Why is there no christian democracy in Poland - And why should we care?

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WHY IS THERE NO CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY IN POLAND – AND SO WHY SHOULD WE CARE?[*]

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Abstract

Despite the fact that almost all Poles are Roman Catholics and that religion has played an important part in contemporary Polish politics, no self-declared Christian Democratic party has been successful in post-1989 Poland. None of the currently successful Polish centre-right parties profile themselves as Christian Democratic, nor can they be labeled as such objectively. While superficially Poland looks like fertile ground for Christian Democracy, the factors that were crucial to the formation and success of Christian Democratic parties in post-war Western Europe were largely absent during the emergence of democratic, multi-party politics in post-1989 Poland. Of course, parties are never simply produced and sustained by 'cleavages': they are more than institutional responses to some kind of social demand. The formation and success, or otherwise, of Christian Democratic parties owes much to the inter-play between social realities and sponsors, on the one hand, and the institutional and ideological crafting of entrepreneurial politicians, on the other.

In the field of party politics, there is an implicit expectation that the party systems of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) will over time come to resemble those of the Western half of the continent. True, there is evidence to suggest that the differences between 'old' and 'new' Europe are as significant as the similarities, and may prove very persistent. But, superficially at least, there appears to be some support for such an expectation. After all, most CEE countries have parties that can be plausibly placed on the familiar dimensions (left-right, authoritarian-liberal etc.) and many of them, rather conveniently, get together with their western counterparts in European party federations or at least party groups within the European Parliament (EP). One of the obvious differences between the party systems of CEE and their Western counterparts, for example, is that there are no cases in the former of a Christian Democratic party that could claim anything like the success enjoyed by such parties in the latter in countries like Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and, before its implosion in the early 1990s, Italy.

One way of exploring that difference, and at the same time improving our understanding of party and party system formation as a whole, is to follow a trail blazed by Sombart and more recently trod by Marks and Lipset (2001), whose aim was find out why there was no electorally successful socialist alternative in the USA. Investigating a non-occurrence can help us in two ways. Firstly, it can tell us more about what did happen in a particular time and place by contrasting it with what did not. Secondly, it encourages us to reflect and improve on existing explanations of why similar things happened (or did not happen) in other times and places. The key to doing both of these, of course, is not just to pick a case where something didn't

happen but also to make sure that what didn't happen might, *prima facie*, have been expected to occur (Mahoney and Goertz 2004).

While in most countries in the relatively secular CEE region the non-occurrence or absence of a successful Christian Democratic party might come as no surprise, there is one country in which, given the nature of its society and political divisions, one might have expected Christian Democracy, at least at first glance, to have gained a foothold and even to flourish. That country is Poland – a nation where practising Roman Catholics make up around 95% of the population, a large proportion of which is still employed in the agricultural sector that, along with church-goers, traditionally supplied continental Europe's Christian Democratic parties with a core vote. This core vote cut across class and laid the foundations for a centre-right that stood out against the re-distributive politics of the left, the equally secular politics of liberalism, and the capitalist politics of conservatism. When we look at Poland, however, there seems to be no such thing as a successful Christian Democratic party. This makes post-1989 Poland a crucial case of a 'non-occurrence' in contemporary European party politics.

We begin by defining Christian Democracy, a necessary but not an easy task, especially because in recent years it has become something of a slippery fish. We then go on to show both how 'self-declared' Christian Democratic parties have failed in post-1989 Poland and that currently successful centre-right parties cannot convincingly be called Christian Democratic. Next, we explore the factors that played an important part in the initial formation and success of Christian Democratic parties in post-war, newly-democratic continental Europe, looking both at countries where

such parties did well (in particular, Italy and Belgium, but also the Netherlands and Germany) and at countries where it failed to take hold (notably France). Following that, we explore which of those factors were more or less in play in Poland after the fall of the Communist regime. Finally, we examine how the findings from our case might contribute to our more general understanding of party formation and success.

Christian Democracy: how would we know it if we saw it?

How do we know if one or more parties in post-1989 Poland, or anywhere else for that matter, can convincingly be called Christian Democratic? What we need is an archetype that we can compare against. Scholars like van Kersbergen (1994) and Hanley (1994) argue that Christian Democracy should be seen to possess a distinct ideological pedigree, comprising of at least five distinctive, core elements. These can be used as characteristics we might expect a party to possess in order that we can categorise it as Christian Democratic. The elements should not be seen as a set of criteria that absolutely has to be fulfilled to the letter: we are talking, after all, about what Wittgenstein (2001[1953]) famously termed 'family resemblance', namely categorisation that is not mathematically precise but nevertheless clearly meaningful and useful. On the other hand, a party doing or saying something that clearly runs counter to one or more of the core elements cannot be categorised as Christian Democratic. Obviously, we must allow parties some leeway: even those Western European parties whose membership of the family is beyond doubt have had to respond to challenges and contingencies (such as the collapse of their communist enemy and the emergence of neo-liberalism) which mean that they are no longer

exactly what they once were. Nonetheless, they remain recognisably different from other parties on the right, and so too should the parties we examine in Poland.

The first characteristic of a Christian Democratic party is a commitment to the idea of society as an organic whole – a commitment expressed in the linked ideas of 'social personalism' and 'solidarism' which imply that individual rights and choices, and collective interests, only gain meaning when framed within the context of a wider community. For the Christian Democrat, then, the central goal of politics is to promote harmonious interaction and eliminate tensions between different social classes and individuals through negotiation and social accommodation.

Secondly, Christian Democrats are traditionally strong supporters of the family as the key means of achieving this societal equilibrium. The family is the cornerstone of the community - the primary vehicle for the transmission of social values and an ideal tool for social regulation - and Christian Democrats direct a significant amount of effort into supporting familial structures. A family-oriented approach to social policy, is accompanied by a concomitant emphasis on conservative social and cultural values, which means that there is also a deeply traditionalist and moralistic thread running through Christian Democratic rhetoric. This finds expression in a limited tolerance of alternative lifestyles, which sometimes leads Christian Democrats to openly characterise single parenthood and homosexual relationships as a corrosive threat the traditional family and, consequently, to the community as a whole.

Thirdly, in terms of socio-economic policy, Christian Democrats have normally supported some kind of 'social capitalism', best exemplified by the German 'social market economy'. They shared with conservatives and liberals an essential (albeit qualified) belief in the beneficial power of a market-based economy, together with a conviction that private property constitutes an inviolable right and should be protected from an overly-interventionist state. This notwithstanding, the latter is seen as having a duty to provide for all of its citizens, protect the weak in society and prevent entrenched social exclusion, as well as to intervene and regulate in order to prevent the development of an antagonistic relationship between capital and labour. From this duty flow (neo) corporatist structures and 'continental' welfare states.

Fourthly, Christian Democrat foreign policy is underpinned by a strong emphasis on trans-national, as well as domestic, reconciliation. Christian Democrats know that the nation, alongside the family and voluntary associations, is one of the different kinds of communities in which humankind fulfils itself, but reject nationalism red in tooth and claw. This antipathy derives partly from their close association with the Roman Catholic Church with its universalistic claims, but also relates to a worldview rooted in mutual understanding and reciprocity between individuals and groups (or, as Hanley (1994:8) neatly puts it, "making strangers into friends"). Christian Democratic parties' longstanding attachment to European integration as a means of overcoming nationalism flows logically from this worldview – although clearly not even the most idealistic Christian Democratic statesman completely forgot (or forgets) about his country's 'selfish' political and economic interests as the European project moved (and moves) forward.

Fifthly, Christian Democratic parties' programmes are explicitly rooted in and underpinned by religiosity. Although Christian Democracy is about the application of general Christian principles and values to the governance of the state rather the formal 're-Christianisation of society', Christian Democratic parties remain conscious of their religious origins and the values that they embody are clearly inspired by, and originate from, Christian ethics. First and foremost, Christian Democrats are in politics to express a Christian vision of humankind and its destiny. However, although they may continue to enjoy close relations with (and sometimes the explicit support of) the Catholic Church and its ancillary lay organisations, Christian Democratic parties are also self-consciously lay groupings and are not controlled by, and operate at arm's-length from, the Church hierarchy.

Thus armed with a better idea of what we are looking for, we now go on to see if any of the currently successful centre-right parties in Poland can be called Christian Democratic, pausing initially to trace the ideology's limited history in that country and to examine the unimpressive record of parties that claimed it as their own.

Establishing the absence of Christian Democracy in contemporary Poland

Although all the main Polish parties (except for those on radical left) to emerge at the end of the Nineteenth Century – during the period when Poland was partitioned between Austria-Hungary, Prussia and Russia – made frequent references to Christian values in their programmes, Christian Democracy as a distinct political movement did

not enjoy widespread support. Nor were 'self-declared' Christian Democratic parties especially influential during the period of the inter-war Second Republic following the restoration of an independent Polish state in 1918 (Bender 1985: 335-6). In 1945, there was an attempt to revive the pre-war Christian Democratic Labour Party (Stronnictwo Pracy: SP) but it operated openly for only a short period and following persecution by the authorities, the last vestiges of independent Christian Democratic political activity in communist Poland ended in 1950.

The remnants of Christian Democratic political thought continued largely as one current of thinking within the Catholic secular associations that the communist authorities allowed to function in a stringently controlled form on the margins of political life. There were a number of attempts to revive an independent Polish Christian Democrat movement during the communist period (Stępień 2000). However, the majority of Catholic activists clustered around the so-called 'Znak' ('Sign') movement and associated with the 'Tygodnik Powszechny' ('Universal Weekly') newspapers - which operated semi-independently from, but tightly constrained by, the communist regime - rejected this idea, fearing that it would draw them too closely into official state structures and, ultimately, transform them into simply another 'satellite' organisation. There were also small groups of Christian Democratic activists involved in the democratic opposition movement at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s. However, these individuals and groupings played only a very marginal role in both the Solidarity movement and in subsequent attempts to revive Christian Democracy following the collapse of communism and emergence of pluralist, multi-party politics in 1989.

The early 1990s saw numerous unsuccessful attempts to establish such 'self-declared' Christian Democratic parties (Gołoś 2000). Most of them were either completely new parties that emerged from within the Solidarity movement or attempts to revive historic parties that claimed continuity with the pre-communist and pre-war Polish Christian Democratic movement. The closest that post-1989 Poland came to the emergence of an electorally successful self-declared Christian Democratic party was the formation of Solidarity Electoral Action (Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność: AWS), a coalition of parties and political groupings on the centre-right that was established in 1996 under the aegis of the Solidarity trade union (Karatnycky 1998). Solidarity Electoral Action was an ideologically eclectic and heterogeneous political conglomerate including socially conservative trade unionists, (both economically interventionist and more liberal) Catholic nationalists and relatively secular liberal-conservatives; although it also contained a strong self-declared Christian Democratic element. It won the September 1997 election with 33.83% of the votes and 201 seats (out of 460) and was the main governing party throughout the 1997-2001 parliament. Following the 1997 election, a new union-sponsored political party, the Solidarity Electoral Action Social Movement (Ruch Społeczny Akcji Wyborczej Solidarność: RS AWS) was set up as a 'self-declared' Christian Democratic party and its programmatic declarations contained numerous references to Christian axiology. However, Solidarity Electoral Action's spectacular 2001 election defeat, when it failed to secure parliamentary representation, precipitated a major crisis within the Social Movement, which was dissolved in 2004.

One party that has sometimes been categorised as Christian Democratic and enjoyed medium levels of electoral and political success in the 1990s was the Christian National Union (Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko-Narodowe: ZChN). This party was formed in 1989 and developed into one of the most significant parties on the Polish right following the October 1991 parliamentary election when it spearheaded the Catholic Electoral Action (Wyborcza Akcja Katolicka: WAK) coalition that emerged as the third largest parliamentary grouping securing 8.79% of the vote and 49 deputies. As its name suggests, it was certainly a Christian-inspired party that: stressed its close links with the Catholic Church; argued that public policy should be rooted in Christian values and notions of 'social solidarity'; and supported the family as the most effective guarantor of individual freedom, social stability and cohesion. However, the Christian National Union had a much more expansive approach towards promoting, and ensuring that the state reflected, Christian moral values than an archetypal Christian Democratic party, and sought institutional guarantees to underpin the Church's influence over public life so that the Polish state had an explicitly Catholic character. The Christian National Union's ideology was also characterised by a strong emphasis on national-patriotic themes, particularly the importance it attached to ensuring that the state reflected Polish national and cultural traditions. This was in stark contrast to Christian Democratic parties' traditionally 'universalist' approach, exemplified by their longstanding attachment to European integration as a means of overcoming nationalism. This makes it difficult to classify the Christian National Union as Christian Democratic.

There were also a number of other very marginal 'self-declared' Christian Democratic parties in post-1989 Poland that faded quickly into obscurity, such as Christian Democracy of the Third Republic of Poland (Chrześcijańska Demokracja III Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej: ChD III RP) party, set up by Lech Wałęsa in 1997, essentially a vehicle for him to pursue his personal ambitions. There were also agrarian parties emanating from the Solidarity movement that claimed to be directly inspired by Catholic social teaching or included the term 'Christian' in their name. However, these are more accurately classified as agrarian or agrarian-conservative, rather than Christian Democratic, parties. In other words, none of these attempts to set up 'self-declared' Christian Democratic parties in post-1989 Poland have been really successful.

Moreover, none of the main Polish right wing or centre-right parties currently operating in Poland has sought to profile itself self-consciously as Christian Democratic. At the time of writing, the most significant centre-right parties are the Law and Justice party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość: PiS), Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska: PO) and the League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin: LPR), which secured 27% (155 seats), 24.14% (133 seats) and 7.97% (34 seats) of the vote respectively in the most recent September 2005 parliamentary election. But is it possible to categorise any of these parties as, at least 'objectively', Christian Democratic in the sense that they come close to the 'ideal type' outlined above?

At first glance, Law and Justice does, indeed, appear to bear a close resemblance to an archetypal Christian Democratic party. Its economic programme is infused with

'social market' rhetoric and the party argued that it was the state's responsibility to build more solidarity between those who had succeeded in the new capitalist Poland and those who felt that they had lost out from economic transformation. From the outset, the Law and Justice party was a culturally conservative party strongly committed to traditional social values, particularly the importance of using social policy to support the family. It also argued that the state should recognise the importance of and respect Christian values, which it felt provided an axiological underpinning for associational activity in the public sphere. However, the party never enjoyed explicit support from either the Catholic Church hierarchy or, to begin with at least, lay organisations. Although the party has increasingly made a clear pitch for the religious electorate through its programmatic statements and close association with the influential clerical-nationalist broadcaster Radio Maryja, the station is not an official Church organ. Moreover, although Law and Justice supported Polish accession to the EU, the party also had a strong 'Gaullist' strand to its thinking, reflected in the fact that, having initially aligned itself with the Christian Democratic European People's Party (EPP) trans-national party federation, Law and Justice subsequently decided to join the 'sovereignist' 'Union for a Europe of Nations' grouping in the EP. Indeed, the party's clearest defining characteristic has always been a commitment to the radical reform of the Polish state and the creation of a new moral, political and social order. This made it difficult to categorise as an archetypal Christian Democratic party.

As part of its attempt to construct a broader appeal beyond its original 'core' liberal electorate, Civic Platform also sought to position itself as a socially conservative party

and with a stronger national-patriotic discourse. This involved developing a more religiously informed dimension to its ideological and programmatic profile that shifted the party in the direction of Christian Democracy. Indeed, from the outset, Civic Platform was a member of the EPP and went on to join its EP grouping. However, Civic Platform's economic programme emphasises the importance of competitiveness, sound public finances and low taxation rather than a 'social market' approach based on welfarism, state intervention and corporatism. At root, Civic Platform is a right-wing liberal or liberal-conservative, rather than an archetypal Christian Democratic, party.

As its name implied, the League of Polish Families is certainly a very strong supporter of conservative social values and strengthening the legal and economic position of the family. Axiologically, the party invokes Christian values directly and explicitly to justify its strong opposition to homosexual marriage and adoption, euthanasia, cloning, and any attempts to liberalise Poland's abortion laws; and all of these occupy a prominent place in the party's programme and rhetoric. The party portrays itself as representing an alternative to both collectivist and liberal approaches to political economy and claims to support a 'social market' programme, with a strong emphasis on policies to promote welfare and social protection. In fact, tone of the the League's approach to economic policy is probably *too* overtly anti-capitalist for a Christian Democratic party. Moreover, the party is identified with a particular nationalist strand of Polish Catholicism and, like the Christian National Union although even more so, the League fuses religious fundamentalism with radical nationalist rhetoric. Its hostility to the European project is exemplified by the fact that

its MEPs chose to join the radical Eurosceptic 'Independence and Democracy' grouping in the EP. Given its emphasis on the importance of defending national sovereignty against encroachment from international organisations, it is, therefore, a clerical-nationalist rather than a Christian Democratic grouping drawing more on the traditions of Roman Dmowski's pre-war National Democracy movement (Naradowa Demokracja: ND - known as the 'endecja').

In summary, then, parties in post-1989 Poland that have called themselves Christian Democratic have thus far failed, while none of the country's more successful centre-right and right-wing parties can be called (or, indeed, call themselves) Christian Democratic. We now look for clues as to why by trying to understand the relative success and failure of Christian Democratic parties in a set of democracies that in their day were, like Poland, newly emerging from dictatorship and/or occupation

Accounting for variations in presence and performance: Christian Democracy in post-war Europe

The only flaw in the otherwise exemplary combination of social science and historical method that is Kalyvas' *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (1996) is its author's claim that there was a 'remarkable continuity' between the pre-war parties it focuses on and the Christian Democratic parties that came to dominate the politics of a number of West European countries for several decades after 1945. This idea is rejected by experts on the post-war period – a consensus that arguably calls into question (albeit implicitly) Lipset and Rokkan's assertion that the political formations

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of the post-war period reflected the cleavage structures of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries. The historian Martin Conway (1996: 11) insists that, '"Christian Democrats" (of the pre-war era) were precursors of the post-1945 Christian democrats in name only'. The political scientist Carolyn Warner (2000: 24) likewise maintains, 'the post-war Christian democratic parties were *not* lifted from storage as a continuation of the pre-war Catholic or Christian democratic parties. Maintaining that they were...seriously distorts the process of post-war party formation.'

In short, in order to understand why Christian Democratic parties came about and why they came, at least in some countries, to be so successful, we have to look at 'a particular conjuncture' (Conway 2003: 59) – the first few years after a regime change that saw totalitarian dictatorships or their puppet governments replaced by democratically elected administrations. This does not mean, however, that we must give up the search for generalisation and an explanatory framework that can be exploited in another time and another place, not least in a period that saw a similarly momentous regime change. In fact, a comprehensive survey of the literature on the early post-war development of continental Christian Democracy reveals a number of factors associated with Christian Democratic party success, although (given that they were present to a greater or lesser degree and given that the skill displayed and the luck enjoyed by each party also mattered) the extent of that success still varied, of

course, between countries.[1] Conversely, the absence or attenuation of those factors is associated with the lack of a significant Christian Democratic party. These are discussed below in what we believe is their order of importance.

1. A substantial (and preferably practising) Roman Catholic population.

'There was', as Conway (2003: 48) puts it, 'no secret to the post-war electoral success of Christian Democracy: it relied primarily on the successful yoking of political choice to religious commitment.' The higher the level of the latter, the easier it was to achieve the former. Italy and Belgium were almost entirely Catholic and, while attendance at mass, varied between regions, on average it exceeded 40%. In France, only around a quarter of the population were practising Catholics. Other countries where the Catholic population was lower, such as (West) Germany (nearly half) and the Netherlands (about a third), got over this hurdle, however, by incorporating or co-operating with political Protestantism. Success of course also depended on a solid majority of this Catholic population actually voting for the Christian Democrats: this was almost certainly achieved in Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands, where something approaching nine out of ten practising Catholics did so; such voting was reasonably solid in Germany, where about half of all practising Catholics voted for

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[1] By 'successful' we mean those Christian Democratic parties that: in the wake of the first post-war elections and until at least the 1970s, regularly took between a third and two fifths of the national vote; were crucial components of most governments; and had no significant conservative competitor. Together with Conway (2003) and Warner (2000), the following survey draws heavily upon: Buchanan and Conway (1996); Lamberts (1997); Kselman and Buttigieg (2003); Leonardi and Wertman (1989); Fogarty (1957); Evans (1999); and Pridham (1977).

the Christian Democratic Union-Christian Social Union (Christlich-Demokratische Union–Christich-Soziale Union: CDU-CSU), but considerably flakier in France. All parties, we should note, were almost certainly given a temporary boost by something of a post-war boom in a traditional Catholic religiosity that presumably offered some consolation for the miseries of war and occupation.

2. A real and pervasive fear of a victory (or takeover) by a militant secularist, anti-clerical, egalitarian and potentially totalitarian left.

This was a widespread – and, given, say, the communist coup in Prague in February 1948, a reasonable – anxiety all over continental Europe. Anti-communism had become commonplace in the inter-war and war years, while in the post-war years many communist parties were given a boost by their association with resistance to German occupation and/or by material assistance from a recently triumphant Soviet Union. The apparent (if evanescent) unity of those parties encouraged many to believe that only a similarly united effort could beat them back.

3. Bedrock support from a) newly-enfranchised female voters b) rural/agricultural sectors and c) the propertied middle-classes.

Although the reasons why can only be guessed at (the usual suspects are the parties' 'pro-family' rhetoric and women's relative religiosity), women, many of whom were voting for the first time in the aftermath of the war, seem to have provided significant support for the Christian Democrats. Unlike levels of Catholicity, however, there

seems to have been little variation between countries on this score. The same can be said for the other sources of core support – the so-called 'rural-middle class alliance' or 'farmer-bourgeois alliance', some of which had supported the authoritarian right in the inter-war years, but which in the post-war years helped push Christian Democracy away from a thoroughgoing social corporatism towards a more free-market economic policy, albeit one that preserved agriculture as a special case and looked to Europe to help matters.

4. Potential competitors on the right either a) de-legitimised by their participation or tacit acquiescence in totalitarian regimes or b) unwilling or unable to organise themselves rapidly.

Outside the Soviet Union, the responsibility for the crimes of the inter-war dictatorships, and indeed for the war itself, lay fairly obviously – if not always directly or completely – with the conservative right. Indeed, so heinous were those crimes, there could be little thought, at least immediately, of the 'successor parties' that more peaceful transitions to democracy have produced. However, the fact that many Christian Democratic politicians had been persecuted and imprisoned by right-wing dictatorships and/or were involved in the patriotic resistance allowed them to present themselves as moderates untainted by association with the previous regimes. In France, though, things were different. There, a centre-right alternative to Christian Democracy could have been constructed from the outset around de Gaulle had he not been reluctant to get more directly involved straight away. Little surprise, then, that the creation of the Rally of the French People (Rassemblement du peuple français:

RPF) in 1947 saw mass defections from the (Christian Democratic) Popular Republican Movement (Mouvement Républicain Populaire: MRP), whose leaders declined to 'break right' with the Rally, instead carrying on a centre-left coalition. In fact, right across Europe, the performance of Christian Democratic parties varied according to their capacity to hold onto more unambiguously right-wing electors and politicians - a capacity that varied according to institutional logic. Hence Italian Christian Democracy (Democrazia Cristiana: DC) started out well, but once it became evident that the electoral system would allow small authoritarian parties a foothold, it lost some support, although this was compensated for (as it was in Belgium until the national cleavage could be contained no longer) by essentially centrist governmentalism. The Christian Democratic Union-Christian Social Union, on the other hand, could bank on Germany's high threshold to make voting for a more radical right-wing option seem like a waste of time.

5. A church hierarchy with high prestige and centralised organisation that, at crucial early elections, threw its weight and resources behind its chosen Christian Democratic party.

Warner's (2000) valuable study reveals that the decision of the Church in some (but not all) countries to support a particular party strongly helped 'lock in' that party as the main centre-right contender, notwithstanding the fact that the choice was sometimes *faute de mieux* to start with and occasioned more than the odd regret afterwards. In Italy, once the Lateran Pacts had been re-cemented into the post-war constitution by Christian Democracy, which also engineered the exit from the

government of the left, the highly centralised and financially powerful Church ceased flirting with more authoritarian forces on the right and its mobilisation on the party's behalf, especially in 1948, was uncompromising. Similarly, the Belgian Church swung behind the Christian People's Party-Social Christian Party (Christelijke Volkspartij-Parti Social Chrétien or CVP-PSC) and effectively strangled a potential rival (the Democratic Belgian Union [Union Democratique Belge: UDB]) in its cot. In Germany, political euthanasia rather than infanticide was the order of the day: the relatively less powerful Church hierarchy was nonetheless instrumental in killing off the pre-war (Catholic) Zentrum the better to provide a sure start to the newcomer, the cross-confessional Christian Democratic Union – a party whose untainted brand seemed to offer a better chance of embedding the Church's taxation and property rights, and its welfare operations, in the post-war order. In the Netherlands the break with the pre-war tradition of political Catholicism may have been less sharp, but the material and exhortational support of bishops was almost as strong. In France, however, the Church hierarchy was, firstly, tainted by association with Vichy, secondly, hamstrung by a powerful laic tradition that made it difficult to argue against a separation of Church and state – and intervene in politics – without provoking a massive backlash, and, thirdly, in any case not the relatively centralised, unitary actor that its counterparts in other countries could claim to be. Consequently, in spite of the fact that the early signs for the Popular Republican Movement looked good, the Church hierarchy would not, and to some extent could not, support the party explicitly - a low profile approach that became all the lower once it became clear that the party would not only not give it what it wanted on crucial questions (like religious schools),

but that, unlike most of its counterparts in other European countries (at least in the early years), it was also prepared to govern in coalition with the left.

6. Support and campaigning on behalf of a Christian Democratic party by groups and associations in civil society.

If ever there was a golden age of the mass party, it was in the immediate post-war period. No less than many communist and social democratic parties, some Christian Democratic parties were part of a sub-culture and a network of associated institutions that spread the message and kept supporters loyal, although here again, there was variation between countries. Notwithstanding Mussolini, Italy's lay organisation Azione Cattolica (Catholic Action) retained branches in each of the country's 24,000 parishes that were mobilised to create the so-called Civic Committees that did direct electoral campaigning. Catholic trade unions also remained essentially loyal to Christian Democracy until the 1960s. The role of intermediary institutions in delivering welfare in Italy (and especially in the 'pillarised' societies of the Netherlands and Belgium) meant a continued role for what would now be called 'faith-based' organisations - civil society groups which, in turn, worked to keep Christian Democratic parties strong and helped them maintain support across class lines. In Germany, however, Catholic associations, even though they gradually re-assumed a role in the delivery of social and health services, had been rendered virtually defunct by the Nazi regime. Moreover, the Christian Democratic Union-Christian Social Union never developed a truly organic link with the trade union movement. In France, Catholic Action survived the war, but stood very much at arm's

length from the bishops and, fearing a backlash if it did get too involved in politics, decided to put its efforts into re-awakening the spirituality of ordinary people rather than helping a particular party. More secular interest groups, like the anti-communist, conservative farmers' federation, quickly wrote off the Popular Republican Movement after it pushed for a rationalisation of the agricultural sector, while the Christian trade union was sceptical about the party and keen to retain its autonomy.

7. A Christian Democratic party that delivers the basics to the Church but manages to achieve relative autonomy from the Church hierarchy and its more contentious policy demands.

Christian Democratic parties had to offer the Church something in return for its support but at the same time minimize the extent to which carrying out its agenda would cost them the support of non-confessional and/or moderate voters attracted primarily by the welfarist centrism of 'social Catholicism' rather than any religious zeal. This was not an easy task at first: many bishops and cardinals were seized in the immediate post-war years with an 'integralist' desire to use the state to secure Catholic hegemony and the defeat of apparently sinful modern values, while some of the Church's more contentious demands, especially on schooling, had considerable (and therefore tempting) potential to mobilise core supporters. In Italy, for instance, Christian Democracy managed to deflect Vatican pressure for an alliance with monarchists and neo-Fascists by securing the Lateran Pacts and arguing that its coalition with moderate secular parties was the best way to defeat the ultimate enemy, communism - a holding operation that bought the party enough time to get its

patronage politics up and running. In Belgium, the more conciliatory 'Christian' replaced 'Catholic' in the party's name, though its claim to be open to all those who supported its progressive, centrist social and economic policies was somewhat undermined by its willingness, during national crises over the monarchy and then over the de-confessionalisation of education, to take the Church's side. The German Christian Democratic Union-Christian Social Union, however, resisted pressure to include the 1933 concordat and the confessional school system in the basic law, believing that it would alienate the mass following a true 'people's party' on the right should be aiming for. And this more arm's length relationship with the Church was taken further – indeed probably too far – by the French Popular Republican Movement. It too saw its role as a broker or arbiter between parties trapped by economic interests and bipolar traditions; but it actively refused to offset the downsides of that role (the constant compromises, the blurred identity) with patronage politics or a continued association with the Church.

Christian Democracy in post-1989 Poland – the missing links

Only the first of these factors – a substantial, practising Roman Catholic population – appears to have been present unambiguously during the emergence of democratic, multi-party politics in the case of post-1989 Poland. Surveys taken in the early 1990s, found that 97% of Poles declared themselves to be Catholics, with nearly half of the population attending mass at least once a week, making Poland one of the strongest Catholic communities in Europe (Chan 2000: 179). Historically, the Church was felt to have played a crucial role in upholding and defending Polish national identity and

was an important focus for opposition to the communist regime (Szajkowski 1983, Monticone 1986). Moreover, from the mid-1970s, when 'only' 75% of Poles declared themselves to be Catholic, Poland experienced a religious revival, particularly following the election of John Paul II to the papacy in 1978. So there were also clear analogies with the boom in traditional Catholic religiosity that parts of Western Europe experienced in the immediate post-Second World War period. At the end of 1980s, the Church played an important role in facilitating the round-table negotiations that led to the collapse of communism and transition to democracy. All this meant that when the democratic breakthrough came in 1989 the Catholic Church was the most trusted and respected public institution in Poland.

That said, the early 1990s also saw the emergence of a secular, anti-clerical (but not totalitarian) left. The emergence of anti-clericalism was partly a reaction to the way that the Church moved quickly to expand its influence in the public sphere, especially when parties sympathetic to its agenda gained substantial parliamentary representation following the October 1991 election (Eberts 1998). The Church saw a substantial erosion of its prestige and drop in its public approval ratings combined with a feeling that it had an excessive influence on public life. The communist successor Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej: SLD) exploited this growing public anxiety about perceived excessive clerical influence as one of the springboards for its return to power following the September 1993 parliamentary election and former communist Aleksander Kwaśniewski defeated Wałęsa in the 1995 presidential election, in spite of Church's fairly open support for the incumbent. The clerical-secular divide that emerged as a major source of political divisions in Poland

in the early 1990s corresponded closely to frequency of Church attendance with regular church-goers believing that the Church should play an active role in politics and more sceptical, less devout Catholics and non-believers advocating separation of Church and state. This clerical-secular divide developed into an important and sustainable determinant of party identification and voting behaviour, and combined (and overlapped) with the closely linked factor of attitudes towards the communist past to form a 'historical-cultural' axis that dominated party competition in post-communist Poland throughout the 1990s (Grabowska 2004).

In the early 1990s, there did, therefore, appear to be both a strong potential social base for a Christian Democratic party in Poland and, given the emergence of a resurgent anti-clerical left, a clear incentive for the Church hierarchy to actively promote a party that could protect its interests. What then were the missing links that meant that such a party did not emerge?

In the first place, the social constituencies that provided the bedrock support for Western Christian Democracy were either missing in post-1989 Poland or Polish Christian Democrats faced serious electoral competition for their votes. Female voters in post-communist Poland were not necessarily any more likely to vote for Christian Democratic or Christian parties, or indeed other centre-right parties, than they were to support liberal or social democratic ones. For sure, a third of Poles lived in rural areas, with (although estimates vary on the precise figure) one-fifth of the workforce employed in agriculture, the overwhelming majority of them as peasant smallholders. This substantial rural-agricultural electorate could have provided Polish Christian

Democracy with a potential social base of support. However, unlike their Western post-war counterparts, Polish Christian Democrats faced significant competition for this electorate from the outset, from: other centre-right parties, the ex-communist/ social democratic left and, perhaps most significantly, agrarian parties. Indeed, initially it was the Polish Peasant Party, formed in 1990 as the successor to the former communist 'satellite' United Peasant Party (Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe: ZSL), that emerged as the most significant party among this segment of the electorate. The Peasant Party always remained, at root, an interest-based 'class' party wedded to a peasantist ideology, known as 'neo-agrarianism' in its modernised form, rather than a values-based (proto) Christian Democratic movement. As for Poland's middle class-bourgeois voters, their identity and their interests were by no means as clear as they had been in post-war Western Europe, particularly during the early years of the post-communist transformation. Indeed, in so far as the professional middle classes and the business community represented an objectively identifiable socio-economic constituency in the early 1990s, evidence suggests that they were as likely to vote for liberal parties (more unambiguously committed to promoting a low-tax, free market programmes), traditional conservative parties and even the social democratic left, as they were to vote for Christian Democrats.

Running counter to the fourth factor identified above, there were many other, equally credible, political alternatives to Christian Democracy available on the centre-right in post-1989 Poland. Christian Democracy was only one of many ideological currents that existed within the Solidarity movement including: conservatism, (clerical and more secular) nationalism and (social and conservative) liberalism together with a

(much weaker) social democratic strand. A plethora of new parties, therefore, emerged from within it in 1989-91. Moreover, the record of Christian Democratic activists during the communist period was a somewhat ambiguous one. True, many of the leaders of post-1989 self-declared Polish Christian Democratic parties had impeccable records of activity in the Solidarity movement and could, like their post-war West European counterparts, present themselves as untainted by association with the previous non-democratic regime. But so could many of the other party-forming elites on the centre-right, and they too were, to a greater or lesser extent, also prepared to help advance the Catholic Church's political agenda. Moreover, many of those involved in early attempts to re-activate Christian Democracy in post-communist Poland, such as the Christian Democratic-Labour Party, were linked with the collaborationist 'neo-Znak' movement, so lacked the prestige of association with the Solidarity movement. At the same time, most of the Catholic intellectuals in the more credible Tygodnik Powszechny/Znak milieu who had worked closely with the democratic opposition, such as the first non-communist premier in post-1989 Poland Tadeusz Mazowiecki, were not involved in attempts to establish Christian Democratic parties after 1989.

While, like its counterparts in post-war Western Europe, the Polish Catholic Church certainly enjoyed high prestige and had a good organisational structure, its hierarchy was unwilling to throw its moral weight and resources unambiguously behind a single pro-clerical party, Christian Democratic or otherwise, and eliminate its competitors – the fifth factor identified above. For sure, one of the reasons for the anti-clerical backlash in the early 1990s was the fact that the Church was felt to have intervened

too overtly in electoral politics, with some leading clergymen openly identifying themselves with various post-Solidarity, pro-Church parties. In fact, the closest that the Church came to an official endorsement was in the October 1991 parliamentary election, when the hierarchy at least gave the impression that it was openly supporting a number of Church parties, specifically the Christian National Union-dominated Catholic Electoral Action coalition (Rydlewski 1993: 205-9). However, there are conflicting accounts over the role that the Church played in the 1991 election, and the Episcopate's formal position, as it was in every post-1989 election, was not to identify with or support any particular parties or candidates. Moreover, the Church learnt from its mistakes in the early 1990s and the Church hierarchy maintained more disciplined neutrality in subsequent Polish parliamentary and presidential elections.[2]

In Solidarity - a large, anti-communist and strongly pro-Catholic trade union rooted in conservative social values - any putative Polish Christian Democratic party certainly had the kind of strong potential civil society ally that its counterparts in post-war Western Europe benefited from. However, unlike in post-war Western Europe, where Catholic trade unions (at least initially) threw their weight solidly behind Christian Democratic parties, Solidarity was unwilling to support or campaign on behalf of any of the 'post-Solidarity' centre-right parties, including the Christian Democratic ones. As noted above, the union decided eventually to join the post-Solidarity parties in sponsoring the formation of Solidarity Electoral Action in 1996, and then the Solidarity Electoral Action Social Movement that emerged in 1997 to take over the

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[2] Although, the Radio Maryja broadcaster continued to play a very active and controversial role in Polish electoral politics and individual clergymen campaigned openly for specific candidates and parties.

union's political functions. However, the Social Movement developed as a largely non-ideological 'party of power' at arms-length from the union. Together with the other parties that comprised the Solidarity Electoral Action coalition, it disintegrated following the 2001 election and, for its part, the union decided eventually to withdraw from electoral and party politics chastened by its bad experiences with Solidarity Electoral Action.

In some senses, the seventh and final explanatory factor identified above, that Western Christian Democratic parties delivered the basics to the Church while managing to achieve relative autonomy from the Church hierarchy and its more contentious policy demands, was simply irrelevant in the Polish case. For one thing, no self-declared Christian Democratic party ever achieved enough electoral support to find itself in a position where it could 'deliver' for the Church in this way. For another, the Church was, broadly speaking, able to achieve nearly all of its political objectives without having to 'pick a winner'. This was partly because, to a greater or lesser extent, virtually every centre-right party in post-1989 Poland stressed its commitment to Christian values and promoted policies sympathetic to the Church's social teachings and political agenda anyway. Moreover, the Church also, as Korbonski (2000: 144) put it, 'succeeded in deterring the anti-Church opposition' from attempting to roll back its gains. It was, for example, able to construct a hegemonic discourse accepted by some sections of the secular centre-left that the 1992 abortion law represented a 'compromise' solution that should not be unpicked; in spite of the fact that it was one of the most restrictive in Europe. An interesting example of the way that the Church was able to shift the terms of the political debate in its favour came during the 2003-4

negotiations on the EU constitutional treaty, when even the secular left governments led by non-believers Leszek Miller and Marek Belka made inclusion of references to Europe's Christian heritage in the treaty's pre-amble one of Poland's core negotiating demands.

Conclusion and Discussion

No self-declared Christian Democratic party has been successful in post-1989 Poland. None of the currently 'successful' Polish right wing or centre-right parties has self-consciously sought to profile itself as Christian Democratic nor do any of them fit the ideal type of an archetypal Christian Democratic party that we set out in our five-point model. A close examination of the period after the fall of the communist regime found that only the first of seven factors identified as crucial to the success of a Christian Democratic party – a substantial, practising Roman Catholic population – appeared to have been present unambiguously during the emergence of democratic, multi-party politics. A second factor – fear of a takeover by a militant secularist, anti-clerical, egalitarian and potentially totalitarian left – also existed, but only in attenuated form. None of the other five factors identified were present in Poland, or only in a very limited or qualified form. That this was the case, however, was very much a matter of agency and contingency as well as structure.

At this point, it is worth bringing in, albeit briefly, two West European countries, namely Spain and Ireland, where Christian Democracy failed to take off in anything like its archetypal form despite the fact that it might have been expected to at first

glance. In neither country, of course, were all the factors that gave rise to take off fulfilled. In Spain, for example, after years of trying to escape its close identification with the Francoist regime, the Church was not keen to re-enter politics, and in any case 'the Left in the new democracy was not openly anti-religious, nor militantly anti-clerical' (Matuschek 2004: 245-7). Consequently, the centrist Union of the Democratic Centre (Unión de Centro Democrático: UCD), which governed Spain in the first few years of democracy before being squeezed out of politics by the Socialists on the left and a transformed Francoist successor party on the right, may have temporarily subsumed self-styled Christian Democrats (many of whom eventually ended up in the aforementioned Francoist successor party); but it never convincingly nor consistently defined itself as a Christian Democratic party (Gilmour 2005). One can also argue that, as in Poland, the 'strategic errors' and 'misguided campaign(s)' of political actors unwilling to settle their differences and reconcile their ambitions, played a large part in the story (Matuschek 2004: 247). Moreover, in both Spain and Ireland, national-patriotic themes merged with Catholicism to produce a political discourse on the centre-right that in some ways precluded classical Christian Democracy: in Ireland as a reaction to British colonialism, and in Spain to the perceived desire of 'historic nationalities' to break up the country.

Finally, how do these findings feedback into our more general understanding of party formation and success? The idea that parties are produced and sustained by cleavages continues to cast a long shadow over our understanding of these phenomena. Underlying the argument is the idea that parties are institutional responses to, and expressions of, some kind of social (and often socio-economic) demand. As those

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demands, or their strength, wax and wane, then older parties lose their strength and even die off, while new parties are founded that replace, or at least eat into, their support. In the last decade or so, however, political scientists have begun to question and qualify what Panebianco (1988: 3) terms 'the sociological prejudice', possibly (if not always consciously) spurred on by the formation and development of parties and party systems in Central and Eastern Europe. The latter, after all, often cannot be readily traced back to 'cleavages' in the sense that we have come to understand them in established Western democracies. In other words, they owed as much to agency, and to institutions, as to structure.

Both our own case study from the same region and our exploration of Christian Democratic success in the post-war era confirm that this questioning and qualifying of underlying implicit assumptions is indeed warranted. Parties do not, of course, float free from society either in the abstract or in the particular. What Panebianco calls 'sponsors', institutions that link party and society and often provide material and other resources, are important: the choices of both Church and Catholic lay groups were obviously crucial to the parties studied here. But the formation and success of the latter owes much to the inter-play between those social realities, those sponsors, and the institutional and ideological crafting of entrepreneurial politicians, whether they were part of the parties we looked at or their competitors. Even if it was first pointed out to us by Schattschneider (1960) almost fifty years ago, and again by Sartori (1990[1969]) less than a decade after him, we continually need to remind ourselves that what happens (or does not happen) to parties and party systems requires a

political explanation, and one that recognises the inter-action between demand and supply.

Mair (2006: 372), in the course of a more recent piece that aims to rescue the concept of cleavages from the sociological determinism into which it has been allowed to fall, makes a similar point. Moreover, to support his position he quotes Kalyvas to the effect that 'Confessional parties were not the historically predetermined and automatic reflection of pre-existing identities and conflicts, nor were they the emanation of structural, economic, or political modernization. They were instead a contingent outcome of the struggle among various organizations facing a multitude of challenges under tight constraints'. The 'non-occurrence' or 'failure' of a viable Christian Democratic party in post-communist Poland, every bit as much as the appearance and success of such parties in some countries in post-war Western Europe, illustrates the essential truth of that important observation.

This same combination of agency and constraint also means that parties try hard to adapt to and even to shape circumstances that are by no means all of their own making. In order to survive and even prosper in countries like Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands, Christian Democratic parties have had to move on from the archetype in the last decade or so. Even if it is too early to say that they have metamorphosed into secular conservative parties (Gerard and Van Hecke 2004: 308-12; Duncan 2006), both individual Christian Democratic parties and transnational party family groupings have attempted to cope in a more secular, market-driven age by adopting a more ideologically flexible and organisationally expansive approach.

This 'moving target' raises an obvious contemporary question, namely to what extent do those centre-right parties that are currently successful in Poland resemble not the 'classic' archetype that we discuss here but instead the arguably attenuated version that exists in twenty-first century Western Europe? Although this is a question beyond the scope of this paper, it is one that merits further research.

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