

PAST AND PRESENT IN TRANSITIONAL VOTING

Electoral Choices in Post-Communist Poland

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ABSTRACT

We test three sets of influences linking pre- and post-transition Poland: organizational affiliations, issue positions and economic assessments each corresponds to a different tradition in the voting behavior literature. We look at how each factor impacts on the formation of a competitive party system, employing individual voting data in a multinomial logit model using expected probabilities and factor change interpretation techniques. The findings reveal that the former organizational affiliation of both Communist Party and Solidarity members affects post-transition behavior, even while controlling for issue, economic and social variables. As for issue and economic voting, different policy issues and economic assessments affect post-communist and post-Solidarity party voters, establishing a distinct saliency for the post-communist and post-Solidarity camps, as well as for the political parties in each camp. The analysis shows that the past, whether in terms of organization, issue or economic evaluation, affects the electoral choices of voters during the post-communist transition.

KEY WORDS ■ electoral choice ■ Poland ■ post-communism ■ voting

Party system formation has claimed much attention from scholars interested in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe. These inquiries generally have a twofold thrust, addressing both the level and character of party system development. The first question is whether the supply and demand sides of the competitive party politics (parties and voters) are approaching equilibrium, culminating in 'consolidation' (Bielasiak, 1997; Olson, 1998; Rivera, 1996). The second issue concerns the form of the emerging party-electorate equilibria. Scholars have examined this topic by mapping social and ideological cleavages present in the electorate, and then

seeing how party positions correspond to the geography of the electorate (Evans and Whitefield, 1993; Markowski, 1997; Miller and White, 1998). This approach is an appealing way to represent the main elements of competitive party systems, because it presents the relative proximities of parties and electoral groups on the main cleavage dimensions.

Scholars have posited several cleavage schemes for the post-communist states, including Poland. Each is related to the two axes of left–right economic policy and libertarian–authoritarian politics common to analyses of established democracies (Jasiewicz, 1993; Kitschelt, 1992, 1995). The goal of this study is to extend the map of post-communist party systems by concentrating on how the pre-transition past has shaped the Eastern European party landscape in the post-transition era. The effects of the past on the present are not isolated to a single cleavage, but are embedded with several dimensions.

For example, the effects of the pre-1989 period on current politics have focused on the decommunization issue (Jasiewicz, 1993; Misztal, 1999) and the institutional role of the former ruling parties in the transition period (Ishiyama, 1997; Waller, 1995). Other recent studies have undertaken a more systematic analysis of citizens' evaluations of the past into an understanding of electoral politics in post-communist East Europe (Rose and Haerpfer, 1994; Rose and Mishler, 1994) and Poland (Powers and Cox, 1997). We undertake a similar approach by concentrating on the role past organizational affiliations (with the Communist Party and Solidarity) play in determining voting behavior, thus emphasizing the connection between the communist past and the democratizing present.

Theoretical Discussion

The contention here is that the past may serve as a major source of political orientation and voting behavior that merits a comprehensive analysis. We focus on three factors that bear an imprint of the past on the evolving political scene in the emerging democracies of post-communism: (1) prior organizational affiliation of voters and ensuing institutional loyalty, (2) policy issues that confront past legacies, namely decommunization and marketization, and (3) the impact of economic voting as reflected in retrospective judgments about the economy.

The Organizational Dimension

Organizational attachment and institutional identity are important elements in forging pathways between past and present political behavior. Previous organizational affiliations, in the Communist Party or in the Solidarity movement, can be expected to affect a person's political actions in the transition period. Namely, former membership in the Communist Party or Solidarity is likely to dispose an individual to support their post-transition successor organizations. During their heyday, both the ruling Polish United

Workers' Party (PZPR) and the Solidarity movement had a membership in the millions, providing ample opportunity for past affiliations to shape current political behavior.

The consensus among observers of Polish politics is that the fault-line between regime supporters and Solidarity supporters ran not along a division of economic interests or goals, but rather along a division of symbols and values (Bielasiak, 1992). This has been the focus of work by a group of leading Polish sociologists associated with the Polacy surveys (e.g. Polacy'88, Polacy'90). For the Polacy school, the Solidarity movement rallied around politics of opposition to the regime. Political opposition to the regime, not common economic interests, united Solidarity, centering around a politics of identity that drew sharp lines between 'we' – the people, the nation, Solidarity, and 'they' – the rulers, the communists, the PZPR.

In the accepted, and dominant, pluralist-liberal view, the symbolic conflict of regime versus anti-regime is to be replaced during the transition by conflicts of economic interest. From this vantage point, Solidarity is a movement of societal self-mobilization that gives way to more salient political claims, so that the old political cleavage is superseded by economic conflict. The argument stresses how much post-transitional political cleavages have changed from the pre-transition period (Wasilewski, 1995), and in this way neglects elements of continuity between past and present. Indeed, there are several factors that are likely to contribute to continuity in support for the successor organizations of Solidarity or the Communist Party: affective ties and habituated support, affirmation of the value of previous affiliations, social interactions and networks surviving prior formal membership, and political interests such as ex-communist party members' fear of decommunization. This rationale suggests a number of expectations concerning the voting behavior of voters, reflecting their association with the pre-1989 organizations.¹ The obvious one is that former Party members are most likely, and former Solidarity members least likely, to vote for the Party's post-transition successor. In contrast, former Solidarity members have the highest probabilities of voting for post-Solidarity parties, and former PZPR members the lowest. More significant is the question of the respective impact of former institutional affiliation on post-transition political choices. In view of the political and organizational history of the Communist Party and Solidarity, the expectation is for asymmetries to arise between the effects of past affiliations on electoral support for successor parties. The ruling Communist Party, with its prolonged dominance of the system by means of a hierarchical, disciplined organization, is likely to have a more lasting effect on its members' political perspectives than the more diffuse, more temporary Solidarity movement:

Hypothesis 1: The effects of Communist Party membership on changes in expected probabilities of votes for political parties will be larger than the effects of Solidarity membership.

The Issue Dimension

A second area in which the past influences current voting behavior is through policy issues. In the established democracies, issues have key place in the partisan change literature, where talk is of partisan dealignment, whether transitional or permanent (Dalton et al., 1984). When the lines of political competition change, established voter alignments may shift, may force groups to redefine their political positions in terms of new cleavages. Moreover, in periods of partisan change, existing political benchmarks like ideology and partisan identification become less relevant, because they do not reflect the new lines of political competition (Petrocik, 1981).

Elections in the new democracies of East Central Europe, too, are taking place within a changing political context. The parties are new to the voters and the voters are new to the parties. Voter partisanship and party identification are therefore expected to be weak. The standard view holds that the development of partisanship depends upon the time of exposure to the democratic process and intergenerational transmission of political views. On both counts, the East European electorates rate low.² However, in the context of low partisanship, policy issues may well surface that provide a crucial link between past and present. Two such issues that originated specifically out of the transition from communist systems to democratic rule are decommunization and marketization.

The first, decommunization, has to do with the role of the old political elites in the new regime (Szelenyi and Szelenyi, 1995), an issue that significantly reinforced the political divisions of the pre-transition period into the democratizing phase. An early attempt sought to remove the matter from the political agenda through the policy of the 'thick line' – a clear demarcation between past and present, preferring to look to the future rather than settle accounts with the past. But the thick line idea was never fully accepted by the entire political spectrum, and was denounced early on by some groupings with Solidarity lineage. The resurgence of the political left in the early 1990s further revived the saliency of the issue. The power of ex-communists was again visible, and brought into sharp relief the question of settling accounts with the past. For the right, lustration of the former communist elite was part of a moral obligation that targeted the continuing influence of the 'reds' in Polish politics and society, and decommunization was equated with the salvation of the Polish nation. For the left, lustration was nothing but a witch-hunt designed to remove legitimate political opponents and impose a conservative cloak on the country. The two contrasting views of decommunization became the object of intense political rhetoric and contestation. Decommunization came to be associated with verification and limitation on former communist officials. As such, the policy reintroduced the old political divide as a litmus test in contemporary politics, and reinforced divisions based on positions under the former communist regime as symbolic elements in the building of the new, democratic Poland.

The second policy issue bridging past and present turned around market-centered reforms of the economy. While issues of marketization do not fit as neatly onto the political cleavages of the pre-transition period (Duch, 1998; Kitschelt, 1992; Whitefield and Evans, 1999), questions about the pace of reforms, the extent of state economic intervention, or the provision of a social safety net, tie together past attitudes and present preferences. The debate in Poland over economic reform issues pre-dates the 1989 breakthrough, for the communist regime made structural economic changes a major public issue in the late 1980s (Poznanski, 1996). The 'shock therapy' market reform introduced with the New Year in January 1990 was therefore part of a pattern that asked Poles to make short-term personal economic sacrifices for long-term gains. The pre-transition past also left its mark on Poles' economic attitudes, since the communist system tended to socialize Poles to value egalitarianism and state intervention in the economy (Mason, 1995). In this regard, then, the effect of pre-transition attitudes and experiences are likely to affect the Poles' responses to questions of economic transformation in the post-1989 period.

There are of course a number of other salient issues in the transition between the authoritarian past and the democratic present. In the case of Poland, the religious question has been a major political factor during both the communist period and the ensuing democratization phase (Korbonski, 2000). Citizens' religious affiliation, the role of the Catholic Church in politics, and delineation of the religious-secular spheres have all played a major role in shaping public preferences for political parties. Unfortunately, the survey employed here does not contain sufficient measures for an individual-level analysis. Thus our primary hypotheses regarding transition-related issues concern the decommunization and marketization questions:

Hypothesis 2: Issues of decommunization will differentiate voters of the post-communist successor party from the other parties.

Hypothesis 3: Issues of marketization will differentiate between support for the post-communist party versus the pro-reform liberal bloc, but not as much between the post-communist party and other party groups.

Economic Voting Dimension

The third link between past and present concentrates on the effect of economic conditions on election results. This of course is related to market reform, but goes beyond to involve assessments of national economic performance and personal economic welfare. Citizens' current economic views often refer to past material conditions, as well as future expectations, as benchmarks for economic and political judgments. Research on established democracies reveals that voters' evaluation of economic performance influences party choice (Lewis-Beck, 1988), although there are debates over

the dominance of personal pocketbook effects versus national sociotropic trends (Conover et al., 1987; Kiewiet and Rivers, 1985), and over the predominance of past experiences or the future expectations as most salient at the ballot box (Chapell and Keech, 1991; MacKuen et al., 1992). Still, the consensus is that evaluations of the economy contribute significantly to support or opposition for the incumbent political parties for their management of the economy.

Scholarly traditions of economic voting have been transferred to the newly emerging democracies. The need to transform the economy from plan to market has generated considerable economic change, as well as substantial economic pain. Under those conditions, politics are often permeated with economic issues that affect the fortunes of political parties, reflecting their association with pro- or anti-reform policies (Fidrmuc, 2000; Przeworski, 1991). Numerous public opinion studies confirm that perceptions of economic conditions are bound with party choices that punish incumbents who are held accountable for economic difficulties and reward challengers who offer alternative economic scenarios (Gibson and Cielecka, 1995; Pacek, 1994).

Yet public dissatisfaction with economic performance distinguishes between the institutional framework of democracy and incumbent accountability, rejecting parties in power but not the new system (Duch, 1995; Gibson, 1996; Whitefield and Evans, 1996). The distinction between systemic and policy accountability suggests that the legacy of communism is salient for voters in the emerging democracies. It is thus necessary to move beyond analyses that look primarily to reform conditions associated with the transition to incorporate the past as germane to economic assessments that influence voters' political choices. How a person judges the post-transition economic situation is dependent upon the way in which the person has evaluated economic conditions during the communist era (Rose et al., 1998). Three factors associated with the former communist countries render the past especially relevant to the economic voting hypothesis. First, the legacy of state economic control means that the post-communist electorates are liable to assign responsibility for the economy to the political arena. With a clear idea of who is responsible, voters are more liable to punish or reward political actors for economic performance. Second, market reforms and 'shock therapy' were clearly associated with the change in government from Communist to Solidarity rule. Lines of responsibility were clear. Third, the social effects of the economic reforms were acute: high inflation and unemployment and a drop in production meant the effects of the economic reform were visible and widespread.

For these reasons, we expect to find evidence of both sociotropic and ego-centric economic voting in the Polish electorate. Owing to the coalitional nature of the Polish governments after the transition, it is necessary to anticipate exactly which parties will be the reference point for voters. The four post-transition cabinets between September 1989 and September 1993 were

each formed by a coalition of parties. Which parties will voters punish or reward? Rather than speak of incumbent and non-incumbent parties, it is useful to rank the Polish parties along a continuum of association with the pro-reform policies. The liberal bloc is most associated (and self-associated) with the market reforms. The post-Solidarity rightist parties, which took a less prominent role in the economic policies of the period, fall next on the continuum. The other parties were least tied to government economic policies. This suggests the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4: The more a voter is dissatisfied with his personal economic situation, the less likely he is to vote for the post-Solidarity liberal bloc, and, to a lesser extent, the post-Solidarity rightist bloc.

Hypothesis 5: The more a voter is dissatisfied with the economic state of Poland as a whole, the less likely he is to vote for the post-Solidarity liberal bloc, and, to a lesser extent, the post-Solidarity rightist bloc.

The other economic voting issue highlights Rose and Haerpfer's (1994) assertion that a person's evaluation of current, market economic conditions can be assessed better in conjunction with the person's evaluation of the past, centrally planned economy. Was the economy 'broke' before the liberal reformers got their hands on it? Or did the post-Solidarity parties' liberal market reform 'break' what was not broken before? Downs' (1957: 43) notion of relative performance is at work here: voters will judge the post-transition parties relative to the pre-transition regime. This can be expressed as a ratio of post-transition economic performance approval (P_1) to pre-transition economic performance approval (P_0):

Hypothesis 6: Voters who blame Poland's economic troubles more on the 40+ years of communism and less on the Solidarity-era governments ($P_1/P_0 < 1$) will tend to vote for the pro-reform liberal bloc; and voters who blame Poland's economic troubles more on the Solidarity era and less on the communist period ($P_1/P_0 > 1$) will tend to vote for the post-communist party.

Data and Methods

This article makes use of individual-level voting data from the 1993 elections, from a survey conducted by the Polish Academy of Sciences' Institute of Political Studies (ISP-PAN).³ The survey poses a battery of questions to a 1,851-person random sample representative of voting-age Poles. We examine those respondents who voted for one of the major parties, but exclude non-voters (38 percent of the sample), supporters of minor parties (1.8 percent of sample) and the 'other' or 'do not know' categories (10.1 percent of sample).

Vote choice is the dependent variable. In the absence of an ordinal scale, we use multinomial logit to model the relationship between the independent variables and voter choice.⁴ An 8-category dependent variable is employed, using the main political parties: (1) the communist successor SLD, (2) the former communist allied peasant PSL, (3) the strongly pro-market, post-Solidarity Liberals, (4) Walesa's reformist BBWR, (5) the conservative, nationalistic, reform-weary post-Solidarity right, (6) the Solidarity Trade Union, (7) the social democratic UP, and (8) independent oppositionist KPN. For some analyses, owing to the small size of the sample, the BBWR is grouped with the liberal bloc and Solidarity with the rightist bloc. Two different analytical techniques are used. The first is to generate probabilities of voting for each party, e.g. how does a unit change in a given independent variable (ΔX_i) change the expected probability of voting for the post-Solidarity liberals? Given a certain level of the independent variables, is the probability of voting for the SLD greater or smaller than the probability of voting for the KPN? In this interpretation, the effect of ΔX_i depends upon the level of X_i and the other independent variables. A second technique is to show how the odds of voting for one party versus a second party change for a unit change in a given independent variable. This factor change interpretation is useful because it does not depend upon the levels of the independent variables (Long, 1987).

Findings

Organizational Affiliations

To see what effects Communist Party or Solidarity membership had on post-transition voting behavior, we first turn to the percentage breakdown of supporters for each party by organizational affiliation (Figure 1). A disproportional 16 percent of SLD votes came from Communist Party members. PZPR members comprised 7 percent of the PSL electorate, which happens to be the percentage equal to the fraction of PZPR members in the entire sample. Less than 5 percent of the remaining parties' voters were former Communist Party members. Not surprisingly, former Solidarity members make up a large part (36 percent) of the Solidarity Trade Union's electorate. Solidarity membership is also frequent among voters for the other parties with Solidarity pedigree. Former Solidarity members make up 27 percent of BBWR voters, 23 percent of UP voters, 21 percent of post-Solidarity Liberal voters, and 19 percent of voters for the post-Solidarity Right. Solidarity members make up 26 percent of KPN voters, even though this party evolved outside of Solidarity. The two post-communist parties attracted fewer Solidarity members than would be expected if Solidarity members were evenly distributed among the parties. Among the SLD voters, only 13 percent were Solidarity members, among PSL supporters, 12 percent.

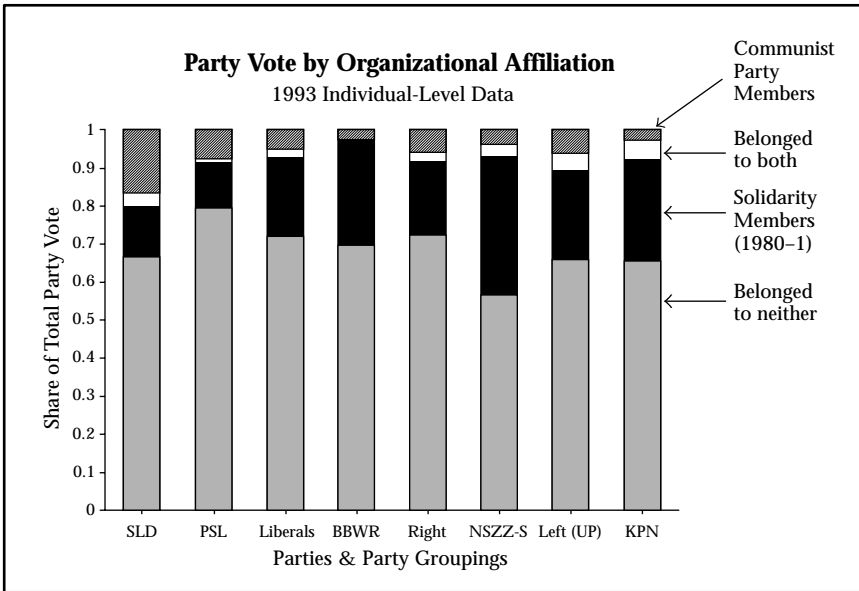


Figure 1. Vote Shares by Organizational Affiliation (*N* = 994)

The next step is to test whether these differences hold up to controls for other variables. Figure 2 plots the expected odds of voting for the SLD versus the post-Solidarity Liberals (UD, KLD and BBWR), plotting organizational affiliation against pro-market attitudes in a 6-category multiple logit model. Figure 2 shows how the odds of voting for the SLD versus the Liberals change for (1) Communist Party members, (2) Solidarity members, and (3) members of neither, over the range of pro-market attitude scores. The other variables in the model are held at their means.

The data in Figure 2 add another piece of evidence showing a propensity for former Communist Party members to vote for the post-communist party. For all levels of market attitudes, the expected odds of voting for the SLD versus the Liberals are greater than 1.⁵ Solidarity members are less likely than unaffiliated voters to vote for the SLD versus the Liberals, although the difference is small. We expect the probability of a Solidarity member or unaffiliated voter voting for the Liberals to surpass the probability of voting for the SLD if the person has above-average pro-market attitudes.

Figure 2 also shows how the impact of organizational influences decreases over the range of pro-market attitudes. For those voters with the least acceptance of the market economy, Communist Party membership has a very large impact on the odds of voting for the SLD versus the Liberals. Those least accepting of the market economy choose the SLD over the Liberals at a rate of 9:1 if they were PZPR members, and less than 3:1 if not. As a person's acceptance of market reforms increases, Communist Party

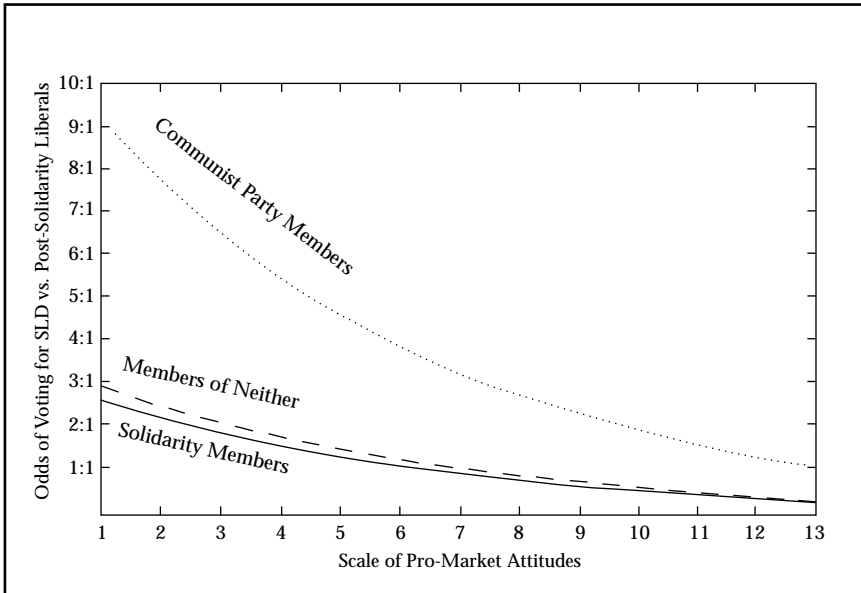


Figure 2. Odds of Voting for SLD vs. Liberals ($N = 779$) by Organizational Affiliation and Pro-Market Attitudes

membership becomes less important in shaping vote choice between the SLD and Liberals. Graphically, this is represented by the narrowing gap between the lines in Figure 2. Among the strongest market supporters, a Communist Party member has roughly equal probability of voting for the Liberals and the SLD.

Figure 3 is similar to Figure 2. It gives the expected odds of voting for the SLD versus the post-Solidarity Right over the range of market attitudes. As in Figure 2, the control variables are held constant at their means. Controlling for the other variables, Solidarity members are more likely to vote for the Right versus the SLD regardless of market attitudes. Communist Party voters, in turn, are always more likely to vote for the SLD over the Right. Voting for the Right versus the SLD becomes more likely the more a person has pro-market attitudes. In contrast to the first graph, the lines depicting the organizational affiliations in the second graph are fairly evenly spaced across the entire range of market attitudes. In other words, the effects of Communist Party and Solidarity membership on the odds of voting for the SLD versus the Right do not change much over the range of market attitudes.

The evidence presented here confirms the expectations about the impact of prior organizational affiliations on party preferences during the transition. Former organizational affiliations have an effect on post-transition electoral behavior. Ex-PZPR members are more likely to vote for the post-communist

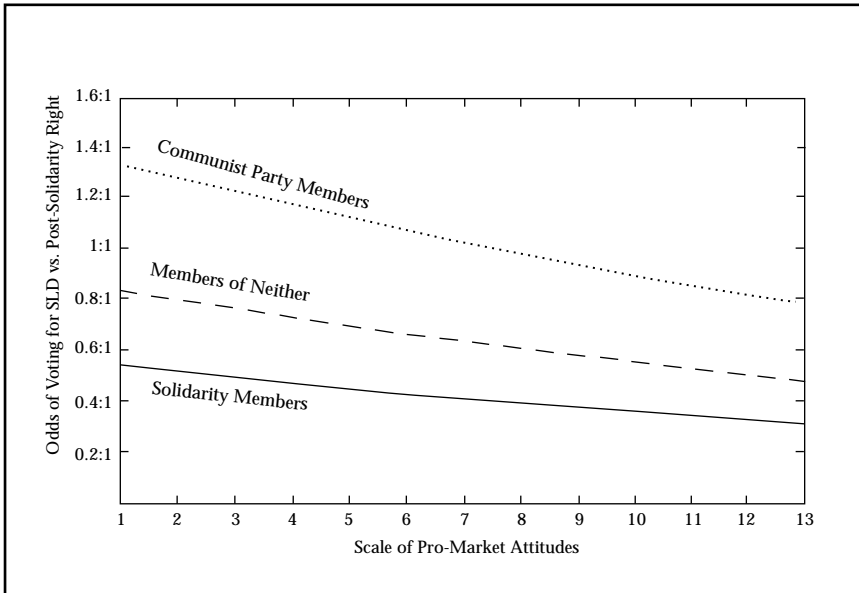


Figure 3. Odds of Voting for SLD vs. Right ($N = 779$) by Organizational Affiliation and Pro-Market Attitudes

party, and to a lesser degree, former Solidarity members flock to parties of the post-Solidarity camp. Unaffiliated voters fall between the two groups. The relationships hold even after controlling for issue attitudes, economic evaluations and social characteristics. The expectation that the impact of Communist Party membership on current preferences is greater than that of Solidarity membership is more mixed, as evident in Table 1. For former Solidarity members, the expected vote for the Solidarity Right is $+0.07$ and -0.03 for the SLD; for the ex-communist vote, the probability is almost identical at $+0.07$ for the SLD and -0.04 for the Solidarity Right. There is a marked difference between the two constituencies in the probability of voting for the Solidarity Liberal parties, which although both negative demonstrate far greater reluctance in the case of the former communist than Solidarity members to cast their vote for the political heirs identified with the intellectual tradition of the Solidarity movement. We can surmise that the first group is motivated primarily by the deep political divide of the past, and the latter by the economic dislocations resulting from the shock therapy associated with the Liberals' policy of transformation.

Issue Positions

In this section, we thus turn to how transition-related issues bridging past and present differentiate voters of the various parties. The model used here

is the previous 8-category dependent variable; while the two independent variables are 13-point indexes of decommunization and pro-market attitudes.⁶ Figure 4 summarizes the factor change data from the multi-nomial logit. The horizontal distances between the symbols indicates a factor change in the odds of voting for one party versus another given a unit change in the independent variable. Pairs or groups of coefficients that are circled or connected by lines are not statistically significant. Also, note that the factor change scale (top scale) is drawn in reference to the post-Solidarity Right category, the symbols for which are lined up vertically on the plot.

Issues of decommunization distinguish the most between the SLD and the other parties. A unit increase on the decommunization scale (support for wider decommunization) decreases the odds of voting for the SLD, versus any of the other parties, by a factor of at least 0.87 (that is, 15 percent). Unit increases in decommunization attitudes differentiate most strongly supporters of Solidarity, the Right, the Liberals and KPN from the SLD. Pro-decommunization attitudes also mean less support for the UP and PSL relative to the four parties listed above. The issue does not differentiate among the Liberals and the Right.

Market attitudes produce a different constellation of parties, controlling for the other attitude variables. The parties fall into three rough groups: parties that gain most from pro-market attitudes (Liberals and BBWR), the ones that gain least (PSL and SLD) and parties in the middle (Solidarity, the Right, UP, KPN). A unit increase in pro-market attitudes changes the odds of voting for the BBWR versus PSL by a factor of 1.47, and for Liberals versus PSL by a factor of 1.37. The odds of voting for the BBWR versus SLD by a factor of 1.35 and for the Liberals versus SLD by a factor of 1.25. Controlling for the other attitudes in the model, market issues do not differentiate among voters for SLD, Right and Solidarity.

As expected in the second hypothesis, decommunization issues isolate the post-communist SLD from the rest of the parties. The effect of market issues is different. Market issues strongly differentiate the Liberals and BBWR from the post-communist PSL and SLD. The parties most associated with market reforms were anticipated to garner support among pro-market voters. However, market issues do not significantly distinguish SLD voters from supporters of the Right and Solidarity. The odds of voting for the latter two parties versus SLD are more affected by decommunization than market issues. The inverse holds for the Liberal camp. The odds of voting for the Liberals and BBWR are affected more by market issues than decommunization issues.

Economic Voting

The third way in which past meets present in Polish voting behavior is through questions of economic interest. Figure 5 presents factor change data similar to the data examined in the preceding section. The economic voting

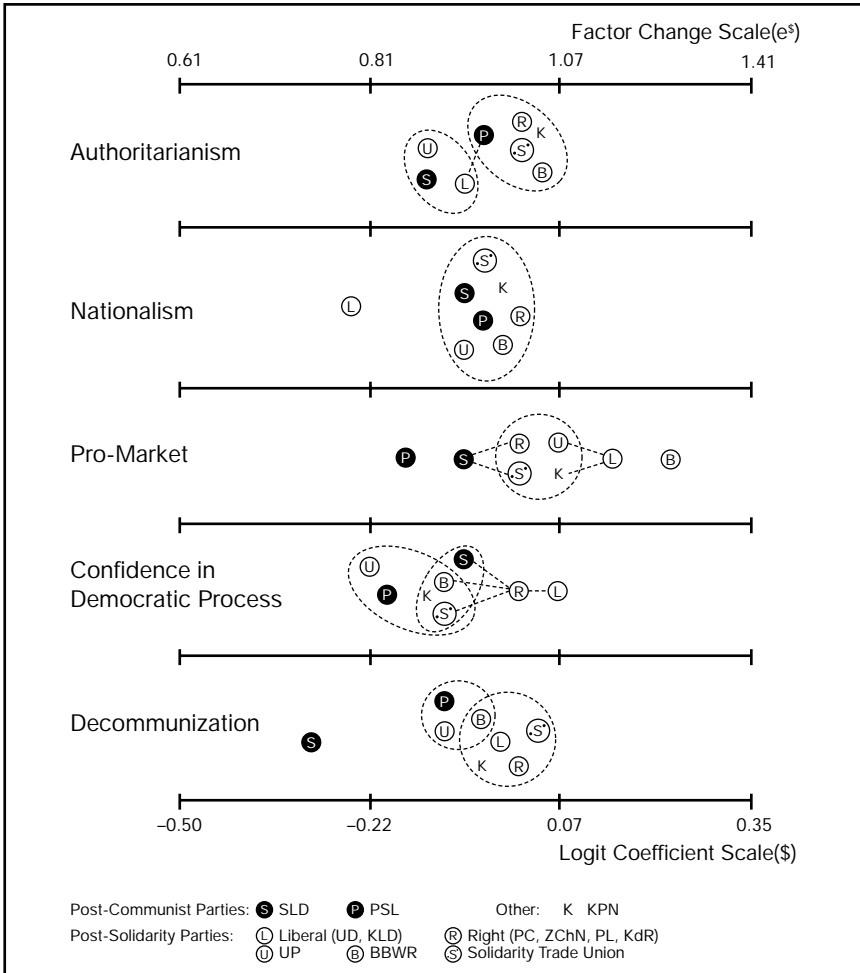


Figure 4. Attitudes & Vote Choice: Factor Change Plot ($N = 869$)

- Notes:* (1) The base category is the post-Solidarity Right.
 (2) Horizontal distance between two symbols indicates a factor change in the odds of voting for one party vs. the other, given unit change in the independent variable. Vertical distances between the symbols have no substantive meaning.
 (3) Dyads connected by lines or encircled are not significant at the .1 level for a one-tailed test.
 (4) The independent variables are each 13-category indexes.

model uses the 8-category dependent variable, and four economic evaluations as independent variables: a pocketbook item: 'How would you rate your current financial situation?' and sociotropic item: 'How would you rate the changes in the economy that have taken place over the last four years?' The other questions ask about negative economic effects of the Communist and Solidarity eras by measuring agreement with the statements: (1) Forty

years of communism ruined Poland and impoverished Poles, and (2) the governments of the last four years have led Poland into a state of chaos and poverty.

Many of the data patterns in Figure 5 were anticipated in the economic voting hypotheses. The odds of voting for the Liberals and the BBWR increase relative to most parties the more respondents: (1) are satisfied with their own financial condition, (2) believe that the reforms have been good for Poland, (3) think that the communists, rather than the Solidarity governments, caused Poland's economic crisis. Conversely, voters dissatisfied with the various elements of the post-transition period and uncritical of the communist era support the SLD and PSL more than most other parties. The question concerning the legacy of communism sharply distinguishes the SLD from the other parties. For a unit increase in the 'it was communism's fault' variable, the odds of voting for the SLD versus any post-Solidarity party fall by a factor of at least 0.48 (-52 percent). The odds of voting for the SLD versus Solidarity fall by a factor of 0.33 (-67 percent).

SLD voters, on the one hand, and Liberal/BBWR voters, on the other, consistently occupy the 'extremes' of the economic evaluation scales. The former group is generally unhappier with the post-transition period, the latter group happier. The pattern of economic evaluations among Solidarity supporters in Figure 5 is not as straightforward. Note the position of Solidarity relative to the SLD and Liberal/BBWR in the figure. On two issues, Solidarity voters are close to SLD supporters. On the other two, they are close to the Liberals. The pocketbook item does not distinguish Solidarity supporters from SLD supporters, but it greatly changes the odds of voting for Solidarity versus Liberals. A unit change in the personal (improved) finances item decreases those odds by a factor of 0.49. The same pattern is repeated in the question about the economic effects of the Solidarity period. Solidarity supporters are indistinguishable from SLD voters, and highly differentiated from Liberal, BBWR and Right voters. The more a voter believes that the Solidarity governments' policies have caused economic hardship in Poland, the greater the odds of casting a vote for Solidarity versus the Liberals, BBWR and the Right.

The other two economic questions result in the opposite configuration of voters. The more a voter thinks that changes in the economy have been good as a whole, the more likely he is to vote for Solidarity and the Liberals versus the SLD. Here, Liberal and Solidarity voters are indistinguishable. The same pattern repeats itself for the question about the communist economic legacy. Here too, Liberal and Solidarity voters are indistinguishable. These patterns imply that economic issues affect Solidarity voters in a special way. Supporters of the Solidarity Trade Union slate seem personally to have been affected negatively by market reform policies and see the policies as having caused harm to the Polish economy. On balance, however, they seem to think reforms were worth the cost. They seem to consider the reform-related hardship to be tolerable side effects of the cure for the communist era economic malady.

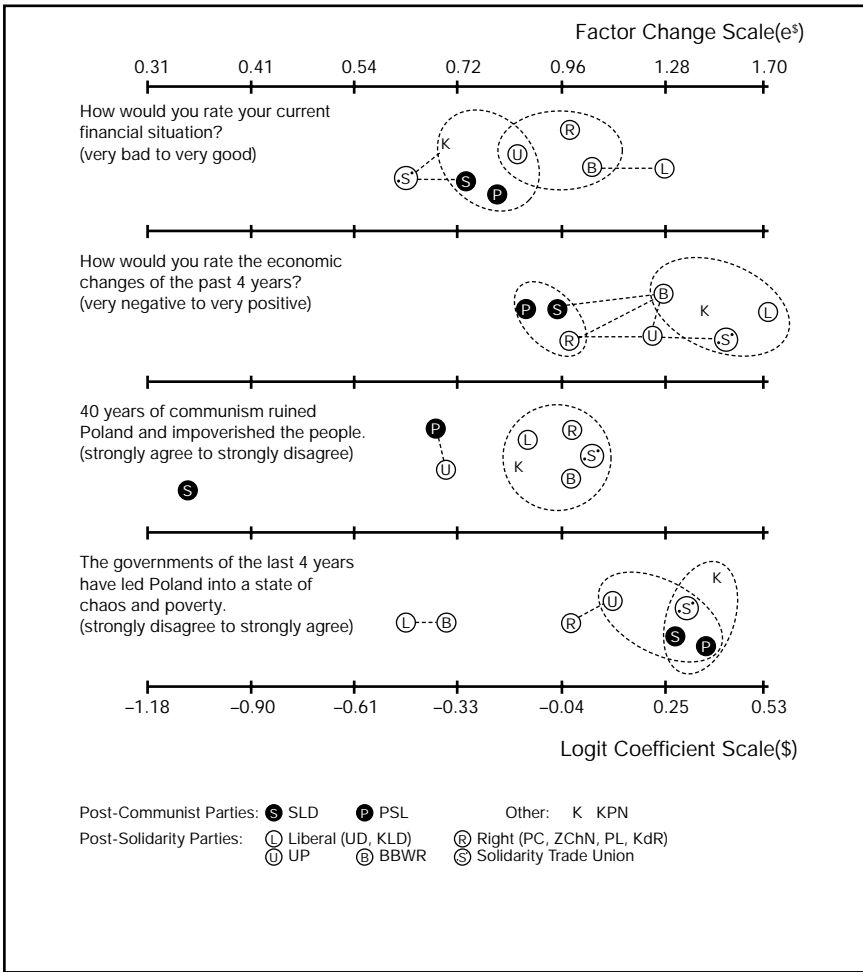


Figure 5. Economics & Vote Choice: Factor Change Plot ($N = 854$)

- Notes: (1) The base category is the post-Solidarity Right.
 (2) Horizontal distance between two symbols indicates a factor change in the odds of voting for one party vs. the other, given unit change in the independent variable. Vertical distances between the symbols have no substantive meaning.
 (3) Dyads connected by lines or encircled are not significant at the .1 level for a one-tailed test.
 (4) The independent variables are each 4-category items (questions worded as above).

Synopsis

Thus far we have treated the three categories of influences separately. We now turn to an overall assessment of their effects on party choice, by examining how the variables among the three categories – organizational affiliations, policy issues and economic voting – influence electoral choice.

Table 1 provides the basis for such an overview. The cell entries indicate changes in the expected probabilities of voting for each of the six parties given a change in the independent variable listed in the first column. The change is from 0 to 1 for the membership variables. For the scaled variables, the change from the value located at 1 standard deviation below the mean ($\bar{x}-1s$) to 1 standard deviation above the mean ($\bar{x}+1s$). For each row, the values of the other variables (including the other issue, economic assessment and social characteristic variables) are held at their respective means. The table enables us to judge what issues are most salient for voters of the major Polish parties.

For a voter who is otherwise 'average' in terms of the 16 variables in the model, being a former Solidarity member increases the expected probability of voting for the Right by 0.07, vis-à-vis those without previous Solidarity membership. The expected probability that PZPR membership adds to the probability of voting for the SLD is also 7 percent. Being a Solidarity member decreases the expected probability of voting for the post-communist parties and the Liberals. PZPR membership increases the probability of voting only for the post-communist parties (SLD and PSL). PZPR membership – when other variables are held at their means – has the most effect on votes for the Liberals, decreasing the expected probability by 0.11 points. The effect of PZPR membership on changes in the probability of voting for the Liberals lessens considerably when market acceptance is held at values below the mean.

In terms of the other variables, there is an interesting distinction between the Liberals and the Right. The Liberal post-Solidarity parties gain most from positive assessments of the post-transition economic changes: pro-market attitudes and positive evaluations of the economic effects of the market reforms. The probability of voting for the Liberals is less affected by changes in decommunization attitudes and the 'Communism to blame'

Table 1. Changes in Expected Voting Probabilities Given Standardized Change

	<i>SLD</i>	<i>PSL</i>	<i>Liberals</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>UP</i>	<i>KPN</i>
Solidarity Member	-.03	-.06	-.02	+.07	+.02	+.03
PZPR Member	+.07	+.05	-.11	-.04	-.01	-.01
Pro-Market Issues	-.04	-.10	+.11	.00	+.03	-.01
Decommunization Issues	-.19	+.01	+.01	+.15	-.01	+.03
Changes Good for Me?	-.09	-.02	+.10	+.01	+.02	-.02
Changes Good for Poland?	-.06	-.03	+.06	+.03	-.01	.00
Communist-era to Blame?	-.22	-.02	+.08	+.13	+.03	.00
Solidarity-era to Blame?	+.01	+.07	-.12	-.01	+.01	+.04

Note: Cell entries are change in expected probabilities of voting for a party for a standard change in the independent variable listed in each row. For the membership variables, the change is from 0 to 1. For the other variables, the change is from a standard deviation below the mean to a standard deviation above the mean.

variable. The opposite holds true for expected changes in the probability of voting for the post-Solidarity Right. A centered, two-standard deviation change in the market attitudes variable raises the probability of voting for the Liberals by 0.11, but leaves the probability of voting for the Right unchanged. Conversely, the same change in the decommunization variable raises the probability of voting for the Liberals by only 0.01, and for the Right by 0.15.

Differences in issue salience divide the parties into two groups. For the Right, SLD and KPN, the standardized change in the decommunization variable is larger than that for the market attitudes variable. The decommunization variable is more salient for these parties. The effects of market issues are greater than issues of decommunization for the Liberals, PSL and UP. For this group, market issues are more salient. Another division among the parties arises in looking at the relative strength of the pocketbook and sociotropic questions. Only for the Right is the effect of a standardized change in the 'changes good for Poland' variable greater than the 'changes good for me' variable. For the other parties, the effect of the pocketbook item is greater. Lastly, there is a division among groups of party supporters in terms of the 'blame' for Poland's economic troubles. The post-Solidarity parties blame the communist era more than the Solidarity era. The post-communist parties and KPN blame the Solidarity era more than the communist era. The SLD and Liberals are more one-sided in their opinions, whereas the rest of the parties more evenly balance blame between the two regimes.

Conclusions

The notion that the past is an influence on voting behavior in transitional politics is supported by the analysis of former organizational ties, policy issues and economic evaluations. At a time when the breakdown of the old political structure is giving way to a highly uncertain economic and political environment, voters in the post-communist societies face a chaotic political landscape. Citizens of the newly democratizing states encounter many social and economic disruptions, many issues demand their attention, and the consequences of marketization and democratization are difficult to foresee. The party system, with numerous political parties trying to establish their place in the democratic process, provides too many options for careful scrutiny and judicious selection. In an environment of such uncertainty and contingent outcomes, the linkages between the electorate and parties are bound to be weak.

In such conditions, past affiliations and understandings are a natural mechanism to sort through the numerous political claims presented by the new political parties. As this analysis of the first stage of the Polish political transition makes clear, the past acts as a frame through which the present

is interpreted. Voting behavior in the new democracy is filtered through the political experiences and political attitudes rooted in the communist past. While this may appear as a normal procedure at times of political upheaval, the use of the past as a cognitive tool to evaluate current circumstances adds an important element to the understanding of post-transition politics. Voters are attracted to certain political parties and reject others not only due to personal pocketbook or sociotropic assessments of the economy, but also due to the political and social baggage they carry forth into the new system. The finding that former organizational ties, assessments of political issues and economic blame are significant elements on party choice confirm prior studies that seek to sort out the impact of the past and present on transitional voting behavior. For the Polish electorate, personal economic conditions, while significant, were not as important as evaluations of the past in determining party preferences (Powers and Cox, 1997).

How has the past influenced voter selection of political parties? The foregoing analyses have demonstrated three ways in which the pre-transition past affected post-transition voting behavior. In the first place, we found each influence – organizational affiliations, issue positions and economic evaluations – to determine the electoral preferences of Polish voters. The data show that former, that is pre-1989, organizational affiliation of both Communist Party and Solidarity members affects their voting in the 1993 election, even while controlling for issue, economic and social variables. As for the other variables, their impact varies according to issue. Different political and economic concerns affect post-communist and post-Solidarity party voters. Moreover, these influences make a difference not only to the two large political wings in contemporary Poland, that is the post-Solidarity and post-communist camps, but also to the political parties found on either side. As the analysis of political and economic issue voting has shown, distinct issue saliency prevails for different political parties on both sides of the political spectrum. Clearly, variables related to the communist past do not have equal mobilizing impact for all groups of party supporters. Instead, the import of issue cleavages is different for each set of party voters.

This suggests that a differentiation in the political landscape of Poland is taking place among voters across the political space, from post-communist to post-Solidarity parties. This differentiation presages a growing sophistication of the voter and a consolidation of the party system, in which distinctive issues determine support for political parties. However, the maturing of the party system is not merely a consequence of the temporal resolution of socio-economic uncertainties and political chaos. The past as well casts its shadow on the configuration of the party structure and its support system. The transition period serves as a mechanism where past affiliations and past loyalties are reinterpreted to guide choices in the new democratic polity. In this manner, the past becomes a cleavage that remains imbedded in the politics of transition and reflects old divisions in the guise

of newly established party competition. Legacies of the past are thus translated into present politics through the institutional mechanism of political parties.

The natural expectation is that the saliency of the past in voting behavior and party competition is bound to erode with time, or at least be recast in a new discourse. Theory suggests that time attenuates the effects of the past on the present. First of all, demographic factors come into play. Voters old enough to have experienced the pre-transition period will gradually be replaced in the electorate by young voters with experience only in the post-transition period. Moreover, as economic interest groups crystallize in the new era, they are likely to cut across the Solidarity versus Communist Party heritage, rendering them less germane to the voter. Despite these trends, the past continues to have a strong bearing on post-communist politics. Certainly in Poland questions of decommunization have played an important role in recent Polish public debates, including formulation of the new 1997 constitution and the 2000 presidential elections (Misztal, 1999). A new discourse of politics has taken shape around the legacy of the past, one that continues to affect voters' identities and preferences, so that the past continues to serve as an important guidepost to electoral choices.

Notes

- 1 Past membership in the PZPR and Solidarity was not mutually exclusive. In 1980–1, many party members joined Solidarity. After martial law in December 1981, such overlap was no longer possible until the end of the 1980s. For most of the decade, then, the overlap in PZPR and Solidarity membership was not significant. In the 1993 data, only 2.3 percent admit they were members, although not necessarily at the same time, of both Solidarity and the PZPR.
- 2 This is confirmed by the 1993 Polish data used in this study: partisanship and left–right placement are not widespread among the Polish electorate, e.g. 54 percent of respondents who voted 'in no way felt attached' to their party of choice and only 5 percent felt 'strongly attached'; less than half of respondents could place themselves on a 4-point left–right scale.
- 3 The survey was conducted by the Working Group on Electoral Studies, directed by Stanislaw Gebethner, Krzysztof Jasiewicz and Radoslaw Markowski of the Institute of Political Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences.
- 4 Multinomial logit is an accepted technique for dealing with non-ordinal categorical data (Aldrich and Nelson, 1984). It estimates expected probabilities of observing each of the dependent categories, in this study, the probabilities of voting for the major parties.
- 5 Odds are ratios of probabilities. The odds of voting for the SLD versus the Liberals equal the ratio of the expected probability of voting for the SLD over the expected probability of voting for the Liberals. If the odds are greater than 1:1, the probability of voting for the SLD is greater. If the odds are less than 1:1, the probability of voting for the Liberals is greater.
- 6 Four questions about types of jobs the former regime's elite should hold comprise

the decommunization index. The marketization index summarizes responses about the role of the state in the economy, wage limits, wage differentiation and the pace of privatization. Levels of support for nationalism, authoritarianism and the democratic process are included as control variables.

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