

Identity and Agency

Majority and Minority Ethnic Voting in New
Democracies

BENJAMIN P. McCLELLAND

Columbia University
Doctoral Dissertation
2019

2

A Theory of Group Size and Ethnic Voting

In this chapter, I outline a theory of how demographic differences alone can create divergent preferences for ethnic representation among majority and minority groups. I argue that ethnic voting is most likely among those voters whose ethnic identities are able to fulfill two equally important functions. The first is that ethnic representation must provide a tangible benefit. In other words, an ethnic group collectively wielding the power of the state must be able to pass or administer state policies in a way that provides some advantage to group members, making ethnic representation worthwhile. This could be tangible material goods like cash transfers; security; more favorable treatment by bureaucrats and administrators in getting access to state services like hospital beds, development funds, and university admissions; or more abstract benefits like the cultural validation or prestige associated with positions of power. The second is that the ethnic identity must be instrumentally useful in solving coordination dilemmas and mobilizing voters in order to gain access to the institutions of power. Organizing along ethnic lines must be a reliable path to winning elections, making ethnic representation a viable possibility in the minds of voters.

My argument can be broken down into three distinct points. The first point is that these two dimensions for benefiting and coordinating ethnic group members vary independent of each other. A voter may find that her ethnic identity is very

closely correlated to policies or state actions that could benefit her directly, but that her specific ethnic group has virtually no chance of getting elected through group mobilization. It is equally possible for a voter to find themselves in the position of easily electing an ethnic champion to office, but that enacting policies to benefit their ethnic community would be of little use. The second point is that these two dimensions are directly influenced by group size, but in different ways. All else equal, the larger a group is, the higher degree of usefulness the group identity has in winning elections, but the lower the degree of benefits to doing so. Thirdly, because of the way in which group size influences these two dimensions, majority and minority groups will have fundamentally different assessments of what voting for an ethnic party gets them, and their willingness to vote for ethnic parties will diverge. Understanding ethnic voting requires an appreciation of the differences between majority and minority groups, and the ways that institutions can mitigate or exacerbate these tendencies.

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, I define the terms used in this dissertation. Secondly, I outline why ethnicity is somewhat unique as the basis of citizen-party linkages. Third, I outline a theory of how these two separate dimensions—the benefits of ethnic representation and the ease of winning office after mobilizing along ethnic lines—vary with group size and produce different strategic calculations between majority and minority groups. In section four, I outline the observable implications of the theory, and testable predictions of ethnic voting derived from this theoretical outline. In the fifth section, I give examples of the theory in practice, using visual depictions, and examples drawn from real-life voting behavior. The final section concludes.

2.1 Definitions

2.1.1 Identity

For the purposes of this dissertation, an *identity* is any category that can be used to classify or describe an individual.

This definition is not universally accepted throughout the literature. Under this definition, identity is a discrete and bounded unit, rather than an all-encompassing abstract idea. Individuals do not have a single “identity” which guides their actions or sense of self, but instead are composed of an enormous

catalog of identities. Following Chandra (2012) and Fearon (1999*b*), identity here is defined as categorical.¹ These categories include the politically relevant identities that form the mainstay of identity politics and cultural studies (e.g., “immigrant,” “gay,” “Evangelical Christian,” etc.), but they also include other categories that define one’s role in society and day-to-day activities, such as professional identities (“lawyer,” “teacher,” “doctor”) and interpersonal identities (“mother,” “husband”) which help categorize individuals into different groups based on societal expectations. Identities can also stem from values orientations or preferences over the way things should be (“libertarian,” “vegan”). Identities even include the trivial (“bird-watcher,” “morning person,” or “Mets fan”). Under this definition, an identity is any discrete category that can be used to describe a person. In this way, identities are the tools used by human minds to resolve the problem of establishing the boundaries between self and others, and determine the proper relations between individuals and the social world in which they operate.²

This definition differs from many understandings of identity in both academic and popular usage, in that no identity is assumed to be of primary intrinsic importance. It makes no *a priori* distinction about the relevance of ethnic identity. This is somewhat at odds with a recent trend in academic scholarship of paying closer attention to the social relevance of particular identity categories.³ This research has fruitfully expanded on our understanding of the ways in which identity categories structure human behavior, but is not appropriate for this study. These studies have usually relied on identities as an independent variable to explain conflict and development, and as such have benefited from greater incorporation of the actual context in which actors operate. This dissertation seeks to explain when identities are most likely to be valuable to voters. It seeks to explain the value of ethnic identities to voters and politicians over other identities like partisanship, ideology, or class. To make assumptions or decisions about which identities are most politically relevant risks tautology, and possibly ignoring endogenous relationships between identity and action. The definition used here more fully appre-

¹See also Barth (1969), Laitin (1998).

²For psychological interpretations on the problem of identifying self and the relation between self and society, see Cooley (1922), Mead (1934), Jenkins (1996), Jenkins (2000), Barth (1969) and Tajfel (1982).

³See Posner (2004*a*) who makes the case that ethnic cleavages should be assessed in light of their relevance to historical and social context within countries, or Cederman, Wimmer & Min (2010) who argue that research should take into account whether or not an identity category is represented by a political organization.

ciates the fact that individuals often have complicated identity repertoires which may be more or less relevant to their political preferences and decision-making.

This definition has the added benefit of allowing for individuals to be composed not of a singular “identity,” but a plurality of “identities,” which more closely tracks with the ways most individuals view themselves. Only the most narcissistic and sociopathic of individuals think of themselves in terms of a single identity category that applies only to them. When asked to explain their own identities, most people do not give their names, or refer to their own individuality or personhood. People frequently do not think of themselves only as “me,” but instead in a repertoire of broader categories that apply to other individuals in society and create possible communities: terms like “graduate student,” “social scientist,” “American,” “midwesterner,” “man,” “caucasian,” “foodie,” etc. These categories are not mutually exclusive, in fact many of them can be understood as operating within nested relationships. For example, “midwesterner,” as used here is a subset of “American.” The “American” identity reflects commonality with other Americans, whereas “midwestern” differentiates between Americans.

Employing a definition that allows for individuals to be composed by the combination and interaction of multiple identities also takes into consideration that the combination of identities can themselves be strong identities. Drawing on set theoretic terms, Crenshaw’s (1991) concept of intersectionality and the fruitful literature that it inspired⁴ provides a strong reason to believe not only that individuals view themselves in terms of multiple identity categories, but that the interactive combination of those identities can have strong correlations to people’s life experience. While intersectional scholars have often highlighted the ways in which intersectional identities can reinforce social discrimination and exploitative systems of privilege and oppression, the same definitions of identities have been employed by other scholars to identify ways in which societal diversity may be managed by democratic institutions. Stepan, Linz & Yadav (2011) stress the importance of “multiple but complementary sociocultural identities,” around which democratic states can form. In their analysis, state institutions and policies can either stabilize or antagonize inter-group relations based on the identity categories they privilege. The most stabilizing identity must usually be built around the state it-

⁴For discussion of how positivist political science can benefit from methodologies based on the intersection of discrete identity categories and intersectional approaches, see Hancock (2007), and Dhamoon (2011).

self, not ethnic, linguistic, or religious identities. Using their example to show how nested identities are important to understanding political outcomes, Canada can emerge as a successful robustly multinational society by privileging the civic identity of “Canadian” which is universal throughout the country, over “Anglophone” or “Francophone,” which is more divisive.⁵

While the definition used in this dissertation does not preclude strong links between identity and circumstances, or between identity and behavior, it is not required by the definition itself. In this way, the conceptualization of identity differs strongly from other influential studies in the field. White (1992, p. 6) defines identity as “...any source of action not explicable from biophysical regularities, and to which observers can attribute meaning....” Under this definition, identities only exist if they are somehow linked to action. It is not possible to have an irrelevant identity, since identity only exists according to this definition if it is the source of an observable action. It is also not possible to have an identity to which individuals attach enormous personal importance, but little social or political importance. The definition employed here operates independent not only of action, but also of sentiment. Wimmer (2013) differs from my definition in stressing that identity communities must be not only categorical, but also behavioral, based on some notion of homophily, or preference for in-group member welfare over out-group member welfare. Clearly this is the case in many identity communities around the world, as evidence by the global ubiquity of ethnic favoritism, racial discrimination, and strong patterns of endogamy. But in the definition used here, preferences for like group members in social interactions are not a necessary requisite of identity. An identity may be accompanied by strong preferences for interactions with in-group members (as is frequently the case with ethnic, religious, linguistic, or cultural identities), or not (as is the case with professional, interest, and physical-attribute identities), and still be considered an identity all the same.

This definition thus means that an individual is composed of an enormous number of identities, so much so that a comprehensive catalogue of an individual’s entire identity repertoire is practically impossible. Moreover, most of the identities which belong to an individual are meaningless for studies of social phenomenon and political behavior. Few political scientists would be interested in identity categories of “left-handed,” “allergic to peanuts,” or “able to drive a stick shift,” but these would nonetheless count as identities under this definition. A tolerance for

⁵On the distinction between civic and ethnic identities, see Brubaker et al. (1999).

irrelevance is necessary for a study such as this. Ultimately the question in this dissertation is whether or not an identity becomes politically relevant. To answer that, we must employ a definition that does not assume relevance at the outset.

2.1.2 Ethnicity

Definition of Ethnicity

In this dissertation, *ethnicity* is defined as an identity based on attributes associated with descent.

There are two important things to note in this definition, which borrows from Chandra (2004). The first is that given the definitions employed here, “ethnicity” is a subset of “identity.” All ethnicities are identities, but not all identities are ethnicities. Ethnicity is but one of a very large number of identity categories that an individual can have, and is in no way more or less important to a person’s behavior, values, or political preferences than any other identity category simply by virtue of its existence. The second is that because an ethnic identity is defined by descent, they are not readily changeable by any human agency. Whereas many identity categories like profession, status, or activity are the result of human choices, ethnicity is largely the result of history and circumstance surrounding an individual’s birth—one can choose to become an “accountant,” a “college graduate,” or a “marathon runner,” but one is born “Sicilian,” “Arab,” or “Japanese.”

This usage is somewhat at odds with the traditional usage of “ethnic” and “ethnicity,” which in common English parlance dates back to the middle ages. As Hutchinson & Smith (1996) point out, for most of the twentieth century in the United States, the term “ethnics” referred to Catholic, Jewish, or Slavic peoples who were recent immigrants to the US relative to the longer-established Anglo-British community. This was in keeping with the medieval usage of “ethnic,” which reflected the Biblical Greek usage of the term *ethnos* to refer to non-Abrahamic pagans. The definition here tries to clarify the concept by removing from it any sort of meaning derived from normative value attachments or inter-group power dynamics. Under this definition the British-descended Americans had no less of an ethnic identity than more recent immigrant arrivals. Likewise, the definition seeks to strip any prerequisite for a specific type of behavior and employ a minimum standard. This differs from Handelman (1977), which requires regular interaction with in-group members; Schermerhorn (1978, p. 12), who requires that ethnic groups

have a similar culture and define themselves through it; or Smith (1986, ch. 2), who requires a sense of solidarity and an attachment to a geographic homeland.

These are all very common phenomenon with ethnic identities, but the definition of “ethnicity” employed here does not require their presence to count as a matter of definition. This minimalist definition is more appropriate for the present study, as it allows us to examine the link between ethnicity and political behavior without assuming that such a link exists *ab initio*. Nevertheless, the distinctions employed here between ethnicity and other types of identities is necessary in order to explain why voters in some contexts support ethnic parties, and others do not.

Definition of Ethnic Voting and Ethnic Party

“Ethnicity” and “identity” are terms which I use to describe individuals, and are not readily applicable to the observable political behaviors under study. For that, I rely on the inter-related terms *ethnic voting* and *ethnic party*. An *ethnic party* is defined as a party which claims to represent the interest of an ethnic identity group. *Ethnic voting* is defined here as voting for an ethnic party.

Keeping with the minimalist understandings of ethnicity and identity outlined above, the definitions used here seek to provide conceptual clarity to complicated phenomena. Many studies of ethnic voting rely implicitly or explicitly on ideas of ethnic voting defined by the degree to which an ethnic group votes together as a bloc.⁶ This approach has produced an important and useful literature analyzing the variation in contexts where ethnicity is a strong predictor of vote choice, and those where it is not. Nevertheless, the approach imposes some strong scope conditions, and allows for studies only in those contexts where ethnicity is already assumed to be a salient political cleavage on which political parties could mobilize voters. Such an approach may overstate the degree to which it is the ethnic cleavage that is driving voting behavior, instead of geographic or institutional issues. In countries where ethnic groups are divided into different geographical areas, different ethnic groups may find themselves living in extremely homogeneous electoral districts with equally homogeneous choices on their ballots despite living in a very diverse country. The fact that many voters are supporting coethnics

⁶See Bratton, Mattes & Gyimah-Boadi (2005), Dunning & Harrison (2010), and Ishiyama (2012) for recent examples from Africa; Birnir (2007), Teney, Jacobs, Rea & Delwit (2010), and Heath, Fisher, Sanders & Sobolewska (2011) from Europe; and Huber & Suryanarayan (2016) for South Asia.

could be because of a calculated decision on the part of voters in response to their own political preferences and the options available, or it could be epiphenomenal to ethnicity entirely. In the United States all people from North Dakota vote for other people from North Dakota. This is not because “North Dakotan” is the most salient individual identity, but because the way that US electoral system is structured it is impossible to vote for a congressman who is not from one’s own state. Thus looking only at voting patterns misses the possible mechanisms by which voters choose to cast their votes, and risks attributing importance to ethnic identities which may be epiphenomenal.

The definition of ethnic party employed in this dissertation stresses what a party claims to do, and how it defines itself. This also differs from several prominent explorations in the literature, notably Horowitz (1985), who defines ethnic parties as parties which derive most of their support from a single ethnic group. As such, I rely on definitions closer to (Kitschelt 2001) and Chandra (2011) which are based on a party’s self-identification with a particular ethnic community. There are several benefits to this approach. Definitions of ethnic party which rely on voter support base effectively precludes the possibility of a “failed” ethnic party—all of the ethnic parties under Horowitz’s definition are inherently successful because they are defined by a pre-existing base of support. This definition is thus much better suited for a study of the effects of successful ethnic parties versus other types of political parties, but ill-equipped to examine why some ethnic parties succeed and others do not. In a similar vein, defining parties as ethnic based on how they present themselves to voters not only allows for an incorporation of human agency into a discussion of ethnic voting, but disaggregates the agency of voters and of political elites. Voters have the choice of who to support. Elites have the choice of how to campaign. The emergence of successful ethnic parties depends on the actions of both of these two sets of actors, but an absence of ethnic cleavages in politics could be the result of the actions of either set of actors independent of the other. Basing an analysis on definitions which allow for parties to propose ethnically defined platforms, but nevertheless fail to mobilize voters and win support based on that platform, allows us to better appreciate the individual factors and the extreme causal complexity that ultimately makes up the party system.

2.2 Linking Ethnicity and Voting

This dissertation seeks to explain why people support ethnic parties. Using the definitions above, all individuals are composed of multiple overlapping and complimentary identities, with ethnicity comprising only a small fraction of a complex of identities that make up an individual. Why then is it that in so many contexts, appeals to ethnic identities dominate over other appeals to other identities?

The question is essentially one of linkages—why is it that ethnicity becomes the basis of the connection between voters and politicians (Kitschelt 2000)? Traditionally, the political science literature has viewed linkages through two separate paradigmatic approaches: the responsible party governance view, and the societal cleavages view. Both of these approaches have difficulty reconciling ethnicity with human agency and the decision-making of political actors. Responsible party governance views would see ethnic voting in many ways as a problem: an inefficient decision made by voters undermining the normative value of democratic governance. Social cleavages approaches would see ethnic voting as much less problematic—inevitable, even—but this is largely due to the assumptions of the link between ethnicity and interest. Neither approach accounts for the possibility of individuals choosing to support an ethnic party or not.

In all but the smallest and most directly-democratic polities, electoral politics are dominated by parties. For many scholars in the field this is inevitable, as party structures are efficient solutions to collective action problems for both elites and voters. For elites, parties enable collective action in the day-to-day processes of governance. Parliamentary party caucuses can pool resources to control agendas, bundle issues together in ways that increase collective utility, and pass legislation to the general benefit of its members (Cox 1997). For voters, party brands resolve social choice problems and provide information on likely outcomes that help hold leaders accountable, and translate citizens’ votes into legislative and executive power (Aldrich 1995). Parties are thus institutions which amalgamate preferences among individuals and convert them into broadly acceptable policies while providing avenues for the implementation of such policies.

The responsible party governance system literature holds that the dominance of parties is not only inevitable, but desirable. These scholars argue that under an optimal party system, parties not only resolve the collective action problems of elites by helping them get elected, but also efficiently translate citizen pref-

ferences into policy outcomes (Dalton, Farrell & McAllister 2011, Chapter 1). In order to win elections, parties invest in party brands which bundle much of the complexity of policy making and governance into a single idea, easily communicated to voters. Theoretically, a party can propose any platform at election time, but for most scholars of responsible party governance, the most important proposals can be reduced to a traditional left-right economic dimension. This is the case in the archetypal Downsian model (Downs 1957), where voters have preferences defined as a position on a one-dimensional ideological space, and vote for whichever party comes closest to that position. In this classical model, the linkage is extremely straightforward: parties campaign on a single dimension, and vote for whichever is closest to their ideal point. The focus on policy has several normatively desirable properties. Most notably, parties can move the policies they propose in response to changes in the preference distribution among the citizenry—i.e., government can respond to the “will of the people” (Powell 2004). Moreover, since parties campaign on policies they plan to enact, and then stand for election again at regular intervals, voters have the chance to reelect parties which have fulfilled their promises or brought about positive outcomes, or remove leaders who have brought about negative outcomes. This dynamic ensures government accountability and leadership responsive to citizens’ demands. (Ranney 1962, Fiorina 1981).

Theoretically, this approach has been critiqued on the grounds that political action is very rarely conducted on a single issue dimension. Given the enormous complexity of human nature and social life, there are a large number of orthogonal dimensions on which parties could campaign and voters could base voting decisions—economic, social, cultural, aggressiveness in foreign policy, etc. Parties may resolve this issue through the use of specific labels and party brands. These brands do for parties what identities do for individuals: use descriptive terms to differentiate one party from another. Many parties bundle policies together into constellations of positions that may be internally consistent with a singular vision of how the state should operate and on what values political action should be based, under the label of ideology (Hinich & Munger 1996). This branding produces a useful cognitive shortcut available for voters in making their decisions. Since it is unlikely that voters will have the resources to investigate all aspects of state action and candidate positions, the use of ideological labels—such as “socialist,” “liberal,” or “traditionalist”—that map onto state policies helps to reduce the

complexity of choosing who to vote for and make decision-making more manageable (Converse 1964).

Ethnic voting in this model is normatively problematic. While there is no reason that a party cannot invest in an ethnic label (and many parties throughout the world do), doing so undermines two of the normatively desirable traits of ideological labels—mainly clearly communicating the party’s intended course of action if elected, and providing metrics by which the party can be held accountable at the next electoral cycle. Campaigning on the grounds of ethnic identity conveys absolutely no information on how a party will behave if elected. If the state is viewed according to Weberian professional ideals, then the main purpose of the state is to pass legislation on tax policy, public spending, foreign policy, security, etc., and then implement those policies in a competent and consistent manner. What exactly those policies will be is unclear under an ethnic label. If a politician campaigns as a “libertarian,” we can reasonably infer that she will favor reduced government spending, and a lighter tax burden. If a politician campaigns as a “Filipino,” it is not entirely clear what the implications would be for policy-making. While there may be some commonality among Filipinos due to circumstance, there is nothing about the label itself that would convey any information about likely policy priorities: “Filipino” candidates can be liberals, conservatives, hawks, doves, or of any political persuasion. Ethnic campaigning thus removes voters from the policy-making process by eliminating the party brands and labels that help voters make informed opinions on how the state will be run under the leadership of various candidates.

Moreover, campaigning of this nature when viewed through the lens of the responsible party government literature undermines voters’ capacity to hold leaders to account. If a candidate promises improved access to healthcare during a campaign, it is extremely clear how voters should be able to judge that candidate at the next election. If access to healthcare has improved, the candidate may very well have proven themselves competent. If access to healthcare has not improved, voters can infer that the candidate is not competent, or corrupt, or was not honest in their last electoral campaign. This makes it possible to “throw the bums out,” and elect new leadership. The basis of retrospective evaluation is much less straightforward when leaders campaign on ethnic labels. By definition, a candidate’s ethnicity cannot change. Ethnic identities are those associated with descent and history, therefore whatever a candidate’s ethnic identity is now, it will almost certainly

be the same at the next election. A candidate can therefore not fail to live up to a promise to be their ethnicity, since changing their ethnicity is something that is generally beyond their control.⁷

Viewing the mechanisms of elections and party competition from the viewpoint of individual voters from responsible party governance model presents an interesting puzzle: why are voters choosing to undermine their own political power? Essentially, supporting an ethnic party is choosing not to choose—it is an abandonment of the voters' main tool to involve themselves in the administration of the state.

That this should happen is less surprising to scholars operating in the tradition that sees political parties and voting blocs as representations of underlying social cleavages. In their seminal volume *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*, Lipset and Rokkan write that parties are “expressive,” and that political parties “develop a rhetoric for the translation of contrasts in the social and the cultural structure into demands and pressures for action or inaction (Lipset & Rokkan 1967, p. 5).” In this analysis, groups create parties, and parties represent the various relevant groups in society in the administration of the state. If ethnicity is a relevant social cleavage, then ethnic voting is not necessarily an abandonment of civic engagement, but rather a demand for one's social group to be represented in the decision-making bodies of the state. As parties engage in the business of getting elected—i.e., finding and training like-minded candidates, developing platforms, mobilizing voters—they repeatedly return to the relevant social groups from which they themselves emerged (LaPalombara & Weiner 1999 [1966]).

This literature has been critiqued as overly functionalist, ignoring those social cleavages which do not become the basis of political party systems (Sartori 1969), as well as strategic interactions and the role of political elites in creating and framing the conflicts in which they are participants (De Leon, Desai & Tuğal 2015). It has also been noted that social cleavages are often poor predictors of party system outcomes and voting behavior outside the long-standing democracies of Europe and North America (Dix 1989). Nevertheless, this sociological approach remains important. Social cleavages such as language, religion, ethnicity, and class have been shown to correlate with the bases of electoral competition even if mitigated

⁷The notion that ethnic voting undermines accountability through by encouraging voter complacency has been explored using both experimental and survey-based methods. See for example, Wantchekon (2003), Lindberg & Morrison (2008), and Bratton, Bhavnani & Chen (2012).

by electoral institutions (Ordeshook & Shvetsova 1994a, Neto & Cox 1997, Mozaffar, Scarritt & Galaich 2003, Elff 2007, Stoll 2008). Moreover, ethnic representation has been shown to affect policy outcomes in ways that are often advantageous to groups which are otherwise excluded from political decision-making (Bratton & Ray 2002, Preuhs 2006). In this sense, electing representatives from one's own social and demographic background may be a reliable strategy to win important and beneficial policy outcomes.

Yet this approach, too, struggles to understand identity and choice. Much of this work acknowledges that ethnicity is just one of several social cleavages, that in many cases cross-cuts other cleavages (Posner 2005, Dunning & Harrison 2010). Voters may be divided among ethnicity, class, and religion all at the same time, producing a variety of combinations of identity repertoires. Which cleavages matter and which do not is a question that is difficult to answer in this literature, since there is no basis for deciding which identity matters to voters and which do not. Using the sociological cleavage-based approach to determine the sources of ethnic voting therefore risks tautology: parties reflect relevant social cleavages, and those cleavages are determined to be relevant because parties claim to represent them. The explanation is systemic, and ignores the incentives of actors or the agency they exercise in campaigning, voting, and organizing. Cleavages exist, and they become the basis of party organization, whether voters like it or not. There is no room in these explanations for voters to reject a cleavage as irrelevant or useless, or to assess a separate cleavage as more useful or pertinent.⁸

The uneasiness between these two branches of the literature can be reconciled by a closer examination of what an ethnic party offers, and why voters might find it appealing. Responsible party governance sees ethnic voting as an aberration, since voters would be better served by more direct expression of preferences and demands for accountability. Sociological cleavage theorists see ethnic voting as a natural expression of relevant social identities and demands for representation. The way to reconcile these is to examine why voters may prefer identity-based representation.

Following the definitions above, ethnic parties make promises and proposals that are different from policy-based or ideological parties. Policy-based parties

⁸Drawing on constructivist insights, several scholars have shown that those social cleavages and identity groups become relevant in systematic ways in response to institutional environments. See the section on instrumentalism in the literature review in Chapter 3.

propose what they will do and what they won't. Ethnic parties propose who will benefit and who will not. Their emphasis is more on goals, and less on procedure. The information they communicate to voters is not how exactly they will administer state institutions, but in whose interests they will work. As opposed to an ideological appeal, an ethnic appeal is more likely to eschew prior commitments and internal consistency, since such prior constraints may impede the main goal: the benefit of one group of people to the detriment of others. This is not only an outcome which some voters may desire, but also one which voters can retrospectively assess. If an ethnic party has delivered on their promises, then coethnics should see their lot improve relative to that of ethnic outsiders. This means that ethnic voting is not an aberration or an irrational action, but can be the result of a calculated decision by self-interested voters. But it also does not mean that any form of identity-based voting is inevitable simply because identity cleavages exist within society. The challenge becomes explaining why voters would respond to ethnic appeals. How do we account for voters who do support ethnic parties and those that don't? In the next section, I develop a theory of how demographic factors can be highly influential in this calculation.

2.3 Identity and Agency: Deciding on Ethnicity

Elections are complicated, posing several challenges for both voters and politicians. Candidates want to get elected. Voters want to elect candidates who will administer the state to their direct benefit. Both sides are confronted with informational asymmetries and scarcities, as well as coordination problems. In certain cases, ethnic identities can help resolve these issues, helping a candidate win her contest, and a voter obtain a favorable outcome. Ethnic political parties are most likely to do well when ethnic identities are most useful in resolving these problems. In this section, I argue that ethnic appeals are likely to be made successfully in those contexts where they hold the greatest capacity to resolve these problems.

2.3.1 Ethnicity and the Challenges of Elections

Voters have a choice to make. On election day, they are presented with a list of candidates, and get to choose who to support. That is the limit of voters' agency in the

voting process. They cannot control the supply of candidates, nor can they control how others will vote. They have total freedom in their own voting choices, but little say in most other aspects of the electoral process. This creates a certain set of challenges. First, a voter needs to be aware of what they actually want. They need to have—and be aware of—their preferences over somewhat complicated policy issues. Second, they need to know how to cast their ballot in order to most effectively bring about that outcome. Ethnic identities can come into play in both of these assessments.

Who exactly will benefit from changes to tax policy, tariffs, regulatory oversight, international agreements, and other political decisions are complex questions about which even professional academics and policy specialists frequently lack consensus. Assessing one's own position in society and observing challenges in day-to-day life is much easier. A voter may not fully appreciate the complexities and policy difficulties of policing and security provision, but she has a sense of whether or not she lives in a dangerous neighborhood. A citizen may not be aware of the finer points of her country's social safety net system, but she is generally aware of her own level of economic vulnerability. Voters are often able to infer the likely consequences of various government policies, explaining the almost universally accepted link between social position and political preference—i.e., why poorer voters prefer higher levels of taxation and redistribution than rich voters.⁹ Considering the full implications of policy outcomes or the consequences of implementing a particular ideology may not be extremely complicated, but nevertheless requires a certain expenditure of cognitive resources.

A more difficult task is figuring out which candidates advocate which policies, as information on where candidates stand on policy matters is not always readily available. Learning about politics and politicians requires time and energy, and may in some cases be too costly, especially given the small likelihood that an individual vote will be decisive in the election (Riker & Ordeshook 1968). This is especially true in places where lots of candidates are competing against each other, or in contexts where media is underdeveloped or political parties lack voter outreach capacities. Even discounting the costs of obtaining reliable information, assessing candidates is also fraught with challenges of informational asymmetry. Politicians have multiple incentives to misrepresent their own true objectives, and

⁹It is also well-documented that political preferences are far from perfectly correlated with socioeconomic position. See, e.g., De Graaf, Nieuwbeerta & Heath (1995) and Evans (1999).

perfectly accurate information on candidate quality are not always forthcoming. Self-interested candidates seeking office solely for personal enrichment or incompetent candidates unable to perform the duties of elected office have every incentive to hide their true qualifications and motives, and may be able to do so given the difficulties voters have in directly observing abstract candidate characteristics.

Problems of who to vote for are further exacerbated by social choice and collective action challenges (McKelvey & Ordeshook 1972, Cox 1984). An individual must factor in the fact that electoral outcomes are the result of not only their choices, but the choices of other citizens as well, and voting for a most preferred candidate is not always the best course of action for someone concerned about ultimate outcomes. Voting for a second-choice candidate when a first-choice is not viable may actually be more likely to tip the election in favor of that candidate and prevent a less-desired outcome. Since the degree to which this is a risk depends on the preferences and calculation of other voters, which are not always immediately obvious, the risk of coordination failure in voting can be quite high, and voters' best possible course of action may actually be to vote for a party whose stated position is not actually closest to their true preference. If a voters' most preferred candidate or party has absolutely no hope of winning an election, but their second choice is a viable candidate in a tight race, that voter may increase their likelihood of casting the decisive vote in favor of a more preferred candidate by voting strategically. But this assessment is only possible if voters have information on the preferences and calculations of other voters, which may be especially difficult to obtain.

Thus voters have three distinct cognitive and informational demands: identifying their own preferences, identifying the likely future behavior of candidates and parties if elected, and identifying the likely voting behavior of their fellow citizens. But in an electoral contest, voters' problems are also candidates' problems. If voters need information in order to make a decision, candidates have a vested interest in helping them make that decision in a way most conducive to electing themselves to office. Candidates must make a choice over how to respond to these challenges. While they generally have little influence over voters' preferences, nor can they readily determine their competitor's positions, they do have a choice of what proposals they want to present to voters. A party's main goal is to present a platform that will convince a large enough group of voters to support them, thereby winning the election.

The first challenge is to choose a party platform that voters will find appealing.

This may not be a completely unrestrained choice, as many candidates cannot credibly commit to certain platforms, and parties often form around specific issues from which they are unable to deviate. Nevertheless, parties do get to choose how they present themselves to voters. They can emphasize economic issues, they can stress cultural issues, they can brand themselves as a single-issue party or a party linked to a specific charismatic leader, etc. This platform must have a broad enough appeal that it can win over a group of voters large enough to carry the party to victory.

The second challenge is communicating this information to voters. In nearly all modern political systems, the number of citizens is large enough that candidates cannot interact with each potential voter individually, and so must rely on mass media or the political party apparatus. This imposes costs and difficulties, especially as voters may not have strong incentives to actively seek out information that would help them make informed decisions, and rely on heuristics or shortcuts instead (Campbell, Converse, Miller & Stokes 1980[1960], Popkin 1991). Aware that voters may also doubt candidate's honesty, candidates and parties must also communicate their trustworthiness and the sincerity of their proposals, avoiding problems of moral hazard and concerns that promises are empty.

Choosing ethnicity as the basis of a linkage between candidates and voters has certain characteristics that may be appealing in resolving some of these informational and communicational problems. Ethnic identities—by definition linked to decent—can be used to convey a commonality between voters and politicians. For voters who struggle to differentiate one would-be leader from another, this may be a helpful heuristic. Absent any other information on candidate preferences, priorities, or competences, voting for a coethnic may be a good option, since shared ethnicity creates the possibility of shared interest through the mechanism of common descent (Ferree 2006, Birnir 2007). It therefore requires much less of an effort on the part of voters to differentiate candidates on the basis of ethnicity. The effect is compounded by the fact that ethnic identities can be made easily and readily apparent. While ethnic markers are often present even in a candidate's name, signals conveying ethnic information can be displayed by the candidate in speech, mannerism, dress, or cultural practice. In this way, it is usually easier for a candidate to convey to voters their ethnic identity than it is to give them a nuanced understanding of their policy position.

The fixity of ethnic identities also help overcome potential moral hazard prob-

lems caused by informational asymmetry. Because ethnicity is fixed and unchanging, voters need not worry about “bait and switch” tactics, where candidates may promise one policy, but enact another once in office. Once a candidate has established her ethnic identity to the voters, voters need not be concerned that the candidate will change when elected. A commitment to help coethnics is fairly credible, since the candidate would herself benefit from such policies. In other words, it is impossible to “flip-flop” on a position based on one’s ethnic identity, since such an identity cannot change.

Ethnicity also helps to establish rough predictions on how other people may be voting, aiding voters in avoiding collective action problems and coordination dilemmas. Since ethnic identities are just as highly visible among voters as they are among candidates, politicians can easily observe potential supporters’ ethnicities. Politicians campaigning on platforms stressing ethnic identities can use demography as a proxy for how well-received their positions are likely to be. An appeal to support a specific group and provide them with preferential treatment may not be universally acceptable among the beneficiaries themselves (as their sincere preference may align more closely with class, ideological, cultural, or some other cleavage), but it is guaranteed that no one outside the group will find this argument persuasive. An appeal to favor group A at the expense of group B may not be acceptable to all A’s, but it will never be acceptable to anyone in group B. Politicians can therefore gain a sense of the ceiling on the support for a specific ethnocentric position by gauging the population ratios of their would-be constituencies. For this reason Chandra (2004) argues that ethnic parties succeed on the basis of “ethnic head counts”—making ethnic appeals to voters only in constituencies where the numbers mean that the ethnic group could win in an election.

Ethnic distinctions can therefore convey valuable information to voters, distinguish between insiders and outsiders, and help in the formulation of policy platforms—all reasons why ethnic identities might be useful as the basis of linkages between voters and candidates. But to claim that ethnic cleavages will become the basis of voter-politician linkages simply because there are some reasons why doing so might be helpful risks functionalist fallacy. It is entirely possible that voters or candidates could have reasons to reject ethnic identification, having better prospects by mobilizing along some other cleavage or ideological identity. Voters may decide that ethnic labels are actually not useful at all in conveying commonality, or may have access to more accurate information on candidate

quality or positions. They may believe that their ethnic identity has nothing to do with their political interests, and find coethnicity as an unpersuasive grounds for voting. It is even possible that individuals believe the representation of their own ethnic group in the organs of political power could be disadvantageous to themselves, and prefer not to have a coethnic in power. If voters do not see a link between their identities and their political preferences—in other words, if what they want the state to do is completely unrelated to their ethnicity—then ethnicity is not a resource useful in pursuit of interest. Likewise, if politicians see that voters are not persuaded by ethnic appeals they have no reason to campaign on them. This could also be the case if ethnic grievances are strong, but there are simply not enough voters to mobilize to win office. For those politicians, ethnicity is not useful to winning office, and of little value.

In fact, the degree of usefulness to voters and leaders may be specific to individual ethnicities, not ethnic identity in general. Politically speaking, some ethnicities are more useful than others. Not all ethnic groups will find it a good idea to mobilize along ethnic lines because such mobilization simply does nothing for them. This may be because the best-case scenario of ethnic electoral mobilization—the take-over of the state by ethnic champions—would do nothing to advance the interests of the individuals involved. It may also be the case that ethnic mobilization is simply not likely to be successful, resulting in coordination failure and vote wasting. But for some groups, ethnic mobilization is likely to lead to success, and provide a substantial policy pay-off. Seizing state power in democratic elections through electoral mobilization is both possible and efficacious. Acknowledging the various degree of usefulness of ethnic mobilization is key to understanding when groups mobilize along ethnic lines and when they don’t. If ethnic mobilization is likely to result in benefits for voters and office for ethnic elites, then everyone has an incentive to politicize ethnic cleavages. Ethnic appeals are likely to win out over non-ethnic appeals, and group ethnic representation is most likely. If ethnic mobilization is unlikely to result in benefits for voters and office for ethnic elites, then the ethnic identity has no value, and non-ethnic appeals are more likely to win out.

Understanding when voters are most likely to support an ethnic appeal and when candidates are most likely to make them requires us to think systematically about when ethnicity is a useful mobilizing tool and when it is not. I argue that it is important to distinguish between two separate functions for which ethnic iden-

tities can be instrumentally helpful: setting policies advantageous to individual voters, and mobilizing groups of voters large enough to win elections. While the literature has often conflated these two, they are separate dimensions, and can vary independently of each other. Ethnic voting is most likely for those voters who see both conditions met.

2.3.2 The Benefits of Ethnic Representation

What, then do voters have to gain from electing leaders who explicitly identify as representatives of an ethnic group? Literature across the social sciences suggests that there are three separate strands of benefits to be gained by ethnic political representation: intrinsic psychological rewards, the enactment of policies in the group's communal interest, and redistribution of state resources in favor of coethnics. In this section, I argue that all three of these benefits are directly correlated with demography, and relative group size. The smaller the group, the more likely they are to benefit from electing ethnic champions.

Perhaps the most straightforward benefit is the emotional benefit that comes from seeing a coethnic in office. As outlined by social identity theory (Tajfel 1978), and self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell 1987), individuals understand their own role in the world and the value they offer to society through their membership in larger groups. This link is partially instrumental, but it is also emotional, as individuals may derive their own sense of self-esteem and self-worth from the overall perceived prestige and worthiness of the group. In psychology, this affective commitment—or emotional attachment to groups—has been shown to produce an emotional commitment in individuals strong enough to create a willingness to incur individual costs in order to maintain the strength of the group (Allen & Meyer 1990). The implications in ethnic politics are clear: political representation is one of the most prestigious honors a group can hold, and the power that comes with holding elected office can produce a strong sense of pride. For Horowitz (1985) this sense of self-worth is especially important in ethnically divided societies where divisions may exist between “backwards” and “advanced” groups. A lack of representation for one group in state power is not only objectively bad, as it opens up concerns of disenfranchisement, and discrimination; but also personally disheartening, as group members feel that their group exclusion reflects a lack of worthiness or capability. In voting for a party that cam-

paigns on a platform of representing a single ethnic group, voters may be seeking the validation that comes from empowering one of their own, accessing the “psychic benefits” associated with group representation.

Politics is not all symbolic, and voting is not all emotional. Modern states do important things, implementing policies that have enormous impact on society and the material well-being of individuals. It may therefore be the case that the benefits of ethnic representation may be high because of overlapping interest shared within ethnic communities. Since ethnicity is by definition associated with descent, it is correlated with other individual characteristics associated with descent. Since most people speak the same language as their parents, linguistic divides often correspond with descent, and therefore may also be highly correlated with ethnic identity. The same is true with other social behaviors and ideas that are passed down from one generation to the next, including religious beliefs, and cultural practices. Voting for a party which claims to represent a specific ethnic group therefore means voting for someone who has a similar background and presumably similar preferences with regards to these issues. In modern, industrialized economies, states have strong incentives to foster linguistic and cultural homogeneity throughout their territories (Weber 1976, Gellner 1983). Which language is chosen as the official language of the state or the dominant language of society determines which group of people must incur the additional costs of learning new languages and those who have the privilege of speaking their native tongue. In addition to the loss of prestige and cultural validation associated with speaking a subaltern language, those who do not incur these costs and develop their language skills risk social exclusion, political disenfranchisement, and economic deprivation (Csergő 2007, Stepan 2015). Ethnic representation is therefore an instrumental tool to avoid the homogenizing policies that would force assimilation and adaptation on a group.

Ethnic representation also offers much less abstract benefits to constituents. Fearon (1999*a*) argues that ethnicity is an extremely useful basis for the distribution of political patronage and clientelistic benefits. Since ethnic markers are not easily changed, they eliminate the common problem of monitoring in clientelistic democracies, and facilitate the identification and maintenance of minimum winning coalitions. In campaigning on promises of representing a specific ethnic group, especially in the so-called “patronage democracies” where the state primarily redistributes services and benefits to political supporters in exchange for

votes (Chandra 2004), parties suggest that voters should support them by virtue of their ethnic identity because they will favor coethnics once in office. There is no direct link to anything in the ethnic identity itself; the campaign is not based on a cultural precept or any idea about what it means to be a member of a certain group, it is simply about favoring coethnics at the expense of other groups. Ethnicity is valuable because it serves as a reliable basis for differentiating “insiders” and “outsiders”—or winners from losers. The only policy is to redistribute away from one group and towards another at every possible opportunity.

There are therefore three different genres of benefits that could be had by electing an ethnic champion to office: psychological, policy, and redistributive. Which benefits voters value most, or why a politician might focus on offering one over the other is an important question, but beyond the scope of this dissertation. For our purposes here, there is one important commonality: the value to an individual voter of each type of benefit is higher for small groups than it is for large groups. All of those benefits increase as group size decreases. All else equal, a small group will receive more of each of the three different types of benefits described than a large one.

On psychological benefits, there are two explanations why this is the case: one rooted in human nature, the other in mathematics. Psychologically speaking, smaller groups are more likely to hold greater meaning and import for their members than larger groups. Brewer (1991) has shown that those identities which become the strongest are those which bond individuals to others in the same category while at the same time distinguishing the self from others. The “ideal” identity in this regard—i.e., the one to which an individual is most likely to develop the strongest personal attachment and sense of worth—is one that differentiates an individual from the largest possible group of people while associating with a small but still viable community. Relatively few people in the world today ever think of their primary identity as “human”—the distinction for most social activity is practically meaningless, since everyone else is a human as well. This is closely related to the mathematical relationship between group size and electoral prospects. If, for example, political leaders were chosen at random instead of through elections, then the odds of a person from a specific ethnic group being chosen would be the same as their proportion of the population. If a single group represents 90% of the population, then that group has a 90% chance of having one of their own members chosen. This makes being elected a much less likely event—and therefore

much more meaningful—for groups which represent a very small segment of the population. As an example, note the historically important moments when members of numerically small (and usually historically disadvantaged) groups become head of state: Barack Obama as the first black President of the United States, K. R. Narayanan as the first Dalit President of India, or Leo Varadkar as the first LGBT Taoiseach of Ireland. The elections of these leaders are often seen as pivotal or inspirational moments, mainly because of the difficulties these leaders had in attaining office.

On policy matters, small groups are also likely to benefit more from ethnic representation than big groups. This is mainly because as a smaller group, they have more to lose, and are more likely to be targeted. Because of sheer numbers, larger groups are more likely to dominate the political and economic sectors. At best, a simple predisposition to employ coethnics due to social networks or physical proximity could put smaller ethnic groups at a serious disadvantage. At worst, ethnocentrism or racism could encourage open discrimination and hostility between ethnic groups. In such a situation with fewer potential targets and more potential threats, smaller ethnic groups are more likely to suffer than larger. If there is a homogenizing pressure in society, as is frequently associated with industrialization, globalization, and other forms of economic development, the languages and cultural practices which are most likely to dominate are those of the largest ethnic groups. A party intending to protect ethnic group interests can actually do a lot to alleviate these concerns if elected to office.¹⁰ They can implement state policies designed to protect minority languages from assimilationist trends.¹¹ Ethnic parties can also implement anti-discrimination policies, legally protecting their ethnic constituency or ensuring their access to state jobs and resources, giving the community the increased strength of state assistance to even the playing field in relation to larger groups and prevent assimilationist forces.

Smaller groups also benefit more from between-group redistribution than larger groups, even if only by mathematics. As an over-simplified example, imag-

¹⁰See Gurr (2000) for a theoretical overview and specific case studies of minority communities' elevated risk of assimilation, and discrimination.

¹¹See Flores (2008) for documentation of such programs in Latin America. In Bolivia, for example, the Ministry of Education subsidizes newspaper supplements in the Aymara and Quechua indigenous languages spoken by 14.6% and 21.2% of the country, respectively. Whereas such an intervention is hardly necessary for Spanish-language media, state intervention produces media that these ethnic communities would most likely not have access to if left to the free market given the relatively small demand in light of the size and the poverty of the intended audience.

ine a situation where everyone pays a certain percentage of their income into a general government fund, and the government then redistributes resources on the basis of identity. If the resources are redistributed only to a single group, then the payoff to each individual is larger if the group is smaller: the pie is simply divided into fewer pieces. The most lucrative between-group redistribution would be when a very small group is able to tax a very large group and distribute resources to its members. A situation where majorities are taxed to pay minorities is relatively rare in truly democratic governments on any large scale.¹² In democratic regimes, the more likely outcome is the dominance of a minimum winning coalition (Riker 1962, Fearon 1999*a*, Posner 2004*b*) which redistributes resources to its own members. Each additional member beyond that required to win elections ultimately reduces the pay-offs to each individual member, a result of the logic that smaller groups benefit more than larger ones.

Regardless of the specific type of benefit voters gain by ethnic representation, it is always more beneficial for smaller groups to be represented on the basis of ethnicity than larger groups. Voters from smaller groups derive a greater sense of validation and psychic benefits from seeing coethnics in office than larger groups. Those voters in smaller groups also are more likely to benefit from public policy goods like linguistic and cultural protection than larger groups, since larger groups are more easily able to defend their communal interests and practices on their own without state intervention. And voters in smaller groups are able to gain more from excludable targeted redistribution than larger groups, since the net benefit per voter is larger by virtue of dividing resources among a smaller number of citizens. All of this suggests that all else equal, minority ethnic group voters will potentially have more to gain by electing ethnic representatives than majority group voters.

¹²Since majority rule is generally the guiding principle of democratic governance, this type of extremely regressive redistribution is usually only associated with authoritarian regimes, such as the government of Saddam Hussein which disproportionately favored Sunni Muslims (only 30% of the country) at the expense of majority Shi'a, or the regressive apartheid regime of South Africa, under which white citizens—never more than 20% of the population—controlled the bulk of state resources. Such extremely regressive group-based policies can result in massive windfalls for beneficiaries, sustained by the repression of everyone else.

2.3.3 Ethnicity as Coordination Device

Usually, the winner in an election is the one who got the most votes. This means that inherent in the definition of democracy is a matter of numbers. Bigger political factions win out over smaller political factions. Throughout history the identities which are usually most important are those with substantial numbers of people, e.g., large-scale societal classifications like “protestants,” “workers” or “land owners.” Small groups are generally irrelevant, as political viability is linked to group size in a democracy.

But a group cannot only be big to win elections, it must also be at least minimally coordinated. Voting is fraught with risks of coordination failure where voters could have improved their ultimate outcome if they had been better able to coordinate on candidate choice. Formal analyses of coordination failure in voting have usually relied on policy preferences and ideal points, and stress that voters may have strong incentives to vote for a candidate which is not their first choice under certain circumstances. In many electoral contexts, depending on a variety of factors, many candidates are not serious contenders, and may have little or no chance of actually ever winning office. Formal models of electoral outcomes have shown that in these contexts if the probability of being the deciding vote in favor of a second choice vote is sufficiently large, the probability of being the deciding vote in favor of a first choice candidate is sufficiently small, and the difference in utility between electing a first choice and a second choice candidate is sufficiently narrow, then voters have a strong incentive to strategically vote for a second-place candidate (McKelvey & Ordeshook 1972). Scholars of strategic voting have pointed out that this type of collective action can be fraught with difficulties, and that not all socially relevant groups may be equally equipped to resolve them (Aldrich 1993, Cox 1997).

The problems for voters when trying to navigate strategic issues is twofold: first they must ascertain the likelihood of their preferred candidate winning. If those are low, then they must also ascertain which options are most viable, in order to identify how to cast a strategic ballot. Ethnicity can help with both of these. Ethnic attributes are often highly visible and generally unchanging. Gauging the viability of ethnic group representation is easier than measuring the potential popularity of other social cleavages. Whereas it is not particularly easy to assess whether someone supports a more ideologically moderate or extremist candidate without polling them directly, the willingness of someone to support an appeal to a specific

ethnic group is more readily obvious. An appeal to use the power of the state to the benefit of a specific group will obviously not be very popular with voters who do not belong to that group. Demographics essentially set the upper limit to how far an appeal on the basis of ethnicity can go: an appeal to group solidarity and superiority may not resonate with all in-group members, but it is clear that it will not resonate with any out-group members.

All else equal, the coordinative capacity of ethnicity in voting is highest for large groups. In a democracy, the larger number of voters almost always wins. Increasing group size results in a larger group of voters who may respond to the appeal, increasing the electoral viability of the ethnic group. Larger groups are more likely to be perceived as strong electoral contenders than smaller groups. If, for example, a voter sincerely prefers to have her ethnic identity explicitly represented in parliament, and she is a member of an overwhelming majority, then she knows that this group winning office is a plausible outcome. She may not know exactly how many of her coethnic voters also prefer ethnic representation instead of representation along class, ideology, or some other social cleavage, but she knows that there are at least enough voters who could respond to an ethnic appeal to carry the group into office. A voter with similar preferences on the minority side, however, faces a different calculation. The total number of voters likely to respond to an ethnic appeal is ultimately capped by the size of the group. If that group is very small, then the likelihood of an ethnic party being politically viable is much lower.

It is a mistake to argue that big groups win and small groups lose every time in a democracy, and it is inaccurate to say that all minority groups face insurmountable obstacles in every situation. The relationship between a group's size and its political viability varies greatly with the institutional context in which the group finds itself. As a voluminous and fruitful literature on institutional design has shown,¹³ electoral rules have an enormous influence on which groups are and are not politically viable. The biggest determinant of group size is district magnitude. Duverger's law—one of very few scientific "laws" in political science—famously argues that majoritarian, first-past the post systems tend to result in two-party systems (Duverger 1962). Since under a single-member district plurality voting rule, only a single candidate can be elected from each district, candidates with small bases are completely unable to win election, while those who hold the support of a

¹³See Duverger (1954), Rae (1967), Sartori (1976), Taagepera & Shugart (1989), Lijphart (1994), and Stoll (2013).

plurality of voters receive all the benefits of office. Mathematically, the system usually favors the largest vote getter disproportionately, since a candidate will always receive 100% of the seats (i.e., one), and therefore 100% of the political authority, despite receiving only a majority or in some cases a plurality of the vote. This tendency changes the strategic incentives of both voters and elites. Elites, mindful of the fact that only the largest faction in a district can win any political power, will tend to concentrate into either the dominant party or a single opposition, since doing so maximizes the chances of election. Voters, in turn, will likely limit the range of voting choices to the top two parties or candidates, aware that voting for a small faction is most likely to result in a "wasted" vote with little to no chance of swaying the election. Under proportional electoral systems, on the other hand, the calculations are quite different. Since legislative seats—and therefore, political power—are awarded in proportion to the votes received, smaller parties have a chance to win power in proportion to their support they receive among voters.

Despite this fact, the differences in group size impact the risk of calculation are important regardless of the electoral system. Even in the most permissive and proportional of electoral contexts, larger groups have an easier time gaining access to office than smaller groups. In a highly proportional system with a very low threshold, the risk for both large and small groups may be so small as to be more or less inconsequential, but we can nevertheless say that there is a difference between the groups. It is possible, for example, for a group comprising 60% of the population of an electorate to split into 12 equal-sized groups, and still come in above a 5% electoral threshold. A minority population that is only 10% of the population can only split into two. In other words, a voter who wants ethnic representation in a majority group requires a lower degree of uniformity of preferences among her coethnics than a comparable voter in a minority group.

The decision-making calculus of voters when deciding to support an ethnic party thus consists of two interactive components: an assessment of the benefits that would accrue to them under a system of ethnic representation, and an assessment of how likely such representation is to obtain. The two dynamics vary not only independently of each other, but with opposite relationships to group size. *Ceteris paribus*, the benefits of ethnic representation increase as group size decreases, whereas the ease of installing ethnic parties in power increases as group size increases. These opposite dynamics suggest that the decision of whether or not to support an ethnic party plays out very different between majority and mi-

nority ethnic groups, simply by virtue of their differences in their relative share of the population.

2.4 Ethnic Voting Decisions in Practice

The decision to support an ethnic party is based on assessments of these two separate dimensions: the potential benefits that a voter would gain by having their interests represented in government, and the likelihood of such a party actually winning. These two dimensions have a very different relationship with demography and group size, creating divergent challenges for majority and minority groups. The potential benefits of ethnic representation are at their highest for small groups, while the ease of access to power is highest for large groups. Majority groups have an easy time getting their ethnic group political representation, but relatively little to gain. Ethnic minority groups would have much to gain through ethnic representation, but a hard time making it actually happen.

In practice, these calculations play out somewhat differently. This is because the two components are actually calculated at different levels of society. The benefits to be had from ethnic representation are ultimately a question of policy outcomes: they are about what type of decisions the state will make, what policies will be enacted and who the state will serve. These benefits are ultimately best understood by looking at the state as a whole as this is the level where policy enactment happens. The access of ethnic groups to political office is ultimately a procedural question of who is involved in policy-making decisions. It is about the way that votes are translated into political representation, and how citizens are involved in the process of choosing who will be in charge. As such, the ease of access to office should be understood by looking at the electoral district.

The distinction matters, because in almost all polities, institutions and demographics interact in such a way as to ensure that the demographics between the societal level where policies are enacted—the state as a whole—and those where leaders are elected—the electoral district—diverge enormously. In a perfectly unitary country composed of a single electoral district, polity and electoral district are the same. Yet practically speaking, very few countries fall into this category.¹⁴

¹⁴To my knowledge, the only countries that meet this perfect overlap in the lower house elections are Israel, Moldova, The Netherlands, Paraguay, Serbia, Slovakia, and Timor-Leste, and many of those use different electoral systems for upper house or presidential elections. Kyrgyzstan is composed of

In many countries, ethnic groups which find themselves as state-level minority groups are geographically concentrated so that they constitute majorities within specific areas (Lublin 2014).

Where electoral districts are delineated geographically, small groups that are disproportionately concentrated within electoral districts will have a much higher ability to clear electoral hurdles than those groups which are dispersed equally across electoral districts. This may be the case due to concentration in some kind of historic homeland—as is the case with the Welsh in the UK—or urban migration patterns—as is the case with black voters in US cities like Detroit.¹⁵ In these cases, national-level minority groups make up an overwhelming majority in the districts in which they live. These groups may thus be guaranteed representation through ethnic voting since they easily exceed all practical barriers to entry.

An ethnic group's political viability can also be changed intentionally for ethnic groups by institutional designers hoping to empower minorities or facilitate representation. In many countries, electoral districts are drawn around historically relevant regional boundaries, which often coincide with ethnic groups' ancestral homeland. The border between Flanders and Wallonia is written into Belgian electoral law, dividing the country into districts where Dutch-speakers make up the majority and French-speakers make up the majority, with relatively few bilingual districts. This ensures that most voters—regardless of ethnic identification—find themselves living in a district where their ethnic group is a viable political bloc, despite French-speakers comprising a national-level minority. Nigerian electoral law requires that electoral districts be drawn in a way that respects “cultural affinity,” resulting in ethnic groups divided into districts where they each comprise a local majority. In both the Belgian and Nigerian cases, electoral laws are designed to give each ethnic group greater chances of representation and lower risk of coordination failure than they would have otherwise had in a straight-up, majoritarian election where all groups voted into the same pool.

In the most extreme cases, ethnic groups are guaranteed representation by ex-

a single electoral district, but also contains special seats for minority populations. In short, it is extremely rare for the demographic characteristics of the individual electoral districts to perfectly match the demographics of the state as a whole. See Bormann & Golder (2013) and Bird (2014).

¹⁵At the most recent US census, the city of Detroit was 84% African-American, while the state of Michigan as a whole was 79% white, making Detroit an overwhelmingly black enclave in an overwhelmingly white state. Illustrative of the ways in which local-level demographics can impact the viability of ethnic representation, all but one of Detroit's mayors since 1974 have been African-American, while every governor in Michigan's history has been white.

PLICIT legal protections and mandates. Lebanon is the archetypal case of explicit ethnic mandates: the constitution requires that president be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of the Parliament a Shi'a Muslim. Other countries include explicit guarantees or ethnic representation, including New Zealand, which sets a minimum quota for ethnic Māori candidates in Parliament, and India, which provides guaranteed representation for a set list of traditionally underrepresented caste and tribal groups. Bird (2014), drawing on Vukelic (2012), estimates that 28 countries currently have explicit legal protections guaranteeing representation for specific groups in the lower house of parliament, with many more relying on implicit systems like ethnic gerrymandering to ensure minority groups representation. These institutions are specifically designed to make minority representation possible. By guaranteeing a certain level of representation to a specific group, they are effectively eliminating the barriers to entry for small groups. Whereas in a purely majoritarian election, a very small group has no chance of being elected, these institutional innovations segregate minority groups onto a different ethnically-delineated ballot, essentially making a national-level minority group a majority group within their own electoral unit. This arrangement changes the viability of ethnic representation from being very low to suddenly being very high.

All of this indicates that when voters are assessing the likelihood of their group being elected to parliament, that calculation must be made not at the national-level, but the district level. Since the district level is where votes are translated into seats, and therefore into political power, the demographic circumstances at the district level are what matters most.

But the benefits of ethnic representation can vary independently of electoral viability—just because an ethnic group can send ethnic representatives to parliament doesn't mean they will. Choosing ethnic representation only makes sense if those representatives are likely to advocate for policies that would be advantageous to voters. For those elected officials to be able to deliver benefits back to coethnics, there must be some kind of policy that differentiates on the basis of ethnicity that voters would desire.

In short, we can say that the overall value of ethnic representation is an interactive product of the benefits that would accrue to individual voters if elected officials were to explicitly campaign on ethnic grounds and the likelihood of victory for an ethnic champion party. While both of these two constitutive components

	Benefits of Ethnic Representation	Ease of Access For Ethnic Groups
Function of	Group Size At State Level	Group Size at Electoral District Level
Highest when	Group is Small	Group is Large
Voter Calculus	"What will I get if my group is in power?"	"How easily can my group win?"

Table 2.1: Two Components of Ethnic Voting

are directly related to demography, they vary in different ways: one is largest when group size is small, and the other is largest when group size is large. One is determined at the level at which political decisions are made, whereas the other is determined at the level at which leaders are elected. Ethnic voting should be most likely among those voters who have high values on both dimensions. Ethnic minority groups are most likely to support ethnic parties when they are very small, but geographically concentrated within electoral districts where they are guaranteed to win elections if they mobilize around a single party or candidate. Ethnic majority groups are most likely to support ethnic parties when they are faced with a large minority group that is geographically concentrated into their own ethnic enclaves. The general outline of the theoretical components determining ethnic voting are outlined on Table 2.1.

2.5 Visualizing the Theory

The discussion above has shown how incentives for ethnic voting can vary based on demographics and institutions, setting different incentives for majority and minority group voters to support ethnic appeals. In this section, I present a more intuitively understood approach by showing how the dynamics outlined above would impact voters in more relatable concrete situations.

2.5.1 Ethnic Voting Decisions in a Very Small Polity

Imagine the polity as seen in Figure 2.1. It is ethnically divided between two ethnic groups, illustrated here by the colors blue and yellow. Suppose there is an election for a single legislator, and three parties are running. One is an ethnic party from the yellows. It advocates for yellow supremacy, supports the communal causes of the yellows to the exclusion of the blues, and believes that the state should show preferential treatment towards yellows. Another party is an ethnic party from the blues. It takes the exact same positions as the yellow ethnic party, but in favor of its own coethnic blues to the exclusion of yellows. The final party is non-ethnic. It believes that ethnicity should not be the basis of state policy, and instead advocates for some other basis of legitimacy.

Obviously, this over-simplified example ignores the enormous complexity of real-life party systems and elections. “Non-ethnicity” is not a party platform or proposal as much as it is the absence of one, and thus would probably not exist as an actual campaign platform in the real world. Nevertheless, in this extremely limited example we can already say something about likely outcomes and voting behavior using the framework outlined above. Take for example, our voters labeled as *A* and *B* in the Figure. We know that *A* is a yellow, and that yellows are the majority group in this polity. We can immediately see that she will not support the blue supremacist party. That party, if elected, would relegate her to second-class citizen status, rejecting her identity and culture, and taxing her to fund programs that would disproportionately benefit the blues. Her choice is therefore between the non-ethnic party, and the ethnic party representing her own group. The inverse is true for *B*. He is a blue, and therefore has no incentive to support the yellow ethnic party for the same reasons.

Let us examine the benefits of ethnic representation to both of these people. From this it is clear that *B* has much to gain from the election of the blue ethnic party. He is in a minority that comprises only $\frac{2}{7}$ of the population, and thus his group’s victory would be extremely prestigious. He would also be the recipient of a fairly large windfall if the state decided to tax yellows to redistribute to blues, since 5 people would be paying in, but only 2 people would be collecting the benefits. The rewards to *A* from the election of the yellow ethnic party is much more modest. Her group outnumbers the blues more than two-to-one, so even if the non-ethnic party is elected there’s a good chance that her group will be represented in the institutions of power by numbers alone. A redistribution policy taxing blues to pay

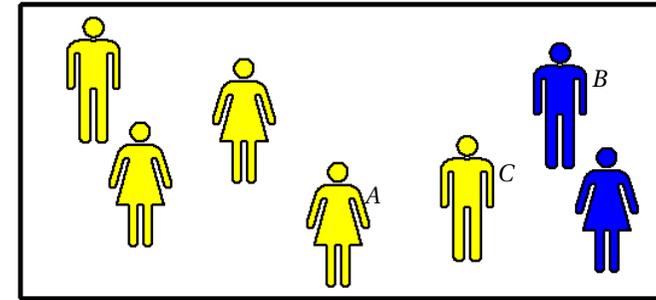


Figure 2.1: Viable Yellow Party; Non Viable Blue Party

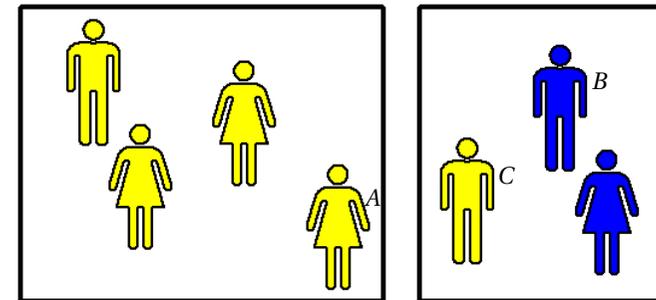


Figure 2.2: Two Electoral Districts Increases Viability for Blue Party

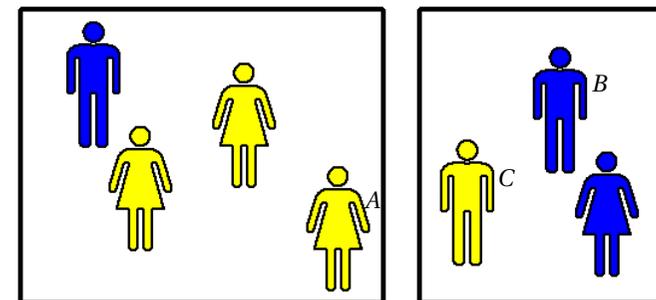


Figure 2.3: Greater Diversity Increases Benefits from Yellow Party

yellows reaps an extremely modest benefit: with 2 citizens paying in but 5 citizens collecting, the spoils are spread too thin to really count for much of anything. Admittedly, without knowing anything about the citizens beyond their ethnicity, or other facts about the parties running, we cannot say for certain whether these benefits would be more or less preferable to our two voters than what the non-ethnic party has to offer. We can nevertheless say that the benefits of ethnic representation to *B* are higher than they are for *A*.

The ease of access to office, though, is exactly the opposite, in that it is much higher for *A* than for *B*. While *B* may have the most to gain from ethnic representation, it is entirely impossible for him to achieve. Even if his fellow blue coethnic supports the blue ethnic party, he knows for certain that no one in the ethnic majority will support the minority ethnic group's party, and since they outnumber him it is impossible for the blue ethnic party to win. Even if the yellow voting bloc splits their vote perfectly between their ethnic party and the non-ethnic party, one of those parties is guaranteed to have at least three votes, outnumbering the maximum two votes that the blues can muster. In this instance, *B* has a very strong incentive to support the non-ethnic party. In fact, the two blue votes supporting the non-ethnic party may be enough to tip the scales in favor of the non-ethnic party over the yellow ethnic party, which ultimately would be a good thing for both blue group voters, avoiding ethnic appropriation from the yellows. For *B*, voting for an ethnic party is a dangerous choice that is ultimately detrimental to his own interests.

A, however, has the luxury of voting for whoever she truly prefers. Either the yellow ethnic party or the non-ethnic party is guaranteed to win this election, and even without knowing the true preferences of her coethnics, her chances of casting the pivotal vote in this extremely small polity are quite high. She need not worry about accidentally allowing the blue ethnic party to win, since such a thing is impossible in this situation, so is free to vote for either party. Again, we cannot say exactly which party she should vote for without going into more specific and idiosyncratic details about her situation, her preferences, or the nature of the competing parties. But we can still compare the relative group-level incentives in this scenario. Voters in the minority group have zero incentive to support an ethnic party, whereas voters in the majority have a moderate incentive to support ethnic parties. Ethnic voting in this situation is therefore more likely among the members of the majority than the minority.

Now let us change the scenario to reflect Figure 2.2. Now instead of electing a single legislator, the polity is going to elect a parliament of two legislators, from two separate electoral districts. The population of the country is the same, just the institutional rules governing the election have changed. Since the demographics of the entire polity are the same, the benefits of ethnic representation are the same as they were before: very high for our minority blue voter *B*, but more moderate for our majority yellow voter *A*. But the likelihood of each ethnic group winning has changed. For *A*, the situation is relatively the same. She now finds herself in an ethnically homogeneous district. She knows that no one in her district will vote for the blue ethnic party, and so is free to vote her true preference just as she was before. But for *B*, the game has changed substantially. Since the minority blues are now a district-level majority, the blue ethnic party has suddenly become viable in a way that it wasn't before. If his fellow coethnic votes for the ethnic party, then it is possible for the ethnic blue party to take the district. The likelihood of victory has gone from impossible to relatively high, causing a drastic increase in his willingness to support the ethnic blue party. The change to the institutional rules has done nothing to alter his motivation for supporting an ethnic party, but it has made the viability much greater, and overall increased his willingness to vote for the ethnic party. In fact, in this case, *B*'s incentives to support an ethnic party may be higher than *A*'s, since ethnic representation is now viable for both voters, but so much more lucrative for the minority group member than the majority group member.

Note that the institutional change has not altered *A*'s incentives, but it has altered *C*'s. Even though *A* and *C* share an ethnic identity, their incentives are the same in Figure 2.1, but divergent in Figure 2.2. In Figure 2.2, *C* now lives in an ethnic enclave of blues. He remains a state-level majority group member, but is now a district-level minority. Even if he has a true preference for the yellow ethnic party, he knows that neither of the other two citizens of the district will support that party, making victory impossible.¹⁶ *C* essentially finds himself in the same position as *B* in Figure 2.1. Even if he truly prefers a yellow ethnic party candidate, such an outcome is impossible due to the high barriers of entry in that district, and so his best

¹⁶Technically, a three-way tie is possible in this scenario. In order to retain parsimony, the implications of this are ignored, as such an outcome is likely only in the extremely over-simplified example presented here. The important insight for the theory from this example is that in the majority-blue district, a blue ethnic party victory is possible, as is a non-ethnic party victory, but a yellow ethnic party victory is not.

strategy is to support the non-ethnic party in hopes of casting a pivotal vote if the two blue citizens split the vote between non-ethnic and blue ethnic.

Let us make one more change, this time to demographics, as reflected in Figure 2.3. Here, the two-district legislature is still in effect, but neither district is purely homogeneous. The yellows are still a majority, but their dominance has declined somewhat, in that they are now $\frac{4}{7}$ of the population instead of $\frac{5}{7}$. For *A*, this demographic change only increases the likelihood of ethnic voting. She is still a majority of the polity as a whole, she is still a majority in her district, but by swapping one of her coethnics for an ethnic outsider, ethnic redistribution has become more lucrative. There is now one more ethnic outsider whose resources could be appropriated, and one less coethnic to share spoils with, increasing her individual gains. The two groups are also now approaching parity, and yellow's status may not be as guaranteed as it once was. This demographic change has only increased her own willingness to support an ethnic party by changing the benefits of ethnic representation, while maintaining ethnic representation as a viable outcome.

Again, in this overly-simplistic example it is not possible to say definitively who will support an ethnic party and who will not. But it is possible to gauge the relative appeal of the various voters in each case. Note that each individual voter's incentives to support an ethnic party vary due to their demographic circumstances within both their district and the polity as a whole. Moreover, even voters of the same ethnic group can find themselves in varying circumstances based on their local demographics. This interaction between national level effects and district level effects is because the demography of the entire country sets the relative benefits offered to each voter of having their elected representatives champion ethnically-defined interests, while the demography of the voter's more immediate electoral district determines the relative ease of access to power.

2.5.2 Ethnic Voting in Reality: Albanians and the Albanian Diaspora

The examples using the abstract figures above show how a voter's relative preference for being represented by an ethnic party can change based on the demographic circumstances in which they find themselves. Such an abstract example ignores much of the complex realities of social and political life in the real world. But a theory of ethnic voting that appreciates both the potential pay-offs of ethnic

representation and the ease of winning if mobilizing along ethnic lines also helps to understand the variation in support for ethnic parties in much of the world today. Take, by way of example, the ethnic Albanian community. Most ethnic Albanians live, unsurprisingly, in Albania, where they constitute roughly 98% of the population. A close second is Kosovo, where they comprise 90% of the population. A large ethnic Albanian diaspora spreads throughout Eastern and Central Europe, with substantial ethnic Albanian minority communities residing in Macedonia (25% of the population), Montenegro (5% of the population), as well as smaller numbers in Italy, Romania, Turkey, Greece, and Croatia and overseas enclaves in the United States and Canada. Albanian ethnic and national identity is extremely strong, both within Albania and Kosovo, and throughout the international Albanian diaspora.¹⁷ But independent of the strength of that identity, the incentives to vote for an ethnic party vary widely depending on context.

Imagine an Albanian voter living in Tirana, the capital of Albania proper. Here she finds herself part of an almost completely uniform population. There is hardly any minority group to speak of in the country. All leaders are virtually guaranteed to be ethnic Albanians by mathematics. In this situation, successful ethnic mobilization is guaranteed to lead to political representation. The population is almost entirely Albanian, so it is entirely possible for the group to clear any formal or informal threshold to winning electoral office if mobilized successfully. But the benefits of ethnic representation are very low in this case. Albanian interests are hegemonic; all candidates and voters are likely to share the same ethnic identity, so they share the same ethnic interests. There is no large group of ethnic outsiders from whom voters may need protection, nor is there an outgroup to target for the reallocation of resources. Ideological distinctions are much more relevant in this case, since those will likely be much less uniform throughout the country, and a voter would likely have much more to gain by redistributing from rich to poor for example, or from lowland areas to highland areas, than they would on ethnic labels. The theory predicts that these relatively low levels of benefits to be had through ethnic voting will lead to some other identity or social cleavage being chosen as the basis of political competition, as voters are mobilized by class, ideology, or region. In fact, this is what has happened in Albania, as the primary political cleavage in recent elections has been between Socialists and Liberal Democrats. Regional and

¹⁷See Koinova (2013) and the *Special Issue: Albanian Migration and New Transnationalisms* (2003) in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*.

linguistic identities are somewhat strong predictors of voting behaviors in Albania, but neither party explicitly campaigns on a doctrine of ethnic supremacy, or a promise to benefit ethnic Albanians within the state specifically.

Now, consider an ethnic Albanian voter living 150 miles away in Pristina, Kosovo, where the situation is somewhat changed. Kosovo is still overwhelmingly ethnic Albanian, as Albanians represent 90% of the population, but there is now a sizable group of ethnic minorities. Unlike Albania, Kosovo spent much of the twentieth century as a part of Yugoslavia, and the first several years of the twenty-first century as a part of Serbia, and many of its ethnic minority citizens are Serbs and other ethnic Slavs. In an example of the ethnic institutional design discussed above, Serbs are guaranteed a minimum level of political representation, and ethnic Serb voters are segregated into a separate ballot to cast votes for their own leaders.¹⁸ In this situation, ethnic Albanian parties still face no immediately obvious barriers to winning an election. Albanians are still an overwhelming majority of the country, and any politician who mobilized even a fraction of the ethnic Albanian majority would be ensured to gain some representation in parliament. The difference here is that the benefits of ethnic representation have now gone up. As the minority community here is larger, ethnic Albanians face a slightly larger threat from ethnic outsiders. Ethnic minorities are also an extremely sensitive issue in Kosovo, given the still-recent history of violent conflict during an ethnic civil war in the late 1990's between Serbs and Albanians. International factors exacerbate this domestic tension, as the Republic of Serbia maintains territorial claims on Kosovo, refuses to acknowledge its declaration of independence, and advocates internationally for the cause of ethnic Serbs within Kosovo. Many voters may therefore be more susceptible to a political platform which promises to neutralize threats—real or perceived—to the majority Albanians by ethnic minority groups. In fact, despite their common ethnic identity, a typical voter in Kosovo and a typical voter in Albania will likely show drastic differences in their support for ethnic parties. In a study of Albanian political parties and elections, Barbullushi (2016) shows that

¹⁸Some studies suggest that Serbs are also more likely to suffer economic deprivation than Albanians in Kosovo, putting them in the position of a vulnerable minority (Bhaumik, Gang & Yun 2006). While the Serbs are not the focus of this example, the theory does also help understand Serb voting behavior in Kosovo. As a vulnerable minority group representing a small segment of the population, they have much to gain through ethnic representation. As the beneficiaries of guaranteed representation, they also have very low barriers to entry. The theory therefore predicts high ethnic voting, which is exactly what happens. In both the 2014 and 2017 elections in Kosovo, nine out of ten reserved Serb seats were won by the Serb List party, an ethnic Serb interest party.

ethnic and ethnonational appeals to voters are far more common in Kosovo than they are in Albania. Reflecting the international environment, parties in Kosovo are much more likely to see sovereignty for ethnic Albanian people as a central component of their platform. It should be noted that a direct comparison between Albania and Kosovo in this regard may not be appropriate, as it is virtually impossible to disentangle domestic ethnic issues from international ones in the Kosovar context, but not in the Albanian: Albania has a much longer history of independence and sovereignty, whereas Kosovo was a former Yugoslav province. Nevertheless, the comparison illustrates how common ethnicity does not always correspond to common incentives to support an ethnic party.

Now consider the situation of an ethnic Albanian voter in Tetovo, 60 miles from Pristina across the Macedonian border. Here, an Albanian voter lives in a city that is almost three-quarters Albanian. Just as in Albania or Kosovo, Albanian is the main language heard on the street, and the Albanian double-headed eagle is seen in windows far more frequently than the Macedonian sun. Our voter is still part of a majority group within her electoral district—one of six in Macedonia—with Tetovo falling in the same region as other ethnic Albanian enclaves like Bogovinje, Debar, Gostivar, Kičevo, and Vrapčište—all of which are majority Albanian. From the language spoken in the city it is obvious that Albanians are a local majority, and there is little concern that voting for a party that explicitly identifies as a champion of ethnic interests is a wasted vote. Nevertheless, the voter knows that she is in Macedonia, a majority ethnic Macedonian country, and that there are substantial numbers of ethnic Macedonian voters who will probably not support a party claiming to represent the ethnic Albanian community. In this environment, the risk of vote wasting, or supporting an ethnic candidate who cannot win has changed little from the voters in Pristina and Tirana. What has changed dramatically is the benefits the voter is likely to receive from ethnic representation. Turning on the TV, she sees that most channels are broadcast in Macedonian—a Slavic language completely unintelligible from Albanian. She sees that while government services at the local level may be available in Albanian, services provided by the central government are more often in a foreign language. All but one of the state universities teach courses only in Macedonian and English, meaning that she must now learn another language if she wants to receive a higher education. Our voter now has serious, tangible grievances that result from her position as an ethnic minority. When a political party promises to represent ethnic Albanian is-

issues, it is clear what those are: language rights, access to state services, and representation in potentially hostile environment dominated by ethnic outsiders. If a candidate promises to deliver to ethnic Albanians their fair share of Macedonia's wealth, our voter now knows that redistributing resources from ethnic Macedonians to ethnic Albanians could result in some very real financial benefits for her and her fellow Albanians. Ethnicity may even be the dominant political issue in her mind when casting her vote, far more important than policy issues regarding class, or other identities. This expectation is borne out by the facts in Macedonia. The divide between ethnic Albanians and ethnic Macedonians is extremely pronounced. Hardly any cross-ethnic voting happens, as ethnic Albanian candidates campaign exclusively to ethnic Albanian audiences, while ethnic Macedonian candidates largely ignore Albanian voters. There is intense intra-ethnic conflict within the Albanian community, but parties mainly compete over who can best represent Albanian interests in opposition to the dominant ethnic Macedonians, making exclusively ethnic appeals to potential constituents.

Now consider an ethnic Albanian voter thousands of miles away in the United States, where she finds herself in one of the very few Albanian enclaves in New York, Boston, or Los Angeles. Here she is unlikely to hear Albanian if she leaves her immediate neighborhood, and finding Albanian language media or cultural activities is no small task, if possible at all. While government services may be available in languages other than English, it is more likely to be in Spanish or Chinese than Albanian, making it clear to her that not only is she a minority, but she is one of the smallest and most demographically inconsequential minority communities. The benefits of having ethnic representation in this situation are even higher than for the voter in Macedonia. Since there is very little ethnic Albanian community to speak of, she can rely less on those in her immediate neighborhood for assistance and support. If a politician were to promise benefits directly to ethnic Albanians in the area, she would likely stand to benefit enormously, since few rivals would compete for benefits. Since there are so few ethnic Albanians in the area, setting aside even a fraction of one percent of government budgets to ethnic Albanian concerns would likely represent a huge windfall benefiting a single Albanian voter directly. A program designed to redistribute money from all tax payers to ethnic Albanians, say in the form of an ethnic Albanian scholarship fund, or Albanian homebuyers loan program, would have an enormous funding base of non-Albanians to draw on and very few ethnic Albanians eligible. In this the potential benefits of ethnic

representation are the highest of all scenarios reviewed here. However, any politician campaigning on ethnic Albanian issues has such a small voter base to draw from, that their campaign is probably doomed to failure if they campaign exclusively on Albanian interests. Excluding voters of other ethnicities to appeal to only ethnic Albanians is political suicide, since such a proposal is hardly likely to attract support from more than a very small number of voters. The barriers to entry to office in this context are insurmountable, as the proportion of the population that would support these appeals is so small compared to other ethnic groups.¹⁹

In all of the situations outlined above the degree to which Albanian identity is linked to political interests has changed because of differences in the demographic circumstances in which voters find themselves. Incentives to vote for an ethnic champion vary in each of the four examples because of changes in what she stands to gain from such representation, and the degree to which such representation is plausibly attainable. "Albanian" as a political identity has significance not because of the voters' level of personal attachment, but because of the broader demographic and institutional context in which the individual voter finds themselves.

2.6 Conclusion

Democracy is a communal activity. Elections are collective events where large numbers of individuals separately make decisions that determine what will happen to the group as a whole. Individual identities are clearly important to understanding those decisions, but it is no less important to acknowledge that the context in which those identities exist are important factors in voting decisions. Vot-

¹⁹Again, this is not just a hypothetical situation. In 2012, Mark Gjonaj, born in the Bronx to Montenegrin Albanian immigrants, ran for the New York State Assembly against incumbent Naomi Rivera. Touting his ties to the neighborhood where he grew up (and Rivera's ongoing corruption investigations), Gjonaj won the election in part due to the support of Albanian-Americans living near Pelham Parkway and Allerton Avenue, one of North America's densest Albanian diaspora enclaves. Gjonaj was not shy about his family's immigrant roots, and was happy to court support from his coethnic neighbors, but never explicitly promised that benefits would flow exclusively to ethnic Albanians in his district; his official platform focused mostly on job creation and public health programs for senior citizens. Gjonaj was nevertheless invited to Tirana and awarded the Order of the Honor of the Nation—The Republic of Albania's highest non-military honor—for being the first ethnic Albanian elected to public office in the United States. See Beekman (2012), *Naomi Rivera Defeated Soundly in Assembly Primary By Hard-Working Challenger* (2012) and Goldstein (2015).

2. A Theory of Group Size and Ethnic Voting

ers do not think only of themselves and their own identities when voting, but also the differences between themselves and others. They consider how their identities may constrain them or enable them, and then act accordingly. To understand how ethnic identities map onto preferences for ethnic political representation, we should acknowledge not just individual ethnic attachments, but also the relationships between groups, as influenced by relative group size.

I have argued in this chapter that group size is an important variable in understanding the role of ethnic identities in voting decisions. This is not to say that group size is the only thing that matters. Clearly there are many other relevant factors that might influence an individual voter's willingness to support an ethnic party. But group size is nevertheless important because it directly influences two separate dimensions which are central to making decisions on who to vote for: the potential policy gains of electing leaders who promise to champion causes, and the relative ease of actually installing such leaders in positions of power. Using this framework, I have argued that ethnic minority group members and ethnic majority group members have fundamentally different strategic calculations. Majority group members would easily win office if they efficiently mobilized their co-ethnic citizens, but would actually have relatively little to gain from doing so. Minority group members would stand to benefit enormously from their group controlling the state, but such an outcome is much more difficult because of the barriers to electoral victory for smaller groups. This argument suggests that ethnic voting among majority group members and ethnic voting among minority group members are actually different things, responding to different incentives and circumstances. As such, we should expect to observe different patterns of ethnic voting among majority and minority communities—a prediction I test empirically in Chapters 6 and 8.

In the next chapter, I use the two-dimensional theoretical framework outlined here to review existing literature on ethnic voting, arguing that much of the literature has conflated the two. But both dimensions are important. Voters may have strong personal attachments to their ethnic identities, but feel that other identities are more relevant to their political decision making. The theory outlined here helps us to understand when voters are receptive to ethnic appeals, and when they are not.