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Hidden dimensions: the stability and structure of regional political cleavages in Poland

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Abstract

The main aim of this paper is to show that behind the complex and fluid surface dimension of the Polish political scene it is possible to reveal a relatively stable two-dimensional structure of deep political identities. The study is based on the analysis of ecological data — the results of elections from 1990 to 1997. The results prove the exceptional stability of the Polish electoral geography and appear to be consistent with other studies based mainly on the survey data. The use of the spatial data allowed us to reveal the historical and spatial determinants of electoral behavior in Poland. © 2000 The Regents of the University of California. Published by Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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The confusing image of society and the political system under transformation

Following the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, there was much debate about the emergent social structures and political cleavages of these newly democratized countries (e.g. Kitschelt, 1992; Evans and Whitefield, 1993; Ost, 1993; Szelenyi et al., 1997). In all of these countries democratic political systems emerged, but the transition from command to market economies, and from totalitarian to democratic systems, raises many questions and challenges. We have no theory that explains comprehensively what has happened in post-communist societies, and that predicts what will happen next. The political scenes and electorates of Central

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European countries still appear to many observers as unstructured, fluid and hard to comprehend in the absence of a coherent theoretical framework.

Several short and middle range theories of change in post-communist states have been proposed including Agh (1991), Adamski (1993), Wnuk-Lipinski (1995) and Staniszkis (1992, 1995). However, none of them have explained the changes taking place in social structure. Indeed, there is no consensus about what exactly has occurred in Central–Eastern Europe in the last decade. One criticism of theories of postcommunist change is that, despite a considerable number of studies and surveys conducted over the years, the results lead to conflicting conclusions. Not only have social structures changed in the process of transformation, but the fluid socio-political context of change makes it difficult to establish a point of reference for dynamic research.

The dynamics of political affiliation constitutes the main challenge for research on change in Central–Eastern Europe. Post-communist societies of this region, and Poland especially, exhibit partisan instability. In a period of a few years there were dramatic changes in political preferences, which if viewed by Western standards might suggest that there was complete discontinuity. However, it is precisely this discontinuity which provides a laboratory for investigating change. In the present article we uncover stable structures underlying the fluid political system and voting behavior in Poland. At first glance this might appear to be difficult, since in a volatile system there is no clear point of reference on which comparative research could be based.

Polish political transformation has several dimensions. First, voter's attitudes change constantly, in part due to changing perceptions of the economy. Media and electoral campaigning also produce attitude change. Another source of change in political preferences is the evolution of party organizations. Each year new parties form, others disappear, merge, divide or change their names and political programs. Even voters with strong party identifications are forced to reexamine their choices. At the same time, deep social structures undergo a gradual transformation. The nature of the process is largely unclear. It remains unclear, for instance, which dimensions of the transformation are the most important, to what extent the transformation results from a change in attitudes, and to what extent only institutions change.

In view of the surface description of the Polish political scene in terms of winners of consecutive elections in the period between 1989 and 1997, Polish electoral preferences would appear to be highly fickle, characterized by rapid shifts of preferences between opposite sides of the political spectrum. In many respects Polish post-communist politics is indeed complex and fluid. Besides, taking into account the volatility of institutions, it is difficult to judge the real extent of the dynamics of political behavior simply because there is no stable point of reference. However, as we will try to demonstrate in this article, it is possible to find a relatively stable structure of political identification below the volatile institutions and voting behavior of Polish politics. We seek the logic underlying the dynamical, and seemingly chaotic, shifts in political preferences.

Before starting our analysis, we consider three possible scenarios of expected outcomes. These are distinguished according to the degree of stability and development

of political identities. These scenarios should not be viewed as results of our studies, but simply as three possible types of explanation for the political volatility in Poland.

1. *Situational determination of political preferences and lack of stable structures.* In this case we assume that voting behavior is purely a function of everyday political events. Since the political context of each election is different, the results are different as well. We can say, for example, that the first post-communist elections of 1989 and 1990 can be interpreted largely as a reaction against communist rule. In the next election of 1991 the defeat of “Solidarity” would be seen as a social reaction to the unexpected costs of reforms and the rising influence of the Catholic Church in the public sphere. Political behavior is thus situational and reactive. We cannot expect to find any stable structure of voting allegiances.
2. *Consistent but evolving structure.* In this intermediate scenario, voting behavior depends on an underlying structure of consistent, but not very stable, political identification. It is apparently vulnerable to processes of social and economic transformation. As a result, it evolves considerably and seems to take a very different form in different elections.
3. *Stable and consistent structure of political identification.* In the final scenario, the structure of deep political identifications is consistent and stable. While the political scene of the country evolves at a very high rate, the political identities of voters remain unchanged. The change in voting behavior merely reflects a change in the perception of parties and an accommodation to the new institutional configuration, rather than change in political preferences.

In the next section, we will try to verify which of the above scenarios offers the best explanation of the Polish voters’ electoral behavior. We show that the veracity of the third scenario is suggested by previous studies concerning structures of the Polish political scene.

Previous studies on stable structures of Polish politics

As stated above, our main (third) hypothesis is that the high volatility of Polish political behavior can be attributed first of all to change in the institutions of the political system, and to a much lesser degree to the political preferences themselves.

Evidence about the deeper structures of political identification can be found in the research on the political scenes of the post-communist countries. Using the notion of cleavage in this context, political scientists have suggested the existence of relatively simple and stable structures in the Polish political scene.

Kitschelt (1995) argues that Polish political space is two-dimensional. One dimension “Left Authoritarian vs. Right Libertarian”, contrasts the liberal KLD party with the peasant PSL. The second dimension, “Socialist-Secular vs. Right Libertarian”, contrasts the extreme positions of socialist UP and post-communist SLD parties with the Catholic ZChN and the anti-communist PC.

Markowski (1995, 1997) in his survey study of four central European societies

identified two similar dimensions. The first dimension, “economic populism vs. market liberalism”, explains about 37% of the variance in political attitudes. The second one, “secular libertarian cosmopolitans vs. religious authoritarian nationalists” accounts for 29% of the variance. The location of particular parties in this grid resembles Kitschelt’s findings.

In Tóka’s (1997) analysis, based on mass survey results, the two main ideological dimensions of party competition in 1992 Poland are very similar to the earlier studies. In the first dimension, accounting for 44% of explained variance, post-communist SLD and peasant PSL (also having deep roots in the old system) are opposed to the anti-communist PC and to a lesser extent to the national-catholic ZChN. In the second dimension, two liberal parties, UD and KLD, oppose the ZChN and to a lesser extent, the PSL. Both of them can be regarded, in spite of their different ideological positions and organizational roots, as parties with conservative and traditional electoral support.

According to Zukowski (1996), who uses survey results in his analysis, the two principal axes dividing Polish politics might be named “values” and “interests”. The first is determined by attitudes towards the communist past: “Solidarity” (i.e. its role as an anti-communist movement), and such issues as abortion and the involvement of the Catholic Church in politics. The axis of interests in Zukowski’s approach reflect attitudes favoring or opposing free-market systems as well as the degree of support for economic reforms. The relative positions of parties and presidential candidates on both axes provided by Zukowski are also quite similar to the patterns described above. In the 1995 presidential elections Kwasniewski is sharply contrasted with Walesa, on the axis of values, Pawlak and Kuron appeared at the extreme ends of the axis of interests. Most of the other analyses of the Polish political scene indicate two dimensions of voting behavior, and are essentially similar to Zukowski’s model.

In this context, Szelenyi et al. (1997) write about the “Theory of Liberal\Conservative cleavage” and the “Theory of the two axes”. In the first approach, political conflicts in Central Europe are not driven by economic interests, rather they are connected with conflicting cultures, values, religion, ethnicity, and worldviews. In the second theory, a part of the so-called Liberal Conservative axis, class or occupational differences and economic interests will increase in importance in Central Eastern Europe. However, as our analysis will show, at least in Poland, cultural factors still dominate over economic ones. As Powers and Cox (1997) put it in their analysis of the parliamentary elections of 1993, “although evaluations of individual economic circumstances have a strong effect on satisfaction with reforms, one’s view of the history is equally important, and understandings of the past, manifested as blame attributions, are essential determinants of voting behavior. Satisfaction with economic reforms has some influence on voting, but its effect is not as great as one might expect, given the prominence of market reforms and privatization”.

The two dimensions of the Polish political scene revealed by political scientists can be related to classic theories of voting behavior. The first is the party identification model, with its elaboration by Campbell et al. (1960). In their analysis, Campbell et al. argued that most voters have a general allegiance to a party, which

is inherited through their family and strengthens with time. The alternative theory of rational voting, proposed by Downs (1957), assumes that party preferences are reflected on the “utility income” which each person receives from the present government. Instead of stable voting allegiances, Downs and rational choice theorists see the voter as a “consumer”, who constantly evaluates his benefits from the political system, and thus exhibits unstable voting behaviors. These two contradictory theories of voting behavior, which also might be seen as complementary, can be related to issue- and cleavage-driven politics. In the context of the Polish system of cleavages the “values” and “interests” axes might be identified, respectively, with the party identification and rational choice models.

Ecological approach to the problem of uncovering stable structures of political identity

Although stable structures of political values can be convincingly revealed by survey research, it is not clear to what extent the stable political identifications declared by respondents play an important role in determining voting behavior in Poland. This question arises especially in view of the strong discrepancy between the stability of the value system uncovered by survey research, and the volatility of political preferences reflected in the results of Polish elections in the period 1990–97. We propose to use election results data to resolve this apparent contradiction. On the one hand, election results data reveal the volatile dynamics of political preferences, but on the other, they reveal underlying stable structures. The confirmation of the existence of deep stable structures in electoral results would provide strong support for the existence of stable political cleavages as suggested by the survey research.

While the survey approach has an obvious advantage, in that it allows us to correlate electoral choices with the declared values and identities of particular voters, it has important drawbacks concerning the study of structures of political identities. Since in most surveys we cannot follow the choices of the same voters in consecutive elections and many parties change their names, alliances and structures between elections, it is difficult to compare the results of electoral preferences in different elections.

In an old democracy with a stable political system the simplest alternative to measuring the stability of voting behavior is to simply compare the results of the same parties in consecutive elections. However, as we have shown, such an approach would be practically impossible in Poland, because of the absence of continuity along the institutional dimension. One strategy adopted by some of the researchers is to classify parties and candidates according to their ideological profiles. The results for parties of the same type can be added and then support for the main political options can be compared in consecutive elections. The main drawback of such an approach lies in its entirely arbitrary classification of parties and candidates.

Another drawback of such an approach is that usually the outcome of such classifications are discrete categories in which all the parties get the same weight for their

membership. In reality, even when several parties are similar in nature, some of them are more extreme than others in a given dimension and should be weighted more heavily.

As an alternative to survey methods, we propose to use the ecological analysis based on data aggregated by regions. The results of the elections for the lowest administrative units in Poland provide a large number of cases representing all politically active Poles. The number of such units makes our analysis statistically reliable.

Another advantage of this small-group approach is the possibility of determining the support for all parties for each studied case. We are also able to assure the continuity of the cases studied: communes,¹ which remain the same for each election, can be directly compared. Since keeping track of voting behavior of the same person in consecutive elections in surveys is difficult and expensive, the advantage of the ecological approach is obvious. For the regional level of analysis, we are sure not only of the comparability of the studied cases (communes), but also of the relative stability of their voting behavior, which is considerably less volatile than at the individual level. Of course, the usefulness of such a method may be limited in the case of high social mobility. However, many sources show that Poland has a relatively stable population.

As already mentioned, the lack of stable party organizations, the support of which could be compared in consecutive elections, is an important obstacle in the analysis of Polish electoral behavior. However, we will try to compare deep structures of political identification. Factor analysis is a useful method of uncovering the composition of hidden structural variables on the basis of the set of observed variables — in our case support for parties and candidates.

Explanatory factor analysis, which is based on correlations between observable variables, reveals the number and the structure of the hidden variables needed to explain the maximum of variance in the original data set. If we wish to relate the possible outcomes of the factor analysis of our electoral data to the scenarios presented at the beginning of the paper, we could expect the following results:

1. If the first scenario of “situational determination of political preferences and lack of stable structures” was valid, a factor analysis would not reveal any consistent structure in a small number of clearly defined factors.
2. If the underlying structure of political preferences was consistent but unstable, factor analysis should produce a coherent low factor solution which would be specific to each election.
3. If the third scenario was valid, and the stable and consistent structure of political identification did exist, a factor analysis should reveal a stable and comparable low factor solution for all of the analyzed elections.

¹ The commune (“*gmina*” in Polish) is the smallest administrative unit in the country. There are approximately 2400 communes in Poland (their number changes minimally each year). The average population of a commune is about 15,000 people and the average area is about 130 km². This makes analysis on the commune level very detailed and statistically significant.

To verify the above presented hypotheses we have performed a separate factor analysis² of the five following elections:

- presidential elections 1990, 1995;
- parliamentary elections 1991, 1993, 1997.

In the analysis of consecutive elections (votes for candidates in presidential elections, and for parties in parliamentary elections³) data on the level of the smallest spatial administrative units — communes — were used.

Factor analysis has already been used in the exploration of selected Polish elections by Tworzecki (1996) and Ostrowski and Przeworski (1996). However, our approach differs in some respects from the previous analyses. First, the other authors used general data in their calculations on the level of the voivodship (province). The breakdown of Poland into 49 voivodships, the boundaries of which were established arbitrarily in 1975 and cross all historical, traditional and socio-economic frontiers in Poland, does not allow a detailed analysis of electoral results.⁴

The use of a considerably higher number of cases in our commune level analysis, provides a much higher level of statistical reliability. This is especially important in factor analysis, which tends to be particularly sensitive to the number of cases. Furthermore, the comparison of five consecutive elections allows us to draw many more general conclusions concerning the stability of Polish political scene.

Thus, in our analysis the commune becomes the case and votes for parties and candidates are variables. As a result, we obtain a number of main factors, which represent the most important patterns of spatio-political cleavage for each of the elections. Each factor can be interpreted based on loadings of all the variables (e.g. relative location of the parties in the factor space). The configuration of parties on both factors was the basis for the interpretation of their character. For each factor and each spatial unit (gmina), a factor score was calculated. This factor score may be interpreted as an index of location of each commune on a given axis. A map of factor scores for each factor is presented below (Figs. 6–9). The map shows the spatial differentiation of the clearest voting patterns, and gives a detailed image of the regional dimension for the largest political cleavages. The darker colors correspond to the higher factor loadings. A set of factor maps for a series of elections illustrates the stability of spatial patterns of political attitudes over time.⁵ This permits

² Factor analysis has been performed with the SPSS for Windows statistical package using the principal component extraction method and varimax rotation.

³ The results of Polish elections for the years 1990–97 in the gmina (spatial unit) breakdown, which were used in the present statistical analysis, and preparation of the maps were obtained from Krajowe Biuro Wyborcze (State Electoral Office) in Warsaw.

⁴ One may add that the division of Poland into 49 voivodships was replaced in 1998 by the new 16-voivodship system.

⁵ Here, because of the repetitive character of most maps, only two sets of them have been presented. Four maps of the 1995 presidential and 1997 general elections illustrate well the similarity of emerging patterns (Figs. 6–9).

us to measure the similarity of structures in both presidential and parliamentary elections, which are normally very difficult to compare.

Results

Our calculations produced consistent results across time. With the exception of the 1990 presidential election, factor analysis yielded two-factor solutions in all cases. The exceptionality of the 1990 election will be discussed below, but even in this case it was possible to obtain a two-factor solution comparable with other elections.

In all cases the two first factors explained a considerable part of the variance. It ranged from 40.7% in most fragmented 1991 parliamentary elections to 70.1% in the presidential elections of 1995. These results strongly confirm the existence of consistent structures underlying the electoral behavior of Poles. In other words, we can reject the first scenario of situational determination of political preferences.

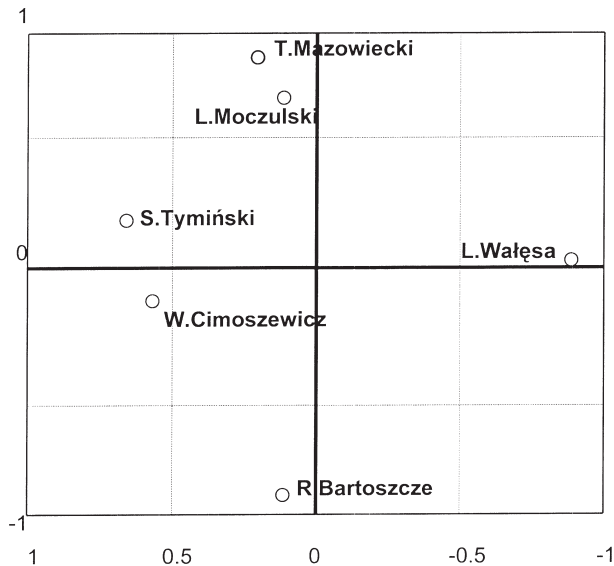
If we look closer at the character of the factors revealed in the analysis, it becomes clear that they are very similar. This allows us to reject the second, intermediate scenario of the consistent but evolving structure of political preferences. What we see is evidence confirming the third scenario of stable and consistent political identities underlying Polish political behavior.

Next, we take a closer look at the results obtained in the case of each of the analyzed elections. The first case, the 1990 presidential elections, seem to be the most difficult and equivocal. Unexpected support appeared for a newcomer on the Polish electoral scene — Stanislaw Tyminski. In his populist campaign, Tyminski presented himself as above partisanship and thus able to pursue a technocratic, unbiased approach to Polish economic and social problems. His independence as a political preference was confirmed by our analysis, when a third important factor emerged in 1990, which may be interpreted as “Tyminski versus all others”. However, when we impose the two-factor solution in our analysis, we can observe the emergence of the “standard”, two-dimensional pattern, which demonstrated in Fig. 1, is comparable in its structure to the factors obtained in the next elections.

In the two-dimensional solution Tyminski, together with ex-communist Kwasniewski, confronts Walesa. The next presidential elections confirm that the victory of Kwasniewski in 1995 was based on votes for Tyminski and post-communist Cimoszewicz from 1990.⁶ In the second emergent factor, the rural–urban character peasant party leader Bartoszcze is contrasted with the leader of the liberal wing of Solidarity, Mazowiecki.

The 1991 parliamentary elections were more structured than the 1990 presidential

⁶ The strong dependence between the electorates of Tyminski and Cimoszewicz in 1990 and Kwasniewski in 1995 was confirmed both by the ecological analysis (high correlation between the sum of votes for Tyminski and Cimoszewicz and Kwasniewski), as well as survey results (confirming the fact that the majority of Tyminski and Cimoszewicz voters from 1990, supported Kwasniewski in 1995, e.g. Raciborski, 1997).



Presidential elections 1990

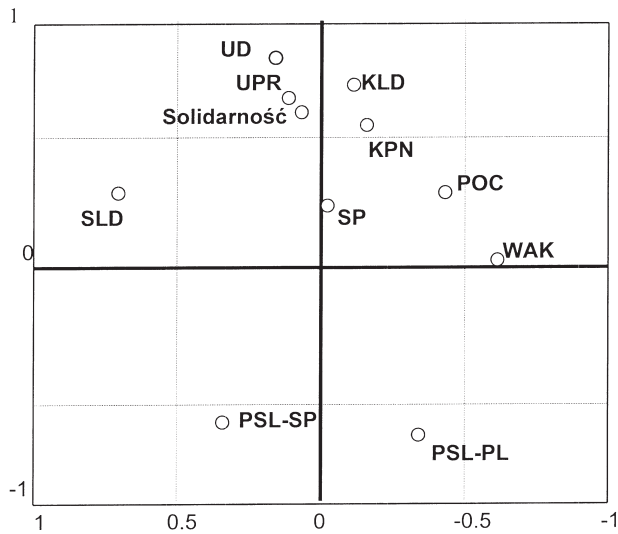
- Rural-urban factor - vertical - 37 % variance explained
- Left-right factor - horizontal - 27 % variance explained

Fig. 1. Factor loadings in analysis of 1990 presidential elections.

elections. Two main factors emerge through exploratory factor analysis. On the first factor axis, Liberal Democratic Union (UD) and Liberal Democratic Congress (KLD) are contrasted with two peasant parties, PSL-PL and PSL-SP. On the second factor axis, post-communist SLD is contrasted with the Catholic Electoral Action (WAK) and anti-communist Citizens Alliance Center (POC) (Fig. 2).

In the 1993 parliamentary elections these factors appeared more clearly, and explained a larger share of variance (Fig. 3). We find the usual urban–rural axis with a sharp contrast between peasant party PSL and several parties supported mainly by an urban electorate. The anti-communist peasant party PSL-PL fades from its electoral defeat. On the second factor, the post-communist Democratic Left Alliance SLD is contrasted with the Christian-National Union (ZChN), which in the next elections formed the Fatherland (Ojczyzna) coalition, and Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN).

The presidential elections of 1995 give the clearest picture of the structure of Polish political space. The two basic factors accounted for more than 70% of variance. On the urban–rural dimension, peasant party leader Pawlak contrasts with such liberals as Jacek Kuron — candidate of the Freedom Union (UW), Tadeusz Zielinski (supported by Labour Union UP), radical economic liberal Janusz Korwin-Mikke and anti-communist-liberal Hanna Gronkiewicz Waltz — the president of the National Bank. In the second factor dimension, which appears to dominate the second



Parliamentary elections 1991

Rural-Urban factor - vertical - 29 % variance explained
 Left-Right factor - horizontal - 11% variance explained

Fig. 2. Factor loadings in analysis of 1991 parliamentary elections.

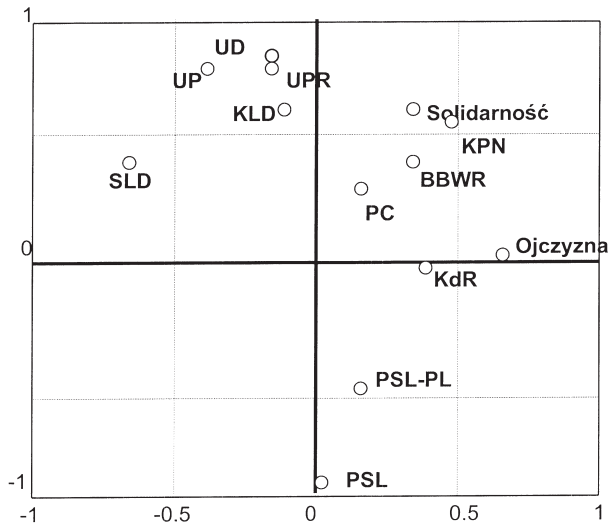
round of the elections, post-communist Alexander Kwasniewski and Lech Walesa received reverse regional patterns of support (Fig. 4).

The 1997 parliamentary elections, while consistent with our two factors, show one surprise. The importance of the two main factors changed. Even in the regional scale, the conflict between post- and anti-communist moved into first position (Fig. 5).

Interpretation of results

After a glance at the results, it can be seen that a similar two-dimensional structure appears in each of the elections. The first dimension is the opposition between parties and candidates of liberal cast (most often representing the circles of the urban intelligentsia), supporting radical market reforms, young professionals, etc. and those representing rural interests.

On the second dimension, the communist past is the contrasting factor of the axis. On one side, we find parties and candidates — descendants of the former Communist party, today acting most often as social democrats. At the other pole, we find those organizations and persons of radical anti-communist orientation. Thus, on the second axis, the post-communist electoral block — the SLD (the Union of the Democratic Left) with its presidential candidates — Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz and Aleksander



Parliamentary elections 1993

Rural-Urban factor - vertical - 30 % variance explained
 Left-Right factor - horizontal - 14 % variance explained

Fig. 3. Factor loadings in analysis of 1993 parliamentary elections.

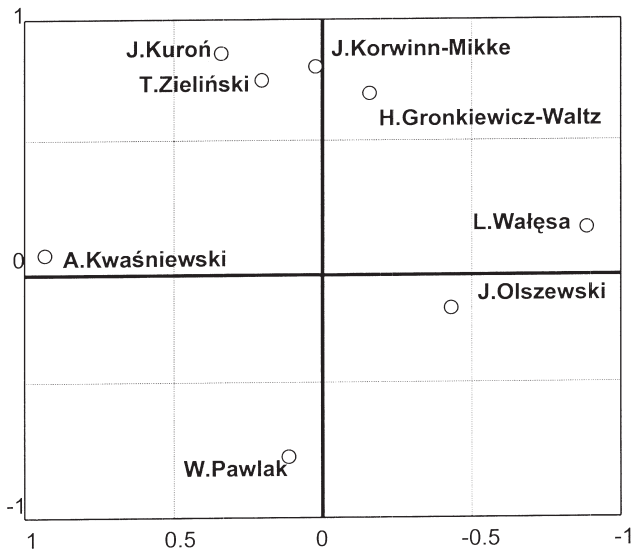
Kwasniewski are confronted with several small and medium size parties and candidates of the fragmented Polish anti-communist right.

These factors emerged in a factor analysis of regional election results, and they match the axis of political conflict in Poland discerned by political scientists and sociologists in previous analyses.

The first “urban–rural” axis can be directly related to Kitschelt’s “Left Authoritarian vs. Right Libertarian” dimension, Zukowski’s “interests” axis, or Markowski’s “economic populism vs. market liberalism” factor. The second “left–right”⁷ or “post-versus anti-communism” factor may be a counterpart to Kitschelt’s “Socialist-Secular vs. Capitalist Religious” dimension, Zukowski’s “value” axis, or Markowski’s “secular libertarian cosmopolitans vs. religious authoritarian nationalist” dimension. It would also correspond to Szelenyi’s “liberal–conservative” axis.

The similarity of our regional analysis results with mass- and elite survey-based studies is an important finding of the present study. The comparability of the socio-political structures discerned in the regional and classic survey analyses is not, however, a universal phenomenon. Recent research on the electoral geography of Central European countries shows that in several countries in the region the relationship in

⁷ The use of “left” and “right” in this paper is based on the conventions prevailing in Poland, according to which post-communist, secular parties are identified as left and anti-communist, religious groups as right.



Presidential elections 1995

Rural-Urban factor - vertical - 41% variance explained

Left-Right factor - horizontal - 29 % variance explained

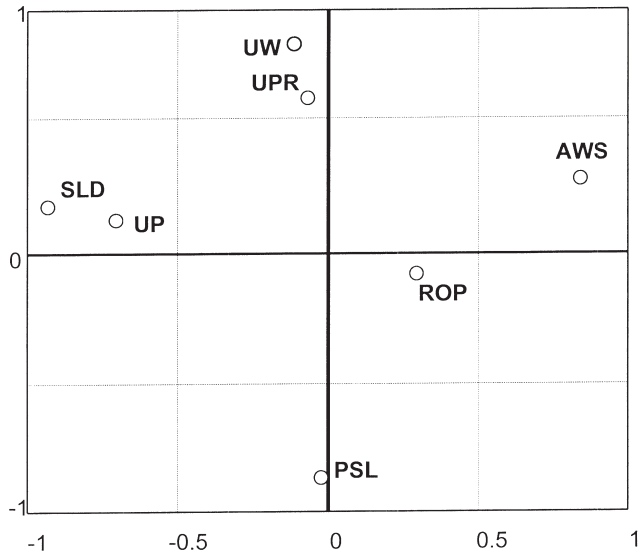
Fig. 4. Factor loadings in analysis of 1995 presidential elections.

question is not so straightforward. Even in countries such as Hungary, Slovakia or Lithuania where factor analysis of the election results in regional breakdowns yields consistent results, they are usually different from schemes proposed by political scientists on the basis of survey analysis.

We have computed factor scores for each gmina. They are portrayed in the maps shown in Figs. 6–9.

For all the analyzed years, regional differentiation on a given factor appears to have similar character. This is true with respect to both of the revealed factors. In order to quantify our visual impressions, we have computed Pearson correlation coefficients between the sets of factor scores for each factor in all elections. The results are given in Table 1. As we can see from the table, the two factors appear to be very stable over a period of 8 years, which was also the period of the most dramatic changes in Polish politics. What is also important is that the level of correlation over the years does not decrease, which demonstrates the deep character of the revealed structures.

Although the phenomenon of considerable stability of electoral preferences in the regional dimension has already been discussed in the literature (e.g. Johnston, 1983), the fact that the stable two-dimensional structure of preferences persists is not obvious. As already mentioned, recent research has indicated the structure of electoral support in the regional dimension could not be reproduced in all countries. Hungary



Parliamentary elections 1997

Left-Right factor – horizontal – 32 % variance explained

Rural- Urban factor – vertical – 24 % variance explained

Fig. 5. Factor loadings in analysis of 1997 parliamentary elections.

is a country where the results of a similar analysis allowed it to be classified in a “second scenario” group. Less stable structures of spatial differentiation can also be found in Slovakia.

General discussion — the determinants of the spatial patterns

So far we have interpreted the factor scores in terms of an analysis of the political image of parties and candidates. The fact that we can attribute factor scores to each gmina makes it possible to verify our interpretation of factor scores against the socio-economic data at the level of the spatial unit. This provides an independent check of our interpretation of the nature of the factors.

The correlation of the factor scores and economic and demographic data shows that both dimensions are clearly related to the socio-economic differentiation of the country. Since almost identical solutions of factor analysis were also obtained on the level of 49 voivodship, where the widest selection of statistics is available, we use data for this level. The analysis reveals that the urban–rural dimension is best related to such indexes as GDP per capita, share of the urban population, average wage, number of cars per inhabitant and education. The second, the left–right dimension’s spatial differentiation, is best explained by such indexes as: stability of popu-

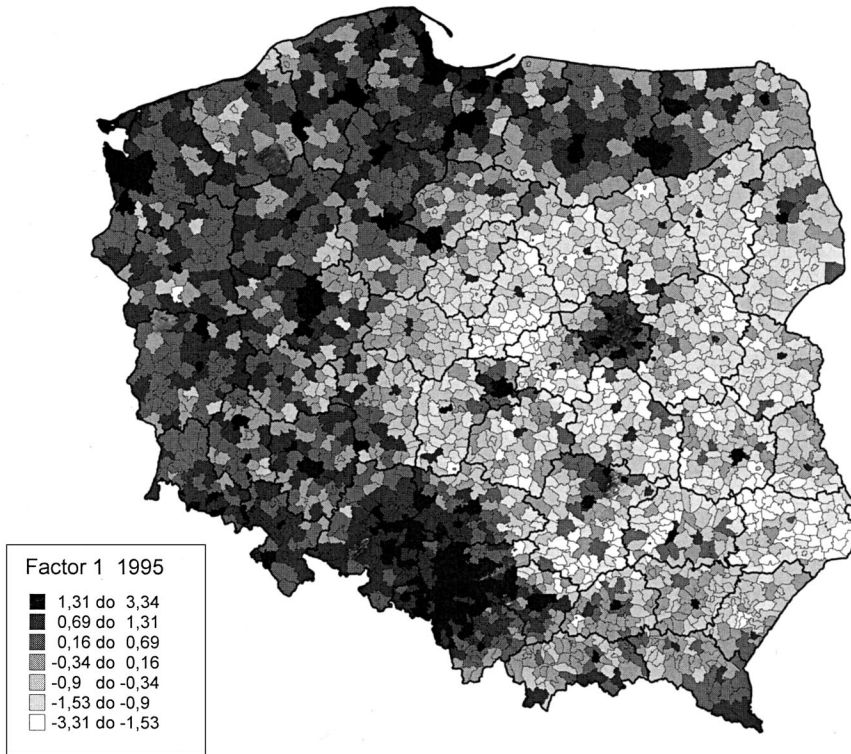


Fig. 6. Factor scores of urban–rural dimension of 1995 presidential elections.

lation (share of native-born inhabitants in a given commune), religiosity, private farms in the total number of farms, divorce and crime. Rural communities that are stable, religious and have low crime and divorce rates tend to vote right.

It is also possible to show that the same regularities are observable on the gmina level. Although the available socio-economic data on the level of communes is very restricted, we have obtained a set of data on quasi-randomly selected rural communes in Poland.⁸ In Table 2, we present the correlation between selected indexes and factor scores for the 1995 presidential elections.

Another source of explanation for observed patterns can be found in the historical interpretation of the structures. Such an approach is also possible with the use of maps of factor scores.

The analysis of historical roots of regional differentiation of electoral preferences has a long tradition (e.g. Taylor and Johnston, 1979). One of the first studies of both stability and the determinants of regional differentiation of political preferences was

⁸ Data was obtained from the available data set of the results of the last census (1988) from rural areas. This set was reduced to those communes which did not change their status over the years, which allowed us to match the census data with the results of the last election.

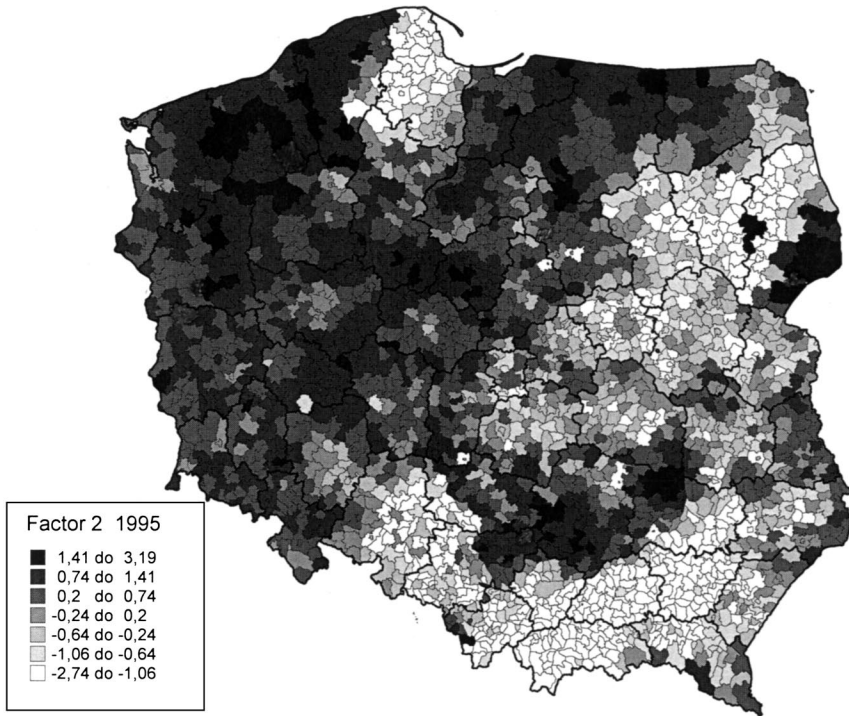


Fig. 7. Factor scores of left–right (post- vs. anti-communist) dimension of the 1995 presidential elections.

done by French social geographers. For example, Siegfried (1949) analyzed the electoral geography of the Adreche Department. He found stable structures of regional differentiation in left- and right-wing party support in the Third Republic. He also showed the connections between the historical, economic and physical geography of the region.

Siegfried's classic study inspired hundreds of studies on regional differentiation of voting preferences, which were undertaken in almost all Western Democracies and many other nations. Most of this work has been done by social geographers, in isolation from sociology and political science, which is a loss for all disciplines. Specifically, the important drawback of many of the geographical analyses was often that the simplistic approach did not extend much beyond the description of maps of support of parties and candidates. In our study we use geographical analysis as a supplementary source to confirm factor interpretations of the nature of the uncovered cleavages. The maps of factor scores allow us to notice the importance of historical factors. First, we note the significance of Poland's partition between Russia, Prussia and Austria (later Austria–Hungary) for more than a century. Apart from the three post-partition regions, there is a fourth region acquired by Poland after World War II from Germany, known as the “Western and Northern territories”. The special character of each region has been widely discussed, but most of our knowledge about

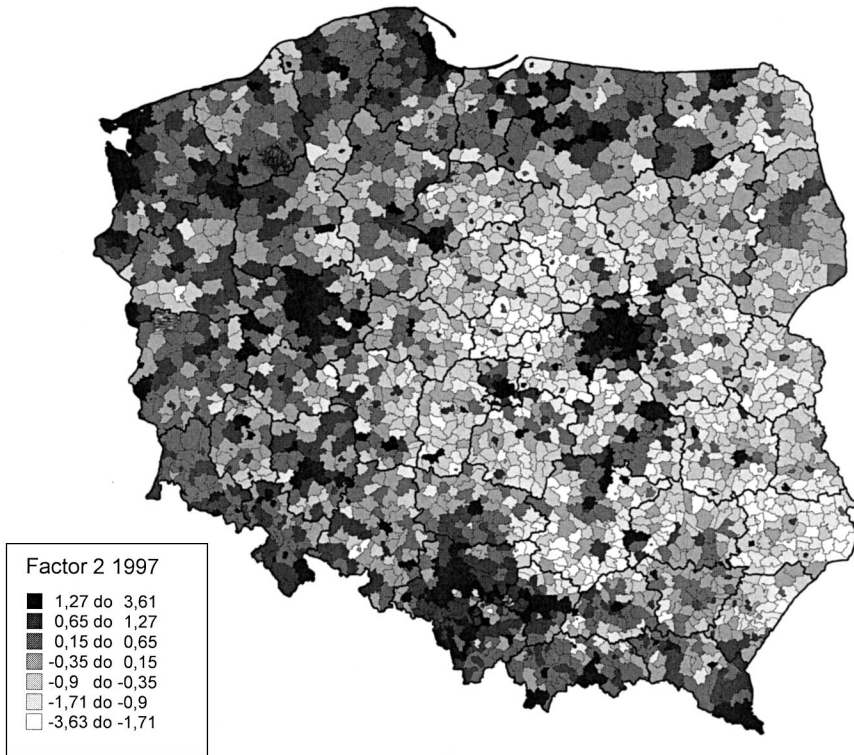


Fig. 8. Factor scores of the urban–rural dimension of 1997 parliamentary elections.

the importance of the historical past comes largely from unverified stereotypes. The former Austrian–Hungarian part, also called Galicja, is widely viewed as the most “liberal”, its electoral law being constantly democratized in the late XIX century, thus allowing the diffusion of Polish culture and national political organization. Some of the negative aspects of the Galicja stereotype include exceptionally bad farm structures, widespread poverty, leading to mass emigration to America.

The former Prussian region enjoyed some democratic freedom, but here the state was much more active in the repression of manifestations of Polish national identity. A positive legacy of the Prussian influence on present day electoral behavior is a high quality school system. This causes the high electoral turnout in the former Prussian zone. Another contribution of Prussian rule is agrarian reform, avoiding the emergence of the small, ineffective farms typical of the Russian and Austrian sectors, as well as peasant–landlord conflicts characteristic of these sectors of Poland until 1939.

The worst stereotype is ascribed to the Russian sector, known also as “Kongreśówka”.⁹ Hampering the development of the region, Russia left a legacy of corrupt,

⁹ Named after the Congress Kingdom formed in Vienna in 1815.

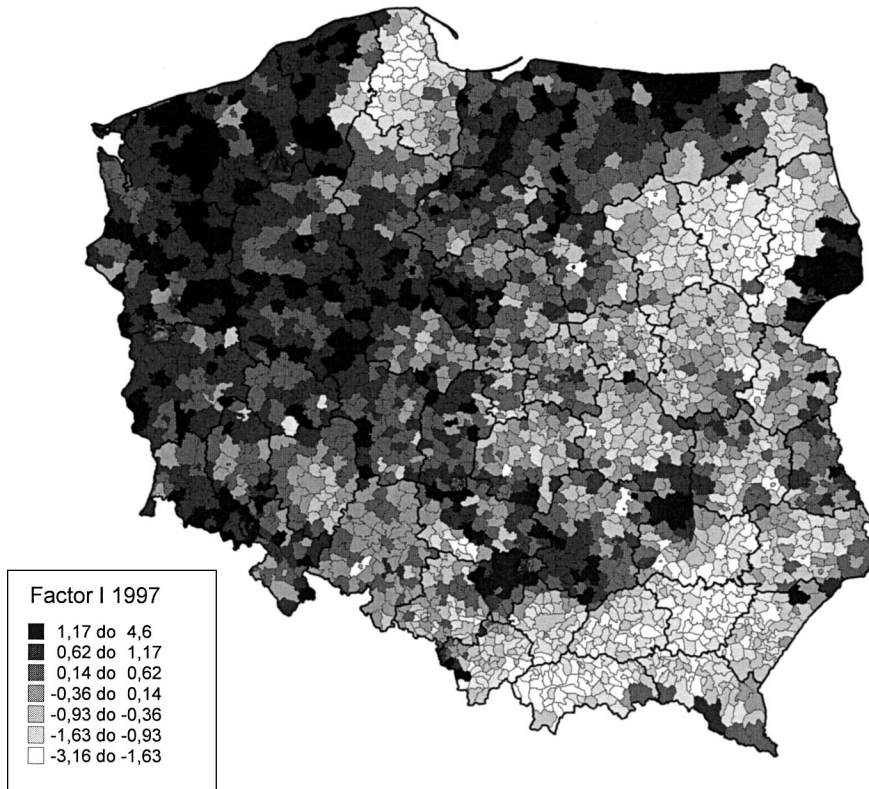


Fig. 9. Factor scores of the left–right (post- vs. anti-communist) dimension of the 1997 parliamentary elections.

authoritarianism. The Russian state left neither democratic traditions nor technical infrastructure. It did, at the same time, generate the emergence of left-liberal educated intelligentsia class with ambitions of preserving some of the values of nobility and a clear anti-system of political orientation. Kongresówka gave Poland its poets, writers and many national heroes, but it also had the lowest level of education and the least focused national and civic identity among its large peasant population.

Finally, the Western and Northern territories became a “social laboratory”, since Poles from many different places were settled and mixed there after the expulsion of the German population following World War II (Fig. 10).

Returning to the maps displaying factor scores of urban–rural cleavage (Figs. 6 and 8), we can observe more than a simple town–countryside divide. It is clear that the bigger the city, the more liberal its political character. Beyond this basic correlation, we also observe an important differentiation in the rural areas of Poland. In the former Russian areas the factor scores on the rural–urban dimension have the lowest values. Exceptions are rare but include the cities of Warsaw and Lodz, which have been important industrial centers for a century. The former Austrian–Hungarian

Table 1
Pearson's correlation coefficients between factor scores, $n=2468$ (gminas)

Rural–urban axis				
Year	91	93	95	97
90	0.76**	0.812**	0.829**	0.776**
91	0.892**	0.748**	0.745**	
93	0.812**	0.837**		
95	0.771**			
Post- vs. anti-communist axis (left–right)				
Year	91	93	95	97
90	0.734**	0.774**	0.867**	0.842**
91	0.745**	0.753**	0.728**	
93	0.839**	0.818**		
95	0.899**			

**Significance level 0.05 (2-tailed)

Table 2
Correlation between factor scores of the 1995 elections and the socio-economic data set of selected rural communes of Poland, $n=1507$ (selected rural communes)

	Factor 1 Rural–urban	Factor 2 “New” vs. “old” regions
Fertility of soils	−0.140**	0.010
Share of land in possession of private farmers	−0.440**	−0.461**
Average surface of farm	−0.260**	0.330**
Share those born in place in their of residence	−0.420**	−0.510**
Working in private farms	−0.780**	−0.205
Working in state-owned farms	0.260***	0.472**
Working outside agriculture	0.730	−0.154**
Not employed	0.429**	0.301**
Average number of persons in household	0.010	−0.247**
Active in agriculture	−0.780**	0.058*
Unemployment	−0.030	0.065*
Education above elementary	0.680**	−0.102**
High school and university education	0.530**	−0.005
Education below elementary	−0.540**	0.142**
Population above 60 years old	−0.640**	−0.062**
Population 40–49 years old	0.540**	0.200**
Density of population	0.410**	−0.076**
Women per 100 men	0.340**	−0.004
Number of private enterprises per capita	0.510**	−0.108**
Natural increase of population	0.438**	0.024

*Significance level 0.05 (2-tailed)

**Significance level 0.01 (2-tailed)

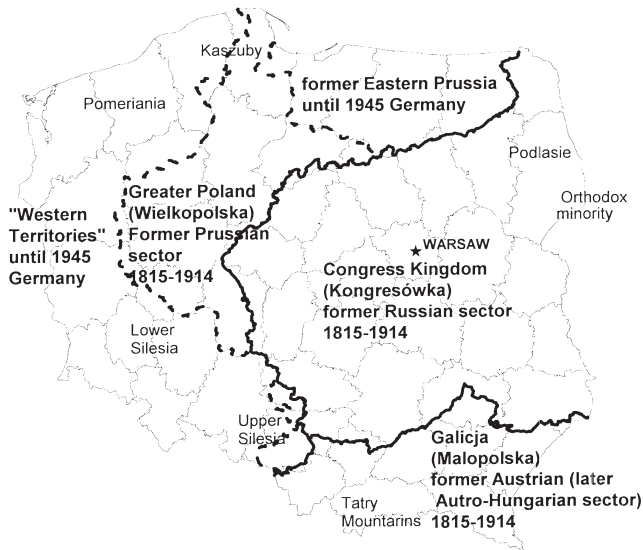


Fig. 10. Historical regions of Poland.

region is more differentiated on this factor. The highest levels of these factor scores appear among the territories of the former Prussian zone, and the Western and Northern territories acquired from Germany after World War II.

The geography of the second factor seems more complicated. The heritage of Polish partition is most visible in the case of the former Austrian–Hungarian zone, where we observe the highest right wing (or anti-communist) factor scores. The major exception in Galicja are several communes in the Bieszczady mountains, where the native Ukrainian population was expelled and new settlers appear to be much less conservative. The most extreme values of right (anti-communist) factor scores are found in the Tatra mountains inhabited by one of the most traditional, religious and stable communities in Poland, the Highlanders. Another anti-communist region is Podlasie in northeastern Poland. The religious and stable population of the region has many descendants of petty gentry (countrymen enjoying full civil right) and a vivid remembrance of anti-communist guerillas after the end of World War II. This region clearly differs from the area inhabited by the orthodox minority in the East (often considered as Belarussian) and former Eastern Prussia in the North inhabited by settlers from all parts of pre-war Poland. Most of the places with relatively young populations in formerly German territories are characterized by the highest left (post-communist) factor scores. On the other hand, part of Silesia inhabited by voters of a German minority cannot be defined as post-communist. Encompassed by Gdansk voivodship, another radically anti-communist region is Kaszuby. As we see from Fig. 9, the traditional, Catholic population of Kaszuby, which survived several years of Germanization, is even more anti-communist than its regional capital Gdansk, known as the birth place of Solidarity and home town of Lech Walesa.

Conclusions — levels of political identity

Our results indicate that the political cleavages in Polish society have much deeper roots than many have expected. It appears that voting in recent Polish elections is determined by a factor structure which remains stable while the surface of Polish politics and voting behavior shifts quickly. We think it is possible to discuss at least three levels of Polish politics. The first is the level of political representation. Here, because of the electoral system, the changes are most visible. Even a few points of victory of Kwasniewski over Walesa in the 1995 elections produced a radical political change.

The second level of stability of the political system in our approach is voting behavior, which changes slightly from one election to another, but whose fluctuations are not so dramatic as the “revolutions” in the institutional dimension. Much of the change in the election results is related to the changing scope of electoral participation. As the turnout in some elections increases or drops, different parties gain or lose votes. This does not necessarily mean that voter preferences change considerably.

Since the institutional dimension of the political system changes much faster than voter preferences evolve, this fluctuation forces voters to adjust their political preferences to the new formal system. We say, paradoxically, that by changing their preferences voters show the stability of their political allegiances. Many voters ignore parties and candidates but support the same orientation representing their party/candidate in previous elections. This might be termed the “accommodation” of voters to the change of the political system. It may also be interpreted as an example of the ideological identification of voters who use rational reasoning to maintain their stable loyalties. In other words, political identification theory, mentioned earlier, could be seen as the best model of Polish voting behavior on the deep level, while the rational vote model is more adequate for the description of the political behavior on higher levels of analysis.

In sum, our conclusions concerning the voting behavior will depend to a large extent on our level of observation. The same applies to the structure and logic of the system, which can create an impression of chaos and disorder in the institutional dimension, but which appears more logical at the level of voting behavior and even more coherent at the level of political identification. Of course, this regularity is a manifestation of much more general phenomenon of the differentiation of human preferences between rather stable (context independent) and more fluent context dependent choices.

One of the most interesting features of our two-dimensional model of political cleavage in Poland is that it articulates a deep level of political identification, and relates it to concrete historical traditions, social cleavages and social indexes. Another benefit is that it permits understanding of party and voter changes over time in relation to the two main stable political orientations.

We also would like to stress that in a more general sense the above discussed method of analysis of elections allows a comparison of voter preferences despite

considerable changes in institutional configuration of party organizations, which seems especially useful for the study of political transitions.

Appendix A. Factor analysis results (rotation: varimax normalized, extraction: principal components) ($n=2468$, gminas)

See Tables 3–8.

Table 3
Presidential elections 1990 (factor analysis without the reduction of number of factors)

	Factors loadings		
	I	II	III
R. Bartoszcze	-0.871	-0.037	0.078
T. Mazowiecki	0.826	0.112	0.251
L. Moczulski	0.522	-0.291	0.589
W. Cimoszewicz	0.187	0.848	-0.088
L. Walesa	0.156	-0.730	-0.467
S. Tyminski	0.059	0.175	0.869
% Variance explained	34.7	24.5	16.8
Cumulative		59.2	76

Table 4
Presidential elections 1990 (analysis performed with reduction of number of factors to two)

	Factor loadings	
	I Urban-rural	II Left-right
R. Bartoszcze	-0.862	0.058
T. Mazowiecki	0.831	0.188
L. Moczulski	0.713	0.055
L. Walesa	0.014	-0.966
S. Tyminski	0.237	0.713
W. Cimoszewicz	-0.170	0.595
% Variance explained	37.0	26.9
Cumulative		64.0

Table 5
Parliamentary elections 1991

	Factor loadings	
	I Urban–rural	II Left–right
UD	0.803	–0.154
KLD	0.75	0.059
UPR	0.665	–0.119
“Solidarnosc”	0.596	–0.065
PSL-PL	–0.589	0.229
PSL-SP	–0.578	–0.338
KPN	0.561	0.24
SLD	0.289	–0.648
WAK	0.085	0.586
POC	0.287	0.471
“S” Pracy	0.278	0.008
% Variance explained	29.3	11.4
Cumulative		40.7

Table 6
Parliamentary elections 1993

	Factor loadings	
	I Urban–rural	II Left–right
PSL	–0.857	0.015
UD	0.782	–0.079
UP	0.768	–0.329
UPR	0.758	–0.077
“S”	0.628	0.388
KLD	0.562	–0.087
KPN	0.542	0.499
PSL-PL	–0.48	0.179
BBWR	0.44	0.379
PC	0.311	0.137
Ojczyzna	0.053	0.646
SLD	0.427	–0.646
KDR	0.006	0.379
% Variance explained	30.2	14.1
Cumulative		44.3

Table 7
Presidential elections 1995

	Factor loadings	
	I Urban–rural	II Left–right
W. Pawlak	–0.835	0.075
J. Kuron	0.820	0.349
T. Zielinski	0.804	0.281
J. Korwin-Mikke	0.773	0.002
H. Gronkiewicz-Waltz	0.758	–0.314
A. Kwasniewski	0.068	0.951
L. Walesa	0.209	–0.908
J. Olszewski	–0.158	–0.561
% Variance explained	41.2	28.9
Cumulative		70.1

Table 8
Parliamentary elections 1997

	Factor loadings	
	I Left–right	II Urban–rural
AWS	–0.847	0.307
SLD	0.830	0.281
UP	0.655	0.131
ROP	–0.348	–0.132
PSL	0.051	–0.884
UW	0.182	0.762
UPR	0.154	0.582
% Variance explained	32.3	23.9
Cumulative		56.2

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