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The Word of God Comes into the Voting Booth. Church Attendance and Political Involvement in East Central Europe during the Early 1990s

Abstract: In this research I explore the effect of religious denomination and belonging on political participation in former communist countries of East Central Europe after the fall of communism. In the early 1990s, mostly as a response to forced secularization during communism, authors heralded a massive religious revival in the countries formerly belonging to the Eastern Bloc. In this paper I show that the re-discovery of God and church was not equally popular in all countries. Moreover, I explore the links between religious participation and political participation and I find no uniform transnational effect of denomination. Rather, the Eurobarometer survey data from the early 1990s suggests that the ways in which religious believing and belonging influence political participation at the beginning of democratization is context driven. Indeed, one of the strengths of this paper resides in my attempt to capture the religious context in post-communist Europe shortly after its collapse. I thus contribute to a better understanding of how religious and political involvement are intertwined during early transition in East Central Europe. In the conclusion, I advocate the need for adequately taking context into consideration, especially given its dynamic and multi-faceted nature.

Keywords: religious participation, political participation, East Central Europe, democratization

According to the English version of the *Pravda* newspaper, the Russian Orthodox Church is the largest importer of spirits and cigarettes countrywide. Due to its tax-free status, granted by successive post-Soviet governments, the Orthodox Church became a lucrative "corporation," facilitating the sale of "non-Orthodox" goods. The same newspaper appreciates that the future may also bring a monopoly over wine imports. Across the ocean, American political scientists research the significant potential of churches in creating democratic behavior and civic skills. They report that Christian congregations in the United States are veritable creators of democratic attitudes and civic skills. In this paper, I address the following question: "How can vodka be reconciled with voting? The focus of my research is the effect of church participation on political participation in Central and East Europe.

Central and Eastern Europe has been under scholars' lenses for more than a decade now, but the focus tends to fall on either of two preferred sub regions: Central Europe (comprising Poland, the Czech and Slovak republics, Hungary and Slovenia) or Russia and its former republics. Cross-sub-regions studies are harder to come about, and Romania, Bulgaria and Albania are under-represented (Tucker 2002). My research compares religious determinants of political participation across

10 countries: former Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Russia, Bulgaria, Albania, Romania and the three Baltic republics, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Indeed, Central Europe, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics seem to share more differences than similarities. Language patterns, ethnicities, forms of government and social and political pasts differ. History reports a wide range of political entities from Imperial Russia, to independent Romanian pre-state organizations, to Ottoman dominated Bulgaria and to the Austrian Hungarian monarchy. As difficult as comparisons across Central and Eastern Europe may be, at least three commonalities justify the effort. First, all the countries in the region have a communist past. Second, all the countries were part of imperial powers. Third, democratization is undertaken in each and every country. Pre-communist and communist pasts are relevant factors in explaining democratic outcomes (Ekiert 1991).

According to the majority of "international assessors of democracy," Central Europe consists of consolidated market economies and democracies, while Eastern Europe, Russia and the former Soviet Republics are still in transition (Freedom House, USAID). What causes differences in performance? Comparative studies are specifically designed to answer these types of questions, and this is what I attempt in this paper. I explore whether religious denominations and church attendance patterns influence political participation, and thus determine the creation of a democratic political culture. More specifically, I test two alternative hypotheses. First, along the lines of Max Weber's *Protestant Ethics*, I ask whether particular denominations affect patterns of political participation in similar ways across countries. This hypothesis is labeled the "essentialist" hypothesis. Second, I assert the importance of every country's social, cultural and religious context, and assess the impact of religious participation measures on political participation country by country. I name this latter hypothesis "contextual."

In the following, I first explore the relationship between religion, transitions to democracy and political participation. I assert that, because of the popularity of religion and high rates of church attendance across Central and Eastern Europe, learning and developing civic skills in religious arenas is a possibility. Second, I introduce the *Civic Volunteerism Model* developed by Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) as a framework for studying determinants of political participation. In this section I explain why the CVM model is not very helpful in studying religious determinants of political participation in Central and Eastern Europe, and present a more contextual model (Wood 1999). In the third section, I analyze survey data for 10 countries, and assess the impact of religious participation on measures of political involvement. Fourth, I draw the conclusions of this study, and discuss its explanatory power and inherent limitations.

Constitutions, Voting booths and Altars

The connection between transitions to democracy, church involvement and political participation is not obvious. Transitions to democracy imply both institutional choices

and the population's response to these new institutions. Institutional choices are easier and more controllable processes than the rooting of these institutions. As an illustrative example, Taagepera (2003) analyzes the process of choosing electoral rules for democracies in transition, and he concludes that, after reinventing the wheel, every country ends up with a variation of an already existent system. The previous example illustrates the fact that institutional choices have a limited range of variation, while the correlative process of rooting them in the national post-authoritarian context can have endless outcomes. Lijphart (1996), Diamond, Linz and Lipset (1995), and Mainwarring (1992, 1997) are just a few authors that researched transitions from an institutional point of view.

In consolidated democracies, the response of the population reflects aspects of democratic political culture, such as political participation and behaviors. Successful transitions need political participation, and political participation in transitional countries requires mobilization and recruitment efforts, due to the lack of democratic political culture, hindered by an authoritarian regime. Among mobilizing factors, religion and churches can mobilize citizens politically, and thus contribute to the creation of both a consolidated democracy and democratic culture. The question remains: Do they mobilize? And, if so, to what extent and for what purpose?

Democratic regimes depend on political participation for their validation and for the mere functioning of the regime. In addition to the heavy accent placed on participation per se, democracy also requires particular forms of political participation: voting (Duch 1993), party identification (Barnes et al. 1985) and even the open discussion of the polity's problems (Barnes 2001). In addition, political participation is usually measured by degree of involvement in political issues, ranging from voting to participation in protests and identification with a political party. However, these measurements do not speak by themselves about civic skills. Are the people participating because they feel empowered and have already developed civic skills, or are they merely recruited by a powerful agent? This question gives rise to a discussion of civil society. In established democracies, civil society is one of the main political mobilizers (Verba et al. 1995). What is its role in democratizing countries?

Civil society is a necessary complement for democracy. Building on DeTocqueville's observations of 19th century American voluntary associations, civil society comprises all the participatory aspects of the society that are not specifically political and are outside the state sphere. It is the key concept that characterizes current discourses on democratization. People outside of the government getting together and solving problems is a necessary attribute of every consolidating democracy. Expanding on DeTocqueville's observations, Robert Putnam (1993, 2000) developed the concept of social capital, as the most useful resource that a good civil society has, and hence revived the term.

Civil society is usually connected with associationalism (Kaldor and Vejvoda 1997). Multiple non-governmental organizations that determine split loyalties and overlapping identities are at the base of American pluralism. However, Cohen and Arato (1994) qualify the term, and ask what the probability of seeing multiple groups in Central and Eastern Europe is as compared to cases of consolidated democracies.

Carothers (1999) explains that "foreign imported" associations or associational ideas do not grow roots in Central and Eastern Europe because there is no tradition for them. In addition, Kaldor and Vajvoda (1997) explain that civil society is a more familiar term for some countries in Central and Eastern Europe (Hungary, Slovakia, and in the late 80s, Poland becomes the epitome of civil society through the Solidarity movement) while the rest are not familiar with the concept. Ekiert (1991) also asserts that the breakdown of the communist regime created a dramatic decrease in popularity and authority of both state and civil society, and resulted in apathy.

Even if Putnam is offering fairly detailed recipes for a flourishing civil society that will benefit the democratic polity, different countries follow these recipes differently according to their respective historical, social and cultural contexts. It is thus important to focus on the effect on civic skills and political participation from those organizations that actually seem to fare better after the breakdown of the communist regime in terms of popularity and participation rates.

I chose to analyze the role of the church in affecting political participation because it is the only institution that is trusted by the population in Central and Eastern Europe. According to Mishler and Rose (1997), disappointments caused by democratic transition create political malaise, observable in decreasing rates of turnout among other things. The church and the army however, continue to be highly trusted institutions. Additionally, people actually participate in religious activities more than any other political or social event (Mishler and Rose 1997). There are differences within Central and Eastern Europe, but overall the rate of church attendance is higher than any other participatory activity.

Furthermore, the role of the church as a segment of civil society that can manufacture civic skills is significant from an ethical point of view. According to Barnes (2001), there are few political institutions that have been left uncompromised by the communist regime. For example, trade unions represent part of the communist inheritance. High rates of participation in trade unions after 1989 are to be understood by their quasi-mandatory membership status.

The triad of democratization–participation–church, reflects an ongoing debate about political culture and political participation that will be the last point of this section. Does democracy require democratic political culture, or is it that democratic political culture is created by the democratic regime? Is church participation the link or the deterrent for successful creation of political culture and democracy? Almond and Verba (1963) and Inglehart (1990) are advocates of the first approach. Democratic political culture manifested as civic beliefs and participatory acts conditions democratic development. This is a culturalist thesis that asserts the necessary priority of democratic values before democratization occurs. Following this thesis, the countries in Central and Eastern Europe have fairly bleak prospects for democratic consolidation, due to their communist experience: "One of the worst legacies of authoritarian rule is the lingering de-politicization of the population, where political involvement was confined to obligatory channels (and thus discredited) or else forbidden" (Barnes 2001: 99). Even after the communist regime breaks down, people's perception of mandatory meaningless political participation can be a lingering influ-

ence. The second argument is clearly developed in Muller and Seligson (1994). They turn the culturalist thesis on its head when they state that civic beliefs are not the prerequisite of a democratic regime, but rather, they are created and developed by a democratic regime. They maintain that, at least in the case of interpersonal trust, the regime can be the creator of this quality.

I argue that the two models are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Democratic regimes need democratic values in order to consolidate, and, in turn, they reproduce democratic values themselves. In other words, every institution emerges from a cultural context but continually affects the context as well. I maintain that civil society can be the main agent of creating democratic attitudes and behaviors. Instead of focusing on the effect of civil society on political participation per se, I take a more pragmatic approach and focus on the effect of churches, as the most "populated" areas of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe.

The Civic Volunteerism Model Revisited

Most of the literature on determinants of political participation emphasizes resources. Citizens with more resources tend to participate more. Socio-economic status (SES) is the primary determinant of political participation: higher income, a better social status, and more education all lead to increased participation. SES, as developed by Verba, Nie and Kim (1978) however, does not tell the full story. The role of civil society needs to be addressed as well. Therefore, the *Civic Volunteerism Model* (CVM), developed by Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) introduces the mobilizing role of the civil society. According to the CVM, political engagement and civic skills also increase political participation, besides SES. Engagement is constituted by those positive beliefs and attitudes towards democracy, coupled with feelings of personal political empowerment and efficacy. Civic skills are practices and experiences that familiarize individuals with the political game, and its rules of play. Writing a petition, organizing a campaign, even voting makes more sense if it is practiced. The authors show that participation in non-political organizations, such as unions, voluntary organizations and churches, creates a familiarity with the ways organizations function and give the individual a feeling of efficacy.

Specifically in the case of churches, Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) explain that they have the benefit of eliminating resource driven inequalities apparent in the American system. To be sure, the authors warn that not all churches have the same impact on creating civic skills. Protestant churches, for example, are more efficient at empowering citizens since they are focused on more discussion and participatory practices.

I find one major problem with the CVM model, which lies in the authors' inability to deal with the limitations of the model imposed by the internal culture of the church. Richard Wood (1999) asserts the causal autonomy of culture and states that the internal political culture of the church is formed from its cultural strategy and its cultural base. He argues that political science and social movement literatures do not

address the critical issue of church's internal structure in both limiting and affecting its effect on civic skills building.

The cultural base of a church represents those segments of participants' cultural terrain that the church purports to, those common unifying traits of the population that offer the legitimizing base for the church's actions. The cultural strategy indicates what part of community life the organization will draw upon. These two factors lead to the formation of an internal political culture, made up of shared assumptions, perceptions and symbols that facilitate the understanding of the surrounding world. The political culture affects the projection of social power and the ability to shape the public realm.

Wood's approach is designed for the pluralist religious space existing in the United States. His announced goal was to determine the effectiveness of church participation in the representation of minorities. So part of his analysis will not apply to cases of dominant religion or even state religion. The overall framework, though, is useful. Cultural base and cultural strategy carry meaning when applied outside the North-American context.

I suggest that Wood's model can be used to amend the Civic Volunteerism Model. The major weakness of the CVM is the assumption that initial religious motivations are converted into civic skills. This assumption underlines the presence of two consecutive conversions. First, the religious motivations that prompt a person to go to the church are converted into a process of learning civic skills. Second, once these civic skills are learnt, they are subsequently converted into political participation. Wood's analysis addresses the institutional aspect of this weakness: initial religious motivations are converted into civic skills and then into political participation in accordance with the internal political culture of the church. In addition to this aspect, there is also an individual volitional aspect, namely the intention of the individual to perform this series of conversions.

In the next section, I analyze the impact of religious participatory actions on political participation. I make a distinction between various denominations and countries, in order to control for the variation imposed by each church's internal political culture. The two alternative hypotheses are the following. First, there is the denominational hypothesis: individual denominations have the same uniform impact on political participation, independent of the context. Second, there is the contextual hypothesis: churches function differently depending on their contexts, and so one can see within denomination variation.

Data Analysis

The data set used for this analysis is the Central and Eastern Eurobarometer from 1991. The size of the multinational sample is fairly large, allowing for within country analyses on samples of over 1000 respondents.

The CVM model will be tested for the major denominations and their corresponding churches in Central and Eastern Europe: Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox

and Muslim. In doing so, I undertake an exploratory research and assess the impact of church on political participation by country and church. The decision to test the model by both country and church has two important advantages. First, it allows one to distinguish patterns of political participation influenced by religious variables. For instance, perhaps Catholic nations have the same religious and political participation mechanisms. Huntington (1996) affirms that democracy and capitalism, in other words a successful civilization, will only go as far as Catholicism and Protestantism go, which would not extend to Muslim countries, or perhaps to Orthodox countries. Second, it may not be religion per se that has an influence, but rather the relationship between the state and the church that determines the effect on political participation.

The operationalization of concepts is always a difficult process. To measure the effect of church on political participation, I use denomination and church attendance. Denomination and church attendance are overlapping in some respect. In some cases, choosing to identify yourself with a particular denomination is already proof of more religiosity, even if you do not actively participate in the church. Church attendance however is only one possible measure of church involvement. While using church attendance as the only measure of church involvement is a limitation, one can argue that, at least for Catholic and Orthodox churches in Central and Eastern Europe, church attendance is a "sufficient" indicator, since these churches do not have the extent of access and community oriented activities that Protestant churches do.

For the political participation measures I chose three variables: intention to vote in the incoming elections, political discussion and political persuasion. The intention to vote measures electoral participation and can fluctuate according to the time remaining until the next elections in each country. However, given that this data was collected in 1991, electoral enthusiasm was still somewhat at a peak, due to the still recent liberating experiences of 1989. Political discussion measures frequency of political discussion with friends. The variable was made into a dichotomous variable (discuss politics, or do not). Political persuasion complements the political discussion question and asks whether the respondent ever persuades people to change their political views.

The intention to vote measure is a proxy for electoral participation. In other words, if church participation is positively correlated with intention to vote, then we see a recruitment effort from the church. Recruitment may indeed increase political participation but in a merely instrumental way, without building democratic political culture. Political discussion and persuasion are considered a proxy for civic skills. Traditionally, political discussion is used as a measure of engagement, while persuasion approximates political campaigning. In the context of this research however, discussion and persuasion can measure civic skills, since I am only testing the importance of religious determinants of political participation. If going to church increases discussion and persuasion, then something more than recruitment is taking place. If religious participation is correlated with political discussion, persuasion, and electoral participation, then the church is a creator of civic skills. However, the questions assessing political discussion and persuasion have a cultural specificity belonging to the Western world, and they have to be taken as such.

Table 1

Religious denomination by country

Country/religion	Protestant	Catholic	Orthodox	Muslim	None	Other
Poland	.0%	93.8%	.0%	.0%	3.4%	2.8%
Czechoslovakia	2.8%	48.2%	.3%	.0%	43.8%	4.9%
Hungary	15.4%	45.5%	.0%	.0%	36.2%	2.9%
Russia	.3%	.0%	38.2%	2.5%	48.9%	10.1%
Romania	4.4%	3.9%	87.8%	.0%	.6%	3.3%
Albania	.0%	8.3%	20.7%	65.0%	.7%	5.3%
Bulgaria	2.3%	1.1%	49.1%	9.7%	34.8%	3.0%
Estonia	19.2%	.7%	13.4%	.0%	61.5%	1.7%
Latvia	7.5%	16.2%	19.3%	.1%	37.7%	12.4%
Lithuania	.5%	65.5%	4.9%	.0%	23.6%	3.0%

Intention to vote, political discussion and political persuasion are all dichotomous variables to allow for a better comparison between them (*intention to vote* is a dichotomous variable in the survey while *political discussion* and *persuasion* were ordinal with 3 and 4 categories respectively—then recoded). The survey question referring to *church attendance* has 5 categories of answers: several times a week, once a week, several times a year, once a year and never. *Education* has four categories: primary education or less, secondary incomplete, secondary complete, and higher education/university/college. *Age* is a numerical variable.

Three pieces of significant information are readily visible in this table. First, the area comprises countries with one dominant religion such as in Romania, Bulgaria and Russia, coming close to religious homogeneity in Poland, and countries with pluralistic religious spaces, like in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Albania and the Baltic republics. Religious homogeneity and heterogeneity may be one contextual variable that influences the effect of church attendance on political participation. Second, in the countries with one majoritarian religion, the majority can be fought over other denominations, such as in Romania, or over atheists like in Bulgaria and Russia. Third, and related to the previous point, the number of atheists varies from country to country. Romania and Poland have the smallest number of atheists, at .6% and 3.4% respectively, while Estonia, Russia, Czechoslovakia and Hungary have significantly more. The number of atheists is an interesting question in and of itself: after the religious reprimation undertaken by the communist regimes, one would expect a return to religion. According to Huntington (1996) the crash of communism bring *la revanche de Dieu*, while Inglehart and Baker (2000) also find that in Central and Eastern Europe people come back to religion, especially in its participatory aspect. Additionally, Finke and Iannacone (1993) (also Finke and Stark, 1998) discuss the functioning mechanisms of religious economies, and argue that where there is religious pluralism, religiosity and religious participation are expected to increase (following the logic of the free market and the effects of competition among suppliers on demand). The argument is that postmaterialist societies have privatized religion, and church attendance is correlatively decreased, while people in Central and Eastern Europe rediscover the religious phenomenon. Correlatively, patterns of church attendance are significant in determining the degree of secularization of each country. Tables 2 and 3 present distributions of church attendance, country by country and by religious denomination.

Table 2

Church attendance by country

Country/ church attendance	n/a	Several/ week	1/week	Several/ year	1/year	Never	Dk
Poland	3.1%	5.5%	54.9%	27.9%	5.5%	2.9%	.2%
Czechoslovakia	45.6%	3.8%	11.4%	15.4%	13.9%	6.8%	3.0%
Hungary	37.4%	2.7%	10.4%	20.6%	15.8%	13.1%	.1%
Russia	57.5%	.6%	2.7%	15.4%	15.8%	7.2%	.8%
Romania	.0%	2.4%	14.0%	53.2%	24.5%	5.8%	.1%
Albania	1.4%	3.7%	11.3%	24.9%	15.6%	37.1%	13.0%
Bulgaria	36.9%	1.8%	2.8%	23.6%	11.8%	22.0%	1.0%
Estonia	64.8%	.3%	2.1%	16.1%	12.5%	3.6%	.6%
Latvia	44.4%	.5%	4.0%	25.4%	17.9%	7.1%	.6%
Lithuania	26.1%	1.9%	16.0%	39.2%	13.9%	2.4%	.5%

Table 3

Religion and church attendance

Religion/ church attendance	Several/week	1/week	Several/year	1/year	Never	Dk
Protestant	2.1%	12.1%	40.6%	30.2%	14.6%	.4%
Catholic	4.8%	32.3%	36.4%	16.8%	8.2%	1.2%
Orthodox	1.4%	9.6%	46.1%	26.4%	15.5%	.7%
Muslim	5.1%	8.0%	22.8%	20.9%	38.7%	3.8%

Overall, Catholic people go to church the most often, followed by Protestants and then by Orthodox. The discipline in the canonic rules of the Catholic Church, and its internal political culture is visible in this result: discipline and organization are key values. However, table 2 shows that the discipline in church attendance specific to the Catholic Church is mainly respected in Poland, the country with the least number of atheists as well. The same is true about Romania in the Orthodox camp: the least number of atheists and the most church attendance. These two tables thus suggest that every national context determines rates of church attendance, the same denomination being able to attract many or few confidants to their services. Moreover the theory of religious economy does not find support, with homogenous religious contexts enjoying more widespread religious commitment in the population.

Different patterns of church attendance and different levels of atheism make one question the validity of arguments such as "Eastern Europe sees a revival of religious enthusiasm." A question arises: what trigger these different religious behaviors? Gautier (1997, 1998) argues that churches that have been actively anti-communist and represented a locus of true civil society resistance are more popular after 1989. The theory stands for Poland, in which the Catholic Church has been a true mobilizer of the resistance. However, Romania is an outlier, since the Romanian Orthodox

Church has been a collaborator of the communist regime, and yet it displays very high rates of religiosity and church attendance.

Different patterns of church attendance and different rates of identification with religion confirm the initial fear that comparisons are not easy to come about in Central and Eastern Europe.

To test the Civic Volunteerism Model, logistic regression has been used. This technique allows for measuring the effect of church attendance on measures of political participation, while controlling for other independent variables. Table 4 indicates the results of logit models; the indicators shown are the unstandardized b coefficients, their respective standard errors, and the level of significance. For every model, three SES independent variables are included, for control purposes: gender, education and age. Income was not included since it is not a valid measurement in Central and Eastern Europe, because of sudden and frequent changes in currency and additional sources of income than those declared by respondents. Although not reported, the three SES indicators are more often than not significant, especially in the case of political discussion and persuasion. Their effect is in the expected direction: older, more educated males tend to be more politically participatory.

Table 4

The effect of church attendance on intention to vote, political discussion and political persuasion respectively, within each denominational group (logistic regression, numbers are *Exp(b)*, and *b* and *std deviation* in parentheses, bold numbers are coefficients statistically significant at .05 level)

Denomination/action	Intention to vote	Political discussion	Political persuasion
Orthodox	1.118 (.111, .076)	**.837 (−.179, .061)**	**.869 (−.140, .060)**
Catholic	1.023 (.022, .047)	**.843 (−.170, .054)**	1.072 (.069, .059)
Protestant	**1.314 (.273, .133)**	.885 (−.122, .127)	.791 (−.234, .133)
Muslim	**1.270 (.239, .105)**	**.788 (−.238, .089)**	1.068 (.066, .080)

The effect of church attendance remains statistically significant (where marked so) even when education, age and gender are used as control variables.

The results are puzzling. For Protestant and Muslim confidants, going to church has a positive impact on intention to vote, which is statistically significant, although the relationship remains positive for Catholic and Orthodox churchgoers as well. Nevertheless, church going is negatively correlated with political discussion for all religious denominations, and it is statistically insignificant only for Protestant. Moreover, within the category of Orthodox believers, churchgoers are also less prone to engage in politically persuasive discussion. These are perhaps the most interesting results of this research, indicating that irrespective of denomination, believers that are more religiously participatory, tend to be easily recruited for voting, while they engage less in discussion and participation, thus not becoming truly mobilized. In my understanding, mobilization equals an effort from the church to politically engage confidants by empowering them and teaching them civic skills. Recruitment illustrates a mere effect of an increase in intentions to vote, bypassing the more substantive political learning process. Although I consider this line of argument enticing, one should

not forget that the databases used in this research are from 1991, when both religious revival and democratic political participation were at the very beginning of their post communist identity reconstruction. Thus, differences between mobilization and recruitment should be carefully interpreted while not losing sight of other explanatory variables revolving around the fundamental societal changes and changes in mentality that took place during those years.

However, as noted above, national context seems to matter in terms of patterns of religious participation, and so this contextual effect may become apparent in a plotting of the same results but in a country by country analysis. Table 5 also displays logit models in which the effect of church attendance on political involvement is analyzed for each denomination.

Table 5

The effect of church attendance on intention to vote, political discussion and political persuasion respectively by country and denomination (logistic regression, direction of relationship, coefficients statistically significant at .05 level marked with "*")

Country	Denomination	Intention to vote	Political discussion	Political persuasion
Poland	Catholic	+*	—*	—
Hungary	Catholic	+*	+	+*
Hungary	Protestant	+	+	—
Czechoslovakia	Catholic	+	—	—
Russia	Orthodox	—	—	—
Romania	Orthodox	+	—*	—
Bulgaria	Orthodox	+	+	+
Bulgaria	Muslim	—	—*	—
Albania	Orthodox	+	—	—
Albania	Muslim	+*	—*	+
Estonia	Orthodox	—	+	+
Estonia	Protestant	+	—	—
Latvia	Orthodox	—	—*	—
Latvia	Catholic	—*	—	+
Latvia	Protestant	—	—	—
Lithuania	Orthodox	+	+	+
Lithuania	Catholic	+	—	+

I also constructed interaction terms for some countries from denomination and church attendance in order to be able to test the combined effect of both, and, when applied to Romania, the analysis revealed that churchgoers are less engaged in political discussion than non-churchgoers, irrespective of confession, while Orthodox churchgoers are intending to vote on larger numbers than any other believers, where churchgoers do ←CHECK not. This grants more support to the hypothesis on the Orthodox recruitment and on mobilization strategies discussed in the paper.

In table 5 I took a more detailed look at the relationship between church attendance and political involvement per country and denomination, in order to be able to take into account national context. Thus, table 5 indicates that the positive correlation between Catholic church going and increased intentions to vote remains significant only in Poland and Catholic Hungary. It is noteworthy that Poland has the lowest number of atheists (3.1%) compared to such high numbers for Czechoslovakia (45.6%)

and Hungary (37.4%) respectively. In addition, 54.9% of Poles go to church once a week, the highest rate of church attendance. An explanation for these results may thus be that the effect of church attendance on political participation increases with a homogenous highly religious social context. One may also note the importance of the Catholic Church in opposing communist regimes, and hence its major role played in the construction of democracy. Nevertheless, in Poland one also notes a negative relationship between church attendance and political discussion, again suggesting a pattern according to which monopolistic large churches are effective recruiters for votes without infusing more fundamental political skills specific to a democracy, such as political discussion, in their confidants. Table 5 also shows a positive relationship between political persuasion and church going among Catholics in Hungary, potentially hinting at the importance of national context when interpreting the relationship between church going and political involvement.

In the countries with Orthodox confidants, where this church either dominates or finds itself in the minority, the evidence is even more mixed. First and foremost, one observes that in these countries political discussion is always negatively associated with church going, be it in the Romanian highly religious context or in the Albanian Muslim context. Second, one also notices differences between the secular context of Russia or some of the Baltic countries, where indeed there are no relationships between church attendance and any measure of political involvement, and the more religious contexts.

The two main conclusions of this data analysis can be summarized as follows. First, essentialist cultural arguments fail to explain the effects of religious determinants on political participation in Central and Eastern Europe. Irrespective of denomination, every national context determines a specific mechanism in which religious variables may affect political involvement. These religious variables can impact political behavior through either recruiting or mobilization. Second, church attendance influences patterns of political involvement more effectively in contexts in which there is one large dominant church within a highly religious society (Poland, Romania, Albania). In these situations, church attendance seems to be a mechanism for both recruiting voters and discouraging critical political discussion.

Conclusion

In this paper I assessed the impact of church attendance on political participation for ten countries in Central and Eastern Europe. As there is a lack of true comparative research in the region, I assembled most of the countries constituting the former Soviet satellites. Despite the high degree of variation between cases, I was able to extract some common patterns.

The employed theoretical apparatus builds on Verba's et al. (1995) Civic Volunteerism Model. The church is an arena in which individuals learn civic skills that they consequently use in the political arena. Following the logic of the model, a correlation should be identified between church attendance and political participation. I amend

the CVM model by specifying the presence of an internal political culture within each church that is affected by the church's external and internal context, which in turn affects and limits its effect on political participation.

The data indicates that, in opposition to Huntington and Inglehart, religious participation patterns in Central and Eastern Europe are not uniformly on the rise. The rediscovery of God after five decades of secularism does not occur with the same enthusiasm in all the countries, and not even within the same denominations. There are more and less religious Orthodox and Catholic countries, and more religiously participatory Catholic and Orthodox countries. These essentialist arguments do not seem to stand in this case.

Some evidence for the CVM model is found. Churchgoers seem to be more politically engaged in some cases. However, these cases are not clustered along denominational lines. The Church's potential in teaching civic skills varies from country to country, which suggests the importance of context. Several contextual features may play a role in affecting the church's ability to influence political behavior. First, the status of the church as majoritarian or minority seems to be important. The Orthodox Church in Estonia is an arena for political mobilization of the Orthodox/Russian minorities. Second, the degree of religiosity of the population, measured here by the number of atheists, also affects the church's mobilizing ability. For example, in highly religious Poland, the Catholic Church has more of such mobilizing power, than in the more atheist Hungary or Czechoslovakia. Third, the relationship between state and church seems to be important and to influence the way the church interacts with its confidants.

A final word of caution is also in order. Given that I analyze data from 1991, the relationships I find between religious and political involvement measures need to be interpreted in the context of early post-communist transition. In other words, two years after 1989, churches and believers alike are actively looking for redefining their identity and status and so conceptual differences such as the one between recruitment and mobilization are probably less stable as they would be in a more stable political and religious system.

In conclusion, the findings of my research strongly support the importance of context. Churches act differently in different circumstances and their effect on the society, and the furthering of democratization is correspondingly different. Policy initiatives that clearly indicate a preference for the separation of state and church may not apply without nuances.

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