

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

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Any analysis of the influence of ideology in politics should take into account its links to religiosity. But, is this relation maintained over time? On what individual or collective factors depends? What components of the religious phenomenon have the most prominent influence in the left-right ideology? In this paper we answer these questions using a large sample of 35 European countries from the European Values Study (EVS) and the Party Manifestos Project. We do so from a longitudinal perspective, paying attention to their development since the early 1980's until the late 2000's, considering the impact of the different dimensions of religiosity, and from a comparative focus, evaluating the importance of the context in the selected countries.

Keywords: - Europe – Religiosity- Left-Right positions- Ideology

## **1. Defining left and right.**

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

At the present time, “left” and “right” are associated with two big belief systems that present alternative views about collective action and distribution of economic resources and power among political community (Lipset et al. 1954; Downs 1957 cite by Kroh 2007: 205). According to this, left has been primarily associated with the idea of social equality (Bobbio 1996, Corbetta et al 2009), usually taking shape on the notions of progress, revolution and redistributive economic policies. On the contrary, the right is related to the idea of hierarchy and continuity of the established order, linking itself to conservative proposals and with the no interference with property rights and inequality generated by the same lack of meddling (Laponce 1981, Schmitt and van der Eijk 2009, Zechmeister, 2006). Although each pole claims its universal validity defending the common good, each one supports a particular vision of the world that pretends to represent the interests of different social groups (Laponce, 1981; Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976; Knutsen 1995: 67). In

accordance to this idea, traditional cleavages presented by Lipset and Rokkan in 1967, would have shaped the meanings of left and right, so the location of individuals in those cleavages could be crucial (Alford 1967, Rose and Urwin, 1970, Lijphart 1979, Campbell 1980, Freire 2006).

But are individuals consistent in their ideological locations with their social membership? Or, in other words, to what extent do other factors influence political self-perceptions? One of the main contributions in this regard is laid down by Ronald Inglehart and Hans Dieter Klingemann (1976). In their work "*Party Identification, Ideological Preference, and the Left-Right Dimension among Western Mass Publics*" they considered the determinants of the self-placement on the ideological scale. With a synoptic vocation, they provided an organized and empirical approach, identifying three main components that structure the locations in this scheme: a component linked to the situation of individuals in the social structure, another linked to value systems and a final one related to party identification. Those three components, that systematize many of the factors identified as influential in the political orientations but no specific analysis has been monograph focused on the specific impact of religiosity in left-right divisions, and certainly none has taken into account the complexity of the religious phenomenon. Here we briefly describe these three elements that Inglehart and Klingemann developed, and its relationship with religious aspects.

The first factor to which we refer is that of social structure, intimately linked to the Lipset and Rokkan's model of cleavages. According to their theory, early social divisions would have crystallized in stable parties systems in Europe. Specifically, they referred to those divisions between working class and owners, between religious and non religious (or between Protestants and Catholics, depending on the context), between the rural and the urban, and finally, between centre and periphery. However, during last decades some

processes, as secularization and social mobility and fragmentation would have a negative impact on the saliency of these social divisions on politics (Franklin 1984, Dalton 1996, Kitschelt 1993, Dogan 1995, Nieuwbeerta y Ultee 1999).

In our analysis we consider basically the goldthorpien definition of social classes (Goldthorpe, J.H., 1980) operationalized in seven groups (Andersen and Heath 2002; Nieuwbeerta, de Graaf y Ultee, 2000), as a proxy of the social class cleavage devised by Lipset and Rokkan. We also control by gender, age, cohort, marital status and education. Our developed definition of the religious cleavage will be presented in next section.

Inglehart and Klingemann framed social values as a second factor that explains positions in the left-right scale. Since ideologies systematize sets of beliefs and values, individuals may use the latter as a reference to settle them at the schema. This postulation is based on the idea that value systems precede and shape political orientations or behaviour (Layman and Carmines, 1997) or, as it was noted by Knutsen (1995), their stability over time would make them suitable to reflect a generalized political position. Values are phenomena that are not directly observable; nevertheless, they represent an extraordinary relevance in politics. Very often they have been operationalized on the basis of preferences and attitudes (Campbell, et al., 1960), the assessment of the role of the Government in economy (Downs, 1957), or the degree of prominence of the private sector or the level of agreement with social equality (Crewe et. al. 1983, Lijphart 1984, Huber 1989; Corbetta et al. 2009).

In regard to this big set of values, we have included a selection of indicators to sum up every aspect described above: justification of behaviors like homosexuality, divorce, euthanasia, suicide and abortion; but also Government's responsibility to ensure welfare, attitudes towards competition, respect for authority, and confidence in police. Some

authors showed an interest on the emergence of new post-materialist values in European societies (Inglehart, 1990) and their absorption and integration, or replacement by the left-right schema (Knutsen, 1995). To analyze this component, we also included some variables like the willingness to pay to protect the environment, the preference for male employment over female in case of shortage, and a version of Inglehart's Postmaterialism Index (Inglehart, 1971).

Here we deal with potential problems of endogeneity. Social groups, defined by cleavages, promote values systems and obtain different evaluations. At this point, André Freire (2006) assess that attitudes towards institutions representing the interests of these groups - like churches, trade unions or corporations –should be considered as an identity component of the social factors. However, we consider that these attitudes should be better framed within the range of values systems. They should not replace the empirical elements that refer social divisions. The same way that a favourable position toward redistribution policies does not replace or complement objective indicators of class divisions, a great sympathy towards unions should not too.

The third and last factor that Inglehart and Klingemann solidly tied to the location in the scheme is party identification. Party identification refers to emotional bonds that people have with political parties developed by individuals in their political socialization (Butler and Stokes, 1969; Converse, 1969; Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976; Berglund et al., 2005). Parties locate themselves in the left-right scheme, so, their identified voters could use these references to establish their own positions. They are even comparable to the bonds that link individuals and their religious identification (Miller and Shanks 1996: 120-1). Partisanship in Europe has a remarkable cognitive component based in political values and issue positions that leads to prefer a particular party. Supporters present more stable beliefs and values systems in countries where cleavage parties are dominant. But again

what is needed here is to determine to what extent individuals' partisanship is an influential factor, *regardless* of both the place they occupy in the social structure or the value systems they share.

The lack of suitable data for this indicator has made us use "vote intention in the next parliamentary elections" as a proxy for partisanship. This is far from optimal. Partisanship has two main components –attitude and self-identification (Greene 2002) - and vote intention does not fit as an indicator of either. We take this into account in the assessment of the results.

## **2. The "religious component" of ideology.**

In our analysis, we split religiosity from other ideology's determinants in order to thoroughly analyze its impact. We certainly consider religion as a social factor, but our conceptualization is more accurate compared to those that only pay attention to the assignment of individual to religious groups and mislead the centrality of the phenomenon in individuals' lives.

When we study the influence of religion on voting, an important part of the literature has continued using similar proposals to that developed by Wolfgang Jagodzinski and Karel Dobbeleare in 1995, who designed an indicator of "church religiosity" based on religious denomination and frequency of church attendance. Despite of the broad empirical support of this approach and its demonstrated applicability in different contexts (Knutsen 1995, Van der Eijk 2005), other areas of the social sciences have debated about the necessity of using different religious indicators (Esmer and Petterson, 2007). We will use a set of them in order to avoid a naive vision of the concept, what will let us measure five different components: behaviour, identity, beliefs, individual religiosity, and, finally, institutional religiosity, which will be described in more detail in the following lines.

### 2.1. The behavioural component.

Many authors have highlighted the utility of the frequency of attendance to religious services as an indicator of religious intensity and integration (Jagodzinski and Dobbeleare 1995:86; Manza and Brooks, 1997; Montero, Calvo y Martínez, 2008: 30). Regular contact with religious discourses in churches has an important influence on the behaviour of those who listen to them and could be an expression of a high level of commitment and time investment (Calvo y Montero, 2002: 2). However, the use of this variable is not exempt from criticism. The different confessions do not emphasize the same on the duty to attend public services. In fact, weekly church attendance is a primary mandate only for Catholics. To avoid this problem, some scholars have included in their analysis indicators that measure also the frequency of praying in the private sphere (Esmer and Petterson, 2007; Kotler-Berkowitz, 2001). In our analysis both components will be considered.

### 2.2. The identification component:

An important trend in the study of religiosity is the levels of affiliation. Despite this indicator does not necessarily imply commitment with religious institutions, considering oneself as belonging to a particular religious confession is the best proxy to locate individuals in the religious cleavage, and one of the best religious indicators to explain electoral behaviour in Europe (Knutsen, 2004). According to this idea, and attending to the European reality, we consider the adscription to the main religious confessions (Catholic, Protestant, Muslim and Orthodox) or to the group of citizens that does not adhere to any.

### 2.3. Beliefs.

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



principles on which the faith of a certain denomination is shaped, could be understood as a high degree of agreement with. Nevertheless, there is no clear consensus in the literature on the influence of these more intimate aspects of religion on ideology or voting behaviour (for a more in depth about this, see Jagodzinski and Dobbeleare 1995:80; Manza and Brooks, 2003; Esmer and Petterson, 2007; Knutsen, unpublished). In this paper we will consider the belief in *dogmas* shared by the majority of confessions: the existence of God, heaven, life after death and hell.

#### 2.4. The individual religiosity.

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

#### 2.5. The institutional religiosity.

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

in religious authority. The loss of moral authority over society would be accompanied by a loss of the capacity of religion to influence both the public sphere and private life of individuals.

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

With this selection of variables we take into account a wide range of expressions of the religious phenomena that could have been affected in many different ways by the process of secularization. Most importantly, they may interact differently with the self-placement in the left-right scale. In next section, we contrast the effective influence of these variables in ideology by employing a longitudinal and comparative approach that allows us to establish the basis of this relationship, within the dimensions set forth by Inglehart and Klingemann (1976).

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

As we said before, we use data from the European Values Study database (EVS) with a longitudinal perspective. To do this, we have organized waves in separate periods of approximately 10 years each, depending of data availability. These waves were renamed into four groups, depending on the beginning of the nearest decade (1980s, 1990s, 2000s and 2010s), although reference years do not always match exactly the year in which these data were collected. Those countries for which we do not have at least three observations and those for which many of the key variables were not available were excluded. As a result, Greece, Belarus and Turkey were dropped, maintaining 35 countries in the final selection.

As previous research highlighted, there is a positive association between ideology<sup>2</sup> and religious indicators (Norris and Inglehart, 2004: 201- 8). In our analysis, we observe that in almost all countries and waves, people belonging to the main confession of the country locate themselves closer to the scale's right pole, while people without religious identity do it closer to the left (results not shown due to lack of space).

Concerning the correlation between church attendance and ideology, we can assert that the more a person attends to church, the more locates further to the right (Dalton, 1996). But there are some exceptions to this assumption in Eastern European Orthodox countries and in Northern Ireland and Iceland, a group of the most homogeneous societies in terms of religious practice.

Attending to the remaining indicators of religiosity, there is a relationship between higher levels of religious commitment and closest identification to the right in most of the cases. However, the bivariate analysis is not enough. In order to provide a more complex and complete analysis of the relationship between religiosity and ideology, we present in Table 1 a linear regression model based on least squares approach in which our dependent variable is individual's ideological self-placement on the left-right schema. Our main goal here is to explore which of the five religious components -identification, behaviour, beliefs, private religiosity and institutional religiosity- are the most important when explaining individual political ideology. To further this argument we pay attention to the specific relevance of each of them. We check this point by entering the 5 components in the regression equation, then removing one by one and thereby estimating the percentage of variance that cannot be explained by the other components. Additionally, we estimate the overall impact of the five components of ideology.

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<sup>2</sup> Ideology is expressed in the traditional bipolar scale of 10 points in which 1 means "extreme left" while 10 is "extreme right". In the annex to this chapter there are listed the variables used, with their wording and answer categories.

As shown in Table 1, explained variance in certain waves and countries exceeds the 10 per cent, while in some cases exceed 20 per cent, which indicates a significant impact of the religious component. Furthermore, the influence of the religious experience over time does not present a monotonic progression in every country -we can only speak of stability and high influence in France, Ireland and Portugal; and of stability and low influence in Romania, Moldova, Russia and the United Kingdom-. Spain is the country in which religion achieves the highest sustained influence, although with a sharp negative trend since 1980`s. Declines were recorded in new democracies and also in some established ones. Instead, its impact seems to grow only in some Eastern European countries: Albania, Poland, Slovenia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. Definitely, these results do not fit with the assumption that religiosity is losing power to predict individual`s ideology.

However, concrete and specific contributions of each component are small when compared with the total variance explained by religiosity. This is explained by the high degree of correlation between these factors. Even though, we find that religious identification is the component that makes a most distinctive contribution to explain ideological self-identification, specifically in those countries with significant ethnical fractures, such as some Balkan countries and Northern Ireland, but also in France in 2010. We also note that neither the religious behaviour nor institutional religiosity contribute substantially to increase the explained variance, even in Catholic countries<sup>3</sup>. This means that the cornerstone in the operationalization made by Jagodzinski and Dobbeleare (1995) is not sufficient to assess the impact of religiosity on ideology.

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<sup>3</sup> Lucia Medina (2010) found that church attendance was a relevant factor in Catholic countries.

**Table 1: Percentage of the explained variance of left-right self-placement by each component of religiosity controlled by the others.**

Albania					Austria				Belgium				Bulgaria			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Identification	-	2,7	3,4	0,6	-	0,4	2	0,5	3,5	1,2	2,2	1,1	-	2,8	1,1	1,3
Behaviour	-	0,1	0,1	2	-	0,2	2,6	0,4	0,8	0,2	1,7	0,5	-	0,1	0,1	0,3
Beliefs	-	0,3	0,2	1,6	-	0,9	0,2	0,9	1,2	0,4	0,3	0,4	-	1,9	1,2	0,1
Private Relig.	-	0,1	1,1	2,1	-	1,3	0,2	1,1	1,8	0,7	0,2	0,4	-	2,6	0	1,7
Instit. Relig.	-	0	0,1	0,2	-	0,2	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,9	0	0,9	-	0	0	0,1
TOTAL	-	3,7	7,3	7,5	-	9,5	6,6	5,8	24	12,1	8,1	6	-	11,8	6,3	3,9
N	-	665	708	879	-	1114	1039	1003	503	1378	1279	1361	-	592	525	652

Croatia					Czech Republic				Denmark				Finland			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Identification	-	1,3	1,7	0,2	-	0,2	0,5	1,1	1,0	0,8	1,4	0,0	-	1,9	1,9	1,0
Behaviour	-	0,0	0,3	0,3	-	0,5	0,1	0,5	0,4	0,7	0,7	0,4	-	0,2	0,6	0,0
Beliefs	-	0,3	0,4	0,9	-	0,1	0,4	0,2	0,6	0,9	1,7	1,4	-	0,6	0,6	1,0
Private Relig.	-	0,7	0,0	2,1	-	0,9	0,4	0,2	1,3	0,1	0,3	0,1	-	0,2	1,1	0,2
Instit. Relig.	-	0,5	0,9	1,2	-	0,2	0,1	0,3	1,0	0,1	0,8	0,5	-	0,1	0,4	1,0
TOTAL	-	13,4	7,8	17,6	-	7,6	4,4	2,4	14,2	5,9	6,1	3,8	-	8,6	9,9	7,3
N	-	914	706	1050	-	1570	1453	1078	813	767	720	1289	-	399	721	648

France					Hungary				Iceland				Ireland			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Identification	0,6	0,8	2,2	4,5	-	1,9	2,0	0,6	1,6	1,2	1,5	1,2	1,4	0,4	0,5	3,1
Behaviour	0,4	0,4	0,9	0,2	-	0,6	0,1	0,1	0,6	0,2	0,4	0,5	0,5	0,2	0,2	0,7
Beliefs	0,7	0,5	1,5	0,3	-	1,6	0,5	0,4	1,0	0,5	0,4	1,3	0,6	0,5	0,6	0,6
Private Relig.	0,0	0,1	0,2	0,1	-	0,2	0,0	0,2	0,0	0,0	0,1	0,1	1,2	3,0	1,9	0,5
Instit. Relig.	1,0	0,8	0,4	1,3	-	0,0	0,9	0,2	0,8	0,3	0,1	0,5	1,0	0,8	0,9	0,4
TOTAL	18,5	13,4	11,5	12,9	-	9,8	7,7	2,1	5,9	3,2	3,1	3,8	8,5	12,1	12,1	14,4
N	874	629	1101	1308	-	577	665	1284	805	558	770	632	751	833	650	489

Italy					Malta				Moldova				Netherlands			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Identification	0,3	1,9	0,7	1,4	0,9	1,6	1,5	0,5	-	1,6	1,7	0,8	0,2	1,7	0,6	1,6
Behaviour	0,4	0,1	0,1	0,9	0,3	1,1	0,1	0,6	-	0,4	0,0	0,0	1,0	0,9	0,2	1,0
Beliefs	1,2	0,3	2,0	0,4	0,4	9,6	3,6	1,2	-	1,5	1,4	0,6	0,4	3,4	2,0	0,5
Private Relig.	0,3	0,3	0,0	0,2	0,0	3,4	0,0	0,3	-	0,1	1,2	0,4	2,3	0,3	0,3	0,2
Instit. Relig.	3,2	1,0	0,0	0,2	1,7	0,0	0,1	2,6	-	0,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,2	0,1	0,0
TOTAL	17,6	13,1	8,8	7,5	3,7	17,2	8,4	8,0	-	3,0	4,7	2,1	23,3	23,0	8,9	9,8
N	904	1247	1340	816	168	128	955	629	-	680	477	718	754	847	918	1290

Norway					Poland				Portugal				Romania			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Identification	2,1	1,0	1,1	1,4	-	1,2	0,9	1,5	-	0,2	0,6	0,7	-	1,4	1,7	1,2
Behaviour	0,4	0,1	0,2	0,3	-	0,3	0,5	1,1	-	0,4	1,4	0,6	-	0,0	0,6	0,1
Beliefs	0,4	0,5	0,4	0,4	-	0,8	0,8	0,9	-	0,6	0,8	0,5	-	0,9	2,2	0,3
Private Relig.	0,3	0,3	0,2	0,4	-	0,9	2,3	0,7	-	0,4	0,2	2,4	-	0,0	0,1	0,9
Instit. Relig.	0,3	0,0	0,9	1,1	-	0,1	0,8	0,3	-	0,7	0,3	0,2	-	1,0	0,5	0,5
TOTAL	8,0	3,4	4,2	5,3	-	5,7	12,9	13,8	-	9,5	8,7	8,1	-	3,3	4,6	2,7
N	745	922	1016	966	-	655	681	958	-	893	593	792	-	818	482	705

Russia					Slovakia				Slovenia				Spain			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Identification	-	1,1	0,6	2,0	-	1,1	0,9	2,7	-	1,9	0,5	1,0	0,5	0,4	0,8	2,0
Behaviour	-	1,5	0,3	0,5	-	0,1	0,5	0,1	-	1,2	0,2	0,6	0,8	0,6	1,1	0,5
Beliefs	-	0,6	0,2	1,4	-	0,3	1,4	0,4	-	0,7	0,9	0,7	0,9	1,5	0,2	0,9
Private Relig.	-	0,9	0,1	0,8	-	2,4	1,2	0,2	-	0,3	1,8	1,4	0,7	0,3	1,8	0,3
Instit. Relig.	-	0,2	0,4	0,0	-	0,1	0,3	0,3	-	0,3	0,8	1,2	2,2	0,9	0,5	0,3
TOTAL	-	3,9	1,6	5,1	-	14,0	8,5	4,2	-	7,8	14,1	19,2	31,9	20,2	18,9	17,0
N	-	431	1121	590	-	555	826	846	-	419	628	883	1356	1915	1426	964

**Table 1 (continuation)**

	Sweden				Switzerland				Ukraine				Macedonia			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Identification	1,3	0,4	0,2	1,7	-	1,3	0,4	1,3	-	4,7	4,7	3,9	-	0,2	4,1	1,6
Behaviour	1,3	0,6	2,8	0,4	-	1,6	0,5	0,1	-	0,4	0,4	0,0	-	0,0	0,1	0,3
Beliefs	0,3	0,3	0,8	1,1	-	1,9	0,2	1,1	-	0,4	1,3	0,8	-	0,3	0,3	0,4
Private Relig.	0,0	0,7	0,0	0,2	-	0,8	0,3	0,3	-	0,1	0,1	0,4	-	0,1	0,1	0,7
Instit. Reliq.	0,1	0,0	0,1	0,6	-	0,0	0,0	0,2	-	1,0	0,3	0,0	-	0,0	0,1	0,1
<i>TOTAL</i>	6,1	2,8	5,5	4,3	-	11,6	2,1	5,6	-	8,9	11,2	9,8	-	3,2	7,5	5,6
N	612	694	761	502	-	886	621	868	-	842	471	605	-	543	735	582

	Great Britain				West Germany				East Germany				Northern Ireland			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Identification	2,3	1,5	1,2	2,3	0,9	0,5	1,4	2,7	-	0,2	0,7	0,5	15,4	7,9	4,2	5,0
Behaviour	0,1	0,1	0,0	0,1	0,1	1,2	0,2	0,2	-	0,2	1,1	0,3	0,0	1,1	2,1	0,1
Beliefs	0,7	0,2	0,3	0,6	0,6	0,9	1,7	1,8	-	1,2	0,4	0,5	0,6	1,1	0,9	0,9
Private Relig.	0,5	0,3	0,6	0,2	0,4	0,1	1,6	0,1	-	0,4	1,3	0,0	1,1	0,9	1,1	3,0
Instit. Reliq.	0,2	0,1	0,0	0,0	1,0	1,6	0,0	0,7	-	0,2	0,6	0,2	0,3	0,6	0,1	0,0
<i>TOTAL</i>	6,8	4,8	4,6	4,6	12,2	12,0	9,2	7,6	-	11,3	8,1	3,8	19,4	13,5	7,7	10,0
N	868	1181	620	1045	1022	1263	734	782	-	951	655	705	213	255	580	278

	Serbia				Montenegro				Bosnia			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Identification	-	5,1	0,6	0,6	-	1,9	3,2	3,2	-	1,8	0,4	4,5
Behaviour	-	0,0	0,6	0,2	-	0,0	0,2	0,8	-	0,5	0,1	0,9
Beliefs	-	2,0	1,4	0,4	-	4,3	2,6	0,2	-	1,4	0,2	1,0
Private Relig.	-	0,3	0,6	0,4	-	1,4	1,5	0,4	-	0,7	1,6	0,4
Instit. Reliq.	-	0,0	0,5	0,1	-	1,2	0,3	0,0	-	0,2	0,1	0,0
<i>TOTAL</i>	-	7,7	5,6	3,9	-	7,6	7,0	9,9	-	8,7	7,9	11,6
N	-	736	589	837	-	118	458	674	-	648	652	885

But, in order to unmask the real effect of religiosity on ideology, we need to return to Inglehart and Klingemann's scheme. Table 2 provides information about how much variance of individual ideology can be explained by each one of these components and how much can be explained by altogether. This table also shows how much of this explanation is provided exclusively by religious variables.

The first element that draws our attention is whether our full model fits our dependent variable. Hopefully, if our operationalization fits the data, a large percentage of the variability of ideology would be explained by this full model. This is so in almost every country and year, although the percentage varies from a 63.6 per cent in Albania in 2000 to a 8.7 percent in Romania in 2010. This great variability demonstrates that ideology is shaped differently in diverse contexts and moments. However, in every country of Western Europe, with the only exception of Ireland, the total variance explained by the complete model is, on average, over 25 percent. Countries of Central and Eastern Europe that do not exceed this threshold are Austria, Bosnia, Hungary, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Russia and Slovakia. At the other extreme are those countries with the best fit of the model, among which are the Western European countries France, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Sweden, and - as already noted- Albania.

If we consider the direct impact of each one of the three components defined above, partisanship emerges as the factor that explains a greater percentage of variance, with an outstanding difference, although its influence decreases in some Western European countries where it was relatively high at the beginning of the period. In most of the Central and Eastern European new democracies this influence has increased, but with some exceptions. These variations could be explained by the new processes of creation of party loyalties in these new democracies, which are not monotonic. Some authors

had pointed out the relevance of some contextual factors, like ideological polarization, to describe how left-right self-placement can be more relevant in some context and less salient in others (Andersen and Heath, 2002; van der Eijk et. al. 2005; Medina 2010).

Value systems reach the 5 per cent of the explained variance in some Scandinavian and Western European countries, while in the majority of Eastern European countries their contribution is much lower, with a variable contribution between 1 and 3 per cent. Social factors get the last position, exceeding 3 per cent only in Eastern countries – specially in Balkans- and the two Irelands, while this percentage declines in most countries, with only a few exceptions.

As we can note in Table 2, religiosity makes a modest but important contribution to the explanation of left-right self-placement. In particular, it reaches more than 5 per cent of additional variance in most of the new democracies of Eastern Europe, specifically in countries with a strong presence of Catholics (Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia). But this is not exclusive of these cases, as Bulgaria, Ukraine, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia also reach a high percentage. Religiosity also fits ideology in some Western European Countries with a major presence of Catholic population, like Ireland and Malta.

In most of these countries the distinctive influence of religiosity declines over time, together with the increment of the specific weight of partisanship. This corroborates the assumption that after the transition to democracy in Eastern Europe, new parties would have a minor influence in shaping citizens' preferences, who further used ethno-religious references to orient themselves in an emerging political context (Van der Brug et al. 2008). Nevertheless, there are exceptions: in countries such as Poland and Slovenia the influence of religiosity experienced an upward trend, probably as a



consequence of their party systems restructuring during the 2000's (Enyedi 2006; Fink-Hafner, 2006). On the other side, we find that in most established democracies there is no univocal trend, although the specific influence of religion is clearly lower and mostly below 5 per cent.

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

Albania					Austria				Belgium				Bulgaria			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Social factors	-	1,6	1,2	1,5	-	1,5	1,5	1,6	3,0	0,9	0,6	0,8	-	4,1	2,0	1,9
Values	-	4,2	3,9	1,7	-	0,7	4,1	3,5	1,8	3,6	4,0	1,8	-	3,5	3,2	3,5
Religiosity	-	2,1	3,3	2,1	-	3,7	1,7	1,9	13,5	3,6	2,4	2,2	-	8,0	4,4	2,6
Party ID	-	34,9	39,9	38,6	-	4,0	7,8	9,4	-	7,6	8,1	12,5	-	6,2	24,4	17,9
TOTAL	-	51,8	63,6	51,0	-	16,2	24,4	24,3	29,7	27,8	23,8	22,5	-	28,4	45,1	35,1
N	-	665	708	879	-	1114	1039	1003	503	1378	1279	1361	-	592	525	652

Croatia					Czech Republic				Denmark				Finland			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Social factors	-	3,5	2,5	1,3	-	2,1	0,9	1,9	6,5	1,2	1,3	1,3	-	1,2	2,3	3,0
Values	-	1,6	3,9	1,9	-	3,4	1,8	3,7	6,9	3,3	5,5	4,0	-	6,4	1,0	8,2
Religiosity	-	4,1	2,3	4,1	-	6,9	1,5	2,2	4,1	0,7	2,3	1,5	-	3,1	3,1	1,6
Party ID	-	4,9	3,9	9,8	-	7,2	26,6	21,0	-	19,5	10,7	15,1	-	19,8	24,6	19,1
TOTAL	-	24,4	20,6	31,8	-	23,2	46,0	37,3	30,3	46,7	34,9	39,7	-	45,0	48,9	56,5
N	-	914	706	1050	-	1570	1453	1078	813	767	720	1289	-	399	721	648

France					Hungary				Iceland				Ireland			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Social factors	2,2	2,5	0,5	0,5	-	3,1	3,1	0,8	3,0	1,5	1,3	1,5	5,4	2,2	1,5	3,8
Values	8,7	7,2	4,6	5,9	-	2,7	1,6	2,3	3,6	3,2	2,6	2,6	4,6	5,7	3,9	5,5
Religiosity	6,5	2,3	2,9	3,7	-	8,0	5,6	1,1	3,9	2,5	1,6	1,0	3,0	3,8	4,0	5,3
Party ID	-	15,3	21,5	16,4	-	2,7	8,0	23,3	-	37,1	32,4	30,1	-	2,4	2,9	0,7
TOTAL	28,9	44,8	41,7	44,5	-	18,1	21,3	34,0	12,8	56,5	49,7	54,5	20,1	24,8	21,6	24,8
N	874	629	1101	1308	-	577	665	1284	805	558	770	632	751	833	650	489

Italy					Malta				Moldova				Netherlands			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Social factors	1,8	1,5	0,6	1,6	11,5	11,9	1,1	0,9	-	1,8	1,8	4,5	2,3	0,6	1,2	1,3
Values	6,8	3,3	2,7	7,3	17,5	17,2	1,9	2,5	-	5,8	3,1	2,9	6,8	3,0	3,1	2,9
Religiosity	5,1	3,6	2,3	1,7	2,5	15,1	2,8	0,5	-	1,9	3,2	2,5	9,3	4,6	2,0	1,5
Party ID	-	14,5	27,9	18,1	-	-	8,6	35,6	-	5,0	12,6	2,6	-	15,3	20,9	21,4
TOTAL	26,1	35,0	46,5	48,6	29,3	45,9	24,4	56,1	-	20,3	27,5	13,3	32,3	50,8	42,5	42,5
N	904	1247	1340	816	168	128	955	629	-	680	477	718	754	847	918	1290

Norway					Poland				Portugal				Romania			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Social factors	6,9	1,3	0,7	2,6	-	3,0	1,9	2,1	-	1,2	1,8	1,7	-	1,3	2,2	0,9
Values	4,3	3,8	3,9	5,1	-	1,3	2,0	2,0	-	1,3	4,9	1,6	-	5,7	5,1	2,8
Religiosity	5,3	0,9	1,5	1,2	-	4,0	1,8	8,3	-	1,8	4,5	3,8	-	3,0	4,2	2,4
Party ID	-	19,8	15,2	20,0	-	0,6	24,5	4,1	-	19,4	15,6	11,6	-	4,3	5,5	2,5
TOTAL	20,0	42,0	31,4	45,7	-	11,5	42,8	22,4	-	33,5	32,1	24,0	-	18,7	19,2	8,7
N	745	922	1016	966	-	655	681	958	-	893	593	792	-	818	482	705

Russia					Slovakia				Slovenia				Spain			
	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010	1980	1990	2000	2010
Social factors	-	3,5	1,3	1,6	-	2,4	2,7	2,6	-	8,4	1,9	1,3	3,3	0,9	0,6	1,2
Values	-	7,0	2,0	4,0	-	4,9	2,7	0,9	-	8,2	1,8	1,9	5,4	2,1	2,9	1,5
Religiosity	-	3,1	1,1	3,6	-	9,8	3,0	2,8	-	2,9	4,7	7,1	6,6	1,8	2,8	2,9
Party ID	-	-	10,7	4,2	-	1,8	9,9	11,0	-	3,4	6,8	7,2	-	19,9	17,3	21,2
TOTAL	-	14,7	20,2	15,6	-	24,7	25,5	20,5	-	26,7	24,9	30,0	40,1	49,9	44,5	45,9
N	-	431	1121	590	-	555	826	846	-	419	628	883	1356	1915	1426	964

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

**Table 2 (continuation).**

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

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

In short, in almost all European countries religion is –or was in recent decades- a remarkable factor, especially in the new democracies of Eastern Europe and those countries with Catholic majorities. Religiosity determines a specific and concrete part of the variance of the left-right ideology. This part of the variance is not explained neither by value systems nor partisanship or the rest of social factors included into our model. However, there are some Western countries – such as Spain, France, the Netherlands and Northern Ireland- where religiosity has a remarkable influence when no other factors are considered (Table 1), what indicates that these additional factors would have absorbed or subsumed the impact of religious variables (Table 2). Quite the opposite occurs in some of the new democracies such as Bulgaria, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, where religiosity contributes in a low or moderate level even after including the dimensions defined by Inglehart and Klingemann. That means that, in these countries, the contribution of religious divisions on ideological self-placement is relatively independent of other factors. It seems that also the importance of religiosity tends to decline with democratic development (Norris and Inglehart, 2004: 132), but not necessarily: can be (re)activated by changes in context. But, why ideology and religiosity are overlapped in some countries but not in others? Are there religious or social contextual situations that can explain these changes?

### **3. The importance of the context.**

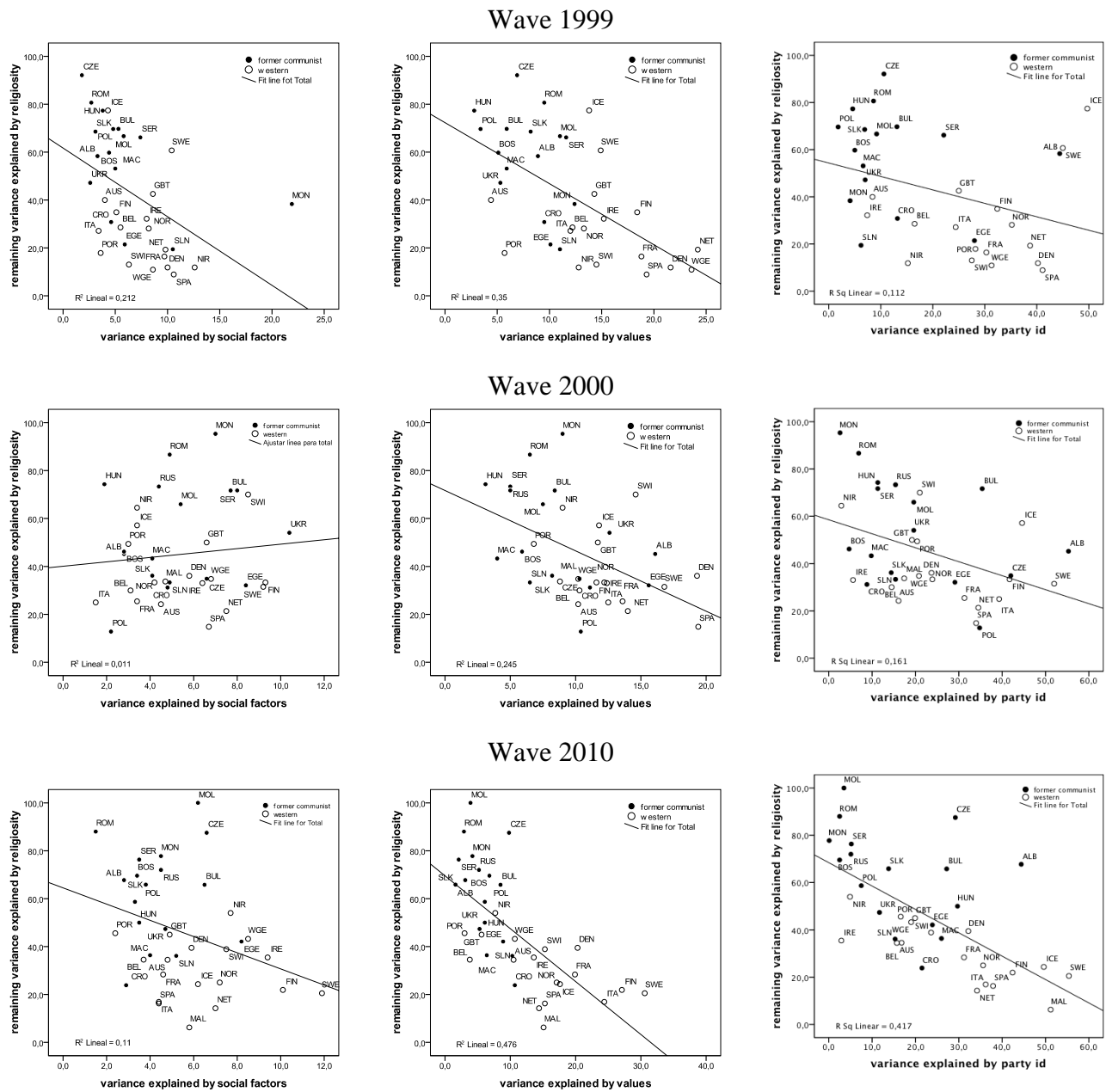
In spite of the cultural changes in the Continent, the religious phenomenon maintains a certain influence on the European's ideological positions. However, as we highlighted, the strength of this link changes among countries. In this regard, we have previously noted some general patterns. For example, we pointed out the greater strength of this relationship in countries where an important part of the population is considered Catholic and their differential evolution

in opposition with countries of Eastern Europe, but, is this really so? Is there any macro process that could share light on this matter?

As we pointed out in previous section, partisanship could be one of the reasons why religiosity and ideology vary in their correlation over countries and time. This seems to be the main responsible of the decline in the explained variance by religiosity in some contexts. To test this point, we have examined how the impact of religion decreases when other factors came into play. As shown in Figure 1, the greater the direct impact of partisanship, the greater the reduction in explained variance by religiosity.

Nevertheless, what is more striking is the influence of the variance explained by value systems. That is, the greater the direct impact of value systems, the more effect is "stolen" from religiosity. As noted before, we have included in the values systems not only issues concerning the role of the Government, the respect for the authority or the level of postmaterialism, but also attitudes towards abortion, divorce or euthanasia between others, aspects that are subject of strong religious controversy -specially with the Catholic Church- (Dalton, 1996:336). Therefore, we must indicate that both, value systems and partisanship absorb the impact of religiosity in a multivariate model. The determinants of Inglehart and Klingemann model present serious problems of endogeneity: social groups historically associated with left and right, value systems promoted by some of these groups and numerous cleavage-parties connected with them.

**Figure 1: explained variance of religiosity that remains after introducing social factors, values and partisanship.**



But, it is not possible and plausible to develop general guidelines that help us to improve our explanation using country-level information? With this goal, we have used the same sample of 35 European countries, although only using the last observation - the called 2010's wave-. We use the same linear regression model that was described in the preceding section with a

fundamental change: in this occasion we have used Hierarchical Analysis introducing a second level of analysis with specific information at country level. Including aggregate variables to our previous analysis, we intended to improve and advance in the explanation of ideological self-placement, specially to clarify why in some countries ideology and religiosity are closer than in others.

Attending to what has been shown, it is essential to establish some contextual mediators between ideology and religion that help to share light in this complex relationship that has not been deeply studied from a comparative perspective. But the lack of literature in this matter does not let us to present a clear and agreed set of arguments to explain it. So, which are these key elements that could mediate in the relationship between religiosity and ideology in Europe?

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

As we observed, the impact of religion in many of the new Eastern democracies appears to have its own characteristics. A short democratic experience means a lower level of development of the partisan component: the lack of familiarity with political parties and their minor consolidation in these contexts could enhance both the leaders and the citizens to use social divisions as factors of electoral mobilization and political orientation (Brader y Tucker, 2001; Enyedi 2006; Van der Brug et al. 2008; Rico, 2010; Mainwaring and Torcal, 2006), specifically religious divisions (Lewis, 2000; Medina, 2010). In addition, the authoritarian policies of the Communist Governments, and especially its religious policies, may have contributed to this differential pattern. We shall remember that these governments tended to have considerable religious intervention (Van der Brug et al. 2008; Froese 2001), in some cases adopting policies of suppression of religion –like in Albania and the countries of the former USSR-, or control and/or subordination of Churches by the State. This control was more successful with Orthodox and Protestants religious elites, but failed with Catholics (Gautier 1997; Froese, 2001), much more

hostile probably due to its supranational organization under the direction of the Vatican (Gautier 1997), to the strength of its social networks and doctrinal positions (Mendelsohn and Nadeau, 1997), and its relationship with national identity (Gautier 1997). Therefore, in our analysis we will consider not only the membership to the bloc of countries of former communist Eastern Europe, but also we shall consider their interaction with the majority religious denomination in these countries, as we will see in next paragraph.

### *3.2. Religious characteristics of the country.*

The diverse forms of expression of religion in each country may have a certain influence on the positions of individuals. As we have seen, countries with strong ethnic and religious divisions can also express these divisions in terms of left and right. Moreover, we have reiterated that in countries with a majority of Catholics –but not too hegemonic-, the relationship between religiosity and ideology tends to be more robust. Therefore, we shall introduce a variable that will concrete whether the country is predominantly Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox, or whether we can consider mixed<sup>4</sup>.

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

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<sup>4</sup> When none of the religious denominations of the country reaches the 60% of the total denominated population, the country is considered “mixed”.



*oppose other aspects of secularization processes, showing increasing political differences in comparison to non-religious voters”* (Nieuwbeerta, Brooks and Manza, 2006). We contrast these points using the percentage of the population that does not recognize any religious denominations.

### *3.3. Country’s political supply.*

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

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

ideology of the Parliament has been introduced in the analysis, weighting the result by the size of every party.

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

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

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

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

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

Table 3. Level of variance explained by individual and contextual variables in models with religious variables and in complete model

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

\* Percentage of explained variance by level-1 variables.

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

In short, our models allow us to conclude that there are significant differences between groups of countries with respect to how religious variables predict the ideology of their inhabitants. Religiosity and ideology present more or less direct relations depending basically on some social and political characteristics at country level. Living in a Catholic or Orthodox country, especially in a former communist one, and with parliaments located on the right of the ideological scale, religion becomes a major predictor of ideology. However, in western and northern countries, and in Protestant or mixed, religiosity loses power to predict the ideology of their citizens.

## **7. Conclusions**

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

Ideology, as a bipolar scheme, contrasts different visions of the world that represent alternatives that are connected to the interests of specific social groups, values systems and identified voters. According to this, individuals who share some of these characteristics are more likely to be grouped according to their interests, labelling themselves in the ideological camp that better corresponds to their interests. This is what Inglehart and Klingemann analyzed (1976) as social determinants of ideology, finding that partisan loyalties primarily structure locations, rather than the membership to a social group or the affinity to a values system. But to what extent have

citizens been relegated to a central role of "party supporters"? Are other basic elements such as social class, values or religiosity important?

Our first approach is clear. Indicators of religiosity are linked to self-positioning as expected: individuals with higher levels tend to place themselves closest to the right of the scheme. In addition, in an attempt to summarize the complexity of religious phenomena to their main components, we have grouped these indicators in different dimensions. We have seen that in many countries religious identification is one of the most important factors, with a relatively independent influence. Compared to the contribution to the variance made by every component of religiosity, we contrasted that religious identification could be considered as an independent factor. However, religious behaviour, which includes church attendance, has not shown relevant results as the literature has suggested. It could be supplied by factors such as religious beliefs or private religiosity. In short, the religious phenomenon is more complex than assumed the operationalization of Jagodzinski and Dobbeleare. It has several components; we need to take the most prominent, that not always are the same, depending on the country.

On average, the direct impact of religiosity when measuring ideology would be around 9 per cent of the total explained variance, although this presents important variations between countries, depending on different factors, there is no country without links between religion and ideology, particularly intense in the Catholic countries.

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

we have seen that its influence is displaced to a greater extent in those countries where partisanship has a significant weight, but even more by value systems.

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

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

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