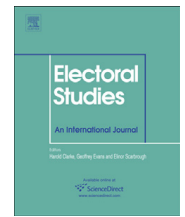Contents lists available at SciVerse ScienceDirect

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Engineering inclusion: Assessing the effects of pro-minority representation policies☆

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ABSTRACT

In democracies, a constant tension exists between the stability and integrity of the community as a whole, and the desire to ensure minorities a voice in politics. Reserved seats and reduced thresholds are two common means by which ethnic minorities gain legislative seats, though little or no empirical work exists testing their efficacy in this regard. Combining multivariate analysis with in-depth case studies, this article shows that both reserved seats and lower thresholds increase minority representation, though reserved seats accomplish that goal more consistently. Reduced thresholds tend to increase the share of votes and seats won by ethnoregional parties but reserved seats do not. Additionally, Mauritius' unusual best-loser system aids both minorities and ethnoregional parties.

1. Introduction

Nations are groups of people with a common "we-feeling," a sense of mutual belonging and obligation (Anderson, 1991). Of course, the political boundaries of modern states often contain more than one nation, with minority groups competing for voice and power. When minority groups have had the benefit of historical presence, large numbers, and geographic concentration, federalism often affords political influence. But for groups without these advantages, electoral success on a level playing field is simply not feasible. Yet issues of minority inclusion have remained salient, partly out of the desire to recognize their importance, and partly to mitigate ethnic conflict. A constant tension, then, exists in many modern democracies between the stability and integrity of the community as a whole, and the desire to ensure minorities an equitable stake.

Reserved seats and reduced thresholds are two prominent means that countries use to help ethnic minorities gain legislative seats. While past work outlines these methods and more besides (Lijphart, 1994; Reynolds, 2005), we still have little empirical sense of whether they work and how. We show that both reserved seats and lower thresholds increase minority representation, though reserved seats accomplish that goal more consistently. The opposite is true if one considers these laws' effect on minority party success rather than simply minority representation; reduced thresholds tend to increase the share of votes and seats won by ethnoregional parties but reserved seats do not. Additionally, Mauritius' unusual best-loser system aids both minorities and ethnoregional parties.

Utilizing a new dataset created for this study, we canvass 80 democracies rated "free" by Freedom House from 1990 through 2011, with an eye toward places where laws facilitating minority representation are in force. Among these, we find seven countries with reserved seats,

six with reduced thresholds, and Mauritius' best-loser system. We begin with an overview of each policy type and its expected impact on vote share and seats won by members of ethnic minorities and ethnoregional parties. Next, we examine the impact of the pro-minority policy on a case-by-case basis. Multivariate models test our policy hypotheses in a systematic way, bolstering the case analysis.

2. Minority representation in theory

Ethnic diversity does not exist in a vacuum, and debate rages over the best way to manage the stresses it places on society. Most agree that social harmony in a diverse polity will obtain only if governmental decision-making includes members from different groups. Disagreement is less over whether or not political institutions matter for this, and more over what *types* of institutions foster these sentiments, and why (Lijphart, 1968; Norris, 2008; Reynolds, 2011). Institutionalist research typically focuses on ethnic conflict; here, scholars have assessed consociationalism and forced power-sharing (Lijphart, 1968), and debates exist over the effects of federalism and regional autonomy, on the one hand (Brancati, 2009; Brubaker, 1996; Bunce, 1999; Horowitz, 2000) and majoritarian versus proportional electoral systems on the other (Diamond and Plattner, 2006).

In many cases, minority groups are deemed worthy of recognition yet lack the wherewithal to secure regional autonomy or federalism. In response, many states modify electoral rules *within* broader electoral regimes to buttress minority representation (Lijphart, 1994; Reynolds, 2005). We know little as yet, however, about whether or not they actually *work*, and much of the answer depends on one's assumptions about what minority representation really entails.

At the most basic level, pro-minority electoral rules are successful to the extent that minority members gain legislative seats unwinnable without them; they are meaningful both symbolically and because they may afford representatives of that minority a more effective political voice. On the other hand, minority-members may obtain *seats* without actually being able to articulate their constituencies' political *interests*, a situation amounting to tokenism and not representation. Since the predominant means by which interests become articulated in legislatures is via political parties, we cannot understand the benefit of pro-minority electoral provisions without also considering their role in fostering the success of ethnoregional *parties* that clearly and authentically promote minority goals and interests. Indeed, sometimes they are accused of doing so all too well, as many view them as an engine of ethnic conflict (Brancati, 2009; Brubaker, 1996). We do not raise this distinction to answer normatively-charged questions about the nature of "ideal" representation, but rather because the apparent value of the laws we analyze depends on it.

We define "ethnoregional parties" as those formed on the basis of nationality or ascriptive characteristics, such as language or religion, as well as sub-state regional loyalties. These are often difficult to distinguish, with many parties easily classified as both. Other definitional issues remain, among them the fact that ethnoregional parties may present themselves as "national" despite an ethnic or regional focus. Ethnic group boundaries and sizes can also be hazy or disputed. Online Appendices A and B identify the ethnoregional parties and groups in our analysis.

2.1. Reserved seats and communal lists

Countries reserve seats for many reasons, but common to all is that small or historically oppressed minorities would gain little or no representation absent the special provision. This typically occurs in majoritarian or semi-proportional electoral systems with geographically dispersed minorities, to assure that minority group representatives can surmount their lack of regional concentration or numbers (Reynolds, 2006). Among the eight countries examined here, only three have proportional electoral systems, and two of these three—Cyprus and New Zealand—used majoritarian electoral systems when seat reservations were first established. Slovenia is the sole country that established seat reservations with proportional representation but neither minority with reserved seats would be large enough to win a seat without the reservation for their group. Countries appear more likely to reserve seats for minorities with long histories of settlement in the country (as opposed to recent immigrant groups); long tenure affording demands for representation greater legitimacy (Krook and O'Brien, 2010).

Reserved seats assure minority representation for select groups by design, so naturally minority seat share will increase where they are in place. But they do not necessarily assist ethnic minority *parties*. On one hand, the real chance to win seats might spur the formation of ethnic parties to take advantage of the opportunity. We view this, however, as unlikely. For ethnic minority representatives, it is likely more advantageous to sit in the legislature as a member of a large party or as independent who can caucus with whichever force controls the government. Small, geographically-dispersed minorities of the sort that tend to receive reserved seats will also find it more difficult to overcome the organizational challenges of party formation. Consequently, reserved seats should not systematically increase the share of votes or seats won by ethnoregional parties even as they enhance ethnic minority representation. To the extent that there is a positive impact, it should only accrue to minority parties in countries where the number of reserved seats is large. In such cases, it is likely easier to overcome the organizational challenge and exercise political influence.

Also tied up in the issue of reserved seats is the question of who gets to cast ballots for them (Reynolds, 2006). Voting can be conducted by communal lists—limited to members of the target community—or open to all. The former assures that the minority community has control over the representative, whereas reserved seats elected by all voters guarantees only that the representative is a member of the ethnic minority community. This form of seat reservation resembles that typically used for reserved seats for women, except in Rwanda, as both male and female voters almost always participate (Krook, 2009). Since

many non-minority voters participate in elections for reserved seats without communal lists, the elected official may be more attentive to their interests. Reserved seats should have an effect on ethnic party performance only in countries where reserved seats are paired with communal voting. Any increase in ethnic party success cannot reasonably be attributed to reserved seats when anyone can vote for them.

2.2. Lower thresholds

Countries with PR or mixed systems often require parties to win a minimum share of the vote to receive seats. Some states reduce the threshold for minority parties or exempt them entirely. Among the six free democracies with reduced thresholds analyzed here, three—Denmark, Germany, and Poland—eliminate the threshold completely for selected minorities. Romania retains its threshold but guarantees each minority party a single seat at a level far below that normally required for a party to win it. Two countries—Lithuania and Italy—have had reduced thresholds at some point during the period studied here.

Reduced thresholds should increase vote share and seats won by ethnic minority parties, as they are specifically premised on their success. The size of the increase, however, should be proportionate to the additional share of ethnic minorities available to support a party that can overcome the threshold needed to enter the legislature. After all, if the threshold is a barrier to minority representation, its reduction should only help parties based in these groups if its share of the electorate is greater than the reduced threshold. And the level of benefit from the reduced threshold should relate to the size of the groups that can surpass the threshold thanks to the reduction.

2.3. Best-loser system

In Mauritius, eight MPs (of 70 total) are selected through a unique "best-loser" system that allots seats to candidates who fail to win constituency mandates and simultaneously promote greater ethnic balance. In this system, seats are not reserved for any particular group; the d'Hondt highest-average system determines which community deserves the next seat based on the population of each community according to the 1972 Census and the number of seats it already holds. The eight best-loser seats are awarded to losing candidates of the appropriate community but in such a manner as to preserve the partisan balance produced by the constituency elections (Mathur, 1997). Though it does not necessarily help ethnic minority parties, the system provides additional opportunities for them to win seats and should probably help increase the overall share of votes and seats won by ethnic and regional parties.

3. Case-by-case assessment of the impact of pro-minority electoral provisions

3.1. Reserved seats

We examine in turn the six countries that pair reserved seats with communal lists (Cyprus, Kiribati, New Zealand,

Samoa, Slovenia, and Taiwan). We then turn to India, the only country in our sample where reserved seats are *not* paired with communal lists.

3.1.1. Cyprus

The 1960 Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus contains a number of features designed to protect the Turkish Cypriot minority. It mandates communal elections with all Cypriots categorized as members of either the Greek or Turkish Cypriot communities. Although Turkish Cypriots comprise 18 percent of the population, the Constitution reserves them 30 percent of House seats. Additionally, Cyprus reserves three seats for nonvoting representatives of the Armenian, Maronite, and Roman Catholic minorities. Greek and Turkish Cypriots had separate party systems even prior to the breakdown of relations between the two groups and the division of the island.

3.1.2. Slovenia

In its 90-member parliament, Slovenia reserves one seat apiece for its Hungarian and Italian minorities elected by the Borda count.[1] Minority group members may also cast ballots in the regular election for the remaining 88 mandates (Toplak, 2006). The reserved seats result in substantial overrepresentation of both groups as they give 2.2 percent of seats to just 0.4 percent of population. Both the ethnic Italian and ethnic Hungarian members of parliament have won election as independents, and no ethnic or regional parties have formed. Even larger immigrant groups from other former Yugoslav republics do not receive the same protection as Slovenia's two autochthonous minorities (Mekina, 2004).

3.1.3. Taiwan

Taiwan reserves seats for Taiwan Aborigines, just 1.8 percent of the population, in the Legislative Yuan. While the total number of legislative seats has fluctuated, the number reserved for Aboriginals has stayed level at six except for a temporary rise to eight in 1998. Despite these variations, Aboriginal MPs have consistently represented over 60 percent fewer eligible voters than non-Aboriginal MPs. Plains Aborigines and Mountain Aborigines vote in separate constituencies for one-half of the reserved seats by the single-non-transferable vote (SNTV).

Seat reservation has not encouraged successful Aboriginal parties. The Chinese Taiwan Aborigine Democratic Party, the sole Aboriginal party to participate in elections, ran only one candidate in 1995 who received just 8 percent of the vote. This may reflect the enormous linguistic, geographic, and cultural diversity among Taiwan's indigenous people. Moreover, until the separation of constituency and list votes in 2008, voters who cast their ballot for an Aboriginal party lost the chance to influence the distribution of list seats as constituency votes were also used to allocate them and Aboriginal parties could not possibly

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[1] Voters rank the n candidates from most to least preferred. Candidates receive n points for each first preference, $n - 1$ points for each second preference, $n - 2$ points for each third preference, and so on. The candidate with the most points is elected.

gain enough votes to qualify. The dominance of two major coalitions led by the rival Kuomintang (KMT) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) also discourages the emergence of Aboriginal parties. Instead of representing minor opposition ethnic parties, Aboriginal representatives gain a voice in one of the two major coalitions.

3.1.4. Samoa

Voters lacking traditional village ties, mainly those of foreign or mixed descent, have a single two-member block vote constituency reserved for them. No ethnoregional parties have formed, as politics center on personality and parties are loose associations.

3.1.5. Kiribati

Phosphate mining during colonial times stripped away 90 percent of the island of Banaba's surface. After the end of the Japanese occupation during World War II, British authorities removed the surviving population to Rabi Island in Fiji. Approximately 5000 Banabans live on Rabi compared to just 300 on Banaba. The Rabi Island Council nominates one member of Kiribati's Parliament (Van Trease, 1993). Additionally, Banabans elect one MP even though Banaba has just 14 percent of the ideal population per MP. Together, the two members for Banaba comprised 4.4 percent of the legislature after the 2007 election though Banaba was home to only 0.3 percent of Kiribati's population. Parties exist in Kiribati as extremely loose factions, so there would be little advantage to organizing a Banaban party.

3.1.6. New Zealand

Originally intended to relegate Māori to token representation, New Zealand's use of separate registration rolls and constituencies now enhances their representation. Māori lacked voting rights until the 1867 Māori Representation Act reserved 4 of 76 seats for them, a small number compared to their share of the population. Like their European counterparts, Māori ran in single-member constituencies but the country had two sets of electoral maps with country divided into one set of constituencies for Māori and another for Europeans.

Starting with the 1978 election, Māori could choose whether to be listed on either the general—previously European—or Māori electoral rolls. The Māori seats assured them representation in the House, and could have allowed for the formation of Māori parties. However, their small, fixed number combined with the tendency of the FPTP electoral system to produce majority governments discouraged the formation of a successful Māori party. Mana Motuhake competed in all four general elections held between 1981 and 1990, taking between 10 and 22 percent of the votes cast for the Māori seats, but never winning a seat (Sullivan and Vowles, 1998).

The number of Māori seats began to vary in proportion to the share of voters enrolled on the Māori list when New Zealand switched to a mixed-member proportional (MMP) system. Reflecting a steady shift in the share of Māori who chose the Māori roll, the number of Māori electorates grew to seven in 2002. The combination of dual sets of electorates with MMP has resulted in large increases in the number of Māori elected. During the last three FPTP elections, Māori never won more than 7 percent of seats, a share that subsequently jumped to 13 percent with the first MMP election in 1996 and rose to 17 percent in 2005. This increase stemmed not just from the rise in Māori seats but in Māori elected off of party list seats, as parties need to place Māori high on their lists in order to attract Māori voters.

The importance of small parties has increased, as has the incentive for them to form, under MMP. No single party has won a majority, so large parties need support to form a government. The Māori Party won four seats in 2005, five in 2008, and three in 2011; all were Māori constituency seats. The Mana Party won a single constituency seat in 2011. The Māori Party has provided support for the government from outside the Cabinet since 2008.

3.1.7. India

While the six countries examined above all pair reserved seats with communal lists, India reserves seats but uniquely allows all voters to cast ballots for them. It elects 543 members of the Lok Sabha by the single-member plurality system, but only members of Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes may seek election in certain constituencies reserved by the Electoral Commission (Lijphart, 1996). The share of constituencies reserved for each group corresponds roughly to that group's population share.

As we argued above, seat reservation without communal lists guarantees symbolic minority representation but does not assure that the MP reflects the wishes of the minority community (Jensenius, 2012). Scheduled Tribes face this problem far less often than Scheduled Castes because they are more highly concentrated in sections of the country and often form a majority in reserved constituencies (McMillan, 2005). India has a multitude of ethnic and regional parties, but they thrive due to factors other than reserved seats. Reservation does not guarantee that the candidate preferred by Scheduled Caste members wins since all voters in a reserved constituency can cast ballots.

The share of votes and seats won by ethnic and regional parties has increased substantially over the last several decades. Even so, and despite the focus of many parties on caste or tribal groups, there is little evidence that seat reservations have played a significant role in their success. Rather, successful ethnoregional parties have had sufficiently concentrated support that they can win seats regardless. Furthermore, many ethnoregional parties that win Lok Sabha seats gain support from non-caste or non-tribal linguistic or regional groups.

3.1.8. Summary

By definition, reserved seats assure a certain level of minority representation, as they guarantee a minority presence in the legislature. The New Zealand experience, however, cautions that such representation does not necessarily have to be at parity with the minority's share in the population. Nevertheless, except for New Zealand, all of the countries examined here reserve a higher share of legislative seats for minority groups than they compose of the population. Reserved seats thus appear an effective means of assuring minorities a seat at the table. Seat

reservations, moreover, only occasionally advance ethnic or regional parties. Only in New Zealand and in Cyprus prior to the division of the island have reserved seats facilitated greater ethnic party success. The Indian experience further reminds that greater minority representation does not inherently result in the election of elected officials who depend upon minority support regardless of party.

3.2. Lower thresholds

We now turn to our second type pro-minority electoral rule, reduced thresholds. First, we examine three countries in which lower thresholds have aided minorities and minority parties (Poland, Italy, and Romania). Following this, we consider three cases (Germany, Lithuania, and Denmark) where these provisions are not currently effective.

3.2.1. Poland

Poland exempts ethnic minority parties from legal thresholds applied to other parties (Birch et al., 2002). Parties representing the German minority have been the sole beneficiaries, though they have never bested the 1.2 percent vote obtained in 1991. This share has declined in each of the six elections since 1991, reaching just 0.2 percent—good for a single seat—in 2011. Shrinking support presents a greater threat than the electoral system to the future of German minority parties (Cordell and Born, 2001; Fleming, 2002).

3.2.2. Romania

Except for the 1990 elections, Romania has consistently required parties to pass a threshold to receive parliamentary seats; that said, parties representing officially-recognized minorities that fall below still receive a single seat if they win just 5 percent of the average vote required to elect a deputy (Birch et al., 2002). In practice, parties awarded seats under the special dispensation have received only a trivial share of votes (0.05 percent or less of all votes cast in Romania since 1992). The provision has allowed many tiny ethnic minority parties to win seats—13 in 1992, 15 in 1996, and 18 in 2000, 2004 and 2008.

The necessity of the special protection for ethnic minority parties varies by ethnic group. The Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania garners support consistent with the ethnic Hungarian share of the population and qualifies for seats under the thresholds applied to all parties. Roma constitute Romania's other sizable ethnic minority, though their number is disputed. Unlike the Democratic Union of Hungarians, no Roma party has ever come close to passing the legal threshold; rather, they count on Romania's reduced threshold, and would have fared even better had the threshold simply been eliminated for minority parties as in Poland. Leaving aside Roma parties, only the Democratic Forum of Germans in Romania would have ever won a single seat in any election if the thresholds applied to non-minority parties had been lifted but ethnic minority parties still had to receive the normal share of votes required to gain a seat. The smallest ethnic minorities, each with 0.3 percent or less of the Romanian population, benefit most clearly from not just the elimination of the threshold but the reduction in the share of the vote required for a seat.

3.2.3. Italy

Italy has radically altered its electoral system twice since 1990. The latest change, adopted prior to the 2006 election, contains a complex set of threshold requirements but relaxes them for parties that represent recognized linguistic minorities. Instead, these parties must win 20 percent of the vote in their region to qualify for seats. The South Tyrolean People's Party, the major party of the German and much smaller Ladin minority was the only beneficiary of the relaxed thresholds in the 2006 and 2008 elections.[2]

3.2.4. Lithuania

A small change to the electoral system has had a major impact on the chances for ethnic minority parties to win party list seats—70 of the 141 mandates in the Seimas. In 1992, ethnic minority parties had to gain just 2 percent of list votes to qualify for list seats, lower than the 4 percent required for other parties. Lithuania then revised the threshold upward to 5 percent for all parties, including ethnic minority parties, and 7 percent for coalitions of two or more parties.

The new higher threshold requires more cohesion than ethnic Poles, 7 percent of the population, and ethnic Russians, 6 percent of the population have been able to achieve. While Electoral Action for Lithuania's Poles surpassed the lower threshold with 2.1 percent of the vote in 1992, it failed to garner list seats in subsequent elections despite winning between 3.1 and 4.8 percent of the vote. The Union of Russians managed to win list seats in 2000 as part of an ethnic Lithuanian-led coalition but has not entered the Seimas in any other year. Electoral Action has entered the Seimas through constituency seat victories instead. Regional concentration was critical to their success; 92 percent of ethnic Poles live in Vilnius County. Ethnic Russians are insufficiently concentrated to form majorities in any constituency and no ethnic Russian party has won a constituency seat (Popovski, 2000).

3.2.5. Germany

Parties must gain more than 5 percent of list votes or win three constituency seats in Germany's MMP system to qualify for the distribution of list seats but parties representing Germany's four recognized national minorities—Danes, Frisians, Sorbs, and Roma—are exempt from these requirements (Capoccia, 2002). So far, no minority party has ever gained a single seat due to the threshold exemption.[3]

3.2.6. Denmark

The German minority is exempt from the threshold to enter the Danish parliament and is excused from signature requirements to get on the ballot (Reynolds, 2005). Nevertheless, the Schleswig Party – which fought nine of the ten elections held from 1947 through 1971 and won a

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single seat in the Folketing in 1953, 1957, and 1960 – ceased campaigning after 1971, likely because its share of the vote had dropped below the share needed to win a seat. Even so, it managed to gain a seat in 1973, 1975, and 1977 through cooperation with a non-minority party (Kühl and Pedersen, 2006).

Interestingly, the Schleswig Party's successes were not due to its exemption for the threshold requirement: rather – enabled by the regional concentration of its vote in South Jutland County, which also serves as a multimember constituency – it entered parliament repeatedly by winning a constituency mandate (Miller, 1964). Despite not needing a threshold exemption, one should not negate the value of a pro-minority preference, as Denmark intentionally created a constituency where the German minority could win (Elklit, 1992).

3.2.7. Summary

Where the minority is sufficiently large, as in Italy, Germany, and Poland, ethnic parties can benefit from reduced thresholds. In contrast, in Denmark and Germany, the minority is just too small to earn a seat even despite the lower barrier. In Lithuania, ethnic Poles gained from a lower threshold until its abolition. When ethnic parties manage to win seats, minority representation also increases as ethnic parties promote minority group members as candidates.

3.3. The best-loser system in Mauritius

Mauritius's best-loser system promotes ethnic balance among its four officially recognized communities: Hindu, Muslim, Sino-Mauritian, and the General Population—the latter mostly comprised of Christians, predominantly African Creoles but also people of European descent. The four communities only begin to capture ethnic diversity of Mauritius as differences in language, caste, and place of origin further fracture communities. The smaller island of Rodrigues, dominated by Creoles, is also a regional minority with its own identity (Christopher, 1992). The best-loser system aims to assure greater ethnic parity without altering the balance of power between parties, and it has unquestionably made the Mauritian parliament more closely reflect the ethnic balance of the country. Controversy remains, though, as some argue that it entrenches communalism (Nave, 1998), but it remains popular as a vital protection against future political marginalization for ethnic minority groups (Mathur, 1997; Mozaffar, 2005).

In recent elections, best-loser seats have inconsistently augmented the strength of ethnoregional parties, primarily of Rodriguan parties, which gained one additional seat in 2010, two in 1995 and 2005, and four in 2000, though none in 1991. These additions to the Rodriguan delegation stand out when one considers that the island has only two constituency seats. Hizbullah, a Muslim party, also won a single best-loser seat in 1995. All told, ethnoregional parties won 9 of 31 best-loser seats awarded from 1991 through 2010.

3.4. Assessing the impact

Table 1 summarizes the impact of reserved seats, reduced thresholds, and the best-loser system on the election of minorities and ethnoregional parties to legislatures in the fourteen cases. All three policies have a strong positive effect on minority representation as ethnic minorities would receive no or far less representation without them. Reserved seats, however, provide a more solid assurance to minorities than lower thresholds as they require no minimum level of minority support or cohesion to win seats. In Denmark and Germany, ethnic minorities do not gain representatives from parliament, despite the lower threshold. The repeal of the reduced threshold in Lithuania and the division of Cyprus impede minorities from benefiting in these countries. At the same time, reserved seats appear to encourage ethnic party success less consistently than a reduced threshold. The success of the latter policy rests entirely on the ability of ethnic minority party lists to win seats. The benefit to ethnic minority parties, however, is inherently limited, as the minority would not need a reduced threshold if it possessed greater strength at the polls.

Unlike with a threshold reduction, minorities can take advantage of reserved seats without ethnic parties. The case studies provide tentative support for the idea that minorities may choose to participate as independents or via majority parties when the number of MPs is small and less likely to sway legislative outcomes. In Samoa, Slovenia, and Taiwan, MPs elected from reserved seats comprise a very small part of the legislature and none represent ethnic minority parties. Ethnic parties only emerge in reserved-seat systems when ethnic minorities form a higher share of the population and legislature. In these cases, ethnicity may be a more salient political division and ethnic parties have a greater chance to shape government formation and policy. In Cyprus, the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities had completely different party systems at the time of the 1960 election, the sole election in which both communities participated. Separate Māori parties emerged in New Zealand once the country allowed the share of reserved Māori seats to fluctuate, and thereby increase, and adopted MMP which increased the number of parties and gave smaller parties greater influence in government.

Confusingly, India has the highest share of parliamentary seats held by ethnoregional parties but its form of seat reservation does not aid them. Reservation assures Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes symbolic seats at the table. The success of parties based in these groups, however, depends not on reservation but on their electoral power as the absence of communal lists forces candidates to appeal to the overall electorate. Finally, the Mauritian best-loser system helps ethnoregional parties sporadically but not systematically. Additionally, ethnoregional parties must achieve a certain level of electoral success to become competitive for best-loser seats.

4. Multivariate models

We now turn to multivariate models designed to test our hypotheses more systematically. These utilize a new database of election results from 1990 through 2011 in 72 democracies rated "free" by Freedom House, as electoral institutions often understandably have different effects in "partly" or "not free" democracies (Mylonas and Roussias, 2008), and the value of minority representation is

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Table 1
Summary of countries with seat reservations and lower thresholds.

| | Best-loser system | Reserved seats | | Lower thresholds | Ethnic and regional groups aided | Degree of help to ER groups | Degree of help to ER parties | Mean vote for ER parties |
		With communal lists	Without communal lists					
Mauritius	X				Rodriguans, Muslims, Creoles, Chinese	Moderate	Variable	6.4
Cyprus		X			Turkish Cypriots	Suspended	Suspended	0.0
Kiribati		X			Banabans	High		
New Zealand		X			Māori	High	High	0.7
Samoa		X			Part and Non-Samoans	High	None	0.0
Slovenia		X			Italians, Hungarians	High	None	0.0
Taiwan		X			Aborigines	High	None	0.0
India			X		Scheduled Castes, Tribes	High	None	27.7
Denmark				X	Germans	No Longer	No Longer	0.1
Germany				X	Danes, Sorbs	No Longer	No Longer	0.1
Italy				X	Germans, Ladins, Sardinians, Friulians	High	High	8.0
Lithuania				X	Poles, Russians	No Longer	No Longer	3.8
Poland				X	Germans	High	High	1.4
Romania				X	Roma and others	High	High	9.3

questionable in authoritarian regimes. We exclude eight Pacific Island countries, such as Kiribati, without well-defined party systems.

We use cross-sectional time-series generalized least squares regression models with clustered standard errors to reflect that prior outcomes influence the results in each country's election. The two models shown in Table 2 predict the *percentage of votes* and the *percentage of seats for ethnoregional parties*.[4] Several different factors in the two models control for the impact of reserved seats, reduced thresholds, and the best-loser system. The *percent of reserved seats in countries with communal lists* measures the share of reserved seats and the size of potential incentive to ethnoregional parties. It should have a statistically insignificant coefficient if, as expected, reserved seats do not have an impact on ethnoregional party success but a positive coefficient if reserved seats aid ethnoregional parties. The percentage of reserved seats in *India* separately controls for the same effect in sole country in the database with reserved seats without communal lists for voting for them.

We calculated the *percent additional minorities in countries with lower thresholds* to gauge the added percentage of minorities that could support ethnic parties with a chance of winning seats due to a reduced threshold for ethnic parties. This approach is preferable to a dummy variable coded 1 for countries with lower thresholds and 0 otherwise, as a reduced threshold should have little effect if it does not offer the targeted groups a meaningful opportunity to win seats. Neither the Danish minority in Germany

nor the Germany minority in Denmark could win a seat even if all group members supported an ethnic party, so it would be foolish to expect the reduced threshold in these countries to have an effect on electoral outcomes. Moreover, the impact of a lower threshold should be proportionate to the additional share of minorities with that opportunity. Lower thresholds are constructed to assist ethnoregional parties and we expect that they should increase the share of votes and seats won by them at least modestly.

Table 2
Cross-sectional time-series GLS regression models with clustered SE of votes and seats won by ethnoregional parties.

	Percent votes for ethnoregional parties	Percent seats for ethnoregional parties
Percent reserved seats in countries with communal lists	−0.39*** (0.12)	−0.45*** (0.14)
India (percent reserved seats without communal lists)	0.69*** (0.18)	0.70*** (0.20)
Percent additional minorities in countries with lower thresholds	1.94*** (0.33)	2.80*** (0.41)
Mauritius (best-loser system)	5.73*** (0.70)	5.97*** (0.91)
Percent minority	0.24*** (0.04)	0.17*** (0.05)
Percent minority in countries with proportional representation	0.15*** (0.05)	0.17*** (0.05)
Decentralized	3.01*** (0.84)	3.17*** (0.91)
Percent minority in countries with simultaneously elected strong president	−0.22*** (0.04)	−0.21*** (0.05)
Year (1990 = 0, 1991 = 1, … 2009 = 20)	−0.00** (0.00)	−0.01*** (0.00)
Constant	0.13*** (0.04)	0.07 (0.04)
Observations	406	406
Panels	72	72
Wald chi-squared	471.01	315.35

Notes: $^*p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$.

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[4] The key substantive results are the same if one just uses ethnic parties. Online Appendix A lists all ethnoregional parties for countries included in the data that either won seats or averaged more than 1 percent of the vote in the country or their regional base in the elections in which they participated. Though it excludes very small parties, Appendix A captures parties that won the overwhelming share of ethnoregional party votes and all seats.

A dummy variable coded 1 for *Mauritius* and 0 for other countries controls for the impact of that country's best-loser system. The variable's coefficient should be positive if the best-loser system helps ethnoregional parties win seats as the success of Rodriguan parties in the above examination of Mauritius indicates.

The models also control for other factors expected to influence ethnoregional party success. Potential support for ethnoregional parties should rise with the *percent minority* in the country. Additionally, the model contains a measure for the *percent minority in countries with proportional representation* as ethnoregional parties may gain more traction in countries with electoral systems open to smaller parties.[5] A dummy variable controls for *decentralized* countries,[6] as scholars have argued that decentralization, often called by the related terms of federalism or regional autonomy, increases ethnoregional party support (Brancati, 2009; Bunce, 1999). Studies have shown that small parties fare less well in countries with presidential elections, so the models control for a *simultaneously elected strong president* (Amorim Neto and Cox, 1997; Clark and Golder, 2006).[7] Both models also control for the *year*.

The results support the conclusion that lower thresholds and the best-loser system aid ethnoregional parties but that reserved seats paired with communal lists do not. Indeed, the coefficient on the reserved seats variable is negative, suggesting that seat reservations actually undercut the share of the vote received by ethnoregional parties relative that expected based on the share of minorities and other factors. This finding is not altogether surprising since most countries with reserved seats do not have ethnoregional parties,[8] possibly because the number of seats is usually so small that parties based in them would have little influence.

Ethnoregional parties perform above expectations in India but one cannot attribute this outcome directly to reserved seats. Any voter can cast ballots for them and much of the success of ethnoregional parties occurs outside the reserved seats related to other cleavages. One might contend, however, that the reservation of a substantial portion of seats maintains and polarizes the public salience of cleavages around caste and tribe. But a definitive answer to this question would require more evidence.

Lower thresholds provide strong support for ethnoregional parties. The coefficients greater than one indicate that ethnic parties benefit disproportionately, a reflection that ethnic cleavages remain entrenched in countries that have established this special provision to aid ethnic parties. Finally, ethnoregional parties in Mauritius receive over 3 percent more votes and seats than otherwise expected. One might account for this outcome by the underestimation of Mauritius' extreme ethnic diversity by the relatively simple percent minority variable. But it also seems reasonable to attribute it at least partially to the best-loser system as ethnoregional parties often benefit from it.

5. Implications

Liberal democracies have increasingly recognized the importance of offering minority groups a voice in government, both to tamp down ethnic conflict and to promote minority recognition. While no minority canvassed here poses a systematic threat to the survival of the states in which they are embedded, questions of equity, minority rights and interests, and overall social harmony remain. In response, numerous legal provisions—among them reserved seats, reduced thresholds, and the best-loser system—are in force to advance minority representation.

Here, we assessed for the first time whether or not such policies achieve these goals in terms of representation in a strict sense—the number of seats won by minorities—and in the broader sense of encouraging the success of political parties premised on advancing minority interests. Each approach operates differently and has its strengths and weaknesses. Reserved seats assure ethnic minorities seats in parliament by definition. They succeed at advancing minority representation in the strict sense, and the guarantees they provide in this respect are more effective than lowered thresholds. Such systems are sometimes criticized for heightening the salience of ethnicity in politics, and calcifying legislatures in a way unresponsive to population change. On the former point, our results suggest that reserved seats rarely increase the ethnicization of the party system, at least in countries with small numbers of reserved seats. The major risk of such systems—namely, the legal entrenchment of ethnicity as a salient political cleavage—appears overstated, though that may reflect the small or token nature of seat reservations.

In a sense, lower thresholds operate in the opposite way as reserved seats, as they guarantee nothing in the absence of ethnoregional parties. That, in turn, requires the support of enough ethnic minority voters to surmount even a reduced threshold, as the cases of Denmark and Germany illustrate. In this sense, lower thresholds contain their own mechanism for termination if the ethnic minority no longer requires them. Moreover, there is little real danger of polarization around ethnicity due to reduced thresholds as groups that need them are inherently small and pose little threat to majority control. Even so, the requirement that ethnic parties must form in order to reach parliament indicates that though reduced thresholds do not guarantee representation in a strict sense, they offer a path to the articulation of minority interests.

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[5] Online Appendix B elaborates on the methods used to determine the minority share of the population and sources for the data. As defined here, PR excludes mixed systems, unless they correct for disproportionality, and systems awarding a bonus to the winning party or coalition. It includes systems that produce disproportionate results from low district magnitude or a high legal threshold. For details, see online Appendix C..

[6] Paralleling past definitions of federalism or decentralization (Brancati, 2009; Elazar, 1987), countries are "decentralized" if regional governments have constitutionally-entrenched independent decision-making authority, or if they include regions scoring 15.0 or higher on the Regional Authority Index (Hooghe et al.,, 2008). Spain and the United Kingdom are the only two cases captured by this provision. For details, see Appendix C.

[7] We weight this variable by the percentage of minorities, as its impact should relate to share of minorities. We did not weight decentralization since the major works cited expect it to result in more ethnic or regional parties independently. For details, see Appendix C.

[8] If one controls separately for New Zealand, the sole country with an ethnoregional party, the coefficient on the New Zealand variable is also negative.

The Mauritian best-loser system is an intriguing alternative that promotes ethnic balance within a majoritarian system without reserved seats. There, diversity has forced the construction of cross-ethnic coalitions in order to win elections despite ethnic divisions. Yet the system promotes ethnic balance and provide a safety net for any ethnic group that might end up disadvantaged by the vagaries of the often highly disproportionate block vote electoral system, even as it protects the partisan balance created through the constituency elections. Any group has the potential to benefit from the system depending upon the outcome of the constituency elections. So even though it was instituted to protect minorities, it also safeguards the majority.

The best-loser system nonetheless attracts strong criticism (Nave, 1998). Like reserved seats, critics accuse it of highlighting the salience of ethnic divisions in the minds of voters and entrenching them into the political system in a manner hard to eliminate. As in Lebanon, which allots fixed number of seats to its many ethnic groups, it may be extremely difficult to alter the system as changes will likely benefit one group at the expense of another. Finally, the positive aspects of the Mauritian experience are not easily replicable; the interethnic coalitions that characterize constituency elections depend upon the country's high ethnic diversity and ethnic geography.

What one makes of these findings largely depends upon the normative assumptions about what minority representation ought to achieve. Such questions cannot be answered here, but our results are useful in suggesting courses of action once foundational assumptions are in place. Reserved seats may be the best approach for countries that wish to make sure that small minorities, which would otherwise not gain representation, gain a voice in the legislature. Countries may find reduced thresholds preferable for larger minorities that can benefit from them as they still permit the minority to integrate into majority parties if they so choose and ethnicity declines as a source of political division. The pre-existing electoral regime conditions the choices available; while any country can reserve seats, reduced thresholds do not make sense in non-PR systems.

This study hardly exhausts the mechanisms for enhancing minority representation. For example, countries can draw constituencies with the intention of creating seats winnable by minorities, as the United States does for African Americans and Latinos (Lublin et al., 2009). Countries can also over represent certain regions, sometimes populated by ethnic or regional minorities, in their legislatures (Courtney, 2001; Johnston et al., 2001; Snyder and Samuels, 2004). The comparative impact of both policies on minority representation and ethnoregional parties merits further study.

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