

MASS POLITICS IN INTERWAR POLAND

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Executive Summary

The political behavior and loyalties of interwar Poland's minorities remain controversial issues. Among nationalist and even mainstream Polish historians, it is often taken as an article of faith that Poland's large minority population supported Marshal Pilsudski's coup in 1926 and then provided the domestic backbone of support for the Soviet occupations of 1939 and 1945. In this working paper we assess a unique data set of electoral and matching census data for two elections in interwar Poland in order to make an initial judgment of just how Poland's minorities actually voted.

Introduction

The political behavior and loyalties of interwar Poland's minorities remain controversial issues. Among nationalist and even mainstream Polish historians, it is often taken as an article of faith that Poland's large minority population supported Marshal Pilsudski's coup in 1926 and then provided the domestic backbone of support for the Soviet occupations of 1939 and 1945.

Although it is difficult to measure the absence or presence of loyalty among such large and diverse populations as Poland's Germans, Jews, Belarusians, and Ukrainians, one way of getting at this question is to examine the opportunities that the general population had to express their political preferences. In this working paper we assess a unique data set of electoral and matching census data for two elections in interwar Poland in order to make an initial judgment of just how Poland's minorities actually voted.

Answering the question of how specific ethnic groups vote is not straightforward, even in the present era of extensive individual level polling data, for the simple reason that people often conceal their preferences on matters of race and ethnicity. The problem is even trickier when dealing with historical voting patterns, before the era of systematic public opinion polling. The only solution available is to collect matching electoral and census data at the lowest possible level of aggregation and from there make inferences about the actual voting behavior of discrete ethnic groups.

Some historical work has been carried out using the rich trove of Polish data, but most analyses begin at a far too high level aggregation to be useful or reliable. None use the thousands of observations possible through careful use of village level data. The present paper begins to fill in this gap in our knowledge. Our contribution remains at this stage modest. In

what follows, we describe the data we have collected, discuss its limitations, and provide preliminary data analysis using graphs. For one election we present our first estimates of ethnic group support for Poland's party blocs using ecological inference. As we shall see, even with these limited methods, a great deal can be said about the voting behavior of interwar Poland's minorities.

The Data: Census

Building on the path breaking work carried out on the German Reichstag elections in the run up to Hitler's seizure of power in 1932,¹ we take as our main task first to match census and electoral data at the lowest level of aggregation possible. In the case of interwar Poland, however, using both census and electoral data requires a discussion of its nature and limitations. Although both the census and elections were flawed by Western, and especially contemporary, standards, with care they are certainly usable. Taken together they can give us a fairly accurate picture of where Poland's minorities lived and in what strength. They can also tell about the breakdown of the vote on a village by village basis.

Interwar Poland reemerged from the lands of three defunct empires: the Habsburg, the German, and the Russian. This had two major effects on the functioning and makeup of the new state. The first concerned the ethnic Poles themselves. Since Poles had lived for over a century under three very different forms of rule, it was only natural that the political parties and political cultures that emerged would be highly heterogeneous. Poland's authorities understood this and in constructing national statistics not only divided up the country into provinces (voivodships) but also categorized these provinces as western (the former Prussian territories), central (the

¹Juergen Falter, *Hitlers Waehler*, (Munich: Beck, 1991); Richard Hamilton, *Who Voted For Hitler*, (Princeton:

former areas of Congress Poland), eastern (lands from the Russian Empire), or Southern (territory for Habsburg Galicia). Forging a sense of national unity, even among Poles, was widely understood to be a difficult task.

For our purposes, however, even more important than the desire of Poland's leaders for a unitary nation-state was the reality of its multinational character. Although the victors at Versailles originally envisaged a Poland constituted along ethnic lines, great power politics and Polish military victories in 1919-1920 made for a much larger state. This ensured that at least 30 percent of the country's inhabitants would be ethnically “foreign.” The inclusion of eastern Galicia (western Ukraine), much of Western Prussia, a large part of upper Silesia, and the partition of Belarus with the Soviet Union meant that millions of Ukrainians, Belarusians, Jews, Germans, and others would either have to be accommodated, integrated, assimilated, or discriminated against within the new Poland. Having signed the minorities treaty sponsored by the League of Nations, Poland's political elites committed themselves to the first option—that is—respecting the cultural and political rights of the non-Polish ethnic groups on their territory. Poland's constitution of 1921, especially its articles 110 and 111, guaranteed equal treatment under the law and the right to establish and run their own religious, cultural, and educational institutions.

The Polish census of 1921 was an expression of these conflicting imperatives. Because it was carried out quickly under very unfavorable conditions, experts disagree on whether the 1921 census produced an accurate picture of the country, especially regarding its actual ethnic composition. Not only were the mass movements of people associated with the end of World War I still proceeding, but the Ukrainian population did not always cooperate with census takers.

Princeton University Press, 1991).

When combined with the official inclination to incorrectly categorize Ukrainians as Poles, the end result may have been the miscategorization of as many as one million Ukrainians.

Even if nationality had been recorded accurately, there would still remain the thorny question of self-identification. Asking someone if he or she were a member of the Polish nation in 1921 was not necessarily the best way to zero in on group identification. Many Jews, as demonstrated by the differences in the totals for “Jewish nationality” and “Jewish religion” in 1921, must have given their nationality as Polish. Moreover, it is widely acknowledged that many Belarusians did not have a firm sense of their identity outside of religious affiliation (Orthodox). These considerations suggest that it is very difficult to establish the actual ethnic makeup of the country. Both problems of administrative chicanery and the fluidity of national identities require us to use some ingenuity in deriving a reasonable picture of the ethnic makeup of interwar Poland.

The 1921 census was followed up a decade later by the 1931 census. Since one of the elections we will be analyzing in Poland took place in 1928, this latter census could potentially have been useful for our analysis. Two large obstacles to using this census, however, make it basically less valuable than the 1921 materials. First, whereas the earlier census inquired as to the respondent's nationality, the latter inquired as to "mother tongue." This would normally not pose such a problem and could perhaps be a useful category. However, the 1931 census was carried out after the political elite had already given up on implementing the spirit and letter of the Minorities Treaty. So although it was conducted by a much more experienced bureaucracy, in some ways it was even less accurate than the 1921 census regarding the count of minorities.

One way of controlling for administrative chicanery is to supplement the use of data on nationality with equivalent data on religion in order to infer ethnic affiliation. This method has

been used by the Polish historian Jerzy Tomaszewski, a harsh critic of the 1921 census, and has much to recommend it.² First, contemporary observers noted that census takers reported religious affiliation; these results were not falsified at high levels of the bureaucracy. Second, ethnic groups in interwar Poland correspond fairly closely to religious affiliation. Poles were overwhelmingly Roman Catholic. Jews tended to be of the Jewish faith, Ukrainians in eastern Galicia were overwhelmingly Uniates (Greek Catholic), Belarusians were almost entirely Orthodox. In a handful of districts, especially in Volhynia, two districts of Polesia, and in several districts surrounding Chelm where a significant number of Orthodox Ukrainians resided, it is difficult to use religion to infer ethnicity. Fortunately these communities are easily identifiable from the census data because the districts in question are the only ones where the Orthodox inhabitants far outnumber the Belarusians.

The 1921 census with settlement level data was published in 14 volumes organized by voivodship. The 15th volume (which in fact was volume six in the series), on Wilno, never appeared. Within each voivodship, the data is first broken down into *powiaty* (districts), then into *gminas* (which are designated either as cities or rural settlements). Several large cities also contain further administrative subdivisions that can fortunately be matched up with electoral data, allowing, for example in the case of Warsaw with its 27 departments, for some fine grained analysis of a large and diverse urban area that might otherwise through aggregation bias contaminate the analysis. We have coded each voivodship as being part of either Central, Western, Eastern, or Southern Poland, corresponding to each of the historical regions.

²Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Rzeczpospolita Wielu Narodow*, (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1985). [Republic of Many Nations]; Zbigniew Landau and Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Rabotniczy Przemyslowi w Polsce: Materialne Warunki Bytu, 1918-1939*, (Warsaw: Ksiazka i Wiedza, 1971) [Industrial Workers in Poland: Material Conditions of Life, 1918-1939]

When matched up with 1922 and 1928 electoral returns, we designated this as a “full match” observation. What that leaves us with is 3,647 observations encompassing 17 million Poles. Because of matching problems, the data is biased against the large estates. This contaminates the analysis in some regions more than others and necessitates a deeper analysis of the four historical regions of Poland.

Since the “full match” gminas are the basic unit of analysis in this study, it is worth dwelling on their characteristics for a moment. Most, except in cities, are comprised of groups of rural settlements. The median size of this unit is 2428 inhabitants. Four percent have less than 1000 inhabitants and eight percent contain greater than 10,000 inhabitants. Central Poland's median size gmina is 5800; in Western Poland the median size is 1872; in the Eastern territories the median is 8208 (although the largest settlement does not exceed 30,000); and in Galicia (the “South”) it is much more variable, with 1600 living in the median gmina and the largest being the major city of Lwow with 219,000 inhabitants.

These differences in aggregate settlement structures between the regions mirror the huge differences in ethnic settlement structures between Poland's four historical regions. Consider, first, Poland's Jews. While in Central Poland, in half of all settlements less than 2 percent of the population were Jewish, in the larger cities of the region there were sizable Jewish populations which meant that in 10 percent of all settlements (out of a total of 1173) the population was between 37 percent Jewish and 93 percent Jewish.

In the Eastern territories, by contrast, the median percentage of Jews at the settlement level was 3 percent but in 10 percent of settlements the Jewish population comprised between 56 and 94 percent of the population. In Galicia, most settlements had between 0 and 1 percent Jews, but in 5 percent of settlements, Jews comprised between 37 percent and 78 percent of the total

population. The pattern that emerges for Jews is that of an urban population spread throughout Poland's historical region (with the exception of the formerly Prussian territories where their numbers were small) and that within these region lived in relatively few places but in large numbers.

The pattern for Ukrainians is very different. Using ethnicity data for central Poland, they are present in only 25 percent of settlements and their numbers were so few in Western Poland that they were not even counted in most places. In Eastern Poland, on the other hand, in 25 percent of settlements their proportion of the population exceeded 70 percent. In Galicia, by contrast, in 50 percent of settlements their proportion exceeded 40 percent and in 25 percent of settlements, their proportion came to over 81 percent. In short, Ukrainians were highly concentrated and in Eastern Poland, where they dominated certain areas, and were dispersed almost everywhere in Galicia in strengths ranging from a small minority to an overwhelming majority. Although the proportions change slightly using religion data instead of data on nationality, the general pattern does not.

Belarusians were present in appreciable numbers (9 percent) in only 5 percent of settlements in Central Poland and were absent in Western Poland and Galicia. In the Eastern Territories, by contrast they constituted at least 7 percent of the population in half of all settlements, and in 25 percent of all settlements they constituted a clear majority (between 59 and 96 percent).

The census data are good but not perfect for generating reliable ecological inferences. Poland's ethnic minorities, for the most part, are spread throughout the country or at least

throughout individual regions, each with large numbers of observations. The Jews, on the other hand, are fairly concentrated in the cities, making the data somewhat more lumpy than is desirable but still usable for our purposes.

Data: Elections

Interwar Poland held three national elections that can pass the minimal test for being free and fair. The 1919 election took place only in Congress Poland and although they have much to tell us about the Jewish vote, they tell us almost nothing about the vote in the Eastern Territories and in Galicia where the bulk of Poland's minorities lived. For the purposes of the following analysis, we ignore the 1919 results.

The 1922 election took place before the eastern borders of the country were completely settled in the minds of many Ukrainians and while the question of Silesia remained open. The electoral system, based on a modified system of proportional representation, made it relatively easy for small regional parties to gain entry to the lower house, the Sejm. As a consequence many different ethnic and regional parties contested the election. At least four ethnic Ukrainian parties and several ethnic Jewish parties competed, and these were complemented by a plethora of regional, class based, and multi-ethnic parties. Because there were so many parties, and many of these had ideologically similar profiles, we simplify the analyses by grouping the parties into blocs. As we shall see, although the evidence that the Galician Ukrainians boycotted the election is strong, scholars consider this election to be generally free and fair.

The results certainly reflect the very diverse political makeup of the new state. The minorities parties, led by the *Blok Mniejszosci Nordowych* (Bloc of National Minorities), received 16 percent of the popular vote, for a total of 89 out of 444 parliamentary seats. The

Communist party received a modest 1.4 percent of the vote, while the nonrevolutionary left, dominated by the *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna* (Polish Socialist Party or PPS) and the left agrarian *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe-Wyzwolenie* (Liberation Party), garnered nearly 24 percent of the vote. The political center consisting mainly of the *Partia Centrum* and the *Narodowa Partia Robotnicz* (National Workers Party), received roughly 5.4 percent of the vote. The right dominated in the cities by the *Chrzescijanski-Zwiazek Jednosci Narodowej* (Christian Alliance of National Unity), which included the National Democrats, Christian Democrats, and the Christian National Party, won a plurality of roughly 30 percent and was the only political grouping to win significant support in every region of the country. In rural areas, the center-right agrarian *Piast* party performed reasonably well, winning just over 13 percent. Together, the urban and rural right comprised the only viable parliamentary coalition before 1926.

Poland's political institutions exacerbated the polarized politics that emerged during the 1922 election campaign. The constitution of March 1921, drafted by rightist forces hostile to the charismatic Marshall Pilsudski, established a weak presidency and a strong parliament (which they hoped to dominate). The electoral rules were strongly proportional, with larger parties benefiting marginally from extra seats apportioned to "national lists." The result of this system of transforming votes into seats was a highly fragmented body that could not easily form a stable majority.

Perhaps the thorniest issue in coalition politics was the legislative strength of the parties representing national minorities that had been elected as part of the Bloc of National Minorities. "Polish" parties, for their part, refused to form a government with any club of minority members of parliament, and in fact there was not to be one non-Polish cabinet minister in interwar Poland. The exclusion of minority deputies from policy making, however, meant that the implementation

of the Minorities Treaty would be left solely in the hands of ethnically Polish politicians. The result was a less than adequate protection of cultural and educational rights for the country's Germans, Ukrainians, Belarusans, and Jews. It was only natural then that Soviet propaganda during the 1920s should try to convince Belarusans, Ukrainians, and Jews (just as German propaganda was aimed at Poland's German population) that their national aspirations could be better realized and their cultures better protected in the union republics across the Soviet frontier.

The fragmentation of the party system, combined with the exclusion of the national minorities from government, ultimately led to political instability. In March 1926 amid growing discontent and the prospect of a right wing majority returning to power in the parliament, Jozef Pilsudski and his supporters staged a coup d'etat. Even after the seizure of power, however, Pilsudski was not ready to break with democratic institutions altogether.

In 1928 Poland's second parliamentary elections were held. Pilsudski wanted new elections in order to gain a parliamentary majority for his pro-government bloc. The vote took place under the watchful eye of the state; nevertheless, by the standards of the day, the election was, for the most part, fair.³ Only in a few of the eastern provinces were large numbers of votes invalidated by zealous local authorities. These were, it appears, primarily the ballots of Belarusan and Ukrainian communist voters. In the end, communist parties probably received 10 percent of the vote nationally, with this number reduced through administrative measures to 7.5 percent.

Evidence of the relative fairness of these elections is that Pilsudski's pro-government bloc received just over 21 percent of the vote and under 30 percent of parliamentary seats. Pilsudski's main nemesis, the parliamentary right, received nearly 9 percent of the vote.

³Andrzej Chojnowski, *Pilsudczycy u Wladzy*, (Wroclaw: Zaklad Narodowy, 1986) [Pilsuskiites in Power]; Joseph

Pilsudski was not able to obtain a parliamentary majority until the completely “managed” elections of 1930. In short, even with its problems, the semi-free election of 1928 still allows one to evaluate the political preferences of Poland’s interwar minorities and permits us to evaluate the evolution of the loyalties over a crucial period of the country’s history.

The Electoral data for the 1922 and 1928 Sejm elections was published in two separate volumes. For each one the data is broken down first into 64 electoral districts, then into powiats, and finally into settlements. Importantly, the number of votes and the number of disqualified ballots is recorded, which can assist us in pinpointing the location of administrative pressure in the 1928 election. This data can also yield important information on turnout. Larger settlements for each can be easily matched with census materials, but, as noted, since data was published only on settlements with more than 500 inhabitants, the full match data set is smaller than it would be if the electoral data were recorded down to the smallest settlement units.

Blocs

The main methodological and theoretical issue for dealing with the electoral data is how to group the parties into blocs. As noted, Poland’s system of proportional representation generated a large number of parties—22 state lists and dozens of regional lists for the 1922 election and 26 state lists and several dozen regional parties for the 1928 election. With so many parties, analysis necessitates grouping them into blocs. Historians agree on the general contours of the country’s party system, even when the parties were broke down not only along ideological lines.

Rothschild, *Pilsudski's Coup d'Etat*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966).

For the 1922 elections, historians agree that the party orientations can be classified as either right, center, non-revolutionary left, ethnic, and communist. For the 1928 election, historians agree that it makes sense to group the parties as either Pilsudskist (pro-government), Right, Center, Non-Revolutionary Left, Revolutionary Left, and Ethnic. A large number of small regional lists that received very few votes cannot be classified, and so are left in our analysis as “other.” Space consideration forces us to restrict our analysis to the 1928 election. Our coding is explained below and is based on an analysis of the most highly regarded histories in English and Polish, as well as an analysis of party platforms.⁴

PARTY BLOCS 1928

Progov	CentRight	Center	Left	Ethnic-Min	Comm.
BBWR(Pilsudski)	Piast/Chr.Dem	NatParty Labor	PPS	BlocNat Min	Com List
CathUnion West	CathNational		Wyzw.	UkrNat Allian	SelfHelp
Nat.-StateBloc Lab	Monarchists		Peas.Part	Gal Zionist	Bel.Com
Peasant Assn.				OrthJew.Bloc	Sel-Rob
				Poalei Zion	Sel-RobL
				Jewish Bund	UkP of Lab

Historians disagree on a number of issues, however, and offer little guidance on other important questions. First, although the existence of a political right in interwar Poland is undisputed and the inclusion of the National Democrats and Christian Democrats in this bloc is also something that scholars agree upon, there is less agreement on whether the agrarian Piast party that was strong especially in Galicia should also be categorized as right or center-right (as

⁴For an excellent treatment of interwar Poland’s party platforms on a range of socio-economic and ethnic issues, as well as excerpts of the party platforms themselves, see, Alicja Belcikowska, *Stronnictwa i związki polityczne w Polsce : charakterystyki, dane historyczne, programy, rezolucje, organizacje partyjne*, (Warsaw: Akc. Dom Ksiazki Polskiej, 1925) [Political Parties and Associations in Poland: Characteristics, Historical Data, Programs, Resolutions, and Party Organization]

advocated by Rothschild and Kowalski) or as centrist (as by Polonsky and Roszkowski). The question is not an easy one and makes a large difference in how one evaluates the performance of the right.

For example, in a “narrow” conception of the right, in which the Piast is left out, in Galicia in the 1922 elections the right received more than 15 percent in half of all settlements. If the Piast is included as part of the right, however, in Galicia in half of all settlements it received more than 63 percent of the vote. We believe it makes sense to take an expanded view of the right and include the Piast party in the bloc. For one thing, since the National Democrats were weak in Galicia, the right part of the spectrum was occupied by the Piast. For Galicia, the right consisted primarily of the Piast.

Second, an analysis of its party platform reveals positions on the ethnic minorities that are not easily distinguishable from the more extremist National Democrats. Finally, there is the retrospective point that the Piast participated in government as a coalition partner with the National Democrats until the coup. Pilsudski certainly viewed the Piast leader Witos as a member of the right and imprisoned him under terrible conditions in 1930.

A second and equally difficult question concerns the status of the Bloc of National Minorities, which ran as a party in 1922 and received 16 percent of the vote in 1922 and 12.8 percent in 1928. On the surface it appears to be a multi-ethnic party. But its behavior does not fully support this assessment. This Bloc of National Minorities ran as a marriage of convenience between German, Jewish, Ukrainian, and Belarusan parties. Immediately after the election, it broke up into ethnic parliamentary clubs whose members did not always cooperate with (and frequently competed against) each other.

What are we to make of this? From the standpoint of the ethnic minority voter and from the ordinary Pole, the Bloc was clearly an ethnic party, set up to support ethnic interests. But from the standpoint of other ethnic parties, especially those that did not join the bloc, it seems to be truly multi-ethnic. For purposes of simplicity, we group it together with the other ethnic parties because the purpose of this paper is to evaluate the changing loyalties of Poland's minorities and not to evaluate per se the conditions under which ethnic versus multi-ethnic parties thrive, although clearly Poland's party system is amenable to answering this question—as shown by the number of parties that defected from the Bloc in 1928—something we leave for future papers.

A third question concerns the communist parties. In interwar Poland, the communist party was illegal. It nonetheless ran under a number of names that were easy for voters to identify, usually some variation of “workers and peasants” in its name. Although the communist party received only 1.5 percent of the vote in the 1922 election, in 1928 it received 2.5 percent of the vote. However, a large number of regional and local communist, ethno-communist, and pro-Soviet parties mushroomed in time for the 1928 election and when taken together they received 8 percent of the vote, a total that most historians argue would probably have reached closer to 10 percent had a large number of ballots not been invalidated in the Eastern Territories. Rothschild groups most (though not all) of these parties as “ethnic,” whereas Polonsky groups them as “Communist and Pro-Communist.”⁵

Polish historians remain agnostic on this question, mostly because serious analysis of the communist party was precluded under the communist regime and the question of the political loyalty of interwar Poland's minorities has yet to be addressed. It appears, however, based on

⁵Rothschild, Pilsudski's *Coup d'Etat*; Polonsky, *Politics in Independent Poland*.

the platforms of these parties (for example, the Ukrianian Party of Labor--see Encyclopedia of Ukraine) and based on their willingness and desire of most to adopt communist party names with ethnic suffixes that the elites of these parties were at least pro-Soviet and most likely had made the decision to cast their lot with the world communist project emanating from just over the border in the Soviet Union in the hope that they would find followers among their co-ethnics who had grown weary of the thin gruel of assimilation and discrimination that was Polish minorities policy. Given the large range of moderate ethnic parties that competed in 1928, a vote for any of the ethno-communist parties was most likely a leap out of ethnic political “voice” per se and into anti-system “exit.” A further solution is to generate yet another bloc of parties, “ethnic radical,” and to evaluate their performance separately. Given their communist affiliation, ideology, and programs, however, we find this solution less than satisfactory. However, we will run analyses with both the “narrow” international communist bloc and the “broader” ethno-communist bloc, as well as a categorization as an “ethnic radical bloc” in order to compare results.

Analysis

The overall pattern of support for ethnic parties in minority communities remains more or less the same in 1928 as in 1922. But the communist party became much more popular. To see this consider Figure 1, which shows communist support for settlements with varying proportions of ethnic groups. (Note that the West is excluded because the communists did not compete there.) In the East and South communists do not usually get more votes than the number of minorities in a given place, but there is quite a bit of variation within purely minority settlements. On the peripheries of Poland it seems that the communists are popular only in minority areas.

Central Poland, where Jews and to a lesser extent Orthodox are the principal minorities, shows a slightly different pattern. There it seems the communists are popular in many places with few minorities, evidence no doubt that at least in some areas, such as the Dabrowa Basin, the movement does have working class roots.⁶ These panels alone constitute significant evidence that is a gross oversimplification to claim that the communists derived their support only or even largely from national minorities.

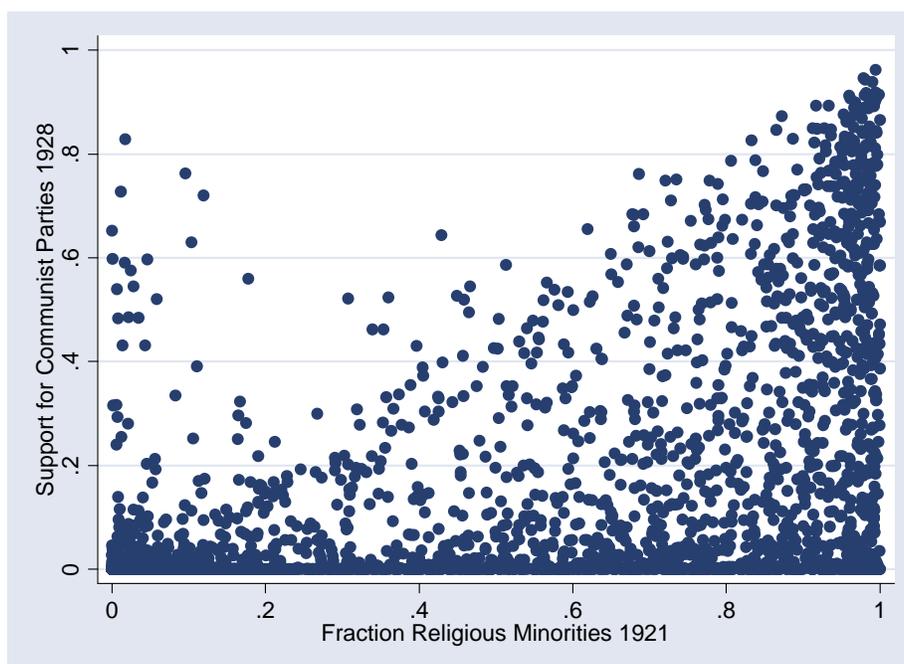


Figure 1

The differences between the Jews on the one hand and the Uniates and Orthodox on the other become clear if we graph each separately, as in Figure 2. For reference we also include, as a fourth panel, the pattern of communist support for Roman Catholics.⁷ The remarkable thing

⁶Communist support in the East and South may also be related to economic status. To do this it will be necessary to condition support on these variables.

⁷Both the Catholic and Jewish panels are computed using all of Poland, whereas the Orthodox and Uniate panels take settlement from the East and South, respectively.

about this figure is how very different the Jewish and Catholic settlements are from the Orthodox and Uniate ones. Communist support is highest in settlements where there are no Jews (or Catholics) and relatively low in settlements where there are high numbers of Jews. This is even stronger evidence that the Jews were not supporting the communists at the mass level. With the exception of a handful of probably mining settlements (on the far right of the Catholic panel, with high communist support), a similar relationship holds for the Catholics. This is in stark contrast with the Orthodox and Uniate panels, where the communists hardly ever seem to get more votes than the number of minorities in a settlement.

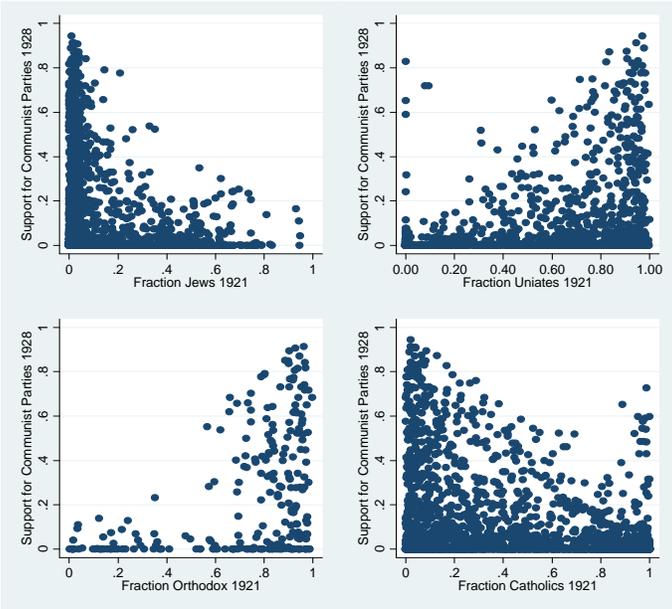


Figure 2

The ecological inference problem prevents us from taking the next step, which is to infer definitely from these graphs what proportion of each religious group supports communist or minorities parties. We are fairly safe in inferring Jewish and Catholic preferences for the communists. The communist did best where Jews and Catholics were fewest, and worst where

they were dominant majorities, so whatever support these groups do evince, it cannot be very high. The story is different for Orthodox and Uniates. Here we are safest making inferences about the top right (near 1,1) and bottom left (near 0,0) of each panel. In settlements where everyone is Orthodox (or Uniate) and all votes go to the communists, then we know who the voters were. Likewise in settlement where there were no Orthodox (or Uniates) and the communists got no support, then we know that these minorities could not have supported the communists. But in more heterogeneous places it is more problematic to infer that whatever communist support there was came from the minority groups. For that we require ecological inferences.

The table below presents ecological estimates of support for various kinds of political parties across Poland's minority groups in the 1928 election.⁸ The party blocs are displayed across the top, and the minority groups down the side. Actually two tables are presented: one for the South, where Catholics, Jews, and Uniates are the most prominent groups; and one for the East and South, where the Orthodox rather than the Uniates join the Catholics and Jews. The numbers in each cell represent the estimated support for a particular blocs by a particular group. Thus, for example, looking at the section for the South, we estimate that 42% of Catholics support the government party, whereas 30% of Jews do. The “-“s in the table represent estimates of less than 1%. Across any row the percentages will not necessarily add up to exactly 100, since we exclude the vote for other parties. In the interests of clarity we leave off the standard errors for each estimate.⁹

⁸We compute these estimates using the methods discussed in Ori Rosen, Wenxin Jiang, Gary King, and Martin Tanner, “Bayesian and frequentist inference for ecological inference: the R x C case,” *Statistical Neerlandica* Vol. 55, No. 2, 2001, pp. 134-156.

⁹These need to be bootstrapped, and can dramatically increase the time for computation.

There are numerous intriguing features of this table. First, if we look at support for communist parties, our prior inferences for the Catholics and Jews are confirmed: neither group supports them in any significant way. The same cannot be said for the Orthodox and Uniates. 37% of Orthodox support communist parties by 1928, a substantial proportion, and three times the level for the Uniates, 12%. We can conclude that minority support for the communists is quite variegated, and undoubtedly reflects as yet unmodeled organizational and economic factors. Second, we see that the Right is largely “Polish”, which is unsurprising since these parties were perhaps the least sympathetic to minority issues. But the Right by no means monopolized the Polish vote, never rising above one-quarter of the Catholic vote.¹⁰ The Poles were thus themselves split on the direction the country should take.

TABLE 1: RELIGIOUS BASES OF MASS POLITICAL BEHAVIOR, 1928

		<u>Communists</u>	<u>Left</u>	<u>Center</u>	<u>Govt</u>	<u>Minority</u>	<u>Right</u>
South	Rcath	-	32	-	42	-	23
	Uniate	12	-	-	21	67	-
	Jews	-	-	-	30	69	-

Est/Cnrl	Rcath	2	58	-	16	2	21
	Orth	37	-	-	43	19	-
	Jews	2	-	-	27	64	6

Third, there are dramatic differences between Uniates and Orthodox in support for ethnic parties. Whereas 67% of Uniates support such parties in the South, only 19% of Orthodox support such parties in the East and Central. To the extent that we can consider the Orthodox as

¹⁰The 6% of Jews that are estimated to have supported the Right in eastern and central Poland may be evidence of the need to condition these estimates on the degree of ethnic homogeneity of each settlement. This result could emerge if, as is entirely possible, Poles in Jewish areas gravitated towards the Right.

Belarusian and the Uniates Ukrainian, this is one more, dramatic piece of evidence that Belarusan national consciousness, which would have had to emerge in the Russian empire, was less developed than the Galician Ukrainian, which was nurtured under the Hapsburgs. The numbers do not change much if ones estimated these tables using nationality rather than religious data.¹¹

Fourth, perhaps more surprisingly, we see that the non-revolutionary left is also almost exclusively Polish. This striking result is perhaps the best reflection of the ethno-national polarization of Polish politics. There are good reasons Poles shied away from the communists, as by this time they were openly pro-Soviet, and the county had only recently emerged from Russian rule and staved off Soviet conquest. Likewise there is little reason for the minorities to have supported the Right, which advocated policies inimical to their interests. But the Left should have been a haven for all ethnic groups wishing to avoid the extremes of the left and the right or the exclusivity of ethnic parties. (In this sense the Right can be seen as an ethnic bloc for Poles.)

Instead the pro-government bloc was served that purpose, enjoying huge support from both Poles and non-Poles. That support for the government parties is much higher in the South (42%) than in East and Central Poland (16%) lends extra confidence in both the data and the method. Pilsudski's "base" was in the South, and we would have expected much higher support there than elsewhere. The large minority support may be attributable to the exigencies of life in a country perceived to be sliding into authoritarianism. For the minorities Pilsudski was far

¹¹It is important to note, however, that in the East a large portion of Orthodox voters were Ukrainian. To the extent they too supported communist parties, this constitutes evidence of the continued importance of religious differences within the Ukrainian communist for generating very different kinds of political identities and loyalties. It is quite possible that the Orthodox Ukrainians did not view potential Union with the Soviet Union with the same level of distaste as the majority of their Uniate co-ethnics in formerly Habsburg Galicia.

preferable to the Right, and they could hope to be rewarded for their support with a modicum of protection. Even the Orthodox--at least those who shunned the communists—preferred the government-allied parties.

Fifth, if we look just at Jewish voting behavior across the two regions, one is struck with the similarity. The Jews of the former Hapsburg empire, residing in the South, are not politically different from those who lived in the much more backward Russian empire. This is at least a sliver of evidence that despite different opportunities and possibilities for assimilation in the two empires, the Jews resembled one another politically speaking more than they resembled other groups in the milieu in which they resided.

Wrap-up

This paper has shown that the mass political behavior of minority groups in interwar Poland is substantially more nuanced than has previously been imagined. First, we refute the claim, expounded for the last several decades, that the Jews were the primary supporters of the communist parties. Jews may have been prominent among the party leaderships, but Polish Jewry as a whole was as anti-communist as, apparently, the Poles were themselves. Second, we show that Polish politics remained highly polarized along ethnic lines even in 1928, after the rise in popularity of the communists. So great were these divisions that majorities and minorities only converged in their mutual support for the government party.

Yet the paper poses more questions than it answers. In particular we still have no systematic explanation for why the communists, government, and minorities parties draw so disproportionately from different ethnic groups. Why do roughly two-thirds of Uniates and Jews

support minorities parties in 1928? From which 1922 political camps did the minorities, communist, and government parties draw their support in 1928? These questions remain to be explored.