

It's a Multifaceted Economic Effect, Stupid!
Conventional vs. Transitional Economic Voting in Poland, 1997-2005

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Abstract

We provide the first systematic test at the micro-level contrasting the predictions of a standard incumbency-based model of economic voting (“Conventional Economic Voting”) in the post-communist context with a Transitional Economic Voting model focusing on particular “types” of parties. We do so by analyzing party preferences across the three most recent Polish parliamentary elections. Our findings present a nuanced picture that suggest multiple paths for economic influences on voting in the post-communist context. This is in part due to what we feel is an important novel contribution of the paper, which is our use of longer, “transitional” economic evaluations (e.g., “do you feel the economy has improved since the collapse of communism?”) in our analyses, in addition to conventional short-term retrospective evaluations (“do you feel the economy has improved or in the past 12 months?”). We do find clear evidence of support for the Conventional Economic Voting approach, but this evidence is limited to a specific set of evaluations to which the theory is most appropriately applied: short-term retrospective evaluations and the vote for incumbent parties. The Transitional Model, on the other hand, is strongly supported by the presence of relationships between longer term transitional retrospective evaluations across a range of parties. Moreover, we even find some support for the Transitional Model in predicting the effect of short term economic evaluations. In particular, a number of reformist (“New Regime”) parties are preferred by people who think the economy has been improving in the past 12 months, a finding that is largely at odds with incumbency-centered models of economic voting.

Introduction

Since the publication of Gerald Kramer's landmark *APSR* article "Short-Term Fluctuations in U.S. Voting Behavior" over 45 years ago, scholars have been fascinated with trying to understand the relationship between economic conditions, voting behavior, and election results (Kramer 1971). For the next quarter of a century, the vast majority of this effort was focused on trying to understand economic voting within the relatively stable two-party system of the United States. Not surprisingly, almost all of the theoretical energy of this endeavor was focused on better understanding the relationship between economic conditions and the vote for incumbent political parties; in a two-party system, such a model could sufficiently characterize the effect of the economy on the entire electorate. As studies of economic voting spread beyond the United States in the 1990s, however, new avenues of theoretical inquiry gained prominence. In particular, cross-national studies of economic voting in established democracies highlighted the concept that the effect of the economy on the vote for incumbent parties may vary across time and place, and is likely *conditional* on other factors, such as, for example, the clarity of government responsibility for economic outcomes (Powell and Whitten 1993). The most recent decade has witnessed a rise of the study of economic voting in post-communist countries. These studies – responding to the fact that incumbency centered approaches have a limited scope in multi-party systems, and, especially, multi-party systems with large numbers of new and unstable parties – have tended to examine the effect of economic conditions on a much wider range of political parties, including but not limited to incumbent parties. Some studies examined the effect of the economy systematically on every major party competing in an election (Gibson and Cielecka 1995; Bell 1997), while others began to consider the vote for certain types of

political parties, such as liberal/reformist or post-communist (Colton 1996; Fidrmuc 2000a, 2000b; Jackson et al. 2003b, 2005).

One recent attempt to provide a systematic theoretical framework through which we can understand the effect of economic conditions on the vote for parties in the post-communist context can be found in Tucker (2006). Tucker proposes what he calls a “Transitional Identity Model” of economic voting, whereby “New Regime” parties, or those parties who are primarily identified with the transition away from communism and the implementation of market reforms, are predicated to perform better in parts of the country with better economic conditions. Conversely, “Old Regime” parties, or parties descended from the prior ruling communist parties, are predicted to perform better in parts of the country where the economy is worse. Tucker uses cross-regional aggregate level data to test this model, and finds stronger empirical support for it than a more conventional incumbency based approach across twenty elections in five post-communist countries from 1990-99.

In this paper, we provide the first systematic test at the micro-level contrasting the predictions of a standard incumbency-based model of economic voting (hereafter “Conventional Economic Voting” or the “Conventional Model”) in a the post-communist context this type of Transitional Identity Model (hereafter, “Transitional Economic Voting” or the “Transitional Model”) by analyzing party preferences across three Polish parliamentary elections: those that took place in 1997, 2001, and 2005. Our findings present a nuanced picture that suggest multiple paths for economic influences on voting in the post-communist context. This is in part due to what we feel is an important novel contribution of the paper, which is our use of longer, “transitional” economic evaluations (e.g., “do you feel the economy has improved since the collapse of communism?”) in our analyses, in addition to conventional short-term retrospective

evaluations (e.g., “do you feel the economy has improved in the past 12 months?”). We do find clear evidence of support for the Conventional Economic Voting approach – which should come as a relief to those who believe support for such a model is an important prerequisite for establishing accountable democratic governance – but this evidence is limited to the specific set of evaluations for which the theory is most clearly intended: short-term retrospective evaluations and the vote for incumbent parties. The Transitional Economic Voting model, on the other hand, is strongly supported by the presence of relationships between longer term transitional retrospective evaluations across a range of parties. The effect of these long-term transitional evaluations are actually strong enough that when the two models are in conflict with one another (e.g., for Incumbent Old Regime parties), the long-term transitional evaluations can almost completely cancel out the effect of even strong short-term retrospective evaluations. Moreover, we also find some support for the Transitional Model in predicting the effect of short term economic evaluations for opposition New Regime parties. In a number of cases these parties are preferred by people who think the economy has been improving in the past 12 months, a finding which is completely at odds with Conventional Economic Voting models.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In the following section we expand upon our theoretical arguments and more explicitly state our hypotheses regarding both the Conventional and Transitional Economic Voting Models. In the next section, we justify our decision to focus our analysis on a series of elections from one country as opposed to a more explicitly comparative framework, as well as explaining why Poland is a particularly appropriate choice for such a study. We then present our empirical results, which provide the basis for the conclusions put forward in the preceding paragraph. We conclude the paper with a discussion of

the implications of our findings for the continuing evolution of our understanding of the phenomenon of economic voting.

Models of Economic Voting

The relationship between elections and the economy is a well established political reality in established democracies, with a wealth of evidence suggesting that economic conditions exert a substantial effect on election outcomes.¹ The sudden arrival of a host of new democratic countries which followed the decline of communism presents an opportunity for further testing of existing models of economic voting and, perhaps even more importantly, new theoretical developments in the study of economic voting prompted by the unique circumstances facing new democracies. In the remainder of this section, therefore, we present two potential models of economic voting in transitional countries. The first follows the dominant strand of the existing economic voting literature in established democracies by focusing on voting for or against incumbent parties. The second draws on recent work on economic voting in post-communist countries (in particular Tucker 2006, although see as well Fidrmuc 2000a, 2000b; Jackson et al. 2005) to hypothesize about the effect of economic conditions on the vote for particular “types” of political parties.

In its most straightforward form, the predominant model of economic voting employed in studies of established democracies expects that voters will tend to punish the incumbent in bad economic times and reward the incumbent when the economy is doing well. In this framework, elections function much like referenda on economic conditions during the incumbent party’s term in office. Scholars have produced a vast amount of evidence supporting this basic premise

¹ For a recent review of the literature in established democracies, see Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000. For a review focused on post-communist countries, see Tucker 2002, p.292-5.

using both macro and micro-level data.² Within this literature a number of important debates about the specific details of the connection between economics and elections have arisen. These debates aside, the fundamental claim of this model, that a positive relationship exists between economic conditions and support for the incumbent party, is nearly beyond dispute. It is important to note that the Conventional Model has little to say about how economic conditions ought to influence the fate of non-incumbent parties. In two party systems this is not a serious concern, as the impact of economic evaluations on the vote for opposition parties follows directly from the incumbency relationship noted above. For multi-party systems, however, the Conventional Model provides little guidance as to the relationship between economic conditions and the support for different non-incumbent parties.

The weight of supporting evidence suggests that the Conventional Model should provide a guide to understanding elections in transitional democracies. In fact, the assumption that voters in new democracies would behave in accordance with its predictions helped to spur a great deal of the literature on the politics of economic reform (e.g., Sachs 1990, Dornbusch and Edwards 1991, Przeworski 1991).³ Therefore, the Conventional Model seems the logical place to begin any empirical analysis of economic voting patterns.⁴

² In the American context, see for example Kramer 1971; Tufte 1975, 1978; Chappell and Keech 1985; Erikson 1989, 1990; MacKuen et al. 1992 at the macro-level and Kinder and Kiewiet 1979; Fiorina 1981; Kinder and Kiewiet 1981; Lockerbie 1991; Lanoue 1994 at the micro-level. In the comparative context, see for example Powell and Whitten 1993; Remmer 1993; Palmer and Whitten 1999; Roberts and Wibbels 1999; Whitten and Palmer 1999; Chappell and Veiga 2000; Palmer and Whitten 2000 at the macro-level and Alvarez et al. 2000, Wlezien et al. 1997; Anderson 2000; Nadeau et al. 2002 at the micro-level.

³ If citizens were only to attend to recent economic conditions, then pro-reform parties would tend to lose support as the difficult phase of the transition to a market economy progresses. Governing parties responsiveness to this loss of support and/or their replacement by anti-reform parties through elections, it was hypothesized, could then inhibit implementation of important reform policies. In the intervening years, of course, more than just the electoral premises of this approach have been challenged; see in particular Hellman 1998; Frye 2002; Herrera 2005.

⁴ One critique of this approach is found in Stokes 2001, who argues that the Conventional Model of economic voting does not apply in transitional countries and provides a set of alternative models. She argues instead that citizens may interpret bad economic times as a sign that the short-term pain required of a transition is underway, and thus initially reward reformist incumbents for painful economic changes; indeed in Stokes 1996 she cites a Czechoslovak finance minister who stated that “Unless the unemployment rate grows to 8% to 10% this year, we will not be doing our

There is, however, a growing body of evidence that supports an alternative model of economic voting specific to countries in transition (Fidrmuc 2000a, 2000b; Jackson et al. 2003a, 2005; Tucker 2006). This approach is grounded in the unique context which exists in a transitional democracy. In established democracies, the issue of the economy largely reduces to the question of which party is best able to create positive economic conditions while working within a broadly accepted economic system. In contrast, the appropriate system is very much a part of political debates about the economy in transitioning countries. Even if a return to communism *in toto* is unlikely, the memory of an alternative economic system – crucially with a different set of economic strengths and weaknesses – is posited to linger well into the transition. In this framework, citizens can use information about economic conditions to update their beliefs about these transition writ large and then evaluate parties based on their association with the transition. This ‘transitional identity’ of political parties enables voters to connect economic conditions and party evaluations, and therefore supplants incumbency status at the heart of the model (Tucker 2006).⁵

The Transitional Model of economic voting accordingly predicts a positive relationship between evaluations of economic conditions and support for parties associated with the economic transition. These ‘New Regime’ parties acquire this identity by appealing to individual voters through their general support for the economic transition. Citizens who perceive positive

job.” Nevertheless, there are two reasons to suspect this model will be of limited use in explaining recent elections in post-communist countries. First, while these such an approach have been accurate early in the transition process, in the decade following the transition, it seems unlikely that citizens would still be willing to conceive of bad economic conditions as a ‘good sign’ about things to come and/or as the consequences of economic decisions made by the old regime prior to transition (and indeed, Tucker 2006 finds no evidence to support these claims at the aggregate cross-regional level even in the earliest Polish elections; see p.72, nt.48). Second, these models expect citizens to interpret information about economic conditions in a rather sophisticated way. A good deal of work in even well established democracies suggests that expecting this sort of reasoning from citizens is unrealistic (Achen and Bartels 2004).

⁵ In the section we draw heavily upon and utilize the terminology of Tucker 2006, especially Ch.2. Other studies following a similar theoretical trajectory of focusing on a party’s “type” in post-communist countries have used a reformist/liberal vs post-communist/leftist distinction that leads to a similar classification of parties (Fidrmuc 2000a, 2000b; Jackson et al. 2003a, 2005; Mach and Jackson 2006).

economic conditions attribute these conditions to the change from communism to a more market oriented system and thus are predicted to support New Regime parties. Citizens with negative economic evaluations will tend to have more negative evaluations of these same parties. “Old Regime” parties are those most closely associated with the Communist party which ruled prior to the transition. Since citizens can associate these parties with a period of time when economic problems that accompanied the transition either did not exist (or were much less serious), the Transitional Model predicts that voters who are unhappy with economic conditions ought to be more likely to gravitate to Old Regime parties than other parties about which they know less. Of course, since information is built into this prediction, we might expect this relationship to change over time, a point we return to in more detail later.⁶

The Temporal Nature of Economic Evaluations

As specified above, the Conventional and Transitional Models can yield *potentially* competing predictions about the relationship between economic conditions and support for political parties. However, the Conventional and Traditional Models of economic voting also diverge with respect to the temporal framework citizens adopt when evaluating economic conditions.⁷ In order to generate an evaluation of a given set of economic conditions, an individual must compare these conditions to some alternative set. When the first set entails more (less) desirable economic outcomes compared to the alternative, positive (negative) evaluations result. Citizens may reasonably compare current conditions to a host of different alternatives

⁶ For a more detailed explication of this time-based argument, see Tucker 2006, p.46-7.

⁷ The issue of temporal evaluations also calls to mind the wide-ranging debate in the political science literature regarding prospective vs. retrospective voting (MacKuen et al. 1992; see Mach and Jackson 2006 for a discussion in the Polish context). While we touch on this topic briefly later in the paper, we are self-consciously *not* referencing the debate here in an effort to call attention to a much less studied aspect of the temporal nature of economic evaluations: the temporal quality of one’s reference point for assessing changes in the state of the economy.

including: the state of the economy when the incumbent took office, conditions in neighboring countries, some average of actual economic conditions over some period of elapsed time etc (Powell and Whitten 1993; Palmer and Whitten 1999; Whitten and Palmer 1999). In most micro-level survey-based work on economic voting in established democracies the reference point is assumed to be relatively recent economic conditions (e.g. “over the past 12 months would you say the economy has...”) or is simply left to the respondent (e.g. “how would you evaluate the economy today, is it...”). These two types of questions reflect both the general belief that voters tend to be fairly myopic and the difficulty inherent in identifying a commonly used alternative reference point.

In post-communist democracies, however, there is an obvious reference point against which citizens might reasonably compare current economic conditions: the pre-transition economy. While voters might rationally conduct fairly sophisticated comparisons (for instance, a voter might compare present conditions to present day conditions had the old regime remained in power, or present conditions to conditions had the economic reforms been pursued differently) we assume voters are likely to take a more straightforward approach than to estimate these counterfactuals. Specifically we expect some voters may compare current conditions to a general conception of the economy under the communist regime. Indeed, the Transitional Model is premised on the idea that citizens use evaluations of the transition writ large to update their opinions of political parties. In addition to a fairly myopic view of economic change compared to a year ago, these evaluations of the transition may derive from a comparison of the current economy with average conditions under the old economic regime. Thus such longer term

evaluations of economic change should affect citizens' support for political parties based on each party's transitional identity.⁸

The Transitional Model of economic voting thus directs attention to economic evaluations distinct from the short-term evaluations in which the Conventional Model is grounded. In the Conventional Model, voters adopt a decidedly short term perspective on the state of the economy and the model thus assumes no relationship between longer term economic evaluations and party support. This assumption of course derives from the fact that in the politics of established democracies, which the Conventional Model was developed to explain, there exists no socially shared past moment against which current conditions ought to be compared. A straightforward application of the Conventional Model thus yields a prediction of no relationship between evaluations of the economy since the transition and party support.

Moreover, because we consider a set of elections occurring over a nine year time frame there is good reason to suspect that the nature of economic voting may evolve over time. First, we might expect the Transitional Model to receive greater support early in our series of elections with the Conventional model working better in the most recent elections as Polish democracy develops. Tucker (2006) provides a more nuanced set of predictions about the fate of the Transitional Model over time. He presents one set of hypotheses predicting that as time passes and voters acquire more information about party types, citizens should become better able to distinguish reformed Old Regime parties who accept the need for some economic reforms from more unrepentant Old Regime parties. Thus the Transitional Model might continue to explain support for unreformed Old Regime parties but could be less useful in explaining the fate of

⁸ Tucker 2006 hints at such an approach in his conclusion when he discusses the idea that there could be “two different types of “incumbent parties to be blamed or rewarded for the state of the economy following a dramatic change in a country’s economic circumstances – the incumbent party of the pretransition period (here the Old Regime parties) and the incumbent parties of the transition period (here the New Reigme parties) – neither of which need to actually be in power at the time of a given election to be considered an incumbent” (p.280).

reformed Old Regime parties.⁹ Similarly, the Transitional Model should be more appropriate over-time for New Regime parties that consistently put forward a liberalizing agenda in contrast to New Regime parties with a more populist bent (see Table 2.5, p.7.3). Tucker goes on to suggest that debates about membership in the European Union may eventually replace questions about transitional economic reforms as the main economic cleavage in post-communist countries, and thus anti-EU parties could come to play the role originally played by the post-communist Old Regime parties in attracting dissatisfied voters, especially after countries have joined the European union (see p.294-5). If this suggestion is correct, than in the Polish case we could expect citizens who are dissatisfied with the economy to turn to anti-EU parties in greater numbers in 2001, as accession to the EU becomes a greater part of the national dialogue, and especially in 2005, once Poland has already joined the EU.

-- INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE --

Table 1 therefore provides an overview of the specific hypotheses derived from the Transitional and Conventional Models. Two party characteristics (incumbency status and New/Old regime identity) yield the four possible party types listed in column one. The second column classifies each of the major Polish political parties; we discuss these parties in greater detail in the following section. For each of these party types we identify the direction of the relationship between party support and evaluations of the economy over the short term and since the transition.

The Conventional Model predicts a positive relationship between perceptions of short term economic change and support for incumbent parties. This model offers no prediction for the relationship between the economy and non-incumbent party support. As there is no broadly

⁹ Although it should be noted that he finds no evidence to support this prediction through the course of his study, which encompasses only the 1990s.

shared reference point in older democracies, the Conventional Model expects that economic voting is distinctly short term and expects no relationship between longer-term evaluations and party support. The Transitional Model, however, predicts a specific relationship for each of the eight cells in Table 1. This model predicts that evaluations of the economy grounded in a) a comparison with very recent conditions and/or b) those present prior to the transition will be positively related to support for New Regime parties and negatively related to Old Regime parties. The remainder of this paper presents the empirical test of these hypothesized relationships.

The Polish Context

As noted previously, we focus our empirical analysis in this paper on a single country in an effort to provide a systematic analysis of our hypotheses over time without the complications arising from a comparing survey data across countries (King et al. 2004).¹⁰ We chose Poland from among the post-communist countries for three reasons, in addition to the fact that as a country of over 38 million people Poland is the largest of the post-communist countries in the European Union, (and indeed the 6th largest country in the EU overall).

First, we had a wonderful source of data for our analysis in the form of the Polish National Election Studies, which have been conducted under the leadership of a single director (Radoslaw Markowski) for the last three election cycles (1997, 2001, 2005). Not only are these studies remarkably thorough in general, but they are particularly good in terms of providing

¹⁰ This in no way reflect a bias against more comparative research, and indeed we feel strongly that future research should evolve in this direction. But given the novelty of testing Transitional Economic Voting at the micro-level, the introduction of the long-term evaluations in the study of this form of economic voting, and the over-time analysis, we felt it best to limit other moving pieces in the analysis.

suitable questions for studies of economic voting. Crucially, all three years had an appropriate question for assessing long-term economic assessments since the start of the transition.

Second, Poland has been a particularly popular country for studies of voting and elections in post-communist countries, trailing only Russia in scholarly interest (see Tucker 2002, Figure 2). This allows us to tie the study empirically to a developing literature. Most crucially, a number of studies have already demonstrated something akin to what we have labeled here as Transitional economic voting at the aggregate level (Tucker 2006, Jackson et al 2005, Fidmurec 2000a,b).¹¹ Moreover, Jackson et al (2005) finds very limited support for the Conventional Model of economic voting in Poland and some suggestive evidence which supports the idea that citizens vote based on preference for certain economic policies. In a related paper, Mach and Jackson (2005) use data from a three wave panel study to explore the link between personal and regional employment changes, attitudes about economic policies, and vote choice in 1993 and 1997 in Poland. They find a relationship between individuals' medium term economic evaluations and vote choice consistent with the transitional model. In both 1993 and 1997 those who believe that the Poles 'like themselves' are better off compared to five years prior are more likely to support the Liberal reform parties. Similarly, Powers and Cox (1997) directs attention to the context of transitional democracies and demonstrates that beliefs about whether the communists or liberal reformers were to blame for the poor economic conditions in the 1993 Polish parliamentary elections are strongly related to vote choice in the election of that year.¹²

Our study builds on these previous works most importantly by providing the first explicit test of

¹¹ For additional aggregate level studies of economic voting in Poland see: Gibson & Cielecka 1995, Bell 1997; Lubecki 2004.

¹² Bielasiak and Blunk (2002) considers, among other things, economic voting in the 1993 Polish election. In motivating their hypotheses Bielasiak and Blunk speak to transitional identity of parties but, by virtue of studying an election in which the economic reformers formed were the incumbent, are unable to clearly distinguish between Conventional and Transitional economic voting since the models yield the same predictions.

the Conventional and Transitional models at the micro-level and by specifying and operationalizing long-term “transitional” economic evaluations. However, we also hope to make a contribution to this burgeoning set of works on voting in Poland by extending the sequence of elections studied well into the second decade of post-communist Polish democracy.

Last but certainly not least, the Polish political experience provides the perfect backdrop for our empirical analysis. Poland’s transition has involved dramatic economic and political shifts and there is therefore good reason to suspect that economic assessments influenced citizens’ political attitudes.¹³ As these economic events unfolded, there was also considerable variation in Polish politics and election outcomes. The 1993 Polish parliamentary elections (not included in our analysis) witnessed the triumphant return of the ex-communist Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) to power in coalition with the former communist satellite Polish Peasant’s Party (PSL) (Millard 1994; Chan 1995). Despite some bumps in the road, the coalition remained in office until the scheduled 1997 parliamentary elections, when it lost power despite improving economic conditions (Tucker 2006, 145-8). It was replaced by a coalition of the Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS), itself a coalition of right and right-of-center parties drawing on the legacy of the anti-communist solidarity movement, and the Freedom Union (UW), which was the descendent of the parties most closely associated with the original implementation of Poland’s economic reforms. As noted in Table 1, one can classify both UW and AWS as New Regime parties, although it is important to note that of the two it is the UW that remained most clearly associated with Poland’s economic reforms, both through its political legacy and its policy positions. In the parlance of Tucker (2006), the UW is a “consistent liberalizing” New Regime party, while AWS is a “populist leaning” New Regime party. Similarly, both the SLD and PSL clearly have a link to the pre-communist past, and so we include them both on Table 1 as Old

¹³ For a comprehensive review of Poland’s transition through 1997 see Jackson et al (2005).

Regime parties. Tucker (2006) does not actually classify the PSL as an Old Regime party due to its primary identity as an agrarian party, so we expect that Transitional Economic Voting effects will be more pronounced for the SLD. However, it is important to note that in Tucker (2006)'s term, the SLD is clearly a "reformist" Old Regime party, so it is precisely one of the parties for which we might expect the predictive power of the Transitional Model to diminish over time (although Tucker 2006 found no such diminution through 1997). Nevertheless, with Old Regime Incumbent parties and New Regime opposition parties, the 1997 election is perfect for contrasting the Conventional and Transitional Economic Voting models.

The 2001 parliamentary election witnessed a complete reversal in the fate of the AWS and UW. After a troublesome time in office marred increasingly by scandals and a collapse of their coalition, not only were the two parties voted out of government, but neither could actually secure the minimum votes necessary to even return to the parliament. Instead, the 2001 elections saw the return of the SLD and PSL to power, and the emergence of four new parliamentary parties. The Citizen's Platform party (PO) and Law and Justice Party (PiS) can both be described as what Tucker (2006) calls "second generation" New Regime parties, as both could clearly trace their lineage to the original anti-communist forces. Of the two, PO was much more clearly associated with Poland's economic reforms, and continued to advocate for more reform of this nature; PiS took, and has continued to take, an increasingly populist line. So as with AWS and UW, we can think of PiS as a more populist-leaning New Regime party and PO as a more consistent liberalizing New Regime party. Nevertheless, as heirs to heirs of the original Polish political movements, we might expect the Transitional Model of voting to have less predictive power generally. The other two parties that emerged in this election were more extreme populist parties, one with a left-of-center tinge, Self-Defense (SO), and one with a much

more nationalist and religious right-wing flavor, the League of Polish Families (LPR). These two parties would also provide most of the elite opposition to Poland's EU accession.¹⁴

The SLD and PSL's second term in office, however, also became marred in scandal, and both parties limped into the 2005 election with little hope of re-election. Both were spared the indignity of not making it into the next parliament, but they very convincingly lost control of the government. PiS and PO finished in first and second place and were widely expected to form a government, but last minute maneuverings led a much more populist oriented coalition between the PiS, LPR, and Self-Defense, now Self-Defense of the Republic of Poland (SRP).

With variation in the incumbency status of different parties, (and the transitional identity of incumbent parties), the Polish legislative elections from 1997 to 2005 provide fertile ground for theory testing. In particular the 1997 and 2005 elections present particularly valuable opportunities as the two models considered here offer opposing expectations about the direction of the relationship between evaluations of the economy and of incumbent parties. Moreover, the disintegration of the parties most closely associated with the transition to a market economy and the rise of the PO and PiS to fill the subsequent political vacuum provides a particularly intriguing context in which the Conventional and Transitional models of economic voting can be tested. One obvious question is whether parties with no direct link to the earliest reform policies develop transitional identities which enable transitional economic voting. If not, we might expect that this weakened link brings with it the more predictable pattern of conventional economic voting found in more established democracies.

As Table 1 makes clear, the Conventional model predicts a positive relationship between perceptions of recent economic conditions and evaluations of incumbent parties. That is, this positive relationship should be evident with respect to the UW and AWS in 2001 and for the

¹⁴ For more on the 2001 election, see Maksymiuk 2001; Millard 2003; Benoit and Hayden 2004.

SLD and PSL in 1997 and 2005. This model makes no predictions as to the relationship between economic and party evaluations among non-incumbent parties. For instance, this model provides no guidance as to whether and how beliefs about economic conditions in 2001 are related to the distinctly different set of non-incumbent parties (i.e. PO, PiS, SLD, PSL). In addition, since the conventional model is grounded in the assumption that voters respond to only the most recent economic conditions, there should be no relationship between evaluations of the economy beyond the previous election. Accordingly, there should be no relationship between perceptions of economic changes since the regime and evaluations of any of the parties.

The Transitional economic voting model yields clear predictions about the direction of the economic conditions-party support relationship for all of the potential combinations of incumbency and transition identity. Since voters use economic information to evaluate the economic transition and then bring these evaluations to bear in assessing parties based on their transitional identity, in each of the three elections, this model predicts a negative relationship between recent economic conditions and support for the SLD and PSL. Similarly, regardless of their incumbency status, evaluations of parties associated with the economic reforms that defined the transition (UW, AWS, PO, PiS) should be positively related to evaluations of short-term economic conditions. Recall that from the perspective of the Transitional model, short-term economic conditions provide information about the general question of how to evaluate the transition to a market economy. The Transitional model also expects these longer-term evaluations of the economy to be related to evaluations of political parties and the expected direction of these relationships are the same as for short-term conditions. The Transitional and Conventional Models thus differ not only in terms of the direction of the economic voting

relationship (in some cases) but also as to the existence of the relationship when longer-term economic evaluations are considered.

Data and Methods

To test the predictions of the Conventional and Transitional models of economic voting, we analyze survey data from three waves of the Polish National Election Study. Interviews for this survey were conducted shortly after each of the 1997, 2001, and 2005 legislative elections.¹⁵

While we are ultimately concerned with the relationship between perceptions of economic conditions and vote choice, the primary dependent variable in the analyses we present below are respondents' evaluations of each of the main Polish political parties. Investigations of voter choice need not be restricted to familiar discrete choice models such as Multinomial Logit (MNL) and Multinomial Probit (MNP). Indeed, directly measuring respondents' party utilities offers considerable advantages over statistical models designed to deduce these utilities (van der Eijk et al, 2006). Discrete choice statistical models are grounded in the claim that citizens identify utilities for each of the competing parties and vote for the party with the highest utility. The latent dependent variable in these statistical models is thus not party choice but the utility of the potential options. Absent a direct measure of these utilities, they are empirically deduced by comparing the frequency with which parties are selected across individuals in analyses that account for all relevant control variables. In addition to the fact that smaller parties must often be omitted from analysis, generating reliable estimates from such models requires that researchers do not violate important model assumptions such as the need to control for all relevant control variables and, in the case of MNL, that the choice decisions are independent of irrelevant

¹⁵ The 2005 study has a panel component. First wave interviews occurred from 9/27 to 8/10 following the legislative elections held on 9/25. The second wave was conducted between 12/12 and 12/30 after the 10/23 Presidential election. The economic questions were asked during the first wave of this panel study.

alternatives (IIA). In light of these considerable challenges facing the use of discrete choice models, researchers might alternatively attempt to directly measure party utilities which “is not only a viable alternative to discrete-choice modeling but it is actually to be preferred” (van der Eijk et al, 2006). With these concerns in mind, we adopt such an approach to measuring party utilities. However, as a robustness test, we did rerun all of our models using more traditional multinomial-logit analysis of vote choice, which revealed very similar substantive findings.¹⁶

In order to directly measure party utilities, we use respondents’ evaluations of parties on a ten point scale running from ‘strongly dislike’ to ‘strongly like’. These questions depart from the standard ‘feeling thermometer’ question found in many election studies in established democracies by asking respondents for a somewhat less affective and more cognitive evaluation of the parties. These responses are thus more closely aligned with the underlying concept, party utilities, that we seek to measure. The strong correlation between these evaluations and vote choice further attests to the validity of this approach to measuring utility.¹⁷ For ease in interpretation, all likes/dislikes values are rescored on a 0-1 scale.

The primary independent variables of interest are various evaluations of economic conditions. For each election, we have measures of respondents’ evaluations of the economic conditions in four distinct time periods at both the national and household level. Respondents are

¹⁶ MNL analysis results are included in Appendix D. The only substantively meaningful difference we found in the vote choice analysis was the absence of a significant relationship between evaluations of short-term personal economic conditions and the probability of voting for the UW in 1997. Our party evaluation results, which are discussed thoroughly below, suggest a weak positive relationship between recent personal economic conditions and evaluations of the UW. Coupled with the absence of a relationship between short-term national evaluations, these vote choice results are clearly consistent with the Traditional model while the party evaluation analysis yields somewhat more ambiguous results. The results for the PiS in 2005 also differ somewhat across the two methods. The vote choice models suggest a negative relationship between short term economic conditions and PiS support and no relationship between support and evaluations of the economy since transition. As we note in the text below, these results are consistent with the more skeptical position on market reforms that the PiS adopted in the 2005 elections in an effort to distinguish itself from the PO.

¹⁷ Correlations between party evaluation and vote choice (operationalized in a dichotomous fashion) range between .4 and .7 for the larger political parties. Correlations are somewhat weaker for the smaller parties, but this result is likely in part a function of strategic voting. These correlation coefficients can be found in Table D3 in Appendix D.

asked to provide evaluations of the economy: over the past twelve months (*retrospective*), at the time of the survey (*current*), in the next twelve months (*prospective*), and compared to conditions under the old regime (*transitional*).¹⁸

In the analysis below we focus primarily on retrospective evaluations of economic conditions. While we have a measure of respondents' evaluations of the economy at the time of the survey, there is no way of knowing the reference point against which respondents are comparing current conditions and there may well be heterogeneity across individuals in the selection of this reference point. In practice, current and retrospective evaluations are very strongly correlated, and the substantive implications of the results presented in Table 2 (below) are distinctly similar across both measures of perceptions of economic conditions.

The PNES surveys also include questions on respondents' expectations of future economic conditions (12 months from now). While such questions might allow us to contribute to the debate within the Conventional framework as to whether citizens rely more on evaluations of past conditions or expectations of the future, the timing of data collection inhibits such a comparison. In all three years the PNES was conducted after the results of the legislative election were known. There is thus a distinct possibility that citizens expectations about future economic conditions are partially caused by their evaluations of the parties that are about to form the

¹⁸ The question wordings for each of these eight measures in each election are included in the appendix but a few specific cases warrant attention. First, in 2001 and 2005 transitional evaluations are assessed by responses to "Does Poland's economy now operate better or worse than in the times of the old regime, that is before 1989". This specific question was not asked in the 1997 survey but respondents were asked "Looking back, how do you - retrospectively - evaluate the effects of the so-called 'Balcerowicz Plan'". This question directly taps evaluations of the economic reforms put in place following the end of communism (The Balcerowicz Plan) and thus provides a reasonable, albeit less explicit, measure of the underlying concept with which we are concerned. Second, the household level transitional question in 1997 is also different than the 2001 and 2005 version. In the latter years respondents are asked "And looking at the standards of living of you and your family, are you better off or worse off than in the times before 1989?". The 1997 survey offers an alternative measure: "in the last 8 years (since 1989) have substantial changes occurred in your [own wealth] and were they for better or worse?". In both cases, the different wording of the transitional economic evaluation questions in 1997 prevent a direct comparison of effects across years, but since these questions clearly tap the underlying concept, we expect the relationship between these responses and party evaluations to be identical in direction and similar in magnitude.

government. Indeed the results reported in Table 2 strongly support this expectation. For instance, prospective expectations of the national economy are consistently related to party evaluations in a manner consistent with the idea that supporters of a winning party will be optimistic about the economy (SLD in 2001; UW and AWS in 1997; PO and PiS in 2005) while supporters of losing parties will be far more pessimistic (SLD in 1997 and 2005; AWS in 1997).¹⁹ Accordingly, we restrict attention to the results pertaining to citizens' evaluations of the short-term and post transition economy (in other words, the top half of Table 2). All of our 'economic conditions' variables are scaled -1 to 1, as such the coefficients presented in Table 2 are the expected change in the evaluation of a political party associated with a positive change in perceptions of the economy equivalent to half the distance of the full range (e.g. from the economy has 'stayed the same' to 'gotten much better').

Empirical Results and Discussion

-- INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE --

Table 2 presents empirical estimates of the relationship between respondents' perceptions of economic conditions and evaluations of the larger Polish political parties. To test the predictions of the Conventional and Transitional Models, we estimated a separate linear relationship between evaluations of a particular party and each of the different measures of economic perceptions discussed above. For each party, then, we estimated eight separate regressions for each of the three elections.²⁰ In all cases we control for a standard set of

¹⁹ Although beyond the purview of this particular paper, the consistency of these findings regarding prospective attitudes are rather striking. In particular, it suggests great caution should be exercised in any evaluation of prospective voting using post-election survey data. We plan to investigate whether this pattern is common in other countries in the future, and welcome any comments from readers with information in this regard.

²⁰ In the case of the 2001 election, we actually estimate 9 separate models because of the presence of two potential post-transition retrospective pocketbook variables.

covariates including: age, income, education, frequency of church attendance, past membership in the Communist or Communist satellite parties, residence in a village and employment as a farmer.²¹ Table 2 thus presents the results of 152 separate regressions. We chose to estimate separate models for each economic variable in order to ease comparison of the coefficients over time.²² In the table, therefore, we present only the coefficient and standard error of the economic variable in question (e.g., post-transition national conditions). However, in order to test the robustness of the findings, we re-estimated these models using a variety of combinations of economic variables in each model (e.g., including retrospective and prospective national evaluations in one model or including short-term and long-term retrospective evaluations in one model), and the core substantive results we discuss below do not change when adopting these alternative estimation strategies.²³

Results concerning the SLD, which is the best example of an Old Regime Polish party and which was the incumbent party in the 1997 and 2005 elections, provide some support for both models of economic voting. The Conventional Model prediction of a positive association between short-term economic conditions and support for the SLD in 1997 and 2005 is well

²¹ We re-estimated all of these models with a more complete set of control variables. In addition to those listed above we controlled for: position on the role of the church in public life; position on state jobs for “individuals occupying high positions under communism”, and a series of indicator variables identifying those who: live in a small town or city, are unemployed, are retired, are self-employed, or are employed by a private firm. Addition of these controls does not substantively affect the estimates presented in Table 2. Results of this analysis are available from the authors.

²² Since some of our 1997 measures differ slightly from those in the 2001 and 2005 datasets, simultaneously estimating the effect of all economic variables would have inhibited over time comparison of those measures (e.g. short-term retrospective evaluations of national conditions) which are the same across surveys.

²³ In order to isolate the unique effect of different economic perceptions, however, we did estimate models which include various combinations of all of our retrospective measures including models which account for ‘Conventional retrospective’ and ‘Transitional retrospective’ perceptions of both national and personal economic conditions. The results of this analysis are included in the appendix (Table C2 in Appendix C). By including evaluations of both personal and national economic conditions, these models speak to the whether Polish citizens are pocketbook or sociotropic voters. Generally speaking the coefficients for the evaluations of national conditions are considerably more stable and in a number of models the apparent effect of personal conditions disappears. These results are thus consistent with the general finding in established democracies that citizens tend to vote based on national economic conditions.

supported in the data. In both years perceptions of both national and personal economic conditions are positively related to evaluations of the SLD. In 1997, a one unit increase in evaluations of that national economy is associated with an increase of .14 in evaluations of the SLD. (To reiterate, the dependent variable is scaled on a 0-1 interval, so an increase in .14 is a substantially meaningful increase in how much one likes a party). The same positive effect is evident in 2005 but the effect is considerably smaller at 0.09, a change that contradicts the idea that the Conventional Model should generate increasingly strong results over time. Short-term evaluations of one's personal economic situation are also positively related to SLD evaluations though the effect size is somewhat smaller (1997: 0.07; 2005: 0.08). As the SLD was a member of the opposition in 2001, the Conventional Model offers no prediction for the SLD in this election.

The relationship between SLD evaluations and short-term economic perceptions reveals only limited support for the Transitional Model. The Transitional Model predicts a negative relationship in all years. When the SLD was the incumbent (1997, 2005), however, the relationship is positive, as discussed above. In fact, these two elections are particularly important for our analysis because the two models offer divergent predictions and the results clearly suggest greater support for the Conventional Model. In 2001, support for the SLD was negatively related to evaluations of the national economy and unrelated to egocentric economic evaluations. The coefficient of -0.05 for the relationship between short-term national evaluations and SLD support is indeed consistent with the Transitional Model and suggest changing one's perceptions of the economy from 'much worse' to 'much better' is associated with a one unit increase on the 10 point party evaluation scale. One might reasonably argue, however, that while the Conventional Model offers no specific prediction for the SLD in this year, the simple fact that

economic evaluations should be positively associated with support for the then incumbent parties (UW, AWS) suggests that most other parties should gain support among those disgruntled with the economy. Overall, the results from regressions involving short term economic evaluations are generally consistent with the Conventional Model of economic voting.

The results from analyses involving long term economic evaluations yield a very different conclusion. Individuals' evaluations of economic conditions since the start of the political and economic transition are negatively related to support for the SLD in 1997 and 2001 and unrelated to evaluations of the communist successor party in 2005. The statistically significant and negative relationships between sociotropic transitional economic evaluations in the first two elections are consistent with predictions of the Transitional Model. This negative relationship exists both when the SLD was the incumbent party (1997: -0.08) and when it served in the opposition (2001: -0.08). In addition, we must not lose sight of the fact that the significant impact of these evaluations more than a decade after the end of the Communist era is certainly remarkable. The results for 2005 are somewhat different than for the preceding elections. The data suggest no relationship between transitional evaluations of the economy and support for the SLD. These results, however are consistent with both the prediction that the Transitional Model should fade out over time generally, or the more specific prediction that the Transitional Model should start to be less applicable for *reformed* Old Regime parties over time. While neither pattern appears to be evident from 1997 – 2001, it is important to remember that the SLD was in opposition at this point. It is possible that its return to government from 2001-2005 (and in particular perhaps the numerous corruption scandals accompanying this run in power) finally severed the link in the minds of voters between the SLD and some sort of mitigation of the post-transition ills.

Taken together, the relationship between economic perceptions and SLD evaluations offer some support for both models. Short term economic evaluations are almost entirely consistent with the Conventional Model while longer-term transitional perceptions are related to SLD support in a manner consistent with the Transitional Model. This same pattern is very much evident in the results from analyses of support for the PSL. As predicted by the Conventional Model, short-term evaluations of national and personal economic conditions are positively related to support for the PSL in 1997 and 2005 and unrelated to evaluations of the party when it served as an opposition party in 2001. Longer-term transitional economic evaluations, specifically the sociotropic variant, are negatively related to PSL support in both 1997 and 2001. Like the SLD, there is no statistically significant relationship in 2005. While the direction of all of these relationships are the same for both PSL and SLD, the magnitude of the effects tend to be much smaller for the PSL. This result fits nicely with the claim that the party's agrarian affiliation diluted the Old Regime identity of the PSL. In addition, the fact that the PSL comprised a smaller portion of the governing coalition than the SLD in 1997 and 2005 speaks to the idea that economic voting is conditional on attributions of responsibility (Powell and Whitten 1993). We would expect the strength of economic voting relationships to be positively related to the proportion of the governing coalition a party provides (Wilkin et al. 1997; Tucker 2001, 2006), which is indeed what we find in this case.

A similar pattern emerges when we look to New Regime parties. As noted previously, the UW was the Polish party with the strongest New Regime identity by virtue of clear association with the original Balcerowicz plan as well as its continued advocacy for the virtues of market reform. Accordingly, the Transitional model predicts a positive relationship between short-term economic evaluations and support for the UW. This prediction is borne out in the data for

evaluations of personal economic conditions in both 1997 and 2001, and for national conditions in 2001.²⁴ The effect of evaluations of national conditions in 2001 is quite strong with a coefficient of .11. Interestingly, however, there is no relationship between national perceptions and UW support in 1997. This effect runs contrary to the expectations of the Transitional model and is consistent with the Conventional Model given that the UW was not an incumbent party in 1997. The Conventional Model also receives support from the 2001 data since the coefficients are positive though these results are less instructive for our purposes since both models generate the same predicted relationship.

Once again, coefficients related to the longer term evaluations of economic conditions are consistent with the Transitional Model. In both years, beliefs about changes in the economy at the national and personal level since the transition are positively related to support for this New Regime party. The effects are dramatic in 1997. A one unit increase in perceptions of the national economy since the transition is associated with a two point increase in the ten point party evaluation scale. While the effects in 2001 are still positive, they are considerably weaker, which may have been a result of the fact that the UW was considered largely finished as a relevant political player by this point. Again we find support for both models of economic voting. Longer term evaluations are clearly related to support for the UW in a manner consistent with the Transitional Model. The results from analyses of shorter term evaluations are somewhat more difficult to interpret.

While the AWS formed a coalition government with the UW and supported the economic reforms, the party's New Regime transitional identity is considerably weaker than the UW. The relationship between evaluations of the AWS and perceptions of recent economic conditions bears this point out. The negative relationship (-0.08) between short-term sociotropic evaluations

²⁴ Following its failure to enter the parliament in 2001, the UW did not contest the 2005 election.

and support for the AWS in 1997 is inconsistent with the Transitional Model and fits more closely with the Conventional Model. While there is a clear positive relationship between economic perceptions and evaluations of the AWS in 2001 these results are consistent with the predictions of both models. Despite the fact that the coefficients for short-term perceptions in 1997 are more consistent with the Conventional Model, beliefs about the economy since the transition are related to evaluations of the AWS in a manner consistent with the Transitional Model. The effect of beliefs about the national economy are quite large (.14) in 2001 and while smaller still statistically and substantively significant in 1997.

Overall, results for the two primary New Regime parties offer clear support for the Transitional Model with respect to longer term evaluations and suggestive support for the Conventional Model when we consider citizens shorter term evaluations. The decline in the impact of national level transitional economic evaluations from 1997 to 2001 is intriguing. These effects may derive from the decreasing relevance of the transition over time or, alternatively, may be due to the virtual disintegration of the UW and AWS leading into the 2001 elections. This latter explanation receives support from the fact that results from the 2001 and 2005 elections for newer New Regime parties clearly suggest that the significance of transitional evaluations has not yet faded away.

Results from our analysis of PO evaluations provide strong support for the Transitional Model with respect to perceptions of *both* short-term and post-transition economic conditions. This is particularly interesting, given that as a “second generation” New Regime party, we might have expected these effects to be weaker. Indeed, the Transitional model of economic voting appears to be alive and well 16 years after the collapse of communism! Excluding prospective evaluations, the relationship between all economic perceptions included in Table 2 and PO

support is positive. Despite the fact that the party was a non-incumbent in both 2001 and 2005, there are substantial positive coefficients for both national and personal economic evaluations. In the 2001 election, a one unit increase in perceptions of recent national economic conditions is associated with an increase of 1.4 on the ten point party evaluation scale. This effect appears despite the fact that the party did not participate in the previous government (in fact it did not even exist until 2001). If the Conventional Model's logic is correct, we should expect those with positive short-term evaluations to support the incumbent party, not a new and untested non-incumbent party. In contrast, the Transitional Model clearly predicts a positive relationship in both years because of the strong New Regime identity of the PO. The Transitional Model receives further support from the substantial positive relationships between national (and to a lesser extent personal) transitional economic evaluations in both 2001 and 2005.

Analysis of support for the PiS provides additional support for the Transitional Model. The direction of the effects are generally the same as we found for the PO but the magnitude of effects tends to be smaller. Despite being a non-incumbent, there is a positive relationship between short-term evaluations of the economy and support for the PiS in 2001. Interestingly the same relationship is not present in 2005. (While only a guess, we believe this may be due to the effort that PiS had begun making in 2005 to differentiate itself from the PO heading into the 2005 elections, which included in particular an attack against the overly liberalizing economic tendencies of the PO, and in particular the PO's call for a flat tax.) Long-term evaluations are also positively, albeit weakly, related to support for the PiS. Given that the PiS is properly described as New Regime but in a much weaker sense the results for these two parties flow directly from the Transitional Model. Citizens pleased with both short term and long term

economic conditions are more likely to support both these New Regime parties *despite* their non-incumbent status, but this relationship is much more pronounced for the PO than the PiS.

Table 2 also provides insight into the relationship between perceptions of economic conditions and support for parties whose primary identity does not derive from their relationship to Poland's economic transition. As mentioned earlier a left-wing (SRP) and a right wing (LPR) populist party emerged as important political players in the 2001 and 2005 elections. For the SRP, all short-term and all post-transition economic evaluations are negatively related to support for the SRP in both years. For the LPR, we find that evaluations of the party are positively related to perceptions of both recent and longer-term economic conditions in 2001, but negatively related to evaluations of the party in 2005. While outside of the primary hypotheses being tested in this paper, these results are consistent with Tucker (2006)'s suggestion that as Old Regime parties cease to be particularly attractive to those dissatisfied with economic conditions, they could be replaced by parties who were opposed to EU membership. And indeed, by 2005, the first Polish elections held after the country had joined the EU, we no longer find support for the Old Regime hypothesis among the SLD, but instead now see a negative relationship between support for both of the anti-EU populist parties.²⁵

-- INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE --

In light of this result it seems logical to consider how these distinct economic evaluations combine to influence party support. Of particular interest are party evaluations among citizens for whom the Transitional Model provides conflicting predictions. Consider a citizen who believes that the current economy is an improvement over conditions prior to the transition from communism but who also perceives a short term economic decline. While her evaluations of

²⁵ Why this pattern started earlier for SRP (in 2001) than for the LPR is an interesting question, but may have something to do with the somewhat outlandish tactics – such as large road blockades – employed by SRP leader Andrzej Lepper.

long-term conditions imply greater support for New Regime parties, more recent economic developments suggest support for the Old Regime.

Results presented in Table 3 offer some insight into the relationship between evaluations of the current conditions based on a comparison of pre-transition and much more recent economic conditions. This table reports information about mean evaluations of the various parties among citizens with different combinations of short and long term economic evaluations. To generate these results we first divided individual respondents into nine categories based on their responses to our short term and transitional economic perceptions measure. We then calculated the mean response for the party evaluation question within each group and subtracted this figure from mean support among all other groups. These figures thus provide an indication of how different evaluations of a given party were among some group of individuals compared to the rest of the sample. For instance, mean evaluation of the SLD in 1997 among those who believed the economy was better since the transition but had declined over the past year was 0.26. Among all other respondents mean evaluation of the SLD in that year was 0.43. The difference between these two figures (-.17) thus appears in the seventh row of the SLD-1997 column in Table 3.

Consistent with the above discussion of support for the SLD, the results in Table 3 suggest evaluations of the SLD are a function of underlying dynamics behind both Transitional and Conventional economic voting. When the SLD was the incumbent party (in both 1997 and 2005), there is a clear positive relationship between perceptions of recent economic conditions and evaluations of the SLD. This relationship holds regardless of one's beliefs about the post-transition economy as a whole. Using our measure of deviation from mean evaluation among the rest of the sample, for those who believe the post-transition economy is worse, the difference in

evaluations of the SLD in 1997 between people who believe short term conditions are worse and those who perceive conditions to be better is .31. This same figure for those who believe the transition has resulted in no economic change is .30 and is .20 among individuals who think the post-transition economy is better. This same basic pattern is evident in 2005 as well though the effect is slightly weaker. If we compare groups that differ in evaluations of long-term economic changes but share similar short-term evaluations, however, a pattern consistent with the Transitional model emerges for both 1997 and 2001. For instance, among those who believe the economy has not changed much recently, there is a .14 point gap in 1997 evaluations of the SLD between those who perceive long-term changes to be worse compared to better. This pattern is clearly present in 1997 and 2001 and it all but disappears in 2005.

Table 3 also presents an opportunity to consider how individuals combine short and long term evaluations. When the logics behind the two models conflict the effects of short and long term evaluations appear to cancel out. In 1997, evaluations of the SLD among those who believe the economy had deteriorated over both the short and long term are not distinct from the rest of the sample. In contrast, however, among those people who believe recent conditions are better while the transition as a whole has caused economic decline, evaluations of the SLD are dramatically higher than the rest of the sample (.28). Conversely, evaluations are much lower among those who believe things have recently gotten worse in spite of a generally positive post-transition economic trend (-17).

A similar pattern of results emerges from a comparison of evaluations of the PSL. Consistent with the Conventional Model, in both 1997 and 2005 perceptions of recent economic conditions are positively related to evaluations of the PSL regardless of one's beliefs about the post-transition economy. In 1997 when the Transitional and Conventional Models collide

(recent conditions are worse (better) and conditions have deteriorated (improved) over the long term) evaluations of the PSL do not depart from the overall average. In contrast, among individuals for whom the competing models offer the same prediction, evaluations of the PSL are rather extreme. Overall, however, the relationship between economic perceptions and evaluations of the Old Regime parties is somewhat weaker for the PSL compared to the SLD. This result is also consistent with those presented in Table 2 and our claim that the transitional identity of the PSL was considerably weaker.

The results for the UW in 1997 also suggest that both the transitional and conventional dynamics are at work. Consistent with the Conventional Model, the effect of short-term evaluations on support for the UW are quite weak when it served as an opposition party in 1997. When the UW was the incumbent in 2001, there is some evidence that perceptions of recent economic changes are positively related to evaluations of the UW, but the strength of this relationship appears to depend on one's perceptions of longer term conditions. Among those who believe there has been a post-transition economic decline, short-term evaluations are clearly related to support for the UW. Among those who perceive conditions to be better over the longer term, there is little evidence that short-term conditions exert any effect. Consistent with the Transitional Model, evaluations of the post-transition are very clearly related to evaluations of the UW in 1997. This relationship is considerably weaker in 2001.

The results for the AWS are again generally similar to those for the UW but also more muted. Evaluations of the economy over the long term are strongly positively related to AWS evaluations in 1997 and this relationship is present but much weaker in 2001. As for evaluations of recent economic conditions, while the results for 2001 are consistent with both theories, in 1997, these evaluations are negatively related to support for the AWS in a manner generally

consistent with the Transitional model. Indeed this result sheds some light on the very limited impact of short-term evaluations on the UW in 1997. Whereas the weaker transitional identity of the AWS may have encouraged respondents to evaluate the AWS from the perspective of the Conventional Model, the much stronger New Regime identity of the UW may create a cross-pressure for the competing dynamics.

Finally, the results for the PO also warrant specific attention. For this party we see consistently strong support for the transitional model. Despite being a non-incumbent in both elections evaluations of the PO are positively related to post-transition evaluations of the economy and perceptions of more recent economic conditions. From the perspective of the Conventional Model, there is no reason to expect any relationship between economic conditions and support for the PO and the existence of a strong positive relationship stands completely at odds with the predictions of this model. Over a decade and a half after the start of the transition and for a second generation new regime party, the transitional dynamic of post-communist politics clearly matters a great deal.

Conclusions

In some ways, all studies of voting in post-communist countries are measured against the (admittedly straw-man like) null hypothesis that political circumstances are too fluid in these countries to allow for any systematic patterns of voting – especially those found to exist in stable, established democracies – to be present. Here, we join many other important recent studies in continuing to reject that null. But we also move the literature forward by providing a more nuanced description of the myriad of ways in which economic evaluations influence voting behavior in at least one important post-communist countries. Voters dissatisfied with recent

economic developments do indeed provide less support for incumbent political parties than those who are more satisfied with the state of the economy, much as has been found to be common in the West and in particular in the United States. However, this finding does not falsify recent theoretical arguments about the importance of economic evaluations in affecting the vote for reformist “New Regime” parties or post-communist “Old Regime” parties. Quite to the contrary, such Transitional Economic Voting patterns are also important predictors of the vote. Crucially, we identify that the major path through which these evaluations affect voting behavior is through more long-term economic evaluations, specifically in comparing current economic conditions to pre-transition economic conditions. But these evaluations are no less important, and we’ve demonstrated that they can even cancel out the more immediate effect of short-term retrospective evaluations in the appropriate circumstances. Moreover, the Transitional Economic Voting model can also help to explain the fact that opposition New Regime parties (here the PO) are at times preferred by voters who have even short term positive retrospective evaluation, a finding for which conventional incumbency-centered approaches to economic voting have no explanation.

Taken together, the findings continue to suggest the importance of considering context in modeling patterns of economic voting. The Transitional Model of economic voting works so well in the Polish context precisely because there is a common frame of reference for longer-term retrospective evaluations. While we suspect similar patterns may be at work in other transitional democracies, this is an important subject for future research, both within and beyond the post-communist context.

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Table 1

Party Type	Polish Political Parties	Temporal Frame of Reference	Model of Economic Voting	
			<i>Conventional</i>	<i>Transitional</i>
New Regime Incumbent	2001 – AWS, UW	Short Term Since Transition	Positive No relationship	Positive Positive
New Regime Non-Incumbent	1997 – AWS, UW 2005 – PO, PiS	Short Term Since Transition	No prediction No relationship	Positive Positive
Old Regime Incumbent	1997 – SLD, PSL 2005 – SLD, PSL	Short Term Since Transition	Positive No relationship	Negative Negative
Old Regime Non-Incumbent	2001 – SLD, PSL	Short Term Since Transition	No prediction No relationship	Negative Negative

Table 2 : Perceptions of Economic Conditions and Party Evaluations: Coefficients and (Standard Errors)

		SLD			PSL			UW		AWS		PO		PiS	
		1997	2001	2005	1997	2001	2005	1997	2001	1997	2001	2001	2005	2001	2005
Short-Term Retrospective	National	0.139 (0.019)	-0.049 (0.023)	0.085 (0.014)	0.051 (0.016)	0.000 (0.018)	0.043 (0.013)	0.008 (0.017)	0.106 (0.018)	-0.077 (0.020)	0.135 (0.018)	0.140 (0.021)	0.071 (0.016)	0.077 (0.021)	0.000 (0.016)
	Personal	0.072 (0.020)	0.005 (0.020)	0.082 (0.015)	0.023 (0.016)	0.008 (0.016)	0.042 (0.014)	0.046 (0.017)	0.052 (0.017)	-0.012 (0.020)	0.064 (0.017)	0.110 (0.019)	0.031 (0.017)	0.036 (0.019)	0.009 (0.017)
Post-Transition Retrospective	National	-0.083 (0.017)	-0.078 (0.014)	-0.005 (0.011)	-0.040 (0.014)	-0.035 (0.012)	0.011 (0.010)	0.201 (0.013)	0.045 (0.012)	0.138 (0.017)	0.078 (0.012)	0.104 (0.013)	0.095 (0.012)	0.021 (0.013)	0.048 (0.012)
	Personal		-0.062 (0.015)	-0.012 (0.011)		-0.013 (0.012)	0.018 (0.011)		0.024 (0.013)		0.063 (0.012)	0.065 (0.014)	0.060 (0.013)	0.052 (0.014)	0.063 (0.013)
	Personal Wealth	0.014 (0.018)	-0.036 (0.017)		0.029 (0.015)	-0.011 (0.014)		0.060 (0.016)	0.035 (0.014)	0.046 (0.019)	0.066 (0.014)	0.073 (0.016)		0.027 (0.016)	
Current	National	0.116 (0.024)	-0.014 (0.025)	0.106 (0.015)	0.008 (0.020)	0.046 (0.020)	0.055 (0.014)	0.096 (0.020)	0.109 (0.020)	-0.030 (0.025)	0.145 (0.020)	0.169 (0.023)	0.059 (0.017)	0.099 (0.023)	0.006 (0.017)
	Personal	0.078 (0.023)	0.029 (0.021)	0.069 (0.015)	0.025 (0.019)	0.010 (0.017)	0.047 (0.014)	0.066 (0.020)	0.060 (0.017)	-0.013 (0.024)	0.047 (0.017)	0.096 (0.020)	0.034 (0.017)	0.040 (0.020)	0.029 (0.017)
Prospective	National	-0.164 (0.023)	0.147 (0.023)	-0.060 (0.019)	0.003 (0.019)	0.066 (0.018)	0.009 (0.018)	0.080 (0.020)	-0.004 (0.019)	0.234 (0.023)	-0.035 (0.019)	0.004 (0.021)	0.154 (0.022)	0.003 (0.021)	0.229 (0.021)
	Personal	-0.068 (0.024)	0.138 (0.024)	-0.039 (0.018)	0.020 (0.019)	0.041 (0.019)	0.005 (0.018)	0.058 (0.020)	-0.019 (0.020)	0.125 (0.024)	-0.025 (0.020)	-0.012 (0.023)	0.106 (0.021)	0.005 (0.023)	0.131 (0.021)
	Incumbent?	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓		✓				

Table 2 (continued): Perceptions of Economic Conditions and Party Evaluations: Coefficients and (Standard Errors)

		LPR		SRP	
		2001	2005	2001	2005
Short-Term Retrospective	National	0.114 (0.022)	-0.033 (0.015)	-0.026 (0.020)	-0.019 (0.016)
	Personal	0.037 (0.021)	-0.005 (0.017)	-0.036 (0.018)	-0.035 (0.017)
Post-Transition Retrospective	National	0.038 (0.015)	-0.029 (0.012)	-0.077 (0.013)	-0.098 (0.012)
	Personal	0.024 (0.016)	-0.015 (0.012)	-0.048 (0.014)	-0.097 (0.013)
	Personal Wealth	0.025 (0.018)		-0.059 (0.015)	
Current	National	0.105 (0.025)	-0.014 (0.017)	-0.013 (0.022)	-0.022 (0.017)
	Personal	0.020 (0.021)	-0.013 (0.017)	-0.035 (0.019)	-0.061 (0.017)
Prospective	National	-0.013 (0.023)	0.061 (0.021)	0.051 (0.020)	-0.042 (0.022)
	Personal	-0.028 (0.024)	0.028 (0.021)	0.031 (0.021)	-0.020 (0.021)
Incumbent?					

Table 3 Deviation from Mean Party Evaluation by Perceptions of Economic Conditions

Post-Transition Retrospective	Short-Term Retrospective	SLD			PSL			UW		AWS		PO		PiS	
		1997	2001	2005	1997	2001	2005	1997	2001	1997	2001	2001	2005	2001	2005
Worse	Worse	-0.03	0.09	-0.06	0.00	0.06	-0.01	-0.21	-0.08	-0.07	-0.09	-0.14	-0.15	-0.02	-0.01
Worse	Same	0.06	-0.01	0.05	0.10	0.06	0.06	-0.18	0.03	-0.06	0.01	-0.03	-0.06	0.02	-0.01
Worse	Better	0.28	0.05	0.11	0.09	0.15	0.07	-0.17	0.21	-0.24	0.10	0.13	-0.06	0.07	-0.10
Same	Worse	-0.14	-0.02	-0.07	0.00	-0.03	0.01	-0.03	0.00	0.10	0.01	0.03	-0.07	-0.02	-0.04
Same	Same	-0.03	-0.02	0.02	0.00	0.00	-0.01	0.01	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.02	-0.04	0.06	-0.06
Same	Better	0.15	-0.20	0.13	0.00	-0.16	0.04	0.03	0.06	-0.15	0.20	0.12	-0.02	-0.07	-0.07
Better	Worse	-0.17	-0.06	-0.04	-0.11	-0.08	-0.01	0.15	0.05	0.14	0.02	0.10	0.03	0.00	0.07
Better	Same	-0.08	-0.09	0.02	-0.08	-0.01	-0.03	0.17	0.08	0.08	0.18	0.14	0.11	0.05	0.03
Better	Better	0.03	-0.20	0.02	0.00	-0.10	-0.01	0.14	0.02	0.01	0.16	0.20	0.13	0.06	0.01
Incumbent?		✓		✓	✓		✓		✓		✓				