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The Choices for Europe: National Preferences in New and Old Member States*

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Abstract

Drawing on the existing body of literature that deals with national preference formation and building on the role played by vulnerability and deficits in shaping policy choices at the European level, this article provides a synthetic framework to explain the stances of the Older Member States (OMS) and New Member States (NMS). We subsequently apply the model to NMS, focusing largely, although not exclusively, on Poland. We argue that although many of the policy preferences can be explained by the framework, the size of states, especially with regard to ambition and capacity, and the nature of the country's post-communist transition appear significant for the NMS and need to be incorporated into future theory-building. We conclude by highlighting areas in need of further empirical research.

Introduction

Previous explorations into the nature of national preferences and their formation in EU Member States have generated a large body of scholarly literature

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highlighting a number of different explanations including size, societal interests, dependency, ideology and unique historical experiences (e.g. Archer and Nugent, 2006; Aspinwall, 2002, 2007; Stone Sweet and Sandholtz, 1997; Dimitrakapoulos and Kassim, 2005), many of which feed into the grand explanatory theories of European integration (e.g. Moravcsik, 1999). The fifth wave of EU enlargement in 2004 and 2007 has provided political scientists with 12 additional cases to examine national policy preferences and behaviour in the EU, and consequently, the opportunity to refine and develop the existing frameworks for the study of national preference formation. Working on the assumption that the origins of at least some EU policies may be found in the preferences of the Member States, this article asks to what extent the explanations drawn from the Older Member States of western Europe also apply to the New Member States that joined in 2004 and 2007.

The article proceeds as follows. First, drawing on the existing body of literature, we provide a framework to explain the stances of the Older Member States (OMS) across a range of policy areas, paying particular attention to the role played by vulnerability and perceived shortcomings in shaping preferences. Second, we then apply the model to the New Member States (NMS), concentrating on the largest of them, Poland, although also taking the experiences of other NMS into account. While acknowledging that insufficient time has passed since accession to draw definitive conclusions, we argue that although the nature of many of the policy preferences can be explained by the framework, the size of states, especially with regard to ambition and capacity, and the nature of the countries' post-communist transition appear significant for the NMS and need to be incorporated into future theory-building. We also highlight areas in need of further empirical research.

The aim of this article is four-fold: we set out Poland's policy preferences clearly in a comparative context; we provide a synthetic framework of how scholars have explained national preference formation; we conduct a very preliminary examination of how well models derived from the OMS apply to the NMS; and, in doing so, we outline a research agenda and suggest how current scholarship on national preference formation may need to be refined to address both OMS and NMS.

I. Existing Scholarly Frameworks

The existing body of scholarship has generated a number of explanations of preference formation of EU Member States, which both compete with and reinforce each other. Before outlining our synthetic framework, we begin by

summarizing a number of explanations stressed in the scholarly literature, including unique historical experiences, size, dependency, ideology and powerful societal groups.

Unique historical experiences have been used to help explain the positions of states such as Germany and the United Kingdom (e.g. Bulmer and Paterson, 1987; George, 1998). The former's enthusiasm for integration and its concomitant willingness to bankroll the process of integration, especially during the first few decades following the Treaties of Rome, is seen not just as part of the German desire to come to terms with its past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*), but is also about dealing with the consequences of the past, whereas the UK's reluctance to join the European Communities in the first place and its subsequent lukewarm support for, if not downright hostility towards, further integration is seen partly as a product of Britain's singular imperial history and its victory in World War II. Even French enthusiasm for economic and monetary union (EMU) in the early 1990s can be seen, in part, as a product of a desire to tie Germany more closely into European structures and hence make a return to historical antagonisms less likely. In the Austrian case, despite its importance as a European Great Power before 1918, the experience of the 1930s and 1940s and the neutrality imposed on it until the end of the cold war seem to have laid to rest pretensions to Habsburg glory. What matters in all of these cases is the 'kind' of history a country has had and how this is perceived both domestically and internationally.

In all of these cases we suggest the key to understanding the nature of preferences lies in (perceived) shortcomings and vulnerabilities. Thanks to the events of the 1930s and 1940s Germany had multiple weaknesses. Moreover, accepting the framework of European integration helped end such discriminatory provisions as the International Authority of the Ruhr and helped deal with the consequences of the past. In contrast, the United Kingdom initially did not feel either in deficit or vulnerable, perceiving the nascent European Economic Community as unnecessary. As the UK's trade profile shifted, there was a growing recognition that the UK's economy was increasingly tied to continental Europe.

Although no-one can deny the importance of history, it provides a context or backdrop rather than the full explanation for the nature of policy preferences. Most emphatically, it is not simply a factor to be used when all other explanations fail and the following should be taken into account when weighing up its significance. Firstly, history does not explain variations across policy areas. The UK, for example, although opposing many aspects of further integration, has been a consistent and strong advocate of enlargement and the single market. Secondly, emphasizing history can be too deterministic and is poor at explaining change over time. Thirdly, history is not a fixed

variable. The wartime experience cast a long shadow over the post-war German elite, but with the elevation to power of a new generation of politicians born after World War II, such as Gerhard Schröder, and the shift from the Bonn to the Berlin Republic – thereby ending the imposed vulnerability of post-war division – Germany's European vocation has become 'increasingly contingent, contested and circumscribed' (Paterson, 2006, p. 3). Nevertheless, as we will discuss below, in Poland and other NMS, history plays a role. In Slovakia's case, for example, its complicated transition and the process of accession have left a mark, whereas for Poland, its (perceived) sense of historical destiny (or, formulated differently, self-importance) feeds strongly into the thinking of Polish politicians.

Recent scholarship has also devoted attention to size and its role in shaping a country's stance on further integration (Antola, 2002; Archer and Nugent, 2006). Although the size of a state can be measured in many different ways, we suggest the salience of size in the shaping of national preference is tied to a country's *self-perception* of its size and importance (Thorhallson, 2006). Simply put, in contrast to the other 2004 entrants, Poland perceives itself as big and important, and acts accordingly. In his first speech to the Polish *Sejm* on his appointment as prime minister on 19 July 2006, Jarosław Kaczyński described Poland as a large European state that 'counts' in the European Union (Kaczyński, 2006). At the Brussels summit in December 2005, for instance, Poland pushed harder than the other new entrants for a larger slice of the financial perspective pie. This attitude did not start on 1 May 2004 – although it has intensified as Poland flexed its muscles after entering the post-conditionality phase of its relationship with the EU – but had been in evidence during the accession process, especially the eleventh-hour battles over milk quotas at the Copenhagen summit in December 2002 and the 'Nice or Death' battle cry over voting weights in the Council of Ministers.

Size, however, is not merely influential in the setting of strategy, but also in the formation of preferences (e.g. Archer and Nugent, 2006). In a system which includes states of varying sizes we might assume that a small state would have a stronger preference for more powerful common institutions and the consequent ceding of a degree of sovereignty partly to defend better its interests 'against the dominance, perceived or real, of large Member States' (Antola, 2002, p. 75). In a similar vein to an explanation based on unique historical experiences, however, size is a rather simple, crude explanation that does not by itself explain variations across policy areas. Nonetheless, it highlights the importance of vulnerability and deficits. Recognizing the limitations of *domestic* policies, smaller states have tended to see the advantages of international co-operation to secure domestic goals such as welfare provision (Milward, 1992).

The size of the state and vulnerability also feed into another factor stressed by scholars: dependency on the EU. Dependency can be seen in one of two ways. Firstly, trade dependency. Transactionalists believe that forms of interaction such as trade may affect views about the merits of European integration (e.g. Stone Sweet and Sandholtz, 1997; Mattli, 1999). Simply put, the dependency argument contends that the higher the levels of intra-EU trade, the higher the support for integration. To this can be added Katzenstein's (1985) argument that small states tend to favour integration because their economies are more open. It is easy to see the logic of the argument here, but to what extent does trade dependence shape a country's integration strategy? As we will return to below when discussing the case of Slovakia, high levels of trade dependency may actually strengthen arguments against further harmonization to ensure visibility and the maintenance of comparative advantage.

Secondly, dependency can be measured in terms of EU funds. As Aspinwall (2007) argues, countries that receive high levels of disbursements from the EU have every incentive to keep the money flowing, and risk interruptions if they obstruct the agreement of common policies or institutional change. Moreover, his statistical analysis suggests that EU payments have a strong influence on government support for measures in the Council. A glance at voting habits in the first three years following the 2004 enlargement indicates that by and large it is indeed the richer net-contributor states such as Sweden and the Netherlands which have voted no or abstained more often.

Aspinwall has been at the forefront of arguing that ideology matters in preference formation in the EU. He opines that much of the scholarly literature 'presumes that governments represent some conception of the national interest in an environment free of ideological competition' (2002, p. 105), but parties' views of European integration are coloured by their ideological preferences, and they respond to it on that basis. He further argues that left–right ideological attitudes towards European integration can be graphically charted as a bell curve where ideologically stronger left or right-wing parties tend to be the most eurosceptic, since 'left ideology has elements of both "old politics" anti-market socialism and "new politics" anti-centralist activism' (Aspinwall, 2002, p. 86), whilst right-wing ideology 'is comprised of nationalist sentiment which seeks to preserve state autonomy, for both identity and economic reasons' (Aspinwall, 2002, p. 87). This argument highlights an important complication when assessing a country's stance: not only is the relationship between Member States and the EU dynamic, but the EU itself is in flux. The balance of power in the EU between the liberalizing, expanding and deepening tendencies has changed significantly since 1957 and has affected parties' attitudes to further integration. Indeed, although

internal ideological developments are partial explanations for the changing attitudes towards the EU of both the British Labour and Conservative parties throughout the 1980s and 1990s, for example, part of the change was a product of developments at the EU level, especially the increasingly important social dimension.

Stress on ideology, however, provokes two questions. Firstly, to what extent are ideological factors more important in shaping stances in some policy areas than in others? Intuitively, we might expect that the relationship between ideology and the stance governments take is much weaker in the areas of foreign policy and defence (Aspinwall, 2002, 2007). Secondly, to what extent is there a radical change when a government of a different ideological hue comes to power? Member States such as the UK and France provide good examples of striking continuities despite the election of ideologically different governments. Despite encouraging noises indicating that the Labour government would change Britain's policies towards the EU (e.g. Blair, 2001), Blair's ten years in office were marked by a failure to make a decisive break with the euroscepticism of the previous administration and a continued hostility towards deeper integration. Blair's position is largely a product of a generally sceptical public and concerns about the electoral consequences of a strongly pro-integration policy – as well as the fact that the Labour party's standpoint has differed little from that of the Conservative party in terms of its economic policy since the early 1990s (Wall, 2008). France's consistent support for the Common Agricultural Policy is in no small measure a product of the powerful domestic agricultural lobby, whose influence is greatly disproportionate to the farm sector's contribution to French national income.

Given the continuities of policy despite governments of different ideological standpoints holding the reins of power, this suggests we may have to look deeper for the source of a country's stance. In one of the most influential contributions to the literature on European integration, Andrew Moravcsik (1999) saw domestic economic lobbying organizations as central to the process of national preference formation. The power of these groups, he argues, can be seen in Member States' positions during treaty negotiations such as the deliberations leading to the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty. Moravcsik's account goes beyond preference formation to explain the process of European integration. Although we acknowledge that Moravcsik's account concentrates on the intergovernmental bargaining of treaties, thereby overlooking the incremental day-to-day role played by supranational institutions in the process of European integration (Wincott, 1995), there is much to commend his account of preference formation.

II. Towards a Synthetic Framework of Old Member States' Preferences

Our brief overview of the existing literature draws attention to two points. Firstly, there is no silver bullet which provides the explanation both for all countries and all policy areas. Secondly, some of the factors are more fixed (such as history), whereas others are more labile (such as ideology); hence it is important to recognize the existence of a temporal dimension in preference formation. Nonetheless, bringing together the insights of other scholars we can provide a simple framework to explain preference formation and help us to generate predictions about what is likely to be the case in the NMS (see Table 1). A key issue here is the relative weighting of these factors, which is discussed following the presentation of the synthetic framework. We acknowledge that our model privileges parsimony over comprehensive coverage, but our aim here is to provide a basis for further research and discussion, rather than pretending that we offer the last word on the subject.

We acknowledge the voluminous literature on categorizations in public policy (for a classic account, see Lowi, 1964), but for the purposes of this article we identify five broad areas of policy: 'More Europe'/Deeper Integration, Liberalization, Distributive Politics, Foreign Policy and Wider Europe. '*More Europe*'*/Deeper Integration* refers to a Member State's general attitude towards European integration as a whole, in particular the extension of Community competences, but also including the creation of uniform standards and policy instruments. We see two factors as central to preference formation in this broad policy area: visionary zeal or ideological resistance and attitudes towards business interests. The former refers on the one hand to the missionary fervour which animated many of the luminaries of European integration such as Kohl and Schuman – a sense of purpose largely absent from British politicians – whereas on the other hand it refers to an

Table 1: Synthetic Framework of Preference Formation in the Old Member States

Broad policy area	*What shapes stance?*
'More Europe'/Deeper Integration	• Visionary Zeal vs. Ideological Resistance
Distributive Politics	• Net Contributor/Recipient
Liberalization	• Ideology of politicians and governments
Foreign Policy	• Sense of self-importance or 'historical destiny' • Size
Wider Europe	• Geography • Attitudes towards deeper integration

Sources: Archer and Nugent (2006), Aspinwall (2002, 2007) and Stone Sweet and Sandholtz (1997).

ideologically based resistance. Such resistance may take the form of a concern for the defence of national sovereignty or an ideological opposition to increasing the state's role in the regulation of business. We suggest the tension between the two is crucial. Indeed, in some states both strands may be marginal or even absent, for example in Belgium or Greece. The second factor refers to whether politicians privilege economic efficiency over fairness, or a social justice agenda. Those who prefer the latter to the former have tended to be more lukewarm towards the interests of business and have therefore been more willing to countenance the introduction of additional regulation on business and the promotion of a 'European social model' (Giddens, 2006).

The category *Distributive Politics* refers to such areas as the allocation of structural and cohesion funds as well as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Based on simple cost–benefit assessment, we see the main factor in shaping preferences as whether the state is a net contributor (i.e. a potential beneficiary of distributive politics) or not. Nonetheless, we recognize that there are two mediating factors: the overall macroeconomic (especially fiscal) position of a Member State and past practice. Although net recipients' enthusiasm for EU funds will tend to remain constant irrespective of how their economies are performing, states which have to put their hands into their pockets and pay for distributive policies are more likely to be willing to exhibit largesse in times of solid growth and balanced budgets than in a harsher economic climate when a Member State's budget deficit is growing. After all, the contribution to Community funds has always been a rather small proportion of a given Member State's national budget. The exact size of the contribution to Community funds is most important when the national budget is under strain. Nonetheless, there is a degree of path dependency in attitudes towards the Community budget and old habits die hard. The negotiation log-jam over the 2007–13 financial perspective was broken in 2005 in part thanks to German Chancellor Angela Merkel's willingness to get out the Federal cheque book. Other exceptions abound. France, a net contributor in recent years remains relatively keen on a generous Community budget – as a result of its historical and cultural attachment to the CAP. Ireland, once one of the poorest and now one of the wealthiest Member States, and soon to become a net contributor, remains in favour of a larger Community budget, since the larger the budget, the easier it will be to extract concessions and transition arrangements for regions that are due to be weaned off structural and cohesion funds. A final exception is the UK. Britain remained stubborn in defence of its cherished rebate, although the justification for it that was based on Britain's relative poverty *vis-à-vis* the other Member States had disappeared by the turn of the 21st century; the rebate had acquired too much of a totemic quality among British eurosceptics for it to do otherwise.

In terms of *Liberalization* (by which we mean the removal of barriers to trade and the expansion of markets), we suggest here that the evidence points towards the importance of the ideology of the governing politicians and/or their key business allies. The Single European Act (after all the most important liberalizing step in the history of the EC/EU) provides an illustrative example. Although scholars may dispute what institutions or individuals drove the process (e.g. Moravcsik, 1999; Beach, 2006), some downplaying the role of Member States, few would deny that the preferences of the Member States were intimately tied to the ideological preferences of the leading politicians. Moravcsik's contribution which emphasizes the role of powerful societal groupings, however, provokes a further question as to the source of the stated ideological agenda. As we will discuss below in the case of Slovakia, some of the NMS do appear to provide grist to Moravcsik's mill.

Although we acknowledge there is a degree of overlap between our categories of *Foreign Policy* and *Wider Europe*, we make an analytical distinction. Whereas in the former category states with a sense of their own 'greatness' (or self-importance), a feeling of 'historical destiny' or mission (often linked to a geographical location or imperial past), such as France or the UK, tend to have strong preferences on external policies. States lacking this sense of self-importance appear to have much weaker preferences. We suggest that (perceived) size matters here. States which conceive of themselves as big beasts act accordingly in foreign policy. Nonetheless, concerns for areas of geographical proximity can provoke strong preferences and impact on EU foreign policy as both Finland's Northern Dimension Initiative and Spain's role in the European Mediterranean Partnership attest.

Wider Europe, referring to attitudes to enlargement, in contrast, is less determined by size. Here three factors appear critical: geography, attitudes to migration and stance on 'more Europe' or deeper integration. States tend to be keen on enlargement towards their near neighbours, although this enthusiasm, especially in more recent times, is somewhat tempered by a concern for potential migratory flows. Moreover, the debates surrounding eastern enlargement in the early 1990s highlighted that expanding the club complicates the process of deepening, hence states' positions on further enlargement can be shaped by the perceived knock-on impact on the process of deepening. In order to preserve the idea that anti-enlargement states remain pro-European, this attitude is translated into the more politically acceptable formulation of concerns about the EU's 'absorption capacity'.

Having identified the various factors that we believe shape Member States' national policy preferences, we now turn to the complicated, but absolutely crucial matter: the relative weighting of these factors that will clarify why

some issues are more important than others. We argue that the answer to this question may be found in an analysis of the fields of political action where a Member State is most vulnerable.

Looking at the early years of the European Communities (EC), France's preference for a collectively financed CAP was rooted in the weakness of the French farm sector (which at that time accounted for 25 per cent of total employment (Adams, 1999)) and the need to pay for expensive modernization. West Germany's vulnerabilities were multiple: most importantly, it needed access to markets and rehabilitation in the international community as a source of both internal and external legitimacy. Germany's preference for a deeper Union reflected this. For the UK and Ireland in 1973, the European Communities were primarily a means of reinvigorating their enfeebled economies, although for the Republic of Ireland, the Community unexpectedly allowed the Irish government to escape from the shadow of the UK,[1] which in part explains the relative popularity of Europe in Southern Ireland. Once Britain's relative economic weakness had been resolved, however, enthusiasm for European integration waned, especially on the right of the political spectrum.

For the southern Member States that entered the EC in the 1980s, the European project was once again a source of international legitimacy, funding for economic development as well as providing access to a large market. Europe helped compensate for these numerous deficiencies as well as offering a much-needed guarantee of democracy. The Member States that joined in 2004 and 2007 also suffered from multiple economic and democratic weaknesses in comparison with the rest of the Union, as will be investigated below. A key difference between these states and those that joined in earlier waves of enlargement was that the Union helped overcome the most pressing of their weaknesses *prior* to accession. Thus across the Union, national policy preferences reflect the Member States' responses to their own weaknesses and vulnerabilities. The task for Europe, or rather the expectation of Europe, is that it will compensate for, or help overcome, a Member State's deficiencies.

Following on from our synthetic framework, we propose four hypotheses on national preference formation in the NMS that are as follows:

H1: States will prioritize those particular areas of European policy that are perceived to compensate for their particular shortcomings.

[1] Given the economic integration of Ireland with the UK at the time of accession in 1973 it had no real choice about whether it joined the Community or not. The Irish pound was pegged to Sterling at a 1:1 rate until 1979, and the vast majority of Ireland's exports (then almost exclusively food) went to the UK.

H2: As some of the NMS become richer and hence become net contributors rather than net beneficiaries they will become less keen on distributive politics.

H3: Regardless of the government in power NMS will consistently advocate further enlargement of the Union to geographically proximate countries.

H4: Where organized labour is weak and the business lobby is powerful, preferences on socio-economic questions will be shaped by the interests of business.

These hypotheses for the NMS have been derived inductively from the preceding synthetic framework and developments in the NMS over the next few years will provide data for other political scientists to test these propositions across the 27 Member States. We now turn to our review of national preference formation in the NMS, drawing particularly on the case of Poland, albeit in a comparative context. The assessment should be viewed as essentially preliminary since too little time has elapsed since the 2004 and 2007 enlargements to allow for a more detailed exposition.

III. National Preference Formation in the New Member States

We have chosen to focus on Poland as the largest of the new Member States and, moreover, as a Member State whose national preferences attracted much attention across Europe in the period that forms the focus of this study, May 2004 to January 2008. We do not, however, restrict ourselves to Poland, but apply our model to other new Member States as well. In particular, we draw on the case of Slovakia, which not only has the advantage of differing from Poland in terms of size, history and its transition and accession processes, but it allows us to draw on recent scholarship which sought to explain National Preference Formation in the country (Haughton and Malová, 2007a; Haughton and Malová, 2007b; Malová *et al.*, 2005).

'More Europe'

In terms of 'More Europe' or attitudes towards deeper integration the framework would predict that a country's stance is shaped by visionary/ideological politics. Given the absence of significant European visionaries in the New Member States (with a Europe-wide reputation at least), we can suggest that the stance of most NMS seems to be shaped more by ideological convictions. Polish concerns about increasing the policy areas that are pooled with the other Member States are less the result of concerns over sovereignty (like the UK) or worries that Union standards may fall below those in place already

(as is the case in Sweden, Denmark or Finland), and more about so-called 'cultural differences'. Of particular concern to Poland in the first years of membership, especially for conservative political parties, such as the former prime minister Jarosław Kaczyński's Law and Justice, was the idea that the right to on-demand abortion could be extended to Poland, or indeed the idea that euthanasia might eventually be guaranteed by EU human rights legislation. Similar concerns were expressed in Poland about the future possibility of gay marriage – or the adoption of children by homosexual couples. The Polish centre-right, which contained a significant number of social conservatives, felt that EU human rights legislation could undermine the Roman Catholic foundations of Polish society. Such sentiments have also been articulated by parties elsewhere with a strong Christian base in the NMS such as the Christian Democratic Movement in Slovakia.

In line with a number of NMS such as Hungary, in terms of ideology, between 2004 and early 2008, it was centre-right political parties in Poland (such as Law and Justice and to a lesser extent, certain elements in Civic Platform) which tended to be far less enthusiastic about European integration than centrist or centre-left parties (such as the Democratic Left Alliance, the Social Democratic Party of Poland, the Labour Union and their combined electoral bloc formation with the Democratic Party, the Left Democrats). Right-wing parties, such as Self-Defence and the League of Polish Families, which joined Law and Justice in coalition between 2006 and 2007, were hostile to further European integration, partially as a result of an instinctive isolationist stance, but also because of a sense that the EU undermined the 'Polishness' and the conservative, Catholic roots of early 21st-century Polish society. Between 2004 and 2008, on the Polish party scene, enthusiasm for European integration went hand in hand with privileging the *Westpolitik* axis of Polish foreign policy, which holds that Germany is Poland's most important ally. Parties and politicians that view Germany with ideological suspicion, most notably Law and Justice, were not pro-European integration (Bobiński, 2007).

The cases of the Czech and Slovak Republics also demonstrate the importance of ideology but in slightly different ways. In the Czech case, former prime minister and current Czech president Václav Klaus has been the closest to a visionary the NMS had produced, but rather than advocating *More Europe* he has been a prominent and vocal critic of the European Union since the early 1990s. His euroscepticism – and that of other leading figures in the centre-right Civic Democratic Party – is rooted in both an 'Anglo-Saxon economic critique of the EU as an inefficient, over-regulated and "socialist" structure dominated by self-seeking bureaucratic elites' and a 'national critique' of the EU as a threat to Czech national sovereignty (Hanley, 2007,

p. 191). In contrast, with the exception of the Christian Democratic Movement, which has consistently articulated a cultural critique of the type mentioned above, there has been no visionary in Slovakia. Indeed, when the EU was mentioned in political debates in Slovakia it was either linked to questions of competence, i.e. who was best placed to milk the EU 'cash cow' (Haughton and Rybář, 2008) or exploited for political purposes in fighting other battles such as the delay in ratifying the Lisbon Treaty in early 2008 due to opposition criticisms of a proposed press law.

Distributive Politics

In terms of *Distributive Politics*, the vast majority of new Member States are enthusiastic proponents of this area of EU policy-making. Drawing on the case of Poland, as a relatively poor Member State, its official stance on distributive politics is that it is strongly in favour of what it terms '*solidarity*' between Member States, which is shorthand for the transfer of funds from wealthier Member States to poorer ones. Whilst the capitals of many new Member States boast per capita income levels around the EU average, they are islands of wealth in countries with some of the poorest regions in the European Union, such as the eastern regions of Poland that border Lithuania, Belarus, Kaliningrad and Ukraine.

Poland also has a large agricultural sector, in terms of employment at 19 per cent of the total, if not in terms of value added to GDP, which is only 4.2 per cent (GUS, 2008). As a result, it comes as no surprise that Poland is also in favour of the retention of the Common Agricultural Policy and, in particular, of the direct income payments to farmers that come with it. Although these were set at 25 per cent of the EU-15 level in 2004, rising to 100 per cent by 2012, this new revenue stream did much to modernize and rationalize the Polish farm sector in the first years of membership. The Polish attitude towards the CAP is illustrative of how a Member State's preferences can change rather quickly. Prior to accession, Poland was in favour of a wide-ranging CAP reform, since in the eyes of many Polish officials it would be able to compete with west European producers on price in a free market. This stance changed when the direct income payments for farmers were introduced in 2004. An enthusiasm for the magic of the free market dissipates when the payment of funds from the Community budget begins.

Liberalization

Our framework suggests that attitudes towards liberalization will be shaped by the ideological positions of politicians and governments or their key business interests. Both cases provided a means of testing the importance of

the former factor given the changes in governments that occurred between 2004 and 2008. In Poland, both the 2005 and 2007 governments led to some shifts in ideology (Millard, 2006; Szczerbiak, 2007). The 2005–07 Law and Justice-led coalition's instinctive euroscepticism made it lukewarm towards both liberalization and harmonization, including abandoning the Polish złoty for the euro. This government was replaced with a more strongly pro-liberalization coalition in late 2007 – which included the free marketeering Jacek Rostowski as finance minister, who had previously argued for the unilateral adoption of the euro in Poland – and attitudes towards economic liberalization and harmonization softened. Slovakia took a sharp ideological turn in 2006. That summer's parliamentary elections led to the ejection of a centre-right coalition under premier Mikuláš Dzurinda which had introduced a radical neoliberal package of policies to a leftist-orientated government under Prime Minister Robert Fico's leadership (Haughton and Rybář, 2008).

In both Poland and Slovakia, however, the countries' stance towards greater economic liberalization under governments of different ideological colours were remarkable not for the changes, but for the consistency (Bilčík, 2007). In the Polish case attitudes towards such issues, such as the implementation of the services directive and the opening of the EU market towards the competitive pressures of globalization were similar across the ideological spectrum even though not all Polish political parties, notably the former governing parties Self Defence and the League of Polish Families, had advocated a pro-liberalization agenda domestically. This preference was born of two things. First, the predominance of economic liberals in the political elite, who shared the belief that the free market policies of the Balcerowicz Plan which introduced the radical shock therapy of the early 1990s produced a highly favourable microeconomic climate, and that Polish economic policy-making should aim to replicate this success by rolling back the impediments to business that have sprung up since the early 1990s. Second, the influence of business on Polish policy-making in the 1990s and early 21st century was high, although perhaps not quite as great as the Law and Justice-led coalition of 2005–07 suggested in their frequent lambasting of the so-called *układ* (a network of businessmen, corrupt politicians and officials who were alleged to be intriguing against the interests of the Polish people for their own profit).

Economic reform was not given a priority by the 2005–07 Law and Justice-led coalition, and other, smaller parties, such as the Polish People's Party, were less keen on the free market. The picture is somewhat confused, since the very fluid nature of Poland's political system means that some political formations may contain politicians with varying attitudes towards economic policies. In summary, most mainstream Polish politicians and parties, on both the centre-left and the centre-right, are largely

pro-liberalization, but it should be noted that the principal dividing line in Polish politics in the 1990s and early 21st century was an individual's attitude towards the communist past, and not socio-economic policy.

The Lisbon Agenda of making the EU the 'most competitive' region of the world economy by 2010 was obviously supported by Poland – indeed no Member State could have been against such a vague and yet worthy aim. However, the liberalization/globalization debate did not carry the same baggage that it did in the western European continental Member States because Poland's relative economic position was improving, and not deteriorating, over the 1990s and 2000s. Although Poland had very little R&D capacity in the first years of its membership, the goals of the Lisbon strategy did not seem to be directly applicable to the Polish economy, and for that reason, the economic competitiveness agenda was not high on the list of Poland's national preferences within the EU. As the competitive advantages that a newer, poorer Member State's economy enjoys over its European partners during the catch-up phase are eroded, it is likely that such a Member State will become more concerned with the global race for competitiveness. Support for liberalization did not extend to the Common Agricultural Policy in Poland between 2004 and 2008 for the simple reason that during that period, Poland was beginning to receive direct – and steadily growing – income payments for its farmers.

In the Slovak case, early indications appeared to highlight that ideology, or at least a desire to protect the neoliberal agenda from threats at the European level (Haughton and Malová, 2007a), drove the country's attitude towards economic integration, although admittedly more in terms of harmonization than liberalization, so the continuity of policy provides a puzzle. Recent research indicates that the key may lie in the power of the business lobby (Haughton and Malová, 2007b). Both the private equity firms and the automotive industry which helped drive the Dzurinda government's neoliberal project and the business interests with close links to the governing parties in the Fico-led government have been influential in urging successive governments to push for greater access to European markets (liberalization) and euro entry, whilst opposing harmonization in the fiscal sphere, helping to maintain the country's comparative advantage. The influence of the business lobby was, in part, shaped by the process of transition and accession to which we return below.

External Politics

Both Poland and Slovakia appear to confirm the framework's suggestion that in the realm of foreign policy we would expect the sense of self-importance

or *historical destiny* and geography to shape attitudes. Poland's attitude towards EU foreign policy, and indeed the European Union as a whole, is strongly determined by its history and geography. The 18th-century partitions (when Poland was carved up by Prussia, Austria and Russia) and World War II have fostered deep-seated distrust of its neighbours, especially Russia and Germany, who in Polish eyes partitioned Poland for a fourth time in the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact of 1939. Poland's Atlanticism, which was manifested between 2004 and 2008 in its sending troops to Iraq and in volunteering to host the US anti-missile defence shield, stemmed from the widespread belief that only the United States had the necessary firepower and, even more crucially, the political will, to defend Polish independence should the need arise (Longhurst and Zaborowski, 2007). Its attitude towards Russia was similarly historically determined, with the belief persisting amongst senior advisers to President Kaczyński that Russia retained its historical antagonism towards Poland and that this was manifested in Russian foreign policy in the Putin era.

In common with France and the United Kingdom, Poland has a sense of *historical destiny*, which originates in the lingering memory of the grandness of its past as a large, multi-ethnic, east-central European Great Power between the 15th and 18th centuries. This impression of self-importance was expressed primarily in the elite attitude that Poland should be a major player, if not *the* major player, in the EU's foreign policy towards Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus (a significant portion of which was once part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) to which we return to below, but also in the idea that Poland in the EU is a significant power in itself that should be listened to, respected and treated as one of the large states along with France, the United Kingdom, Germany and to a lesser extent, Italy and Spain (Kaczyński, 2006). Poland's attitude towards its place in the world in the post-accession phase was somewhat confused, mixing together this 'politics of grandeur' with acute worries about its economic and financial weakness *vis-à-vis* the other Member States. For this reason, the issue of voting rights in the Council acquired such importance in Polish domestic politics. This was expressed memorably in the 'Nice or Death!' slogan – with no government willing to concede the 'place on the top table' that near parity of voting weight with Germany (despite the fact that Poland's population is only half the German level) provided under the terms of the Nice Treaty. Although the voting weight question was not an issue that was concerned with the EU's external politics (since external relations are not subject to QMV) it *was* strongly connected with the 'politics of grandeur' that can be bound together with a sense of historical destiny, itself tied intimately to Poland's sense of vulnerability. Given the importance of self-perceived historical destiny in the

Polish case, it is worth mentioning a couple of additional examples from the post-accession phase.

An illustration of Poland's perception of is own self-importance in the European Union in the early years of membership may be found in its willingness to form a minority of one and deploy the veto where it was felt that its interests were not being served. In a Union of 27, the veto is an instrument to be used with extreme reluctance by any one Member State for fear of undermining its reputation as a reliable and *communautaire* partner. Poland appeared to have no such reservations. It used the veto in the negotiations on the agreement to replace the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA) with Russia in 2007, and although joined by Lithuania, would have proceeded alone. In 2005, Agriculture Minister Krzysztof Jurgiel (Lucas, 2005) threatened to invoke the so-called Luxembourg Compromise of 1966 (an effective veto on a QMV decision) in response to a proposed deal on sugar reform. This move was avoided, but demonstrated the Law and Justice coalition's willingness to depart from the established means of conducting negotiations on a proposed piece of legislation. Frequent reference was made between 2004 and 2008 to the defence of Poland's 'national interests' in the European Union and the Gaullist example of how best to engage with Europe's institutions and Member States touted as a model for Poland to emulate.

In contrast, most of the other NMS are smaller countries whose histories are perceived less in terms of 'grandeur' both domestically and internationally; in consequence they do not share Poland's sense of historical destiny. They do, however, have geographical concerns which are largely reflected in their positions on enlargement (as will be shown below). Nonetheless, in a similar vein to Poland, relations with Russia are shaped by history and geography and have been especially prominent in the external policy priorities of the three Baltic States. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which were forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union and endured four decades of rule by Moscow, view Russia with suspicion and were far less enthusiastic about striking deals during the Putin era than many of the OMS.

Wider Europe and Enlargement

Our framework posits that two factors will shape a country's stance on Wider Europe/enlargement: geography and attitudes to deeper integration. We would suggest that the first of these, tied to history and economics, is key to explaining both Poland's and the other NMS' stances.

In the case of Poland, attitudes towards the 'Wider Europe' and enlargement draw together the various elements of the broad policy preferences

discussed above, making Poland very strongly in favour of enlargement to include Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova as well as, by extension, the Western Balkans and Turkey on the assumption that what is good for Turkish accession is good for Ukrainian accession. The idea that Poland should be opposed to *any* further enlargement was once mooted in the Polish public realm, on the grounds that an increase in the number of poorer Member States would create new demands on the Union budget and reduce the amount of spending available to Poland – however, this idea failed to garner any popular support (Copsey, 2007). In the formation of Polish policy preferences towards enlargement, history (memories of the Jagiellonian 'golden age' when the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth stretched from (Black) sea to (Baltic) sea), geography (a desire not to be the Schengen frontier forever), economics (a belief that the markets and labour supply of the east are essential to the Polish economy in the longer term), all trump a more mean-minded instinct to conserve funds in Poland.

Other NMS' positions appear to be shaped by a mix of geography, history and economics. Geographical proximity, if not contiguity, has shaped a generally enthusiastic attitude towards further enlargement. But this positive attitude is also shaped by common histories. Lithuania, for example, has been a strong advocate of enlarging the Union to its former fellow Soviet republic Ukraine, and Slovenia has been at the forefront of pushing the case for enlargement to include other former Yugoslav states. Under both the Dzurinda and Fico governments Slovakia articulated strong support for further EU enlargement, especially to the Western Balkans (Bilčík, 2007), partly shaped by geographical concerns, but also thanks to the perceived economic opportunities enlargement would provide. Slovakia's stance was also shaped by its complicated accession and transition path (which we return to below). For somewhat different reasons, but in line with the stance of British centre-right politicians, Czech President Klaus' advocacy of enlargement to include Turkey, Ukraine, Morocco and Kazakhstan in an interview in 2005 was driven in part by a belief that expanding complicates and thereby hinders deepening (Hanley, 2007). The one widespread reservation towards further enlargement is the case of Turkey. As in the OMS opposition is largely rooted in a desire for a *Christian* Europe and is mostly articulated by Catholic parties.

Relative Weighting of National Preferences

In the case of Poland, given its relative economic position *vis-à-vis* the other states and the consequent opportunities to receive European funds, the policy

preference with the highest relative weighting is distributive politics.[2] This reflects (in common with France in the 1950s and 1960s) the weakness of both the Polish farm sector and the stark differences in wealth between regions. The flow of Community funds to pay for modernization is far too significant to take second place to any other policy priority. The second most important policy preference for Poland in the European Union is the linked (in Polish eyes at least) issues of wider Europe, enlargement and external relations. The first reason for this is that one of Poland's principal vulnerabilities both historically and at the turn of the 21st century has been in its relations with Russia. With the backing of the European Union, Poland is much better able to defend its own interests and overcome its deficiency in this area (as illustrated by the Polish veto of talks with Russia on a new PCA in 2007). Moreover, for the sake of security and prosperity as well as for historical reasons, Poland would like to see its eastern neighbours, Ukraine and Belarus, join the Union. This would not only help overcome the economic weaknesses of its eastern provinces, but it would also remove the security problem of having the hard Schengen frontier on its eastern border.

Liberalization is less high on Poland's EU agenda, mainly because in the first years of membership, its relative economic position strengthened hugely with very strong economic growth and the halving of unemployment. Once the Polish economy's year-on-year growth slows to a lower pace, it is likely that Polish enthusiasm for liberalization will rise. As a result of Poland's numerous weaknesses, public enthusiasm for 'more Europe' is high since it is closely associated with growing prosperity, free movement and above all an acceptance of Poland into the international community. This enthusiastic view was not shared by all of the Polish elite in the 2000s, although it may change when power shifts to the next generation of politicians who did not cut their political teeth in Solidarity during the 1980s. Thus in common with the OMS, Poland's policy preferences are a close reflection of the policy fields in which the Polish state is weakest.

Mediating Factors

Although the preceding analysis has highlighted that many of our expectations drawn from the OMS of why a state has the policy preferences that it does holds for NMS, in some areas our arguments need to be qualified to take into account

[2] The weighting of Poland's national preferences is based on an analysis of the political programmes of two of the main political parties in the 2007 parliamentary elections, Civic Platform (whose programme may be found at «http://www.platforma.org/program/») and Law and Justice (whose programme may be found at «http://www.pis.org.pl/dokumenty.php») and the government website «http://www.poland.gov.pl», where a description of Poland's EU priorities may be found at: «http://www.poland.gov.pl/The,priorities,of,Polish,European,policy,459.html».

the specificities of the NMS. Undoubtedly the most important mediating factor for ten of the 12 New Member States is the fact that as former communist states, the nature of their transition to EU membership was strikingly different to that of the states that joined in the enlargements of 1973, 1981, 1986 and 1995. The legacy of 40 years of socialism for the political and economic situation of these states is well-known and has been widely documented since 1989: the weakness of civil society groupings, the fluidity of political parties that are mostly elite created and closely associated with their founders and leaders, the lack of highly developed mechanisms of accountability and, very importantly, the absence of institutionalized official forums for government and key interest groups to interact in an open and transparent manner. In this regard we would stress in particular the role of the business lobby.

Relations between government and business are a greatly under-researched aspect of the contemporary politics of central and eastern Europe. Rumours of conspiracies abound. The perception that business interests were highly privileged in the unofficial decision-making structures of Poland's 2001–05 centre-left government, for instance, led to a crushing defeat for the post-communist Union of Left Democrats or SLD in 2005. It has proven difficult to conduct empirical investigations into the influence of business on policy-making in the region due to the unwillingness of many sources to be interviewed, although some attempts have been made in the field of foreign policy (Copsey, 2007). This is understandable, since in a system where the boundary between legitimate lobbying and the illegitimate exchange of favours is far from clearly delineated, it is hard for an individual to know whether his behaviour is appropriate or otherwise. Although separating scurrilous rumour from fact is difficult, the widespread perception that business is powerful and the apparent impact of business on nominally left-of-centre governments, in the liberalization sphere in particular, demonstrate the need for more detailed research.

Another important factor that is particular to the New Member States that joined in 2004 and 2007 and relates to the nature of the post-1989 transition is the difference in the quality of the national debate on the EU between those states that were invited to accession negotiations at the Luxembourg European Council in 1997 (Poland, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Hungary, Estonia and Slovenia) and those which were not (notably Slovakia, Lithuania, Romania and Bulgaria). One of the most striking aspects of European politics in this latter group, which were invited to join at the Helsinki summit, was the absence of debate in those countries on EU issues prior to accession, even amongst the political elite, beyond a desire to join the club (Duvold and Jurkynas, 2006; Haughton and Malová, 2007a). We suggest this is a product of their different processes of transition and accession. In the Slovak case, for example, the decision not to

invite that country to begin accession negotiations in 1997 and the subsequent 'blame game' in domestic Slovak politics that ensued as to who was responsible, focused attention on why Slovakia had not been invited, rather than what type of European Union the state wanted to belong to (Henderson, 2004). This situation may alter over time; what matters for the formation of national policy preferences in the New Member States is that in those states that were not chosen to be front-runners in 1997, the domestic debate shifted decisively away from discussion about 'what kind of' European Union (Tsoukalis, 2005) they would be joining in favour of an ongoing debate about how to make sure they would not miss the boat.

Both the arguments about the power of business and the transition and accession processes raise broader issues of legacies and lasting impacts. Firstly, the power of the business lobby was facilitated in part by the weakness of other interest groups, especially trade unions and the fluidity of party politics. Developments in Slovakia and Poland perhaps hint that the power of business *may* have declined since 2004. Indeed, following the election of the Fico-led government in Slovakia there have been signs that the trade union movement is becoming more assertive. Although political scientists should be wary about making predictions, we suggest that the lasting impact of the transition which privileged the interests of business in the decision-making process is on the decline. Secondly, the lack of much debate about the form the EU should take in the Helsinki group may be significantly shaped by the size of the state. Slovakia, Latvia and Estonia all see themselves as small players and act accordingly, whereas Poland considers itself one of the big players.

Conclusions

There has been much discussion in scholarly and policy-making circles about how the eastern enlargement is changing the nature of the European Union. Not only has the increase in the number of members impacted on the functioning of the EU, but these states have brought with them their own sets of policy preferences. Although we recognize that four years of membership is an insufficient period to draw anything other than provisional judgements, this article has sought to examine the nature of policy preferences in the NMS. Building on previous scholarship we produced a synthetic model of preference formation in the OMS. The framework highlighted that no single factor explains the preferences of the OMS in all policy areas, but that in each major policy area one or two factors can be identified. Applying these to the NMS we found that the framework has significant value in explaining the nature of national preferences.

We further argued that the relative weighting of a Member State's national preferences can be understood by asking the question: what is Europe 'for'? In line with the work of Milward (1992) and others we suggested that the purpose of European integration as far as an individual Member State is concerned is to compensate for domestic weaknesses. A Member State's various vulnerabilities and shortcomings not only shape its stance on a given area of proposed Community action, but also determine the relative weighting of particular policy areas within the bigger picture of its EU agenda. Thus, for example, economically weaker states are likely to prioritize distributive policies over other areas of Community action. Although after four years of membership all of the new Member States remain net recipients, this is very unlikely to be the case in the future. Indeed, thanks in no small part to the relatively high levels of economic growth in some states, we predict a growing divergence in the NMS' choices for Europe, with smaller states such as Slovenia and Estonia shifting their preferences as they become net contributors to the EU budget.

The nature of national policy preferences, as well as the mechanisms by which they are determined, are of crucial importance to scholars who seek to understand the future policy agenda of the European Union. The impact of NMS' policy preferences on the EU will rise considerably over the next decade; however, we still know too little about the nature of these preferences and how they are formed. It is hoped that the framework presented in this article will encourage other scholars to take up this challenge and shed light on the choices for Europe in all 27 Member States of the enlarged Union.

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