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What is This?

Where does religion meet democracy? A comparative analysis of attitudes in Europe

Natalia Vlas and Sergiu Gherghina

Abstract

Starting from the growing importance of religion for politics, this article tests whether religion in Europe is connected with democratic attitudes. Analyzing and understanding such a relationship is essential for a better understanding of the prospects of present and future democratic consolidation. Our two-step approach aims to assess the variation and causal forces of democratic attitudes in Europe in the light of broader country-level factors and individual proclivities towards religion and politics. We use data from the European Values Study (1999) for the correlations and regression model. Our findings undermine the existing prejudices according to which Islam leads to authoritarian attitudes. Moreover, we illustrate the crucial roles played by satisfaction with democracy and confidence in the Church in shaping democratic attitudes across religions.

Introduction

For a long time, religion has been peripheral to the concerns of political scientists. Based on the assumption that modernization leads to privatization, decline, and, indirectly, to the disappearance of religion from the public space, prominent figures in social sciences – Marx, Freud, Weber, and Durkheim – described such a trend. These expectations were not fulfilled and there was an ongoing intermingling of religion with major political events throughout the world. Numerous examples can be identified in the past two centuries, ranging worldwide from the American Revolution to the civil rights movement, or from the end of apartheid to the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe (Elshtain, 2009: 8). Recent data support the idea of a growing importance of religion in world politics as well as in peoples' lives, both in underdeveloped and developed countries (Berger, 1999: 1–19; Fox and Sandler, 2004; Haynes, 1998; Moghadam, 2003; Petito and Hatzopoulos,

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2003; Thomas, 2005). Although until recently Europe has been considered the exception from the global trend of the religious resurgence (Davie, 1999: 65–85), religion has nonetheless gained an increased attention in this part of the world. Religion 'is coming back to Europe' not only in the form of Islam, as a result of increased immigration, but also in the growth of new Christian movements (Jenkins, 2007; Motzkin and Fischer, 2008) and in the revitalization of religious traditions, especially in Eastern European countries.

This public visibility of religion raises questions regarding the future of democracy (Motzkin and Fischer, 2008). In the spirit of 'militant secularism,' some authors consider religion an anti-democratic force and an intruder in the political sphere (Rorty, 1994). Such perspectives are counterbalanced by those of classical thinkers (e.g. Tocqueville, Maritain, de Saint Exupéry) who consider religion (mainly Christianity) as a necessary asset for democracy or even the mainspring of democracy. A more specific approach sees religious affiliation as an important determinant of democracy, with some religions being more compatible with democracy than others (Fukuyama, 2001; Huntington, 1991: 71–85; Lipset, 1994: 5).

Building on the latter perspective, this article tests the existence of general and particular relationships between religion and democracy in Europe. Such an endeavor can be conducted on multiple levels, each dealing with particular aspects of the relationship. One is the analysis of the compatibility between the religious values/dogmas and liberal democracy. Another is the analysis of the particular actions and strategies of the various religious actors affiliated to particular religious traditions with respect to democratic issues and processes. Our approach targets the attitudinal analytical level, having as a basis the arguments emphasizing religion's role in shaping people's (un)democratic attitudes and values (Billings and Scott, 1994; Bottici and Challand, 2006; Kedourie, 1994; McAdam, 1982; McClosky and Zaller, 1984; Moore and Ovadia, 2006).

Specifically, we aim to identify if religion in Europe is connected with democratic attitudes. Analyzing and understanding such a relationship is essential for a better understanding of the prospects for democratic consolidation, especially in countries with 'questionable democratic traditions' (Michalski, 2006: 2). In doing so, we use a two-step approach. First, we employ bivariate statistics to test the general linkages between our variables. Second, we use a regression model to estimate the impact of the variables on democratic attitudes. This article provides an answer to the following research question: *How do religious affiliations influence the democratic attitudes of a person?* We use data from the 1999 wave of the European Values Study (EVS) to assess the variation and causal forces of democratic attitudes in Europe in light of broader country-level factors and individual proclivities toward religion and politics.

The first section describes the general relationship between religion and democratic attitudes, delving into theoretical arguments further elaborated in the second section. The latter clarifies the main concepts, presents the logical linkages between them, and formulates testable hypotheses. The section on research design includes details about data, variable operationalization, and methodology, while the fourth section deals with the findings. The final section summarizes the main conclusions and discusses the major implications of this study.

Religion and democratic attitudes

Previous studies indicate that a necessary condition for the persistence of democracy is the existence of convergent systems of values (Almond and Verba, 1963; Inglehart, 1997; 2000; Lipset, 1959; Mishler and Rose, 2001; Rose, 1997; Weber, 1958). Although the support for democracy may be strong, if it is not accompanied by compatible value systems it may not endure, and contextual circumstances could erode democratic support (Moreno and Mendez, 2002). As Inglehart

(2000, 96) argues: 'Democracy is not attained simply by making institutional changes through elite level maneuvering. Its survival depends also on the values and beliefs of ordinary citizens.' Either as pre-conditions for the establishment of a democratic regime (Huntington, 1993: 13) or as consequent elements of the democratic transition (Rose, 1997: 98; Schmitter and Karl, 1993: 47), the citizens' democratic attitudes and values and their acceptance of democracy as 'the only game in town' (di Palma, 1990) are necessary to maintain and consolidate democratic systems (Inglehart, 1997; Mishler and Rose, 2001).

Based on these linkages, we explore whether different religious traditions are somehow responsible for the nurturing of such attitudes. According to Inglehart and his colleagues (Inglehart, 1997; Norris and Inglehart, 2001), the prevalent attitudes existing in societies with strong support for democracy (i.e. enhanced by the socio-political development) are individual autonomy, tolerance, free choice, popular participation, trust, satisfaction with life, and skepticism with respect to authority. High levels of tolerance and interpersonal trust are fundamental for the functioning of democracy (Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 1991). Overall, low levels of interpersonal trust tend to correlate with authoritarian orientations, while high levels of interpersonal trust are less supportive of authoritarian leadership (al-Braizat, 2002: 279). Other authors emphasize the crucial value of positive attitudes towards democratic legitimacy that are believed to prevent democratic regime breakdown and encourage stability. In this respect, it ensures that the political dissatisfaction of the masses leads to reforms through legislative and electoral means rather than to coups and revolutions (Diamond, 1999: 169).

Gibson (1995: 55) described the democratic citizen as one who 'believes in individual liberty and is politically tolerant, has a certain distrust of political authority but at the same time is trusting of fellow citizens, is obedient but nonetheless willing to assert rights against the state, and views the state as constrained by legality.' A democratic citizen is one who believes that the democratic regime is the most appropriate one for society (democratic legitimacy attitudes), rejects anti-democratic (authoritarian) forms of governance, and is satisfied with the way democracy works, and respects human rights.

As for the determinants of these supportive democratic attitudes, different answers have been offered so far: historical country experiences, socio-demographic factors, economic development, and the strength of the civil society (see, for example, Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006; Anderson and Guillory, 1997; Bollen, 1983; Evans and Whitefield, 1995; Lipset, 1994). Apart from such factors, religion has also been identified as one of the significant cultural elements that shape people's democratic attitudes/values and their opinion about the systems of government (Billings and Scott, 1994; Huntington, 1993; Kedourie, 1994; with McAdam, 1982). Some authors have argued that religious and spiritual values have the ability to raise support for or, on the contrary, to inhibit democratic attitudes when certain conditions are present (Bottici and Challand, 2006; Karner and Aldridge, 2004; Katnik, 2002; McClosky and Zaller, 1984; Moore and Ovadia, 2006), while others have argued that different religious traditions have different modes of relating to democracy (Clenendin, 1994; Fukuyama, 2001; Huntington, 1998; Kedourie, 1994).

Theoretical linkages

This section presents the theoretical assumptions of the relationship between religion and democracy – focusing on Christianity (with its three main branches) and Islam, as these are the main religions represented in Europe. We summarize the historical developments and doctrinaire elements within these religious traditions that lead to the empirical testing displayed in the article (i.e. whether certain religious traditions favor democratic attitudes compared with the rest).

Islam and democracy

The democratic deficit of the Muslim world is widely acknowledged. Here, 'democracy lacks the strong institutional and cultural underpinnings that it needs,' power remains highly personalized, civil society is weak, the participatory state institutions are also weak, and democracy is often seen as an 'imported solution' (Tibi, 2008a: 47). There is no single genuine electoral democracy among the Arab countries, as Freedom House reports show (Karatnycky, 2000) – only pseudo-democratic political systems (Karatnycky, 2002; Volpi, 2004; Waterbury, 1994).

Part of the reason for this situation lies in the fusion of religious and political power in much of the Muslim world. Although some Muslim intellectuals promote the separation of the mosque and the state – among them the Iranian lawyer and human rights activist Shirin Ebadi (Monshipouri, 2004: 6), and Abdullahi an-Na'im, who promoted the idea that the state be considered as a guardian of secularism and secular human rights, freeing the mosque to become a site of worship instead of representing a contested political arena (An-Naim, 2003: 39) – such a separation seems to be problematic. It would entail a dismantling of the Islamic state in countries such as Iran, for instance (Mojab, 2001). Even in Turkey, a country that presents itself as a secular democracy, Islam still plays a significant role in politics, and the separation between them works in theory only. Tibi (2008b) argues that the AKP governing party, although defining itself as a moderate conservative party with a pro-Western orientation, is willing to set up an 'Islamic order.' As such, there is little possibility for the Islamist parties to develop 'a genuine commitment to democracy' as the Islamist ideology is incompatible with it. The same author warns that the Islamist institutional orientation, as opposed to the violent forms of Islamism, poses more subtle challenges to the democratic order – the representatives of it 'compete in elections for instrumental reasons, but they refuse to accept the full measure of democracy, including the political culture of democratic pluralism.' Accordingly, 'they may be partners, up to a point, in democratization, but they cannot be trusted' (Tibi, 2008a: 47).

Other studies (Pew Global Attitudes Project) emphasize the serious tensions that surround the role of religion in Turkey's political life and highlight 'growing doubts among Turks that democracy can thrive in their country and increasing worries that Islam is playing a larger, and possibly harmful, role in politics' (Ruby, 2007). Other authors, however, consider that Turkey is launched on the path to democratic consolidation and it actually attempts to 'consolidate democracy, reconcile Islam with secularism, and become a part of Europe without sacrificing its cultural and religious distinctiveness' (Ayoob, 2004: 451).

Apart from Turkey and other democratizing countries with predominantly Muslim populations such as Albania or Bosnia-Herzegovina, there are millions of Muslims dispersed within other (previously traditional Christian and democratic) European countries. The growing number of Muslim populations within the once homogenous Western European societies gives rise to tensions over the role that Islam may play in influencing the behavior of European Muslims. Many Europeans worry that the centrality of Islam in many Muslims' lives makes it difficult for them to accept European core values, such as tolerance, democracy and equal rights for women (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2004: 1).

Given that Islam sees God as the ultimate source of political authority and as the giver of the laws to govern the entire community, both at the individual and at the societal level (Voll, 1994), some authors argue in favor of the incompatibility between Islamic and democratic principles. While the democratic ideal includes values such as the tolerance of diversity, openness and pluralism, individual autonomy and freedom, Islam requires intellectual conformity and an uncritical obedience to authority, more fitted to a totalitarian state than to a democratic one (Huntington, 1984: 208; Kedourie, 1994: 5–6; Lewis, 1994: 54–56).

Similar to Christianity, Islam has several sects and a great diversity of views and interpretations of its laws and principles (Esposito and Piscatori, 1991). Moreover, the socio-political and economic circumstances of both individuals and their countries could impact on Muslims' democratic attitudes. In this context, some authors emphasize that Islam provides certain fundamental principles supportive of democracy – among them, the idea that power lies in truth, that justice and the rule of law are essential, and that there is a need for an advisory system of administration. Equally important in Islam is the idea that society is composed of conscious individuals with free will and responsibility for themselves and for others, and for governing themselves (Gülen, 2001: 134–135). These principles are compatible with democracy: 'the Qur'an addresses the whole community and assigns it almost all the duties entrusted to modern democratic systems. People cooperate with one another by sharing these duties and establishing the essential foundations necessary to perform them. The government is composed of all these foundations. Thus, Islam recommends a government based on a social contract. People elect the administrators and establish a council to debate common issues. Also the society as a whole participates in auditing the administration.'

By rejecting cultural essentialist explanations that blame Islam for the absence of democracy in the Muslim world, al-Braizat (2002) shows how the support for democratic ideals is universal and Muslims are not less supportive of democracy as an ideal than Christians. Mernissi (1992) and Hamdi (1996) argue that democratic values such as tolerance and openness are also present within the Islamic tradition. It thus seems that Islam provides both principles and values conducive to democracy, and leads us to formulate our first hypothesis:

> H1: Muslim respondents are more likely to display democratic attitudes compared with the non-Muslim respondents.

Christianity and democracy

While the relationship between Islam and democracy is considered by Western commentators to be problematic, the existence of a convergence between Christianity and liberal democracy is more often taken for granted. Kraynak (2001), on the other hand, claims that there is no inner affinity or inherent compatibility between Christianity (be it Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant) and liberal democracy. He suggests that what is observable is at best a prudent alliance since none of the great Christian thinkers (e.g. Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Luther, and even the American Puritans) was a liberal democrat. On the contrary, all supported other forms of government (e.g. monarchy, aristocracy or some mixed forms) which are considered to be capable of organizing and modifying the fallen nature of man.

However, historically speaking, modern democracy originated in Western Europe, in the part of the world that was fundamentally shaped by Western Christianity. Berger (2004) emphasizes that democracy could originate there because two conditions necessary for democracy to develop were present. On the one hand, there was the anthropological component that presupposes that every human being must confront God by himself, which later became the basis for universal human rights. On the other hand, there was the sociological element that requires the separation between the state and the church. Although this principle was common to Eastern Christianity too, the different historical circumstances in which the two Christianities developed resulted in different weight conferred to this principle. Thus, in Western Europe the struggle between the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy, whose outcome was 'pretty much a victory of popes over emperors, laid the groundwork of institutional pluralism and of what later developed into civil society' (Berger, 2004: 76).

In the case of Orthodox Christianity, on the other hand, some authors emphasize an incompatibility, or at least ambivalence, in relation to democracy. Their sources lie at least in part with Orthodoxy's Byzantine heritage: it developed within the context of an empire, in which it was allowed to influence the form and content of the theologies of state and culture assumed by Eastern Christianity. Due to this context in which democracy had no meaning, it was unprepared to face issues such as human rights and democracy (Papanikolaou, 2003). In the same vein, other authors have emphasized that Orthodoxy is more oriented towards quietism and less towards world realities. This tendency towards the 'nurturing of an otherwordly – mystical approach to life' was maintained throughout the course of history as Eastern Orthodoxy was insulated from the secularizing influences present in the West (Dobrijevic, 2006: 4). Accordingly, as Huntington (1998) would argue, Orthodoxy lacks those characteristics that would make it able to support Western-style (liberal) democracy, feeling uncomfortable with the modern democratic principles of Church–state separation, multiculturalism and religious pluralism and less supportive of civic and political action. While the Roman Catholic Church is praised for its theological embrace of human rights and support for democracy starting with the Second Vatican Council, the Orthodox Church did not experience such an *aggiornamento* and it has never addressed these issues. Consequently, it was ill prepared to deal with the new realities emerging after the fall of communism (Papanikolaou, 2003: 76). In Romania, for instance, the Romanian Orthodox Church's (ROC) compromised image due to its collaboration with the communist regime,[1] the problematic Church–state collaboration that continued after 1989 as well as the attempts of the ROC to 'shape Romanian democracy according to its vision,'[2] have caused Romanian intellectuals to 'deny the ROC a positive role in Romania's democratization efforts' (Stan and Turcescu, 2000: 1470–1471).

In Greece, on the other hand, it seems that the church '(except for efforts to preserve some minor church prerogatives) did nothing significant to oppose, resist or stall the eventual consolidation of democracy and it has been broadly supportive of the democratic government' since 1974, when democracy was instituted there (Stepan, 2005: 20). Indeed, there are some attempts to illustrate how the Greek Orthodox Church displays a certain degree of ambivalence towards some aspects of democracy, most notably pluralism, but beyond that it is not incompatible with democracy (Prodromou, 2004).

In the case of Protestantism, on the other hand, there seems to be an inherent affinity towards democracy as Protestantism displays certain features that created a favorable foundation for democracy: the emphasis on individual conscience guided by the scriptures, the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, and the importance ascribed to lay education and literacy, with all the resulting consequences (Woodberry and Shah, 2004: 48–60). Historically, Protestantism 'has also been linked to generating a political culture that promotes individualism, tolerance, the pluralism of ideas and civic associationalism,' and therefore the Protestant countries 'are more likely to be democratic compared to largely Islamic and Catholic states' (Tusalem, 2009: 883).

Undoubtedly, the role played by the Catholic Church in the resistance movement in some of the former communist countries is widely acknowledged. So too, is the resistance role played by the Lutheran Church in the German Democratic Republic (Berger, 2004: 79). Consequently, although Catholicism and Protestantism were accused not so long ago of standing in the way of democracy due to their anti-democratic stances and doctrines, they seem to have found certain theological resources to develop and support new democratic practices (Philpott, 2004). In the case of Orthodoxy, although such theological resources that support communitarian forms of democracy can be found, they are only sporadically and weakly used in order to theologically legitimize democracy (Papanikolaou, 2003; Promodrou, 2004). As Berger (2004: 79) puts it: 'Orthodoxy still

awaits its John Courtney Murray.[3] Pluralism and democracy have been realities imposed on Orthodoxy from the outside, to be either resisted or reluctantly accommodated.'

Accordingly, the response given by Berger to the question: 'Does Christianity *today* relate positively to democracy?' is the following: 'In the cases of Catholicism and Protestantism, the answer is pretty definitely yes. In the case of Orthodoxy, it is maybe' (Berger, 2004: 80). Based on these assumptions, that imply a certain ranking of the Christian denominations, some of them being more restrictive than others, depending on whether they have faced a major reform during modern times, we would therefore expect that Catholic and Protestant respondents display stronger democratic attitudes than the Orthodox ones. Following these theoretical arguments, we hypothesize that people belonging to the Orthodox Church will have the least democratic attitudes within the group of Christian denominations:

> H2: Orthodox respondents are less likely to display democratic attitudes compared with non-Orthodox respondents.

As soon as these relationships are established, we have to take one step further to make sure that their content is substantiated and implications are empirically explored. This is the second phase of our research, in which we try to identify certain patterns within and between the religious denominations. In this respect, we test whether three types of factors associated with religious, social, and political attitudes are related to the system of democratic values. The first variable is confidence in the Church. The first hypothesis of our study aims to reveal the general relationship between people belonging to a certain denomination and their democratic attitudes. However, this may suffer modifications once the confidence vested in the main religious institution comes into play. As previously argued, the distance between Church and citizens varies to a great extent. This happens not only between religions, but also within the same category. For example, the closeness felt by citizens towards the Catholic Church in Poland is greater than in Ireland, a country perceived as strongly Catholic. This difference lies in recent history when the Polish Catholic Church took a decisive political stance against the communist regime. This discrepancy is also reflected in the levels of confidence in this institution: almost 20% of Poles have a lot of confidence in the Church whereas slightly more than 13% in Ireland display the same feature.

We expect to see a linear effect of confidence in the Church over democratic attitudes especially within religions where these are not widely spread (i.e. Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism). In other words, there should be a negative correlation between confidence in the Church and democratic attitudes: the more people trust an institution that does not encourage democratic attitudes, the lower the level of displayed democratic attitudes. The reciprocal is logically valid and we expect to observe differences between groups (i.e. people belonging to more democratic permissive religions should display higher levels of trust in the Church). As a result, we hypothesize that:

> H3: A high level of trust in Church inhibits democratic attitudes.

Ever since Tocqueville published his *Democracy in America*, the involvement of citizens in voluntary associations has been considered one of the main components of a genuine democracy. Almond and Verba (1963: 320) have shown that these voluntary associations are the most important foundation of democracy, creating civic values conducive to durable democracies. In his study of the Italian regions, Putnam (1991) also maintained that the membership in such associations is the main source of civicness (i.e. the best way to learn civic attitudes). These associations serve as real schools of democracy: membership increases the face-to-face interactions and creates a favorable

framework for the development of attitudes like trust, tolerance, and solidarity used to achieve the groups' purposes. The same argument was strengthened in the context of participation in non-political voluntary associations. A high degree of involvement allowed for more learning of democratic attitudes such as institutional confidence (Stolle and Rochon, 1998: 47–65). Similarly, we expect the more active people to have more democratic attitudes compared with the rest of respondents, irrespective of their religion. In fact, getting involved in the community is the application of specific democratic rights and liberties (e.g. the right to association, freedom of speech) and that is why we would expect civic and democratic attitudes to be positively correlated:

H4: Civicness has a positive impact on democratic attitudes.

The third factor considered is satisfaction with democracy. The logical mechanism behind our hypothesis is straightforward: we expect people satisfied with democracy to have a higher level of democratic attitudes compared with those dissatisfied with democracy. Such a situation should be evident, especially within those religions that allow democratic values to develop:

H5: The satisfaction with democracy positively influences democratic attitudes.

Each of the latter three hypotheses is tested through bivariate correlations to identify the type of relationship established between the variables. However, as they focus on causal mechanisms, we conduct an Ordinary Least Squares Regression (OLS) model in which we include other attitudinal factors (e.g. confidence in Parliament and perception of the previous regime) and socio-demographic components (education, age, and gender) as determinants of the democratic attitudes. All these issues are extensively discussed in the following section, presenting the research design of our article.

Research design

For our study we have selected all the European countries included in the EVS. All missing cases were excluded from the analysis. Also, we have included the five religious denominations that directly interest us and excluded other religions. As a result of these two filters, we end up with approximately 22,000 respondents. The interviews were conducted face to face and all ensured country representativeness. Accordingly, we assume the same feature to characterize our religion samples.

The dependent variable is an index of democratic attitudes, ranging on a 1–14 scale. Two variables were combined to form this index: the option of an authoritarian political figure or domination of one party (2–8 scale); and the tolerance of minorities (of other religions and/or foreigners and other ethnic groups) on a 0–6 scale. When summing them, we weighted them equally. Cronbach's Alpha is 0.87 for this index. As a result, the higher the score, the more democratic are the attitudes. For our multivariate analysis we considered this ordinal index to be interval (as it has 13 values and respects all the assumptions made for regression).

The independent variable *Confidence in Church* is operationalized on a 1–4 scale having as extremes trust in Church (1) and lack of trust (4). The same applies to *Confidence in Parliament*. The variable *Civicness* is an index computed from the membership and voluntary action in various associations. There were 10 items for each dimension (initially coded 0 passive and 1 active) which were summed to an index: a person displaying civic attitudes would score 20, whereas a totally passive individual would register a score of 0. Cronbach's Alpha is 0.81 for this index. *Satisfaction*

with Democracy is an ordinal scale variable with values between very satisfied with democracy (1) and not satisfied at all (4). Perception of the political system in the past is treated in the same way, but the scale ranges from bad (1) to very good (10). Age is captured as the birth year of the person, education is coded into categories that correspond to levels of education, and for gender 1 is male and 2 female.

The hypothesis testing is done in two phases. The first implies the use of bivariate statistics in the form of cross-tabs and correlations. For the cross-tabs we have transformed the democratic attitudes variable to make the interpretation easier to follow. The ordinal scale was transformed into three categories, each of them including four or five categories (e.g. 'authoritarian attitudes' meant the 1–5 attitudes on the original scale). For correlation we have used Spearman, as the assumption of normality does not hold for our variables. Second, in order to test causality we employ an OLS regression with the following model:

$$\text{Democratic attitudes} = \text{constant} + \beta 1 \text{ Confidence in Church} + \beta 2 \text{ Civicness} + \beta 3 \text{ Satisfaction with Democracy} + \beta 4 \text{ Confidence in Parliament} + \beta 5 \text{ View of political system in past} + \beta 6 \text{ Education} + \beta 7 \text{ Age} + \beta 8 \text{ Gender} + \mu$$

Findings

As a general observation, there are very few people with authoritarian attitudes in Europe – only 1.7 percent of respondents. Table 1 includes the democratic attitudes of Europeans compared on the religious dimension,[4] and reveals that Muslim and Orthodox respondents display contrasting patterns when it comes to their authoritarian attitudes. The former have the least authoritarian attitudes (very close to zero percent)[5] within their category, whereas approximately 3 percent of the Orthodox respondents have such attitudes. The other three categories (Roman Catholics, Protestants, and those belonging to the Free Church) display 1 percent of authoritarian attitudes. There is a similar pattern when looking at the semi-democratic attitudes, with only 3 percent of the Muslim respondents falling in that category as opposed to 21 percent of the Orthodox and 16 percent of the Roman Catholic respondents. Moreover, this pattern is strengthened when looking at the category of democratic attitudes, in which we find 97 percent of the Muslim respondents. If we compare this percentage with the 76 percent Orthodox respondents and 84 percent Roman Catholic respondents displaying these attitudes, we can conclude that there is empirical support for the first two hypotheses.

This result is in line with the presented theoretical arguments. However, the empirical complexity makes us consider at least two possible contexts that enhance this discrepancy. First, the Muslim respondents are mainly residents in Western countries with consolidated democratic traditions. Living within an environment for a long period of time, socialization occurs and thus migrants

Table I. The relationship between religion and democratic attitudes (percentages)

Attitudes	Roman Catholic	Orthodox	Protestant	Free Church	Muslim
Authoritarian	1	3	1	1	0
Semi-democratic	15	21	8	9	3
Democratic	84	76	91	90	97

Note: Cramer's V = 0.16 (statistically significant at 0.01 level).

Table 2. The bivariate correlations with democratic attitudes (respondents in brackets)

Variable	Roman Catholic	Orthodox	Protestant	Free Church	Muslim
Confidence in Church	0.14** (13,387)	0.26** (3,991)	0.06** (4,987)	0.12** (565)	0.1 (190)
Civicness	0.1** (13,463)	0.13** (4,074)	0.13** (4,613)	0.11* (508)	0.12 (201)
Satisfaction with Democracy	0.12** (13,021)	0.19** (3,876)	0.14** (4,841)	0.05 (539)	0.32** (203)

Note: * significant at 0.05 level; ** significant at 0.01 level.

adapt to the political and social culture of their host country, keeping their religion. Consequently, complementary to the permissive character of Islam, they may also benefit from the socialization effect. Second, many Orthodox and Roman Catholic countries have a recent authoritarian past, with a short democratic experience. As Linz and Stepan (1996) argue, democratization takes place at several layers (i.e. constitutional, attitudinal, and behavioral), with attitudes coming rather late in the game and facing numerous challenges. This may explain why some respondents belonging to these religions demonstrate more semi-democratic and less democratic attitudes compared with the other respondents. The fact that the attitudes are in the process of formation cannot be ignored in explaining the entire situation. Summing up, there is an empirical pattern regarding the distribution of democratic attitudes between religions, but we cannot know if it is spurious.

Given these uncertainties, the test of the specific hypotheses becomes a necessary further step. In this respect, the bivariate correlations between confidence in the Church, civicness, and satisfaction with democracy and the democratic attitudes provide useful insights. Table 2 includes all correlation coefficients (Spearman) divided into the five religious denominations used so far. The third hypothesis regarding the level of trust in the Church and democratic attitudes finds empirical support across all religious denominations. Overall, there is a slight to medium tendency of people trusting the Church to have less democratic attitudes (coefficients ranging between 0.06 and 0.26, almost all except for Muslims being statistically significant). Moreover, this result is highly consistent with what the test of the first two hypotheses indicates. It was previously emphasized that the Orthodox respondents are the usual suspects where this linkage is the strongest. The correlation coefficient is the highest in the case of this denomination, followed by the Roman Catholic respondents (a similar pattern to what is detected in Table 1). At the same time, there is a weak tendency for those Muslim respondents who trust their Church to display less democratic attitudes (without a possibility to generalize due to the lack of statistical significance). In a nutshell, the test of the third hypothesis indicates that in quite a few situations the respondents vesting confidence in the Church have less democratic attitudes compared with the rest. The pattern gets stronger as we move downwards on the ladder of permissiveness from Muslims to Orthodox respondents. Whenever the religion tradition (e.g. Orthodox) inhibits democratic attitudes, there is a higher probability to transform the discourse into *us vs them* and to polarize the attitudes of the people according to their initial beliefs (i.e. the Church or the democratic issues).

When examining the relationship between civicness and democratic attitudes, we observe a general positive pattern. Overall, there is a weak correlation, without differences between religious denominations: people with civic attitudes have a weak tendency to have more democratic attitudes compared with their fellow citizens falling within the same religious denomination. Our hypothesis finds empirical support and illustrates how civic involvement plays a role in shaping democratic attitudes in Europe without interfering with the religious factor.

Finally, our hypothesis about the positive relationship between satisfaction with democracy and democratic attitudes also finds empirical support. The correlation coefficients indicate discrepancies between the situation in different religions, ranging from a very weak relationship in the case of the Free Church respondents (0.05, not being statistically significant) to a medium relationship (0.32, statistically significant at 0.01) in the case of the Muslims. Thus, respondents belonging to the most permissive religion in the analyzed group display the strongest correlation between their perception of democracy and their attitudes. Such an observation is consistent with our previous argument about the Muslim migrants who settled in Western democracies. As long as they are satisfied with the general situation in the host country, they embrace democratic attitudes and follow the models they observe. However, this empirical test provides an apparently surprising result for the Orthodox respondents: the correlation between their satisfaction with democracy and democratic attitudes is medium (0.19, statistically significant at 0.01), although their religion appears to be the least permissive in terms of democracy. Our explanation for this situation is connected with the status of relatively young democracies, which characterizes the Orthodox societies included in the study. For example, Greece appears to be the oldest democracy in that cluster of countries: before joining the EU three decades ago it was ruled by authoritarian governments. Thus, democratization in all these states has only recently been completed and it often went hand in hand with the democratic attitudes. People satisfied with the political transformation are also more likely to have democratic attitudes, compared with their fellow citizens who still long for the old regime.

Although our hypotheses were totally or partially supported by empirical evidence, we would like to clarify the remaining puzzling aspects and to delve into the causal mechanisms. By including the above-mentioned variables into a common regression model to which we add supplementary variables, we test the explanatory potential of the factors included in hypotheses 3–5. The models (the same for every religious denomination) are presented in Table 3 and have as a dependent variable the democratic attitudes of the citizens.[6] Practically, this multivariate analysis aims to capture the causes of democratic attitudes across religions. The explanations are quite poor in almost all the cases, the best explained attitudes being those of the Orthodox (16% variance explained) and Muslim respondents (10%). The general picture does not change dramatically when other determinants are introduced, the only variable making a difference being education.

Table 3. The results of the OLS models

Variables	Coefficients				
	Roman Catholic	Orthodox	Protestant	Free Church	Muslim
Confidence in Church	0.14**	0.18**	0.12**	0.16**	0.11
Civicness	0.07**	0.06**	0.11**	0.1	0.13
Satisfaction with Democracy	0.13**	0.14**	0.1**	0.08	0.31**
Confidence in Parliament	−0.03**	0.01	−0.09**	0.06	0.06
View of political system in past	−0.06**	−0.07**	0.04*	0.03	0.11
Education level	0.12**	0.18**	0.15**	0.16**	0.01
Age	0.04**	0.09**	0.06**	−0.01	0.04
Gender	0.03**	0.05**	0.05**	0.08	0.1
R^2	0.07	0.16	0.09	0.06	0.1
N	13,387	3,991	4,841	539	203

Note: The coefficients are standardized. * significant at 0.05 level; ** significant at 0.01 level

Those respondents graduating from high school or with a university degree have more democratic attitudes compared with the respondents who attended only primary or secondary school. Education is an important determinant for all except the Muslim religion, where it has practically no influence on the democratic attitudes of Muslim respondents. Apart from this, education is the second most important predictor for attitudes, next to satisfaction with democracy and after confidence in the Church.

Confidence in Parliament, the perception of the political system in the past, age, and gender make little or no difference when it comes to political attitudes. The results of our statistical tests indicate that for some models, some of these variables are slightly more relevant than for others. For example, for Muslims gender has an impact: women display more democratic attitudes compared with men. The lack of explanatory potential for the gender variable is somewhat surprising. In other instances, these supplementary variables do not have a consistent effect across religions. Confidence in Parliament provides opposite effects. For the Roman Catholic and Protestant respondents, more confidence in Parliament has a positive impact on democratic attitudes, whereas for the respondents belonging to the Free Church, Orthodox, and Muslim religions those who trust the Parliament have less democratic attitudes.

The story told by the figures in Table 3 confirms and strengthens our previous findings. The only exception is made by Confidence in Church, which loses its discriminatory feature between religions as soon as other variables are included in the model. However, it maintains the direction of its effect on democratic attitudes. Satisfaction with Democracy and Civicness have positive impacts; however, they do not explain the wide variance in democratic attitudes. Summing up, the variable bearing most explanatory potential is Confidence in Church followed by Satisfaction with Democracy, Civicness, and Education. The latter is the only variable among the controls that performs quite well, justifying the expectation that educated respondents will display more democratic attitudes compared with the rest. Through education individuals acquire knowledge, better understanding of the political and social processes, and analytic potential. All these features transcend religion as education appears to have a similar effect among all examined religious denominations apart from the Muslims (where the low number of respondents may also play a role).

Conclusions

Three major conclusions can be drawn from our statistical tests. First, there are differences among the European respondents belonging to various religions when it comes to democratic attitudes. The theoretical linkages revealed in the second section of our article find empirical correspondence, a relevant discrepancy being observed between the Orthodox and Muslim respondents. The latter have the highest percentage of respondents with democratic attitudes and the smallest with authoritarian characteristics within the denomination. Second, Civicness and Satisfaction with Democracy appear to be relevant in the process of shaping democratic attitudes. More important, such factors do not act differently across religions. Thus, the discrepancy between the democratic attitudes of respondents belonging to different religious denominations can be reduced as soon as people have similar profiles with respect to their civic engagement and perception of the democratic regime. Finally, looking at the profile of the Muslim respondents in Europe, these findings reveal their socialization within the European democracies and contradict the prejudiced discourse against them. The permissiveness of their religion towards democracy and their consistent attitudes provide a perspective contradicting an existing perception.

Apart from these observations, our study carries two other directly observable implications, at both theoretical and empirical levels. First, the connection detected between various types of

denominations and democratic attitudes in Europe is not random. The general pattern in which Muslim respondents tend to have more democratic attitudes compared with the Christian respondents is substantiated when analyzing the determinants of those attitudes. As a result, the theoretical frames discussing the influence of religion in everyday life may suffer modifications as soon as elements like civicness or democratic experience are incorporated. In this respect, we narrow down the relationship between democracy and religion by exploring how components of the latter influence democratic attitudes. Second, our empirical contribution to existing research is twofold. On the one hand, we provide empirical tests of theoretical ideas. Our large N analysis complements the single case studies and targets general patterns. On the other hand, we reveal similarities and differences in predicting democratic attitudes across religious denominations. Thus, while Civicness appears to be a rather weak universal explanation for democratic attitudes, Confidence in the Church and Satisfaction with Democracy vary greatly between the least and the most permissive religions. Such findings are relevant for countries where democracy is not yet established: the channeling of the religious discourse in a certain direction may end up in specific democratic attitudes.

Country-specific studies may confirm and further specify our findings. The major impediment of our aggregate level analysis lies in the inability to explain the observed causal mechanisms. However, this exploratory endeavor sets the basis for further research. We have only outlined differences between the democratic attitudes of people belonging to several religious denominations. Further research is required to explain the reasons for these attitudes. Apart from the already explored democratic and civic experiences, studies can account for a multitude of social and economic factors that may make the difference. Even following our line of reasoning (i.e. using the same model), empirical tests with other data (and different conceptualizations of our key terms) should be conducted to determine the robustness of our results.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. During the communist regime, some of the most prominent members of the Romanian Orthodox Church, for instance, attempted to reconcile Orthodox theology with the communist ideology (see the *Apostolat Social*, in which patriarch Justinian promoted the concept of 'social apostolate,' created by the fusion of Marxist-Leninist social analysis and Orthodox theology – Stan and Turcescu, 2000: 1468–1469), and the latter patriarch Teoctist supported the communist regime to its very end – he even sent the dictator a telegram of support days after the first popular anti-communist uprising, which started in Timisoara on 15 December 1989 (Stan and Turcescu, 2000: 1470).
2. Given that many Orthodox leaders considered democratization as a threat to their Byzantine view of church–state relations (Stan and Turcescu, 2000: 1471).
3. John Courtney Murray was an American Jesuit who 'provided a distinctively Catholic legitimation of religious liberty and democracy' (Berger, 2004).
4. We excluded those countries that are not considered at least partly free in the Freedom House index or that do not score above 0 in the Polity IV measurement. In the excluded case, there is a large probability of having the democratic attitudes of their citizens influenced by other factors than those considered in this article.

5. The percentages were rounded to whole numbers without decimals. That is why in Table 1 there is no Muslim respondent with authoritarian attitudes. In reality, their percentage is below 0.1.
6. We have checked for the multicollinearity of the independent variables, and the results indicate no reasons to worry (the maximum value of the correlation coefficient was 0.3, which is statistically significant).

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