

SECULARIZATION OF SOCIETY AFTER COMMUNISM: TEN CATHOLIC-PROTESTANT SOCIETIES

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The term “secularization” refers to the process whereby the authority of religious institutions, beliefs and values declines in society, culture and politics. Secularization goes together with the processes of socio-economic development, which transform traditional agrarian communities into industrial societies. Secularization emanates from the profound effect of modernization on the organization and “self-interpretation” of society.

As a rule, the transition to modernity started in Europe in the context where society had one religion, religion was institutionally represented by one church, and that church had a significant role and authority in society, culture and politics irrespective of whether the church depended on secular rulers or not. Concomitantly, the secularization of societies – i.e., the decline of socially authoritative religious values and institutions – takes in the Western Christian realm the form of the declining authority of traditional churches.

The secularization of societies can be approached from political or socio-cultural perspectives. George Moyser differentiates five process of *political secularization*: constitutional secularization, policy secularization, institutional secularization, agenda secularization, and ideological secularization¹. Correspondingly, the decline of church authority according to this approach is evaluated by the legal regulation of church-state relations, church involvement, influence and connectedness to the political identity, political processes, political culture and agenda.

According to the socio-cultural perspective, however, the secularization of society is evaluated from the perspective of population. Secularization is operationalized as the decline of support for the *social* and *political status* of religious institutions, and as the decline of church-related religious practices, beliefs, rituals, and values among the population. This study follows the latter approach.

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¹ **George Moyser.** Politics and religion in the modern world: an overview. – Politics and Religion in the Modern World. George Moyser (ed.) New York: Routledge, 1991, pp. 14–15.

The theoretical puzzle that this paper attempts to solve is related to the impact of two relevant variables – level of socioeconomic development and the nature of the political regime – on the secularization of societies. Western Europe lacks the experience of having a Communist regime, yet includes some of the most secularized societies in Europe. Similarly, the post-communist realm of Europe embodies some highly secularized societies. Which of these two regions has more secularized societies – the economically less advanced post-communist societies or the predominantly post-industrial societies that have modernized under democratic regimes? The systems of government under discussion have one significant difference. While democratic societies usually have some groups, movements and parties that seek the secularization of education, politics, culture and society, democracy still presumes the competition of multiple ideologies and therefore cannot impose on society “from above” a single ideology devoted to radical secularization. Communist regimes, on the other hand, were committed to “polity-dominance secularization”, which, according to Donald Eugene Smith, manifests itself as a commitment to a radical program of secularization that excludes any religious autonomy, strives to eradicate the influence of religion from society or attempts to bring the content of religion into line with the official ideology². If post-communist societies display higher levels of secularization than societies of Western Europe, then the existence of a political regime committed to secularization “from above” has a stronger impact on the secularization of societies than the level of socioeconomic development. If Western European societies are more secularized than economically less advanced post-communist countries, then this would give additional weight to the variable of socioeconomic modernization. If the results support the latter observation, then it can be speculated that even for Communist regimes, the policies aimed at socioeconomic modernization could have greater influenced the secularization of societies than the ideological measures of “polity dominance secularization”.

This paper argues that, in general, the patterns of secularization among European societies can be explained by the differences in the level of socioeconomic modernization. The particular influence of Communist regimes, however, is manifested mainly in the declining level of both religious affiliation and participation in religious services, and in a lower percentage of individuals for whom religion is important and who take moments of prayer. Additionally, post-communist societies have a higher average proportion of “convinced atheists”, and more of those for whom “God is not at all important”. People in post-communist societies tend to follow more

² **Donald Eugene Smith.** Religion and Political Modernization: Comparative Perspectives. – Religion and Political Modernization: Comparative Perspectives. Donald Eugene Smith (ed.) New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1974, p. 8.

traditional-theistic beliefs in sin and in hell, and their attitudes regarding family and homosexuality are more traditional-religious than in Western European societies. Among the post-communist societies, the social authority of the church has been preserved best in Catholic mono-confessional societies, where historical religious tradition, national identity and national struggles have been closely connected.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part presents a theoretical framework for the analysis of the secularization of society. The second part encompasses a comparative analysis of the patterns of secularization in seventeen traditionally Western Christian societies of Europe (hereafter abbreviated as WEST) which did not share the experience of the Communist regimes after the Second World War and in ten post-communist societies of East-Central Europe with Western Christian backgrounds (abbreviated as ECE)³. Additionally, the societies which have been “over-“ or “under-secularized” are identified in both regions. The third part of the paper uses these findings for a theoretical discussion on the impact of Communist regimes on the secularization of societies.

I. Defining secularization of society

The root cause of secularization is socioeconomic modernization, which consists of urbanization and economic development, advancements in science and technology, increasing social, religious and political pluralism,

³ The empirical analysis uses data from 1999/2000 World Values Surveys (source: www.worldvaluessurvey.org, online data analysis, conducted in February 2007). This round of World Values Surveys included all the post-communist and traditionally Western Christian countries of Europe – Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia – and a territory of Eastern Germany (five states which formed German Democratic Republic during 1949–1990). The traditionally Western Christian societies of Europe represented were Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Great Britain, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Western Germany (eleven states which formed the Federal Republic of Germany during 1949–1990). In tables the reference to the countries follows the three-letter abbreviations that are used during Olympic Games, except for territories within political states which were polled separately in World Values Surveys: AUT – Austria; BEL – Belgium; CRO – Croatia; CZE – Czech Republic; DEN – Denmark; ESP – Spain; EST – Estonia; FIN – Finland; FRA – France; GER-W – Germany West; GER-E – Germany East; GBR – Great Britain; HUN – Hungary; ISL – Iceland; IRL – Ireland; ITA – Italy; LAT – Latvia; LIT – Lithuania; LUX – Luxembourg; MLT – Malta; NED – Netherlands; NIR – Northern Ireland; POL – Poland; POR – Portugal; SLO – Slovenia; SVK – Slovakia; SWE – Sweden.

growing rates of literacy and the introduction of mass education, and “the increasing importance of modern secular social and political institutions”⁴.

Secularization thesis claims that social modernization is accompanied by processes whereby things, meanings, functions, and roles which formerly used to be ‘sacred’ and traditionally located in the religious sphere become increasingly ‘secular’; i.e., they are relocated or transferred to the secular spheres⁵.

Traditional societies were “sacred” by virtue of being *immersed* by a certain religion. Max Weber has argued that irrespective of whether the traditional society was ancient Egyptian, Jewish, Hellenic, Roman or Japanese; medieval theocratic, early modern caesaropapist, or that of Orthodox peasants in the villages of czarist Russia, life in every one of these was “permeated” by religion⁶. This influence of religion also encompassed the realms of politics, economy and science. As Emile Durkheim has pointedly observed, religion “extended to everything; everything social was religious”⁷.

Traditional forms of religion relied heavily on the *supernatural* and *transcendent*. They provided the society with a “thoroughly supernaturalistic view of the world”⁸ together with beliefs and practices which related social life to the spiritual and transcendent realm. The latter was perceived to be superior to ordinary and everyday life. Traditional social life “derived its meaning from being embedded in a *transcendently* [italics added] guaranteed order”⁹.

Irrespective of whether traditional religion was polytheistic, monotheistic or did not include beliefs in deities, *theism* characterized them all. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, *theism* is “the view that all limited or finite things are dependent in some way on one supreme or ultimate reality of which one may also speak in personal terms.”¹⁰ In one way or another, all world religions provided “reassurance that, even though the individual alone

⁴ **Jonathan Fox.** World Separation of Religion and State Into the 21st Century. – Comparative Political Studies, 5/2006, p. 539.

⁵ **José Casanova.** Public Religions in the modern world. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 13.

⁶ **Max Weber.** Economy and Society. Guenther Roth, Claus Wittich (eds.) Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, pp. 1159, 1162.

⁷ **Emile Durkheim.** The Division of Labor in Society. Margaret Thompson (transl.) – Readings from Emile Durkheim. Kenneth Thompson (ed.) New York: Routledge, 2004, p. 39.

⁸ **Steve Bruce.** The Pervasive World-View: Religion in Pre-Modern Britain. – The British Journal of Sociology, 4/1997, p. 679.

⁹ **Frank J. Lechner.** The Case against Secularization: A Rebuttal. – Social Forces, 4/1991, p. 1103.

¹⁰ **Encyclopædia Britannica.** Theism. 2009. Retrieved March 18, 2009, from Encyclopædia Britannica Online: <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9109476>.

can't understand or predict what lies ahead, a higher power will ensure that things work out"¹¹. The "higher power" could be represented by God in monotheism, gods and deities in polytheistic religions or by the law of karma in traditional Hinduism and Buddhism. The fate of human beings was perceived to be dependent on these "higher powers", which were not only morally-concerned and actively involved in the life of individuals and of society, but were also powerful enough to intervene supernaturally into human affairs. Such theistic beliefs were the necessary preconditions for the traditional religions to function as sustainers of moral order in society¹².

What was considered socially as sacred was related to religion, but not necessarily to any or every religion that was represented in society. According to Emile Durkheim, every religion has its "system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden"¹³, yet every religion is not necessarily related to what is considered as "sacred" in society. The Roman Empire of the third century AD had thousands of Christians, yet Christianity was not "socially sacred". Christianity had no connection to Roman religion or to the civil religion (emperor worship) of the day. During the fourth century, Christianity was *socially sacralized*, or to put it differently, what was considered sacred in society was *Christianized*. Christianity transformed from a *private* and *primarily religious* reality into a *public*, religious *and* social, political and cultural reality. The Christian church could exist before the Christianizing of societies. Concomitantly, the Christian church also "continues to make sense *religiously* [italics added] when the processes of secularization have stripped it of all its regulatory powers over society"¹⁴. Thus, "sacred" does not always equal "religious" (or any religion represented in society); likewise, "secular" does not always equal "non-religious".

The concept "secular" refers to *temporal* (in contrast to eternal), *natural* (in contrast to supernatural), and *worldly* (in contrast to religious and transcendent). Traditionally, this concept referred also to non-religious or "not related to the church" because Medieval Christianity was itself thoroughly supernatural¹⁵ and the church was the institution which dealt with this supernatural religion. To describe the secularization of European societies, the term *desacralization* – which is a process whereby something

¹¹ **Norris Pippa, Ronald Inglehart.** Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 19.

¹² **Rodney Stark.** Gods, Rituals, and the Moral Order. – Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 4/2006, p. 619.

¹³ **Emile Durkheim.** The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life. Joseph Ward Swain (transl.) New York: Free Press, 1967, p. 62.

¹⁴ **Smith** 1974, p. 7.

¹⁵ **Bruce** 1997, p. 679.

is rendered less sacred – may also be appropriate, because societies were first *sacralized* in a *Christian manner*. Furthermore, Christianity itself can accommodate secularization by either giving up the status and position of social, cultural and political authority, *or* by abandoning supernatural, transcendent, and theistic worldviews and beliefs. The latter is called *internal secularization*¹⁶.

Secularization thesis does not envision the disappearance of social functions, behaviors and needs (for social meaning, social solidarity, social norms, social control) once fulfilled by traditional religions. Secularization thesis argues for the *transfer* of these functions *from* sacred *to* secular, which can take the form of the emergence of new religions, new ideological worldviews or actors other than traditional churches, which start to fulfill the roles that were previously under the control of one religious institution. Donald Eugene Smith argued in 1974 that modernization causes universal “movement toward a *world culture* based in large part on humanism, material values, science, and technology” that is “gradually eroding all traditional world views”¹⁷. Furthermore, these new world-views, which replace traditional religions in modernized societies, “will be considered equally sacred as traditional ones by their adherents and will be interpreted as functional substitutes by observers”¹⁸.

And the final feature of secularization that is applicable to all traditional cultures and world religions is related to the weakening of the power and authority of religion in society because societies gradually move away “from being focused around the sacred”¹⁹. As religion may continue to function in a secularized society and in a secularized form, the primary focus of the analysis of secularization should be on religious authority, instead of religion *per se*²⁰.

The decline of religious authority takes place in two phases. First of all, the transition from agrarian to industrial production brings along the growing separation of church and state together with “a shift from universal religious institutions to religious pluralism”²¹. Increasing religious pluralism will have a direct negative influence primarily only on the historic religious tradition.

¹⁶ Internal secularization is “the process by which religious organizations undergo internal development towards conformity with the secular world”. **Mark Chaves**. *Secularization as Declining Religious Authority*. – *Social Forces*, 3/1994, p. 757.

¹⁷ **Smith** 1974, p. 8.

¹⁸ **Frank J. Lechner**. *Secularization Revisited*. – *Social Forces*, 1/1992, p. 227.

¹⁹ **Moyser** 1991, p. 14.

²⁰ **Chaves** 1994, p. 749.

²¹ **Franz Höllinger, Max Haller, Adriana Valle-Höllinger**. *Christian Religion, Society and the State in the modern World*. – *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 2/2007, p. 134.

Thereafter, the general decline of religious authority should be manifested more powerfully in the second phase of modernization – during transition from industrial to postindustrial societies²².

While increasing religious pluralism goes together with the growing separation of church and state, modernization also contributes to the *privatization of religion*. The privatization of religion may occur as a transformation of traditional forms of religion (which withdraw both in practice and in theory from public to private sphere), but also as the emergence of new forms of religion. The *privatization of religion* manifests itself differently on social and individual levels:

A. On a social level, “the privatization of religion refers to its declining social significance for public rhetoric, legitimization, debate and policy”²³. Religion becomes confined to the “private sphere”²⁴, and politics turns into an autonomous sphere²⁵. The opposite process, whereby religious individuals, groups and institutions participate increasingly in politics, or religious symbols and interpretations are increasingly used in public debates, is termed *deprivatization* of religion²⁶. Some form of religion may still be part of the political processes in contemporary post-industrial countries, but individual examples of the “deprivatization of religion” cannot usually be interpreted as a reversal to a sacred and religious system of social governance (*desecularization*) or as an institutionalization of some vision of a modern religious state²⁷. In modernized societies, religion itself has become subject to competitive interpretations. Neither religious nor political institutions are capable of having total control over religion in the contemporary *public sphere*. In contrast to contemporary liberal societies, which value freedom of the individual over truth, Medieval Catholicism valued its orthodox dogma, and totalitarian Communism valued its comprehensive and true ideological doctrine over the freedom of the individual. In liberal democracies, there is more than one political party competing for the allegiance of the population, and there is also more than

²² **Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris.** *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change around the World.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 13

²³ **David Martin.** What I Really Said about Secularisation. – *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 2/2007, p. 4.

²⁴ **Chris Hann.** Problems with the (De)Privatization of Religion. – *Anthropology Today*, 6/2000, p. 14.

²⁵ **Renato Moro.** Religion and Politics in the Time of Secularisation: The Sacralisation of Politics and Politicisation of Religion. – *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 1/2005, p. 76.

²⁶ **Casanova,** 1994, p. 57.

²⁷ **Donald Eugene Smith.** *The Limits of Religious Resurgence.* – *Religious Resurgence and Politics in The Third World.* Emile Sahliyeh (ed.) New York: State University of New York Press, 1990, p. 44.

one institution interpreting religion in society. For any religiously related public issue – like religious instruction in public schools, legal protection of same-sex couples, prohibition of abortion, peacemaking or legitimate reasons for war – “religion in the public sphere” can be interpreted and represented by several groups and institutions: church hierarchy, lower clergy, political activists, political movements and parties, interest groups, academic scholars and others.

B. On the level of the individual, the *privatization of religion* is manifested in a process whereby religion becomes increasingly a matter of individual “choice” and “preference”. In modernized societies, religion loses its common and binding quality²⁸. The human condition will be changed “from fate to choice” in nearly all areas of life; thus, “modern religion is characterized by individuals who reflect upon, modify, pick, and choose from the religious resources available to them”²⁹. Individuals build their own “individual spiritual pathway” by putting together their own set of religious attitudes and ideas³⁰. Concomitantly, an increasing number of modernized Christians should become “Christians in their own personal way”³¹. In general, individuals in affluent postindustrial societies are “becoming increasingly indifferent to traditional religious values”, but “are not abandoning private or individualized spirituality”³². In rich countries, “spiritual concerns more broadly are not disappearing”, but individuals “are not continuing to support the traditional religious authorities, institutionalized, hierarchical forms of religion, and established religious practices”³³. Consequently, neither persisting manifestations of religion in the public sphere, nor “continued faith on the part of significant, even growing numbers of individuals”, refute the secularization theory³⁴.

The Christian version of the sacralization of society (that resulted in “Christian society”), culture (that resulted in “Christian culture”), politics (that resulted in a “Christian state”, which could take the form of a church state, a state church, or a certain form of church-state relations where both

²⁸ **Peter L. Berger.** *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion.* New York: Anchor Books, 1969, p. 133.

²⁹ **Peter L. Berger.** *Pluralism, Protestantization and the Voluntary Principle. – Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism.* Banchoff, Thomas (ed.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 23.

³⁰ **Martin** 2007, p. 4.

³¹ **Eva M. Hamberg.** *Christendom in decline: the Swedish case. The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750–2000.* Hugh Mcleod and Werner Ustorf (eds.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 52.

³² **Norris, Inglehart** 2004, p. 74.

³³ **Norris, Inglehart** 2004, p. 75.

³⁴ **Lechner** 1991, p. 111.

institutions were relatively autonomous regarding each other) and human-kind (usually referred as “Christian universe” or “Christendom”) has eight particular aspects:

1. First is the institutional differentiation of church and state. Christian society was functioning as the society of only one (true) church, which was “specifically concerned with religion in counter-position with all other institutions of society”³⁵. All other institutions were to function within the general framework that was defined by Christian norms, symbols, dogmas and beliefs. The interpretation of Christian religion itself was controlled either by the church or by secular rulers.

2. The membership in Christian society was not based on private religious belief, religious conversion or voluntary religious affiliation (i.e., it was not a society of individuals, who are conventionally called “believers”). The normative religious conformity of Christian societies resulted in a situation where every member of the society *was* Christian. José Casanova has pointedly described this situation with the phrase, “Christians within Christendom led Christian lives”³⁶.

By adopting social, cultural and political roles, Christianity transformed into something much bigger than a mere religion. Christianity started to function as “a common language” of society, “shared by the devout, the lukewarm and even the secretly sceptical”³⁷. Any realm of human activities and sphere of social life – whether economy, culture, art, philosophy, science, education, politics – became a sector of a larger religious whole.

3. Traditional European Christian societies shared four main constitutive myths: that human beings are created by God; that humans are bearers of God’s image despite their sinful nature after the Fall; that human history is guided by the divine hand toward a divine goal; and that Christ is the only way of salvation³⁸. For secularization, the relevant question is not whether there are churches which still teach these beliefs or how many members of society individually believe in these myths. The vital question is: “Are these myths still vital for the self-interpretation of the society?”

4. Due to the historical tradition of church-state relations where the church is the sole representative of religion in society, secularization for European societies is defined as the process whereby religious institutions lose social significance³⁹. The decline of church authority starts from the

³⁵ **Berger** 1969, p. 123.

³⁶ **Casanova** 1994, p. 16.

³⁷ **Hugh McLeod**. *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p.11.

³⁸ **Lechner** 1991, p. 1108.

³⁹ **Bryan R. Wilson**. *Religion in Secular Society: A Sociological Comment*. C. A. Watts: London, 1966, p. xiv.

situation where the church was able to control non-religious spheres like the economy, culture and politics. Correspondingly, secularization is manifested as the process whereby *non-religious* spheres are “*free themselves*” from church authority.

5. As a rule, this emancipation has taken place in *two major phases*:

A. First is the *religious emancipation* from the church’s regulatory powers or the emancipation from the church without being emancipated from religion. Thus *political rulers* of the 16th and 17th centuries increasingly either adopted Protestantism or made use of caesaropapist control of the Catholic Church in their territories; some of the most *economically* advanced regions of Europe converted to Calvinism, which did emancipate early capitalists from the former limits of Catholic norms. Likewise, scientists like Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) or Isaac Newton (1643–1727) were not disputing religion in general, but the authority of church and traditional Christian dogmas over scientific reasoning.

B. The second phase consisted of *emancipation from religion* in favor of scientific reasoning, ideology, philosophy or world-view. A major change in *philosophy* and *economic* theory took place during the Enlightenment (1720–1780). Unlike early social philosophers, for whom Christianity provided the framework according to which human beings and society, values and morals were conceptualized⁴⁰, leading philosophers of the 18th century – particularly David Hume (1711–1776) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) – no longer took the Christian worldview as a point of reference. “A divine judge” replaced (or was replaced by) “future generations of happier mankind” as the “ultimate arbiter” over human affairs; reconciliation with God was replaced by the emphasis on self-fulfillment; “love of humanity” took the place that was earlier occupied by the love of God⁴¹. Adam Smith (1723–1790) introduced the idea that the *economy* is governed by its own laws. The economy, like politics, started increasingly to function “as if God” did not exist. The 19th century witnessed the advance of secular ideologies in *politics*, and the further secularization of *science* due to the advance of liberal theology (including scientific criticism of the Bible and Christian tradition), positivism and secularization of the education system of European nation-states⁴².

⁴⁰ **Jacob Leib Talmon.** *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy.* New York: Praeger, 1960, p. 21.

⁴¹ **Michael Burleigh.** *Earthly Powers: The Clash of Religion and Politics in Europe from the French Revolution to the Great War.* New York: HarperCollins, 2005, pp. 42–43.

⁴² **Derek W. Urwin.** *A Dictionary of European History and Politics, 1945–1995.* London: Pearson, 1996, p. 16.

6. In (WEST or the West) West, the secularization of society has often brought along the *sacralization* of non-religious spheres. The 16th century Reformation reduced the influence of international Catholicism together with the sacralization of the rule of caesaropapist monarchies. The emerging state church system meant not the elimination of the Church's control over everyday life, but rather a change of location of the control of religion. Later centuries witnessed the emergence of "new sources of the sacred" which were related not to religion⁴³, but to secular ideologies. In radical and revolutionary form, modernization has occasionally resulted also in attempts to sacralize race, state, nation⁴⁴, or economic class.

7. Since the Reformation, there have emerged various forms of *privatized Christianity* that have contributed to secularization. Calvinism, with its emphasis on inner-worldly asceticism, changed the Western culture from thoroughly theistic and supernatural "towards an anti-magical, disciplined life-world"⁴⁵; later versions of Protestantism – Pietism⁴⁶, evangelical awakening movements⁴⁷, Pentecostalism and Charismatic Christianity⁴⁸ – emphasized individual conversion, private religious experience and religious choice.

For traditionally sacred and Christianized socio-political systems, the freedom of conscience of the individual was perceived as a destabilizing danger. In order to protect its religious monopoly, Medieval Catholicism disciplined heretics. In order to protect the new church authority set up by the Protestant reformation, Martin Luther also had to struggle against papacy, Catholic monasteries and orders⁴⁹. Caesaropapist state churches later disciplined the sects. With the increase of religious toleration and protection of religious freedom, the whole system of sacred society and the authority of a traditional Christian church started to disintegrate.

In contemporary democracies, the churches have lost the status of institutions, which have an exclusive state supported privilege to be the sole representative of the religion of the realm. Individuals are no more coerced

⁴³ **N. J. Demerath III.** Secularization and Sacralization Deconstructed and Reconstructed. – The Sage Handbook of the Sociology of Religion. James A. Beckford and N. J. Demerath III (eds.) London: Sage, 2007, p. 69.

⁴⁴ **Burleigh** 2005, p. 6.

⁴⁵ **Bryan S. Turner.** Orientalism, Postmodernism and Globalism. London: Routledge, 1994, p. 10.

⁴⁶ **Burleigh** 2005, p. 149.

⁴⁷ **David Martin.** On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory. Ashgate: Aldershot, 2005, p. 5.

⁴⁸ **Philip Jenkins.** Godless Europe? – International Journal of Missionary Research, 3/2007, p. 117.

⁴⁹ **Randall Collins.** The Rise and Fall of Modernism in Politics and Religion. – Acta Sociologica, 3/1992, p. 173, 175.

by state and by laws to believe, participate and adhere, even if the state church still formally exists. Peter Berger observed already in 1969 that, in this regard, the churches in the U.S. and under the Communist system of government faced similar contexts “to the extent that the churches can no longer call upon the political arm to enforce their claims of allegiance”⁵⁰. The churches now need to persuade individuals, who voluntarily decide what to believe and when to participate. The churches are no longer capable of defining comprehensive belief parameters in society⁵¹. Even if a majority of the population are still members of the church, without the exclusive protection and support from the state, it is increasingly difficult for the church to control the conformity of the beliefs and values of its members to church doctrines and dogmas.

For the analysis of secularization, the adherence to the church doctrines and participation in church services are better indicators of the lasting impact of the church than the overall levels of religious belief and practice in society because secularization does not rule out even high levels of *privatized* religious belief and practice⁵².

8. An increase of the use of *religion in the public sphere* and *religious participation* in public life and politics is more likely an evidence of the *reaction* in a context which has already significantly secularized than an example of either de-secularization or restoration of the social authority of traditional churches. In traditionally Christian societies, abortion and homosexuality “were labeled criminal behavior by the State and shameful, even sinful, behavior by the religious authorities”⁵³. European societies of the 19th century were not polarized over these issues, although bitter confrontations took place over the secularization of education. Today’s public debates over these value orientations encompass both political and religious activists, groups and organizations of various, often contradictory, persuasions. The loss of a common conception of social values and a recently enlarged space for individual choice in moral, religious and political matters is corresponding to the general decline of church authority. In traditional societies where (one particular) religion used to have “ever-present influence” in society and on “the everyday life of individuals”⁵⁴, secularization has resulted in the “*collective non-religious consciousness* of

⁵⁰ **Berger** 1969, p. 131.

⁵¹ **Detlef Pollack**. Religious Change in Europe: Theoretical Considerations and Empirical Findings. – *Social Compass*, 2/2008, p. 171.

⁵² **C. John. Sommerville**. *The Decline of the Secular University*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 11.

⁵³ **Immanuel Wallerstein**. *Render Unto Caesar? The Dilemmas of a Multicultural World*. – *Sociology of Religion* 2/2005, p. 122.

⁵⁴ **Norris, Inglehart** 2004, p. 5.

modern society”⁵⁵, irrespective how many individual religious motivations, individuals or groups are present in the latter.

2. Decline of church authority in European societies

The studies over the secularization of European societies usually conclude that there is enough evidence in favor of the secularization thesis⁵⁶ and progressive, though uneven, secularization of Europe is “an undeniable social fact”⁵⁷. The secularization has taken place with variations in both Western Europe and in post-communist East Central Europe. Both regions also have exceptional societies which have either “over-secularized” or “under-secularized”⁵⁸.

According to a WVS 1999/2000 sample of traditionally Western Christian societies, the most religious population in Europe is Malta, but Poland is also characterized by extraordinarily high levels of religiosity according to most indicators. Irrespective of the experience of the Communist period, scholars usually identify the Scandinavian countries, France, the Netherlands, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Eastern Germany, as the least religious territories of Europe⁵⁹.

The period of communist regime seems to have had contradictory effects on the secularization of societies in ECE. Between 1937 and 1980, the number of places of worship and the number of full-time clergy were doubled in Poland⁶⁰, and earlier rounds of the WVS testified to some increase of religiosity in Hungary during the 1980s⁶¹. In other societies (e.g. Eastern

⁵⁵ **Macon Boczek**. What Secular Means. – *First Things*, June/July, 2005, p. 6.

⁵⁶ **Loek Halman, Veerle Draulans**. How Secular is Europe? – *The British Journal of Sociology*, 2/2006, p. 263.

⁵⁷ **José Casanova**. It’s All About Identity, Stupid. – *Index on Censorship*, 4/2004, p. 88.

⁵⁸ For such cases José Casanova has used terms “over-secularization” and “under-secularization”. **José Casanova**. Religion, European secular identities, and European integration. – *Religion in Expanding Europe*. Timothy A. Byrnes, Peter J. Katzenstein (eds.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 84.

⁵⁹ **Grace Davie**. Religion in Modern Europe. A Memory Mutates. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 70–71; **Casanova** 2006, p. 83.

⁶⁰ Between 1937 and 1980 the number of places of worship and the number of full-time clergy were doubled in Poland. **Steve Bruce**. *Choice and Religion: A Critique of Rational Choice Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University, 1999, pp. 102–103.

⁶¹ According to World Values Survey, in Hungary from 1981 to 1990 the percentage of those who “pray and meditate” arose from 45% to 57%; the percentage of

Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovenia), the levels of religiosity were decreasing during Communist period and the same trend also continued *after* the collapse of Communist regime⁶².

The decline of church authority is analyzed according to six dimensions: religious affiliation, personal religiosity, religious practice, religious beliefs, traditional-religious values and perception of the role and status of the religious institution.

2.1. Religious affiliation

Religious affiliation shows the level of social influence of the church according to three main indicators:

1. the percentage of religiously affiliated persons in society;
2. the amount of religion outside of the religious institution – the proportion of those who according to some indicator (practice, belief, personal religiosity) are religious, but do not belong to religious institutions;
3. the percentage of those who do not have religious motivation (convinced atheists; those who do not believe in God etc) for being church members, but have church affiliation nevertheless.

Those who lack the affiliation of religious organization are termed “un-churched”⁶³. “Unchurched” includes individuals who do not belong to

convinced atheists dropped from 14% to 4%, belief in God rose from 44% to 58%, belief in the Devil from 7% to 18%, belief in hell from 9% to 15%, belief in heaven from 16% to 24%. The percentage of those who considered themselves as religious rose from 44.3% in 1978 to 70.9% in 1993. **Paul Froese**. Hungary for Religion: A Supply-Side Interpretation of the Hungarian Religious Revival. – *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 2/2001, pp. 257–258.

⁶² According to the World Values Survey, the proportion of convinced atheists in Eastern Germany arose from 21% (1990) to 25% in 1995. **Paul Froese, Steven Pfaff**. Explaining a Religious Anomaly: A Historical Analysis of Secularization in Eastern Germany. – *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 4/2005, p. 411. The 2001 census in Czech Republic demonstrated the increase in the percentage of individuals with no religious affiliation from 39.9% (1991) to 59.0%. **Jiri Rajmund Tretera**. Church and state in the Czech Republic. – *Law and religion in post-communist Europe*. Silvio Ferrari and W. Cole Durham, Jr. (eds.) Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2003, p. 81. Similar trend was manifested also in Slovenia. **Lovro Šturm**. Church-State Relations and the Legal Status of Religious Communities in Slovenia. – *Brigham Young University Law Review*, 3/2004, p. 608.

⁶³ “Unchurched” as an academic concept is used by **Robert C. Fuller**. *Spiritual, but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. German scholars have used the term “*Entkirchlichung*” for the

church but *are religious* according to some other indicator (e.g., take moments of prayer, believe in God) as well as those who do not belong to church and are also not religious according to other indicators (“not-religious”; “convinced atheists”).

Furthermore, there can be church members who have religious affiliation but *are not religious* according to one or several other indicators (e.g., are convinced atheists; do not consider themselves as religious persons; do not get comfort and strength from religion; do not believe in God; or God is not important for them). The religious affiliation of the non-religious segment of the population can be interpreted as the lasting cultural and social influence of the church, a historical remnant of the sacred society when the church was closely connected to culture and included both religious and non-religious individuals. Obviously, the latter group does not have religion as the principal motive for identification with religious tradition. They identify with the church most likely due to *cultural* (including traditional affiliation of forefathers and relatives) or *ethno-religious*⁶⁴ reasons. This kind of “cultural religion” is a vital source of support for the social status of religious institutions and may still form “the single largest category of religious orientation” in Europe⁶⁵. The merely cultural and social status of the church, however, cannot be automatically exchanged for such religious, political and moral authority that the church used to have in a traditional society.

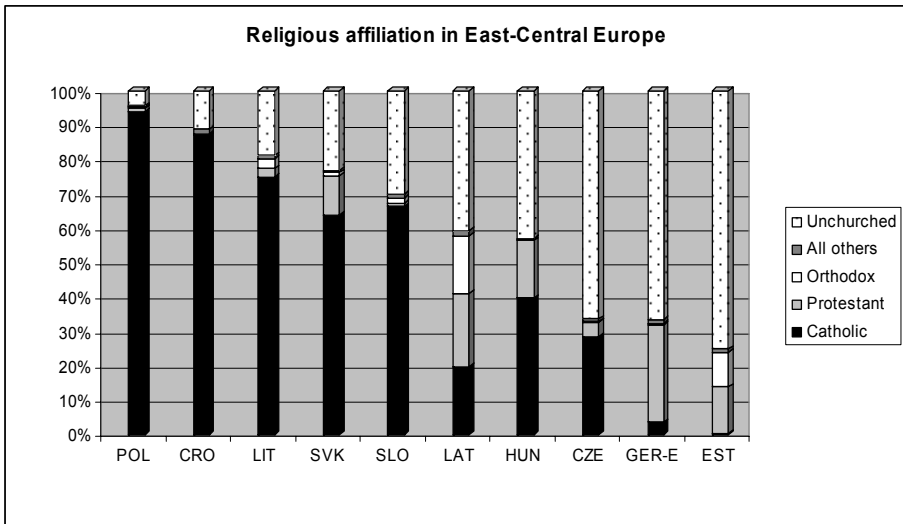
Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate major differences in religious affiliation between post-communist Europe and Western Europe. While the average

process, whereby an increasing number of people define and practice “their religiosity in non-traditional, individualized and institutionally loose ways”. **Peter L. Berger**. *Secularization and de-secularization. – Religions in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations*. Paul Fletcher, Hiroko Kawanami, David Smith, Linda Woodhead (eds.) London: Routledge, 2003, p. 295.

⁶⁴ E.g., for “national atheists” (and national traditionalists) national religious tradition is a means for being connected to the national community. While they may not care about religion, they may care about national culture, national religious rites and rituals. **Eileen Barker**. *But Who’s Going to Win? National and Minority Religions in Post-Communist Society. – Philosophy and Sociology 6/1999*, pp. 62–63.

⁶⁵ **N. J. Demerath III**. *The Rise of „Cultural Religion” in European Christianity: Learning from Poland, Northern Ireland, and Sweden. – Social Compass, 1/2000*, p. 136. José Casanova names France, Sweden, England and Scotland as examples of societies, where the church services are relatively empty, but the historical churches (Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, or Calvinist) still function as the “public carriers of the national religion”. **José Casanova**. *Immigration and the New Religious Pluralism. – Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism*. Banchoff, Thomas (ed.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 62.

level of “religious persons” is almost the same for both regions (in ECE 65.5% and in WEST 66.8%), there is a marked difference in the average level of religious affiliation (in ECE 60.6% and in WEST 79.6%). Half of the societies of ECE have levels of religious affiliation below 60% – Estonia 24.8%; Eastern-Germany 33.5%; the Czech Republic 33.7%; Hungary 57.1%; Latvia 59.3%. At the same time, only two out of 17 Western European societies (Figure 2) have a level of religious affiliation below 60% (France 57.5%; Netherlands 44.8%).



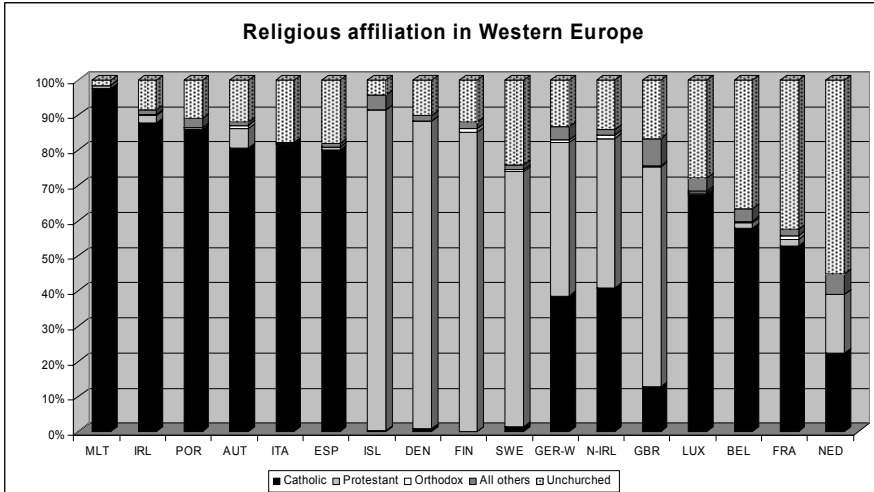
Source: calculated from the results of WVS 1999/2000 (www.worldvaluessurveys.com).

Figure 1. Religious affiliation in East-Central Europe

The second category of religious affiliation is related to confessional homogeneity. The society is classified as “mono-confessional” if 70 percent or more of its population belongs to the largest confession and the second largest confession is adhered to by less than 10 percent of the population⁶⁶. Western Europe has significantly more “mono-confessional” societies than ECE. While ECE has only three mono-confessional societies out of 10 (which is 33%) and all of them Catholic (Poland, Lithuania and Croatia), ten societies out of 17 (59%) are mono-confessional in WEST, and four of them

⁶⁶ These criteria for defining “mono-confessional state” have been inspired by the similar operationisation of the concept by Detlef Pollack. **Detlef Pollack.** Einleitung: Religiöser Wandel in Mittel- und Osteuropa. – Religiöser Wandel in den postkommunistischen Ländern Ost- und Mitteleuropas. Detlef Pollack, Irena Borowik, Wolfgang Jagodzinski (Hrsg.) Würzburg: ERGON-Verlag, 1998, S. 11.

Protestant. Both regions yield evidence to the argument that increasing confessional pluralism contributes to lower levels of religious affiliation⁶⁷.



Source: calculated from the results of WVS 1999/2000 (www.worldvaluessurveys.com).

Figure 2. Religious affiliation in Western Europe

According to the results of WVS 1999/2000, there are about twice as many traditional Protestants among the religiously affiliated people in WEST (29.1%) than in ECE (14.2%). This difference would today be perhaps non-existent or less significant, if the Protestant churches had not lost substantially more of their members under Communist regimes than Catholic churches.

In WEST, there are more “convinced atheists” with religious affiliation than in ECE. This observation is true for Catholic churches (1.0% of convinced atheists are members of Catholic church in WEST, and 0.8% in ECE), for traditional Protestants (2.4% and 0.5%) and for free churches (0.4% and 0.0%).

Another striking difference is related to the affiliation level of those who attend religious services “never, practically never”. In WEST, 51.9% of those who practically never attend religious services are church members. The corresponding average percentage for ECE is only 18.6!

Estonia has the lowest level of religious affiliation in Europe. Estonian society, however, cannot be considered as the most secularized society in Europe because religious affiliation is the only indicator where Estonia occupies the last position. Although Estonia usually does not appear above

⁶⁷ Halman, Draulans 2006, p. 263.

the European average, Estonian society is at the same time not far from the category of “believing without belonging”⁶⁸. In comparison with other societies, Estonia has more of those who consider themselves as religious persons (41.7%) than Great Britain (41.6%) or Sweden (38.9%), and more individuals (35.9%) who get comfort and strength from religion than in the Czech Republic (25.7%), Eastern Germany (27.5%), Denmark (32.6%), Sweden (33.2%), France (34.7%). Estonians are also more positive than Eastern Germans regarding the religious ceremonies at birth (supported by 63.7% of Estonians and 25.6% of Eastern Germans), marriage (65.0% and 34.0%) and death (75.6% and 39.0%). Correspondingly, it is not the attitude regarding religion or church *per se* that is extremely low among the Estonian population, but the willingness to be formally affiliated to the church. Estonian society contrasts best with Iceland, where a majority of the population are church-members even if they do not claim religious beliefs (who are “belonging without believing”). According to the WVS 1999/2000, 74% of the Icelandic sample considered themselves believers, 85% believed in God and 95% were church members. Consequently, Icelandic churches must have members who do not believe in God and do not consider themselves believers.

2.2. Personal religiosity

The existence of privatized religious behavior and levels of religiosity is analyzed according to three indicators which have a *positive* relationship to religiosity: being a religious person; importance of religion; and getting comfort and strength from religion; and according to two indicators which are *negatively* related to religiosity: God not at all important; and being a convinced atheist. On the average, the levels of religious affiliation are significantly higher in WEST than the levels of personal religiosity.

Both regions have an almost similar average amount of those who consider themselves as **religious persons** (average in WEST 66.8%, in ECE 65.5%). As the affiliation levels were higher in WEST, it is expected that in WEST there should be more affiliated persons who do not consider themselves as religious persons. Concomitantly, only 63.6% of affiliated Protestants (in contrast to 83.9% in ECE) and 81.6% of affiliated Catholics (93.1% in ECE) in WEST consider themselves as religious persons.

⁶⁸ Grace Davie has used the phrase “believing without belonging” for the situation, where people express their religiosity outside religious institutions and at the same time there are not many convinced atheists in the society. **Grace Davie**. Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging. Cambridge & Oxford: Blackwell, 1994, p. 2.

It is also worth mentioning that Malta, which regularly books the first place according to other indicators of religion, has only the tenth largest percentage of religious persons among 27 societies after Poland (94.4%), Portugal (88.0%), Italy (85.8%), Croatia (85.2%), Lithuania (84.4%), Austria (79.5%), Denmark (76.5%), Slovakia (81.5%), and Latvia (76.9%). The list is headed by a post-communist Poland, and half of the ten societies with the highest proportion of religious persons are post-communist (two of these post-soviet!). The bottom of this ranking is divided similarly by societies from both regions. The societies with the lowest levels of religious persons are Eastern Germany (28.6%), Sweden (38.9%), Great Britain (41.6%), Estonia (41.7%), the Czech Republic (43.2%), and France (46.6%). Thus, the results for Malta demonstrate that the level of personal religiosity is quite autonomous from other indicators of religion, and the regionally similar level of religious persons may allow speculation that the advance of modernization does not necessarily undermine the levels of private religiosity.

The secularization theory predicts that the advance of economic development drastically reduces the proportion of those for whom **religion is important**⁶⁹. The regional average for this indicator, however, is higher for WEST (51.3%) than for ECE (43.7%), although among the top three only Malta is from WEST. 90.7% of respondents in Malta considered religion as very or rather important, followed by Poland (83.9%) and Croatia (78.8%). The last three of the list, however, are all from ECE (Eastern Germany 16.3%; the Czech Republic 19.7%; Estonia 22%).

Also, the average level of those who **get comfort and strength from religion** is slightly higher in WEST (56.9%) than in ECE (52.7%). Both regions, however, are markedly polarized. In WEST the extremes are represented by Malta (92.5%) and Denmark (32.6%), and in ECE by Croatia (82.2%) and the Czech Republic (25.7%).

Among the indicators which are negatively related to religiosity, the proportion of convinced atheists deviates more from the general comparative pattern of personal religiosity than the proportion of those for whom “**God is not at all important**”. ECE has a regionally higher level (22.2%) of the latter than WEST (14.8%). Although the highest scores were for Eastern Germany (53.1%) and the Czech Republic (42.1%), and the society of Malta has the sovereign position at the bottom of the list with 0.7%, it is worth mentioning that they are followed by *four societies* from WEST (France with

⁶⁹ The results from survey analysis conducted in 76 nation states, which represented about 80% of the world's population, concluded that the average level of those, who considered religion “very important” was 64% for societies categorized according to economical development as “agrarian”, 34% for industrial, and 20% for postindustrial societies. Norris, Inglehart 2004, pp. 38, 57.

30.4%, Sweden with 28.9%, the Netherlands with 25.9% and Denmark with 25.5%).

The proportion of **convinced atheists** is higher in ECE (6.5%) than in WEST (5.1%), but the ranking of individual societies is worthy of consideration. There are exceptionally low level of convinced atheists in Malta (0.2%), Poland (1.2%), Lithuania (1.5%), Ireland (1.7%) and Austria (1.8%). An exceptionally high proportion of convinced atheists are in Eastern Germany (22.3%) and France (14.9%), which are followed by Slovenia (8.5%) and the Czech Republic (8.3%). It is also a bit unexpected that the top ten societies with the highest proportion of convinced atheists include six societies from WEST, despite the overall larger number of West-European societies in the WVS of 1999/2000. These findings stir up several questions. Why should France have a much higher proportion of convinced atheists than most of the post-communist societies, and post-communist Poland far less than any society in WEST, except Malta⁷⁰? Why are the post-Soviet societies not at the top of post-communist societies (Lithuania with 1.5%, Latvia with 2.8% and Estonia with 6.7%)? And why are the levels of convinced atheists lower in post-Soviet societies than in France (14.9%), Luxembourg (8.0%) and Belgium (7.2%)? Any speculation on this topic should take into account the non-Communist and pre-Communist sources of atheism.

2.3. Religious practice

One of the main indicators of the influence of modernization on religious behavior is related to the declining attendance at religious services and decreasing engagement in regular prayer and meditation⁷¹, although the third form of participation – support for religious services at birth, marriage and death – can remain relatively widespread. The present study distinguishes between individual and collective religious practices in order to assess the connectedness of the population to the traditional churches.

⁷⁰ Eastern Germany (22,3%) was followed by France (14,9%), Slovenia (8,5%), the Czech Republic (8,3%), Luxembourg (8,0%), Belgium (7,2%), Estonia and Sweden (6,7%), Spain (6,5%), and Netherlands (6,3%).

⁷¹ Using data from World Values Surveys 1981–2001, Norris and Inglehart have documented the decline of the average weekly religious participation and daily prayer as the societies develop from agrarian to post-industrial economies. The average weekly participation at religious services was 44% for agrarian, 25% for industrial and 20% for postindustrial societies. The average level of those who pray every day was 52% for agrarian, 34% for industrial and 26% for postindustrial societies **Norris, Inglehart** 2004, pp. 21, 57.

The average **participation in religious services** (at least once a week) is lower in ECE (19.9%) than in WEST (24.5%). WEST, however, has significantly more church-members who participate in religious services “never, or practically never” (among Protestants, 14.9% in ECE and 33.3% in WEST; among Catholics, 8.5% in ECE and 14.5% in WEST).

In contrast to most other indicators of religion, where the least religious societies are usually from ECE, the least *participating* society is from WEST. The lowest levels of religious attendance (at least once a month) were in Sweden (9.4%); followed by Estonia (11.2%), the Czech Republic (11.7%), Denmark and France (11.9%). Likewise, the highest proportion of those who attend “never, or practically never” was in France (60.4%), followed by the Czech Republic (57.5%), Eastern Germany (56.5%), Great Britain (55.8%), and the Netherlands (48.3%).

The average level of individuals who “take some moments of prayer and meditation or contemplation or something like that” is higher in WEST (64.3%) than in ECE (56.8%). The society that engages most in prayer is Malta (91.2%), followed by post-communist Poland (87.2%), and Ireland (81.8%). At the bottom of the list are Eastern Germany (29.8%), the Czech Republic (37.3%), France (41.0%), Sweden (44.0%), Slovenia (46.3%), Great Britain (49.8%) and Estonia (50.8%). The individual countries fit the “usual picture”, although the closeness of Great Britain, with the uninterrupted tradition of state church, to post-soviet Estonia, is unexpected.

The average level of those who pray to God outside religious services at least once a week is 44.4% in WEST and 38.8% in ECE. In this category, however, the bottom of the list is reserved for the post-communist societies of Eastern Germany (16.8%), the Czech Republic (17.5%), and Estonia (18.3), which are followed by France (19.6%) and Denmark (20.3%). The contrasts between the least and most religious societies are enormous in both regions. The levels of private prayer are highest in Malta (86.5%), Poland (78.0%), Ireland (70.6%) and Great Britain (62.5%).

In WEST, however, there are significantly more individuals who attend religious services “never, practically never”, but at the same time: are either formally members of religious denominations (51.9% in WEST, 18.6% in ECE); are religious persons (34.9% in WEST, 25.4% in ECE); get comfort and strength from religion (19.7% in WEST, 12.8 in ECE); or believe in God (50.1% in WEST, 27.3% in ECE).

Despite the higher levels of religious affiliation in WEST, these numbers demonstrate that *within* denominations of WEST, there are proportionally more of those whose religious sentiments and behavior have distanced from traditional religious institutions and who follow private forms of religion. The private form of prayer (exemplified best by the habit of prayer outside of religious services by individuals who do not attend regularly religious

services) is more widespread in WEST. Among those who attend religious services “never, practically never“, 35.9% in WEST take moments of prayer and meditation (in comparison to 23.9% in ECE), and 12.1% take moments of prayer and meditation outside of church services (in comparison to 7.2% in ECE).

As a general trend, the support of religious ceremonies at the **rites of passage** (birth, marriage, death), remains relatively widespread in the post-industrial societies of Europe⁷². On the average, Western Europeans tend to support slightly more religious ceremonies at birth (74.7% in comparison to 69.3% in ECE), marriage (74.7% in comparison to 70.2 in ECE), and death (82.6% in comparison to 76.7% in ECE) than the post-communist populations. In post-Soviet societies, the levels of support for religious ceremonies at rites of passage do not fall below 63%. Eastern Germans and Czechs are the only ones in Europe for whom these levels are below 50% (the only exception is the religious service at death, which is supported by 50.4% of Czechs).

The regional difference, however, is more significant for those who attend “never, or practically never“. In WEST 46.9% of individuals who have no habit of participating in religious services favor religious ceremonies at birth (46.9% in contrast to 34.9% in ECE), marriage (47.5% in contrast to 35.3% in ECE), and death (59.4% in contrast to 45.0% in ECE).

2.4. Religious beliefs

Modernization should negatively influence primarily traditional theistic beliefs (belief in sin and hell⁷³), which do not correspond as well with individualized and liberalized culture as do beliefs in God and heaven. The latter beliefs are quite ambiguous in content and are less limiting with respect to personal autonomy and the life purpose of the individual. The former beliefs reflect the adherence to traditional church dogmas, while the latter beliefs may also correspond to a privatized religion. Belief in a “Personal God” (if given a choice between “Personal God” vs. “spirit or life force” as closest fits their beliefs) corresponds better to the traditional belief system taught by

⁷² **Hugh McLeod**. Introduction. – *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750–2000*. Hugh McLeod and Werner Ustorf (eds.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 4.

⁷³ Inglehart and Norris have demonstrated that with transitions from agrarian to industrial and from industrial to post-industrial, the most obvious changes in beliefs are related to belief in hell (59% is the average for agrarian, 36% for industrial, and 26% for postindustrial societies) and that people have a soul (68% for agrarian, 43% for industrial, 32% for postindustrial societies). **Norris, Inglehart** 2004, p. 57.

Christian doctrines; beliefs in “spirit or life force” or non-traditional beliefs in re-incarnation and horoscope, especially if declared by church members, are signs of privatized religion (individuals pick beliefs from various sources and thus form their own belief systems).

Western populations believe more in God (79.9% is the average in WEST, 68.1% in ECE), life after death (57.6% in WEST, 48.3% in ECE), and heaven (49.1% in WEST, 39.5% in ECE). Among the 27 societies of this study, Malta has the highest levels of belief in every category (99.5% believe in God, 80.6% believe in hell, 87.7% believe in heaven, and 92.6% believe in sin), and the lowest levels of belief in God are found exclusively in post-communist societies (Eastern Germany 30.3%, the Czech Republic 38.9%, and Estonia 51.4%).

The societies of ECE, however, have higher average levels of belief in **sin** (62.5% in comparison to 57.5% in WEST), and in **hell** (32.1% in comparison to 30.8% in WEST). The lowest level of belief in hell were in Sweden (9.5%), Denmark (9.5%), Eastern Germany (10.1%), the Czech Republic (13.1%), and the Netherlands (13.8%). The lowest results for the belief in sin were in Eastern Germany (20.4%), Denmark (20.6%), Sweden (25.7%), France (39.8%), Netherlands (39.7%), Belgium (42.9%).

Despite the higher levels of traditional beliefs among the post-communist populations – which may have been one of the reasons why the present pope, Benedict XVI, (or the present pope, Pope Benedict XVI,) has argued that traditional Catholic faith has been “more securely rooted” in Eastern Europe⁷⁴ – these societies also do adhere more to some non-traditional beliefs. If there is a choice between “personal God” and “Spirit or life force” as closest to their beliefs, then in ECE there are more of those who prefer “Spirit or life force” (38.1%) to “personal God” (31.4%). In WEST, the picture is the opposite: 44.0% opt for “personal God”, and 33.3% for “Spirit or life force”⁷⁵.

⁷⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, before being elected as the 265th pope, has acknowledged that Vatican has doctrinally “scarcely any problems” with Catholicism in post-communist societies. **Ray Taras**. *Poland’s Transition to a Democratic Republic: The Taming of the Sacred? – The Secular and the Sacred: Nation, Religion, and Politics*. William Safran (ed.) London: Frank Cass, 2003, p. 141.

⁷⁵ Similar results have been arrived also by Detlef Pollack: “In Western European states, belief in God is always higher than acceptance of astrology or faith healers. In Eastern Europe the acceptance of religiousness outside the Church is in some cases almost as high as belief in God, in others it is equal or even higher (East Germany, Czech Republic).” **Detlef Pollack**. *Religiousness Inside and Outside the Church in Selected Post-Communist Countries of Central and Eastern Europe*. – *Social Compass* 3/2003, p. 324.

2.5. Traditional religious values

In traditional societies, religion gives answers to the meaning of the human condition, provides for social values and moral norms, and addresses issues related to “ultimate questions of life and death”⁷⁶. In a secularized situation, people still ask these questions, and society still needs values and norms, but the answers and norms are increasingly found outside of traditional religion. Consequently, modernization contributes to the change of social values from traditional worldviews to “secular-rational values”⁷⁷. The usual indicators of this value change are related to the increasing levels of justification of abortion, divorce, homosexuality, euthanasia, and suicide among the population⁷⁸. This study concentrates mostly on the values related to marriage, abortion and homosexuality.

The average level of disapproval (“never justified”) of divorce (17.3% in ECE, 14.2% in WEST), euthanasia (30.5% in ECE, 26.3% in WEST) and casual sexual relationships (48.3% in ECE, and 45.0% in WEST) is higher in ECE than in WEST. At the same time, societies of WEST disapprove more of adultery (57.2% in comparison to 48.4% in ECE), and also slightly more of abortion (28.2% in comparison to 27.3% in ECE). The regional difference is most outstanding for traditional Protestants, who are markedly more liberal in WEST than in ECE. In ECE 27.4% of Protestants disapprove of abortion (14.8% in WEST), 19.3% disapprove of divorce (6.2% in WEST), 32.7% disapprove of euthanasia (16.8% in WEST) and 52.9% disapprove of casual sexual relationships (35.0% in WEST).

The most vivid general regional difference is related to the attitudes regarding **homosexuality**. The average disapproval of homosexuality is in ECE 54.4% and in WEST 26.4%. In post-communist societies even 40.9% of those who go to religious services “never, practically never” disapprove of homosexuality (the corresponding figure for WEST is 18.1%). The lowest level of disapproval of homosexuality among post-communist societies is found among countries outside of former Soviet Union (Eastern Germany 22.5%, Slovakia 23.9%; the Czech Republic 26.9%, Slovenia 41.6%). The highest levels of disapproval of homosexuality are in Hungary (88.0%), Lithuania (78.0%) and Latvia (76.9%). Among Western societies

⁷⁶ **Philip Schlesinger, François Foret.** Political Roof and Sacred Canopy? Religion and the EU Constitution. – *European Journal of Social Theory*, 1/2006, p. 61.

⁷⁷ **Ronald Inglehart, Christian Welzel.** *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 5.

⁷⁸ **Veerle Draulans, Loek Halman.** Mapping Contemporary Europe’s Moral and Religious Pluralist Landscape: An Analysis Based on the Most Recent European Values Study Data. – *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 2/2005, p. 183.

homosexuality was disapproved of most in Malta (60.7%), and least in the Netherlands (7.0%) and Sweden (8.7%).

In the list of societies which gave the most positive answers to the question “do not want homosexuals as neighbors”, the highest result from WEST – Malta with 39.6% – receives only eighth place in the overall list, which is led by Lithuania (67.5%), Poland (55.2%) and Croatia (52.8%).

While Communist regimes did penalize the practice of homosexuality, they were among the first ones to enable legal and in-hospital abortion for women. Concomitantly, the attitudes regarding the justification of abortion form a more complex picture. The average level of disapproval of **abortion** (“never justified”) for WEST (28.2%) is slightly higher than for ECE (27.3%). In this category, however, the list of societies that are most disapproving of abortion is headed by Western societies. The top of the list is occupied by Malta (88.9%!), Ireland (51.5%) and Northern Ireland (46.2%), followed by Poland (43.9%), Croatia (43.7%) and Latvia (36.7%). Societies of Western Europe, however, occupy the bottom of the list. Least disapproving of abortion are the predominantly Lutheran societies of Sweden (5.4%), Finland (11.4%), and Iceland (11.6%). On average, Protestants in ECE (27.4%) are more disapproving of abortion than in WEST (14.8%); in WEST, however, Catholics (39.2%) are more disapproving of abortion than in ECE (36.9%).

Support for traditional marriage is higher in post-communist societies. On average, 22.0% of the respondents of WEST considered marriage an outdated institution (in contrast to 15.0% of ECE).

2.6. Status of institutional religion

Modernization of societies is accompanied by decreasing confidence in hierarchical institutions – “the military, the police and the church” – while the confidence in non-hierarchical and non-authoritarian institutions may remain relatively high⁷⁹. In order to assess the popular attitude regarding the status of the traditional church, the perceptions regarding the religious, social, and public role of the church are analyzed. Thereafter, the political participation of the clergy or church leaders (answers to the questions: “religious leaders should not influence how people vote” and “religious leaders should not influence government”) is contrasted to the (possibly)

⁷⁹ **Ronald Inglehart.** Postmodernization Erodes Respect for Authority, but Increases Support for Democracy. – Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government. Pippa Norris (ed.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 246–247.

individual and non-hierarchical forms of religious participation in politics (answers to the questions: “politicians who don’t believe are unfit for public office”, and “people with strong religious beliefs in public office”).

Post-communist societies are more supportive of the functions of the traditional church, which are related to morals, family and faith.

On the average, 51.2% in ECE (in comparison with 41.6% in WEST) were of the opinion that religious institutions give answers to “moral problems”; 73.7% thought that religious institutions give answers to “people’s spiritual needs” (61.0% in WEST); and 47.4% thought that religious institutions give answers to “the problems of family life” (36.0% in WEST).

Western societies are characterized by higher support for the social role of the traditional churches.

On average, 30.7% of the respondents in WEST thought that religious institutions give answers to “the social problems” (which is slightly more than 28.3% in ECE). In this category, the lowest regional result for ECE was in Estonia (14.1%), and the highest in Lithuania (61.3%), which testifies to the enormous difference in the perception of the *social* role of traditional churches in these societies.

Public support for religious politicians is significantly higher in ECE.

Both Catholics and Protestants of Western societies are less supportive of individuals with religious beliefs in politics than their counterparts in post-communist societies. 43.1% of Protestants and 37.6% of Catholics in ECE respond positively to the statement “better if more people with strong religious beliefs in public office” (in contrast to 13.9% Protestants and 27.7% of Catholics in WEST). A similar pattern repeats itself regarding “politicians who don’t believe are unfit for public office”, which is supported by 19.8% of post-communist Protestants (in contrast to 9.0% in WEST), and 22.6% of post-communist Catholics (in contrast to 16.5% in WEST). In both categories, the most supportive of religious politicians is the society of Malta (63.3% and 40.7%, respectively). This, however, does not automatically contribute to the social support of the political influence by church leaders. The population of Malta is among the 27 societies also the *least supportive (!)* of the influence of religious leaders on the way people vote. 89.9% of the respondents in Malta considered it appropriate for church leaders to be involved in electoral politics. Malta is followed by France (86.2%) and by the most religious post-communist society, Poland (85.7%).

A slightly different pattern of attitudes emerges regarding the influence of church hierarchy on daily politics. Least supportive of the influence of religious leaders on political government were the respondents in Denmark (85.4%), France (81.6%), post-communist Poland (80.9%), Austria (81.6%) and post-communist Croatia (79.2%). It can be speculated that in WEST, the

political influence of the church leaders is disapproved of by several of the least religious societies, while in ECE the most religious societies are also most worried about clerical influence on political government.

The average disapproval of the influence of religious leaders in politics is quite uniformly high everywhere. The lowest disapproval of the influence of church leaders in elections was in the Netherlands (65.7%) and on political government in Sweden (51.8%). This means that Europe does not have any traditionally Western Christian society, where a social majority would support the political involvement of church *leaders*.

One more observation regarding post-communist societies is due. Survey data usually demonstrates that Poland, Croatia and Lithuania are the most religious post-communist societies, and Eastern Germany, the Czech Republic and Estonia are the least religious ones. The most religious three have the regionally highest levels of religious affiliation; they are the only mono-confessional Catholic societies, and they have the highest proportion of those for whom religion is “very or rather important in life” (in Poland 83.9%, Croatia 78.8%, Lithuania 59.5%). They also have high levels of those who consider themselves as religious persons (Poland 94.4%; Croatia 85.2%; Lithuania 84.4%), who get comfort or strength from religion (Croatia 82.2%; Poland 82.0%; Lithuania 72.3%), and the least amount of those who attend religious services “never, practically never” (Poland 5.3%, Croatia 10.4%, Lithuania 16.0%). In addition, they also have the regionally highest levels of belief in sin (Lithuania 90.5%; Poland 90.3%; Croatia 76.4%), and hell (Lithuania 68.2%; Poland 65.6%; Croatia 57.1%).

The three least religious societies in ECE have the lowest levels of religious affiliation, and the least amount of those for whom “religion is (very or rather) important in life” (Eastern Germany 16.3%, the Czech Republic 19.7%, Estonia 22.0%). They have the lowest percentage of religious persons (Eastern Germany 28.6%, Estonia 41.7%; the Czech Republic 43.2%) and the least amount of those who attend religious services at least once a month (Estonia 11.2%; the Czech Republic 11.7%; Eastern Germany 12.4%) or get comfort or strength from religion (the Czech Republic 25.7; Eastern Germany 27.5%; Estonia 35.9%); the general public in these countries believe least in hell (Eastern Germany 10.1; the Czech Republic 13.1, Estonia 16.2) and are the least God-believing among the 27 societies of this study.

3. Theoretical conclusions

Regarding church-related religiosity, the survey results have testified to a stark polarization among post-communist societies, as well as contrasting patterns between post-communist and Western societies. These patterns are interpreted by four theoretical explanations: the level of socioeconomic modernization; the impact of Communist regime; the impact of the positive connection between church and national identity; and the interplay of confessional tradition (Catholicism) in combination with the homogeneity of the religious market and ethnic organization of society.

3.1. Modernization

The primary influence of socioeconomic modernization on secularization seems to be manifest in several ways: the most religious society of the sample – Malta – was the only society of WEST categorized as “industrial” according to the level of economic development (all the other societies were “post-industrial”). And vice versa, the *least* religious society of Europe, Eastern Germany, is the only post-communist society categorized economically as “post-industrial”⁸⁰.

Contribution to the economic modernization thesis can also be found in the case of Slovenia, which by the end of 20th century had the most advanced economy among post-communist states (Eastern Germany excluded). Concomitantly, Slovenia had the second largest segment of convinced atheists (8.3%) in the post-communist region, and the second lowest level of the belief in sin (43.2%), which was one of the main types of belief that distinguished the post-communist realm from WEST (in both categories Slovenia is behind only Eastern Germany). In addition, the value orientations of Slovenians are closer to the post-industrial societies of WEST than the usual orientations of post-communist realm. Among Slovenes, the level of those who find abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, divorce, having casual sex, and adultery “never justifiable” is always lower than the average of the ten post-communist societies of this study.

Different levels of modernization are not corresponded by differences in the support for religious ceremonies at rites of passage, or the levels of personal religiosity – the average levels of “religious persons” is similar in both regions; the level of “convinced atheists” is slightly lower in Western Europe and the level of those for whom religion is important is higher in Western Europe.

⁸⁰ Norris, Inglehart 2004, p. 46.

Yet, the modernization of societies without the experience of a Communist regime has contributed significantly to religious privatization. That is to say that those who are not very satisfied with traditional Christianity do not opt for non-religious or non-Christian alternatives. In the societies of Western Europe, there are proportionally more of those whose religious sentiments and behavior have distanced from traditional religious institutions. They have been alienated from traditional church without having been alienated from religion. This privatized religiosity is manifest in significantly higher levels of those who do not have the habit of participating in religious services but still remain formal members of religious denominations (51.9% in WEST, 18.6% in ECE); those who considered themselves as religious persons (34.9% in WEST, 25.4% in ECE); got comfort and strength from religion (19.7% in WEST, 12.8 in ECE); or believed in God (50.1% in WEST, 27.3% in ECE). The privatization of religion is also manifest in the decline in support for the functions of traditional churches, which were related to morals, family and faith, although the church activities in the provision of social care is still widely supported. The average support for politicians with religious beliefs is also lower in Western than in post-communist societies, which also testifies to the increasing attitude that religions should be a private, not public matter.

Modernization clearly contributes to the decline of religious beliefs in sin and hell, which are closely related to a theistic worldview. The overall levels of ambiguous belief in God, however, may remain relatively high.

Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart have attributed the lower levels of religion in Estonia and the Czech Republic to the relative successes in economic transition among post-communist societies⁸¹. An additional sign of the influence of socio-economic development on secularization is the further secularization of certain societies *after* Communism. Thus, as Slovenian and Czech populations have achieved higher levels of economic welfare during 1990s, they have also increasingly secularized⁸².

⁸¹ Norris and Inglehart contrasted Estonia and the Czech Republic with Albania and Romania, which were more religious societies, but less advanced economically. Norris, Inglehart 2004, p. 127.

⁸² According to the censuses of 1991 and 2002, Slovenian population has increasingly secularized *after* Communism: the proportion of Catholics fell from 71.36% to 57.80%, and the proportion of atheists rose from 4.35% to 10.10%. Šturm 2004, p. 608. The same pattern can be observed among Czechs. Between 1991 and 2001 the proportion of affiliated individuals fell from 44,8% to 32,0% according to the censuses. Tretera 2003, p. 81.

3.2. Communist regime

Communism has a particular impact on secularization⁸³. In general, the impact of Communist regimes has been stronger on religious institutions than on personal or subjective religiosity⁸⁴. Economically less advanced post-communist societies have lower average levels of affiliation and participation in religious services and lower percentages of those for whom religion is important and who take moments of prayer than in economically more advanced Western societies. This is in contradiction with the general socioeconomic thesis of secularization, and is evidence of the peculiar secularizing influence of the Communist regimes.

Also, the slightly higher proportion of “convinced atheists” in the post-communist region testifies to the secularizing effect of Communist regimes, which succeeded also in purifying atheists or non-participant (perhaps traditional or cultural Christians) out of church ranks. Or, to put it differently, there are more of those who are dissatisfied with traditional Christianity, and have opted out of any form of religion. Furthermore, the general secularizing legacy of Communist regimes becomes more detailed if the larger average proportion of those who quite radically claim their indifference regarding religion (the average of those for whom “God is not at all important” was 22.2% in ECE and 14.8% in WEST) is also taken into account.

It can be speculated that Communism may have also contributed to the preservation of some traditional religious beliefs (like belief in sin and hell) and may have hindered the process of religious privatization and the liberalization of social values – or that post-communist societies just have not arrived at the level of modernization where the privatization of religion becomes more widespread, which has taken place more thoroughly in Western societies.

The contrasting regional patterns regarding homosexuality (the average disapproval of homosexuality was in ECE 54.4% and in WEST 26.4%) and abortion (which was slightly more disapproved of in WEST), demonstrate the legacy of the Communist system on social values. The public does not easily approve of those values which were not supported by Communist regimes (homosexuality), and which, as a rule, become increasingly approved of at higher levels of economic modernization. Consequently, the liberalization of social values and the individualization of religious beliefs is a process that in post-communist regions started primarily *after* Com-

⁸³ Inglehart, Welzel 2005, p. 5.

⁸⁴ Irena Borowik. The Religious Landscape of Central and Eastern Europe after Communism. – The Sage Handbook of the Sociology of Religion. James A. Beckford, N. J. Demerath III (eds.) London: SAGE Publications, 2007, p. 660.

munism. The higher average levels of disapproval of divorce, euthanasia and casual sexual relationships together with stronger support for traditional marriage in post-communist societies can be both due to lower levels of modernization or possibly also due to the collectivist nature of social morality of the Communist regimes.

The lowest results for Eastern Germany also demand some explanation. Eastern Germany has an exceptionally high level of convinced atheists not only in comparison to Europe, but also on a global level⁸⁵. To recall some of the findings of the WVS 1999/2000 study, among the 27 societies surveyed, Eastern Germany had the lowest percentages of those: who supported religious ceremonies at birth (25.6%), marriage (34.0%) and death (39.0); who think that churches give answers to spiritual needs (40.5%); who are religious persons (28.6%); and who believe in God (30.3%), in heaven (14.1%), or in sin (20.4%). And vice versa, Eastern Germany occupies first place in the proportion of those for whom God is not at all important (53.1%). Paul Froese and Steven Pfaff offer an historical explanation for this situation. They claim that the existence of “a mass membership socialist movement for decades before the Marxist-Leninist regime came to power” contributed to the situation where Communism in the DDR “was never simply a foreign imposition by Soviet occupiers”⁸⁶. As a consequence, also the levels of religion declined.

Another explanation could stress the peculiarities of church-state relations or a lower level of repression of religious organizations in the DDR than in other Communist states. When the religious leaders of Czechoslovakia petitioned for Religious Freedom in 1988, they coveted an extension of religious freedom to the level that did exist at that moment in “neighboring GDR and Poland”⁸⁷. Yet this argument would hardly explain the extraordinarily high level of religion in Poland, where the Catholic Church enjoyed privileges not comparable to any other church in other countries of the Warsaw Pact⁸⁸. In Czechoslovakia⁸⁹ and the Soviet Union,

⁸⁵ Of the 46 countries included in the World Values Survey (1995–1997), Eastern Germany had more than double the percentage of atheists (25.4%) than the next most atheistic society (Japan with 12.2%) in the sample. **Froese, Pfaff** 2005, p. 398.

⁸⁶ **Froese, Pfaff** 2005, p. 416.

⁸⁷ Czech Petition for Religious Freedom January 1988, point 7. “We demand that the religious orders be rehabilitated, and permitted to accept new members as in neighbouring GDR and Poland.” **J. F. Maclear** (ed.) *Church and State in the Modern Age: A Documentary History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 500.

⁸⁸ Manfred Spieker has argued that Poland was most free country of the East block of countries. **Manfred Spieker**. *Das Forschungsprojekt “Die Kirchen in den postkommunistischen Transformationsprozessen”*. – *Katholische Kirche und Zivilgesellschaft in Osteuropa. Postkommunistische Transformationsprozesse in Polen, Tsche-*

the levels of repression of churches were higher than in Hungary – at least after 1964, when the Communist regime had made an agreement with the Vatican, the Catholic Church could reestablish a full hierarchy and send priests to study in Rome⁹⁰, Poland⁹¹, and Yugoslavia⁹². Most favorable could have been the situation for the church in Yugoslavia, especially since the 1960s⁹³. The treatment of the church was perhaps the least hostile in Slovenia, where Communists were among the most tolerant, liberal-minded and closest to West European social democrats among Yugoslavian Communists⁹⁴.

While Communism has left its regional imprint on the decline of the status of traditional churches, and the secularization of certain societies (esp. Estonia, the Czech Republic) can largely be attributed to Communist anti-religious policies, the relationship of traditional churches to their national culture and identity better explains the variation of secularization among post-communist societies and the reasons why Communism succeeded in societies better than in others.

chien, der Slowakei und Litauen. Manfred Spieker (Hrsg.) Ferdinand Schöningh: Paderborn, 2003, p. 24.

⁸⁹ Among East-European Communist regimes the religious organizations in Czechoslovakia were most repressed and tightly controlled. **Grzegorz Ekiert**. *State Against Society: Political Crises and Their Aftermath in East Central Europe*. Ewing, NJ, USA: Princeton University Press, 1996, p. 156.

⁹⁰ **Stephen White, Bill Miller, Åse Grødeland, Sarah Oates**. Religion and Political Action in Postcommunist Europe. – *Political Studies*, 4/2000, p. 681.

⁹¹ In Poland, the Catholics had their own newspapers, a Catholic university at Lublin, Catholic chaplains in the army, their own deputies' groups in parliament. **White, Miller, Grødeland, Oates** 2000, p. 681.

⁹² **Pollack** 1998, p. 19.

⁹³ In comparison with other communist countries, Yugoslavia was more liberal towards religion and religious institutions. Although the rights of political, cultural, educational, and organizational life were limited for the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia, there still existed a relative autonomy and freedom in the field of religion. **Marko Kerševan**. Religion und Kirche in der slowenischen Zivilgesellschaft nach 1990. – *Religiöser Wandel in den postkommunistischen Ländern Ost- und Mitteleuropas*. Detlef Pollack, Irena Borowik, Wolfgang Jagodzinski (Hrsg.) Würzburg: ERGON-Verlag, 1998, S. 375, 377.

⁹⁴ **Anton Bebler**. Slovenia's Smooth Transition. – *Journal of Democracy*, 1/2002, p. 130.

3.3. Cultural defense

Steve Bruce has claimed that the processes of modernization may not result in secularization if religion fulfills some function “other than mediating the natural and supernatural” or “man and God”⁹⁵. The most obvious of these jobs is the “cultural defense”, which occurs when “an ethnic group or nation sharing one religion finds itself in conflict with an ethnic group or nation of a different religion.”⁹⁶ To put it differently, “cultural defense” describes the situation when the church has been on the side of national struggles against occupation by a religiously or ideologically alien regime.

This approach yields better explanations for the causes of “over-“, and “under-secularization” among post-communist societies. For example, the relatively successful secularization of Slovenian society can be attributed to the particular history of religion and nation building. Until the 20th century, Slovenia lacked any substantial need for confronting an occupying foreign rule in religious terms because Roman Catholicism was for centuries the state church for the Habsburg Empire and Catholicism also emerged as a national religion for Slovenians⁹⁷. In a like manner, Eastern Germans lacked until the 20th century the need to confront any occupying rule backed by an alien ideology or creed. Such a merge between the Protestant church and the national struggles of Eastern Germans also “failed to reproduce itself under communist pressure”⁹⁸.

Historic religious traditions and national identity have been weakly connected for Czechs and Estonians (Catholicism and Lutheranism, respectively), in contrast to Lithuanians and Poles, for whom the Catholic Church, ethnic identity and national struggles were intertwined already in the pre-Communist period, or for Croatians and Slovaks, for whom a “religious marker of ethnic identity” has become increasingly important since the 1970s⁹⁹.

The levels of church-related religion are significantly higher in all these societies where the church and nationalism have been closely connected. Nevertheless, the cultural and national influence of the church does not automatically spill over to all the other categories of religious authority. To what extent the norms, beliefs and values of the church (for example, the dogmatic positions of abortion) are supported by the population are the social dimensions of religion, which are perhaps better explained by the advance in modernization.

⁹⁵ **Bruce** 1999, p. 267.

⁹⁶ **Bruce** 1999, p. 267.

⁹⁷ **Šturm** 2004, pp. 608.

⁹⁸ **Martin** 2005, p. 32.

⁹⁹ **Martin** 2007, p. 145.

3.4. Confession and ethno-religious homogeneity

Last, but not least, both post-communist and Western European societies demonstrate that church-related religion is preserved better in societies which are ethnically homogeneous, Catholic and mono-confessional. Previous studies have demonstrated on a global level that Catholic societies are characterized by culturally similar social and cultural values, and the same applies for the historically Protestant societies¹⁰⁰. The traditionally Protestant societies of Western Europe have maintained high levels of formal religious affiliation, yet have secularized in most of the other dimensions of religion. Protestants in post-communist societies have markedly more traditional-conservative attitudes regarding abortion, divorce, euthanasia and casual sexual relationships than Protestants in Western Europe. Post-communist societies also demonstrate the success of Communist regimes in the undermining of the formal relationship of traditionally Protestant societies with their churches. Because Protestant cultures had already experienced significant secularization *before* Communist regimes – especially in the form of secularization of education and declericalization of society (by dissolving religious orders and nationalizing the monasteries) – the Communist regimes could start the secularization of society from a significantly more advanced position in Protestant, rather than Catholic societies.

Both regions demonstrate that as a rule, mono-confessionalism is linked with higher levels of religiosity, and religious pluralism is linked with relatively *low* levels of religiosity.¹⁰¹ A contributing factor to religious homogeneity is ethnic homogeneity. Mono-confessional *and ethnically homogeneous* populations of Poland and Lithuania were harder for Communists to control or subordinate than the multi-confessional or multi-ethnic societies in Hungary, Latvia or Estonia.

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¹⁰⁰ **Ronald Inglehart, Miguel Basáñez, Jaime Diez-Medrano, Loek Halman, Ruud Luijkx.** Human Beliefs and Values: a cross-cultural sourcebook based on the 1999–2002 values surveys. México: Siglo XXI Editores, 2004, p. 17.

¹⁰¹ **Norris, Inglehart** 2004, p. 127.

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