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Are all Socialists Anti-religious? Anti-religiosity and the Socialist Left in 21 Western European Countries (1990–2008)

EGBERT RIBBERINK, PETER ACHTERBERG & DICK HOUTMAN

ABSTRACT *The political situation in the Soviet Union during the twentieth century has led some to suggest that socialism is some kind of secular religion as opposed to 'normal' religion. In modern Europe, however, there have been vibrant Christian socialist movements. This article looks into the different attitudes of socialists towards religion and answers the question whether it is pressure of religious activity or pressure of religious identity that makes socialists resist religion. The results from a multilevel analysis of three waves of the European Values Study (1990–2008) in 21 Western European countries specifically point to an increase in anti-religiosity by socialists in countries marked by Catholic and Orthodox religious identities.*

Introduction: Socialism and Anti-religiosity

Socialism is man's positive self-consciousness, no longer mediated through the abolition of religion. (Karl Marx)¹

For Karl Marx, socialism was about the realisation of an ideal society that had overcome the problems associated with capitalism and religion. This did not necessarily involve fighting religion at all cost. He did not envision an anti-religious society, but a society that no longer needed to be concerned about religion. Followers of Marx, however, did concern themselves with religion. Much of the history of the twentieth century is marked by the Russian attempt to become a world power based on a socialist 'scientific atheistic' ideology. Paul Froese (37) notes that

post-revolutionary Russia appeared the ideal place to spread the doctrine of scientific atheism. Leading up to the Russian Revolution, many Russians were completely disillusioned with their political and cultural traditions and after the Tsarist regime was overthrown, many believed in the promises of a new socialist utopia.

Indeed, the Russian Orthodox state religion boasted adherence rates of no less than 76% in 1900, with 0% non-religiosity, whereas, during the Soviet rule, these numbers had declined to 28% and increased to 52%, respectively, by 1970 (Barro and McCleary 1356).

However, the marriage between Soviet socialism and the anti-religious agenda the Soviet rulers advocated has not been the only way in which socialists have concerned themselves with religion. Contemporary socialist

movements encompass a wide range of different attitudes towards religion, ranging from fiercely anti-religious to mild and tolerant. In Western Europe, for example, French socialism has traditionally boasted and promoted disbelief and secularism on the one hand, aiming to remove all references to God from education and public administration (Knutsen 98; Waller and Fennema 47). On the other hand, in countries like the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, socialists have traditionally shown an indifferent or even tolerant attitude towards religion (Waller and Fennema 158; Brown 28). Apparently, there is nothing inherently 'anti-religious' about socialism. It can be both tolerant and intolerant towards religion. This raises the question what makes socialists have anti-religious attitudes in some countries and why they are tolerant towards religion in others.

This article addresses this question and aims to develop and test a theory about variations in anti-religious attitudes among socialists across national contexts in Western Europe. Firstly, we develop what we call the 'religious pressure' thesis on the basis of a literature review. We derive two hypotheses from the latter about how the religious context affects the degree to which socialists embrace anti-religious attitudes. We then test these hypotheses by means of a multilevel analysis of survey data from the European Values Study for 21 Western-European countries (1990–2008). We then summarise our conclusions in the final section.

Socialism and Anti-religiosity in Western Europe

For a long time, socialism has been associated with opposition to religion, the church, and faith in many European countries. This has not only been the case in Communist Eastern Europe; anti-religiosity has also surfaced in Western European countries like France, Italy, and Germany. The historian Hugh McLeod describes how, in Germany, becoming a socialist was part of a larger trend of de-Christianisation during the imperial period, especially for working-class people (McLeod, "Protestantism" 327). He presents German socialism as a much needed ideological alternative for the Lutheran Church. Socialists "tried to escape from the influence of the state and its ideological allies by creating a comprehensive range of counter-institutions within which their distinctive identity could be preserved and their distinctive ideas propagated" (ibid 335). By the end of the nineteenth and during the twentieth century, this pattern was visible in many Western European countries. In France, the need for an alternative to the religious worldview became so pressing that there were groups on the political left that not only rejected religion, but also developed alternative rites and rituals modelled on religious behaviour, e.g. the "Society of Mutual Autopsy" (Hecht).

Nevertheless, the anti-religiosity of these socialists is not the whole story. The popularity and growth of socialism did not only inspire apostates and non-religious people, but also influenced the theologians and religious philosophers of that time. To many Christians, the egalitarian and social programme of socialism was very appealing. As a result, a Christian socialist movement developed from the beginning of the twentieth century, which received wide recognition, among others by the well-known German

theologian Karl Barth. He is said to have stated that “A true Christian must be a socialist (if he is serious about the reformation of Christianity). A true socialist must be a Christian (if he is concerned with the reformation of socialism)” (Barth qtd in Busch 83). Other well-known proponents of this view were Paul Tillich in the United States and Gustavo Gutierrez in Latin America (Stenger and Stone; Gill). The popularity of socialism among Christians led to the formation of Christian socialist parties in some Western European countries, many of which later merged with social democratic or green parties; this happened in Britain and the Netherlands, for example (Cort 138; Bas 176).

From the anti-religious “Society of Mutual Autopsy” (Hecht) to the progressively Christian *Evangelische volkspartij* or “Evangelical People’s Party” (Bas), socialists have developed a wide variety of attitudes towards religion. An indication of a possible explanation for this variation is given by Steve Bruce, who notes that the values and practices of the British political left are heavily influenced by the Protestant sects (*Secularization* 8): “The British labour movement always owed far more to the Methodists and Baptists than it did to Karl Marx.” This suggests that the variety of attitudes towards religion could be explained by the local religious context (see also Brown 28). This idea can also be found in the works of David Martin on secularisation (*General, On Secularization*). He states that politics and religion are ‘isomorphic’ in the sense that “historic religious moulds of European societies are mirrored in characteristic secular mutations and transpositions” (*On Secularization* 80), as if “You read one from the other” (ibid 47). This implies that the differences in attitude of socialists towards religion can be explained by the differences that can be found in the various religious contexts. The specific pressure exerted in this religious context determines the attitude of socialists towards religion. We call this the ‘religious pressure thesis’. Our aim is to develop this thesis further and test the hypotheses that can be derived from it.

The Religious Pressure Thesis on Anti-religiosity and Socialism

The religious pressure thesis focuses on the role of the religious context in explaining anti-religiosity. This approach is primarily based on David Martin’s work on secularisation. Central to his secularisation theory is the way in which different religious cultures shape the trajectories of secularisation in those countries (Martin, “What” 139). For Martin, religion does more than provide for the religious needs of some individuals. It penetrates into the cultural make-up of a country and continues to do so long after people have stopped going to church. Talking about nationalism and religious identities, he states that “[r]eligion carries national identity under threat: after all, religion almost always fulfils other roles than what we today label purely religious” (“Nationalism” 13). This is an important observation for the theoretical understanding of what a religion does to a culture. Martin speaks of ‘religious cultures’, looking into the way religion influences elements of the broader culture like language, architecture, art, and literature. Thus, when we speak of those who are no longer connected to any religious institution (the non-religious or the secular) or of those who are opposed to any religious

institution (the anti-religious or the secularist) and when we speak about the process that tries to describe the processes of changing roles for and attitudes towards religion (trajectories or narratives of secularisation), we must look at the specific religious culture in which these processes occur (Martin, *General, On Secularization*; see also Berlinerblau; Calhoun, Juergensmeyer and VanAntwerpen; Casanova; Lee; Ribberink and Houtman).

Martin's 'religious cultures' argument counters the arguments of those who still see the overcoming of religion by the secular as the next phase in the development of modernity or, in his words, the "interim formation prior to the secular denouement" (*On Secularization* 8). He continues that "[t]here are, for example, numerous accounts of Christian socialism which treat it as 'only' an interim anticipation of real secular socialism" (*ibid*; see also Taylor, *Secular* 556). Instead, Martin suggests that we look at both the religious and the political phenomena as closely interrelated. This implies that anti-religious movements are connected to a religious culture in such a way that they can be seen as mirror images of the religious movements they despise (cf. Asad 596; Bruce, *Secularization* 8; Williamson and Yancey 111).

In the literature on this topic, it is almost always Catholicism and socialism that feature when authors speak about the mirroring of religious culture. For example, Martin distinguishes various types of national religious cultures, among other things on the basis of the presence of a Catholic or an Orthodox religious monopoly. This type of religious culture, he explains, is particularly susceptible to manifestations of the secular—not so much merely non-religious in a benevolent and tolerant fashion, but rather as a sort of secular religion in itself, leavened with anti-religious zeal (*General* 24):

[A] Catholic or Orthodox monopoly creates a militant counter-image of itself. The nexus of the French Enlightenment doctrines resembles a Catholicism inverted and the secular religions produced by France are sometimes a form of Catholicism without Christianity.

According to Martin, religious cultures dominated by a Catholic or an Orthodox religion are more likely to evoke unequivocally anti-religious reactions than more pluralistic Protestant religious cultures. Also, as several authors have argued, in the context of Catholic and Orthodox cultures, this reaction often has a socialist political agenda (Bruce, *God* 10; Martin, *General* 24, *On Secularisation* 50; McLeod, *Religion* 214; Van Rooden 524; Campbell 224; Taylor, "Future" 226).

What these authors do not make clear, however, is what it is in Catholic or Orthodox religious cultures, as opposed to Protestant cultures, that makes socialists develop anti-religious attitudes. Is it related to the notion that Catholics are more religiously active and that this activity is experienced as more repressing towards non-Catholics? Or is their collective identity itself seen as a larger threat to socialist ideals than the Protestant identity? In other words, what kind of religious pressure does effectively evoke an anti-religious attitude in socialists? Is it pressure of religious activity or pressure of religious identity that leads socialists into resisting religion?² Based on a discussion of available literature, we develop two hypotheses in order to answer this question.

Hypotheses

Our first hypothesis looks at the religious pressure formed by religious activity in a certain context. Since the cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, the overarching power of the Christian churches has declined significantly, although this has been a more manifest process in the Protestant countries than in the predominantly Catholic and Orthodox countries (Berger, *Rumor* 15; Bruce, *Secularization* 21; Martin, *On Secularisation* 47; Taylor, "Future" 227). In the changing religious climate that affected all these churches, those that remained strong became even more active, while others, especially those that had a more formal and nominal following, lost much of their presence and influence (Achterberg et al. 696). In general, it can be said that the Catholic and Orthodox churches were part of the first group and the Protestant churches part of the second. This implies that, in Catholic or Orthodox countries, religion is now more of a cultural force to be reckoned with than in Protestant countries, since it is more active, present, and socially visible. We expect that the personal confrontation between actively religious people and socialists will harden the negative attitude of socialists towards religions and the religious and lead them to consider a more activist anti-religious position (e.g. Visser). The first hypothesis that can be formulated is that the higher the national level of active religious involvement, the more socialists tend to have anti-religious attitudes (Hypothesis 1).

Apart from Martin, authors like Peter Berger (*Rumor*) and Charles Taylor ("Future") have also pointed to the collective national identity that Catholicism and Orthodoxy have been able to create. In countries where the Catholic or Orthodox Church has had a deep impact on people's sense of national identity, socialists who want to reform society according to their political ideas find their main obstacle to be the dominating cultural force that the Catholic or Orthodox Church is. Taylor argues that, when a collective religion overlaps with the political identity and when that religion claims total power and control, this calls for anti-clerical reactions of total control by the state ("Future" 226). Martin argues that the countries with Catholic or Orthodox monopolies³ feature predominantly collective values, like solidarity, nationalism, and respect for authority, which are the basis for social and cultural mono-cultures (*General* 24). We would expect socialists to mirror these collective religious structures by building political counter-structures, which in this context will inevitably be anti-religious. Martin calls those structures "rivalrous secular universalisms" (*On Secularisation* 76). Here, the argument is centred on the pressure formed by the collective instead of the active type of religiosity. This leads us to formulate the following hypothesis: in countries with high levels of Catholic or Orthodox affiliation, people with high levels of socialist ideals will also have high levels of anti-religious attitudes (Hypothesis 2).

Data and Operationalisation

In order to be able to test the two hypotheses, we have used the following data sets of the European Values Study: EVS 1990 (second wave), EVS 1999 (third wave), EVS 2008 (fourth wave).⁴ These data sets are the most commonly used data sets that deal with economic, political, and religious values in

Western Europe. We excluded the 1981 data set because it contained too few variables that were included in the other three waves. Only in the last three waves did we find enough overlap in the questions asked to be able to use them as a single combined data set. The reason that we wanted to use more than one wave is that this provides a larger number of countries to work with, since each country that was part of more than one EVS wave counts double (or more) in the country-level data analysis. This is important for the multilevel analysis design, since it provides a larger country-level sample size.⁵ In the discussion on the decline of religion in some regions and the resurgence of religion in others, Western Europe is commonly seen as “the odd one out”⁶ (Martin, *On Secularization* 47; see also Berger, *Desecularization* 9; Greeley; Bruce, *Secularization* 4). Unlike in other Western countries, such as the United States, the church has lost most of its former strength, adherence, and influence in most Western European countries. Its diverse pattern of religious cultures and large shares of non-religious people provide a very interesting background for our study of non-religiosity, socialism, and anti-religiosity. The Western European countries under study here are (the year of the respective EVS wave is in brackets): Austria (1990, 1999, 2008), Belgium (1990, 1999, 2008), Cyprus (2008),⁷ Denmark (1990, 1999, 2008), Finland (1990, 1999, 2009), France (1990, 1999, 2008), Germany (1990, 1999, 2008), Greece (2008),⁸ Great Britain (1990, 1999, 2009), Iceland (1990, 1999, 2008), Ireland (1990, 1999, 2008), Italy (1990, 1999, 2009), Luxembourg (1999, 2008), Malta (1990, 1999, 2008), the Netherlands (1990, 1999, 2008), Norway (1990, 2008), Portugal (1990, 1999, 2008), Spain (1991, 1999, 2008), Sweden (1990, 1999, 2008), Switzerland (2008), and Northern Ireland (1990, 1999, 2008), with N=68,918 in 58 country/waves.

Socialist ideology is measured by looking at the respondents’ preference for voting for a political party which is based on socialist ideology, combined with the creation of a scale tapping the respondents’ attitudes towards socialist political-economic views. We are interested to see under what circumstances a wide variety of people adhering to a socialist ideology take on anti-religious ideals. Therefore, for the voting preferences, we did not only include the far left, but also the mainstream social democratic parties that are promoting economic equality and a large role for the state in providing for its citizens. Based on the classification done by the Manifesto Research Group/Comparative Manifestos Project (MRG/CMP),⁹ we coded all political parties of Western Europe either as ‘socialist’ (including communists and social democrats) or ‘else’ (including the greens, liberals, conservatives, and nationalists). People indicating a preference for socialist parties were coded 1, all others were coded 0.

For the political-economic views that are part of the socialist ideology scale, we had to limit ourselves to the items that were included in all three waves of the European Values Study. One question was whether respondents would prefer businesses to be owned by private people or by government, with their answers recorded on a scale of 1–10, where a higher score (10) indicates preference for the latter. A similar question was asked to measure whether respondents would see competition as something good (1) or harmful (10) for people’s work ethic and creativity. Another similar question asked whether respondents would hold individuals or the state responsible for providing for people’s well-being, with a higher score (10) indicating preference for the

latter. All items were standardised and linearly combined in order to create a scale for 'socialism' (see Table 1¹⁰).

Anti-religiosity is measured by looking at the two items that can be said to measure respondents' hostility towards religion. One item asked whether the respondent is a religious person. The answers to this item differentiate between religious, non-religious, and 'convinced atheist'. Although the term 'atheist' is very much contested and can mean many different things, in this case, it is clear that people have to see it as something different from religious and non-religious. We assume that most respondents will have read the term 'convinced atheist' as meaning 'anti-religious', since the other options include the religious and non-religious category. Read in this way, people reacted to this question positively (religious), in a neutral way (non-religious) or negatively (convinced atheist). Therefore we coded people with a religious preference as 1, people with a non-religious preference as 2, and convinced atheists as 3 (answer category 'do not know' was coded as missing).

The item that asked about people's confidence in the church as an institution can also be seen as an expression of religious tolerance (or the opposite—intolerance). The answer category is a four-point scale, ranging from 'a great deal' to 'none at all'. We used the mean of the standardised results of this measure (which was already coded in such a way that high scores indicate mistrust of the church), together with the standardised score for the 'convinced atheist' item, to create an index for anti-religiosity. The factor and reliability analysis of this scale is presented in Table 2.

Central to our hypotheses are the different ways in which religious pressure can lead socialists to develop an anti-religious attitude. The first measure of religious pressure is based on the *active religiosity per country*. Attendance rates indicate the actual presence and activities of religion in a certain culture. We could look at all kinds of measures of active religiosity, but the most straightforward way is to look at how many people in a country actually go to church and how regularly they do so. Therefore, the measure we use is church attendance rates on a national level. We use the specific item that asked about church visits besides weddings and funerals and similar occasions and coded all those who attended once a month or more as positive (answers 1–3 = 1) and those who only attended on religious holidays, just once a year or never as neutral (answers 4–8 = 0). We calculated an average score per country regarding this item, which is a percentage of the total population that actively

Table 1. Factor and reliability analysis for the Economic values scale.

Item	Factor Loading
Preference for government ownership?	0.75
Preference for competition as harmful?	0.73
Preference for state responsible for providing?	0.71
Eigen value	1.59
R^2	0.53
Cronbach's α	0.56
N	55,010

Source: EVS 1990–2008.

Table 2. Factor and reliability analysis for the Anti-Religiosity scale.

Item	Factor Loading
Convinced Atheist?	0.75
Confidence in church low?	0.75
Eigen value	1.50
R^2	0.75
Cronbach's α	0.67
N	64,280

Source: EVS 1990–2008.

visit church services. An overview of the frequencies of this measure is given in Table 3.

The second measure of religious pressure is related to the collective identity of a religious culture. The most straightforward way of measuring this is the level of affiliation with Catholic or Orthodox churches in a country.¹¹ We call this variable the *Catholic/Orthodox Religiosity*. All respondents were asked whether they were members of a religious denomination (yes=1, no=0) and, if so, what their religious denomination was. We selected the respondents that had indicated that they were members of a Catholic or an Orthodox denomination. These scores were combined so that we could create a score per country that indicates the share of a country's population that is affiliated with either the Catholic or Orthodox denomination. We used the same calculation

Table 3. Percentage of actively religious people per country.

Country	1990	1999	2008
Austria	0.45	0.43	0.28
Belgium	0.35	0.28	0.18
Cyprus			0.56
Denmark	0.11	0.12	0.10
Finland	0.11		0.10
France	0.17	0.12	0.12
Germany	0.33	0.35	0.23
Greece			0.43
Iceland	0.09	0.12	0.12
Ireland	0.88	0.75	0.57
Italy	0.51	0.53	0.48
Luxembourg		0.30	0.19
Malta	0.90	0.87	0.84
Netherlands	0.31	0.25	0.26
Norway	0.13		0.12
Portugal	0.48	0.53	0.48
Spain	0.41	0.36	0.26
Sweden	0.10	0.09	0.08
Switzerland			0.20
Great Britain	0.25	0.19	0.20
Northern Ireland	0.69	0.60	0.54

Source: EVS 1990–2008.

Table 4. Catholic/Orthodox and Protestant Religiosity per country.

Country	Catholic/Orthodox			Protestant		
	1990	1999	2008	1990	1999	2008
Austria	0.78	0.81	0.74	0.07	0.06	0.06
Belgium	0.68	0.56	0.51	0.01	0.03	0.01
Cyprus			0.98			0.00
Denmark	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.89	0.88	0.86
Finland	0.01		0.01	0.86		0.74
France	0.58	0.54	0.45	0.01	0.02	0.01
Germany	0.45	0.40	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.38
Greece			0.95			0.00
Iceland	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.94	0.91	0.88
Ireland	0.93	0.89	0.84	0.02	0.02	0.04
Italy	0.83	0.82	0.80	0.01	0.00	0.00
Luxembourg		0.66	0.63		0.03	0.03
Malta	0.97	0.98	0.96	0.00	0.01	0.01
Netherlands	0.29	0.22	0.27	0.17	0.18	0.22
Norway	0.01		0.03	0.88		0.73
Portugal	0.77	0.86	0.83	0.00	0.00	0.01
Spain	0.85	0.81	0.59	0.00	0.01	0.00
Sweden	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.76	0.71	0.64
Switzerland			0.35			0.31
Great Britain	0.10	0.14	0.11	0.46	0.63	0.39
Northern Ireland	0.29	0.34	0.34	0.61	0.45	0.41

Source: EVS 1990–2008.

to create a similar variable for Protestant Religiosity (including the Free Church) as a control variable on a national level. An overview of the frequencies of this measure is given in Table 4.

As control variables at the individual level, we used gender, age, and education.¹² Age is an item the answers to which range from 15 to 108 years. Level of education is measured by the variable that asked for the age when respondents had finished formal education.¹³ In order to get a feel for the variables that were thus created, the descriptive statistics for each of the variables are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of variables used for multilevel analysis.

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age respondent	68,638	15	108	46.25	17.655
Gender	68,882	1	2	1.53	0.499
Years of education	66,408	0	94	18.38	5.913
Anti-religiosity	68,625	-1.53	4.11	0.01	0.812
Active Religiosity	68,918	0.08	0.90	0.34	0.205
Socialism	47,803	-1.11	1.84	-0.01	0.674
Catholic/Orthodox religiosity	68,918	0.00	0.98	0.51	0.332
Protestant religiosity	68,918	0.00	0.94	0.25	0.320
Valid N (listwise)	46,141				

Source: EVS 1990–2008.

Results

With the analysis of our pooled data set on political-economic and religious values, we test the validity of our two hypotheses. Our aim with this test is to validate the religious pressure thesis, which describes how, in some specific religious cultures, socialists tend to react more strongly against religious pressure than in others. We expect that socialists have higher levels of anti-religiosity as a reaction to both active religiosity and the collective religiosity of the Catholic/Orthodox churches.

We use ordinary least squares linear multilevel analysis with maximum likelihood estimation to test the hypotheses for two reasons. First and foremost, multilevel analysis makes it possible simultaneously to estimate effects of both individual-level and country-level variables. As our data are structured in such a way that there are two levels—68,918 individuals with certain characteristics (e.g. age, education, voting behaviour, etc.) are nested in 58 countries/waves with certain characteristics (active religiosity based on national attendance rates and level of Catholic/Orthodox religiosity)—multilevel analysis is the most suitable option. Secondly, as our hypotheses aim to investigate how individuals react differently to differences in country-level religiosity, multilevel analysis is well suited as it allows for testing cross-level interactions. We estimate different models with a different number of effects. These are effects of the variables at either individual or national level and we estimate the interactions between these variables. Each of the models also contains so-called random effects. These effects, noted as variances, are estimations of the variability of the mean level of anti-religiosity in a country and of the variability of the level of anti-religiosity at the individual level. Each model that shows lower levels of these two types of variability explains anti-religiosity a bit better. Table 6 shows the results of our analysis.

Firstly, we explain what the different models of Table 6 mean. The first model basically shows that anti-religiosity can be explained both at the individual level and at the context level. Roughly 10% of variance ($0.052 / (0.45 + 0.052) * 100$) can be explained by country-level factors. The rest can potentially be explained by individual factors. As the first model does not include any variables, any inclusion of variables at either individual level or context level almost automatically results in lower levels of unexplained variance. This is indeed the case in model 2. Model 2 shows the significance of the independent variables—age, gender, education, socialism, and different measures of religiosity. The proportion of unexplained variance at the individual level has been reduced (from 0.45 to 0.41). The unexplained variance at the context level has been reduced considerably (from 0.052 to 0.017). As our hypotheses assume, the positive effect of socialism on anti-religiosity, which we found in model 2, actually varies in strength between contexts. In other words, a necessary precondition is that, in some contexts, socialists are likely to be more anti-religious than in other contexts. In model 3, we test and verify exactly that assumption. This model, identical to the previous one with respect to the number of effects of variables estimated, shows that the effect of socialism varies between contexts (0.008). Model 4 includes the interaction effect for active religiosity and socialism, which we use to test our first hypothesis. This model does not appear to be a significant

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Table 6. Explaining anti-religiosity (OLS multilevel analysis, Maximum Likelihood, N=46,141 in 58 country/waves).

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Constant	1.94*** (0.03)	2.82*** (0.10)	2.81*** (0.09)	2.81*** (0.09)	2.81*** (0.09)
Age	-	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)
Gender Male	-	0.19*** (0.01)	0.19*** (0.01)	0.19*** (0.01)	0.19*** (0.01)
Gender Female (ref)	-	-	-	-	-
Years of education	-	0.01*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)
Catholic/Orthodox religiosity country	-	-0.53** (0.17)	-0.50** (0.16)	-0.50** (0.16)	-0.50** (0.16)
Protestant religiosity country	-	-0.66*** (0.13)	-0.64*** (0.13)	-0.64*** (0.13)	-0.65*** (0.13)
Active religiosity country	-	-0.65*** (0.14)	-0.65*** (0.13)	-0.66*** (0.13)	-0.66*** (0.13)
Socialism	-	0.12*** (0.00)	0.11*** (0.01)	0.13*** (0.02)	0.12*** (0.02)
Active religiosity country X socialism	-	-	-	0.07 (0.06)	-0.27** (0.09)
Catholic/Orthodox religiosity country X socialism	-	-	-	-	0.17** (0.06)
-2log likelihood	94490.69	89895.66	89667.43	89669.97	89665.07
Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC)	94494.69	89899.66	89673.43	89675.97	89671.07
N (in 58 country/waves)	68,918	46,141	46,141	46,141	46,141
Variance individual level	0.45	0.41	0.41	0.41	0.41
Variance country level	0.052	0.017	0.015	0.015	0.015
Variance socialism	-	-	0.008	0.008	0.006

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001 (two-tailed test for significance).
Source: EVS 1990-2008.

improvement of the third model. We discuss below how this leads us to refute this hypothesis. The fifth model also includes the interaction effect for Catholic/Orthodox religiosity; this model proves to be a significant improvement of the third and fourth model.¹⁴ In this model, we find two significant effects. Besides the positive and significant interaction term for Catholic/Orthodox religiosity in a country and socialism, we also find a negative effect for the interaction between active religiosity in a country and socialism. This can be explained by two facts: there is a high correlation (.78***) between the two indicators for country-level religiosity and the cross-level interactions of these variables with socialism cancel each other out. We discuss below what this means for our hypotheses.

Table 6 shows how socialism and anti-religiosity are generally positively correlated. Thus it can be said that, on average, people with socialist political views are more inclined to hold negative views about religion than people with other political views. The same can be said of males, who have higher levels of anti-religious attitudes than females (e.g. Bainbridge 11; Sherkat 452). That this effect for gender is even stronger than the socialism effect indicates that there is greater variety in anti-religious attitudes between socialists and non-socialists than there is between males and females.¹⁵ We can also see how people who live in countries with high levels of religiosity, regardless of which type—Protestant, Catholic/Orthodox, active religiosity—are less likely to have anti-religious attitudes. This is not surprising since this variable is a mean score per country. Religious people will naturally have a more tolerant view of religion than non-religious people. However, what interests us most is what the interaction effect of these types of religiosity and the effect of socialism are on anti-religious attitudes. In other words, we want to know whether the context influences the anti-religious attitude of socialists in a significant way, as our hypotheses suggest.

Following Hypothesis 1, we expected that the level of active religiosity of a country, as measured by attendance rates, would influence the tendency of people with socialist ideals to have anti-religious attitudes positively. However, in countries with high levels of active religiosity, the effect of socialist ideals on anti-religiosity is not significant according to model 4 and negative according to model 5. This is surprising, since we already saw that, in general, socialists tend to be anti-religious. Apparently, they are less so when they live in countries where they are surrounded by actively religious people. This contradicts the expectation set out in Hypothesis 1, which is why this hypothesis must be refuted. The outcomes in model 5 point to a possible continuation of the influence of socialism on Christian thought mentioned earlier and the different Christian-socialist movements that have proliferated in countries like Britain and the Netherlands. Figure 1 shows a visual representation of this effect (based on model 5 of Table 6).

Our second hypothesis deals with the religious affiliation in a given country. It expects that in countries with high levels of Catholic/Orthodox affiliation, people with socialist ideals have higher levels of anti-religious sentiments. Figure 2 shows a visual representation of the results from Table 6 (model 5), concerning this hypothesis.

This figure illustrates how socialism, Catholicism/Orthodoxy, and anti-religiosity are related. Both in Catholic/Orthodox countries and in

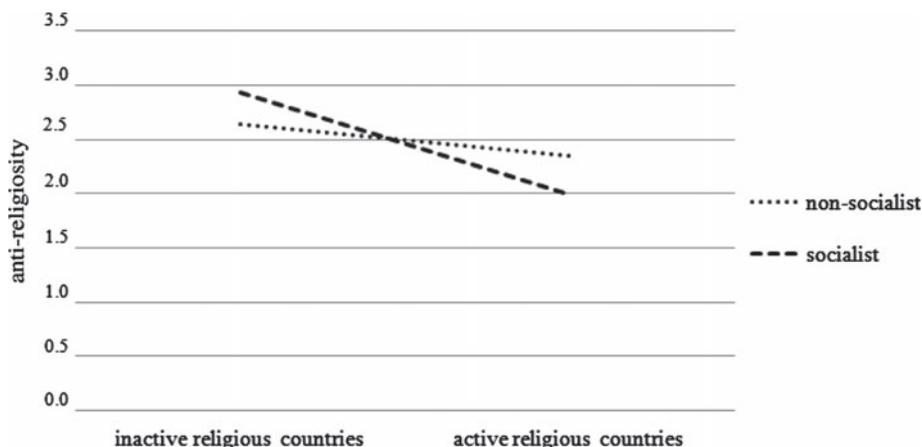


Figure 1. Effect of socialism on anti-religiosity in countries with low and high active religiosity score in 58 country/waves.

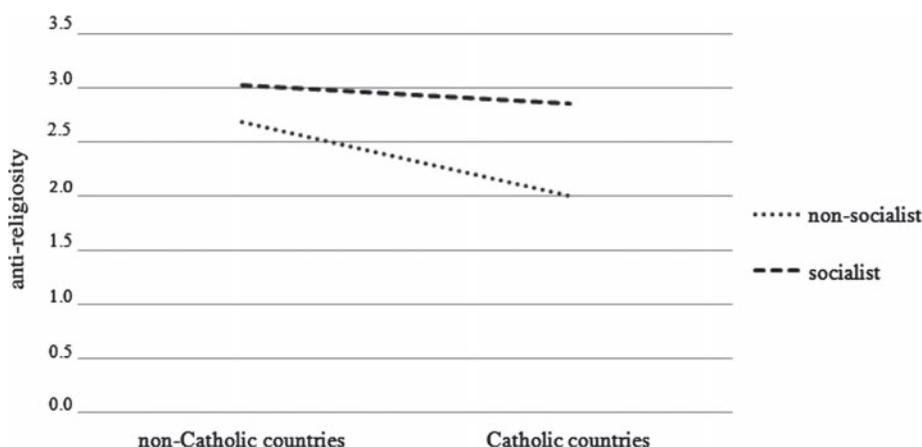


Figure 2. Effect of socialism on anti-religiosity in countries with low and high Catholic/Orthodox religiosity score in 58 country/waves.

non-Catholic/Orthodox countries, people with higher levels of socialist ideals tend to have higher levels of anti-religious sentiments. However, it is interesting to see that this effect is stronger for the Catholic countries than for the non-Catholic countries. As Tables 3 and 4 show, the countries with higher levels of Catholic/Orthodox membership levels also tend to have a higher level of active religiosity. What exactly is the trigger? In our analysis, both types of religiosity have been taken into account, in their interaction with socialism. Model 5 in Table 6 shows that for socialists, an environment of Catholic/Orthodox religiosity functions as a trigger, not because contexts with a large share of Catholics/Orthodox happen to be contexts with a large share of actively religious people, but just because they live in countries with a larger share of people that are affiliated with Catholic and/or Orthodox churches. This confirms the expectation as formulated in Hypothesis 2.

We now conclude by discussing how these results are relevant for the current debate in the sociology of politics and religion.

Conclusions

The central question of this article is whether it is pressure of religious activity or pressure based on religious identity that makes socialists resist religion. Our results point specifically to countries marked by the collective identity of the Catholic and Orthodox religions, based on the level of affiliation, not on the level of involvement. This shows how, in the case of socialist anti-religiosity, religious and cultural identity is a stronger influence than religious and cultural practice (see also Berger, *Rumor*; Noomen, Aupers and Houtman 6; Norris and Inglehart 17). What lies beyond the scope of our analysis is to assess the individual motivation of socialists to react to religious identity more strongly than to religious activity in Catholic/Orthodox contexts. In the discussion of Hypothesis 2, we mentioned an historical-political aspect of Catholic/Orthodox cultures, namely the way in which church and state are entwined with each other, and a mono-cultural aspect, which involves the collective cultural values like solidarity and respect for authority and which creates a culture with a high level of homogeneity. Further research could explore which of the two aspects is more relevant for socialists and also perhaps what individual characteristics socialists have. We are inclined to think that an historical-political hypothesis that suggests that these churches have been foundational to the power distribution in the state and therefore trigger opposition would resonate predominantly with the higher educated socialists. At the same time, we think that a cultural solidarity hypothesis that suggests that, due to relative high levels of solidarity and homogeneity in Catholic/Orthodox contexts, socialists feel excluded as an out-group, both politically and religiously, would predominantly resonate with the lower educated working class (Houtman, Achterberg and Derks 98).

What we cannot endorse is the expected positive correlation between the anti-religiosity of socialists and the context of active religiosity. There was no significant interaction effect in the fourth model and there was a significant negative correlation with the interaction effect in the fifth model. This implies that, when there is an active religious community, this in itself does not lead socialists to oppose religiosity. This result coincides with the finding of Egbert Ribberink, Peter Achterberg and Dick Houtman (114) who point to a stronger effect for the anti-religiosity of the less educated, but only in contexts with low levels of active religiosity and vice versa (less educated people have weaker anti-religious attitudes in contexts with high levels of active religiosity). This could possibly explain the negative relation between socialists' anti-religious attitudes and the level of active religiosity, as it suggests that there is some similarity in the perception of religion by less educated people and socialists. This asks for more research, also because we need to expand our understanding of these processes and their interrelatedness.

The mirroring of religious and political identities with opposed ideologies, which we have discussed and analysed, also underlines the importance of the debate on religious, post-religious, and secular identities. This debate over the

place of religion in modern societies has taken centre stage in recent controversies within the European Union, for example, in the discussion on the possible admittance of Turkey (Casanova 71; see also Berlinerblau; Bruce, "Post-Secularity"). Our findings can help to specify exactly what (post-) religious cultural identities are and how they work, but also in what way religious identities have a different influence on these controversies compared with religious activity.

In what kinds of religious cultures will a socialist become anti-religious and why? We have stressed the central place of religious cultures in our analysis. Although our 'religious pressure thesis' could not be fully endorsed, our analysis opens up more lines of inquiry that will be able to follow the logic of this thesis. Since we mainly looked at socialism as a mirror image of Catholicism and Orthodoxy, one of the lines of inquiry is what kinds of mirror images can be found for the Protestant mono-cultures of Scandinavia, the mixed religious cultures of the Netherlands, Germany, and the United Kingdom and what mirror image the growth of Islam in Europe will result in. In order further to assess the empirical tenability of the religious pressure thesis, future research could use this thesis in the exploration of the rise of anti-Islamism in countries like Norway, Switzerland, and the Netherlands (but not in countries like Spain and Portugal) and the popularity of the 'new atheism' in the United Kingdom and the United States (see Amarasingam).

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NOTES

1. "Since the real existence of man and nature has become evident in practice ... the question about an alien being, about a being above nature and man—a question which implies the admission of the unreality of nature and of man—has become impossible in practice. Atheism, as the denial of this reality, has no longer any meaning, for atheism is a negation of God, and

- postulates the existence of man through this negation; but socialism ... no longer stands in any need of such mediation... Socialism is man's positive self-consciousness, no longer mediated through the abolition of religion." (qtd in Geoghegan 589)
2. We follow Russell Dalton in using this distinction in types of religiosity.
 3. Martin (*General* 23–4) argues that Protestant monopolies also exist, mainly in Scandinavia, but that they feature individualistic values. This creates a different cultural dynamic in which there is no collective anti-religious reaction, as evident in Catholic countries. Instead, there is a climate of religious indifference.
 4. We used the integrated data set that has been made available through the Gesis.org web site.
 5. See Cora Maas and Joop Hox who state that for this kind of analysis, a country-level sample size of at least 50 is preferred. This does not mean that some respondents are counted double, since these data sets do not consist of panel data.
 6. Others would say that it is not Western Europe, but the United States that is the odd one out (e.g. Bruce, *Secularization* 157). For the sake of our argument this is not important and we follow Martin in his view of Western Europe's secularisation.
 7. We excluded Northern Cyprus since it is part of Turkey.
 8. We left out Greece (1999) because only one of the four items concerning economic values was used there.
 9. See <https://manifestoproject.wzb.eu/>, access date: 8 March 2013.
 10. The modest score on Cronbach's alpha is partly due to the fact that only three items were measured. However, increasing this measure with other indications of socialist values, as available in the EVS data set, does not significantly increase the reliability nor does it influence the outcomes of the multilevel tests that we did. In fact, it decreases the number of valid respondents because several of the items that would be included contain a large number of missing values, because they were not consistently asked in all countries and/or in every wave of the survey. Therefore we have worked with this measure and the measure of voting behaviour.
 11. Although there are many differences between the two church denominations, in the literature, they are seen as cultural counterparts, both creating collective national identities. This leads us to consider them as a single variable in this operationalisation.
 12. We also checked for level of income. Including this variable did not significantly alter our findings. However, it is a variable with many missing values (23%); therefore we did not include it in our model. We also did a model check with the different EVS waves as dummy variables, which did not influence our findings either. For the sake of clarity, we left these dummy variables out of the model presented.
 13. The alternative question that asked for people's level of education was not consistently asked in all countries or in all three waves of the survey.
 14. The fifth model is a better fit on a .900 probability scale. The explained variance of socialism (0.006) has a standard error of 0.0015 and thus measures a significant score.
 15. The effects in our model are not standardised, but a standardised model would give a similar output, with gender showing a 50% stronger effect than socialism. Since this is consistent with other findings and not directly relevant to our hypotheses, we have not elaborated on this difference further.

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