Does Familiarity Breed Contempt? Inter-Ethnic Contact and Support for Illiberal Parties*

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Does contact between ethnic groups lead to greater support for liberal parties? Research on this debate in the U.S. context is contaminated by high levels of mobility and a truncated party palette. This paper addresses the problem through an examination of the 1929 and 1935 national parliamentary elections in Czechoslovakia, where mobility was limited and the spectrum of parties was broad. We employ ecological inference on an original database of election and census results for several thousand municipalities to estimate ethnic group support for liberal and nonliberal parties across a variety of local demographic configurations. The results show that interethnic contact has indeterminate electoral effects: no uniform pattern of support for liberal parties exists either across or within ethnic groups. The electoral impact of contact depends upon the peculiarities of the group being studied and the national demographic context under which contact occurs. In and of itself, contact between ethnic groups breeds neither amity nor contempt.

One key condition for sustaining democracy is the continued predominance of liberal democratic parties within the party system. Where radical parties gain sufficient mass popular support, the fate of democracy is bleak. Multiethnic democracies are seen as especially vulnerable to the polarizing and zero-sum political competition that breeds communal conflict, simmering resentments, ethnic outbidding, and increased support for parties espousing ethnic hatred and antiliberal politics (Chandra 2004; Dahl 1971; Horowitz 1985). The purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationship between ethnic demography and mass electoral preferences for liberal democratic and illiberal political parties.¹

Comparativists who study the politics of ethnic voting tend to focus on how national and regional-level demography structures elite ethnic cooperation and conflict, how it shapes the probability of cross ethnic alliances, and even how demography determines the long-term stability of democracy. (e.g., Posner 2005; Radnitz 2004). We acknowledge the importance for democratic support of factors such as the number of significant ethnic groups, their overall size relative to one another, and the potential for cross-cutting cleavages. Such macrolevel approaches, however, neglect the local demographic context within which voters formulate their electoral preferences. Our aim is to analyze how the dispersion of ethnic groups across localities (but within a fixed national demographic configuration) affects mass support for liberal and illiberal parties. Does familiarity breed contempt? Or are multiethnic localities the best hope for liberal democratic parties?

Despite decades of research, scholars still disagree on why contact between groups leads in some cases toward more peaceful, inclusive politics, while in other cases toward increased mutual antipathy and illiberal sentiments. There are basically two schools of thought

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¹By liberal democratic parties we mean those parties ideologically committed to competing for power using the institutions and procedures of liberal democracy. Following Linz (1976) and Sartori (1976), this usually means pragmatic parties of the center-right and center-left.

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correlation between intergroup contact and tolerance determine the direction of causality. For example, the peting hypotheses. First, extreme levels of residential context that complicate efforts to test the two com-
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amity in divided societies, in which political stability is attained through mutually agreed segregation of antagonistic groups and a shared commitment to
effective government through power sharing at the supra-communal level (Lijphart 1977). To the extent the threat hypothesis holds, then parties seeking to
capitalize on intergroup hostility should find their greatest success in ethnically heterogeneous areas.

Proponents of the so-called threat hypothesis take the opposite tack. While not denying the theoretical advantages of contact, they emphasize how demographic balance influences the degree to which one group perceives other groups as a threat. Threat perception may be rooted in actual competition over resources and jobs or in hazier fears of social and political vulnerability to people who are seen to have different values and ways of life. Either way, the propinquity of ethnic groups is thought to induce suspicion and hostility rather than mutual tolerance (e.g., Blumer 1958; Blalock 1967; Bobo and Hutchings 1996). This view underlies the consociational model for interethnic amity in divided societies, in which political stability is attained through mutually agreed segregation of antagonistic groups and a shared commitment to
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The tension between the two views lies as much in research design and method as it does in theory. Much of the work has focused on race relations and politics in the United States, where the wide availability of detailed survey and ecological data has facilitated sophisticated attempts to bridge the theoretical divide (e.g., Oliver and Wong 2003; Stein, Post, and Rinden 2000). As troubled as race relations have been in the United States, however, there are two features of the American context that complicate efforts to test the two competing hypotheses. First, extreme levels of residential and professional mobility mean that it is difficult to determine the direction of causality. For example, the correlation between intergroup contact and tolerance may be less a result of learning than the prior decision of tolerant people to live in ethnically mixed areas. In the latter case, it is liberal values that lead to interethnic contact, rather than vice versa. To avoid this conundrum, some scholars have shifted from observational to experimental research, where the variables at work can be manipulated in a semicontrolled setting (Glazer 2003). Of course, what is gained in methodological rigor is lost in external validity: however realistic the experiment, it is not at all clear that the conclusions travel very well back to the real world.

The second troublesome feature of the U.S. context concerns its truncated party political palette. The dominance of two liberal democratic parties and the institutional barriers to the success of alternatives means that the U.S. party spectrum does not reflect whatever potential mass constituencies exist for exclusionary or antiliberal politics. Instances of political extremism such as George Wallace’s presidential candidacy and David Duke’s various attempts to capture state office in Louisiana do provide important opportunities to test the threat hypothesis (Giles and Bruckner 1993; Voss 1996; Wright 1977), but these are the exceptions that prove the rule. We simply do not know who would support hypothetical African American, Hispanic, or fascist parties if the U.S. single-member district system, which discourages third-party entry, were replaced with proportional representation.

Research Design

In this paper we examine the political consequences of ethnic proximity through a detailed examination of electoral behavior in interwar Czechoslovakia. The principal advantage of Czechoslovakia is that it provides some remedy for the two aforementioned deficiencies of the U.S. case. First, although the country was undergoing urbanization at the time, the level of mobility in Czechoslovakia was far below that of the post-World War II United States. The great wave of out-migration to other countries had ceased after World War I, and although the cities continued to attract rural folk, neither the labor nor the housing markets were flexible enough to give many the luxury of choosing where they could live. Most people were stuck where they were. The analysis will therefore be less contaminated by the selection effect.

Second, interwar Czechoslovakia’s electoral system featured a combination of proportional representa-
tion and relatively low thresholds to enter parliament.
Consequently, it enjoyed a remarkably diverse array of viable political parties. The interwar period may be best known for authoritarianism, but it was a golden age for political diversity. Fascism and communism had not yet been discredited, and they competed alongside nationalist and liberal democratic parties for mass support. We discuss various political parties in the following section.

Interwar Czechoslovakia has two other features that make it an excellent venue for this research. First, there is good reason to expect Czechoslovakia’s ethnic demography to be a powerful determinant of political behavior. The lands comprising Czechoslovakia had been multiethnic for centuries, and numerous stereotypes and mutual prejudices had arisen under Habsburg rule. The arrogant, exploitative German and backward, clerical Slovak had become a staple of Czech literature. In the Slovak popular imagination the Czechs were hypocritical urban sophisticates, the Hungarians nationalist usurpers. Hungarian discourse, for its part, held Slovaks in disdain and suitable for forced assimilation (King 2002; Seton-Watson 1908; Wiskemann 1967). The founding of the new states after World War I gave new life to these prejudices by reshuffling the ethnic hierarchy. Czechs who were inferior to the Germans in the ethnic pecking order in the Habsburg era but superior in the ethnic pecking order to Slovaks, now ruled in tandem with the Slovaks over Germans and Hungarians (and Jews). This reversal of ethnic fortunes rendered interwar ethnic relations particularly volatile. Although class and rural/urban cleavages were pronounced in Czechoslovakia and throughout East–Central Europe in the interwar period, most historians maintain that the deepest and most important divides in these societies were ethnic (e.g., Polonsky 1972, Rothschild 1974). 2

Second, Czechoslovakia held regularly scheduled free and fair national parliamentary elections. We examine two, in 1929 and 1935. The advantage of these is that they took place under very different political circumstances. Whereas the 1929 election occurred before the global economic crisis and subsequent international political turbulence, the 1935 election took place well after the Nazi seizure of power in Germany, the turn to Stalinism in the Soviet Union, and the general authoritarian turn in Europe as a whole. The dissolution of democracy in neighboring countries, and in Germany in particular, emboldened the Czech, German, and Slovak fascist elites to shed some of their prior fealty to the republic in general and to amicable ethnic relations in particular. By analyzing both the 1929 and 1935 elections we are able to see how changing peak-level ethnic tensions are refracted through local demographic configurations.

The paper proceeds as follows. We elaborate in more detail the electoral and demographic context of interwar Czechoslovakia and outline the ecological inference methods on which our analysis is based. Our main results come next, where we explore the ethnic bases of party support in the 1929 and 1935 national parliamentary elections. We then perform robustness checks by reestimating a few key results while controlling for levels of industrialization. The conclusion follows.

To anticipate our results, we find that neither the contact nor the threat hypothesis holds general sway within Czechoslovakia. Local ethnic demography does not exercise a consistent or sustained impact either across groups or for a given group over time. Generally speaking, the threat hypothesis holds for the ethnically dominant Czechs and formerly ruling Hungarians in Slovakia: they were at their most politically moderate when living in relative local isolation from other national groups. For the Slovaks, nominally corulers but in fact subordinate to the Czechs, contact appears to moderate political behavior. They proved most vulnerable to extremist appeals when they were concentrated in their own localities. Even here, however, we find that religion may be a more powerful determinant of political choice than ethnicity per se. Although we offer plausible explanations for different behavioral responses to local ethnic demography, each requires departing from any single logic of contact or threat. Our results suggest that the broader literature would benefit from such a departure as well.

### Parties and Ethnic Groups

Interwar Czechoslovakia was, by the standards of the day, a solid democracy. Four national elections occurred, in 1920, 1925, 1929, and 1935. Most students of the era consider them to be free and fair, even if in the eastern part of the country there was a modest amount of administrative pressure applied to the minority population. 3 Czechoslovakia’s proportional representation system provided fertile ground for creating a large number of class, ethnic, and regionally based political parties, in all more than 50 during the

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2Among scholars of East Europe there seems to be little agreement on usage of the terms “ethnic” or “national” in reference to the many groups in the region. In the remainder of this paper we will use both terms.

3This area, Subcarpathian Rus, is excluded from the analysis.
interwar era. Understanding the impact of ethnic balance on voting for intolerant and polarizing parties in Czechoslovakia requires a short precis of the main parties and blocs of parties of interest in this paper. The full breakdown of parties and party blocs can be seen in Appendix I, available from the authors. One important cleavage in interwar Czechoslovak politics divided those parties welcoming the creation of a democratic Czechoslovak republic and those that did not. Because of the highly proportional voting rules, stable government required the cooperation of the pro-republican parties, something achieved by the leadership of the five largest Czech republican parties running from bourgeois-conservative to social democratic in the quasi-corporatist institution of the Pětka. The pro-republican parties differed on important questions of domestic and foreign policy. What they shared was a commitment to building a Czechoslovak nation within a liberal democratic Czechoslovak state.

A second important political cleavage divided ethnic groups. Ethnically based extremist parties opposed the liberal universalism of the Czechoslovak state and the institutions of liberal democracy, though such hostility did not prevent these parties from campaigning for office in elections. They did so, and sometimes with great skill, from both the right and left side of the political spectrum. Among ethnic Germans the extremist and irredentist German National Party (DNP) and the German National Socialist Workers Party (DNSAP), a proto-Nazi organization, rejected liberal democracy, preached antisemitism, and vilified the Czechoslovak state. After 1932 both parties were superceded by the pro-Nazi “Sudeten” German Party whose leader, Konrad Henlein, emerged from relative obscurity as a gymnastics instructor to capture 15% of the national vote in 1935, the largest share of any party in Czechoslovakia.

In contrast to the German extreme right, the ethnic right among Slovaks was primarily clerical in orientation. It revolved around the figure of Andrej Hlinka, a Catholic Priest, and his Slovak People’s Party (SPP). The main bone of contention for the Slovak right was Slovakia’s share of power within the country. Many Slovaks had hoped for a federal Czechoslovakia, but the final product more closely resembled French centralism, a model that threatened the place of the Catholic Church in Slovak education and public life. Czechs dominated the civil service at the national level and, along with Slovak Protestants, occupied a disproportionate share of high profile positions within Slovakia itself (Janos 1997, Leff 1988). The SPP thus traded on resentment among Slovaks against Czech domination supposedly masked by the official ideology of Czechoslovakism (Felak 1994). Although the primary demand of the SPP was for autonomy, activists within the party often combined this message with a virulently anti-Semitic and frequently anti-Hungarian Slovak particularism. It would be an exaggeration to regard the SPP as outright fascist, though the presence of an organized paramilitary militia (the Rodobrana and, later, the Hlinka Guard) and open admirers of Mussolini and Hitler within its ranks, suggests at least a family resemblance (Jelinek 1971). The SPP consistently received the highest support of any party in Slovakia, garnering 28% of the Slovak portion of the national vote in 1929 and 30% in 1935.

Class conflict also existed and on the extreme left was the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KPČ). Like its sister parties in other countries, it emerged after a split with the Social Democrats in the aftermath of the Russian revolution and espoused a universal message of class solidarity. Initially somewhat independent of the Soviet party, by 1929 the party had purged its independent elements and fully bolshevized. The same year party leader Klement Gottwald could declare openly in parliament that his party’s “highest revolutionary headquarters is actually Moscow” (Oschlies, 1979, 180). The electoral platform of the KPČ called for a workers’ revolution and a dictatorship of the proletariat. Although the party was open to all ethnic groups, it enthusiastically exploited ethnic grievances when politically advantageous, especially if it could benefit from minority dissatisfaction with pro-republican parties. The Communist vote hovered around 10% in 1929 and 1935.

4The parties in the Pětka were the Agrarian, the Social Democrats, the National Socialists (a moderate left party based in Bohemia and Moravia), the Czechoslovak Populists (a clerical party catering to Catholics), and the National Democrats (a bourgeois conservative party). Following Luebbert (1991), we characterize the Pětka as quasi-corporatist because it evolved from a coalition into a regularized consultative mechanism that hammered out agreements between representatives of land, labor, and capital. In this way it prevented many social antagonisms from being fought out on the parliamentary floor. The “quasi” qualifier indicates it remained mostly informal and at various times failed to meet.

5As King (2002, 166) notes, the term “Sudeten German” did not come into usage until the founding of the Czechoslovak state and came to refer to the Germans in the solidly German-speaking borderlands in the North and West. Hereafter, we use the term “Sudeten” without scare quotes.

6Mann (2004, 26) includes a paramilitary organization as one of the key traits of a fascist party.
Ethnic Groups

We rely on the 1930 census to enumerate Czechoslovakia’s ethnic groups, which included Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Hungarians, Ruthenians, Poles, and Jews. Censuses never perfectly reflect “reality,” as Kertzer and Arel (2002) have shown. The question for any given census is how large the distortions are. The most obvious peculiarity of the Czechoslovak census was the amalgamation of Czechs and Slovaks into one category of “Czechoslovaks” for purposes of enumeration. Apart from the desire to assert the unity of the new Czechoslovak nation, the primary motivation was all too obvious to observers at the time: if Czechs and Slovaks were counted separately, Germans would outnumber Slovaks. This quirk of the data does not affect the analysis because almost all Czechs lived in Bohemia and Moravia, while most Slovaks lived in Slovakia.

Some historians have recently called into question the accuracy of both Habsburg and Czechoslovak censuses, especially regarding the enumeration of Czechs and Germans in Bohemia and Moravia. King (2002) and Judson (2006) both document the fluidity of national identities in the late Habsburg period, while for the Czechoslovak period Zahra (2004, 2008) demonstrates how Czech enumerators deliberately seized opportunities to maximize the number of Czechs. We acknowledge these arguments, but do not feel they invalidate our assumption that the 1930 census, writ large and appropriately interpreted, can be taken as an accurate reflection of the population’s sense of its own national identity. First, our reading of both King and Judson is that the case for the predominance of linguistic or regional rather than national identities in the Bohemian lands is stronger for the Habsburg period than for the new Czechoslovak state and that the case for national identities strengthens during the 1920’s. Second, both King (2002, 164–68) and Zahra (2008, 118–25) note that in comparison with the 1921 census, the 1930 census relied on more ascriptive criteria of nationality, rendering the sorts of manipulations carried out in the early 1920s more difficult to execute, though of course some still occurred.

Third, although we do not have an independent measure of national identity against which to check the census data, we do have some dramatic indirect evidence that on the whole the census is reliable. Across 3,718 municipalities in Bohemia and Moravia, there is an astounding 95 correlation between the 1930 census data on the fraction of ethnic Germans and the vote for a German party in the 1929 parliamentary election. Whatever identity is being tapped in the census, it correlates very well with preferences for German political parties across the Bohemian lands as a whole. Moreover, we arrive at a similar conclusion if we investigate how many areas might have significantly higher Germans than the census indicates. To determine this we counted the number of municipalities where the vote for German parties was 25% or more higher than the number of recorded Germans, on the assumption that “extra” votes for German parties would be coming from Germans classified as Czechs in the census. This amounted to only 53 localities, or 1.5 percent of all communities. Thus, although the irregularities in the 1930 census reported by Zahra and others exist and are important, they should not deter the use of the data writ large as an indicator of national identity.

Estimation Methods

Our data are ecological: 1930 census data and the actual results from the 1929 and 1935 national parliamentary elections. We collected these data at the lowest level at which they could be matched, the municipality. In the case of Prague, we use municipal districts, but most of the observations are village (obec)-level. The result is a data set of over 15,000 settlements for which we have matching ethnic and electoral data. This is roughly 50 times more data than have hitherto been used to address local ethno-electoral politics in interwar Czechoslovakia. Other social and economic data are available only at one administrative level above the municipality, the okres (district) level. We discuss the okres-level data further below.

We employ ecological inference to estimate group preferences for political parties.7 Our goal is to estimate the distribution of votes across ethnic groups in settlements exhibiting different forms of ethnic heterogeneity. The issue is best understood visually. Table 1 illustrates the ecological inference problem for Bohemia in 1935. We are given the row (census data) and column (votes for each party/bloc) marginals, and

7No survey data are available for this period, but even if there were, there are good reasons why they might be unreliable for our purposes. It is well known in survey research that respondents are often reticent about expressing unpopular sentiments to their interviewers. Consequently, surveys of political preferences will tend to underestimate the actual level of support for extremist parties. This effect may be heightened by ethnic differences between the interviewer and the respondent. Of course it would be best to have both kinds of data to test for consistency between the two, but historical research places limits on method.
the goal is to estimate the interior cells of the table, the fraction of each social group that support a given party/bloc.

We rely on two modes of ecological analysis. One, the method of bounds, establishes deterministic limits on the possible values that the quantity of interest can take on based on the distribution of votes and ethnic groups. Such bounds can be readily computed from the data for any settlement or from the marginals in Table 1. For example, if 67% of the population is Czech, and the communists receive only 9% of the vote, then we know that the upper bound of Czech support for the Communists (when all Communist voters are Czech) is 9/67, or roughly 13%. The lower bound is 0. We will see that in many cases the bounds themselves are quite narrow, lending extra confidence that the results are not a consequence of arbitrary statistical assumptions.

Our second and primary mode of analysis uses statistics on our settlement sample to infer point estimates of the quantities of interest, the interior cells of tables such as Table 1. Although highly popular, the estimation method in King (1997) is not easily applicable in ethnically and politically heterogeneous situations where there are more than two national groups and parties. We tried Goodman’s regression and extensions proposed by Achen and Shively (1995) but they yielded estimates that were often less than zero or greater than 100%, which are nonsensical in the context of our problem. Instead, we employ the nonlinear least squares approximation of the multinomial-Dirichlet model presented in Rosen et al. (2001). The principal advantage of this model is that it respects the logic of the deterministic bounds and yields consistent estimates for arbitrarily large tables. We provide some details of this model in Appendix II, available from the authors.

In the absence of systematic data on the actual degree and nature of contact between national groups, we use proximity as a proxy. We recognize the risks inherent in this strategy. Much like in the United States, where different ethnic groups might dwell in adjoining areas of town but rarely ever see one another, it is possible that East European national groups lived “in separate worlds.” We offer two pieces of evidence in defense of our assumption. First, the bulk of our observations are villages with small populations. The median population of our Czechoslovak settlements is only 434. It is not so easy to lead a separate existence when there is at most one market, one post office, and one school. Second, and more importantly, the historical literature reveals multilayered relations among national groups. Consider, for example, Germans in Czechoslovakia. In some portions of Czechoslovakia, Germans lived largely on their own and actually needed to have little contact with Czechs. However, in the cities of Bohemia not only was there extensive and intensive contact between Czechs and Germans, but historians have documented quite carefully that the same people frequently moved back and forth between these communal identities. The contact between the two groups was so intensive in many places that by 1930, many Germans were in the process of becoming Czechs, a process that naturally raised alarms among leaders of the German community (King 2002, 165–68; Wiskemann 1967, 231–34). Much the same can be said for the Hungarian minority.

### Results

We begin our analysis with the 1929 national parliamentary elections. Our estimates of the social bases

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**Table 1 The Ecological Inference Problem, Bohemia 1935**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Parties/Blocs</th>
<th>Communist</th>
<th>Republican</th>
<th>Fascist</th>
<th>German</th>
<th>Nazi</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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8We assume full turnout across national groups. This is not unreasonable. In 1929, the only year for which we have the requisite data, turnout averaged 92% across Bohemian and Moravian settlements, and 90% across Slovak settlements. These numbers do not appreciably change if analysis is restricted to predominantly (greater than 95%) Czech, Hungarian, or Slovak settlements. Turnout was high and remarkably uniform across ethnic groups.

9All estimates were performed in R 2.2.0 with the code described in Wittenberg and Bhaskar (2007). See Wittenberg et al. (2007) for an updated version of this software.
of the main party blocs appear in Figure 1. Since Czechoslovakia was constructed out of territories that had been a part of other empires, each of which had a different configuration of national groups, we present a separate panel for each region. In each panel, the horizontal axis represents the fraction of the titular majority, Czechs and Slovaks, ranging from zero (settlements without any Czechs or Slovaks) to one (purely Czech or Slovak settlements). The numerical strength of minority groups in a settlement is inversely related to the strength of the majority groups. Thus, the upper horizontal axis indicates the fraction of minority groups, with zero on the right and one on the left. The vertical axes represent the fraction of a particular national group that supported a given bloc/party, again ranging from zero (no one in group x supported bloc y) to one (everyone in group x supported bloc y).

Each point (denoted by a capital letter) represents an individual estimate. The interpolated lines connecting the same letter indicate how a group’s support for a bloc changes with the demographic strength of Czechs and Slovaks across settlements. Different line types used to connect letters (solid, dashed) represent different national groups. Thus, in the Bohemia and Moravia panels, solid lines represent Czech voting behavior, whereas the dashed lines represent German. The letters used on the lines stand for the names of blocs. Thus, for Figure 1, we have (G)erman parties (ethnic but full participants in the Republic), (R)epublican parties, the (C)ommunist Party, the extreme right-wing German (N)ationalist parties, (E)thnic parties for Hungarians, Poles, and Jews, and Hlinka’s (P)opulist Slovak People’s Party. For example, in Bohemia we estimate that roughly 70% of Czechs who resided in settlements that were 20% to 40% Czech voted for (R)epublican parties (the leftmost R), whereas over 80% of Germans that lived in Czech-dominated (60–80%) areas supported (G)erman parties (the rightmost G). A similar logic holds for the other panels,
and will hold for other figures, though the identities of the parties and the national groups may vary. We also display 95% confidence intervals, as vertical lines, around estimates for those parties receiving a significant portion of a group’s vote.

Interpreting these plots takes some getting used to, but it’s worth the effort, because they make it quite easy to see whether or not there is an effect to be explained: the flatter the line, the less contact matters. In Figure 1 this is most visible in German voting behavior in Bohemia (dashed lines). Support for (G)erman parties was roughly 80% in both German-dominated settlements (the leftmost G) as well as Czech dominated-settlements. Support for the German (N)ationalists and the (R)epublican (Czechoslovak) parties remained mired at under 10%. Part of the stability of the German vote is rooted in the rich palette of German parties, which allowed for much vote switching within the bloc. Indeed, two of the main German parties, the Social Democrats and the Agrarians, had served in government, and had resisted amalgamating with their Czechoslovak ideological counterparts primarily because this would have ceded the national question to the rejectionist parties (Wingfield 1989, 48–75). A nontrivial proportion of (G)erman parties supported extreme German (N)ationalist parties, especially in Moravia.

Although the Germans remained largely immune to the proximity of their national rivals, the same cannot be said for the Czechs, where the upward sloping lines indicating support for (R)epublican parties in Moravia (and to a much lesser extent Bohemia) shows that Czech preference for such parties decreased with the increased presence of Germans. Although overall Czech support of these parties remains quite high, there is nonetheless moderate evidence for the threat hypothesis: as Czechs move from (local) majority to minority, they gravitate toward the (C)ommunists in Bohemia and (G)erman parties in Moravia.

Things are more complicated in the Slovak half of the republic. For the Slovaks there would appear to be clear support for the contact hypothesis. They were much more likely to vote for Hlinka’s (P)opulist Slovak People’s Party when they were in the local majority; as their proportion of a given settlement falls, they become more likely to vote for (R)epublican parties. Unlike in Bohemia and Moravia, however, this finding may be masking important confessional effects. Hlinka’s SPP was led by a diverse group of conservative Catholic clerics, many of whom were deeply antisemitic and opposed to social modernization, which they feared would significantly reduce the role of the Church in education, family, and cultural life. The party’s clear Catholic appeal reinforced the salience of a confessional cleavage among Slovaks, a significant minority of whom were Protestant. Hlinka attempted to bridge this divide by emphasizing Slovak oppression by the Hungarians, and later by the Czechs. At the outset of the Republic, Slovaks had been led to believe that the state would contain significant elements of federalism, when in fact its structure much more approximated the French unitary model. The SPP pitched its message directly at this source of resentment among Slovaks and preached “autonomy” even at the “price of the republic” (Felak 1994, 54). The campaign message was really that of a “catch-all protest party” with programmatic statements, sometimes mutually exclusive ones, aimed at a diverse range of social groups. Historians stress a broad socioeconomic base for the SPP, from poorly educated small town traders, small holding farmers, to the underemployed or unemployable urban intelligentsia (Hoensch 1979, 317–18).

In fact, the confessional cleavage among Slovaks was more complicated. To show this we estimate Roman Catholic and Protestant support for parties in ethnically homogeneous (greater than 99%) Slovak settlements. Whereas 65% (± .1%) of Catholics supported Hlinka and only 30% (± .1%) (R)epublican parties, over 94% (± .1%) of Protestants went (R)epublican. Protestants clearly preferred their status as favored interlocutors with their Czech co-rulers in a federal state to an uncertain status under a clerical, Catholic-dominated, more fully autonomous Slovak regime (Mamatey and Luža 1973, 78; Rothschild 1974, 120). Unfortunately it is not possible to obtain separate estimates for Catholic and Protestant Slovaks in nonhomogeneous settlements. We can infer that levels of Slovak support for (R)epublican and Hlinka’s (P)opulists in evenly split and majority Slovak areas represent an average of disparate Catholic

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11 We report bootstrapped percentile confidence intervals based on 500 bootstrap replications. Due to limited variance and hence uncertain results, in most cases we do not generate estimates of a group’s voting behavior when that group is less than 20% of a settlement’s population.

12 Czech support for the communists in German areas was not necessarily a vote for ethnic intolerance but it was a logical response to a perceived ethnic threat. The Communist Party represented a small but important nonethnic, yet illiberal part of the public sphere where Germans and Czechs mingled. Ethnically intolerant Czechs should have supported the Czech fascists or one of the right of center bourgeois “Czech” parties—parties that were in any case willing to work with moderate German parties in government. The anomalous support for (G)erman parties emerges from districts such as Hlucin, where the local Moravians, who had undergone a semi-Germanization, had been forced to register as Czech in the census. See Wiskemann (1967, 231–34). Unfortunately it is not possible to purge the census data of these falsely identified Czechs because we lack the requisite disaggregated data on these irregularities.
and Protestant preferences. What the confessional results tell us is that at least as far as support for Hlinka is concerned, the key identity for political behavior is not ethnic, but religious.

For Hungarians the threat hypothesis seems to hold. As they go from local majority to local minority, their support for (R)epublican parties falls from roughly 20% to near zero. At the same time, their support for (C)ommunist and especially (E)thnic parties rises. For Hungarians, then, the (C)ommunists and (E)thnic parties represented two different responses to the Slovak threat. Both types of parties actively supported cultural and linguistic rights for Hungarians, but the (C)ommunists did so as part of a universalist and cosmopolitan message within the Czechoslovak state, whereas the (E)thnic parties sought national self-determination for Hungarians and greater autonomy for other minority groups.13

1935

Let us turn now to the 1935 election results. In contrast with the 1929 election, which occurred in a context of relative amity among ethnic groups, the 1935 vote took place after the rise of Hitler and Stalin had emboldened extremist Czechoslovak political entrepreneurs. Czech Fascists now received over 7% of the vote. Konrad Henlein had assumed leadership of the German extreme Right and had established a Nazi Sudeten German party that won over 15% of the vote, becoming by far the largest German party. Hlinka’s Slovak populists had begun to advocate an independent Slovak state rather than merely autonomy within Czechoslovakia. Our prediction is that the increased “ethnification” of politics at the national level should increase support for the threat hypothesis at the local level. Germans and Slovaks, previously merely dissatisfied citizens of the Republic, now could be seen by others as posing a threat to the Republic’s very existence. This could very well drive fearful Czechs and Hungarians into the hands of their own extremists.

Figure 2 displays the social bases of bloc/party support in 1935, in a set of panels that is analogous to Figure 1. There are two key features of this figure. First, comparing Figures 1 and 2, the change in overall German electoral preferences is clearly visible in the Bohemia and Moravia panels, where the (N)azi Sudeten German Party, whose predecessor parties obtained at most one-third of the German vote, now grabs over 50% of that vote. This came at the expense of the more moderate (G)erman parties, which still received a large portion of the vote, but not nearly as large as in 1929.

The increasing radicalization of the Slovak Protestants is not portrayed in the Slovak panel, but the numbers reveal their growing preference for Hlinka’s ‘autonomist’ (P)opulists: their support for the (R)epublicans dropped from 94% to 73% (± .1%), while their “autonomist” Hlinka support increased from nil to 13% (± 1%). Protestants still overwhelmingly favored liberal parties, but even their resistance was breaking. Slovak Catholic support for the (P)opulists and (R)epublicans remained remarkably steady at around 65% and 5%, respectively. The rise of fascism among Germans in Bohemia and Moravia and the continued strength of the (P)opulist Slovak People’s party in the Slovak heartland did not push Czechs into the arms of their own extremists. There was a slight uptick in support for Czech (F)ascist parties, but it was only 4–8%, and is barely visible on the panels.

Second, our prediction regarding the consequences of increased national-level ethnic tensions for local perception of threat is generally not borne out. Indeed, excepting the appearance and popularity of Henlein’s (N)azi Sudeten German Party, the most remarkable feature of Figure 2 is how little it differs from the 1929 outcome in terms of Czech, Hungarian, and Slovak voting behavior. There is a small but noticeable trend for the (N)azis in Bohemia: the less Germans were exposed to Czechs, the more likely they were to support the (N)azi party. This is entirely consistent with the contact hypothesis. Although many liberal German voters were suspicious of the Czechoslovak state, they also recognized that their livelihoods were bound up with democratic practices (Kárník 2002, 537). Such sentiments would have been particularly strong among Germans who dwelled among and interacted with their Czech co-citizens, leading to less support for the (N)azis in these areas.14

Although the 1935 electoral campaign was quite acrimonious (see, for example, Campbell 2003; Kelly 1995, 122; Wingfield 1989, 126), there is little

13The shift from (C)ommunists to (E)thnic parties among Hungarians living as a local minority is noteworthy. Our hunch is that the (C)ommunists devoted little effort to organizing in these areas because they were dominated by Slovaks or Germans, groups that had evinced little sympathy for communism elsewhere in Czechoslovakia.

14By contrast, the devastating economic downturn in the highly industrialized German majority areas of Northern Bohemia during the great depression—a staple of the historiography of the 1930s—may have produced a deeper sense of ethnic threat and the subsequent discernably higher level of support for the Nazis in these communities.
evidence that elevated support for the Sudeten German Party within more homogenously German areas was primarily a consequence of coercion. The party was keen to maintain its legal status amid pressure for its dissolution. This did not prevent aggressive campaigning and even altercations at its rallies, but it would have precluded large-scale pre-election intimidation. According to Mamatey election day itself “passed without incident” (1973, 153).

Discussion

Thus far we have found mixed results for the relationship between local ethnic demography and mass electoral preferences. For Czechs and Hungarians our outcomes are consistent, on the whole, with the threat hypothesis: each group’s support for liberal parties is at its maximum when it dwells as the local majority. Slovak political behavior is largely immune to the presence of Czechs.

These heterogenous outcomes are intriguing but unexpected. To check the reliability of our findings we now present some results using the method of bounds. Recall that the bounds can be computed deterministically, without any statistical assumptions. Thus, to the extent they are generally consistent with Figures 1 and 2, we can be more confident that our estimates are not epiphenomenal of questionable statistical assumptions. For reasons of space we present summary bounds only for some of our more prominent results. (Others are available in the online Appendix III). Figure 3 has four panels, each of which illustrates the average lower and upper bounds for a group’s support of a particular party or bloc. Thus, the upper-left panel displays average upper and lower bounds (solid lines) of Czech support for Republican parties in Moravia in 1929 across settlements with varying proportions of Czechs. We can see that the average upper bound on Czech support of Republican parties in Moravia is approximately 70% in
settlements that are 30% Czech (the left-most dashed vertical line). To generate these results we use local weighted polynomial regression (LOESS) to fit curves to the average values of the upper and lower bounds across values on the horizontal axis, and then a spline to smooth the curves.

The bounds in Figure 3 are consistent with the corresponding findings in Figures 1 and 2. Consider again the top left panel of Figure 3, in particular the bounds where Czechs live as a minority (.3) and where they are a secure majority (.9), indicated by dashed vertical lines. The fact that there is virtually no overlap between the two indicates that regardless of where the true values lie within each set of bounds, the slope between them will be positive, as in the corresponding panel of Figure 1. A similar situation holds for the upper-right panel of Figure 3, which displays the bounds of Slovak support for Hlinka’s (P)opulists in 1929. The nonoverlap of the two sets of bounds is consistent with Slovak preferences for (P)opulist parties in Slovak-dominated areas, as noted in Figure 1. The bottom-left panel of Figure 3 shows that our earlier estimate of low Czech support for (C)ommunists was no fluke: except in overwhelmingly German areas the bounds virtually dictate single digit support. In a similar vein the bounds of German support for Henlein’s Nazi party (lower right panel) are compatible with the point estimates from Figure 2.

Thus far our results have been presented without conditioning on other factors because theory tells us that interethnic contact should matter. However, class conflict also existed, and there is some overlap between class and ethnic cleavages. In the Bohemian lands the bourgeoisie was disproportionately German and in Slovakia it was disproportionately Jewish; Hungarians were overrepresented among large landowners; and Slovaks constituted the bulk of the peasantry. What appears as conflict between Hungarians and Slovaks or Czechs and Germans could actually have more to do with economic tensions than with ethnic competition per se. Is ethnicity a proxy for economic interest?

We now condition some of the key findings on one socioeconomic factor: employment in industry and manufacturing. We choose this because Czechoslovakia exhibited dramatic regional variation in its
degree of industrialization. Significant parts of Bohemia and Moravia were as developed as any region in other industrialized countries, whereas other areas and much of Slovakia were mainly agricultural. Moreover, historians of East-Central Europe have shown that industrial employment closely tracks other socioeconomic indicators such as literacy, consumption, and urbanization (e.g., Berend and Ránki 1974). Industrial employment is thus an excellent indicator for a congeries of factors besides ethnic contact that might influence the vote.

Unfortunately the economic data are available only at one administrative unit above the municipality, the judicial okres (or the political okres in the case of Slovakia). Although this yields over 300 units, there are insufficient data to reproduce all the estimates while fully controlling for relevant economic conditions. Instead, we focus on one of our most prominent results: the rise in Slovak (P)opulist preferences as they become the local majority in 1935. We created subsamples of municipalities based on whether the districts that contain these settlements are above or below the median level of employment in industry and manufacturing. Across all districts in Slovakia, approximately 19% of those employed worked in the industrial and manufacturing sectors. We then reestimated key results in each subsample. In particular, we estimated Slovak support for those parties that interest us in areas where each group was a clear minority (between 10 and 40% of the population) and in those where they constituted a clear majority (greater than 80% of the local population). Our unconditioned results will be robust if there remains a similar gradient in preferences for liberal democratic parties within both the industrial and nonindustrial subsamples.

Slovak support for the major parties and blocs in Slovakia are presented in Table 2, with the top two rows of estimates designating samples without the economic covariate (for reference), the next two designating the high manufacturing sample (greater than 19% of employment), and the last two the low-manufacturing sample (less than 19%). In each case 95% confidence intervals are listed in square brackets beside each estimate.15 The one caveat is that just as when we estimated the unconditioned effects, we were not able to factor in the effects both of confession and degree of contact. We will continue to use ethnic identity, it being understood that Slovak support for Hlinka represents disparate Catholic and Protestant behavior.

Table 2 presents these estimates, which clearly confirm the unconditioned effects from Figure 2. First, support for (R)epublican parties (the first column of numbers) remains higher in minority Slovak localities than in majority ones, regardless of whether they are located in industrial or nonindustrial districts. This result remains even when preference for ethnic parties (in this case the Hungarian-German alliance) is taken into account. Contact with other minorities causes Slovaks to vote more liberal regardless of how one classifies the Hungarian-German alliance, and in both industrial and agricultural areas.

Second, the nature of the Slovak response to the increasing presence of their ethnic rivals depends on the socioeconomic context in which contact occurs. To see this, consider Slovak voting behavior where they are in the minority (10–40% Slovaks). In industrialized regions they prefer the Communists (18%) to Hlinka (11%), whereas in less industrialized areas they much prefer Hlinka (21%) to the Communists (8%). The superior Communist performance in industrialized areas undoubtedly reflects greater organizational resources, but they still performed twice as well in minority Slovak communities (18%) than in majority Slovak ones (9%). This suggests that the Communists may also have succeeded in capitalizing on the threat Slovaks perceived from their more numerous Hungarian neighbors, even if the specific Communist solution to this threat did not rely on the exclusionary repertoire of ethnically intolerant parties.16

Conclusion

Does familiarity breed contempt? Our primary conclusion is that in and of itself, the political consequences of contact are indeterminate. First, there is no uniform pattern across ethnic groups. By and large for Czechs and to a lesser extent Hungarians contact with other groups has deleterious effects. For Slovaks propinquity with Hungarians is associated

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15In a few cases the point estimate from the full sample lies slightly outside the 95% confidence interval as computed from the posterior of the bootstrapped replications. The difference, however, never has substantive significance. We acknowledge these instances by extending the confidence interval to include the full sample estimate and reporting that end of it in italics. In all cases we round off to the nearest integer. In many instances the intervals are so small that both endpoints of the interval are the same number.

16We ran a similar analysis of the rise in Czech preference for (R)epublican parties as they become the local majority in Moravia in 1929. It suggests that the observation of increased communist vote among Czechs as the local proportion of Czechs falls is primarily a phenomenon restricted to more industrial areas. The results are available from the authors.
with greater tolerance, while Germans seem impen- 
ervious to the presence of their Czech neighbors. 
Second, the impact of ethnic demography is not con-
sistent within ethnic groups. For Czechs the perceived 
German threat is primarily an industrial phenom-
emon, whereas for Slovaks the industrial environment 
does not significantly alter the benefits of contact. 
The ethnically charged atmosphere of 1935 slightly 
diminishes the earlier negative consequences of con-
tact for Czechs and Hungarians, but largely preserves 
the positive effects for Slovaks and neutral ones for 
Germans.

These contradictory findings are discordant with 
the literature, the vast majority of which finds contact 
to have positive effects. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006, 
767) note that a key limitation of contact research has 
been its single-minded focus on circumstances that 
facilitate beneficial contact. They suggest that scholars 
ought instead to devote greater energy to inhibitory 
factors. Taken together, our disparate results shed 
light on at least two potential determinants. The first 
is national demography. One might have expected 
similarities between German and Hungarian political 
behavior. Both were former dominant nationalities 
who were unwilling and unhappy minorities in 
Czechoslovakia. Yet the Germans proved far more 
immune to contact than the Hungarians. The differ-
ence may lie in their numbers. Germans constituted 
roughly one-quarter of the Czechoslovak population 
and nearly one-third of Bohemia, a demographic 
weight that supported a broad range of political 
parties and economic influence that may have re-
duced fears of Czech political domination. This could 
explain their political disregard for the presence of 
Czechs. The Hungarians, by contrast, constituted less 
than 5% of Czechoslovakia and only around 17% of 
Slovakia, making the Slovaks a far greater potential 
threat to them than the Czechs were to the Germans.

The second factor is national-level ethnic politics, 
which does not appear to exert much influence. This 
is a remarkable finding given the volume of ink 
spilled on the dangers of ethnic outbidding and the 
importance of amicable peak-level ethnic relations. 
As noted earlier, by 1935 Germany and Hungary were 
agitating ever more openly for territorial revision, 
and each, along with the Soviet Union, was support-
ing “their” parties within the Czechoslovak party 
system. Even the most isolated of Czechoslovak 
citizens could not have entered the voting booth in 
1935 unaware of the steady deterioration in inter-
ethnic relations and the threat posed to the republic. 
Yet none of this fundamentally altered the logic of 
contact as it existed in 1929, even if it did slightly 
reduce the magnitude of some effects. German 
support did shift en masse to Henlein’s Sudeten Nazi 
party, but even those gains occurred more or less 
equally in homogeneously German and mixed Ger-
man-Czech settlements. Our results breathe new life 
into the old adage that all politics is local.

A third implication of our findings concerns the 
relationship between the degree of contact and the 
nature of the hypothesized outcome. Close inspection 
of Figures 1 and 2 reveals potential nonmonotonic 
effects, with an inflection point occurring in roughly 
evenly balanced settlements (40–60% Czech/Slovak). 
Such behavior appears to characterize German sup-
port for (G)erman and (N)azi parties, Hungarian 
support for the (C)ommunists and Slovak support for 
(R)epublicans in 1929; and Czech support for the (C)ommunists and Slovak support for 
(R)epublicans and (P)opulists in 1935. This pattern 
is based on relatively few data points and requires 
further investigation, but there are good theoretical 
reasons for believing that evenly divided localities 
might be different. For example, uncertainty about 
which kind of party will emerge politically victorious,
and the likelihood that authority is likely to shift again in the future, might encourage all groups to support more liberal parties. This is in contrast to areas in which a group is a small minority or overwhelmingly majority. In the former case extremist voting poses little threat to the ruling majority group, whereas in the latter the majority can vote extremist without fear of retaliation by the minority. This logic may be more pertinent to local than to national elections, but nonetheless both Germans and Slovaks (though not Czechs) are at their most liberal in evenly balanced settlements.

We conclude with an implication for contemporary ethnic politics. Although communism and fascism are no longer significant electoral threats, other kinds of racist and xenophobic parties remain a fixture of democratic politics. Our findings serve as a reminder that liberal faith in the necessarily benign politics of multiethnic localities may be misplaced. Time will tell, for example, whether the reconstruction of Bosnia along multiethnic lines will increase or decrease the propensity of Croats, Muslims, and Serbs to support illiberal parties. Much depends on the particularities and local demographic distributions of the groups in question. We leave for future research the vexing question of why contact is beneficial for some groups but not others.

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