in Ukraine. Table 2 and Table 3 show different aspects of the relationship between geographic concentration within electoral districts and the election of Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians.

As Table 2 shows, in general, minority geographic concentration tended to correspond with the election of minority candidates. On average, representatives who were ethnic Ukrainians tended to be elected in districts dominated by ethnic Ukrainians (averaging over 80 percent ethnic Ukrainian) while minority representatives (with the exception of the sole Tatar legislator in our study) came from districts with significantly larger minority populations. The largest minority, ethnic Russians, won 31 of the seats in our dataset, in districts that averaged less than 64 percent ethnic Ukrainians.

Table 3 suggests two competing storylines. On the one hand, the districts with the lowest percentage of Ukrainians (0–30 percent, which were all located in Crimea) tended to elect ethnic Ukrainian deputies, suggesting that minority geographic concentration is not conducive to minority representation. However, in minority-majority districts with 30–50 percent Ukrainians, a vast majority (75 percent) of those elected were non-Ukrainian. Even in districts in which the Ukrainian population was 50–70 percent of the population, and thus constituted a majority within the district but faced a substantial minority population, nearly 40 percent of representatives were non-Ukrainian. On the other hand, Table 3 also demonstrates that minority concentration within districts was neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the election of minority representatives. Minority candidates (both Russian and non-Russian) managed to gain election in electoral districts with majority-Ukrainian populations.

**Table 3.** Ethnic Composition of SMD Districts and Election of Ethnic Minorities<sup>a</sup>

Ethnic Composition of SMD District	No. of SMD districts	Percentage of Ukrainian deputies elected	Percentage of Russian deputies elected	Percentage of other minority deputies elected
All Ukraine				
Under 30 percent Ukrainian	9	66.7	33.3	0.0
31–50 percent Ukrainian	12	25.0	50.0	25.0
51–70 percent Ukrainian	28	60.7	28.6	10.7
Over 71 percent Ukrainian	127	82.7	11.0	6.3
East				
Under 30 percent Ukrainian	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
31–50 percent Ukrainian	9	33.3	44.4	22.2
51–70 percent Ukrainian	21	52.4	33.3	14.3
Over 71 percent Ukrainian	31	61.3	22.6	16.1
South				
Under 30 percent Ukrainian	2	50.0	50.0	0.0
31–50 percent Ukrainian	1	0.0	100.0	0.0
51–70 percent Ukrainian	7	85.7	14.3	0.0
Over 71 percent Ukrainian	15	60.0	33.3	6.7
Crimea				
Under 30 percent Ukrainian	7	71.4	28.6	0.0
31–50 percent Ukrainian	1	0.0	100.0	0.0
51–70 percent Ukrainian	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Over 71 percent Ukrainian	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Central				
Under 30 percent Ukrainian	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
31–50 percent Ukrainian	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
51–70 percent Ukrainian	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
Over 71 percent Ukrainian	44	93.2	4.5	2.3
West				
Under 30 percent Ukrainian	0	n/a	n/a	n/a
31–50 percent Ukrainian	1	0.0	0.0	100.0
51–70 percent Ukrainian	1	0.0	0.0	100.0
Over 71 percent Ukrainian	37	97.3	0.0	2.7

<sup>a</sup>Source: Authors' data.

Conversely, ethnic Ukrainians were elected in districts with minority-majority populations, particularly in Crimea.

What can account for these competing findings? First, party proliferation in single-member-district elections may have enabled mobilized ethnic minorities to propel their co-ethnic candidates to victory, even though they made up much less than a majority of the population within a district, because the rest of the field split the remaining vote. This dynamic may account for two seemingly contradictory findings—ethnic Russians getting elected in majority-Ukrainian districts, particularly those with substantial minority populations, and ethnic Ukrainians getting elected in majority-Russian districts in the Crimea. In both cases the majority ethnic population within the district (whether Ukrainian or Russian) may have split its vote across several candidates, allowing a candidate supported by a more focused minority voting bloc to win the election.

Second, some degree of assimilation between different ethnic groups may account for these findings. Within both of the two major ethnic groups, Ukrainians and Russians, there are members who speak the other's language as their native tongue. It may be the case that some of the non-Ukrainian deputies getting elected in predominantly Ukrainian districts are actually highly assimilated Ukrainian-speakers. Conversely, Ukrainians elected in Russian-majority districts may actually be native Russian-speakers. Further research into the specific patterns of electoral support for minority candidates and the precise nature of the ethnic identity of individual legislators is required to test whether these speculative arguments have any systematic explanatory power.

Third, region may complicate the impact of geographic concentration on minority representation in Ukraine. As Barrington (2002) has argued, ethnic identity as a voting cue may be complicated by a regional identity. Eastern and southern regions may have elected Russian and other minority deputies even in districts with lower levels of geographic concentrations of these minorities because of a regional identity that made such minority candidates attractive or at least tolerable to ethnic Ukrainian voters. Conversely, in western Ukraine, where the regional context is relatively "anti-Russian," the threshold for minority candidates to win election may have been higher.

In order to systematically investigate some of these explanations, we ran two logistic regression models on factors affecting the election of non-Ukrainians using data aggregated at the electoral district level.<sup>9</sup> Our dependent variable is Minority Deputy (coded 0–Ukrainian deputy, 1–ethnic minority deputy). Our independent variables capture three potential explanations for the election of minorities in Ukraine: minority geographic concentration, region, and minority-majority districts. Minority geographic concentration is operationalized through the *percent of ethnic*

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<sup>9</sup>We use district-level data rather than *raion*-level data because there is no variance in our dichotomous dependent variable at the sub-district level. We use logistic regression because it is suitable for regression analysis on dichotomous dependent variables.

**Table 4.** Logistic Regression—Factors Affecting Election of Ethnic Minorities in SMD Tier<sup>a</sup>

VARIABLES	(1) Minority Deputy elected	(2) Minority Deputy elected
Percentage of district non-Ukrainian	0.0337** (0.0142)	
East	1.684*** (0.577)	2.060*** (0.519)
Crimea	-0.356 (1.235)	0.694 (0.969)
South	1.369** (0.665)	1.908*** (0.607)
Russian minority-majority district		1.188** (0.524)
Constant	-2.897*** (0.456)	-2.575*** (0.425)
Observations	177	177
LL	-82.26	-82.55
(pseudo) R-squared	.1888	.1860
LRChi2	38.30	37.72

<sup>a</sup> \*p<.05 (one-tail test), \*\*p<.05 (two-tail), \*\*\*p<.01 (two-tail).

*minorities* in an electoral district, an aggregation of all non-Ukrainians in the district, based on the 2001 Ukrainian census. We expect a positive sign on percent ethnic minority, following the expectation of ethnic voting found in the literature. Region is captured by three dichotomous dummy variables for the main geographic regions of Ukraine designated by D'Anieri: East and South (with West/Central excluded as our comparison category). We add Crimea as a region distinct from the South on the basis of its distinct history and culture. We expect a positive sign for the three pro-Russian regions—*East*, *South*, and *Crimea*. Finally, we add a dichotomous variable to account for the impact of ethnic *minority-majority districts*, coded 0 if the district non-Ukrainian population is below 45 percent, 1 if it is 45 percent or higher. In majority districts with relatively few minority voters we expect a Ukrainian deputy. However, once non-Ukrainian minorities cross a certain threshold and constitute a critical mass of the district population, the chances of ethnic minorities getting elected should increase significantly. Table 4 shows the results of our two models for election of non-Ukrainians in the 2002 election.

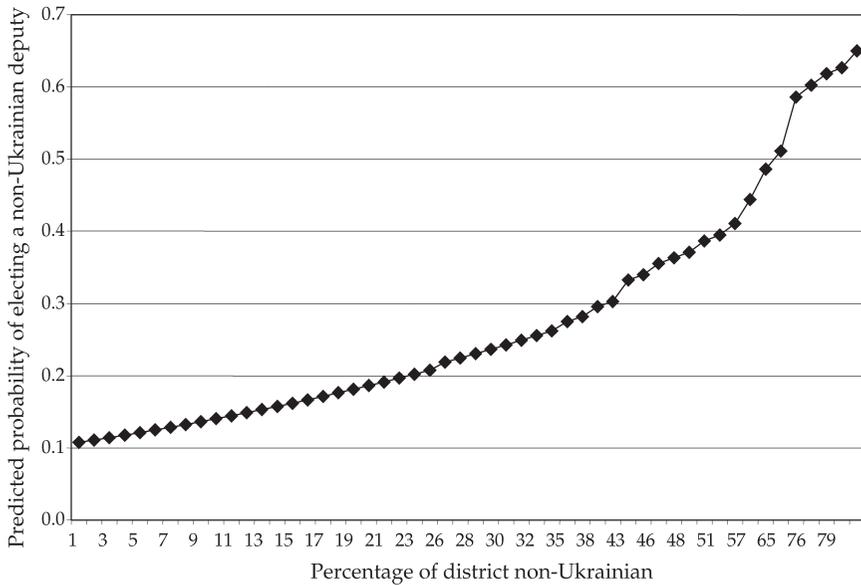
Our two models are differentiated by the variable used to capture geographic concentration. The first includes the continuous variable measuring the ethnic minority percentage in the district. The second model considers the minority-majority district variable for the minority ethnic population. From these two models, we found the following three trends. First, our results indicate that geographic concentration of non-Ukrainians is positively and significantly related to the election of ethnic minorities for the Verhovna Rada. Second, our findings strongly suggest that minority-majority districts play an important role in the election of minority deputies. Finally, our East and South regional control variables are statistically significant and in the expected direction, suggesting that region also has an independent effect on the election of minorities that does not somehow wash out the impact of geographic concentration of ethnic minority or minority-majority districts. An interesting finding is that Crimea, a region that is overwhelmingly Russian, was not statistically significant for producing a non-Ukrainian deputy and, in the first model, was negatively associated with doing so (although not significantly so).<sup>10</sup>

Graphic illustrations of the predicted probabilities for the first logistical model show an interesting story of the varying effect of the geographic concentration of ethnic minorities on the probability of choosing an ethnic minority representative. Figure 1, which traces this relationship for all of Ukraine, holding the other model variables at their mean, shows a line with a gentle upward slope, becoming much steeper when crossing a threshold percentage of around 45 percent of the district population being ethnic minority. This indicates that, although the relationship between demography and electoral representation is a linear one in this case, crossing the 45 percent minority threshold has a magnified effect on the likelihood of electing an ethnic minority. In Ukraine, it seems, there needs to be a certain demographic make-up before the voters identify themselves as an ethnic minority community of interest.

Complicating this story, we find that regional identities adjust the probability of choosing a non-Ukrainian deputy given the geographic concentration of the minority community. Figure 2 shows the predicted probabilities of selecting a minority deputy given demography, organized by the districts' regional affiliation: East, Crimea, South, West/Central. The predicted probabilities for the West/Central are unsurprising: low, even at estimated high levels of non-Ukrainian populations. Likewise, the figure shows a sharp incline and increased likelihood of electing an ethnic minority deputy in the East and the South. This figure corresponds with Barrington's argument that regional identity can act independently of demography, despite their correlation. We might conclude then, that

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<sup>10</sup>One possible explanation for this finding is that a disproportionate amount of our missing data on deputy ethnicity was for Crimean districts. However, we also speculate that the dominant demographic position of minorities in Crimea may have allowed a motivated minority Ukrainian population to elect Ukrainian deputies. However, we do not have the data to test this proposition.



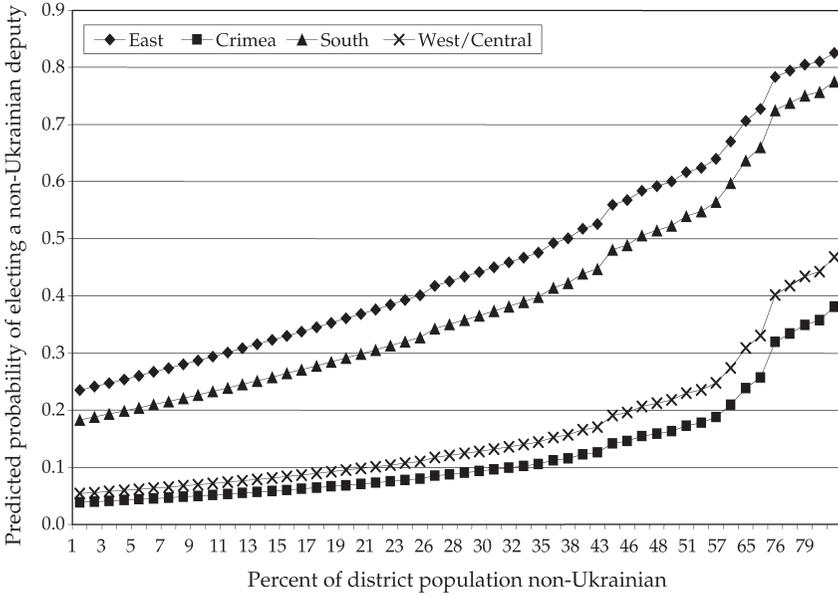
**Fig. 1.** Predicted probabilities, elected minority representative, for percentage minorities in district, countrywide. *Source:* Authors' data.

some Ukrainian regions have political cultures that are more reluctant to elect ethnic minorities.

## CONCLUSIONS

The American context provides the most well developed research agenda and theoretical lens for the study of the interrelationship between minority-majority districts, minority representation, and ethnic electoral mobilization. We have extended this research agenda by applying the concepts and hypotheses from this literature to a comparative (non-Western) context. The comparative politics researcher is at a considerable disadvantage to his American counterpart because of a lack of data that would allow for individual-level analysis of the ethnic minority vote that takes into account regional and institutional dynamics such as minority-majority districts. Nonetheless, we feel that it is imperative to apply these theories and hypotheses beyond the American context because the inclusion of ethnic minorities within democratic contexts is such a vital issue for democratic consolidation around the world.

Our article has shown that in Ukraine, minority-majority districts, no matter how one defines them, are not a necessary or sufficient condition for minority representation. Ukraine does not have a clear threshold at which minority candidates get elected. Districts with the lowest levels of Ukrainians (0–30 percent) still elected Ukrainian candidates, illustrating



**Fig. 2.** Predicted probabilities, elected minority representatives, for percentage minorities in district, regional. *Source:* Authors' data.

a considerable comfort level of the minority for majority candidates (or, concurrently, a high level of assimilation of majority candidates with the minority population in their region). This finding is probably illustrative of the complex web of identities that make up the Ukrainian electoral map although it could also be a finding highly influenced by the complex identity structure of the Crimean Autonomous Republic, where most of the districts of this nature occur. A further divergence from the US literature is the considerable ability of minority candidates to get elected in districts with even a non-majority (30–50 percent) minority population, suggesting that perhaps minority mobilization becomes the most salient factor promoting minority representation at a lower level than in the US, perhaps because of the lower electoral threshold in Ukraine's SMD contests, which experienced significant candidate proliferation.

Despite these differences, our analysis affirms the contours of the minority empowerment theory in general and the positive impact of minority-majority districts on minority representation, in particular. Minority-majority districts seem to have direct benefits for minority representation. This suggests more similarity than difference between a new democracy like Ukraine and the established democracy of the US when it comes to the interrelationship between electoral competition and ethnic politics.

These initial findings suggest that the American experience with minority-majority districts and the electoral mobilization of ethnic minorities has

broad implications for other countries. This initial attempt to expand these theories to a new, post-communist democracy suggests this is a promising line of inquiry that has important theoretical and practical implications for how democracy is practiced in ethnically diverse states.

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