

**Minority representation in a semi-democratic regime:
the Georgian case**

Daniel Zollinger

Center for Comparative and International Studies

University of Zurich

Seilergraben 53

CH-8001 Zürich

Switzerland

E-mail: danielzolli@gmail.com

Prof. Dr. Daniel Bochsler

NCCR Democracy

University of Zurich

Affolternstrasse 56

CH-8050 Zürich

Switzerland

E-mail: daniel.bochsler@uzh.ch

phone: +41 44 634 54 53

fax: +41 44 634 52 00

<http://www.bochsler.eu>

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In liberal democracies, with unrestricted electoral competition, proportional representation with large electoral districts is widely considered as the electoral system providing for the best descriptive representation of ethnic minorities. This article suggests that in most semi-democracies, the same solution might be little favourable to minorities. Many semi-democratic countries with restricted party competition ban or limit parties of ethnic minorities, such as Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirgistan, Cameron, Equatorial Guinea, Tanzania, Gabon, Kenya, Mauritania, Congo (Brazzaville). This article highlights the impact of the electoral system and the importance of political plurality and electoral district design in such contexts. There, the interests of minorities are best protected if they can elect their representatives in small, ethnically homogeneous electoral districts. Plurality or majority voting systems offer minorities the possibility to run with independent candidates. The elections to municipal councils in Georgia in 2006 under a mixed electoral system widely reflect the hypothesised pattern.

1 Introduction

Representation in ethnically divided societies has been intensively studied in the political science literature, for good reasons: Ethnic relations and the ability of democratic institutions to represent and to settle ethnic divides is a key factor of political stability and of conflictuality. Ethnic conflicts have overshadowed transition to democracy, or disrupted after semi-competitive elections in different regions. Therefore, aspects of ethnic representation are omnipresent in the democratisation literature.

Astonishingly enough, the most prominent literature in the field of minority representation mainly looks at free elections in liberal democracies.¹ Given that many divided societies – especially in Africa and in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union – have severely restricted electoral competition, and are frequently characterised as hybrid regimes, competitive authoritarian, electoral

¹ Cameron et al., 'Majority-Minority Districts', Lublin, *Gerrymander for Justice*, Norris, *Electoral Engineering*, chapter 9, Rule and Zimmerman, *Electoral Systems*.

democracies, or semi-democratic systems, an extension of studies to such a context is highly wishful.²

There is a variety of semi-democracies, which is reflected in diverse adjectives used to entitle them.³ Given this diversity, generalisations for all semi-democratic regimes are not always possible. To study minority representation in typical types of these regimes, we identify frequent characteristics of semi-democratic regimes with (partly) competitive elections, also addressed as “dominant-power systems”.⁴ Our analysis provides for a general argument about the consequences of these features for minority representation. We stick to the term semi-democratic rather than semi-authoritarian, as our analysis particularly focuses on the limited degree of openness and choice offered by partly competitive elections.

Despite important limits of democratic control – such as restrictions and biases in political participation, political plurality and competition⁵ – electoral processes in semi-democracies are often relevant, as they are important for the elite recruitment, and they show the potential openness of political institutions for ethnic minorities. Semi-democratic regimes conducting (partly) free elections have recently received considerable academic attention,⁶ but studies of minority representation are often limited to single cases.⁷ The political inclusion of minorities through partly competitive elections deserves more attention by comparative studies. Looking particularly at countries with restricted electoral competition, we are interested in the possibilities of ethnic minorities to access to political offices, and how different institutional arrangements function in such a context.

² Diamond, 'Thinking about hybrid regimes', 30, Levitsky and Way, 'The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism', Sørensen, *Democracy and Democratization*, 446-7.

For instance, in 2001, out of the 10 post-communist countries classified as neither fully democratic, nor authoritarian, seven were multi-ethnic.

³ Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, Schedler, *Electoral Authoritarianism*.

⁴ Carothers, 'End of the Transition Paradigm'.

⁵ Diamond, 'Thinking about hybrid regimes',---, Schedler, *Electoral Authoritarianism*.

For similar definitions, see Carey, 'The Dynamic Relationship', 4, Diamond et al., *Democracy in Developing Countries*, xvi-xvii..

⁶ For an overview, see Gandhi and Lust-Okar, 'Elections Under Authoritarianism'.

⁷ For instance, Fumagalli, 'Framing Ethnic Minority Mobilisation', Melvin, 'Centre-Regional Relations'. Studies with a more general scope include Bogaards, *Electoral Systems, Party Systems*, Bogaards et al., 'Ethnic party bans'.

By definition, semi-democracies allow some political plurality, but parties or politicians close to the regime (hereafter: regime party) dominate the political competition. Second, in ethnically divided semi-democracies, political power often relies on some ethnic groups, while other ethnic groups (usually the numeric minorities) are not equally represented. As divided countries, we define those cases where ethnic diversity constitutes an important source of political conflict, or where some of the ethnic groups (minorities) are oppressed in political, economic, or other terms. Many semi-democracies with restricted electoral competition are not only ethnically mixed, but also ban or hinder parties and organisations of ethnic minorities with direct or indirect means.⁸ Ethnic party bans are particularly wide-spread in semi-democracies. We are aware of such rules in most semi-democracies in the former Soviet Union and in Africa, including Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirgistan, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Tanzania, Gabon, Kenya, Mauritania, Congo (Brazzaville).¹⁰

Considering its frequency in semi-democratic contexts, there is a particular interest in models about minority representation under ethnic party bans or under obstacles against minority parties. Ethnic party bans do not fully exclude minorities out of the representation process, as there are alternative ways of minority representation.¹¹ We find that in conjunction with restricted electoral competition,

⁸ Such a restriction might be the result of spatial rules of party registration (a party, in order to be registered, needs to have a considerable number of members in several or most regions of a country), of high national legal thresholds in the electoral law, of spatial electoral thresholds (electoral thresholds which require a party to win votes from several regions), or of other kinds of explicit bans on regional parties. Birnir, 'Stabilizing Party Systems', OSCE ODIHROSCE ODIHR Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, *Moldova Parliamentary Elections 2001*, 4.

¹⁰ Out of nine African countries, which Carothers classifies as typical dominant power systems, seven ban parties on ethnic, religious, regional, racial or linguistic grounds. Out of the five dominant power-systems in the post-Soviet space, four have ethnic party bans, and the fifth has no relevant ethnic minorities. We do not have systematic information on ethnic party bans on other continents. Bogaards et al., 'Ethnic party bans', Fumagalli, 'A Methodological Note', 81, Matveeva and McCartney, 'Policy Responses', 237, Moroff, 'Party bans in Africa'.

¹¹ A wide literature with a quantitative and formal approach has debated different forms of inclusion of ethnic minority in representation and their consequences, with some important work on minority representation in the US: Cameron et al., 'Majority-Minority Districts', Glazer et al., 'A neo-Downsian model', Lublin, *Gerrymander for Justice*, ---, *Paradox of Representation*, ---, 'Racial Redistricting and African-American Representation'. Looking beyond the US case, the centripetalist school has advocated representation through multi-ethnic or non-ethnic political parties. Reilly, *Democracy in Divided Societies*.

obstacles against minority organisations and parties can negatively affect minority representation in state institutions. Minorities can only be represented through mainstream political parties that are dominated by the ethnic majority. At the absence of outright competition, if a hegemonic party dominates, their chances of getting representation largely rely on the willingness of the leadership of the regime parties, which belong to the ethnic majority.

Some institutional arrangements and strategies allow minorities to be represented (to some extent) even if they can not run with their own parties or organisations in elections. Minorities do pretty well under the majoritarian vote and if electoral districts are small – which usually implies that they are ethnically homogeneous. However, minorities are particularly disadvantaged if they are not allowed to have their own parties, but elections are held under proportional representation with party lists, if electoral districts are large and ethnically mixed, and if competition is low, as usually in semi-democracies. This gives the hegemonic party considerable power to harm representation of ethnic minorities by assigning them little promising positions on the electoral list. Given that these hypotheses are contrary to the conventional wisdom for liberal democracies, we are particularly interested to test these expectations on data from semi-democratic countries with restricted electoral competition.

While our argument might generally apply to ethnically divided semi-democracy with restrictions on the political organisation of minorities, our empirical tests looks at descriptive representation (the question whether members of minorities win seats in local councils) in the Georgian local elections of 2006 in 64 municipalities. Even after the national government lost control over the separatist territories of South-Ossetia and Abkhazia, Georgia is still a multiethnic country, with some 16% of ethnic minorities (not counting South-Ossetia and Abkhazia), most importantly ethnic Armenians and Azeris (each about 6%). They are politically and economically disadvantaged, in aspects such as language education.¹³ Georgia can be characterised as a prime example of a semi-democratic regime, with frequent irregularities in the electoral process. The country also prevents ethnic minority organisations from registering and running in

¹² Toft, 'The Failed Transition in Georgia', 134.

¹³ For an excellent analysis, see, among others, International Crisis Group, *Armenian and Azeri Minorities*, Lohm, *Javakheti after the Rose Revolution*, Wheatley, *Integration of National Minorities*, ---, *Javakheti*, ---, *Kvemo Kartli*.

elections. Georgian municipalities are well-suited for a within-country comparison, as some are heavily dominated by the minorities, while others are ethnically diverse. Local elections in the Georgian natural laboratory allow observing the consequences of different electoral rules in the same context, as they were held in a mixed electoral system.¹⁴

Local institutions are crucial in ethnically divided countries, as they provide minority groups some political autonomy – which is important if minorities are badly represented in the national political institutions. While the literature on multi-level party systems and on (ethno-)regionalist parties in Western Europe has started to investigate representation at the sub-national level, we are not aware of similar studies for semi-democratic countries, and in countries where national political institutions hinder the manifestation of ethnic divides in the party system.¹⁵ Local elections in Georgia are relevant, after a reform of the local administration in 2005 has shifted competences to the municipal councils, which are elected directly.

The next section of this paper introduces our model of minority representation in semi-democratic regimes. The third section explains our case selection, sketching out the legal provisions for party competition and minority representation in Georgia, while section four analyses the effects of the restrictive Georgian party and electoral laws using the example of the 2006 local elections.

2 Minority representation in a restricted party system

There are different ways how elections in semi-democracies can be restricted. In ethnically divided dominant-power systems, restrictions often affect the participation or the political representation of minority groups. Limited suffrage for some ethnic groups restrict the political rights of minorities most directly, but other restrictions are more frequent, and keep the facade of pluralistic elections.¹⁶ Apart from electoral fraud or intimidation, this includes unfavourable constituencies for minorities (malapportionment or gerrymandering) or restrictions on the political organisation of ethnic

¹⁴ Moser and Scheiner, 'Mixed electoral systems'.

¹⁵ Such a restriction might be the result of spatial rules of party registration (a party, in order to be registered, needs to have a considerable number of members in several or most regions of a country) (Bimir, 'Stabilizing Party Systems'), of high national legal thresholds in the electoral law, of spatial electoral thresholds (electoral thresholds which require a party to win votes from several regions), or of other kinds of explicit bans on regional parties.

¹⁶ Schedler, *Electoral Authoritarianism*, 3.

minorities. Often, there are explicit or indirect administrative obstacles for ethnic minority to form their own parties or organisations and to run and campaign in elections.¹⁷ Such legal bans or de facto obstacles against minority parties or organisations might occur also in liberal democracies, for instance if national legal thresholds are so high that a minority group could impossibly pass.¹⁸

While in multi-ethnic democracies, minorities can also be included into mainstream parties (non-ethnically defined parties), our model suggests that this form of minority inclusion is little favourable to minorities in dominant-power systems with a hegemonic party. As this party dominates the competition, its leadership has all power whether to hear or not the minorities' claims, and to include or not members of the minority in adequate numbers on its electoral lists. We argue that minority representation is highly dependent on the electoral system employed.

If minority parties are banned, minorities might either access mainstream (not ethnically defined) parties, run with non-partisan candidates, or in local elections occasionally also with non-partisan electoral lists of local citizen groups. Not all conditions are equally favourable for these forms of minority representation. Particularly relevant are the ethnic structure of electoral districts, electoral rules and the intensity of electoral competition.

The main protagonists of the power-sharing literature on representation in plural societies have argued for proportional representation (PR) with large district magnitude, allowing political parties of minorities to gain access to parliament.¹⁹ Differently, majoritarian²⁰ or preference-ranked voting systems²¹ are proposed by one group of advocates of inter-ethnic cooperation. The picture is refined by the argument that plurality or majority voting systems or PR with small district magnitude allow minority parties to gain access to parliament, similar as PR with large districts, if their electorate is clustered in a small area.²² This literature, however, largely relies on the assumption of an unrestricted party system, where minority parties can be created and

¹⁷ Bogaards et al., 'Ethnic party bans', Moroff, 'Party bans in Africa'.

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¹⁹ Lijphart, *Proportionality by Non-PR Methods*, Norris, *Driving Democracy*, 122-3, Rule and Zimmerman, *Electoral Systems*, etc.

²⁰ Horowitz, 'A Primer for Decision Makers', Stojanović, 'Counterevidence from Switzerland'.

²¹ Reilly, *Democracy in Divided Societies*.

²² XXX

they succeed in elections if the voters want so and the structure of the electoral districts allows it. Hence, it investigates a particular aspect of party competition.

The degree of competitiveness of elections matters particularly for the inclusion into mainstream parties. Where minorities can only access parliaments through mainstream parties, they rely on the willingness of the mainstream party leadership to recruit minority members on the electoral lists. If elections are competitive and if several mainstream parties try to get the minority votes, then ethnic minorities can select the 'best offer': Voters who are keen to increase the representation of the ethnic minority can vote for the party with most minority candidates on the most promising list positions, and with the most minority-friendly program. Only if several mainstream parties rely on the votes of the minorities, there is a strong rationale to adopt the program and the list structure to the wishes of the minority. In ethnically mixed districts the party leadership needs to decide how many candidates of which group will be included on the electoral list. There, intense electoral competition, also for the minority votes, might give parties a stronger incentive to move towards the ethnic minority and to include minority representatives prominently on the electoral lists – in exchange for their votes.

This is not the case if competition is limited, and due to the lack of any reliable alternative, the mainstream party can easily favour members of the ethnic majority in the recruitment process. This might leave the minority being represented symbolically at best, with candidates on low-ranked places of the electoral ballot or in small numbers, if at all.

The tendency that in semi-competitive, restricted elections in ethnically heterogeneous contexts, minorities are bad-off, is reinforced through the role of the local elites. Semi-democratic systems tend to function paternalistically, and personal networks might play a more important role in politics than party programs. This implies that local elites can use their resources (networks, economic power) to increase their chances of getting nominated for elections. In mixed-ethnic environments, in line with political and economic inequalities, local elites consist mainly of the ethnic majority. In clientelistic systems, this reinforces the tendency that in multi-ethnic electoral districts, minorities have lower chances of getting elected within the mainstream party. This does not apply in (almost) homogeneous minority districts. On the one hand, the

consequences of an exclusion of the predominant minority would be drastically visible, since the local population would be excluded from representation. On the other hand, if candidates are mainly recruited from the local population, there are few or no potential candidates belonging to the titular nation, which implies that mainstream parties need to include members of the ethnic minority. While parties might renounce to present local candidates, and run instead with candidates from other regions, we believe that this is difficult in ethnically homogeneous districts, especially if outside candidates do not speak the minority language. Hence, we expect the potential anti-minority bias to be considerably stronger in mixed-ethnic districts than in homogeneous minority districts. This becomes manifested in a lower representation ratio of minorities – they are represented below their population share in mixed-ethnic districts. We summarise these expectations in two testable hypotheses, which focus on the degree of minority representation within mainstream parties.

Hypothesis 1: If minority parties are restricted, the representation ratio of minorities is lower in ethnically mixed electoral districts than in ethnically homogeneous electoral districts.

Hypothesis 2: If minority parties are restricted, more competition between mainstream parties forces mainstream parties in mixed-ethnic environments to include more minority representatives on their lists.

The degree of ethnic homogeneity appears as one of the key variable in our two first hypotheses. Ethnic heterogeneity is a function of the size of the electoral districts. Imagine a large, mixed-ethnic district, which is decomposed into several smaller districts.²³ Almost always, small districts will at least partly separate the ethnic groups, and be on average more homogeneous than the original district. This is especially the case, as in multi-ethnic countries, at the lowest settlement structure, ethnical groups often live clustered, so that small territorial units tend to be homogeneous. Since we expect that in semi-democratic settings, with restricted possibilities for the minority to

²³ Certainly, if the large districts is composed of 70% members of group A, and 30% members of group B, it might in theory be possible to create some smaller districts that are even more heterogeneous (with a 50%:50% composition), but only at the price of other small districts being ethnically homogeneous. Hence, *on average*, the smaller districts might can not be more heterogeneous.

organise, minorities are better represented in homogeneous electoral districts, this implies that small electoral districts might be more favourable to the minority than large ones.

These expectations are contrary to the commonly supposed positive link of district magnitude and minority representation. This relies on two fundamentally opposed starting points. Common models of minority representation ask under which condition, minority parties have good chances of winning a proportional number of seats (rarely also, or under which condition, diversity on electoral lists will be reflected in a diverse composition of the parliament). Minority parties can best be represented in large PR districts (see table 1, left column). Differently, we assume that minority parties are not allowed, and are interested instead under which condition, mainstream political parties need to include members of the ethnic minority on good positions in their lists (table 1, right column). Small, ethnically homogeneous electoral districts are the best protection of ethnic minorities, as due to the homogeneity of the population in the district, they allow only to recruit members of the minority (or candidates not living in the district).

Hypothesis 3: If minority parties are restricted, large district magnitude has a negative effect on minority representation.

Finally, ethnic minorities can also be represented through non-partisan candidates, either independent candidates, or electoral lists by local citizen groups, if the electoral rules allow so (see table 1). Generally, majoritarian systems allow the nomination of non-partisan candidates, so that candidates representing an ethnic minority organisation or aiming at representing the minority group might be elected, even if minority parties are not allowed. Some PR systems allow independent candidates or electoral lists of non-partisan organisations. If allowed, then several non-partisan candidates can run jointly with a non-partisan list, and in PR with large districts their list is represented according to their vote share. Such non-partisan groups can effectively function as local minority parties, and do not have electoral disadvantages compared to minority parties. However, PR systems often solely allow registered political parties to present their list (or they might allow independent candidates, but no non-partisan lists).

Hypothesis 4: If minority parties are restricted, minorities are more often represented by independent candidates (if they are allowed to compete) than the ethnic majority.

Table 1 provides an overview of our model about minority representation, looking at minority parties, independent candidates, local citizen groups and at minority representation within mainstream parties. It allows a comparison of different degrees of restrictions against minority organisations. While in some systems, minorities can choose which form of representation is the most adequate, dominant-party systems often ban minority parties, so that only some of the forms are possible.

xxx include table 1 about here xxx

3 Representation of minorities under restrictive party laws in Georgia

Georgia is particularly well-suited to apply our framework, as its elections do not fulfil all democratic standards, and the country has many traits that resemble what has been described as *semi-democratic* or more specifically as *dominant-power systems* in the literature.²⁴ Since 2004, Georgia has gradually liberalised, but the quality of democratic institutions is still contested. While there are basic political liberties and democratic elections, political power is heavily concentrated with the president, horizontal controls are weak and instruments of control are defective. Institutions are dominated by a hegemonic party, while the institutionalisation of political parties and internal party democracy are weak, personal networks or clan membership are more relevant as mechanisms of political representation and to obtain political power than the party structure, which in many regions exists only on paper, if at all. Apart from elections, political participation is minimal. While in the recent decade, the political leadership took important steps to revitalise economically, and to fight against corruption, these reforms did often not respect the rule of law. Media have been put under massive state pressure.²⁵

²⁴ Bertelsmann Transformation Index, *Georgia*, 4-7, 21. Carothers, 'End of the Transition Paradigm', 13.

²⁵ Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 225-8, Nodia, *Georgia*, Nodia and Scholtbach, *Political Parties*, 29-30.

Political rights of ethnic minorities are restricted, since their political parties are banned, and since there are problems in the conduct of elections in minority regions. Ethnic tensions in Georgia persist also after the breakaway of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.²⁶ Variation in the minority share of the population between municipalities and the mixed electoral system applied for local elections offer the needed variation to test our hypotheses, while holding the political context stable.²⁷

After the nationalising program of president Gamsakhurdia in the early 1990s and the emigration of several minorities (Greeks, Jews, Russians, Ukrainians), and if excluding the breakaway former autonomous territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (populated mainly by ethnic minorities), Georgia's share of ethnic minorities fell to 16.3% (2002 census; in the last Soviet census of 1989, 29.9% minorities were registered). The largest remaining and numerically stable minorities are Azeri (6.5%) and Armenians (5.7%). Both groups live territorially concentrated in the South. The Armenians mainly live in Javakheti, which is part of the administrative region Samtskhe-Javakheti, and form a local majority in two municipalities, and in lower numbers in other municipalities of the same region. After the exodus of the Caucasus Greeks, Armenians form a narrow majority in the municipality Tsalka in Kvemo Kartli, while the Georgians dominate the political and economic life.²⁸ Azeris mainly live in the Kvemo Kartli region, and are a local majority in three municipalities (figure 1). Other minorities (Russians, Ukrainians, Jews, Yezidi-Kurds) live dispersed and mainly in cities, are very small, and are socially better integrated into society.²⁹

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²⁶ Wheatley, *Integration of National Minorities*.

²⁷ The opportunity of having two different election modes applied in parallel has been discussed as natural laboratory to test the effect of electoral systems. Moser and Scheiner, 'Mixed electoral systems'.

We should, however, take the issue of contamination seriously. The candidate selection, electoral campaigns, and voting behaviour under both systems might affect each other. Contamination effects lead an assimilation of the electoral competition in both parts of the system. Cox and Schoppa, 'Interaction Effects', Ferrara et al., *Mixed Electoral Systems*., etc.

If these findings can be generalised, and if we should find differences between both tiers, they persist despite contamination, but the measured degree of difference is not fully informative about the magnitude of the effect.

²⁸ Wheatley, *Tsalka*, 8-9, ---, *Kvemo Kartli*, 7.

²⁹ Nodia, *Polietničnost' Gruzii*, 64.

3.1 Municipal administration in Georgia

Our analysis focuses on the second level of administration in Georgia, the municipalities (*rayoni*). Since 2005, they elect the local councils (*sakrebulo*) directly, and they have been empowered, so that they appear as the most relevant arena of politics at the subnational level. They benefit from increased budgets and new competences, such as managing local property, maintenance of local roads, infrastructure projects, issuing construction licenses, environmental protection, health care, culture, and law enforcement.³⁰

Georgia (excluding South Ossetia and Abkhazia) counts 65 municipalities, also referred to as *rayons* or *districts*. Rural municipalities used to be divided into 976 *temi* (villages, units of several village communities or towns), which still serve as electoral districts for the single-seat district elections. Municipalities are part of the two Autonomous Republics (Adjara and Abkhazia) or the nine regions (*mkhare*). The capital city Tbilisi is an own municipality.

The regional executives and their heads (*'rtsmunebuli'* – governors or special representatives) are appointed by the president and do not have precisely defined competences. Formally, power is concentrated at the subnational level within the municipalities – although the representative and the central authorities still exert significant power.³¹ While until 2005, the head of the municipal executive was appointed by the state president (among the *temi* chairpersons),³² since 2005 (as previously from 1998 to 2001), local assemblies (*sakrebulo*) are directly elected at the municipal level. Before 2005, representative local bodies (*temi sakrebulo*) were elected at the *temi* level, but *temi* were virtually powerless.³³ Since municipalities are ethnically less homogeneous than villages (*temi*), the change in the administrative structure affects the representation of ethnic minorities, especially in ethnically mixed, but Georgian dominated municipalities.³⁴

³⁰ Lohm, *Javakheti after the Rose Revolution*, 23, Nodia, *Georgia*, 245.

³¹ Expert interview of May 2010.

³² Losaberidze et al., *Local Government in Georgia*, Nodia, *Georgia*, 245, Wheatley, *Javakheti*, 12.

³³ see also Evers, 'Samtskhe-Javakheti', 311, Wheatley, *Javakheti*, 19.

In larger *temi*, mayors have been elected since 2001, but they were recommended by the municipal authorities and informally subordinate to them, which made them look like little independent. ---, *Kvemo Kartli*, 18.

³⁴ International Crisis Group, *Armenian and Azeri Minorities*, 12.

3.2 Election mode and malapportionment

After the Rose Revolution of 2004, the quality of the electoral process is still critically discussed.³⁵ Municipal elections in Georgia are held under a mixed electoral systems. The representative bodies (*sakrebulo*) consist of 10 members elected by PR, and additional members elected by the plurality vote – one for each *temi*. As there are 5 to 31 *temi* in each municipality, the assemblies count 15 to 41 members. PR lists are closed, and there are no preferential votes for candidates. In the single-seat districts by plurality vote, not only registered parties and electoral blocs, but also local initiative groups were allowed to nominate candidates in the 2006 elections, but have been banned later. Candidates are elected in a one-round plurality vote (except for Tbilisi, where majoritarian candidates are elected with at least 30% of the votes).³⁶

For the representation of minorities party registration rules and the geometry of electoral districts matter too.

Party and electoral legislation imposes two major restrictions against ethnic minority parties. In national parliamentary elections – which are also held in a mixed electoral system – a 7% threshold of the national votes applies in the PR part. It has the side effect to exclude parties that solely rely on the votes of their minority group (counting only some 6% of the population).³⁷ Party registration rules are restrictive, especially against minorities: In the early 1990s, under president Zviad Gamsakhurdia, minority organisations were regarded as dangerous for Georgia's territorial integrity.³⁸ Georgia was thought as a national state of the Georgians, where minorities were seen as subordinate to the majority. Gamsakhurdia's successor in office, Eduard Shevardnadze, pronounced its openness towards minorities, and aimed at including the votes of the big minority groups. The party law bans parties “on regional base” (§6), due to the fear of secessionism,³⁹ and it prohibits any organisation that might “attempt

³⁵ Carothers, 'End of the Transition Paradigm', OSCE ODIHROSCE ODIHR Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, *Georgia. Partial Repeat Parliamentary Elections 28 March 2004*.

³⁶ Unified Election Code, §115, §118, §119, §123, §124, §126.

³⁷ Election Code of Georgia, as of 2005, English translation available from the European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission) (Opinion no. 358 / 2005).

³⁸ Nodia, *Polietničnost' Gruzii*, 63-4.

³⁹ International Crisis Group, *Armenian and Azeri Minorities*, 17, Nodia and Scholtbach, *Political Parties*, 46.

to include ethnic, racial, social and national unrest” (§26, section 3), which is used as a means not to register ethnically based organisations.⁴⁰

The geometry of electoral districts further affects the representation of minorities. The Georgian *temi*, which work as single-seat districts for the plurality part of the local elections, are unevenly sized, leading to a systematic bias against the representation of minorities (malapportionment). The *temi*, established in 1921, vary today substantially in their population, even within the same municipality, due to migration, deportation during Stalin’s regency, and varying birth rates. As voters of each *temi* elect one delegate to the municipal assembly, small *temi* – which tend rather to be ethnically Georgian – voters are better represented than in large *temi* – which are more often those of the minorities. For instance, in the municipality of Akhalkalaki (94% Armenian population) in Samtskhe-Javakheti, average Georgian *temi* count 490 members, compared to 3046 in predominately Armenian *temi*. Mixed-ethnic *temi* tend to be even smaller than ethnic Georgian ones. Many of them used to have a Greek majority which has largely emigrated. Now, they are mostly represented by ethnic Georgians, which reinforces the political dominance of ethnic Georgians (see appendix A1 for details).

4 Political representation of minorities under restrictive conditions: the Georgian local elections of 2006

For our empirical investigation of minority representation in Georgia, we consider the degree of descriptive representation overall, and further discuss representation of the largest minority groups, Armenians and Azeri. Descriptive representation means that ethnic groups are represented by their own members in political institutions. It might often go along with substantial representation, the question whether they deputies act according to the interest of a certain ethnic group, or whether they represent the demands of an ethnic group. Numerous previous work has shown that descriptive representation of ethnic minorities in Georgia is weak, both in the regional and in the local governments, and in appointed public offices.⁴¹ Relying on subnational

⁴⁰ Nodia and Scholtbach, *Political Parties*, 43.

⁴¹ International Crisis Group, *Armenian and Azeri Minorities*, Lohm, *Javakheti after the Rose Revolution*, Wheatley, *Javakheti*, ---, *Kvemo Kartli*.

comparison, we test our hypotheses, aiming at explaining the low degree of minority representation, but beforehand, we give a brief descriptive overview. For the quantitative study of minority representation, we compiled a database with the results of the local elections 2006 and ethnic and socio-economic data by municipality.⁴² Diverse documents allowed us to ascertain the number and ethnic affiliation of minority candidates.⁴³

4.1 Armenian and Azeri representation at the local and regional level

In the two overwhelmingly (95%) Armenian-populated municipalities, Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda, both remote from the capital Tbilisi, the Armenian minority controls some of the institutions. Local administration is influenced by the Georgian government, by “handpicking its own loyal members from the local Armenian elite to form the administration at *rayon* [ie. municipality] level”.⁴⁴ The deputies of the parliaments in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda are usually influential persons, well-connected in the regional economy, especially in energy trade.⁴⁵ Armenian is the *de facto* language of administration, and communication with the central government is in Russian, although the Law on Public Service demands the use of Georgian language in public service.⁴⁶

In more heterogeneous and less remote municipalities of Samtskhe-Javakheti, and at the regional level, the political impact of the Armenian minority is weak.⁴⁷ The region, dominated by ethnic Armenians (55% of the population), was created in 1994, merging the mainly Armenian region of Javakheti with the ethnically mainly Georgian region of Samtskhe. Only ethnic Georgians have been nominated as governors by the state president,⁴⁸ and their Armenian deputies had rather symbolic functions. In all public offices, Armenians are heavily underrepresented, and even in the Armenian-

⁴² Sources for the election data: Central Electoral Commission www.cec.gov.ge (last accessed April 2010).

⁴³ Partly, information is provided by the Central Electoral Commission. We further investigated lists of candidates and of elected deputies to ascertain the ethnic affiliation, and cross-checked with other listings and with the counting of the Electoral Commission to assure the accuracy. Armenian and Azeri names are easily distinguishable from Georgian names.

⁴⁴ Wheatley, *Javakheti*, 31.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁴⁶ Evers, 'Samtskhe-Javakheti', 316, International Crisis Group, *Armenian and Azeri Minorities*, 22.

⁴⁷ International Crisis Group, *Armenian and Azeri Minorities*, 9.

⁴⁸ Wheatley, *Javakheti*, 12.

dominated part of the region, some key positions for regulating distribution of wealth and property are held by Georgians.⁴⁹

In the Kvemo Kartli region (45% Azeri), both the regional and municipal administrations in Kvemo Kartli are dominated by Georgians.⁵⁰ So far, only ethnic Georgians have been appointed by the state president to the governor's office and to the municipal prefect offices, even in highly Azeri dominated municipalities. The 1994-2003 governor Levan Mamaladze promoted the candidacies of Azeris within the government party list for parliamentary elections, while giving important positions in municipalities to ethnic Georgians, including the posts of the municipal chairpersons.⁵¹ After the "rose revolution of 2004", many minority representatives which had been loyal to the old government have been replaced by Georgians loyal to Saakashvili, who often are no locals.⁵²

In the further analysis, we rely on a comparative analysis of the 2006 local elections. The comparison of 64 municipalities (those where elections were held, except for the capital Tbilisi, with special electoral rules) allows us to draw conclusions about reasons for low representation of minorities. We look separately at the attempts to run with minority parties, on the lists of mainstream political parties, and with independent candidates, before putting the picture together.

Despite very restrictive registration rules,⁵³ all relevant opposition parties were running in the local elections of 2006 – although only the ruling parties was present countrywide. Irregularities were reported regarding the voter lists⁵⁴ and in the vote count,⁵⁵ and there are reports about electoral fraud which also mention the mainly Azeri municipality of Marneuli⁵⁶ and some rural villages of Ninotsminda and Akhalkalaki.⁵⁷

⁴⁹ Evers, 'Samtskhe-Javakheti', 311, International Crisis Group, *Armenian and Azeri Minorities*, 9-10.

⁵⁰ International Crisis Group, *Armenian and Azeri Minorities*, 10.

⁵¹ Wheatley, *Kvemo Kartli*, 12-19.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 20, 37.

⁵³ International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), *2006 Local Elections*, 14-5, OSCE ODIHR, *Georgia Municipal Elections 2006*, 9.

⁵⁴ Regnum, *Fraud in local elections*.

⁵⁵ Press release, OSCE/ODIHR and Council of Europe Congress, Tbilisi, 6 October 2006, available at http://www.osce.org/odihr-elections/item_1_21165.html.

⁵⁶ In Marneuli, electoral protocols were manipulated and electoral observers were hindered from conducting observations. Minority regions are located in remote areas, where the level of education is lower. Especially, lacking knowledge of Georgian language by members of the Electoral

4.2 Attempts to run with ethnic minority parties

There were no parties or organisations of ethnic minorities competing with own lists or candidates in the Georgian local elections in 2006. Attempts to establish political parties of Armenians and Azeris failed, due to the restrictive Georgian party laws.

Both communities have founded organisations in 1988 (Javakhk, Armenian minority) and in 1990 (Geyrat, Azeri minority).⁵⁸ *Javakhk* fully controlled the Akhalkalaki municipality through parallel institutions, and could exert considerable influence on the appointment of its leader as local prefect.⁵⁹ As Geyrat leaders were co-opted by the central government, the organisation lost influence, but it is still present in the Azeri political scene, while Javakhk was succeeded by other Armenian organisations. Among them, particularly noteworthy are the autonomist ethnic Armenian party *Virk* founded in 1995, the Javakheti Youth Sport Union (JEMM) in 2005, and the nationalist organisation *United Javakhk*.⁶⁰ All attempts to register minority organisations as parties have remained unsuccessful, and many candidates belonging to the Azeri *Geyrat* organisation were pressured by the authorities not to run as independent candidates in the 2006 local elections.⁶¹ While the attempt to form an umbrella organisation of minorities to bypass the territorial registration rules failed, minority organisations in several occasions ran on the ticket of mainstream political parties (see next paragraph).

4.3 Election of minority members on mainstream lists in the PR part

There were two forms of electoral competition of minorities on mainstream lists (the lists of political parties that are dominated by ethnic Georgians) – through marriage of convenience with opposition party and much more importantly through participation of minority members on the list of the governing UNM party. We show that

Commissions, while voting protocols are available only in Georgian, opens the door for procedural shortcomings and election fraud in minority regions. Freizer, *Ethnic Minorities and Elections*, 121-3, International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), *2006 Local Elections*, 34-5, Nodia and Scholtbach, *Political Parties*, 27.

⁵⁷ Expert interview, May 2010.

⁵⁸ Wheatley, *Javakheti*, 13.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁰ International Crisis Group, *Armenian and Azeri Minorities*, 15-7, Lohm, *Javakheti after the Rose Revolution*, 17-8, Nodia and Scholtbach, *Political Parties*, 46.

⁶¹ Freizer, *Ethnic Minorities and Elections*, 125.

representation on opposition lists has important spill-over effects on the strategy of the governing party – and therefore, start with an account of the opposition strategies.

In the municipality of Akhalkalaki (94% Armenians), the Armenian organisation *United Javakhk* ran with its candidates on an electoral list on behalf of the opposition party *Industry Will Save Georgia* party (IWSG, short: *Industrialists*), and won three PR seats in the municipal council. Nationally, the *Industrialists* were a fairly weak party, winning only some 3.9% of the national vote. In Akhalkalaki, they achieved their best results throughout the country with officially 32.5% of the votes.⁶² The electoral cooperation of *United Javakhk* and the *Industrialists* for the local 2006 elections in Akhalkalaki had a strong character of a marriage of convenience, allowing the Armenian party to run in the elections. Such cooperation was possible given the territorial separation of the electorate. The not ethnically oriented *Industrialists* win most their votes in urban areas with a Georgian majority, while *United Javakhk* is solely present in rural, Armenian areas. Allowing *United Javakhk* to use the *Industrialists*' label does not hurt them.

In the mixed-ethnic Tsalka municipality, which used to be represented by an ethnic Armenian *Industrialist* in national parliament, the *Industrialists* presented own ethnic Armenian candidates in local elections,⁶³ won 19% of the vote and two mandates for ethnic Armenian candidates. Elected minority candidates from other oppositional parties were rare.

Much more, Armenian and Azeri candidates were present on the lists of the governing UNM party of president Saakashvili, which in the local elections won an absolute majority of the seats in each municipality, and 77% of all PR votes countrywide. Powerful and radical minority leaders were offered lucrative positions in order to mute and align them, following the strategy applied by Saakashvili's predecessor Shevardnadze, who banned the danger of separatism in Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli, co-opting locally influential power brokers. Using economic ties of influential locals to the central government, Tbilisi managed to split up the influential

⁶² *United Javakhk* claims that more than twice this number of votes. Ibid., 124, Lohm, *Javakheti after the Rose Revolution*, 26.

⁶³ Freizer, *Ethnic Minorities and Elections*.

economic groups, especially of Javakheti.⁶⁴ This system of co-optation was kept throughout the regime change, as in Armenian areas, local elites remained at their positions throughout the “rose revolution” of 2004, and joined the new governing party UNM.⁶⁵ Generally, political parties are weakly organised in rural areas (if at all), and rather rely on control through local individuals.

In the local elections of 2006, UNM faced opposition from the Industrialists and United Javakh in the Armenian areas, but it was particularly strong in Azeri dominated municipalities. Voting for the incumbent government party expresses loyalty of the minorities to Georgia, and avoids taking a position in potential conflicts within the Georgian society.⁶⁶ Overall, minorities held 45 out of 687 mandates in the PR part of the elections: 39 on UNM lists, 3 from United Javakh in Akhalkalaki on the Industrialists’ list, and 3 from other opposition parties. After weighting the seats by the size of the population of the municipalities, this amounts to a seat share of 6.1% held by minorities, compared to the minorities’ population share of 16.3%.⁶⁷

The analysis of the electoral results of the 64 municipalities where elections were held (except for Tbilisi) allows us to test two of our hypotheses. We expect that if minority parties are restricted, minorities are doing better in ethnically homogeneous districts (hypothesis 1). In mixed-ethnic districts, minorities are represented (far) below their actual population share, whereas in homogeneous districts, minorities are represented (almost) according to their share of the population. This leads to a quadratic equation that explains the seat share of the minority in the PR elections – where they solely compete within the mainstream parties,

- depending on their share of the population p_{\min} (the higher the share of the minority in the population, the higher their expected vote share and seat share);
- and depending on their squared share of the population p_{\min}^2 (the higher the share of the minority in the population, the better their representation).

⁶⁴ International Crisis Group, *Armenian and Azeri Minorities*, 15-6, Lohm, *Javakheti after the Rose Revolution*, 12.

⁶⁵ Lohm, *Javakheti after the Rose Revolution*, 13.

⁶⁶ Wheatley, *Kvemo Kartli*, 18.

⁶⁷ Not considering minorities in territories not controlled by the central government.

Further, we hypothesised that competition between mainstream parties helps minorities to increase their representation within the mainstream parties in the PR elections (hypothesis 2). We operationalise electoral competition in the PR part as the fractionalisation of the seat share in parliament $comp$,⁶⁸ and we test whether higher competition helps the ethnic minorities to win a higher share of the seats on the UNM lists.⁶⁹ We include competition in an interaction effect $comp \cdot p_{min}$, since we expect that competition increases minority representation in those municipalities where the minority is present.⁷⁰ As minorities mainly live in rural municipalities, we control for differences between urban and rural municipalities.

$$y = \beta_1 \cdot p_{min} + \beta_2 \cdot p_{min}^2 + \beta_3 \cdot comp \cdot p_{min} + \beta_4 \cdot comp + \beta_5 \cdot controls + \varepsilon$$

The results of the regression analysis (figures 2 & 3, regression tables in appendix A3) show the expected curvilinear relationship between the local population share of the minorities and their representation. Also, curvilinearity is statistically significant. This shows that minorities are badly represented in mixed-ethnic municipalities, but much better represented in homogeneous municipalities (hypothesis 1). The rule is valid both overall, as for the minority deputies elected from UNM list. It equally applies both for the election only of ethnic Armenian deputies, as if all minorities are investigated jointly. This also rules out that the observed effect is an artefact emerging from differences between different minority groups. In the PR elections, ethnic minorities rely on the mainstream parties to enter the electoral lists. They only enter the lists on good list places (which secure their election) in homogeneous minority municipalities, where the mainstream parties need to rely on the minority elite. In heterogeneous

⁶⁸ Due to data availability, our index instead of votes relies on seats, which given the PR electoral system should not widely deviate. Also, we count the overall number of seats won by opposition parties (which, given the low seat percentage of the opposition, only leads to a minor bias). 1 indicates maximal possible competition. Empirically, the index varies from 0 (all 10 seats held by UNM, measured in nine municipalities) to 0.96 (6 seats held by UNM, 4 by the opposition, in the municipality of Dusheti).

⁶⁹ This avoids concerns about endogeneity. If employing the share of elected PR candidates from *all* lists as dependent variable, then any positive effect would reflect an inverse causality (in municipalities where the opposition runs with ethnic minority candidates, minorities vote for the opposition, and hence increase both the index of competition and the representation of minorities in the PR tier).

⁷⁰ In models with interaction effects, one should also to test for the simple effect of competition, in order to be certain that competition affects minority representation in interaction with the structure of the population. Braumoeller, 'Hypothesis Testing'.

municipalities, the Georgian dominated mainstream parties rather recruit ethnic Georgians.

The effect is nuanced by the intensity of electoral competition. Only the existence of a strong local opposition party motivates the UNM to include more Armenian candidates on its electoral lists (figure 3). In many cases, such as Ninotsminda (96% Armenian), there was no single opposition party to compete in the elections, so that it was left to UNM's discretion how the local council will be composed.

Xxx include figures 2 and 3 about here xxx

We have interviewed experts about several possible reasons for the low degree or lack of competition in several municipalities, especially in minority regions.⁷¹ They argued that opposition parties are concentrate their organisational structure and activities to Tbilisi and few other towns, and are mainly absent in minority regions. Cases where opposition parties were strong in minority regions were due to random contacts to local minority leaders, who either belonged to minority organizations, or helped opposition parties to establish ties to local candidates of the minority. Hence, the entry of the opposition seems rather to be a consequence of random local conditions than of strategic considerations, which dispels possible problems of endogeneity of our model.

4.4 Elections in the plurality vote part

Finally, we looked at the plurality vote part of the elections (see figure 2, right-hand part). There, representation of minority members elected from mainstream party lists is stronger than in the PR part, counting 93 out of 1000 seats – or weighted, they count 10% of the local power. As under PR, minorities are represented below their share of the local population, but their share of deputies in the local assemblies is much higher than under PR rule. First, this is reflected by a higher number of minority members elected on the lists of mainstream parties than under PR, and second by the possibility that independent candidates of ethnic minorities run in the single-seat district elections. Different from PR elections, under-representation is much less dramatic in mixed-ethnic municipalities. The curvilinear pattern in figure 2 is much weaker than under

⁷¹ Interviews were conducted in May 2010 in Zurich and in Tbilisi.

PR. And, the negative effect of ethnic heterogeneity on minority representatives is too weak in order to be statistically significant at conventional level (see appendix A3).

Most *temi*, even those in multi-ethnic municipalities, have a clear ethnic majority, so that competition is not ethnically based, and rather, the local ethnic majority won the seat. The only exception to this rule occurred in Okami (66.5% Georgians, 18.5% Armenians, 14% Russians), where two Georgians competed against an Armenian representative.

Independent candidates of local *initiative groups* were allowed all over the country. The means was used mainly by ethnic minorities to become represented in local assemblies. Out of the 112 members of minorities who were elected in single-seat districts, a respectable number of 19 were independent candidates. This is by far more than among ethnic Georgians, where only 42 out of 888 plurality vote seats, mostly in small municipalities, are held by independents.

Especially in Armenian *temi*, independents won the elections, while Azeri and other minorities rather stick to the mainstream parties or were pressured not to run in elections (see section 4.2). Out of 64 independent candidates elected into *sakrebulo*s, 15 were counted in Kvemo Kartli and 14 in Javakheti. 14 of them are Armenians, 5 Azeris. This is a considerable number, showing that independent candidates were much more spread and successful in minority areas than in ethnic Georgian *temi*: minority members count 30% of the independent candidates, but only 16% of the population. The difference looks even more impressive considering that given the unequal size of the single-seat districts (*temi*), a minority independent candidate represents much more voters than an ethnic Georgian independent candidate.

Some of these candidates were loyal to minority organisations. In Akhalkalaki, independent candidates loyal to *United Javakhk* won in seven single-seat districts.⁷² UNM candidates usually represented the local elite, while most independent (*United Javakhk*) candidates were unemployed.⁷³

However, also in the plurality elections, representation of minorities remains below their share of the population. This is a consequence of malapportionment and irregularities in the elections. In many cases, registration has been denied to

⁷² Lohm, *Javakheti after the Rose Revolution*, 25.

⁷³ Regnum, *Armenian leaders of Javakheti*.

independent candidates in minority regions or candidates have been discouraged from registering.⁷⁴ Furthermore, in regions with compact minority settlement electoral fraud has usually been higher, for example with exaggerations regarding turnout data.⁷⁵

4.5 Comparing electoral competition in PR and plurality vote

Summarising our results, we identify two major differences between representation under PR and under the plurality vote. Local elections in 2006 resulted in both systems in a degree of minority representation that remained below their population share, but for different reasons. In the plurality vote part of the elections, systematic intra-municipal differences in the electoral district size lead to a representation bias in favour of the titular Georgian nation. Differently, PR provides for a much stronger effect, resulting from large district magnitude and restrictions to the party system.

The most substantial differences between PR and the majoritarian vote emanate in ethnically heterogeneous municipalities in Georgia. While in homogeneous municipalities (> 90% minorities), minorities are adequately represented in the local assemblies under either electoral system, in mixed municipalities (minorities < 90%), they face difficulties in winning seats, especially under PR.

PR districts include the territory of the whole municipality. With 10 seats, they are much larger than the *temi* that serve as single-seat districts in the plurality part. Since all ethnically or territorially based political parties are forbidden, national mainstream parties, and especially the dominant UNM, ruled by ethnic Georgians, decide over the candidate nomination. In the PR part of the elections, only in two municipalities with a minority share above 90% (Ninotsminda and Akhalkalaki), minority candidates are (almost) adequately represented on the party lists and thus also in the municipal council. As long as the ethnic Georgian community is sizeable, there is a clear bias favouring ethnic Georgians on the party lists. In more heterogeneous environments, the political parties that control the candidate nomination process do have the possibility not to include members of the minorities in their list, or to put ethnic Georgians in the first positions of their electoral lists. Voters belonging to the minority can only elect

⁷⁴ International Crisis Group, *Armenian and Azeri Minorities*, 14.

⁷⁵ Due to the paternalistic social structures and due to a lack of knowledge of Georgian language by members of the Election Commissions, elections are more easy to manipulate in minority regions. This particularly applies to rural municipalities with low rates of literacy (expert interviews). See also Nodia, *Polietničnost' Gruzii*, 65.

these dominantly ethnic Georgian lists or abstain, as their own parties are not allowed. This effect is slightly lower only in municipalities with a credible electoral competitor, where competition might motivate parties to address minority voters more actively – but this does not eliminate the under-representation. Only in ethnically homogeneous districts, dominated by minorities, with only a very low percentage of ethnic Georgians, parties do not have any other choice than nominating ethnic minority candidates. Hence, almost automatically, a candidate of the local ethnic group gets elected. Often, in such circumstances the UNM would also recruit local notables of the ethnic minorities as its own candidates. In sum, ethnic minorities have little chances of winning seats in the PR elections with larger districts, apart from the few ethnically almost homogeneous municipalities.

The single-seat districts (plurality part), however, correspond to the local communities (*temi*), and most of them are ethnically very homogeneous. Hence, the comparison of both systems shows pronouncedly different results from the literature that has studied minority representation in liberal democracies.⁷⁶ Our findings indicate that PR and large electoral districts are not helpful to the representation of minorities, if competition is restricted, and minorities are not able to organise in their parties. In such a case ethnic minorities can best be represented in small plurality districts, because small districts are ethnically more homogeneous. Minorities are more likely to be able to select their own representatives there in a homogeneous minority district than in a large, but more diverse district.

4.6 Alternative explanations

Finally, we have looked at alternative explanations which – apart from the electoral system – might explain this pattern, or parts of it.

Differences in representation might be due to different political behaviour of different minority groups, – and result in the observed pattern for instance as Armenian

⁷⁶ E.g. Chandra, *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed*, 14, Doorenspleet, 'Electoral Systems and Good Governance in Divided Countries', 366, Norris, *Electoral Engineering*, 209-229, ---, *Stable democracy*, Rule and Zimmerman, *Electoral Systems*.

Note that parts of the literature highlight that minorities can also succeed in small and non-PR electoral districts, if these are homogeneous. Diwakar, 'Duverger's Law'; XXX

Our argument that small and plurality electoral districts are *better* for minority representation (if competition is restricted), seems not to apply for liberal democracies, and has not been made so far.

municipalities are more homogeneous than Azeri ones. To rule this out, we have tested our models by minority groups, and we find that the detected tendencies regarding the share of minority candidates in heterogeneous municipalities, the effect of electoral competition and the comparison between plurality vote and PR hold irrespective of the specific group: what is valid for all minorities, similarly applies if looking solely at the Armenian minority (see appendix A3).

Second, Georgian is prescribed as official language for political processes, but members of the minorities hardly speak it. While the language laws are little adhered in the minority regions,⁷⁷ they might render political participation for minorities in ethnically mixed municipalities difficult. However, in mixed-ethnic regions, knowledge of Georgian is much better among the minority elites.⁷⁸ Our interlocutors told us that Russian also serves as common language in mixed-ethnic municipalities. Hence, the lack of Georgian language knowledge can not be the core argument explaining low representation of minorities in mixed-ethnic municipalities.

5 Discussion and outlook

Many models of elections and representation of ethnic minorities assume free and competitive elections, and adopt an empirical focus on liberal democracies. Differently, this study offers a theoretical model about minority representation in semi-democratic countries with partially competitive elections. Even there, elections are crucial for the representation of minorities and for the ethnic balance.

Many semi-democracies with ethnic divides restrict the rights of ethnic minorities to run in elections with their own parties or organisations and there is only little competition of non-minority parties for the votes of ethnic minorities, also due to a restricted political plurality. Under these conditions – which are frequent in semi-democracies – we show that minorities fare best with small, local electoral districts, which are usually ethnically homogeneous. This is quite in contrary to the dominant power-sharing literature, suggesting that proportional representation systems with large districts that is the most favourable for minority representation in divided countries.

⁷⁷ International Crisis Group, *Armenian and Azeri Minorities*, 22.

⁷⁸ Wheatley, *Javakheti*, 6-8.

Our paper proposes two detailed explanations of minority success in semi-democratic elections, which have been illustrated and statistically tested for the 2006 local elections in Georgia, held under a mixed electoral system. Minorities are generally insufficiently represented in the political institutions of Georgia, and both the population structure of the municipalities and the electoral system affect this picture.

First, if representation of minorities is restricted, they will run within national mainstream parties and with independent candidates – if they are allowed. For this aim, small electoral districts are more favourable to minorities than large districts, since small territorial units tend to be ethnically homogeneous. In homogeneous minority districts, mainstream parties need to present minority candidates on their lists, or they might even form alliances of convenience with minority organisations, in order to fill their electoral lists.

Second, low representation of the minorities within the hegemonic party is a consequence of lacking electoral competition. In absence of relevant other political parties, the hegemonic party has free hand to present lists including only a minimal number of minority representatives. This changes if there is considerable electoral competition, which incites mainstream parties to aim at winning minority votes – and in change they include more members of minorities on their lists.

We expect these patterns of representation neither to be group, nor country-specific. In the Georgian case, our analysis reveals similar effects, regardless if our model is applied on one specific minority group, or on all minorities. We expect these findings to hold similarly also for national elections, particularly because in divided societies, ethnicity is often an issue in local and in national politics. As in semi-democratic countries politics are often driven by personal benefits, local as national political positions are desired, so that we expect this to hold equally also for other levels of elections. An extension of the analysis to other ethnically divided semi-democracies with restricted plurality and with restrictions on minority parties, and a consideration of the consequences for substantive representation and for political stability might constitute a venue for further studies.

While our empirical study solely investigated the number of minority members elected to public offices, we can hypothesise several implications that address the quality of minority representation in broader terms – but leave them open to rigorous

empirical investigation. The quality of representation (within mainstream parties, own minority parties, or with independent candidates) has also implications for the ability to affect policies according to the demands of the minorities.

A lack of a minority party and lacking competition between mainstream parties for the votes of ethnic minorities give minorities little power to bring their concerns in. Rather than being forceful representatives of minority interests, minority politicians in the ranks of the ruling party are characterised as co-opted minority leaders – a concern widely echoed in our interviews with local experts.

Concerns about the quality of representation apply also for independent candidates. Lacking a strong political organisation, they might be vulnerable to political pressure, and be little accountable to their voters. Last but not least, in transition countries where national and local political competences are often not clearly separated, independent candidates lack the link to a national-level political party, which would allow them to coordinate demands in the national and in the local arena.

Appendix A1: Size of *temi* and ethnic malapportionment in Kvemo Kartli and Samtskhe-Javakheti

In ethnically mixed municipalities, the votes of Georgians have more weight. In Kvemo Kartli, Azeri *temi* are generally bigger than the Georgian ones.

Xxx include table A1 about here xxx

In Samtskhe-Javakheti, the distribution is similar. This finding is especially pronounced in Akhalkalaki municipality. The seven Georgian villages elect 5 *sakrebulo* deputies, while the 58 Armenian or mixed villages share just 17 deputies.⁷⁹ Only in Borjomi, the Armenian minority has more weight than the Georgians, but there's only one Armenian *temi*, Tabatskuri.

Xxx include table A2 about here xxx

On average, the mixed *temi* are the smallest ones. Many of them used to have a Greek majority which has largely emigrated. Now these *temi* are represented usually by Georgians.

Appendix A2: Descriptive analysis of minority representation in the 2006 local elections

Armenian minority

In clearly Armenian-dominated municipalities, there were almost only Armenians elected from PR lists. Georgians had good chances to become elected if they are concentrated to one or few *temi*, and they might get even over-represented in the plurality elections, due to malapportionment. In municipalities with a low share of Armenians, they were generally underrepresented (except for Adigeni), especially in the PR part.

Only in Tsalka, an ethnically very heterogeneous municipality in the Kvemo Kartli region, with a 55% ethnic Armenian majority and only 12% ethnic Georgians,

⁷⁹ Lohm, *Javakheti after the Rose Revolution*, 22.

Armenian candidates were quite successful both on the lists of the Industrialists and of UNM. Otherwise, ethnic Armenians could win only very few PR mandates in ethnically mixed municipalities, while they were quite successful – although often rather underrepresented – in the majoritarian part of the elections.⁸⁰

Xxx include table A3 about here xxx

Azeri minority

In Kvemo Kartli, the region with a strong concentration of ethnic Azeris, there is an extreme bias in the PR part of the local elections: Azeris are generally heavily underrepresented. In the three municipalities with Azeri majority, only five (Marneuli), three (Bolnisi) and one (Dmanisi) seat were won by Azeris (table A4), all of them on UNM lists. In the plurality vote part, the Azeris performed much better, but were still underrepresented. This relies, first, on the malapportionment of the *temi*, and second on the election of Georgians in mixed *temi* with a small percentage of Georgians. For instance, in the municipality of Bolnisi, Georgians won in Kveshi (only 15% Georgians) and in two other mixed *temi*. However, in a mixed Greek-Georgian-Azeri *temi* in the municipality of Tsalka, an Azeri has been elected.

Xxx include table A4 about here xxx

Xxx include table A5 about here xxx

Appendix A3: Multivariate model for minority representation in PR and plurality part of the local elections, 2006

Table A6 presents the results of the regression analysis. Each model is tested separately for all minorities (model 1 and 3) and for ethnic Armenians (model 2 and 4). Ethnic Armenians have a slightly higher socio-economic and political status, and hence, it is plausible that they are better represented than other minorities. We further control for the difference between urban and rural municipalities (dummy variable). All models show that there is indeed the expected curvilinear relationship between the

⁸⁰ Only in Marneuli, a municipality in Kvemo Kartli with an 83% ethnic Azeri population, and a 7.9% Armenian minority, Armenians were largely overrepresented in the majoritarian part. The four (partly) Armenian *temi* in Marneuli are three times smaller than the ethnic Georgian *temi*, and even nine times smaller than Azeri *temi* in the municipality.

minority share in a municipality and their representation. The squared term of the minority share emerges clearly in all four models, and is statistically significant. It shows that minorities are badly represented in mixed-ethnic municipalities, but much better represented in homogeneous municipalities, in line with our hypothesis 1 (see also figure 2 in the main text). The rule is valid both overall, as for the minority deputies elected from UNM list: ethnic minorities enter the electoral lists of

Further, we find that electoral competition helps the ethnic Armenians to be better represented on the UNM lists. This is expressed by the positive and significant interaction term $comp \cdot p_{min}$ in the fourth model. Hence, only the existence of a credible electoral alternative – a strong local opposition party – motivates the UNM to change its strategy and to increase the number of Armenian candidates on its electoral lists.

Xxx include table A6 about here xxx

Table A7 repeats the analysis for the plurality vote part.

Xxx include table A7 about here xxx

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XXX References to authors' own work omitted.

Minority representation in a semi-democratic regime: the Georgian case

Tables and figures

23 July 2010

	Minority parties	Independent candidates	Local citizens' groups	within mainstream parties
List PR - effect of large district magnitude	✓ Positive	(✓) negative (imposes high coordination)	(✓) positive	✓ negative (if competition is low)
Plurality or majority vote	✓	✓	✓	✓
Restrictions against minority organisations	-	(✓)	(✓)	✓

Table 1: Types of minority representation under different electoral systems, overview.

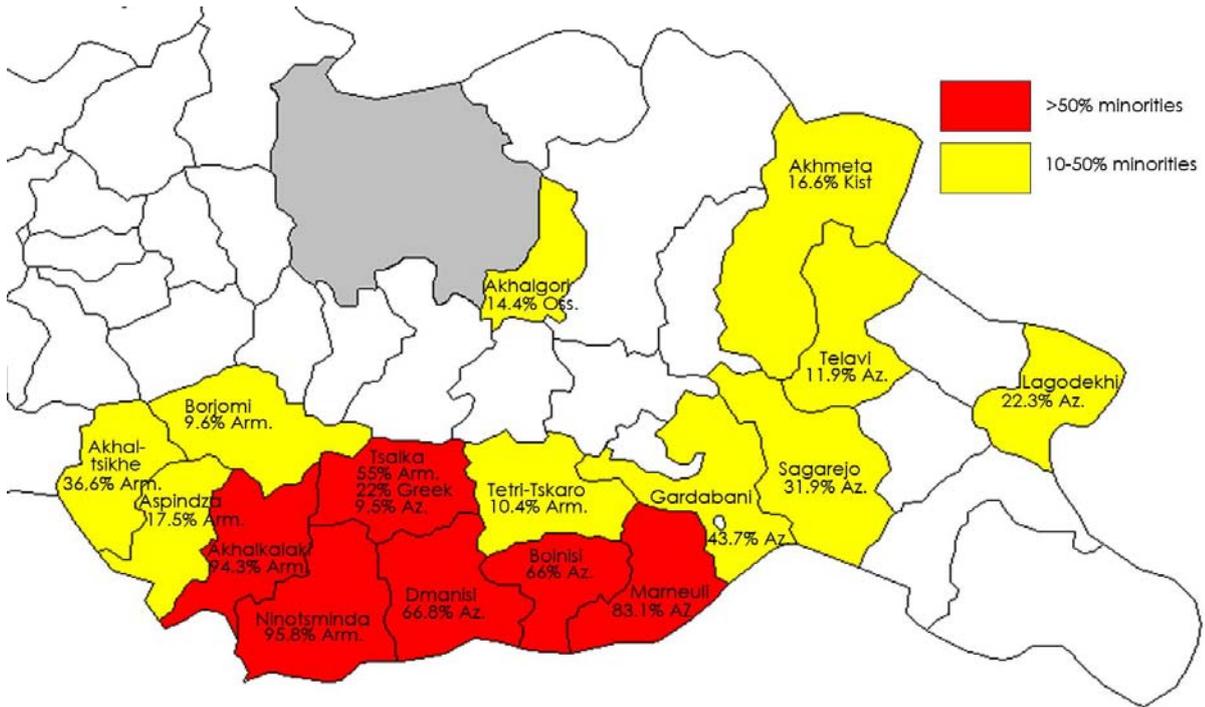


Figure 1: Ethnic minorities in Georgia (numbers according to the 2002 census).

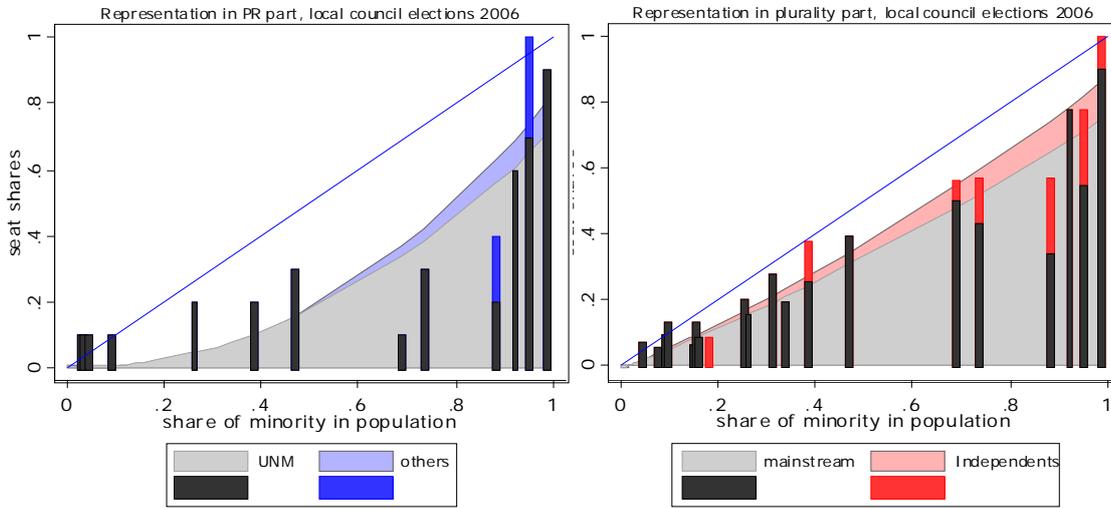


Figure 2: Seat share of minority representatives in PR part and in plurality part in the Georgian local elections, 2006, by share of all minorities in the local population. Estimates by regression models (filled areas) and real values (bars, only municipality with at least 1% minorities)

Local council elections 2006, competition and UNM strategy under PR

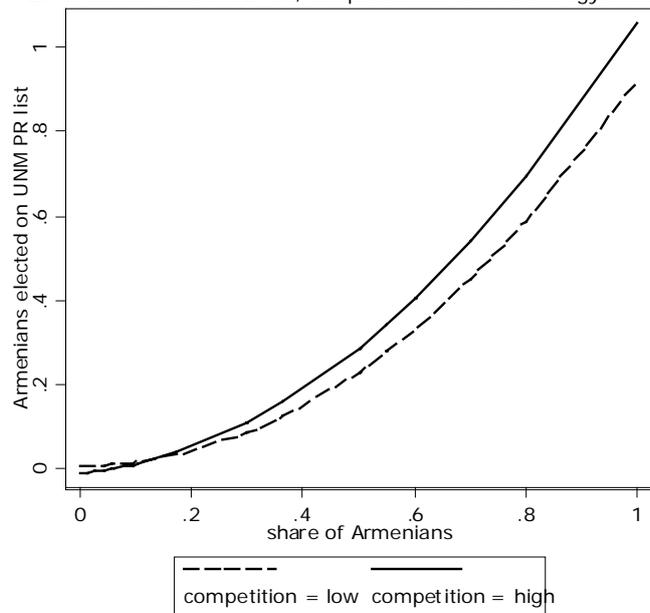


Figure 3: The effect of electoral competition on the structure of the UNM party list: Share of elected ethnic Armenian candidates by local population share of Armenians, under high electoral competition (solid line) and low electoral competition (dashed line). The graph shows regression estimates for the Georgian 2006 local elections, PR part.

Low competition: only UNM wins seats. High competition: maximal empirically value of 0.96.

Tables in online appendix

Table A1: Average size of Kvemo Kartli's temi

<i>municipality</i>	<i>average size of Georgian temi</i>	<i>average size of Azeri temi</i>	<i>average size of mixed temi</i>
Gardabani	3049 inh.	4457 inh.	-
Dmanisi	1324 inh.	2193 inh.	124 inh.
Marneuli	2577 inh.	8316 inh.	908 inh.
Tsalka	318 inh.	884 inh.	663 inh.
Tetri Tskaro	1141 inh.	1628 inh.	400 inh.
Kvemo Kartli	2250 inh.	5079 inh.	818 inh.

Table A2: Average size of Samtskhe-Javakheti's temi

<i>municipality</i>	<i>average size of Georgian temi</i>	<i>average size of Armenian temi</i>	<i>average size of mixed temi</i>
Akhaltzikhe	1534 inh.	1945 inh.	1280 inh.
Adigeni	1415 inh.	-	-
Aspindza	704 inh.	1984 inh.	-
Akhalkalaki	490 inh.	3046 inh.	-
Borjomi	1301 inh.	996 inh.	644 inh.
Ninotsminda	-	3178 inh.	2590 inh.
Samtskhe-Jav.	1140 inh.	2803 inh.	1504 inh.

Table A3: Performance of the Armenian minority in 2006 local elections

Municipality	Share of Armenians	Majoritarian part		PR part		Total Share
		Seats	Share	Seats	Share	
Ninotsminda	95.8%	10	100.0%	9	90%	95.0%
Akhalkalaki	94.3%	17	77.3%	10	100%	84.4%
Tsalka	55.0%	11	36.7%	4	40%	37.5%
Akhaltzikhe	36.6%	6	37.5%	2	20%	30.8%
Aspindza	17.5%	1	8.3%	0	-	4.5%
Tetritskaro	10.4%	1	5.0%	0	-	3.3%
Borjomi	9.6%	1	7.7%	0	-	3.8%
Marneuli	7.9%	3	16.7%	0	-	3.6%
Tbilisi	7.6%	0	-	0	-	0.0%
Batumi	6.2%	0	-	0	-	0.0%
Bolnisi	5.8%	1	7.1%	0	-	4.2%
Adigeni	3.4%	1	6.7%	1	10%	8.0%
Khashuri	1.2%	0	-	1	10%	4.3%

Table A4: Performance of the Azeri minority in 2006 local elections

Municipality	Share of Azeris	Majoritarian part		PR part		Total Share
		Seats	Share	Seats	Share	
Marneuli	83.1%	11	61.1%	5	50%	57.1%
Dmanisi	66.1%	8	56.3%	1	10%	34.6%
Bolnisi	66.0%	7	50.0%	3	30%	29.2%
Gardabani	43.7%	9	39.0%	3	30%	36.4%
Sagarejo	31.9%	4	19.0%	0	-	12.9%
Lagodekhi	22.3%	4	26.7%	0	-	16.0%
Telavi	11.9%	1	5.6%	0	-	3.6%
Tsalka	9.5%	4	13.3%	0	-	10.0%
Kaspi	7.6%	0	0.0%	0	-	0.0%
Tetriskaro	6.5%	1	5.0%	1	10%	6.7%
Rustavi	4.3%	0	-	0	-	0.0%
Mtskheta	3.4%	1	6.3%	0	-	3.8%

Table A5: Performance of the Russians, Kists, Greeks and Ossetians

Minority	Municipality	Share of minority	Majoritarian part		PR part		Total Share
			Seats	Share	Seats	Share	
Russians	Lagodekhi	2.4%	1	6.7%	0	-	4.0%
	Lentekhi	0.2%	-	-	1	10%	5.6%
Kists	Akhmeta	16.6%	3	20.0%	0	-	12.0%
Greeks	Tsalka	22.0%	2	6.7%	0	-	5.0%
	Tetritskaro	5.0%	1	5.0%	0	-	3.3%
	Dmanisi	0.8%	1	6.3%	0	-	3.8%
Ossetians	Akhalgori	14.4%	1	12.5%	0	-	5.6%
	Gori	4.3%	1	4.8%	0	-	3.2%
	Mtskheta	2.2%	1	6.3%	0	-	3.8%

Note: Kvareli municipality has been excluded from this overview, since most of its members of minority groups declared to belong to not specified "other minorities" in 2002 census. According to <http://linguarium.iling-ran.ru/maps/8-dag.gif>, these are most likely Avars or Bezhtins (Dagestani people speaking North Caucasian languages). In Kvareli, in each part of the election one minority representative has been elected.

Dependent variable	Minority seats (PR elections)		Ethnic Armenian seats (PR elections)		Minority seats within UNM (PR elections)		Ethnic Armenian seats within UNM (PR elections)	
	coeff	robust s.e.	coeff	s.e.	coeff	robust s.e.	coeff	robust s.e.
			[p_{\min} = share of Armenians]				[p_{\min} = share of Armenians]	
			robust					
p_{\min}	-0.135	0.242	0.204**	0.072	-0.151	0.332	0.033	0.180
p_{\min}^2	0.948**	0.293	0.857**	0.105	0.901**	0.335	0.940**	0.184
comp					-0.026	0.031	-0.021	0.017
comp · p_{\min}					0.183	0.228	0.163**	0.027
rural	0.012	0.011	0.007	0.005	0.014	0.014	0.003	0.004
constant	0.002	0.017	-0.006	0.004	0.011	0.029	0.009	0.012
N	64		64		64		64	
R ²	0.8832		0.9841		0.8722		0.9833	

Table A6: Regression analysis for the representation of minorities in the PR elections.

Dependent variable	Minority seats (plurality vote part)		Minority seats, independent cand. (plurality vote)		Minority seats in mainstream parties (plurality vote)	
	coeff	robust s.e.	coeff	robust s.e.	coeff	robust s.e.
ρ_{\min}	0.661**	0.106	0.099	.069	0.562**	0.136
ρ_{\min}^2	0.207(*)	0.123	-0.076	0.084	0.282(*)	0.150
ρ_{Armenian}	0.027	0.067	0.188**	0.062	-0.162	0.112
rural	0.047*	0.023	0.007	0.006	0.040*	0.018
constant	-0.057	0.024	-0.011	0.007	-0.045	0.020
N	64		64		64	
R ²	0.9735		0.697		0.941	

Table A7. Regression analysis for the representation of minorities in the plurality elections.

OLS regression, municipalities weighted by the number of their population.