

Persistent effects of diversity: Antisemitism and attitudes toward EU integration in Poland

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Motivation

"The past is never dead. It's not even past."
 William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun*

- How do historic legacies shape political preferences?
- What explains the persistence and change of group identities over time?

Interwar Poland: > 30% of population is non-Polish, interethnic competition, anti-Jewish pogroms.

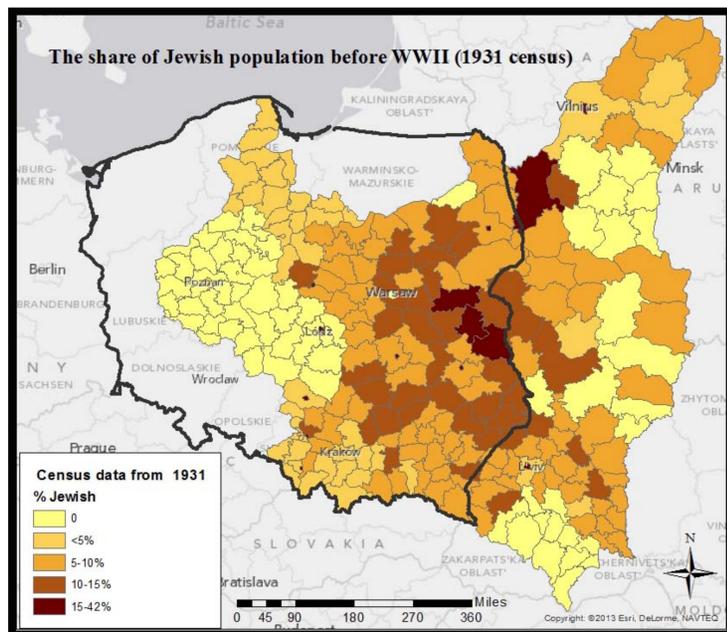
Post-WWII Poland: homogeneous state, Jewish population fell from 3.5 million (1939) to 55 thousand (1945).

But does history of interethnic tensions matter once the minorities are removed?

Test case: EU integration attitudes.

Motivation: Post-1989 debate between "Polonophiles" and "Europhiles" promoting alternative identity conceptions. The far right stoked antisemitism to generate opposition to the EU.

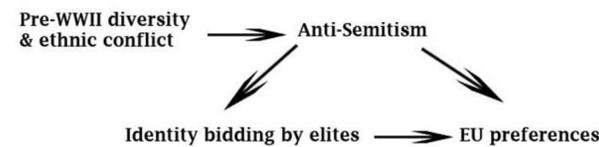
Jewish Population in Poland before WWII



Distribution of Jewish population (1931 census) - legacy of the Pale of Settlement, beyond which Russian empire prohibited Jews to settle.

Theory

Argument: the effects of identity primes strategically deployed by political elites are mediated by historically grounded identities. The claims that the European project is driven by the Jewish capital and threatens Polish identity resonated only with the population remembering conflict with the Jews.

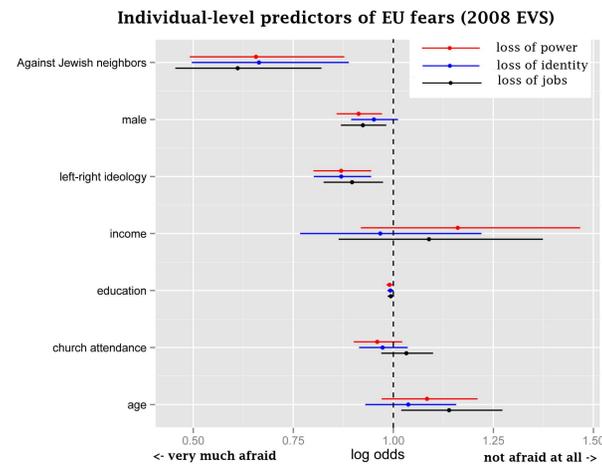


Group identity most likely to shape policy preferences given (a) uncertainty (e.g., limited experience with the market economy) and (b) fit of identity (in 2003, the far right claimed EU & 'cosmopolitanism' == 'Jewish').

Hypotheses:

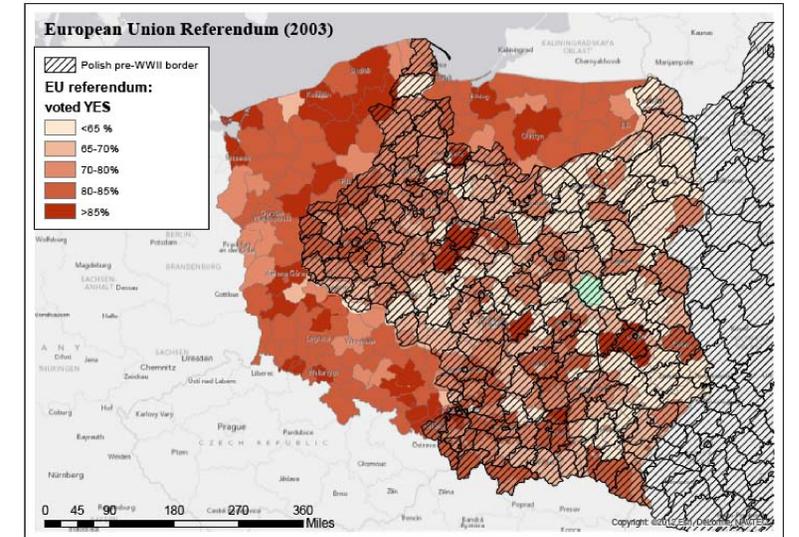
- H_1 : Anti-Semitism will be associated with beliefs that the EU threatens Polish identity and culture.
- H_2 : The share of pre-WWII Jewish population at the county level (proxy for the level of outgroup threat) will be negatively associated with support for EU integration in 2003
- H_A : Costs & benefits of accession (edu, skill level, urbanization).

Individual-level data: EVS (2008)



DV: Some people may have fears about the building of the EU...For each tell me if you - personally - are currently afraid of: (A) The loss of national identity and culture; (B) A loss of power in the world for Poland; (C) The loss of jobs in Poland.

County-level analysis: anti-EU vote in 2003



Comparison of 220 Polish counties:

- DV: % voted against EU integration (2003)
- IV: % Jewish in 1931 (last census before WWII)
- Controls: % urban, % unemployed, % with university degree, log(per capita income), % foreign (2002 census).

Finding: Residents of counties with sizable pre-WWII Jewish populations are significantly more likely to oppose EU accession today (Coef=0.218**). Historic legacies seem to affect receptivity of the population to the far rights' antisemitic claims.

Interestingly, high EU support in the resettled regions - comprised of the various proportions of population from Central and Eastern Poland, - points to the role of social ties in preserving group identity. By fragmenting communities, migration is likely to contribute to the erosion of some cultural memories and the formation of new ones.

Conclusions and extension

- Historically-grounded explanation for the differences in the receptiveness to European identity in Poland.
- Attitudes formed in the past are remarkably persistent and continue to affect political preferences today.
- Next step: survey experiment to test whether identity/historical memories moderate the effects of ethnocentric primes.