

Religiosity and Left-Right Self-placement in Europe. Three Decades of Evolution *

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* Draft. Comments most welcome. Please do not quote or cite without permission of authors.

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Summary:

Any analysis of the influence of ideology in politics should take into account its links to religiosity. But, is this relation maintained over time? On what individual or collective factors depends? In this paper we answer these questions using a large sample of 33 European countries from the European Values Study (EVS) and the Party Manifestos Project. We do so from a longitudinal perspective, paying attention to their development since the early 1980's until the late 2000's, considering a complex religious factor defined by five different dimensions, and from a comparative focus, evaluating the importance of the context in the selected countries.

KEYWORDS: EUROPE – RELIGIOSITY – IDEOLOGY

1. Defining left and right.

Ideology, expressed in terms of “left” and “right”, is one of the keys to understand the complex European political reality. These terms were coined after the convening of the French States General of 1789 (Laponce, 1981:47-48; Mair, 2007). From that moment on, left-right scheme interacted and integrated successive political conflicts and was strategically adapted to each historical moment (Laponce, 1981:47 -55). Since the industrial revolution and especially from mid-nineteenth century, anti-clerical positions and the defence of workers’ interests were clearly linked to the left, while the right was connected to the representation of the most religious people and the ruling classes (Laponce, 1981:53). After World War I, these terms acquired a renewed momentum, when left absorbed the projects of the social democracy and Communism, while political right frame the conservative projects, including Christian-democrats and authoritarian ones (Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990; Knight 2006).

At the present time, “left” and “right” are associated with two big belief systems that present alternative views about collective action and distribution of economic resources and power among political community (Lipset et al. 1954; Downs 1957 quoted by Kroh 2007: 205). According to this assertion, left has been primarily linked to the idea of social equality (Bobbio 1996, Corbetta et al 2009), usually

taking shape on the notions of progress, revolution and redistributive economic policies. On the contrary, the right is related to the idea of hierarchy and continuity of the established order, linking itself to conservative proposals and with the no interference with property rights and inequality generated by the same lack of meddling (Laponce 1981, Schmitt and van der Eijk 2009, Zechmeister, 2006). Although each pole claims its universal validity defending the common good, each one supports a particular vision of the world that pretends to represent the interests of different social groups (Laponce, 1981; Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976; Knutsen 1995: 67). In accordance to this idea, traditional cleavages presented by Lipset and Rokkan in 1967, would have shaped the meanings of left and right, so the location of individuals in those cleavages could be crucial (Alford 1967, Rose and Urwin, 1970, Lijphart 1979, Campbell 1980, Freire 2006).

At this point, a question arises: are individuals consistent in their ideological locations with their social membership? Or, in other words, to what extent do other factors influence political self-perceptions? One of the main contributions in this regard is laid down by Ronald Inglehart and Hans Dieter Klingemann (1976). In their work *“Party Identification, Ideological Preference, and the Left-Right Dimension among Western Mass Publics”* they considered the determinants of the self-placement on the ideological scale. With a synoptic vocation, they provided an organized and empirical approach, identifying three main components that structure the locations in this scheme: a component linked to the situation of individuals in the social structure, another linked to value systems and a final one related to party identification. Those three components, that systematize many of the factors identified as influential in the political orientations but no specific analysis has been monograph focused on the specific impact of religiosity in left-right divisions, and

certainly none has taken into account the complexity of the religious phenomenon. Here we briefly describe these three elements that Inglehart and Klingemann developed, and its relationship with religious aspects.

The first factor to which we refer is that of social structure, intimately linked to the Lipset and Rokkan's model of cleavages. According to their theory, early social divisions would have crystallized in stable parties systems in Europe. Specifically, they referred to those divisions between working class and owners, between religious and non religious (or between Protestants and Catholics, depending on the context), between the rural and the urban, and finally, between centre and periphery. However, during last decades some processes, as secularization and social mobility and fragmentation, would have a negative impact on the saliency of these social divisions on politics (Franklin 1984, Dalton 1996, Kitschelt 1993, Dogan 1995, Nieuwebeerta y Ultee 1999).

In our analysis we consider basically the goldthorpeian definition of social classes (Goldthorpe, 1980) operationalized in seven groups (Andersen and Heath, 2002; Nieuwebeerta, de Graaf y Ultee, 2000), as a proxy of the social class cleavage devised by Lipset and Rokkan. We also control by gender, age, cohort, marital status and education. However, special attention is paid to the religious cleavage, main independent variable of our analysis. Even if we consider religiosity part of this first factor –social structure–, as our first concern is to analyze the impact of religiosity on voting, religious indicators will be analyze as an independent group in our analysis, as we will describe later.

Measuring religiosity is not a simple task. As Martin Feldkircher (1998) argues, “to measure religiosity means to measure value orientations in the sense of a latent,

not directly observable, social construct (...) and one can find innumerable aspects of religiosity which differ considerably with regard to the operationalisation of these relevant constructs (p.87)”. In spite of some indicators that invite scholars to change their perceptions of religiosity and the way they measure it, as the apparent resurgence of “individual” or “private” manifestations of religiosity in some contexts, the low levels of mass attendance in most of the European countries, and the necessity of indicators that able comparable analysis, church attendance is still the main indicator of religiosity on electoral behaviour literature. Despite of the broad empirical support of this approach and its demonstrated applicability in different contexts (Jagodzinski and Dobbeleare 1995, Knutsen 1995, Van der Eijk 2005, Feldkircher, 1998), other areas of the social sciences have debated about the necessity of using different religious indicators (Manza and Wright, 2003: 299, Esmer and Petterson, 2007). We will use a set of them in order to avoid a naive vision of the concept, what will let us measure different elements offering a more accurate definition of religiosity in current Europe: behaviour, identity, beliefs, individual religiosity, and, finally, institutional religiosity, described in more detail in the following lines (more information about the variables used, their wording or answer categories in the annex B).

The behavioural component. Many authors have highlighted the utility of the frequency of attendance to religious services as an indicator of religious intensity and integration (Jagodzinski and Dobbeleare 1995:86; Manza y Brooks, 1999; Montero, Calvo y Martínez, 2008: 30). Regular contact with religious discourses in churches has an important influence on the behaviour of those who listen to them and could be an expression of a high level of commitment and time investment (Calvo y Montero, 2002: 2). However, the use of this variable is not exempt from

criticism. The different confessions do not emphasize the same on the duty to attend public services. In fact, weekly church attendance is a primary mandate only for Catholics. To avoid this problem, some scholars have included in their analysis indicators that measure also the frequency of praying in the private sphere (Esmer and Petterson, 2007; Kotler-Berkowitz, 2001). Our goal here is to test if praying frequency, as an indicator of an alternative religious practice, may also be associated with political identity as church attendance is.

The identification component. The religious cleavage has two components: the denominational community to which a person belongs to and the strength of that link (Bean, 1999:552; Dalton, 1999:177; Knutsen, 2004:98). By the use of this indicator our goal is to measure the first element. Despite this indicator does not necessarily imply commitment with religious institutions, considering oneself as belonging to a particular religious confession is the best proxy to locate individuals in the cleavage. This indicator has been revealed as one of the best religious indicators to explain electoral behaviour in Europe (Knutsen, 2004)², especially dominant in catholic and mixed countries, where the incidence of the religious/secular and catholic/protestant divisions is more intense. According to this idea, and attending to the European reality, we distinguish between the individual adscription to the main religious confessions (Catholic, Protestant, Muslim and Orthodox) or to the group of citizens that does not belong to any³.

Beliefs. An additional indicator of intimate aspects of religion is the acceptance of religious dogmas. This indicator is not exempt from an institutional apex, given that

² Also in the U.S. (.Kelly and Kelly 2005, Jones-Correa and Leal 2001, Hertel y Hughes 1987).

³ In next sections, we will analyze the impact of the contextual level, considering the main religious denomination of the country –mainly catholic countries, mainly protestant countries, mainly orthodox countries and mixed countries-.

accepting the principles on which the faith of a certain denomination is shaped, could be understood as a high degree of agreement with. Nevertheless, there is no clear consensus in the literature on the influence of these more intimate aspects of religion on ideology or voting behaviour (for a more in depth about this, see Jagodzinski and Dobbeleare 1995:80; Manza and Brooks, 2004; Esmer and Petterson, 2007; Knutsen, unpublished). In this chapter we will consider the belief in *dogmas* shared by the majority of confessions: the existence of God, heaven, life after death and hell.

Individual religiosity. Nevertheless, secularization is understood also as a process of change towards a more individual and spiritual religiosity (Turner, 1991). Thus, the need for indicators that reflect these changes in personal spirituality and private religiosity has been highlighted. Specifically, the "importance of God in Life" is considered in literature as an excellent instrument to measure individual religiosity (Norris and Inglehart, 2004; Esmer and Petterson, 2007), together with the importance of religion in life. Such indicators are particularly useful: both refer to the centrality of religion in the personal sphere, thereby allowing us to analyze whether if these aspects are correlated with rightist positioning in political scale, between individuals of different faiths, regardless of their dogmas, moral guidance and commitment to assisting liturgical rituals.

The institutional religiosity. Evaluations of Church, unions or corporations, would be better framed better within other values. However, we need to control and analyze separately the effect of this evaluation. In words of Chaves (1994: 750), "secularization is best understood not as the decline of religion, but as the declining scope of religious authority". According to the author, secularization in Europe is not the cause of the loss of trust in religious institutions but its origin. So, the level

of trust in Church is mainly a proxy to the changes in religious authority. The loss of moral authority over society would be accompanied by a loss of the capacity of religion to influence both the public sphere and private life of individuals. In these pages we use the level of trust in religious institutions as a proxy to analyze the change in religious authority. The loss of moral authority over society would be accompanied by a loss of the capacity of religion to influence both the public sphere and private life of individuals.

These five distinct components of religiosity could lead us to think on problems of endogeneity. Nevertheless, it is not a big issue to our analysis because through them we can more precisely measure the religious phenomenon in Europe with different religious experiences and ways to live spirituality. As said before, church attendance is not enough to define religiosity. Moreover in a world in which religiosity cannot be measure by paying attention to the public sphere. Considering the complexity of the religious factor, we use these five components as a better way to understand this social factor and no matter how correlated these components but how a complex religiosity explains citizens' left-right self-placement.

After social structure, the second factor that explains positions in the left-right scale mentioned by Inglehart and Klingemann is the social values. Since ideologies systematize sets of beliefs and values, individuals may use the latter as a reference to settle them at the schema. This postulation is based on the idea that value systems precede and shape political orientations (Greenstein, 1975) or behaviour (Layman and Carmines, 1997) or, as it was noted by Knutsen (1995), their stability over time would make them suitable to reflect a generalized political position. Values are phenomena that are not directly observable; nevertheless, they represent an extraordinary relevance in politics. Some authors pointed out the relevance of

values on voting behaviour (Schwartz, 1994; Barnea and Schwartz, 1998; Barnea, 2003; Caprara et al., 2006). Specifically, and using attitudes as proxies for values, they showed that attitudes about the degree of governmental intervention in the economy and on the liberal-conservatism dimension structure the political competition in Europe. In fact, the analysis of the influence of values on ideology have usually required of constructs that enable us to study them from an empirical point of view. They have been very often operationalized on the basis of preferences and attitudes (Campbell, et al., 1960), as the assessment of the role of the Government in economy (Downs, 1957), or the degree of prominence of the private sector or the level of agreement with social equality (Crewe et. al. 1983, Lijphart 1984, Huber 1989; Corbetta et al. 2009). Also attitudes towards aspects related to religious conservatism are considered when analyzing values. “(...) Religion continues to play an influential role for voter choice (...) because it reflects deeply held human values”. (Knutsen, unpublished: 1).

In regard to values, we have included a selection of indicators to sum up every aspect described above. Firstly, we considered a set of indicators concerning conservative values: justification of behaviors like homosexuality, divorce, euthanasia, suicide and abortion. As literature has demonstrated, conservative attitudes related to tradition are strongly correlated with left-right self-positioning on the political scale. Although we are aware that some churches debate on this issues declaring their “official” position on these matters, and that these attitudes are strongly correlated with religiosity, conservative attitudes are not considered here as an “appendix” of religiosity. This is because we consider that they are not exclusively related with religious affairs, as could be the debates on the conflict over mosques, the freedom of worship or the presence of crucifixes in classrooms.

Moreover, nonreligious individuals can share, for example, the rejection of homosexuality or abortion.

Secondly, we introduce issues connected with some of the most influential values on ideological self-identification and political competition (Schwartz, 1994). As some scholars argued, those located on the right were more likely to defend freedom in opposition to equality, accept hierarchy and safeguard the societal status (Laponce 1981, Schmitt and van der Eijk 2009, Zechmeister, 2006; Thorisdottir et al 2007). Issues chosen to measure these values are Government's responsibility to ensure welfare, attitudes towards competition, respect for authority, and confidence in police. Lastly, in order to analyze the influence of new issues on ideology, we also included some variables like the willingness to pay to protect the environment, the preference for male employment over female in case of shortage, and a version of Inglehart's Postmaterialism Index (Inglehart, 1971)⁴. By doing so, our goal is testing to what extent the emergence of new post-materialist values in European societies (Inglehart, 1990) are integrated in the left-right schema (Knutsen, 1995).

Here we deal with potential problems of endogeneity. Social groups, defined by cleavages, promote values systems and obtain different evaluations. At this point, André Freire (2006) assess that attitudes towards institutions representing the interests of these groups - like churches, trade unions or corporations –should be considered as an identity component of the social factors. However, we consider that these attitudes should be better framed within the range of values systems. These evaluations do not reflect membership nor self-awareness –in the sense stated in Bartolini's definition of cleavage (2000: 16-17)-, and, the most important,

⁴ The Silent Revolution in Post-Industrial Societies. In: American Political Science Review 65: 991-1017).

we are interested in to what extent individuals share attitudes –or values-, *independent* of their social position. They should not replace the empirical elements that refer social divisions. The same way that a favourable position toward redistribution policies does not replace or complement objective indicators of class divisions, a great sympathy towards unions should not too.

The third and last factor that Inglehart and Klingemann solidly tied to the location in the scheme is party identification. Party identification refers to emotional bonds that people have with political parties developed by individuals in their political socialization (Butler and Stokes, 1969; Converse, 1969; Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976; Berglund et al., 2005). Parties locate themselves in the left-right scheme, so, their identified voters could use these references to establish their own positions. They are even comparable to the bonds that link individuals and their religious identification (Miller and Shanks 1996: 120-1). Partisanship in Europe has a remarkable cognitive component based in political values and issue positions that leads to prefer a particular party. Supporters present more stable beliefs and values systems in countries where cleavage parties are dominant. But again what is needed here is to determine to what extent individuals' partisanship is an influential factor, *regardless* of both the place they occupy in the social structure or the value systems they share. The lack of suitable data for this indicator has made us use "vote intention in the next parliamentary elections" as a proxy for partisanship. This is far from optimal. Partisanship has two main components –attitude and self-identification (Greene 2002) - and vote intention does not fit as an indicator of either. We take this into account in the assessment of the results.

2. How much of religiosity can be found in ideological self-identification?

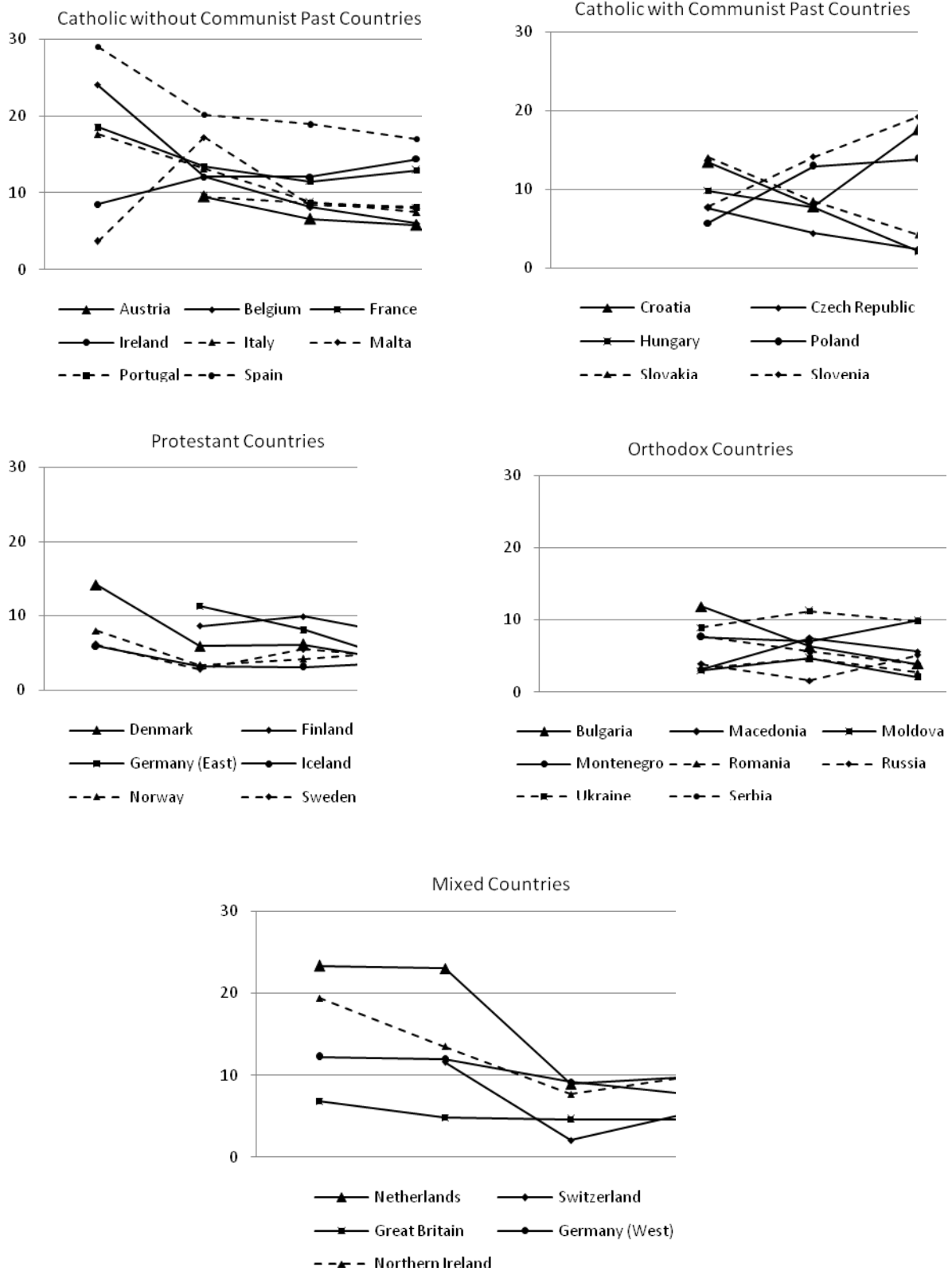
As we said before, we use data from the European Values Study database (EVS) with a longitudinal perspective. To do this, we have organized waves in separate periods of approximately 10 years each, depending of data availability. These waves were renamed into four groups, depending on the beginning of the nearest decade (1980s, 1990s, 2000s and 2010s), although reference years do not always match exactly the year in which these data were collected. Those countries for which we do not have at least three observations and those for which many of the key variables were not available were excluded. As a result, Greece, Belarus and Turkey were dropped, maintaining 33 countries in the final selection.

As previous research highlighted and our own results demonstrate, there is a positive association between ideology and religious indicators (Norris and Inglehart, 2004: 201- 8). In order to better show its effects on ideology we decided to separate religiosity from the other social factors. But it does not mean that we consider it apart from those pointed out by Lipset and Rokkan. Because our research is focused on the relation between religiosity and left-right self-placement we considered that it had to be remarked separated from the rest of factors. As a result of this association, we present in Table A2 the R squared resulted from a linear regression model based on least squares approach in which our dependent variable is individual's ideological self-placement on the left-right axis, and our independent variable is the religiosity measure by the set of religious components defined in previous section –religious practice, identification, private, beliefs, institutionalization.

As shown in Figure 1, explained variance in certain waves and countries exceeds 10 per cent, while in some cases exceed 20 per cent, which indicates a significant impact of the religious component. In the graphical representation of results, we have distinguished between Catholic countries with and without communist past. This division allows us to observe two very different patterns. In countries without communist past, there is a drop in the relationship between religiosity and ideology during the eighties. However, this relationship becomes stable since then, varying from just under 20 points in Spain and just over 5 in Austria. In countries with communist past, the level of explanation begins in 1980s with values around 10 percent and thereafter experiences an increase in Croatia, Slovenia and Poland, countries that in 2010 record similar values to those of countries without communist past.

Orthodox and Protestant countries suffer a similar evolution between 1990 and 2010. Although between 1980 and 1990 Protestant countries show a decline in values -for Orthodox countries there are no observations for these years-, the evolution is very stable since then, with values below 10 percent of the explanation of the individual ideology. In mixed countries, the fall is more prominent than is for Protestants, although in 2010 some countries seem to show a slight recovery or a stabilisation of the correlation between religiosity and ideology.

Figure 1: Variance explained by religion on left-right positioning in Europe, 1980-2010.



Therefore, it seems that religion still has an important influence on individual ideology, especially in Catholic countries. Although between the 1980s and 1990s, appears to be widespread trend toward a lower correlation between religion ideology in all denominational groups, this seems to remain constant or experiences slight signs of recovery since then in almost all countries. This seems to point out that in spite of the Secularization process, religiosity has an impact on political sphere, and potentially on vote. This influence is growing in Eastern European countries, where levels of religiosity in 1980's were especially low, and where religious divisions was supposed to had been vanished during the communist era.

As our study of the relation between ideology and religiosity includes other factors, it is necessary to highlight how they interact as determinants of left-right positions. There are factors that absorb the influence of religiosity on ideology and previous analysis showed that countries such as Spain, France, the Netherlands and Northern Ireland where religiosity has a remarkable influence when no other factors are considered but its weight drops dramatically when other social factors, value systems or partisanship are considered. This indicates that these additional factors would have absorbed or subsumed the effect of religiosity. Quite the opposite occurs in some of the new democracies such as Bulgaria, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, where religiosity contributes in a low or moderate level even after including these key aspects of Inglehart and Klingemann model. That means that, in these countries, the effects of religiosity on the ideological positioning of citizens are relatively independent of other factors.

To test this point, we profoundly examined how the impact of religion decreases once these other factors came into play. As shown in Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5, the greater the direct impact of partisanship, the greater the reduction in variance explained by religiosity. Its direct impact is clearly reduced, especially in the wave of 2010, and although this does not occur in all countries, neither with the same intensity, we certainly find a clear trend.

Nevertheless, what is more striking is the strength of its relationship with the variance explained by the value systems. That is, the greater the direct impact of value systems, the more effect of religiosity is absorbed. Therefore, we must indicate that in a multivariate model both value systems and partisanship “stole” the impact of religiosity on ideology. This point is plausible because, as it was noted before, in the values systems we have included not only issues concerning the role of government, respect for authority or postmaterialism, but also attitudes such as abortion, divorce or euthanasia, that are subject of strong religious controversy, especially with Catholic Church.

Figure 2: Wave 1990

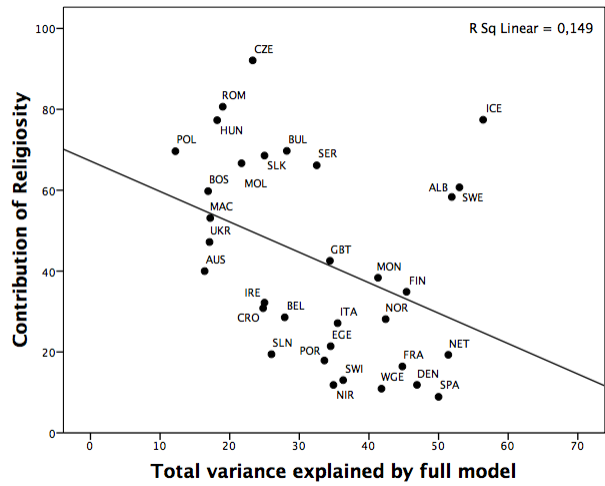
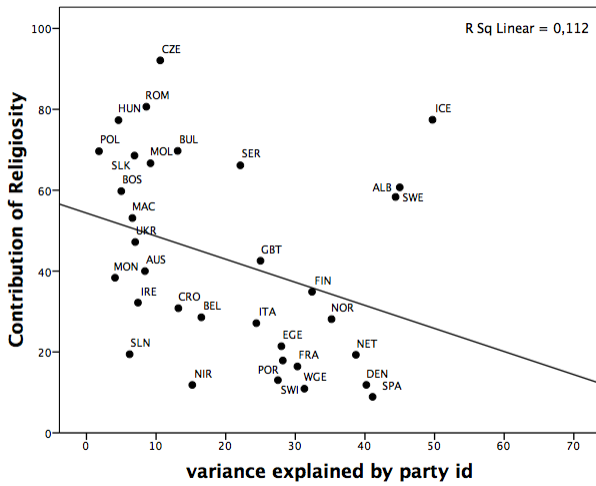
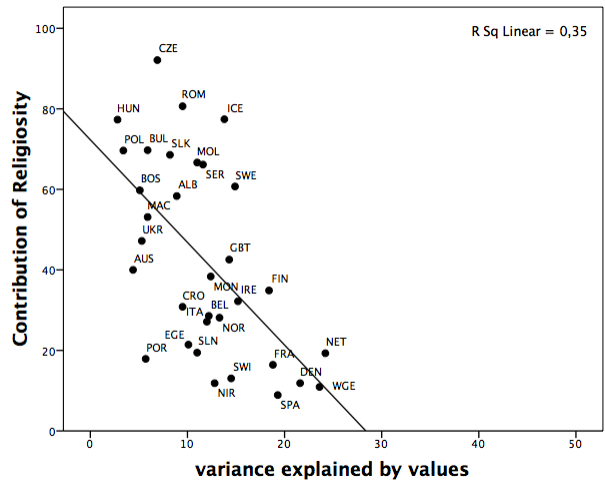
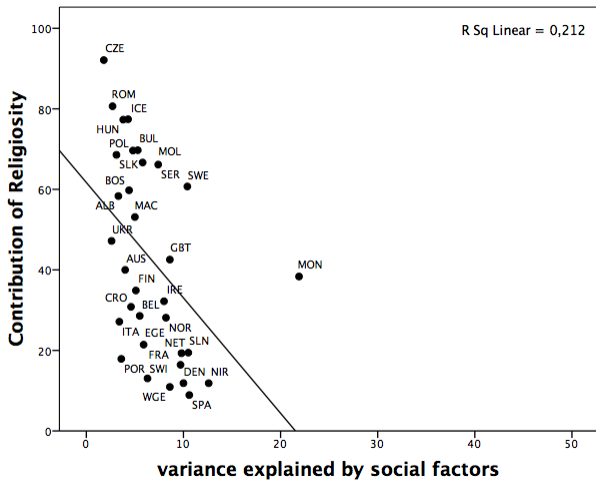


Figure 3: Wave 2000

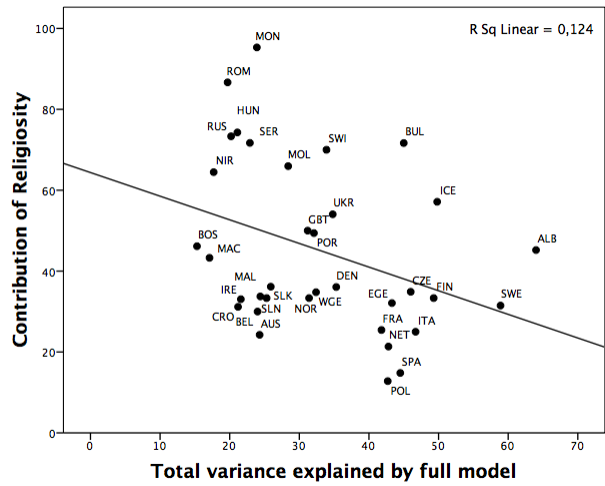
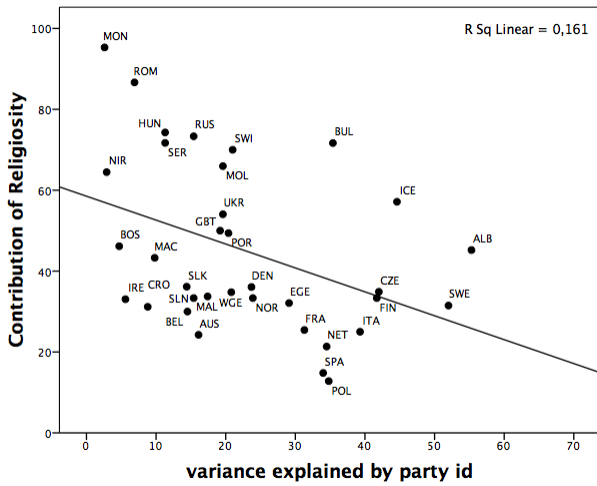
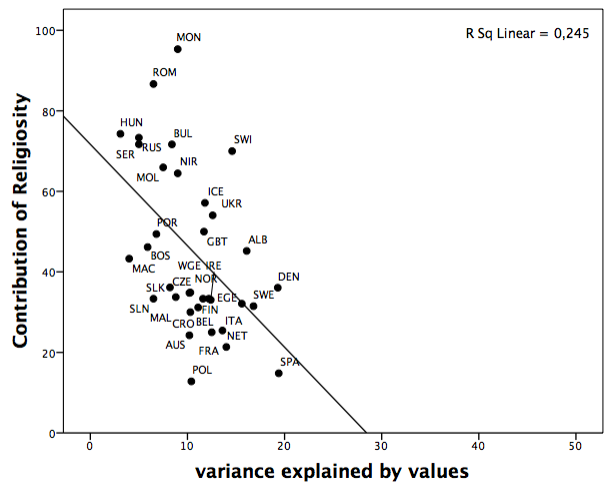
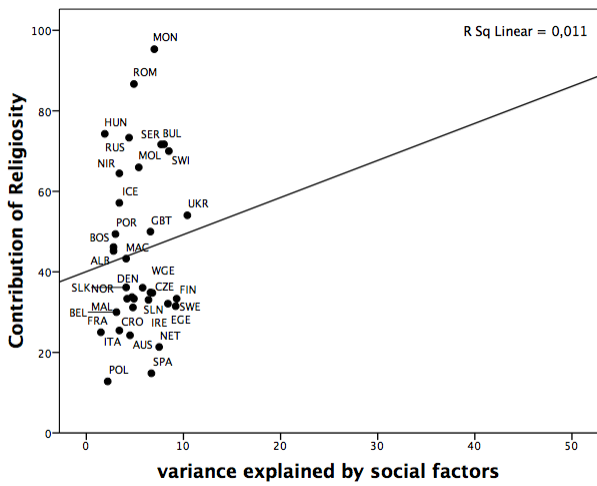
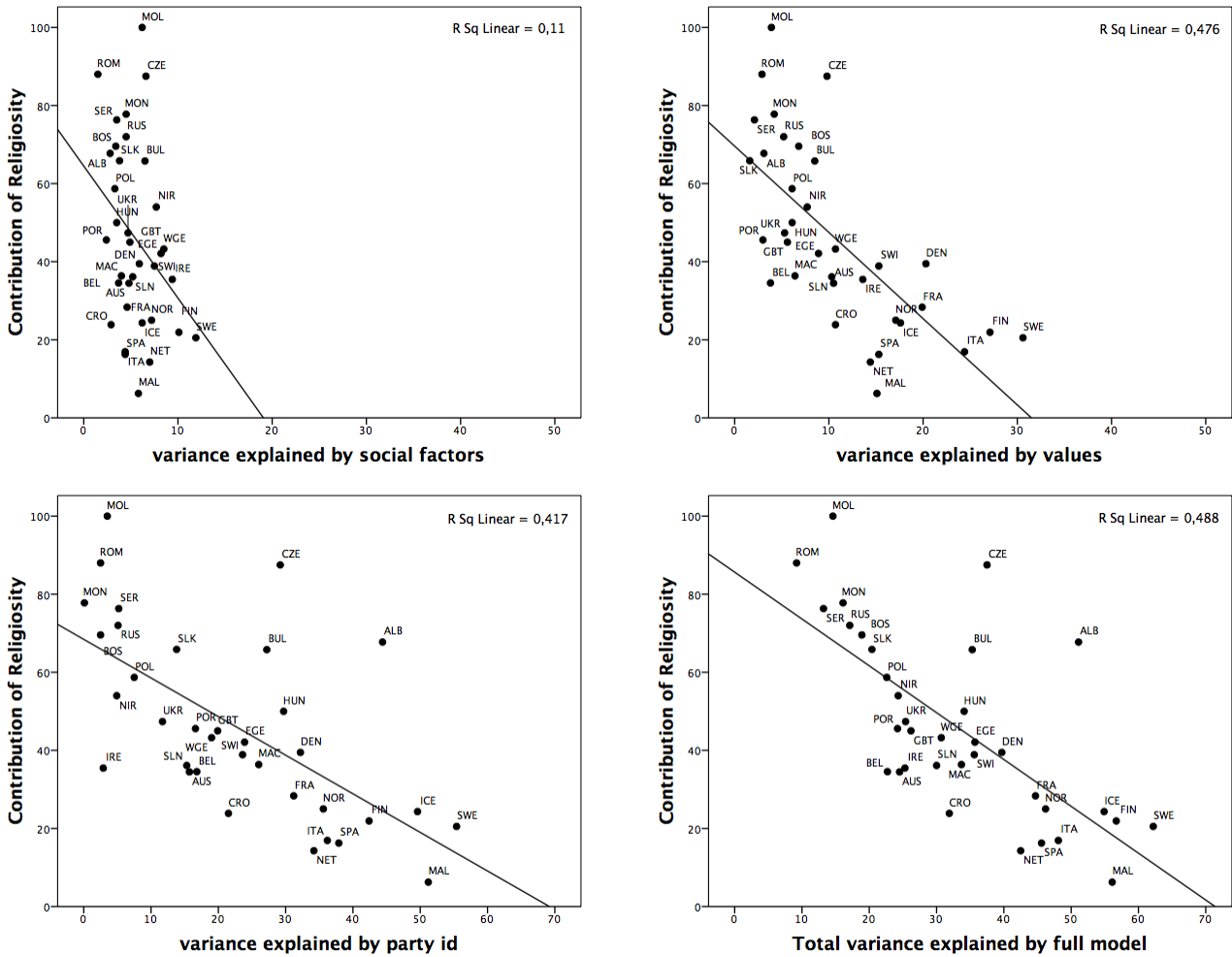


Figure 4: Wave 2010



In the next section we delve into to what extent the circumstances of each country are useful to understand the differences on the ideological positioning of Europeans. Specifically, we will deal with the impact of party supply, the country's majority religion, as well as the effects of being citizen of a new democracy of Eastern Europe.

3. The importance of the context.

In spite of the cultural changes in the Continent, the religious phenomenon maintains a certain influence on the European's ideological positions. However, as we highlighted, the strength of this link changes among countries, but, is there any macro process that could share light on this matter? Is it possible and plausible to develop general guidelines that help us to improve our explanation using country-level information?

At this point, the traditional linear regression is not enough because all individual data is considered to have the same context. This could lead us to spurious results what has been called "the atomistic fallacy". Equally, paying attention only to aggregate data will make us fall in the "ecological fallacy" (Hox, 1995, 1998). With the goal of avoiding these fallacies we use the same sample of 33 European countries and the same linear regression model that was described in the preceding section with a fundamental change: in this occasion we have used Hierarchical Analysis introducing a second level of analysis with specific information at country level. Including aggregate variables to our previous analysis, we intended to improve and advance in the explanation of ideological self-placement, especially to clarify why in some countries ideology and religiosity are closer than in others.

Attending to what has been shown, it is essential to establish some contextual mediators between ideology and religion that help to share light in this complex relationship that has not been deeply studied from a comparative perspective. But the lack of literature in this matter does not let us to present a clear and agreed set

of arguments to explain it. So, which are these key elements that could mediate in the relationship between religiosity and ideology in Europe?

3.1. Religion and politics in the new democracies of Eastern Europe.

As we observed, the impact of religion in many of the new Eastern democracies appears to have its own characteristics. A short democratic experience means a lower level of development of the partisan component: the lack of familiarity with political parties and their minor consolidation in these contexts could enhance both the leaders and the citizens to use social divisions as factors of electoral mobilization and political orientation (Brader y Tucker, 2001; Enyedi 2006; Van der Brug et al. 2008; Rico, 2010; Mainwaring and Torcal, 2006), specifically religious divisions (Lewis, 2000; Medina, 2010). In addition, the authoritarian policies of the Communist Governments, and especially its religious policies, may have contributed to this differential pattern. We shall remember that these governments tended to have considerable religious intervention (Van der Brug et al. 2008; Froese 2001), in some cases adopting policies of suppression of religion –like in Albania and the countries of the former USSR-, or policies of control and/or subordination of Churches by the State. This control was more successful with Orthodox and Protestants religious elites, but failed with Catholics (Gautier 1997; Froese, 2001), much more hostile probably due to its supranational organization under the direction of the Vatican (Gautier 1997), to the strength of its social networks and doctrinal positions (Mendelsohn and Nadeau, 1997), and its relationship with national identity (Gautier 1997). Therefore, in our analysis we will consider not only the membership to the bloc of countries of former communist Eastern Europe, but also we shall consider their interaction with the majority religious denomination in these countries, as we will see in next paragraph.

3.2. Religious characteristics of the country.

The diverse forms of expression of religion in each country may have a certain influence on the positions of individuals. As we have seen, countries with strong ethnic and religious divisions can also express these divisions in terms of left and right. Moreover, as we have showed, in countries with a majority of Catholics –but not too hegemonic-, the relationship between religiosity and ideology tends to be more robust. The literature has demonstrated that religious denomination is specially correlated to ideology in catholic and mixed countries, especially where this “mix” includes catholic groups (Knutson, 2004: 100). Therefore, we shall introduce a variable that will concrete whether the country is predominantly Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox, or whether we can consider mixed⁵.

On the other hand, religious denominations have impact on the development of secularization in Europe, making a difference both at inception as the speed of the process. The secularization process *per se* can have a remarkable influence. In the most secularized countries, religiosity has become a phenomenon of limited social and political relevance. On the contrary, some authors argue that secularization doesn't mean a decrease in the association between religion and vote. *“The assumption in most discussions has been that secularization will produce a declining impact of religion on political preference. But this need not necessarily be the case. In countries where secularization has proceeded furthest, voters who retain their religious identity may oppose other aspects of secularization processes, showing increasing political differences in comparison to non-religious voters”*

⁵ When none of the religious denominations of the country reaches the 60% of the total denominated population, the country is considered “mixed”.

(Nieuwbeerta, Brooks and Manza, 2006). We contrast these points using the percentage of the population that does not recognize any religious denominations.

3.3. Country's political supply.

As we noted earlier, the left-right ideology is a useful tool to simplify the political universe, this is why this instrument may be more useful when the context is more complex. Diverse studies have agreed that in a context of increasing fragmentation and polarization, ideology plays a key role in the management and overview of a complex political supply (Van der Eijk, et al., 2005). As different studies have pointed out (Van der Eijk, et al., 2005: 178; Medina 2010; Rico, 2010), the relationship between ideology and partisanship –the variable with more explanatory weight - is more intense in polarized contexts, which could detract explanatory power to religiosity. By contrast, ideology will be less useful in contexts where the party supply is more limited and where the relevant parties are not clearly opposed in terms of left-right (Van der Eijk, et al., 2005: 178). In these cases, citizens must use other criteria, as religion, to approximate the partisan supply in a very simple and efficient way. On the contrary, some others argued that a more complex context would “increase the magnitude of the association between social positions and party choice” (Evans and De Graaf 2011, unpublished, p.1). In our analysis, we have considered both, level of polarization and fragmentation in Parliament, using the Party Manifestos Project data.

Furthermore, it is likely that the electoral supply plays a central role determining these locations. After all, parties orientate citizens through their messages, and partisanship has proved the most efficient predictor of individual positioning in

almost all countries surveyed. The average ideology of the Parliament has been introduced in the analysis, weighting the result by the size of every party.

Finally, the last item we considered in order to explain the greater or less complexity of the context is that, the existence of parties that define themselves as religious -or Christian-Democrats or Social-Christians- in Parliament, as this allows the voter to establish a direct and clearer relationship between religiosity and ideology.

We aim to determine the influence of these contextual factors on the efficiency of the outlined models in previous sections. This is, the extent to which we can reduce the error terms using information about the context in which individuals live. To establish the importance of each of the contextual variables, we compare the results of the model with a single level - the same presented in Table 2- with the models in which we have added this aggregate level information. Essentially, our purpose is to determine what elements of the second level contribute the most to improve the model to estimate the left-right self-placement of the citizens.

First line of Table 3 shows the explained variance of ideology with a level-1 model (exactly the same than tables 1 and 2). Then, we evaluate the influence of the contextual level variables one by one (results shown in second to seventh rows). In contrast to our hypothesis, we do not observe an improvement in the explanation of ideology when we consider neither party fragmentation nor the presence of religious parties in the Parliament. According to our hypothesis, citizens would perceive a clearer relation between religion and ideology in party systems with the presence of religious parties, but data does not support this assumption. Fragmentation of the Parliament, as an indicator of complexity of the context does

not show a relation with a better explanation of ideology by religion. The degree of secularization neither helps to improve our models.

In contrast, the level of polarization of the Parliament seems to make a contribution, although it is quite modest. It would seem that, on less polarized parliaments, there are a more clear relation between ideology and religion. This could be because, when many of the most important parties are located in one of the two extremes of the ideological scale, then religion emerges as an element to clarify the political offer. Average ideology of the Parliament also offers information: as expected, taking into account the average position of each country party supply improves our ability to explain the location of its citizens.

Something similar happens when we analyze the communist past of the country. The inclusion of this contextual-level variable increases the fit of both models. This means that both, religious and non-religious variables act differently in countries with and without a communist past, when we analyze the individual ideological self-identification. The main religious denomination of the country is the variable that achieves a greater increase: when we make a differentiation between the main religious denominations of each country, we get a much better prediction of his ideology.

Table 1. Level of variance explained by individual and contextual variables in models with religious variables and in complete model

Models as second-level variables included	Religious variables	Complete model
Only first level variables	0,04*	0,29*
Parliament's party fragmentation	-0,06	-0,04
Demo-christian party at Parliament	-0,01	-0,03
Degree of secularization	-0,01	-0,01
Parliament's ideological polarization	0,02	0,00
Parliament's average ideology	0,05	0,10
Communist past	0,11	0,20
Main religious denomination of the country (or mixed)	0,31	0,36
Communist past and average ideology	0,09	0,15
Communist past and religious denomination	0,39	0,45
Communist past, religious denomination and average ideology	0,45	0,41

* Percentage of explained variance by level-1 variables.

In a second stage, we selected those contextual variables that have greatest impact in the explanation of ideology, and combined them with each other. By this way, we could know how much of the dependent variable is explained by them all together. In the third part of the table (lines 9 to 11) it is shown the possible combinations of these variables, and the contribution that would make to both models (with and without religious variables). Of these, and when combined, the main religious denomination in the country, the membership to a new Eastern democracy and the average ideology of parties at the Parliament, are the macro variables that seem to have a better adjustment.

In short, our models allow us to conclude that there are significant differences between groups of countries with respect to how religious variables predict the

ideology of their inhabitants. Religiosity and ideology present more or less direct relations depending basically on some social and political characteristics at country level. Living in a Catholic or Orthodox country, especially in a former communist one, and with parliaments located on the right of the ideological scale, religion becomes a major predictor of ideology. However, in western and northern countries, and in Protestant or mixed, religiosity loses power to predict the ideology of their citizens.

7. Conclusions

The left-right scheme is a central resource for understanding the political reality in most European countries. Throughout its history, has shown great flexibility to absorb new meanings, although it has a core essence. From the nineteenth century on, this political tool began to be linked to religious conflicts. As we have seen, this situation would have evolved until today. The contemporary process of secularization, as moving forward and continuing religious elements of the public sphere, could relegate the role of religion to a mere reminiscence of the past. That is the reason why a review on this subject made from a longitudinal perspective was required in order to identify trends, without ignoring the diversity of the religious and political map of Europe.

Ideology, as a bipolar scheme, contrasts different visions of the world that represent alternatives that are connected to the interests of specific social groups, values systems and identified voters. According to this, individuals who share some of these characteristics are more likely to be grouped according to their interests, labelling themselves in the ideological camp that better corresponds to their interests. This is what Inglehart and Klingemann analyzed (1976) as social

determinants of ideology, finding that partisan loyalties primarily structure locations, rather than the membership to a social group or the affinity to a values system. But to what extent have citizens been relegated to a central role of "party supporters"? Are other basic elements such as social class, values or religiosity important?

Our first approach is clear. Indicators of religiosity are linked to self-positioning as expected: individuals with higher levels tend to place themselves closest to the right of the scheme. In addition, in an attempt to summarize the complexity of religious phenomena to their main components, we have grouped these indicators in different dimensions. On average, the direct impact of religiosity when measuring ideology would be around 9 per cent of the total explained variance, although this presents important variations between countries, depending on different factors, there is no country without links between religion and ideology, particularly intense in the Catholic countries.

However, the specific contribution of religiosity drops dramatically when we introduce in our model other socio-structural factors, values or partisanship. Appears finally as a modest but significant, above others social factors, among which is social class; in short, the element of the social structure more closely linked to ideology, the most influential of the traditional cleavages. Religious divisions maintain relative influence in Catholic countries, while its impact is almost zero in some northern European countries and Eastern European Orthodox countries. In addition, we have seen that its influence is displaced to a greater extent in those countries where partisanship has a significant weight, but even more by value systems.

Using a multilevel perspective, we have taken into account the impact of country-specific characteristics that are keys to understand the location of the citizens and the impact of religiosity on them. Above all, the main religious denomination of the country and being part of the Eastern bloc, have been particularly influential. Specifically, the example of the Eastern countries can be enlightening by the fact that communist attempts to crush the Catholic elites failed, although succeeded in the weakening of the Orthodox and Protestants elites, subjected to autonomous and fragmented churches at national level. Catholicism seems to have a consistent transnational project with a system of values and beliefs directed towards public affairs, which shall be subject to further inquiries. This program could easily jump to the political sphere. In other words, Protestant and Orthodox confessions are more flexible and present alignments more independent of political orientations.

In short, religion continues to play an important role as a component of ideology. Even at the supranational level, some religious characteristics are relevant to explaining citizens' positions. But there are some nuances that need to be remembered. Broadly speaking, religion is less decisive or has lost influence in the Protestant countries of Northern Europe and Eastern Orthodox countries. It would be more relevant in most Catholic countries or in countries with recent religious conflicts and has a specific impact in some of new democracies that should be considered. Moreover, as we have seen, religion is a factor that can be reactivated and most importantly, we should not only consider its direct impact on voting behaviour through religious issues, but also through ideology, which historically would have absorbed to some extent the religious divisions and controversies.

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ANNEX

Table A1. Classification of countries by main religious denomination

Protestant Countries

Denmark

Finland

Germany (East)

Iceland

Norway

Sweden

Catholic Countries

Austria

Belgium

Croatia

Czech Republic

France

Hungary

Ireland

Italy

Malta

Poland

Portugal

Slovakia

Slovenia

Spain

Orthodox Countries

Bulgaria

Macedonia

Moldova

Montenegro

Romania

Russia

Ukraine

Serbia

Mixed Countries*

Netherlands

Switzerland

Great Britain

Germany (West)

Northern Ireland

*Where the main religious denomination doesn't reach the 60% of the denominated population of the country. WVS 2010.

**Table A.2: Variance explained by the different components
of left-right positioning.**

	Albania				Austria				Belgium				Bulgaria			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Social factors	-	1,6	1,2	1,5	-	1,5	1,5	1,6	3,0	0,9	0,6	0,8	-	4,1	2,0	1,9
Values	-	4,2	3,9	1,7	-	0,7	4,1	3,5	1,8	3,6	4,0	1,8	-	3,5	3,2	3,5
Religiosity	-	2,1	3,3	2,1	-	3,7	1,7	1,9	13,5	3,6	2,4	2,2	-	8,0	4,4	2,6
Party ID	-	34,9	39,9	38,6	-	4,0	7,8	9,4	-	7,6	8,1	12,5	-	6,2	24,4	17,9
<i>TOTAL</i>	-	51,8	63,6	51,0	-	16,2	24,4	24,3	29,7	27,8	23,8	22,5	-	28,4	45,1	35,1
N	-	665	708	879	-	1114	1039	1003	503	1378	1279	1361	-	592	525	652
	Croatia				Czech Republic				Denmark				Finland			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Social factors	-	3,5	2,5	1,3	-	2,1	0,9	1,9	6,5	1,2	1,3	1,3	-	1,2	2,3	3,0
Values	-	1,6	3,9	1,9	-	3,4	1,8	3,7	6,9	3,3	5,5	4,0	-	6,4	1,0	8,2
Religiosity	-	4,1	2,3	4,1	-	6,9	1,5	2,2	4,1	0,7	2,3	1,5	-	3,1	3,1	1,6
Party ID	-	4,9	3,9	9,8	-	7,2	26,6	21,0	-	19,5	10,7	15,1	-	19,8	24,6	19,1
<i>TOTAL</i>	-	24,4	20,6	31,8	-	23,2	46,0	37,3	30,3	46,7	34,9	39,7	-	45,0	48,9	56,5
N	-	914	706	1050	-	1570	1453	1078	813	767	720	1289	-	399	721	648
	France				Hungary				Iceland				Ireland			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Social factors	2,2	2,5	0,5	0,5	-	3,1	3,1	0,8	3,0	1,5	1,3	1,5	5,4	2,2	1,5	3,8
Values	8,7	7,2	4,6	5,9	-	2,7	1,6	2,3	3,6	3,2	2,6	2,6	4,6	5,7	3,9	5,5
Religiosity	6,5	2,3	2,9	3,7	-	8,0	5,6	1,1	3,9	2,5	1,6	1,0	3,0	3,8	4,0	5,3
Party ID	-	15,3	21,5	16,4	-	2,7	8,0	23,3	-	37,1	32,4	30,1	-	2,4	2,9	0,7
<i>TOTAL</i>	28,9	44,8	41,7	44,5	-	18,1	21,3	34,0	12,8	56,5	49,7	54,5	20,1	24,8	21,6	24,8
N	874	629	1101	1308	-	577	665	1284	805	558	770	632	751	833	650	489
	Italy				Malta				Moldova				Netherlands			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Social factors	1,8	1,5	0,6	1,6	11,5	11,9	1,1	0,9	-	1,8	1,8	4,5	2,3	0,6	1,2	1,3
Values	6,8	3,3	2,7	7,3	17,5	17,2	1,9	2,5	-	5,8	3,1	2,9	6,8	3,0	3,1	2,9
Religiosity	5,1	3,6	2,3	1,7	2,5	15,1	2,8	0,5	-	1,9	3,2	2,5	9,3	4,6	2,0	1,5
Party ID	-	14,5	27,9	18,1	-	-	8,6	35,6	-	5,0	12,6	2,6	-	15,3	20,9	21,4
<i>TOTAL</i>	26,1	35,0	46,5	48,6	29,3	45,9	24,4	56,1	-	20,3	27,5	13,3	32,3	50,8	42,5	42,5
N	904	1247	1340	816	168	128	955	629	-	680	477	718	754	847	918	1290
	Norway				Poland				Portugal				Romania			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Social factors	6,9	1,3	0,7	2,6	-	3,0	1,9	2,1	-	1,2	1,8	1,7	-	1,3	2,2	0,9
Values	4,3	3,8	3,9	5,1	-	1,3	2,0	2,0	-	1,3	4,9	1,6	-	5,7	5,1	2,8
Religiosity	5,3	0,9	1,5	1,2	-	4,0	1,8	8,3	-	1,8	4,5	3,8	-	3,0	4,2	2,4
Party ID	-	19,8	15,2	20,0	-	0,6	24,5	4,1	-	19,4	15,6	11,6	-	4,3	5,5	2,5
<i>TOTAL</i>	20,0	42,0	31,4	45,7	-	11,5	42,8	22,4	-	33,5	32,1	24,0	-	18,7	19,2	8,7
N	745	922	1016	966	-	655	681	958	-	893	593	792	-	818	482	705
	Russia				Slovakia				Slovenia				Spain			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Social factors	-	3,5	1,3	1,6	-	2,4	2,7	2,6	-	8,4	1,9	1,3	3,3	0,9	0,6	1,2
Values	-	7,0	2,0	4,0	-	4,9	2,7	0,9	-	8,2	1,8	1,9	5,4	2,1	2,9	1,5
Religiosity	-	3,1	1,1	3,6	-	9,8	3,0	2,8	-	2,9	4,7	7,1	6,6	1,8	2,8	2,9
Party ID	-	-	10,7	4,2	-	1,8	9,9	11,0	-	3,4	6,8	7,2	-	19,9	17,3	21,2
<i>TOTAL</i>	-	14,7	20,2	15,6	-	24,7	25,5	20,5	-	26,7	24,9	30,0	40,1	49,9	44,5	45,9
N	-	431	1121	590	-	555	826	846	-	419	628	883	1356	1915	1426	964

	Sweden				Switzerland				Ukraine				Macedonia			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Social factors	8,7	2,5	1,1	1,2	-	1,2	4,6	2,5	-	1,9	3,6	3,6	-	3,7	2,0	2,8
Values	6,1	4,3	4,0	4,4	-	2,8	4,8	4,8	-	2,2	3,6	4,9	-	4,8	2,0	2,3
Religiosity	3,6	1,8	1,9	0,8	-	1,6	1,4	2,2	-	4,5	6,4	5,1	-	1,9	3,5	2,0
Party ID	-	25,9	31,2	22,9	-	15,6	12,4	13,1	-	2,8	6,7	7,5	-	4,4	4,6	19,5
<i>TOTAL</i>	19,8	52,9	58,9	62,2	-	36,3	33,5	35,3	-	17,0	34,7	25,6	-	17,0	17,0	33,5
N	612	694	761	502	-	886	621	868	-	842	471	605	-	543	735	582

	Great Britain				West Germany				East Germany				Northern Ireland			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Social factors	2,9	2,5	1,5	1,6	2,7	0,7	1,1	2,1	-	1,7	2,9	5,7	2,0	6,6	2,5	6,2
Values	5,0	3,7	6,3	2,0	8,4	6,2	4,3	3,7	-	1,7	6,2	4,4	8,0	5,1	6,0	5,4
Religiosity	2,6	2,1	2,2	1,9	3,0	1,3	3,6	3,2	-	2,3	2,7	1,6	7,6	4,7	5,2	5,7
Party ID	-	12,5	12,6	14,2	-	13,1	13,2	11,7	-	13,2	15,6	15,3	-	5,5	0,8	2,6
<i>TOTAL</i>	15,9	34,1	30,5	26,1	24,2	41,8	31,5	30,5	-	34,4	42,7	35,5	29,8	33,4	17,4	23,7
N	868	1181	620	1045	1022	1263	734	782	-	951	655	705	213	255	580	278

	Serbia				Montenegro				Bosnia			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Social factors	-	2,3	3,9	2,7	-	14,1	6,7	2,7	-	3,9	2,4	2,5
Values	-	3,1	2,7	1,8	-	16,3	6,9	2,8	-	1,9	2,8	3,2
Religiosity	-	5,8	3,8	2,9	-	5,4	6,1	7,9	-	5,2	3,7	8,0
Party ID	-	10,8	6,7	4,2	-	2,1	1,1	0,2	-	1,4	2,2	1,0
<i>TOTAL</i>	-	33,6	22,8	13,0	-	40,7	23,9	15,9	-	16,9	15,3	18,8
N	-	736	589	837	-	118	458	674	-	648	652	885

ANNEX B:
WORDING AND CATEGORIES OF VARIABLES
USED FOR THE ANALYSIS

A. RELIGION

Belonging

- Do you belong to a religious denomination? (Yes, no). Which one? Roman catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Muslim, Other⁶.
- Independently of whether you go to church or not, would you say you are: (A religious person, Not a religious person)⁷.
- Now I am going to read off a list of voluntary organizations. For each one, could you tell me whether you are an active member, an inactive member or not a member of that type of organization? Church or religious organization. (Yes, no).

Behaviour

- Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?⁸ No religious denomination, Never, almost never, Sometimes, Weekly or more.
- Do you take some moments of prayer, meditation or contemplation or something like that? (Yes, no)

Beliefs

- Which, if any, of the following do you believe in? (Yes, no): God, Life after death, Hell, Heaven.

Private religiosity:

- And how important is God in your life? (Important, not important)⁹
- For each of the following, indicate how important it is in your life. Would you say it is religion? (Important, not important)¹⁰

⁶ Main categories included: Free church/ non-conformist/ evangelical, Jew, Hindu, Buddhist.

⁷ Originally: Not a religious person, A convinced atheist.

⁸ Originally: More than once week, Once a week, Once a month, Only on specific holy days, Once a year, Less often, Never, practically never.

⁹ Originally, ten points scale: 1 Not important at all, 10 Very important.

¹⁰ Originally: Very important, Rather important, Not very important, Not at all important.

Institutional religiosity

- I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them. (Trust, don't trust)¹¹ The church –“religious leaders” in non-Christian countries-.

B. POLITICS

- In political matters, people talk of "the left" and "the right." How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking? (1 Left, 10 Right).

- Which of these two statements comes closest to your own opinion?

A: I find that both freedom and equality are important. But if I were to choose one or the other, I would consider personal freedom more important, that is, everyone can live in freedom and develop without hindrance

B: Certainly both freedom and equality are important. But if I were to choose one or the other, I would consider equality more important, that is, that nobody is underprivileged and that social class differences are not so strong

- Now I'd like you to tell me your views on various issues. How would you place your views on this scale? (1 agree completely with statement on the left, 10 means you agree completely with the statement on the right)

1 The government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for

10 People should take more responsibility to provide for themselves

1 Competition is good. It stimulates people to work hard and develop new ideas

10 Competition is harmful. It brings out the worst of people

- When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women. (Agree, disagree)¹²
- When jobs are scarce, employers should give priority to national people over immigrants (Agree, disagree)
- Please tell me for each of the following whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between: Abortion, Divorce, Euthanasia, Suicide, Prostitution, Homosexuality. (1 Never, 10 Always).
- I'm going to read out a list of various changes in our way of life that might take place in the near future. Please tell me for each one, if it were to happen, whether you think it would be a good thing or a bad thing¹³? Greater respect for authority.

¹¹ Originally: A great deal of confidence, Quite a lot of confidence, Not very much confidence or none at all.

¹² Originally: Agree, Neither, Disagree

¹³ Originally, an extra category "Don't mind".

- I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: (Trust, don't trust) The police¹⁴
- People sometimes talk about what the aims of this country should be for the next ten years. On this card are listed some of the goals which different people would give top priority. Would you please say which one of these you, yourself, consider the most important? And which would be the next most important? If choice is 1 and 2, interviewed is considered materialistic. If choice is 3 and 4, is considered post materialistic. If choices is 2 and 3 or 1 and 4, is considered mixed.
 1. A high level of economic growth
 2. Making sure this country has strong defense forces
 3. Seeing that people have more say about how things are done at their jobs and in their communities
 4. Trying to make our cities and countryside more beautiful
- If there was a general election tomorrow, can you tell me if you would vote? (If not) Which party appeals to you most?

C. SOCIODEMOGRAPHICS

- Can you tell me your year of birth, please?
- This means you are ____ years old.
- What is the highest educational level that you have attained?¹⁵ [if respondent indicates to be astudent, code highest level s/he expects to complete]: Elementary or less, Secondary or less, University or less.
- On this card is a scale of incomes on which 1 indicates the "lowest income decile" and 10 the "highest income decile" in your country. We would like to know in what group your household is. Please, specify the appropriate number, counting all wages, salaries, pensions and other incomes that come in.
- Are you currently: Married, Never married before¹⁶.

D. CONTEXTUAL VARIABLES

- Religious denomination of the country (denomination for more than 60% of the labeled population in a country, according to WVS IV)

¹⁴ Originally: A great deal of confidence, Quite a lot of confidence, Not very much confidence or none at all.

¹⁵ No formal education, Incomplete primary school, Complete primary school, Incomplete secondary school: technical/vocational type, Complete secondary school: technical/vocational type, Incomplete secondary: university-preparatory type, Complete secondary: university-preparatory type, Some university-level education, without degree, University-level education, with degree.

¹⁶ Originally: Living together as married, Divorced, Separated, Widowed, Single.

Catholic
Orthodox
Protestant
Mixed (no religious denomination reached 60%)

- Communist Past (Yes, no)
- Average ideology of the Parliament (According to Party Manifestos Project).

Left (-10 through -10)
Center-left (-10 through 0)
Center-right (0 through 10)
Right (10 through +10)