

The Sacralization of Politics in Advanced and Post-Communist Democracies

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Introduction

Why is there variation in the influence of religion on politics, across both countries and issues? In some countries, political debates are sacralized: recast in terms of fundamental religious and moral principles, with churches¹ as the key protagonists in public debates. Public policy becomes a “morality issue,” where the debates focus on first principles, the issues are portrayed as one of fundamental ethical principles, and at least one side uses moral arguments in advancing its case (Mooney 2001, Meier 1994.) Familiar examples in the US are those of abortion, stem cell research, and the teaching of evolution. The impact of religion on *policy* also varies enormously, even where similar levels of popular religious belief and participation might lead us to expect similar levels of religious influence. Debates and policy are sacralized far more in the United States, Ireland, Poland, and Slovakia than in countries with comparable economic and religious profiles, such as Canada, Italy, Croatia, and Hungary, respectively. Yet these pairs of countries share similar religious profiles, as measured by the percentage of population that professes belief or attends religious services, denominational diversity, and public attitudes towards the role of religion in politics.

This variation poses a challenge to dominant accounts of religious vibrancy and influence. It persists despite religious monopolies and despite economic development and democratization, both of which have been argued to dampen popular religious fervor. Perhaps most intriguingly, the influence of religion on politics appears to rely on popular religiosity: but not on the demand for such religious influence on politics. Churches can be powerful political actors even where the vast majority of society denounces religious involvement in politics.

These differences matter. First, they have important policy correlates: where religion dominates politics, we see far greater restrictions on abortion, divorce, education, and stem cell research. For example, abortion is restricted to saving the life of the mother in Ireland, but available on demand in Italy. It is similarly constrained in Poland, but available freely in Croatia during the first trimester. Similar patterns can be observed with respect to the regulation of reproductive technologies, religious education in public schools,

¹ Throughout this paper, I refer to these religious actors and organizations as “churches” or “the church,” reflecting the predominantly Christian nature of the country cases.

and the rights of sexual minorities, including same sex marriage. Second, religiosity and the active participation of religious groups in political life have collateral effects. For example, religion and the welfare state substitute for each other in insuring individuals against adverse life events; more religious individuals will prefer lower levels of social insurance (Scheve and Stasavage 2006.) Historically, welfare regimes, unemployment patterns, and educational expenditures have been linked to doctrinal differences (Kahl 2005, Castles 1994.) The political activities of churches and the coalitions they form have also influenced the formation of political party systems and the maintenance of governments (Kalyvas 1996, Warner 2000.) In short, if “movements and social groups that can achieve widespread social communication and can use moral arguments to set agendas of public and legislative debate may matter as much, or more than, voting and elections” (Skocpol et al 1993, 697), then we need to know why and how churches influence policy debates and outcomes.

This paper examines how religious authorities exploit historical resonance and contemporary political alliances to obtain their policy preferences. Section I below examines the variation and data. Section II tests the competing explanations, and Section III advances an account that emphasizes the fusion of nation and religion as a key causal factor.

I. Variation and Data

Churches have actively contested abortion policy, divorce, religion in public schools, stem cell research, and the status of gay marriage. Their success in recasting public debates and achieving their policy goals, however, varies greatly, as Tables 1 and 2 show. In the US, religious movements and churches are the key lobbies for new restrictions on abortion (the issue became a litmus test in Congress for judicial appointees) and changes in the educational curriculum (specifically, the teaching of evolution) at both the state and federal levels. Conservative Catholic and Protestant religious groups made considerable inroads in their policy goals, especially in curtailing abortion access, same sex marriage, and stem-cell research² (Hout and Fischer 2002.) In short, religion has become a central political cleavage (Layman and Carmines 1998). In

² In contrast, the mainstream Protestant churches not only lost members, but were unable to either resolve their internal conflicts over issues such as gay rights, or mobilize effectively in their pro-choice stances in the 1970s and 1980s.

contrast, in Canada, debates were rarely recast in religious terms. Despite the efforts of the Catholic Church, abortion, for example, was not restricted and did not become a dominant political issue, at either the elite or the popular levels, leading one analyst to conclude that “in Canadian politics, abortion seems to be almost irrelevant” (Tatalovich 1997, 144). Some have argued that Canada’s parliamentary system explains these differences, since it privileges party loyalty and limits the access of interest groups to venues such as entrepreneurial legislators, separation of powers, judicial review, and direct democracy mechanisms (Wald, Silverman, and Fridy 2005, 138, see also Mooney 2001, 17.) However, Ireland and Italy are both parliamentary regimes and Catholic societies (both in terms of professed faith and the dominant church organization): yet the debates and eventual laws on abortion, divorce, and education were dominated by Church teachings far more faithfully (and for far longer) in Ireland than in Italy.

In the newer democracies, the Roman Catholic Church in Poland was considerably more successful than its post-communist counterparts in sacralizing politics. After the fall of communism in 1989, the Catholic Church in newly democratic Poland successfully and publicly lobbied for a near-prohibition on abortions and the introduction of religious education into the public school system, and continues to denounce stem cell research, gay marriage, and no-fault divorce as immoral and unacceptable, finding considerable political purchase. In contrast, the church in equally Catholic Croatia failed to forestall civil unions for gays, restrict stem cell research, constrain divorce, or eliminate the provision of abortion. Finally, both Slovakia and Hungary are mixed Protestant-Catholic democracies, with lower degrees of sacralization than either Poland or Croatia. The Slovak church did not have the independent policy or rhetorical impact that the Polish Church did—but it did manage to have its preferences translated into policy with abortion, religions in schools, stem cell research restrictions, and same sex marriage restrictions all passing. As we will see, however, the Slovak church ironically had greater success in achieving policy outcomes than in recasting public debates. Finally, despite a similar religious profile, and similar efforts, the churches in Hungary have had limited rhetorical and policy success.

TABLES 1 and 2 HERE

Two indices summarize church activity in these policy domains.³ First, as a measure of the churches' recasting of political and policy debates, I code whether a) the churches were the protagonists in the public debate over the issue, b) whether churches began the recasting of the issue in religious terms, using phrasing such as "sanctity of marriage," "the culture of life," appeals to the "Christian character" of the nation, or to "natural law," and c) whether secular politicians then adopted the same language.⁴ Second, as an indicator of the churches' efficacy in achieving policy gains, I measure whether the restrictions or changes to policy were a) compatible with Church teachings, and b) justified by the politicians passing them as having a Christian character. These measures thus attempt to avoid the possibility of an accidental coincidence between the preferences of secular and religious authorities.⁵

To measure the public attitudes surrounding religion and its influence on politics, I rely on public opinion data from the latest wave of the World Values Survey (1999-2004) and the International Social Survey Programme (1999). First, I draw a sample of all Christian democracies for which WVS data is available. (The results are robust to including other European countries such as Islamic Albania, Turkey, and Moldova, as well as to dropping the non-European cases.) Since these are all democracies, churches and religious organizations are but one set of actors vying for policy attention. The European cases have all undergone conversion to Christianity over a thousand years ago, so that the denominational framework is

³ A subsequent paper will examine why churches chose to focus on these particular issues, rather than on others concordant with Christian doctrine, such as environmental laws, social justice, poverty, immigrant rights, and so on. Since religion is sustained by community norms (Martin 2005, 84) and the family is a critical unit of Catholic social thought, for example, the issues of marriage, divorce, and abortion fundamentally define communal boundaries. At the same time, churches are selective in which community-defining issues to emphasize: across the cases examined here, for example, divorce has been far less a source of policy pressure than either abortion or same sex marriage. Out of the pool of potential issues, which is defined by their relevance to doctrine, churches are likely to pick those issues that offer the greatest political leverage at the lowest cost to the greatest number of adherents.

⁴ Private lobbying, of course, can be extremely powerful and reflect very different motives from public announcements. However, it is both difficult to capture and does not reflect attempts to set the public agenda or reframe policy issues.

⁵ Other measures of state regulation and support (see Chaves and Cann 1992) are misleading here, since they do not indicate either the source of a close state-church relationship, or its broader policy implications. Their index measures state recognition of denominations, clergy appointments and salary payments by the state, the collection of taxes by the state on behalf of the parties, and outright state subsidies to churches. These show the extent to which the state may support church organizations, but says little about their rhetorical or policy efficacy. Similarly, indices of the separation of religion and state (SRAS, see Fox 2006) measure both state support and state restrictions on religion, but tell us little about informal policy influence, or the legitimacy of religious demands in the eyes of the public and political elites. They may also be misleading for our purposes: the United States is the only country that scores a perfect separation of church and state between 1990 and 2002 (Fox 2006), yet its policymaking is influenced by religious mobilization.

prior to the differences in belief and participation, the founding of national myths, or current religious offerings. Given the variation, “Europe” and “Christianity” is not a proxy for the role of the churches.

Second, several paired comparisons help to examine the causal mechanisms. The countries selected for these paired comparisons were chosen on the basis of similar denominational profiles and religiosity (both belief and participation.) As Table 3 shows, they are roughly comparable on measures of religious belonging, attendance, affiliation, belief, salience, and attitudes towards the influence of religion on politics.⁶ Yet they vary considerably in the influence that religious authorities have had over policy debates and outcomes.⁷

TABLE 3 HERE

III. Explanations and Hypotheses

Two main explanations have arisen for the prevalence and influence of religion. One focuses on the supply of alternatives on offer in the religious marketplace, and the other on the popular demand for politically salient religion. Both have implications for the puzzle examined here: the variation in degree to which religious actors influence political debates and outcomes.

First, in the “supply” model, flourishing competition among rival religions in a pluralist society may stoke the fires of sacralization. Where the religious market can freely offer diverse alternatives to heterogeneous religious beliefs and preferences (Finke and Stark 1992, Chaves and Cann 1992, Stark and Iannaccone 1994, Iannaccone 1998, Gill 2001), the rates of religious participation and denominational affiliation increase. Religious pluralism thus breeds religious fervor. In contrast, where the state regulates religious markets (by financially and politically supporting a state religion, for example), the levels of religious pluralism and participation decrease.⁸ The regulation of religious markets is said to depress participation for several reasons: consumers have no control over the quantity or quality of the religious

⁶ The data on popular attitudes, beliefs, and participation comes from the most recent wave of the WVS (1999-2004). Data on GDP are from the Penn World Tables. The CIA Factbook is the source for prevalence of Catholicism, and sacralization was coded using press and scholarly accounts of the church roles in debates.

⁷ Contrary to the recommendations of Fearon and Laitin (forthcoming), these cases were not chosen randomly from the sample, but on the variation in belief and participation. Random selection helps to ensure representativeness, but does not establish internal validity, the key concern (and comparative advantage) of case studies.

⁸ Chaves and Cann 1992 accordingly find that for every additional item of state regulation, weekly church attendance drops by 5.3% (Chaves and Cann 1992, 283)

goods provided, state interests are unlikely to converge with consumer preferences, one publicly sponsored religion can never provide variety of religious choices demanded by diverse individuals, and finally, even if religious alternatives arise, individuals are already bound to the inefficient state religion (Iannaccone 1991, Chaves and Cann 1992.) Two implications follow: first, both de Tocqueville and Marx earlier noted, “it was the caesaropapist embrace of throne and altar under absolutism that perhaps more than anything else determined the decline of church religion in Europe” (Casanova 1994, 29.) Second, given the heterogeneity of religious preferences, some argue that “the only means of enforcing a religious monopoly is by government fiat” (Gill 2001.) Religious monopolies cannot occur “naturally,” in the absence of state mandate (Gill 2001, Stark 1992.)

This powerful explanation suggests that the more competitive the religious market, the more likely we are to see religious entrepreneurs enter the political arena. In this framework, church attempts to influence politics are both an alternative supplied in the religious market (for those consumers who prefer an activist religion) and a way of gaining greater market share by diversifying the portfolio of outreach strategies. The implication is that where we see religious monopolies, or regulated markets, we should see lower influence of religion on politics. Where a state favors a particular religion, that denomination should not need to sacralize politics, since its privileged position is ensured, while other denominations do not have the opportunity to influence politics.

Along with the literature on the evolutionary origins and patterns of religious belief (Dennett 2006, Atran 1999, Sloan Wilson 2002), these market analogies assume a high and inelastic demand for religion. Individuals in all societies vary in their denominational preferences, but have similar (high) levels of demand for religion. Further, religions are fungible: individuals can change their religious affiliations easily, irrespective of the religious alternatives on offer. These explanations do not examine why some individuals and by extension, some societies, may be more or less receptive to either religious belief or influence.

One alternative explanation, therefore, focuses on the popular *demand* for religion, and the conditions under which it may vary. Thus, Norris and Inglehart (2004) argue that greater levels of social and economic deprivation increase religiosity, since they lead individuals to seek comfort and security in religion. The

resulting levels of religious belief and participation then also create (or at least correlate with) the demand for religious influence over policy. Given religion's traditional concern with morality, such constituencies should be especially receptive to religious incursion into public policy issues framed as "moral." As one observer of the American political scene noted, "morality policy politics may be more prevalent where fundamental religious principles are the foundation for political debate" (Mooney 2001, 16.)

Two predictions follow. First, lower economic development should correlate with higher participation and belief. However, Table 4 suggests that there is little significant correlation between economic development and religious belief, belonging, or participation. This may be the result of countervailing forces: on the one hand, increased wealth may decrease the demand for the provision of personal security by religion (Norris and Inglehart 2004.) On the other, increased wealth also means more resources and motivation for religious mobilization: for example, American evangelicals became politically active once they entered the middle class and encountered urban sin (Sahliyah 1990.)

Second, religious participation and belief should correlate with a greater demand for religious influence in politics, and with higher levels of such influence. However, these predicted relationships do not arise. Instead, popular religiosity appears to be a necessary condition for religions to influence politics—but popular demand for religious influence on politics is not. First, both the recasting of political debates and policy outcomes occur in proportion to levels of religious belief, as shown in Figures A and B. The triangular nature of the data shows that popular faith is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the sacralization of politics. These correlations are both statistically and substantively significant (see Table 4.)

FIGURES A and B HERE

Second, paradoxically, religion influences politics whether or not mass publics want it to.⁹ There is no relationship between the *demand* for sacralization and its *supply*, as Figures C and D show. Desired influence

⁹ Other surveys have confirmed results: for example, an average 50% of respondents wanted the Church to have less influence on politics throughout the 1990s and 2000s in Poland, and 78% respondents did not wish the Church to be politically active. CBOS. 2007. "Opinie o dzialanosci Kosciola," Komunikat z Badan, Warsaw, March 2007. In Italy, only 32% of respondents agreed that religion should have influence on the state (Fisher 2004.) In the United States, 70% of respondents do not want churches to endorse political candidates. (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2002 "Americans Struggle with Religion's Role at Home and Abroad," available at <http://people->

is not correlated to either rhetorical recasting (-.21 correlation at .51 p level) or policy efficacy (-.11 correlation at .72 p level.) More broadly, there is no relationship between religious observance and the demand for religious influence in politics.

FIGURES C, D, and E HERE

These two dominant approaches thus raise several several unanswered questions. First, they treat highly sacralized societies such as Poland and Ireland as *ad hoc* market failures, or anomalies that defy the influence of economic development. Yet there are other naturally occurring monopolies with high levels of religiosity, such as Malta or Lithuania, and other countries outside of Europe. Another set of “market failures” occurs when churches receive very little state support—yet no religious blossoming follows, as in the Czech Republic or France. We are thus left without an account of why some societies might be more *receptive* to religious mobilization or church attempts to influence politics. If we take conversion costs seriously, and stipulate the historical conditions that keep them high, we may be able to explain both why some countries support natural religious monopolies, and how history conditions current religiosity and its political expressions.

Second, even in very religious societies, a considerable majority disapproves of political activity by the churches—but will remain loyal, and not abandon religious practice itself. If churches can influence politics even when overwhelming majorities of the faithful would prefer they stay out of politics, we need an account of the social and political resonance of religion: both its ability to retain adherents in face of their disapproval, and its ability to forge a variety of political alliances to obtain policy goods.

Third, if we are to explain the influence of religion in politics, we need a richer account of the state. Supply-side accounts view the state as a market regulator that privileges certain religions over others.¹⁰ Yet

[press.org/reports/pdf/150.pdf](http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/150.pdf), accessed August 7, 2008.) Majorities believe it is wrong for churches to speak out on politics (51%) and for clergymen to address politics from the pulpit (68%). Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2000, “Religion and Politics: the Ambivalent Majority,” available at <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/32.pdf>, accessed August 7, 2008.) ISSP polls show that

¹⁰ This state support is said to lower adherence to a religion—but given the high and heterogeneous demand for religion, it could instead free up potential consumers for other denominations. People should seek new religious alternatives, in which case nominal state support for one denomination should have little effect on consumers turning to other denominations. If they do not, the key assumption of heterogeneity of religious preferences and their intensity is

policy outcomes fail to map onto measures of state regulation of religion (Minkenberg 2002, 2003.) “State regulation” is inevitably measured as the state support *for* a given church, but not as the *active repression* of denominations. Yet state repression can make national martyrs out of religious bodies—and subsequently powerful political actors. We thus need a more nuanced view of the state and its roles, including both support for and oppression of religion. More fundamentally, we cannot take for granted the “nation-state” as a coherent entity: the state may oppose the nation-building project, or state can be established when no coherent national identity yet exists. Religion can then become a protector of the nation, closely aligning religious and national identities—and providing resonance to subsequent political claims by religious authorities.

IV. An Alternative Account

To provide explanatory leverage, an alternative account needs to fill these lacunae. Specifically, it needs to account for the different degree of resonance of religion in society, the mechanisms by which mass religious loyalties translate into policymaking, and the role of the state in making religious influence possible and powerful.

I suggest that the key to church influence over politics is its historical identification with the nation. The origins of this amalgamation lie in the role the churches played in the building of the nation and the state. In turn, when religious bodies are identified with the nation, as its representatives and protectors, three consequences follow: popular participation and belief are strengthened, opposing church preferences is politically costly, and risk-averse politicians translate church preferences into policy.

The fusion of nation and religion

Why are some churches so closely identified with the nation? Countries vary in the degree to which religion and national identity are coterminous. On the one end of the spectrum we have Poland or Ireland, where national identity and religious denomination appear fused. On the other are countries such as the Czech Republic, Estonia, or France, where national identity consists partly of a rejection of specific religion.

violated. Yet in states such as Sweden or Germany, state support for one religion has not led other denominations to attract adherents.

One answer lies in the historical role of the churches in the nation-building process. The formation of *states* tended to be a secular process, often at odds with established churches. For one, “the bureaucratic state as a technique of social organization rests on the idea that power and source of power reside in nature and are manipulable, rather than residing in an autonomous supernatural (Thomas 1989, 150.) Both states and churches attempt to create a hierarchy of control and enforced rules over individual behavior, and their claims often compete. In contrast, nation building can be infused with religious meaning and the active participation of religious authorities. Unlike states, nations do not rely on secular authority. Religious bodies can build national identity, both by infusing the nation with religious significance, and by physically protecting important national symbols and representatives. National myths can also serve to fuel religious belief and participation, especially when national sovereignty is called into question.

The first pattern is of churches defending the nation against the state. Where the administrative state and an existing nation were opposed to each other (for example, in cases of colonial domination, or foreign imposition of a regime on an existing nation), churches could serve as protectors of national identity against the state. They could do so through informal education, sheltering the opposition, providing physical and spiritual space for opponents to gather, and by maintaining national symbols by imbuing religious symbols (such as icons and saints’ relics) with national meaning. By maintaining the nation, such religious authorities gained both adherents, and fused patriotism with religious loyalty. Thus, “major national communities or else national sub-communities have experienced alien and external rule, and have found their major resource and identity in an historic faith,” (Martin 1991, 469) as in Poland and in Ireland.

In a second pattern, the churches helped to build the nation-state. Where the state arose before national identity coalesced, a religious national *myth* could arise, where religion provided one basis for national coherence and its identity with the state. Rather than religious symbols taking on national meaning, national symbols took on a religious resonance. The nation did not become coterminous with a particular religion for the myth to function. Thus, in the United States, churches and religious communities became a fundamental unit of social organization (Atran 2008), and religious claims gained political resonance, without one religion

becoming a dominant source of national identity. Religion became a useful myth in uniting the nation, providing a measure of cohesion (rather than fusion.)

Finally, the church could oppose the project of merging the nation with the state, with the state acting to build and to unify the nation. The papacy, for example, explicitly and vigorously battled the liberal creation of the modern nation-state in Italy, Spain, France, and the Czech lands, and opposed liberal or nationalist revolutions (Burleigh 2005, 134). The nation-state and the Roman Catholic Church in these countries had a subsequently uneasy relationship, with private religious beliefs coexisting with secular political identities, and church incursions into public life meeting with considerable controversy.

The result is a spectrum of fusion between national and religious identities: from the fusion of national identity to a particular denomination, to a more diffuse national cohesion brought about by religious ideas, to skepticism about the role of the churches, all the way to the rejection of religious organizations as sources of political authority. The observable aspects of the identification of nation with religion include popular and elite opinion that equates national and religious identities, historical and national myths that explicitly refer to religion, and mutual references between religion and nation in songs, symbols, and icons.

Both political and religious implications follow. The relationship between nation and religion matters for church vitality—and state oppression strengthens it. Second, movement between religions is no longer devoid of transaction costs: instead, the costs of conversion will vary directly with the degree of fusion. Apostasy or conversion can be perceived as betraying the nation. Natural monopolies not only exist—but they can flourish, if sustained by the fusion of nationalism and religious belief. National identity and community ties also mean that individuals may disagree with church teachings, and with church political activity, yet remain loyal to the faith itself. As a result, extensive objections to church political activity coexist with high religiosity. This dynamic is clearest in Catholic churches, but it is also visible in Protestant denominations (Hertzke 1988, 147.) Above all, churches can now enter the political arena, and find that their claims resonate both with society, and with secular politicians.

How is this resonance translated into political influence? Religious organizations do not legislate directly, and rarely have direct political representation. One explanation for sacralization, therefore, is that

governments acquiesce to church demands, especially in new democracies, because they “feel indebted” to the churches for the years of rhetorical and physical protection (Htun 2003, 102.) But political gratitude is notoriously short-lived and fragile, and it is not clear why the coalitions with churches be any more robust. Once church protection is no longer needed, there is no need to heed church preferences.

More prosaic calculations underlie sacralization. Politicians worry about offending religious constituencies, especially where the adherents are loyal to a centralized and cohesive church that can easily mobilize its faithful (Fink 2009.) The more powerful the fusion of national and religious identity, the greater the costs of a potential backlash. Politicians, especially nascent political parties and actors, would also like to use the church’s mobilizational potential for their own ends. Attractive religious bodies will thus be characterized by (ideological proximity * church mobilizational strength, itself a vector of membership, its loyalty to the church, organizational density, and centralized hierarchy.)

Conversely, political action is risky for churches. Where they do not command overwhelming popular support, churches are easily seen as partisan and may fail to obtain their policy objectives. Therefore, churches are loathe to get involved politically if they have reasons to worry about their reception: in Canada, Slovakia, and Croatia, for example, churches often stayed out of politics. However, churches care about policy, and worry that religious competitors or unfavorable governments will move policies in an unwelcome direction. Since they have no direct access to governance, they seek out political allies: ideologically proximate parties who are credible potential governing parties (we may think of such allies as defined by ideological proximity * probability of entering office.) Where they are unattractive partners in such coalitions, churches may still attempt to influence policy, by pressuring individual (religious) politicians.

Where church and national identities are closely aligned, churches are confident and politicians are wary of offending them. Churches will move to recast policy domains they consider important, and given the fusion of religion and national identities, many of these claims will resonate with moral authority and wide acceptance. This recasting is successful for two reasons. First, existing levels of participation and belief are high, given the church’s nurturing, and the double bind of betraying the nation by leaving the religion. Second, it makes opposition to church activity suspect on national grounds. Both secular defenders of the

fusion between church and nation and churches themselves will denounce their opponents as being immoral, alien, or hostile to the nation. The definition of “heresy becomes a national definition of treachery, and the all-inclusive and automatic inheritance of baptism becomes an all-inclusive inheritance in the holy spirit of the nation and the sacred emblems.” (Martin 2005, 131.) These reinforcing cleavages render moot political debates over identities and even interests. Where religious and national identities fuse, offending religious sensibilities blurs into national treason, and there are few opportunities for anti-clerical appeals to succeed.

The more national and religious identities are conjoined, the more politicians are anxious about offending a powerful societal actor. Secular elites fear electoral backlash and increased costs of governing that would come with church opposition, and their risk aversion is exacerbated by the informational asymmetries between elites and voters. First, opposing the Church can be electorally costly. The churches have “inevitable influence” as moral authorities for a large swathe of the population (Gill 1998), and their support (or acquiescence) is highly sought by politicians: it is, after all, cheaper to rule through ideological legitimation than through either patronage or coercion. Given the fusion between nation and religion, the payoffs of church support are redoubled. Second, in the face of an overwhelmingly religious electorate, there are few advocates of “sin” in public life: few policymakers who would speak out for pornography, divorce, or other practices generally seen as detrimental to society (or at least controversial). The public, meanwhile, may in fact be more acceptant of “sin”--both because its greater numbers generally mean greater heterogeneity of views, and because many practicing believers nonetheless act in conflict with religious teachings in their private life. Given heterogenous demand for sin among individuals, legislator perceptions of sin are likely to be skewed (Meier 2001, 23.) Public opinion polls then provide conflicting data to such policymakers: for example, well over 80% of Americans both support a woman’s right to choose and restrictions on abortion. Yet political debates do not capture these nuances, and instead pit orthogonal “pro-life” arguments versus “pro-choice” ones. As a result, policymakers’ ideal points do not reflect the public’s: they are likely to be more conservative, and rely more on moral authorities such as churches, than the public.

Where nation and religion are closely joined, the church-state cleavage becomes moot. As a result, neither anti-clerical nor Christian Democratic parties have the opportunity to arise and flourish. This

exacerbates the risk aversion and informational asymmetries, since there is no evidence of secular actors succeeding by refusing to heed church preferences. Instead, governing parties take church preferences into account—even those who are ideologically distant will not question the church's entrance into politics. Rather than risk censure and electoral loss, vulnerable politicians go along with church demands—unless politicians perceive themselves as electorally impervious. As a result, given the fusion of nation and religion, once the churches choose to recast issues as moral imperatives, they are likely to succeed in obtaining policy outcomes as well.

At lower levels of alignment between nation and religion, there are fewer costs to offending religious sensibilities, and more opportunities for explicitly anti-clerical appeals. Rhetorical recasting is not enough to warrant policy success: church opposition is no longer as costly as it would be at higher levels of fusion, and a state-religion cleavage can arise. Opposing church demands or abandoning religion is no longer seen as an act of national betrayal. Elites thus have greater opportunity to pursue anti-clerical claims and constituencies. The looser the alignment between nation and religion, the harder it is for churches to recast policy as a moral or religious issue, and the lower the electoral costs for secular political actors of offending the churches. Churches thus have to seek out specific secular allies, and their policy leverage is a function of the coalitions they form. Christian Democratic parties, specifically, will have a considerable incentive to monopolize church support, and may risk offending other voters (or coalition partners) to build a monopoly on religious support. If such parties are coalition kingmakers, they can advance policy preferences well ahead of the churches' successful recasting of political debates.

Finally, where national and religious identities are orthogonal, politicians have little to fear from offending a weak church, and pursue their own policy preferences at no cost of offending religious authorities. Churches become marginal political players, and either do not get involved in politics, or fail to attract political allies. Without mobilizational strength and low resonance in society, such religious authorities are unable to either recast politics or gain policy outcomes.

The variation in these cleavages is not simply a function of either religious denomination or history. We find primarily Catholic countries across the spectrum of sacralization, from Poland to Italy to France.

Nor is there a single Catholic strategy: instead, church tactics have varied over time and across countries, with different national versions of Catholicism as a result (the heroic Polish church, or the American emphasis on social justice.) In short, the role of the Catholic Church cannot be inferred from the faith itself (de Swaan 1988, 85.) The Reformation had little impact in Italy, Spain, Poland, and Ireland, yet their subsequent levels of sacralization vary. Nor is it a question of state weakness, given the variation in state development during the process of national identity formation. Thus, it is unclear which prior set of factors could be responsible *both* for the fusion of religious and national identities *and* the policy outcomes.

Sustaining fusion and the dynamics of change

As powerful as they are, national histories and myths need to be maintained and perpetuated. One critical mechanism for sustaining national-religious fusion is education and indoctrination within the family, often in the face of considerable political repression from the state. Such transmission was a powerful source of post-communist political identities, for example (Darden forthcoming, Darden and Grzymala-Busse 2006, Wittenberg 2007.) It is one way to generate the widespread identities and norms with which church attempts to influence politics will resonate. It is also one main reason why churches and their secular opponents have for centuries fought over both formal and informal education, and the right to inculcate their own values and identities (Lipset and Rokkan 1967.) These shared values in turn confer identity, prescribe behavioral norms, and maintain boundaries (Wildavsky 1987.)

Once established, the fusion of nation and state is difficult to eradicate for secular authorities, whether colonial or imperial powers, or laicizing governments. First, once the domestic national movement is under the protection of the Church, attempting to eradicate such movements means crossing over into the sphere of the sacred: a move even Stalin was reluctant to make. Religious organizations are much harder to repress than unions, newspapers, political groups, or student organizations (Sahliyeh 1990, 13.) Second, the clergy often have little to lose: for them, the benefits of participation are far greater than the costs of inaction, since the latter means they stand to lose their congregations. This is perhaps why the more public the protest of local clergy under communism, the greater their authority and legitimacy (Wittenberg 2006.) Third, the church(es) represent *the nation*, rather than a specific constituency, and claim to stand above petty politics,

instead ensuring the moral and physical survival of the nation: making divide and conquer strategies more difficult. As a result, fusion legitimates political activity in the eyes of the clerical authorities, who feel emboldened to enter the political sphere, having already sheltered many secular political actors.

Nonetheless, fusion has to be maintained, and church influence is not impervious. First, if national or communal identities change, the national myth and its religious aspects are also called into question. Second, religious authorities may over-reach: since morality policy seeks a total vindication of values, advocates will not be satisfied with marginal reductions in sin, and will continue to press for stringent policies long after any large reductions are possible (Meier 2001, 31.) Politicians may then lash back against impossible demands--or claim budgetary or other constraints prevent them from fully implementing church demands. Third, identification with an "organic" nation is far more robust than identification with a particular demographic cleavage or political party. The narrower the churches' political alliances, or the greater the internal elite conflict within the religious organization, the less credible the fusion with the *nation*. If a church ties itself closely to a particular government or sub-national group, rather than the defense of the organic nation, its claims of universal morality and national protection are immediately suspect. For example, in Latin America, those churches that allied themselves with right-wing regimes in face of competition from other denominations had little legitimacy once these regimes fell (Gill 1998). Similarly, obvious state privilege may similarly backfire: "it is not resistance to modern differentiation per se which weakens religious institutions but, rather, resistance from a position of political or social establishment" (Casanova 1994, 214-5.) Moreover, the construction of a political cleavage requires more active maintenance by the churches than identities transmitted and reinforced through families and schooling. It frequently finds a partisan home, making one party the advocate of religious interests. Sacralization then rests on the allied party's status, rather than on all lawmakers taking church interests into account for fear of offending both the religious institution and its (voting) adherents. Paradoxically, to remain politically successful, churches have to maintain the appearance of being above the political fray.

The consequences of fusion in new and developed democracies

How did the fusion of nation and religion translate into popular resonance and political party cooperation across the paired comparisons? In the absence of an existing national identity when the United States were created, religious references helped to coalesce national identities (Manifest Destiny, the “Judeo-Christian tradition.”) Secular symbols of the state (the Constitution, the flag) acquired quasi-sacred status. One result was an American “civil religion,” the fusion of patriotism with the notion that Americans were God’s chosen people, and a commitment to the idea of America as both pluralist and informed by Puritan and Protestant ideas (Bellah 1967, McKenna 2007, Gentile 2006.) In influencing policy, the historical truth of this national myth mattered less than its wide acceptance and the taken-for-granted-quality it lent religious (chiefly Protestant) political activity at various points in American history.

At the outset, Puritanism introduced the rhetoric of the chosen people and divine destiny for the nation. An important legacy of this initial political primacy of Puritanism was the continued perception of politics as a “matter of right and wrong, salvation and perdition.” (Morone 2003, 11)¹¹ Subsequently, the initially exclusionary Protestant national identity gave way to greater pluralism and a narrative of “Judeo-Christian tradition” (Lipset 1963.) The foundational myth fused moral and political rhetoric, and made religion a legitimate basis for political mobilization.

This is a more subtle, and tenuous, fusion of nationalism and religion than in the other cases examined here: but it served as the bridge to politics for religion, in two ways. First, religious revivals such as the Great Awakenings created both imagined communities and a shared rhetoric, making subsequent political mobilization easier (McKenna 2007, Hertzke 1988.) These “brought to ordinary people the discovery that they could be more than passive spectators; they could be participants in this new drama. All it took was for this realization to migrate from the religious sphere to the political--not a great distance in those days--and people were fully prepared for the fiery language of Thomas Paine in his pamphlets and Patrick Henry in his oratory. Both of them used the language that had already been popularized by the revivals” (McKenna 2007, 65.) The Second Great Awakening of the mid-1840s generated “much of the color and texture of American

patriotism—its moralism, its missionary spirit, its commingling of Christian and national brotherhood.” (McKenna 2007, 80.) These revivals emphasized piety and morality, further making religion a prevalent basis for American political discourse (Thomas 1989, 69-70.) In other words, religious participation led to a sense of an imagined American community and shared political syntax--which then facilitated political mobilization, in both its secular and sacralized versions.

Second, religious and political actors repeatedly entered into coalitions that crusaded for various social and political issues. Prior to the 1920s, conservative theology and progressive politics joined in campaigns for abolition, the Prohibition, Comstockery, and so on. It was only in the 1920s that realignment brought together conservative theology and conservative politics, a “vastly important development that would reach fruition fifty-five years later when conservative evangelicals helped put Ronald Reagan in the White House (McKenna 2007: 234.) The Protestant sacralizing movements allied themselves with the Republican Party, and the rise of the “Religious Right.” Evangelical Christians in the United States entered politics in the 1960s, after decades of insulating themselves from politics as corrupt and too removed from the sacred. As their ascendancy into the middle class brought them in unwelcome contact with pervasive sinfulness, it also meant they gained the material resources that made political mobilization possible. Given their numbers (40% of Americans consider themselves born again evangelicals, Lambert 2008, 185-6), such mobilization had enormous impact. By the mid 1970s, the evangelical ascension was booming. By 1979, three key organizations were in place: Moral Majority, Christian Voice, and the Religious Round Table. (Casanova 1994: 147, Wald 1990.) With the presidencies of with Carter and Reagan, “piety and politics became almost passionate bedfellows.” (Demerath 1991: 28, Domke and Coe, 2008.) Meanwhile the Catholic Church pursued a strategy of direct reframing and lobbying. From the late 1960s to the present, Catholic bishops in the United States launched a right-to-life movement that vetted political candidates starting with the 1976 campaign, and then entered the electoral fray “shamelessly” in 1984 (Casanova 1994, 199), screening

¹¹ This particular fusion of the moral and the political, the religious and the national, may help to explain why “morality” issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage became so much more infused with religious rhetoric, and became so much more than the broader issues of social justice and foreign aid advanced by liberal churches.

candidates and issuing proscriptions against voting for pro-choice candidates. In 2004 and 2008, some bishops stood ready to deny Church sacraments to pro-choice Catholic candidates (Steinfels 2008).

In the 1970s, moreover, evangelicals and Catholics joined forces for the first time, discovering they had liberal enemies in common: advocates of multiculturalism, secular humanism, and sexual liberation (including abortion.) As in the past, they denounced these enemies as “godless communists” and thus anti-American, fusing political opposition and religious heresy. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, these arguments invoked the national myth. In the 1990s, a similar language was adopted by many politicians on the national level, emphasizing the “culture of life” and the “sanctity of marriage” (concepts first used by Pope John Paul II and the Catholic Church.) The Defense of Marriage Act of 1996, for example, ensured that marriage consisted of one man and one woman, precluding federal recognition of same sex marriage (itself legal in Massachusetts as of 2004, with civil unions legal in 10 other states.) It was justified as both a protection of “normal” marriage, and of the “Judeo-Christian moral tradition” underpinning American society (*NYT*, 13 July 1996, accessed 17 February 2009.)

Thus, once evangelical churches decided to enter politics, they were able to capitalize on the earlier Protestant traditions and myths. They both recast the political debates, and with Republicans as key allies, achieved their policy goals. No political party challenged the churches’ right to become politically involved, or took up an anti-clerical position. Religious authorities were thus able to recast political debates and obtained several legislative concessions.

In contrast, no religious mythology attached to national origins in Canada. The state arose and encompassed both the Francophone and Anglophone populations: and while the former saw the Catholic church as helpful in protecting a Francophone identity, the latter had no such attachments. No civil religion arose, and no myth developed of either a higher morality undergirding the nation, or Canada as a promised land (Kim 1993). The persistence of two powerful religious traditions, without either dominating meant no unifying national myth could emerge (Rawlyk 1990.) In short, patriotism or nationalism was not fused with religious sentiment, except in Quebec. There was no singular or sustained religious identity to perpetuate a Canadian national myth, and without such resonance or mass allegiance, churches were unable to sustain

either popular religious participation or political alliances. As a result, while religious groups demanded that their policy goals be met in the United States, Canadian clergy was often circumspect, with Catholic Bishops testifying, at the height of the abortion debates, that their views were one of many to be taken into account, given the pluralism of Canadian society. Catholic bishops further kept their distance from the anti-abortion movement, despite its heavily Catholic makeup (Tatalovich 1997, Tentler 2007.)

The exception was Quebec, where “the creation of a powerful Catholic ideology helped the people to withstand assimilation and decline; it created for them an independent cultural identity” (Baum 1991, 23.) An example of the nation and religion fusing without appealing to the state, Quebec had no ministries of education, public health, or social assistance under premier Maurice Duplessis (1936-1939, 1944-1959), since all these services were provided by the Catholic Church (Baum 2007.) The Church’s cultural dominance went unchallenged. Yet Quebec also illustrates the dynamics of change: as a result of the “Quiet Revolution” that began in 1960,¹² “language partly replaced religion at the heart of Quebecois self-consciousness” (Martin 2005, 69, Oakes 2004.) Once identities shifted from religious to linguistic, and from Canadian to Quebecois, two consequences followed: national independence became a dominant political cleavage, and the Church’s political influence greatly diminished. Schools and other services were placed in the hands of secular authorities (Christiano 2007, 22.) By 1980, no nationalist group sought to promote a Catholic political culture or church teachings (Siljak 1996.) Today, even as most Quebecois identify themselves as nominally Catholic, Quebec has among the most liberal abortion and stem cell laws in the country, while single-sex marriage has been legalized on the federal level since 2003.

In Ireland, the religious authorities sponsored a nationalist movement in the 19th century, mobilizing the conservative Presbyterian minority and leading to an alliance with the Anglicans and Scottish Presbyterians. Independence in 1922 meant considerable cooperation between the church and state. After the 1937 Union with Britain, “close identification between Irish nationalism and the Catholic religion developed,

¹² The revolution was led by bureaucratic elites that emerged from Catholic circles, such as Catholic Action. They opposed the clericalism of the state, which included reserving the best state positions for clerics. These elites began to develop the state bureaucracy (which grew by over 40% during 1960-5) and handed over utilities, crown corporations, and public services to the state, increasing the presence and influence of secular French Canadian elites.

and nationalists defended the prominent role accorded the church in areas of public policy” (Kissane 2003, 75.) Catholicism became the core pillar of an Irish, as opposed to an English, identity, and the Church actively promoted the fusion of national and religious identities. With the local priest serving numerous roles in the community, religion and its practices in Ireland “were very much embedded in everyday social life and relations, and in many instances strongly linked to the landscape, itself at the foundation of local social worlds. Religion, in this sense, is embodied in what Bourdieu called *habitus*, maintained not only by church ritual but by a thousand minor and major observances, habits of body and mind, moral, conceptual, and emotional inclinations. And of course by stories—a world narrated and performed.” (Taylor 2007, 153.)

In the decades that followed, the church repeatedly framed abortion, divorce, and education as its purview, and the restrictions on these domains as a matter of the moral health of the nation. The educational system would prove critical here: despite English efforts to secularize the public school system, the Catholic church was able to insist on its primacy, both through loyal cabinet ministers, and through informal pressure. Throughout, the arguments used by the church relied on its mission to protect the Irish nation, and its moral values. To cement its success, the church informally allied with the dominant governing party, the right-of-center, nationalist Fianna Fail, whose politicians demonstrated their religious credentials by reproducing Church rhetoric and sustaining its policy preferences. These close alliances meant that the Church played an enormous role in defining the acceptable range of public policies, despite a formal (and strict) separation of church and state.

Thus, the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland has successfully recast several issues as matters of fundamental morality, with Fianna Fail and others picking up and amplifying the religious language in public debates and policy justifications. The Church also relied on mass referenda—its ability to mobilize the faithful in defense of Church teachings was a powerful political instrument. One such referendum in 1983 made abortion, which was illegal, unconstitutional as well. The Catholic Church, Fianna Fail, and the Pro-Life Amendment Campaign (PLAC) all exerted heavy pressure on the electorate, and “the result was clearly a vindication of the Catholic Church’s authority and demonstrated the vulnerability of the political process to a campaign orchestrated by well-organized interest groups” (Kissane 2003, 81.) A 1992 referendum, on the

heels of the notorious “X case” (where a raped girl was not allowed to travel to England for an abortion) resulted in the freedom to travel--but with no further provisions for legalizing access to abortion. It was not until 2002 that an attempt by the Fianna Fail government to introduce tougher penalties on doctors for abortion failed in a popular referendum.

Education and divorce followed similar patterns. Attempts by the British government to introduce a non-denominational educational system in 1900s was frustrated by “an alliance between the new Sinn Fein party and the Catholic hierarchy.” (Kissane 2003, 75) Ministers of Education were inevitably observant Catholics, and the pervasive argument of both secular and religious authorities was that neutrality would translate into bias against belief. 1998 was the first time that God was not mentioned in the philosophical introduction to the primary school curriculum (Kissane 2003, 89.) Similarly, in the 1986 divorce referendum Fianna Fail and the Catholic Church both came out against divorce, and the amendment allowing it was rejected by a 63% to 37% vote. When courts rather than popular legislatures decided policy outcomes, however, the Church was less successful. In 2002, high court decisions ended the ban on contraception, the proscriptions on homosexuality were reduced, and no-fault divorce became a possibility. One analyst argued that “the close identification of the nation with the Catholic faith was unraveling” (Kissane 2003, 85.) While the Church could recast the rhetoric of political debates, forcing all political actors to debate the issues on the church’s terms, its reliance on the Fianna Fail to implement these policies meant that as Fianna Fail came under scrutiny for corruption and graft allegations, the Church’s claim to always speak for the good of the nation became more suspect. However, the terms of public debates and policy outcomes continued to reflect Catholic doctrine, and the Church remained a key political participant.

In contrast, there was no myth of the church protecting the nation in Italy. During the Risorgimento, liberalism and nationalism both threatened the Church’s political power (Hanson 1987, 32). As a result, the nation-building years of 1861-1924 saw repeated conflict between the Church and the newly united Italian state (Donovan 2003, 97, Kalyvas 1996.) The Church actively opposed the construction of Italy, and Pius IX (1846-78) forbade Catholics from participating in Italian state politics. In turn, state-building meant the destruction of the Papal States, and the key state-builder, Piedmont, reduced Church privileges (having been

rebuffed when it sought Church support.) In short, religious and national identities were orthogonal, and Church claims to defend the interests of the nation would not be credible. After decades of hostility in the new Italian state, Mussolini concluded the 1929 Lateran Pacts, which signalled a rapprochement between church and state and a partial restoration of Church privilege and influence.¹³ The decision was instrumental: the notoriously anti-clerical Mussolini had little regard for Church theology, but did appreciate the “political utility of religion” (Burleigh 2007, 55.)

In the postwar Italian democracy, the Italian Church allied itself with the Christian Democratic (DC) party: the Church mobilized its flock to support the DC and stem socialist and communist mobilization. As one analyst put it, “the Church wanted guarantees of influence and of anti-Communism, and it was beginning to appear that the DC would be able to offer both” (Warner 2000, 108.) In turn, the DC relied on the Church’s mobilizational capacities to compensate for the party’s meager organizational resources after the war. Its ambitious program for state and society led it to conclude that an alliance with the DC was necessary, and the Church threw its support and organizational strength behind the party beginning with the 1948 elections. The Church subsequently supported the DC throughout its 1948-1994 rule, largely because no other party was both conservative and credible. Despite this marriage of convenience, the Italian Church was unable to either set the terms of the debate, or to push through its policy preferences. The Christian Democrats not only sought coalitions with the “unacceptable” Socialists (PSDI), Liberals (PLI) and Republicans (PRI) after 1948, but began to seek mechanisms that would make it more autonomous of the Church. Specifically, the DC began to rely on patronage, which obviated the need for the Church’s organizational mobilization of the voters (Warner 2000, 176-7.) In comparison with relationship of the Irish church with Fianna Fail and other political actors, then, the DC-Church alliance was considerably more fragile, and Church claims of speaking in the national interest simply did not resonate.

¹³ The Pacts established a sovereign Vatican city state, compensated the Church for loss of papal territories, made church marriage legally sufficient, mandated religious instruction in secondary schools, exempted priests from military service, created state stipends for clergy, and guaranteed operation for church-sponsored associations such as Catholic Action while repressing others (Donovan 2003, 97-8, see also Warner 2000.) Mussolini’s regime further recognized Church participation in schools, restored crucifixes to schools and courtrooms, repaired churches, raised clerical salaries, closed down anti-clerical journals and banned freemasonry.

As early as 1946, the Church was angered by the Christian Democratic government's laxity in including the sanctity of marriage in the constitution, and allowing labor the right to strike. (Warner 2000, 119) Subsequently, a 1974 divorce referendum produced a majority in favor of new and permissive legislation, as did an abortion referendum in 1981. The Church had a stronger presence in education for years, reinforced by the Lateran Pacts with the Vatican (Warner 2000, 212), but religious education continued to be optional, and did not become a part of the regular school curriculum (unlike post-1989 Poland, for example.) A 1984 revision of the Concordat formally separated church from state, and ended compulsory religious teaching in schools (with 7% of the school population now attending Catholic schools, and a large majority of parents choosing the optional religious education for their children in school, Donovan 2003.)

After 1994, and the DC's fall from power, it was not in the Church's interest to align itself with either pole of the emerging bipolar party system. Instead, the Church was able to influence stem cell research and other bio-ethical policies by appealing to individual MPs, irrespective of their party affiliation. In the late 1990s, a veto by Catholic MPs over bio-ethics legislation "resulted in a legislative vacuum, since regulation itself was seen as state recognition of, and participation in, immoral practice" (Donovan 2003, 112.) The Church preferred this outcome to lenient legislation. However, the veto backfired: scientists were free to experiment, with controversial results such as the implantation of embryos in postmenopausal women, and so on. It was not until 2001 and the return of a center-right government that a more restrictive bill was proposed, and received bipartisan cooperation in 2004 that was partly mobilized by Church efforts.¹⁴ Subsequently, the Church persuaded enough voters to stay home to invalidate the 2005 referendum that would have liberalized the legislation. In short, the Catholic Church's rhetorical and political successes are much more mixed in Italy: it has had little impact on abortion, divorce, or educational laws, although it successfully mobilized against stem-cell research.

¹⁴ A 2005 referendum to liberalize the new restrictions failed, thanks to an extensive campaign by the Catholic Church to abstain from voting and thus to fail to reach the minimum 50% voter participation.

Along with Ireland, Poland is an example of the fusion of nation and religion. While Poland was officially converted to Christianity in the 10th century, church and nation first became closely identified with each other during the 18th and 19th century, when Poland was repeatedly partitioned among Prussia, Austria, and Russia. Catholic clergy repeatedly opposed the foreign influence, siding with local notables in resisting Prussian initiatives in education, for example, and subsequently supporting Polish-language instruction with a Catholic curriculum. As a result, “linguistic and educational conflict became part of a national struggle which in this century formed an issue in two succeeding world wars” (de Swaan 1988, 78.) While interwar Poland was ethnically and religiously diverse, and anticlerical parties gained in popularity as the Church began to side with successive governments (Chrypinski 1990, 125), postwar Poland became a homogenous Catholic nation--one where communism was seen as an alien imposition that violated tenets both of sovereignty and faith. The result was a renewed consensus about “a long-standing conflation of the ideas, institutions, and so to speak, behavioral displays of religion with nationality in Poland...the Roman Catholic Church has provided the means for the emergence and preservation of a modern national consciousness among the Poles” (Morawska 1995, 51.) The Church was seen in the most positive light when Poland’s existence was threatened: eg, during the Nazi era. Its lowest evaluations in came in the interwar period, when Poland had regained sovereignty (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 18, 1993.)

Under communism, the Church repeatedly resisted state incursion into its affairs during the communist era, but these incidents were recast as Church resistance to communist imposition on the Polish nation (Morawska 1995, 55) In the early 1970s the Church moved beyond self-defense and began to speak out more forcefully in favor of human rights (Anderson 2003, 144.) It became identified with the “true” Polish nation and the anti-communist opposition: attending church became a political act of opposition to the government, and both the pilgrimage of the Black Madonna around Poland in the late 1970s, and the triumphal return of Pope John Paul II to Poland in 1979 had two effects. They reinforced the notion that Polishness and Catholicism were fused, and served as the same kind of political awakening that the United State experienced in the 18th and 19th century with the religious revivals: a sense of shared community, and shared ideals, that predisposed the participants towards political mobilization. In the 1980s, especially after the collapse of the

opposition trade union Solidarity and the military crackdown, this identification became stronger than ever, since churches offered physical protection for individual dissidents and broader opposition activity.

Not surprisingly, then, the Church sought to translate this political capital earned under the communists into political influence in a sovereign democracy. As it pushed for changes in the laws regarding abortion, divorce, and education, “it also felt morally authorized to insult and scold in public those who dared to contest these provisions”: eg, opponents were denounced as “the sons and daughters of Russian officers” (Morawska 1995, 62.) The Church in Poland was loosely allied center-right parties, but its authority was so great that few parliamentarians initially dared to risk its disapproval. Even as the Church’s popular support dropped during 1989-1992 from 90% to 50%, and 75% of Poles saw the church as “too involved in public matters,” (Morawska 1995, 65), bill after bill legislated the Church’s preferences into law.

Thus, as early in the course of democratic politics as June 1990, the Church in Poland had already mobilized efforts to introduced religion into public schools, and its pressure succeeded in the law of the same year. Its stance towards abortion was uncompromising; after fierce parliamentary debates in 1990-1, the strictures introduced were seen as too permissive, and the Church representatives vowed to return to the fight. Within a year, in 1991, not only was abortion criminalized, but with very little debate in some legislative quarters: for example, all the Senate representatives simply echoed the Church position (Casanova 1994, 111.) The message was forceful: “the Bishops’ Conference sent an open memorandum to the Parliament encouraging “perseverance and courage in seeking legal measures to secure the life of each conceived child.” Church officials pressed for a full prohibition, publicly stating that the principle “‘Thou Shall not kill’ does not allow any exceptions”(Morawska 1995, 63.) The resulting 1993 law allowed abortion only if it posed a threat to woman’s life or health, if it resulted form rape or incest, or if the fetus was irreparably damaged. It was liberalized somewhat by the center-left government in 1996 (allowing abortions until the 12th week for social or economic reasons), but at no point did legislators propose a return to the liberal communist era laws. Less than a year later, however, the Constitutional Tribunal called for these modifications to be re-examined by the parliament, which ruled out a referendum (public opinion was divided on the issue.) The Chief Justice called this decision a “present for the Holy Father,” in anticipation of

the papal visit to Poland later that summer. A new center-right government restored the 1993 restrictions within months of taking office, in December 1997. Finally, on divorce, the Episcopate and its partisan allies pushed for greater constraints on divorce, but these debates were neither as controversial nor as successful. President Kwasniewski, however, vetoed the removal of sex education from schools in late 1997. In short, the Church successfully recast policy debates—and largely obtained its policy preferences.

Croatia represents a case of national myths gained and lost, and illustrates the fragility of a close identification with a particular political option. The church was identified with the Croatian nation throughout under Yugoslav rule, and maintained a moral and political distance from the communist regime. Religion was part of Croat national identity, and Catholicism was contrasted with Serbian Orthodoxy, for example. However, its tacit post-1990 embrace of the HDZ-Tudjman government (which had repeatedly emphasized the strong link between the Church and the Croatian people) undermined its claims to speak for, and represent, the Croatian nation (Lovrenovic 1998, Gruenfelder 2000.)

The Church supported the government of Franjo Tudjman, the leader of Croatia and the governing Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) party throughout the wars of Yugoslav succession (1991-8.) He, in turn, “never fail[ed] to bring up another of the church's virtues: its strong link with the Croatian people...interlacing the church with the very idea of Croatian statehood and nationhood is not unique to Tudjman but common to the Croatian traditional mentality” (Lovrenovic 1998.) In 1998, the government signed an agreement with the Croatian Bishops' Conference as part of its treaties with the Vatican on the status of the Catholic catechism in state-run schools, stating that the schooling system “must take into account the deeply rooted Catholic tradition in the Croatian cultural heritage” and “appropriate religious and cultural initiatives and programs” (Lovrenovic 1998.) Financial support for the church mandated by the same treaties, on the other hand, proved too costly and controversial to be implemented. Until the late 1990s, the church had “rarely... expressed its disapproval, and not even when the government was accused of crimes against humanity, violation of human rights and war crimes” (Gruenfelder 2000.)¹⁵

¹⁵ The inaugural Christmas message of Cardinal Bozanic in 1997 was the first time the church criticized the Tudjman government.

One ironic result of this embrace was that the Church lost policy influence. Once fully democratic politics returned with the death of Tadjman and the new elections in 2000, some voters faulted the Church for not providing greater guidance and mobilization of the voters, allowing the former ruling party, the HDZ, to win. Major political parties after the return of democracy in 2000 distanced themselves from the Church, with even the HDZ now severing the close links as part of its campaign to reinvent itself as a fully democratic party. The Church then tried to exert greater policy pressure, but instead further lost leverage. A 2004 controversy over a trade ban on Sundays pitted the HDZ, the Catholic Church and their allies against the Croatian People's Party (HNS) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP). The Church also opposed sex education in public schools, much as in Poland and in Slovakia. However, it was unable to either change the terms of the debate, or affect policy outcomes. Above all, political parties (including, increasingly, the HDZ) distanced themselves from the Church, and refused to become directly identified with it. By the 2007 elections, the two main parties running, SDP and HDZ, "also broadly agree[d] on a number of hot social issues. Neither would restrict abortion rights, nor does either advocate an outright ban on Sunday work, two frequent demands from the Catholic Church in Croatia... The increasingly vocal clergy, whose social attitudes often verge on extremism, knows very well that neither conservatives nor social democrats will fulfill some of their most deeply held desires" (Loza 2007.) Thus, the Church in a democratic Croatia was largely unable to affect either the rhetoric or the substance of policy.

Finally, both the Slovak and the Hungarian national myths offered different potential for political influence. The history of the Roman Catholic Church in Slovakia was contentious, even if the faith claimed 75% of the population, and its history identified it with Slovak nationalism. However, that nationalism was more controversial than in Poland, Ireland, or the US. The brief period of Slovak sovereignty in World War II was directly associated with the Catholic Church: a Catholic clergyman, Monsignor Jozef Tiso, was the President. However, he was executed for collaboration with the Nazis after the war. As a result, the Church could not easily claim the mantle of a moral representative of Slovak national interests (Reban 1990, 143.) Further, under communism, the Slovak church never mobilized society or served as an opposition umbrella. This was due partly to a more oppressive communist policy in Czechoslovakia: but the policy was possible

because the Church was not a powerful social actor as it was in Poland. As a result, while a sizeable part of the population identified with the church, it had low mobilizational capacity, and little political muscle.

After 1989, the Slovak church was initially “studiously neutral,” in politics (Tancerova 2002), despite the courting of the Christian Democratic party to form closer ties.¹⁶ The efforts of the dominant governing party, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), largely stopped at the October 1993 restitution law (Transition, 5 April 1996, Haughton 2005: 38.) Already very popular, the HZDS had little to gain from being closely identified with the church. As a result, the Catholic Church became publicly involved in politics only in 1995, when it came out in support of President Kovac in his conflict with Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar (Transition 2,7 5 April 1996.) Subsequently, after considerable debate and repeated Church efforts, the Concordat treaty with the Vatican was signed in late 2000, but it failed to address abortion, divorce, or registered partnership law. It was not until 2002 that “important issues were gradually being introduced into the public discourse that had previously been pushed into the background, including reproductive rights, representation of women in the public sphere, and the role of the church in society, among others” (Transitions Online 15, 2003).

The Church tended to *follow*, rather than set, the terms of the debate, as illustrated by abortion. As late as 2001, when the Slovak Christian Democratic party (KDH) attempted to regulate the liberal abortion provisions, the Church itself did not want to take a public stance, for fear of scuppering other constitutional reforms. As the bishop of Kosice noted, “I am for the protection of human life, without condition, but on the other hand, I do not want this problem to become the barrier in the process of adopting constitutional amendments” (Transition, 12-18 February 2001). The battles over abortion that raged were initiated by the Christian Democrats, rather than church pressure, and did not invoke Church support initially. However, after two years of increasingly successful Christian Democrat party efforts (and with no other political allies), the emboldened Church declared in 2003 that supporters of abortion would be excommunicated, leading to considerable speculation whether the Catholic President, Rudolf Schuster, would sign the law. In

¹⁶ The chair of the party told his activists that Christianity is “the source of our internal stability, the inspiration for our decisions, and the source of our supporters” (Haughton 2005, 38.)

2002, the KDH went to the Constitutional Court to argue that Slovakia's liberal abortion law was unconstitutional. One of its coalition partners, the Alliance for a New Citizen (ANO), reacted by trying to strengthen the legal right to abortion, making it fully legal to carry out abortions up to the 24th week of pregnancy if a fetus is damaged. (Until then, doctors had aborted up to the 24-week threshold on the basis of a government directive.) ANO pushed through the amendment in the parliament with the help of the opposition, causing a serious crisis in the government coalition. KDH declared it would leave the coalition if the law were passed. In December 2007, the Constitutional Court declared abortion on demand up to the 12th week constitutional, and abortion for genetic reasons thereafter. The ruling did not end the controversy, as church officials pledged to "use all means available to change the law in the future." (Slovak Spectator, 10 December 2007.)

Reliant on its allies in the KDH, the Church ironically enjoyed greater *policy* than rhetorical success, with abortion, religion in schools, stem cell research restrictions, and same sex marriage regulations all first legislated by the KDH, who then sought the Church's support for its stances. As of 2004, moreover, additional treaties with the Vatican provided for religious education in public schools, and a freedom of conscience that allowed doctors to refuse to perform abortions or teachers to abstain from teaching about birth control, if they were morally opposed to it. At the same time, however, there was little consensus about the role of the Church in politics, and not even its moral authority was taken for granted. Moreover, Church actions were met with considerable backlash. When Archbishop Jan Sokol criticised the SMER party's political advertising (which featured "unchristian" nudity), party leader Jan Fico immediately lashed out that "this is unprecedented interference by the church into politics. This makes the question of the separation of church and state a topical issue for Smer. Instead of interfering in this way, Mr. Sokol should say how much property the church got back through restitution" (Tancerova 2002), in a pointed allusion to the return of lucrative Church property after the collapse of communism. Similarly, the papal visit in 2003 met with controversy over the costs of providing security and accommodations (Tancerova 2003): in contrast, *all* Polish politicians remained silent on the costs of the repeated papal visits to Poland, and did not castigate Church officials. In short, the Slovak Church had to rely on specific political proxies to make any gains,

rather than on overwhelming popular authority and the direct and immediate political repercussions that it could bring.

If the Church achieved its policy goals in Slovakia belatedly, it was entirely dependent on the good graces of political allies in Hungary. Here, the churches were not able to recast political debates, and their policy achievements were incidental to their efforts. The bloody conflicts of the Reformation meant that no church could identify itself with the Hungarian nation, even if the Catholic Church dominated the Protestant, both numerically and politically (Enyedi 2003, 159.) Unlike Poland, Lithuania, or even Croatia, the church played no historical role in preserving national consciousness (Schanda 2003.) The liberal governments of 19th century, backed by the Protestant churches, moved toward church-state separation, but anti-liberalism subsequently brought Church and state closer in the interwar period. Under communism, the Roman Catholic church did not serve as a symbol of national independence, or as a source of protection for the opposition: with a few notable exceptions, such as Cardinal Mindszenty, “the communist regime succeeded in co-opting the Church leaderships and a portion of the local priesthood.” (Wittenberg 2006, 43.) Even as village priests sustained some right-wing and Christian identities, the Church as a whole did not have the symbolic or political capital of its Polish or even Slovak counterparts. If the Church remained neutral in Slovakia, it was effectively neutralized in Hungary: by 1980s, party leader Janos Kadar noted that the churches were ‘without exception loyal to our regime’ (Wittenberg 2006, 43.) Over 30 Church officials were elected to parliament and national council offices in 1985.

The Church nonetheless attempted to recast policy in terms that fused religious and national concerns once democratic politics returned. After 1989, both the conservative government and the Hungarian church raised objections to abortion and same sex marriage in national terms: abortion would threaten the integrity and continuation of the Hungarian nation by lowering the numbers of Hungarians. In the words of the Catholic priest who headed the Hungarian League for the Defense of the Unborn, “the number of Hungarians is dropping every year,” (*New York Times*, 5 January 1992, accessed 11 January 2009.) Subsequently, the Church opposed same sex marriage on the grounds that it would “undermine society’s health” in addition to violating natural law. (Catholic Online, 29 December 2007, accessed 11 February 2009.)

Yet these attempts to recast political debates met with little resonance. Actual policy proposals came *before* the Church began to agitate: the Church was reiterating the terms of the debate initially set by the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), the senior governing party. Pro-and anti-clerical camps continued their conflict, and no ready champion of church interests could be found, despite the 1990-4 government participation of the Christian Democratic Party (KDNP), formally allied with the Catholic Church. The 1994-8 socialist government openly advocated the separation of church and state, further undermining Church policy efforts. By 1998, most pro-clerical initiatives came not from the clergy, but from Viktor Orban, the right-nationalist Prime Minister and leader of the conservative Fidesz party. Accordingly, the Fidesz government introduced state financing of religion teachers, finalized the list of properties to be returned to the Church, increased Church subsidies, and planned to give pensions to the clergy before it was voted out of office in 2002. (Enyedi 2003, 170.) It did so for two reasons: first, the Christian Democratic KDNP had earlier fallen apart, and many of its members joined Fidesz, strengthening pro-Church currents within Fidesz. Second, Fidesz elites gained both legitimation and an arena for political mobilization, as open-air masses were held for Orban and his family, for example. Nonetheless, few public policy changes resulted, both due to an activist Constitutional Court, and the lack of full support within Fidesz ranks for what were seen as controversial policy initiatives. In short, both the Slovak and the Hungarian churches were dependent on political parties to achieve their goals. However, the Slovak church found an eager ally with the Christian Democrats, a party keen on exploiting the church's political capital (the best the small party could do under its circumstances.) Meanwhile, the Hungarian church could rely only on the incidental mercies of conservative parties eager to pursue their own political goals.

Conclusion

In the cases compared here, popular religiosity was a necessary, but not sufficient condition, for the influence of religion over public policy. The fusion of nation and religion, and the political alliances this fusion produced, allowed popular religion to translate into policy. These conclusions call into question both market analogies, with their assumption of constant and high demand (and the ability of the market to directly meet these needs), and theories of religiosity that rely on economic development as the condition for

either sacralization. While neither the Czech nor the French case are explored here in depth, this model accounts for the secularism and low levels of sacralization: in both cases, the Roman Catholic Church was the enemy of state-building projects, by dint of its identification with the Habsburg overseers of the Czech lands prior to independence, and its privileged, anti-republican, position in the *ancien regime* of pre-Revolutionary France. As a result, secular, not clerical, politics flourished.

At the same time, this account complements existing explanations. First, it accounts for the different resonance with which the political efforts of religious authorities are met. Second, it provides one explanation for the costs of conversion: where religion and nation are fused, religious conversion may mean national treason, and the severing of ties to one's community. As a result, religious monopolies may flourish not as a result of state support, but because the costs of leaving the religion are so high. Third, this explanation takes a broader view of the state not just as a supporter of a given religion, but as a more multi-faceted political actor, whose repression of religion or the nation may fuse the two.

Several questions remain. First, why these issue domains? Contemporary churches in advanced democracies have sacralized bioethics, education, and family law, but devoted far less attention to other potential "morality policies" such as capital punishment, poverty, prostitution, alcohol and drug prohibitions, or organized crime. One hint lies in the focus of many Christian churches on the family, and the importance of preserving it as a unit of the nation. Second, how resilient is sacralization, and why? Third, is this phenomenon limited to Christian countries and their particular history of church-state relations? Can it explain Shi'a Iran, Muslim Pakistan, and the different trajectories of Buddhism in Thailand and Sri Lanka? Finally, if religious identities are not fungible under certain historical circumstances, are there different costs to switching ethnic identities? By understanding the historical amalgamation of national and religious identities in Europe, we may begin to answer these questions.

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Table 1. Public Policy Outcomes

	USA	Can.	Ire.	Italy	Pol.	Croatia	Slovk.	Hun
Abortion restricted?	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Divorce restricted?	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Religion in schools? ¹⁷	No	Quebec only, optional	Yes ¹⁸	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Opt.
Stem cell research restricted?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Same sex marriage prevented?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Church Efficacy score	3	.5	5	2	5	1	4	.5

Table 2. Successful Religious Contestation of Public Policy

	USA	Can.	Ire.	Italy	Pol.	Croatia	Slovk.	Hun
Abortion	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes, after 2002	No
Divorce	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Religion in schools?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Stem cell research	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Same sex marriage?	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Summary score	4	0	5	2	3	3	3	1

Table 3. Religious Profiles

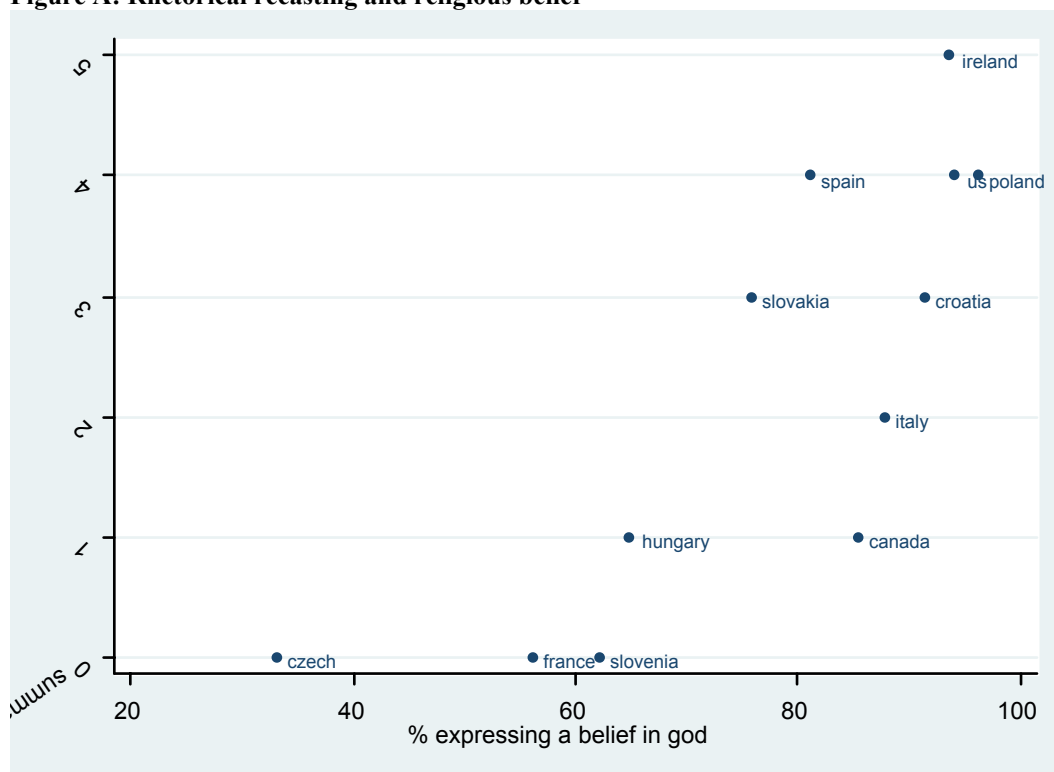
	USA	Canada	Ireland	Italy	Pol.	Croatia	Slovk.	Hun.	Europe Mean (SD)
% believing in God.	95.6%	89.2%	95.5%	93.5%	96.9%	93.2%	82.5%	68.5%	73.4% (17.6)
% belonging to a religious denomination.	78.5%	68.6%	91.3%	82.2%	95.5%	88.4%	76.9%	57.1%	77.6% (19.1)
% attending services > 1/month	60.3%	36%	70.1%	53.6%	77.8%	53%	81.3%	59.3%	31.9% (19)
% believing that religious leaders should NOT influence government	50.5%	75.7%	60%	65.6%	77.6%	74.1%	67.4%	64%	72.3% (8.9)
% Catholic	24%	43%	93%	88%	96%	91%	75%	77%	

¹⁷ Either state funds religious schools, or mandatory religion/ ethics taught in public schools.

¹⁸ Most schools are Catholic.

Table 4. Correlation matrix:

	% believing in God	% belonging to a religious denomination	% attending services > 1/month	Log GDP per capita	% believing that religious leaders should NOT influence government	Church recasting of political rhetoric
% belonging to a religious denomination	.68 0.000					
% attending services > 1/month	.78 0.000	.46 .0004				
Log GDP per capita	-0.42 0.0016	-.17 .23	-0.24 .08			
% responding that religious leaders should NOT influence government	.024 .88	.10 .51	.03 .83	-.14 .39		
Church recasting of political rhetoric	.80 .0018	.81 .0014	.84 .0005	.025 .94	-.21 .506	
Church policy efficacy	.66 .02	.74 .006	.88 .0002	-.12 .71	-.11 .72	.84 .006

Figure A: Rhetorical recasting and religious belief**Figure B: Policy Outcomes and religious belief**

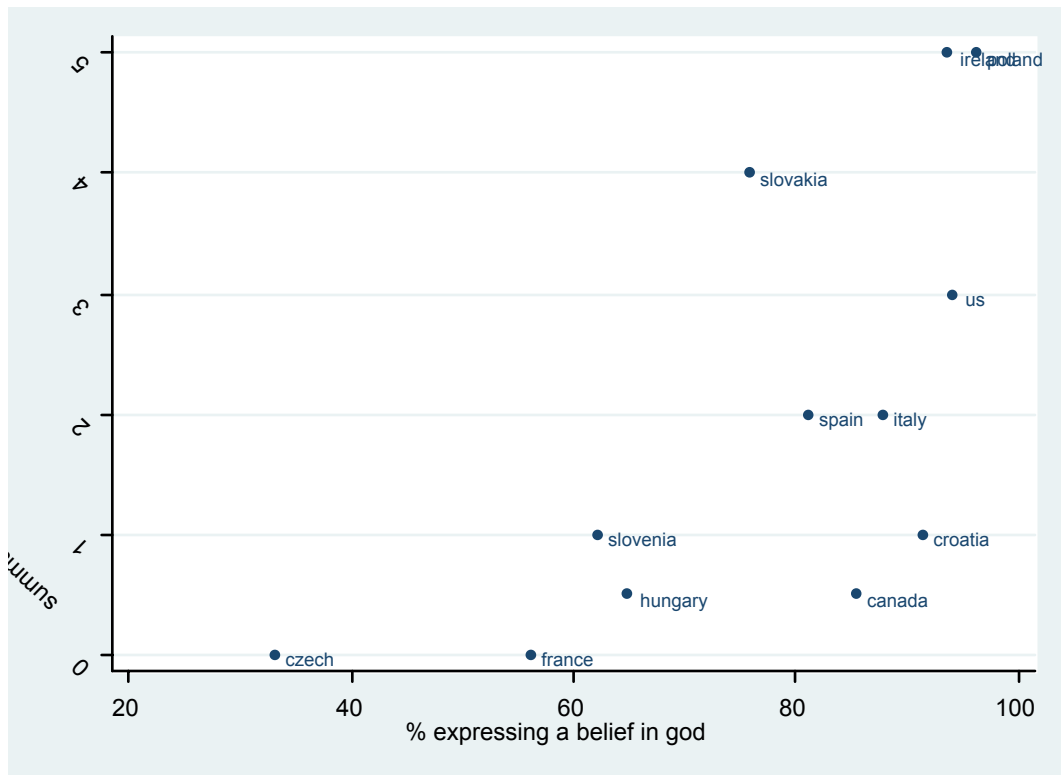


Figure E: Demand for sacralization and religious observance

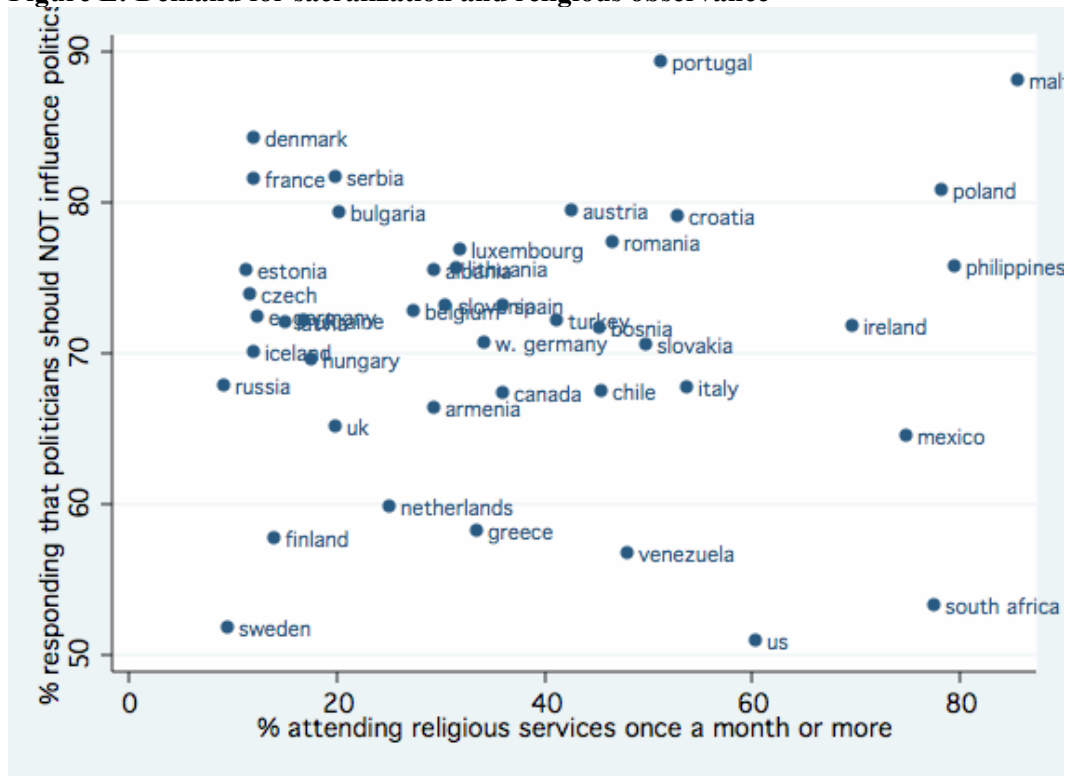


Figure C: Church recasting of political debates and demand for sacralization (ISSP data)

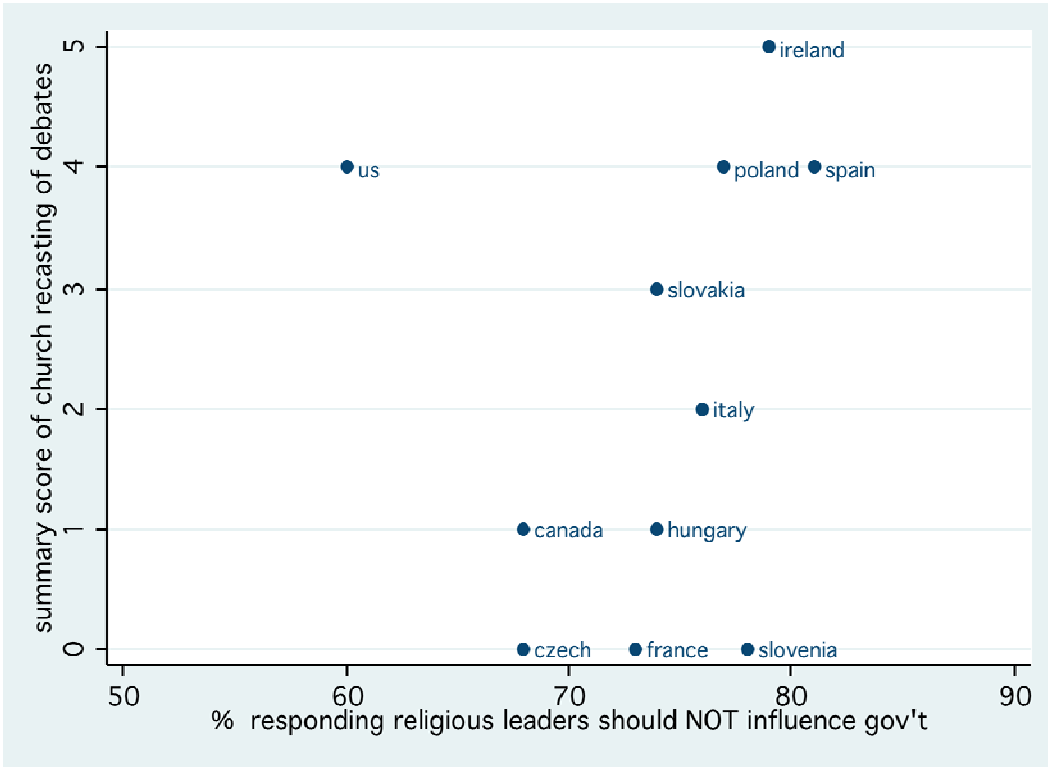


Figure D: Church policy efficacy and demand for sacralization (ISSP data)

