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Secularization, Individualization, or (Re)vitalization? The State and Development of Churchliness and Religiosity in Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe

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ABSTRACT: Sociologists of religion have made several attempts (partly complementary and partly antagonistic) to describe and explain the state and development of religion in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe. This article explores the recent state and development of churchliness and religiosity from three perspectives (decline, individualization, and (re)vitalitazion) and according to three theoretical approaches (secularization theory, individualization thesis, and supply-side model of religious competition). The central results can be summarized as follows: overall, in terms of change in the religious sphere, no homogenous or characteristic pattern can be established for the whole region. While most Orthodox societies have experienced a clear religious growth, the situation in Catholic and Protestant countries has been very varied. Indeed, in countries such as the Czech Republic and East Germany, the process of secularization since the political upheavals in the early 1990s seems to be even more advanced. As far as the ability of the theoretical models to explain religious change is concerned, there is no evidence to support the theory of religious competition. In contrast, the individualization thesis can certainly claim a degree of plausibility for itself, although some findings do contradict its assumptions. All in all, a context-sensitive secularization-theory approach, one which looks at specific cultural and political developments, seems best able to explain developments in the field of religion in Central and Eastern Europe.

KEYWORDS: secularization; individualization; supply-side model of religion; religious culture

Introduction

Ten years ago, two of the most distinguished experts in the field of religion in Central and Eastern Europe summarized the state of the church and religion in the region as follows: "Religion and churches are the new champions after 1989" (Borowik/Tomka 2001, 7). What, though, does this statement mean? Are the churches and religion the winners in the transformation? Are they the new rulers, or are they merely competing with other institutions? Does it reflect the perception of an overall revival of the religious in post-communist Europe (which

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seems to be an opinion shared by the majority of sociologists of religion in Western Europe; cf. Casanova 1994b, 32; Greeley 2002)? Without doubt, it refers to the fact (which cannot be ignored) that religion has become more visible in public discourse, as an actor in the political arena, as an agency of national identity, and as an important protagonist in the social and humanitarian sector. But in what other way has religion set the agenda? And how was it, and is it, perceived and evaluated by other social actors and by the people as a whole? Can we speak of an emerging cleavage between the secular and the religious? If we can, does it apply to all post-communist societies? Was the return of religion to the public sphere accompanied by a return to individual religiosity? Assuming that that is the case, what forms of religion profited from it – the traditional churches or "new" suppliers related to the esoteric scene? Under what social, political and economic conditions did the development of religion take place, and how was the development influenced by the social and historical context?

Thus, the questions I wish to address specifically are: what was the situation concerning churchliness and religiosity immediately after the breakdown of communism, and how has it developed during the last twenty years? What patterns of religious change can be observed? How can the patterns and differences be explained?

Conceptual Framework: Three Scenarios – Three Corresponding Approaches

If the state and development of religion are dealt with on the individual level, then it makes sense to distinguish between organized forms (such as affiliation to a church or denomination, and church attendance) and "private" religiosity (which can be related to dogmas represented by the traditional churches or to "alternative" ideas rejected or at best tolerated by the traditional churches). Having followed the discussion concerning religious change in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe, we could distinguish between three different scenarios at least. First, we could assume a decline in organized forms (churchliness), accompanied by a decline in "private" religiosity (belief, prayer at home, and so on). Such a scenario would indicate a diminishing significance not only of the churches but of religion itself for individuals. Second, we could assume a decline in church affiliation, accompanied by a constant or even increasing demand on private religiosity. Such a pattern could be interpreted as the privatization or individualization of religion. Third, we could surmise that, since the breakdown of communism, i.e., with the end (or at least relaxation) of the political suppression of the churches and religion, both church affiliation and private religiosity have gained greater significance – a scenario that could be called vitalization or revitalization.

These scenarios could be related to three corresponding theories or approaches. The first approach, which is related to the decline scenario, is secularization theory. Secularization theory assumes a general incompatibility between modernity and religion, which is manifested in a declining significance of religion for society and individuals, leading to increasing religious indifference and probably even atheism (cf. Berger 1967; Wilson 1982; Bruce 1996). The second approach, related to the shrinking significance of churchliness but constant demand on private forms, is the privatization/individualization theory in the tradition of Thomas Luckmann (1967). This approach sees religion more or less explicitly as an anthropological constant that simply cannot lose its significance. According to the proponents of this approach, what is characteristic of modern societies is not the decline of religion but its transformation, away from traditional, church-oriented forms towards "invisible" variants, and the contents and forms of religion are characterized by increasing religious vagueness, syncretism, a de-personalization of the concept of God, and a shift towards the sacralization of the inner-self (Davie 1994; Hervieu-Léger 1999; Heelas/Woodhead 2005). The third approach, which could be related to the revitalization scenario, is the theory of religious competition, or the supply-side rational choice (RC) approach. This approach also assumes a latent individual need for religion, a need which simply has to be stimulated by the "adequate" religious offerings in order to become manifest as a religious affiliation and practice. To put the thesis briefly: competition on a

relatively unregulated religious market forces religious providers to offer goods that meet the demands of the consumers, which eventually increases the level of religiousness among the population in a given society (cf. Finke/Iannaccone 1993; Stark/Finke 2000).

However, it is important to note that the scenarios and theoretical approaches, though linked, are not equated with each other. Whereas the scenarios refer to observable processes within the religious field, or to mere results, the theories put forward possible explanations for these developments. For example, an increase in churchliness and religiosity can be a result of the (re-)establishment of a religious market (which would be in line with the RC approach), but it can also indicate a strategy of cultural defence (as is argued by Bruce 2002, 31) or an emerging religious conflict (Stark/Finke 2000, 202). Thus, such a scenario can be neither automatically considered as an argument in favour of the supply-side approach, and nor can it be taken as an argument against the validity of secularization theory per se. Similarly, a decline in the social and individual significance of churches and religion might go hand in hand with processes of modernization such as functional differentiation, urbanization, the decrease in existential insecurity and so on, which is what secularization theorists assume (e.g., Wilson 1984; Bruce 1996 2002; Norris/Inglehart 2004), but it can also be due to political suppression, or according to RC theory – to an absence of a functioning religious market (Stark/Finke 2000, 201). Thus, it is one thing to describe particular patterns of development in the religious field but quite another to look for factors that can explain them. Since the different scenarios described above can be considered as hints towards, but not evidence of, the validity of one or more of the theories, I shall describe both the state and development of religion according to a number of religious indicators, and then make some reflections on possible explanatory factors.

Method, Data and Indicators

In this essay, I give an overview of the state and development of the religious field, with my focus being on quantitative comparative analyses. Therefore, I present purely descriptive data as well as simple bivariate analyses. With regard to the explanatory part, my claim is rather modest: instead of testing theories in a strict sense, it has been my aim to detect some plausibility patterns. The empirical part contains results from micro and macro analyses of a core of 18 countries, which can be classified according to their dominant religious tradition: Catholic – Poland, Slovakia, Croatia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Hungary, the Czech Republic; Protestant – Latvia, Estonia, East Germany; Orthodox – Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Moldova, Russia, the Ukraine; Muslim – Bosnia, Albania.[2] The findings that I present are drawn primarily from various international population surveys (EVS/WVS; ISSP; ESS; Aufbruch; PCE 2000), but I also use other religious and structural data. As explanatory variables, I use various measures of (socio-)economic and political development, such as the GDP, the Bertelsmann Transformation Indexes, and the Human Development Index, the (inversed) Herfindahl-Hirschman index (as an indicator of religious pluralism in a society), and some indicators developed within the State and Religion Survey project by Jonathan Fox (2004, 2008; this is perhaps the most promising attempt to operationalize the state of regulation of churches and religion by the state).

In order to be able to observe whether a decline, a privatization, or a re-awakening of religiousness is indeed taking place, I distinguish between at least two different dimensions of religion: a "traditional" religious dimension (including church adherence, participation in church life, and church-related religiousness), and a non-traditional ("alternative") religious dimension (cf. Pollack/Pickel 1999; Pollack 2000). Within the spectrum of traditional religiousness, I also distinguish between institutionalized and non-institutionalized religiousness (cf. Boos-Nünning 1972). Denominational affiliation, church attendance, and trust in church are used as indicators of traditional-institutionalized religion, whereas belief in God serves as an indicator of traditional-private religiousness. Although religious self-assessment and self-reports on the importance of religion for one's life are not directly linked to traditional religious-

[2] Depending on the availability of data, the number of countries will vary for some analyses.

ness, but indicate a general affinity for religion, I include them as additional variables for this dimension. To grasp the diffuse forms of religion that exist outside of the church is, however, much more difficult. Here, belief in reincarnation, astrology/horoscopes, and faith healers are used as indicators of "older" forms of religiousness outside the church, while belief in the effects of magic/spiritualism/occultism, mysticism and New Age messages serve as indicators of "newer" forms of religiousness or spirituality.[3]

Since the data presented below are drawn from a number of different sources, several methodological remarks might be appropriate at this point. The way that interviewees respond to questions in population surveys is always, of course, influenced in certain respects by when the survey is carried out, the content of the survey, and the cultural context. The latter poses a particular challenge in analyses which compare different international situations. For example, certain questions can be understood differently in different national or cultural contexts. The problem of functional equivalence has been discussed in survey research for years now, although ensuring such equivalence in practice has proven to be extremely difficult (cf. Lauth, et al. 2009, 148). In order to be able to make comparisons as accurate as possible at least within countries, the choice of data has been made principally according to the premise of linguistic equivalence (a premise which is favoured in survey practice, in any case; cf. Lauth, et al. 2009, 151). Unfortunately, though, observing even this premise has not always been possible, since in some cases or countries the wording of the questions even in one and the same survey (as in EVS/WVS or in ISSP) was changed between different waves. When data from different points in time are available, I have therefore tried to base my comparisons on surveys which use identical wording in their questions. I have also attempted to minimize random anomalies, at least where there are different sources for the same or a similar point in time, by choosing a result which corresponds closely with at least one other result. The unavoidable shortcomings in the analysis of the survey data are taken into account in my empirical section insofar as I interpret not so much single findings as general and characteristic patterns.

Empirical Results: Trends, Patterns, Correlations

What can be said about the current situation and development of the religious field since the early 1990s? As can be seen in Table 1, traditional churchliness has undoubtedly prospered greatly in Orthodox societies. In contrast, the rates of denominational affiliation and church attendance have hardly changed since the beginning of the 1990s in most of the Catholic countries, and, indeed, trust in the church has in some cases been lower here recently than it was directly after the political upheavals (Poland, Croatia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic). In traditionally Protestant countries, there have been gains (Latvia, Estonia) as well as losses (East Germany) regarding denominational affiliation, relative stability (on a low level) in terms of church attendance, and a decrease in trust in churches. Finally, with regard to the latter, in countries with a Muslim majority, there has been relatively little change (Bosnia) or a slight decrease (Albania).

[3] From a historically oriented position, one could probably question such a distinction. For example, mysticism has been part of all world religions since the very beginning. However, one should note that quantitative-empirical research is still in its infancy concerning the analysis of alternative religiousness. I derived this distinction from empirical exploration rather than from theoretical presumptions. As factor analyses have shown, magic, mysticism and New Age are considered to be relatively closely connected to each other, while the same is true for the other three indicators.

	Denominational Affiliation			Church Attendance			Trust in Church		
	1990	2008	*Diff.*	1990	2008	*Diff.*	1990	2008	*Diff.*
Poland	96[c]	95[o]	*-1*	84[c]	72[l]	*-12*	84	64	*-20*
Slovakia	74[c]	80[o]	*+6*	41[c]	40[n]	*-1*	50	62	*+12*
Croatia	96[d]	96[q]	*0*	41[d]	43[o]	*+2*	57[a]	53	*-4*
Lithuania	63[c]	86[o]	*+23*	27[c]	29[t]	*+2*	73	81	*+8*
Slovenia	73[c]	71[o]	*-2*	35[c]	25[o]	*-10*	39	49	*+10*
Hungary	58[c]	55[o]	*-3*	20[a]	16[o]	*-4*	56	43	*-13*
Czech Republic	41[c]	30[o]	*-11*	12[c]	10[m]	*-2*	31	21	*-10*
Latvia	36[c]	61[m]	*+25*	9[c]	12[m]	*+3*	64	63	*-1*
Estonia	13[c]	23[l]	*+10*	9[f]	9[l]	*0*	54	47	*-7*
East Germany	35[a]	25[p]	*-10*	6[a]	5[p]	*-1*	44	21	*-23*
Romania	94[c]	98[o]	*+4*	31[c]	50[o]	*+19*	72	86	*+14*
Bulgaria	33[c]	74[o]	*+41*	9[c]	16[l]	*+7*	30	41	*+11*
Serbia	81[f]	90[n]	*+9*	15[f]	21[o]	*+6*	38[a]	60	*+22*
Moldova	85[f]	98[r]	*+13*	23[f]	26[r]	*+ 3*	77[a]	70	*-7*
Russia	34[c]	64[o]	*+30*	6[c]	15[o]	*+9*	65	69	*+4*
Ukraine	66[f]	73[r]	*+7*	18[f]	25[o]	*+8*	67[a]	79	*+12*
Bosnia	71[f]	77[o]	*+6*	46[f]	45[o]	*-1*	72[a]	59	*-13*
Albania	99[f]	70[o]	*-29*	35[f]	14[o]	*-21*	54[a]	50	*-4*

Table 1: Denominational affiliation, church attendance,and trust in church, 2000-2008

Sources: **Denominational affiliation:** [a] ALLBUS 1991; [b] Aufbruch 1997; [c] EVS 1990-1993; [d] Census 1991; [e] ISSP 1995; [f] WVS 1994-1999; [g] ALLBUS 1994; [l] ESS 2008; [m] ISSP 2007; [n] Aufbruch 2007; [o] EVS 2008; [p] ALLBUS 2008; [q] C&R 2006; [r] WVS 2005-2007; in percent. **Church attendance:** [a] ISSP 1990; [b] ISSP 1991; [c] EVS 1990-1993; [d] 1989 (cited by Zrinščak 1999:133); [e] ISSP 1995; [f] WVS 1994-1999; [g] ALLBUS 1994; [h] ISSP 2000; [i] EVS/WVS 1999-2004; [j] PCE 2000; [k] ALLBUS 2000; [l] ESS 2008; [m] ISSP 2007; [n] ISSP 2008; [o] EVS 2008; [p] ALLBUS 2008; [q] C&R 2006; [r] WVS 2005-2007; [s] Aufbruch 1997; [t] Aufbruch 2007; those who report going to church monthly or more often, in percent. **Trust in church:** EVS 1990-1993 ([a] WVS 1994-1999); EVS 2008; 4-point scale; those who report having "a lot" or "quite a lot" of confidence, in percent

As far as people's general attitude towards religion is concerned, it appears that those countries which were already strongly religious at the beginning of the 1990s have become even more religious, while those societies which were already characterized by low degrees of religiosity have become even more secular (Table 2). Countries such as Poland, Romania, Croatia, Serbia, the Ukraine, Moldova and Bosnia, where almost every person defines him or herself as religious and as believing in God, are undoubtedly distinguished by a culture which is strongly denominational or religious. But there are also other countries, such as Slovenia, Hungary and Latvia, in which religion, culture and national identity are not as strongly mixed or not mixed at all. The Czech Republic, Estonia and East Germany, in contrast, are largely secular today, while particularly in East Germany the last remnants of religion seem to be disappearing.

All this is valid, though, only for what people say about whether they do or do not belong to a denomination, whether they believe or do not believe, and whether they are religious or not religious. When it comes to what people actually believe in, a slightly different picture emerges. Even in countries where the population shows a high level of churchliness and religiosity (with the single exception of Poland), only a minority of believers still hold to the traditional Christian idea of a personal God. Also, in general, forms of belief in an impersonal celestial power seem to be becoming more convincing in post-communist societies (Chart 1). In many cases, one's professed denominational background has no substantial theological basis; often, the belief systems remain diffuse and internally inconsistent. Even if it is the case that religion in many Central and Eastern European countries is playing a more public role again, that is only partly reflected in individual beliefs and even less in terms of church-related religious practice. The field of "alternative" religiosity is very varied, and can be distinguished

	Belief in God			Religious Self-Assessment		
	1990	2008	*Diff.*	1990	2008	*Diff.*
Poland	95	95	*0*	96	88	*-8*
Slovakia	64	78	*+14*	74	80	*+6*
Croatia	77[a]	90	*+13*	71[a]	83	*+12*
Lithuania	73[a]	71	*-2*	55	84	*+29*
Slovenia	55	62	*+7*	73	72	*-1*
Hungary	58	67	*+9*	57	53	*-4*
Czech Republic	31	30	*-1*	40	33	*-7*
Latvia	67[a]	71	*+4*	54	76	*+22*
Estonia	46[a]	46	*0*	21	44	*+23*
East Germany	33	19	*-14*	37	18	*-19*
Romania	89	95	*+6*	75	82	*+7*
Bulgaria	36	68	*+32*	36	60	*+24*
Serbia	61[a]	85	*+24*	60[a]	89	*+29*
Moldova	86[a]	98	*+12*	82[a]	83	*+1*
Russia	35	71	*+36*	56	76	*+20*
Ukraine	65[a]	85	*+20*	64[a]	87	*+23*
Bosnia	80[a]	93	*+13*	70[a]	94	*+24*
Albania	91[a]	90	*-1*	45[a]	88	*+38*

Table 2: Belief in God and religious self-assessment, 1990-2008

Sources: **Belief in God**: EVS 1990-1993 ([a] WVS 1995-97); EVS 2008; 2-point scale („yes"/„no"); those answering „yes" in percent. **Religious self-assessment**: EVS 1990-1993 ([a] WVS 1994-1999); EVS 2008; 3-point scale („religious" – „not religious" – „convinced atheist"); those who consider themselves as religious.

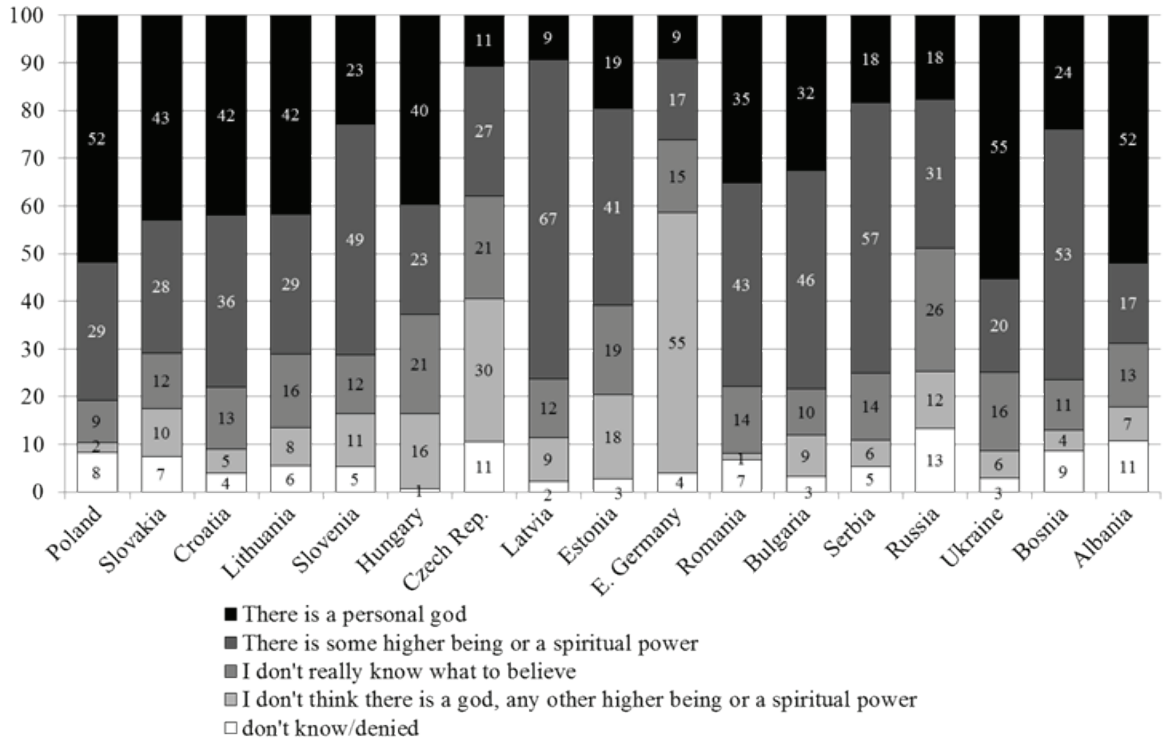

Chart 1: Ideas of transcendence between theism and scepticism

Sources: EVS 2008 (* C&R 2006; ** EVS 1999)

partly, but not entirely, from traditional religiosity. Traditional forms of popular religion and superstition (for example, the belief in fortune-tellers and faith healers) are particularly common in societies with a relatively strong religious-denominational culture. "New" religious phenomena such as Zen meditation, occultism and New Age are relatively more widespread in societies which are somewhat more strongly secularized, although they generally only very seldom gain acceptance (Table 3; see also Pollack/Müller 2006).

	"Old"			"New"			
	Reincarnation	Astrology/ Horoscopes	Faith-healer	Mysticism	Magic/ Spiritualism/ Occultism	Zen Meditation/ Yoga	New Age
Bulgaria	20	18	20	3	4	8	2
Czech Republic	16	17	12	3	8	21	2
Estonia	31	26	24	9	12	31	4
East Germany	8	11	6	3	3	13	2
Hungary	24	24	31	10	7	23	8
Poland	11	8	27	4	4	8	2
Romania	20	23	9	5	7	11	2
Russia	27	47	49	14	25	35	8
Slovakia	16	22	39	4	7	19	3
Slovenia	16	17	16	4	6	20	8

Table 3: "Alternative" religiosity

Source: PCE 2000; 5-point scale („I don't know what it is – not at all – a little bit – yes, to a certain degree – yes, very strong"); those who report „very strong" or„to a certain degree", in percent

What, then, does this mean for the general models which have been used to explain religious change? The proponents of the individualization thesis are partly correct in assuming that parts of the population are adding alternative elements to church and traditional-religious ideas. It is precisely the new-religious forms of spirituality which seem to be thoroughly "compatible" with modernity, and it is particularly those elements of the population – younger, better educated, better socially placed, representing a "modern" lifestyle – who turn to these religious alternatives more often (Table 4).

	Denomination	Church Attendance	Belief in God	Religious Self-Assessment	Importance of Religion	Alternative Religiosity „old"	Alternative Religiosity „new"
Age	.05	.06	.04	.11	.09	-.17	-.18
Sex (female)	.09	.14	.16	.16	.16	.18	-.05
Education	-.10	-.06	-.10	-.12	-.13	.02*	.13
Social strata (subjective)	n.s.	n.s.	-.05	-.04	-.01	n.s.	.02
Place of residence (rural)	.12	.11	.07	.10	.10	-.04	-.10

Table 4: Churchliness, religiosity, and socio-demography

Sources: PCE 2000; bivariate correlations at micro level; Spearman coefficient (ϱ); cumulated analysis (based on data from 11 countries; n ≥ 10,286); all coefficients are significant at 0.01 level (* 0.05; n.s. = not significant); construction of indicators: see annex

There are also findings, though, which contradict the thesis of the privatization and individualization of religion. First, churches and the denominational tradition are still, or again, gaining in importance in many societies (Poland, Croatia, Slovakia, almost all Orthodox countries). Also, regarding the overall limited spread of alternative religious ideas and practices, we can certainly not talk in terms of a "spiritual revolution" (Heelas/Woodhead 2005). In particular, only a small minority of the population are interested in new religious phenomena derived from "alien" religious traditions such as occultism, New Age, Zen meditation and yoga. All in all, then, the findings do not point to the replacement of traditional religiosity by alternative religious ideas and practices. In addition, the results cast doubt on the assumption made by individualization theorists that the socio-demographic contours of religiousness have been largely dissolved (cf. Voll 1993, 241).

The individualization thesis can at least still claim a certain plausibility regarding its interpretation of some developmental tendencies. However, there is hardly any empirical evidence to support the arguments of the economic theory or religious competition. Even if a religious upturn in many countries cannot be overlooked, it is still doubtful whether this can be traced to precisely those factors which are fore grounded by the representatives of this model. One can assume in all countries a general relaxation of restrictions after the end of communism; according to the competition thesis, however, a vitalization in the field of religion should have taken place above all in those countries where there has been an especially high level of religious pluralism and competition on the religious market. Empirically, though, no systematic link can be made between the extent or range of state interference in the area of religion and the vitality of the religious field. If we attend to the bivariate links between the degree of pluralism, the extent of state interference in the religious area, and the religious indicators in Table 5, then a clear picture emerges. With one exception (pluralism index with those without a denomination vs. church-going), which again runs counter to the theses of the competition theorists (Pearson's r = -0.39; although on a weak significance level of 0.10), the extent of religious pluralism does not correlate with the spread of churchliness and religiosity among the population. Also the degree of state support (of one or all religions; index *official support*) and the treatment of minority or all religions (not only their legal status, but also how they are practised; indices *general restrictions*, *discrimination* and *regulation*) in no way show statistically measurable influence on religious vitality. The same applies to the total amount that the state is involved in religious affairs (index GIR total).

	N	Church Attendance	Belief in God	Religious Self-Assessment	Importance of Religion
Pluralism index (without non-denominationals)	18	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Pluralism index (including non-denominationals)	18	-.39*	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Index *official support* (Fox)	18	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Index *general restrictions* (Fox)	18	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Index *discrimination* (Fox)	18	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Index *regulation* (Fox)	18	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Index GIR total (Fox)	18	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.

Table 5: Churchliness, religiosity, religious diversity, and state regulation of religion

Source: bivariate correlations at macro level; Pearson's r; * = significant at 0.10 level; n.s. = not significant; construction of indicators: see annex.

The descriptive findings already presented even indicate, in fact, that it is not religious variety which appears to encourage the spread of religiosity, but much more the existence of a monopoly-like situation: religion is booming in precisely those countries which are particularly homogeneous in terms of denomination (as, for example, in Poland, Croatia, Romania, Moldova or Russia).Where a religious upturn has occurred, it was not the new, "unused" provider who benefited, but the old and respected "national" churches.

Overall, the third general explanation, that of secularization theory, seems to be the most useful theoretical instrument to interpret the situation and development of churchliness in the post-communist societies of Central and Eastern Europe. The negative influence of modernizing tendencies on churchliness and the religiosity of people can be shown just as well on a micro as on a macro level. As far as the micro level is concerned, the socio-demographic profile of traditional church-goers and believers in most countries is presented in such a way that, of those asked, it is in particular the elderly, female, lowly educated and rural-dwelling who are distinguished by their above average level of churchliness and traditional religiosity – those population groups, in other words, which have a relatively low position in the social hierarchy or are particularly exposed to risks (Table 4). Next to individual living conditions, it is also above all the socioeconomic level of society which influences people's behaviour regarding churches and religion. Therefore, it is above all in countries which are highly developed, which have a stable and democratic political structure and a comprehensive social system, and which are predominantly urban, that church attendance is relatively low and that the number of religious groups in the traditional sense is small. The proportion of those defining themselves as religiously indifferent or irreligious is, though, also relatively high (Table 6).

	N	Church Attendance	Belief in God	Religious Self-Assessment	Importance of Religion
Degree of urbanization	18	n.s.	-.63**	-.60*	-.62**
Employees in agriculture	17	n.s.	.61**	.56*	.60*
GDP per capita	18	n.s.	-.70**	-.63**	-.67**
Bertelsmann Transformation Index Economy	17	n.s.	-.63**	-.61*	-.56*
Social expenditure per capita	11	n.s.	-.69*	-.66*	-.61*
Bertelsmann Transformation Index Politics	17	n.s.	-.49*	-.53*	n.s.
Human Development Index	18	n.s.	-.69**	-.63**	-.64**
Bertelsmann Transformation Index total	17	n.s.	-.58*	-.58*	-.51*

Table 6: Churchliness, religiosity, and modernization

Bivariate correlations at macro level; Pearson's r; ** = significant at 0.01 level; * = significant at 0.05 level; n.s. = not significant; construction of indicators: see annex

The Self-Enforcing Nature of Dominant Cultures

I will complete the empirical part of my essay by addressing an issue that is usually neglected in quantitative analyses: how the religious operates in a truly cultural sense. Remember the indicator concerning belief in God presented in Table 2. The character of this standard indicator in survey research is dichotomous (disregarding the distinction between non-believers and convinced atheists for the moment). But, in reality, belief is not dichotomous: there are many variants between unwavering belief and unwavering unbelief (Voas 2008). As we have seen in Chart 1, the majority of believers do not believe in a personal God but in a higher power or life force, and a considerable part of the population confesses to finding it difficult to decide what to believe in. However, once the respondents have to decide whether to believe or not, as is the case with regard to the dichotomous indicator in Table 2, their answers not only say something about their personal belief but also reflect whether they consider themselves as belonging to

the group of the believers or the non-believers in a certain sense. Consequently, this indicator would stand not only for the belief dimension but also partly for a statement about belonging.

To stress this point is important because it refers to the fact that religion is first and foremost a cultural phenomenon – and, like any culture, it takes effect as a macro factor (cf. Hofstede 1980 2001). This is not just a passing comment but probably explains why societies which have become widely secular will hardly turn towards religion again, and vice versa: since a national culture is predominantly based on religious values, this will also influence the attitudes and behavior of those who tend not to consider themselves as belonging to the dominant culture. The same holds true for a society which has become widely secularized. All this is difficult to measure but we should account for it when we analyze and interpret certain statements. Table 7 illustrates the way in which a dominant culture infiltrates the attitudes of the cultural minority, using the examples of Poland and East Germany:

	Denominational Affiliation	Church Attendance	Religious Self-Assessment
Poland			
Personal God	94	41	1.25
Higher power	84	32	0.99
Indifferent	59	23	0.53
Skeptical	43	9	-1.52
Atheist	5	0	-2.84
East Germany			
Personal God	81	13	0.99
Higher power	62	5	0.19
Indifferent	23	2	-1.14
Skeptical	5	0	-2.34
Atheist	1	0	-2.77

Table 7: Ideas of transcendence, churchliness, and religiosity in Poland and East Germany

Source: PCE 2000; proportion of persons belonging to a church in percent; frequency of church attendance per year; religious self-assessment: 7-point scale (3 = extremely religious, 0 = neither religious, nor irreligious, -3 = extremely non-religious); ideas of transcendence: see chart 1.

Poles report to belonging to a denomination and to going to church more often than East Germans – not only on average but also amongst those who believe in a personal God and in a higher being, those who are indifferent in terms of belief, and those who are skeptical concerning whether something like a God or a higher power exists. For example, the religiously indifferent in Poland report to going to church more often (23%) than those East Germans who state a belief in a personal God (13%). 43% of Poles who take a skeptical position regarding their belief in a God or a transcendental power belong to a denomination (Catholicism), which far exceeds the number of religiously indifferent (in a cognitive sense) East Germans who belong to a denomination (23 %). Asked to position themselves on a scale ranging from +3 (very religious) to -3 (very non-religious; 0 stands for neither religious nor non-religious), religiously indifferent Poles consider themselves to be more religious (+0.53), whereas the same group in East Germany clearly classify themselves as being non-religious (-1.14).

It becomes quite clear that it is not just "observable" behavior (such as church attendance, which is certainly more socially expected in Poland than in East Germany) which is influenced by the dominant culture. The same effect can also be observed with regard to the subjective classification as religious or not religious in an anonymous interview situation, where social sanctions can hardly be expected. But if it is true that the social pressure of the dominant cultural majority influences the positions and behavior of the minority, then religious change might not only be considered as depending on "external" factors such as differentiation, ur-

banization, individualization, or the situation on the religious market. It would also mean that a culture, once it had become dominant, would increasingly operate as an accelerating force, enforcing processes of religious change and making them hardly reversible.

Conclusion: Scenarios and Approaches Revisited

Although not all countries, of course, fit this pattern perfectly, it is nonetheless largely the case that, in terms of the development of churchliness and religiosity in the last 20 years, religion has increased in importance particularly in those countries in which the economic and social conditions both before and for a long time after the political upheavals were precarious, where the process of post-communist reformation has been characterized by extensive social problems (as in Romania or Bulgaria) and even accompanied sometimes by war (Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia), and that religion has also boomed in those countries whose progress has been reversed time and again and which still have massive obstacles to overcome (Russia, the Ukraine, Moldavia). In contrast, in those societies which have developed relatively successfully, the upturn in religion has either largely not happened (as in Estonia or Slovenia), or the process of secularization has even become more advanced (as in East Germany or the Czech Republic).

Of course, the socioeconomic contexts of the individual countries, their histories of transformation and the social and economic living conditions of individual people, do not explain everything. Undoubtedly, cultural and historical specificities and path dependencies also play an important role (cf. Martin 1978). What differentiates many East European countries from most of those in Western Europe is, indeed, the controversial question concerning the unity of nation and religion, which is based on centuries-old conflicts. That so many people in Poland, Croatia and Lithuania, as well as in most Orthodox countries, feel as though they belong to a particular denomination and define themselves as religious is also certainly due to the fact that here it is simply assumed that to be a "good" citizen of the country (or to belong to a particular ethnic group) is to declare one's support for one's own church. Without devaluing the religious significance of such testimonies, we can assume that such behaviour does represent at least to a certain extent a statement regarding a sense of national or ethnic belonging. In this sense, a kind of deprivatization of religion really has taken place in some countries (Casanova 1994b).

To understand what has happened on the field of religion in the post-communist period, it is important also to be aware of recent history and the immediate situation in each country at the beginning of the 1990s. There were two factors above all in the past which encouraged secularization: the combination of – more or less harsh – political suppression and persecution of religious communities or believers, and a at least partially successful "modernization from above" led in many countries to a situation in which a large proportion of the population distanced themselves from the church and religion during the communist period.[4] In this regard, the inner dynamics of the process of development should also not be underestimated. The vehemence and continuing resonance of secularization processes even after the political break in East Germany and the Czech Republic can also apparently be explained by the hegemonic position of secular ideas and behaviour, which made access to religious questions and problems fundamentally difficult from the very beginning. On the other hand, the speed with which the

[4] The process by which whole generations successively detach themselves from the religious field can be seen as the result of religious knowledge and practices being passed on from generation to generation over time in a less successful way (Müller 2004, 64-69). The chain of socialization, which in the opening decades of the twentieth century was almost everywhere still intact through the interactions of family, school and church, was destroyed in many places through the disappearance of state support and the political ostracism of the church and all religious activity not only in the public life of the church but also in the private sphere (Pollack 1994, 429). Especially in those areas where political repression began early and lasted for a long time, and where the programme of modernization was carried through rigidly and successfully (as in the Soviet Union and East Germany), these led to a particularly sustained destruction of religious structures.

theme of religion can gain in importance is shown by the developments in Croatia, Slovakia, Moldova and in most of the countries of the former Soviet Union. If a culture of religious belonging or identity has once established itself (and the national question is certainly key here), then this can also develop its own momentum and effect.

The objection that the general models used to explain religious change tend to see religion as an independent social entity and exaggerate its autonomy in regard to other social and cultural dimensions (which would lead to important functions of religion and specific contextual constellations disappearing from view; cf. Tomka 1998, 239) is therefore justified in certain respects. The supporters of these models have sought to counter such criticisms by including explanations of a cultural nature in their arguments. For example, through the thesis that, in cases of external threat, religion can assume the function of defending cultural identity; through the assumption that religion often serves as the means to assimilate ethnic minorities (Bruce 2002); through the hypothesis that, under certain conditions, a conflict situation can annul the principle of competition (Stark/Finke 2000); or through the assumption that Protestantism, for inherently theological and organizational reasons, was always more susceptible to secularization tendencies than, for example, Catholicism (Wilson 1982; Berger 1990; Bruce 2002).

Without question, the religious landscape in the societies of Central and Eastern Europe today cannot be fully understood without the respective historical contexts and the significance of religion for national and ethnic identity being taking into consideration, and this undoubtedly constitutes a major challenge for the general explanatory approaches. With this in mind, though, it is one thing when, despite the intervention of many influencing factors, clear patterns can be made out which support the core assumptions of a theory (and that is the case with secularization theory); and quite another when the empirical material simply dissolves into exceptions which can only be explained with the help of additional hypotheses, which themselves either do not fit the internal logic of the explanatory model or even contradict it (as is often the case with the theory of religious competition). All in all, to interpret the contemporary state and development of the church and religion in Central and Eastern Europe, a context-sensitive secularization theory, one which takes account of historical and cultural conditions and path dependencies (cf. Pickel 2009 and in this volume), is still much more fruitful than a model which(since it was developed against the background of what, indeed, is a highly pluralistic religious landscape as in the USA, but a landscape that emerged nonetheless within a quite specific historical context) is clearly not directly applicable to other regions and cultures.

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Annex: Indicators Used in Bivariate Correlations

Religiosity:

Denomination: 0 = without denomination, 1 = respondent belongs to a denomination

Church attendance: averaged church attendance per year

Belief in God: 0 = non-believer/convinced atheist, 1 = believer

Religious self-assessment: 7-point scale, standardized (0 = extremely non-religious, 1 = extremely religious)

Importance of religion: 4-point scale (0 = very important, 1 = rather important, 2 = rather not important, 3 = not at all important)

Alternative religion – "old":factor score (representing belief in reincarnation, astrology/horoscopes, faith healer)

Alternative religion – "new":factor score (representing belief in mysticism, effects of magic/spiritualism/occultism, the message of New Age)

Socio-Demography:

Age: in years

Sex: 0 = male, 1 = female

Education: country-specific calculation, 3-point scale (1 = low, 2 = middle, 3 = high)

Social strata (subjective): self-assessment of the position of respondent's family in society; 7-point scale (1 = lowest position, 7 = highest position)

Place of residence: 1 = respondent lives in a city, 2 = respondent lives in a rural area

Modernization:

Degree of urbanization: proportion of urban population in society; Source: United Nations 2008 (East Germany: Federal Statistical Office)

Employees in agriculture: proportion of employees in the agricultural sector compared to all employees (incl. hunting, forestry and fishery); values from 2007/2008; source: World Bank: World Development Indicators

GDP per capita: Gross Domestic Product in US$, adjusted by prices and purchasing power parity of 2005; values from 2008; Source: UNECE Statistical Database

Bertelsmann Transformation Index Economy: measure of economic success of a society; criteria: socio-economic level of development, market organization, stability of currency and prices, private property rights, social order, productivity of national economy, sustainability; composite average derived from all single indicators (0 = complete absence of criterion, 10 = complete fulfilment); values from 2008; Source: Bertelsmann Foundation 2008

Social expenditure per capita: in €; only EU member states; values from 2007; Source: Eurostat

Bertelsmann Transformation Index Politics: measure of success of political transformation; criteria: stateliness, political participation, rule of law, stability of political institutions, political and societal integration; composite average derived from all single indicators (0 = complete absence of criterion, 10 = complete fulfilment); values from 2008; Source: Bertelsmann Foundation 2008

Human Development Index: composite measure of socio-economic and human development; criteria: expectancy of life, literacy rate, combined gross enrolment ratio, adequate standard of living (indicators: GDP per capita in US$ and PPP); values from 2007; Source: UNDP 2009

Bertelsmann Transformation Index total: status index of transformation; averaged value of BTI Economy and BTI Politics; values from 2008; Source: Bertelsmann Foundation 2008

Religious Pluralism:

Pluralism index: 1 - Herfindahl-Hirschman index (HHI:measure of market concentration, calculated by squaring the market share of each firm competing in a market, then summing the resulting numbers; range:$0 < HHI \leq 1$; 0 = monopoly, 1 = highest diversity); own calculations on the basis of distributions of denominational affiliations 2005-2008

State Regulation of Religion:

Index *official support*		
0	No Support	Hostility and overt prosecution of all religions (i.e. the ex USSR) / There is little distinction between regulation of religious and other types of institutions (i.e. China) / Official separation of church and state and the state is slightly hostile toward religion (i.e. France) / Official separation of church and state and the state has a benevolent or neutral attitude toward religion in general (i.e. The United States).
1	Supportive	The state supports all religions more or less equally.
2	Cooperation	The state falls short of endorsing a particular church but certain churches benefit from state support more than others (i.e. Austria and Belgium).
3	Civil religion	While the state does not officially endorse a religion, one religion serves unofficially as the state's civil religion (i.e. Ireland and Panama).
4	The state has multiple established religions.	
5	The state has one established religion.	
Index *general restrictions*		
0	No (minority) religions are illegal and there are no significant restrictions on minority religions.	
1	No (minority) religions are illegal but some or all (minority) religions have practical limitations placed upon them or some religions have benefits not given to others due to some form of official recognition or status not given to all religions.	
2	No religions are illegal but some or all (minority) religions have legal limitations placed upon them.	
3	Some (minority) religions are illegal.	
4	All (minority) religions are illegal.	
Index *religious discrimination against minority religions*		
Categories	Not significantly restricted for any minorities.	
	The activity is slightly restricted for some minorities.	
	The activity is slightly restricted for most or all minorities or sharply restricted for some of them.	
	The activity is prohibited or sharply restricted for most or all minorities.	

Variables	Restrictions on public observance of religious services, festivals and/or holidays, including the Sabbath.
	Restrictions on building, repairing and/or maintaining places of worship.
	Restrictions on access to places or worship.
	Forced observance of religious laws of other group.
	Restrictions on formal religious organizations.
	Restrictions on the running of religious schools and/or religious education in general.
	Arrest, continued detention, or severe official harassment of religious figures, officials, and/or members of religious parties.
	Restrictions on the ability to make and/or obtain materials necessary for religious rites, customs, and/or ceremonies.
	Restrictions on the ability to write, publish, or disseminate religious publications.
	Restrictions on the observance religious laws concerning personal status, including marriage, divorce, and burial.
	Restrictions on conversion to minority religions.
	Forced conversions.
	Restrictions on proselytizing.
	Requirement for minority religions (as opposed to all religions) to register in order to be legal or receive special tax status.
	Restrictions on other types of observance of religious law.
Index *regulation of and restrictions on the majority religion or all religions*	
Categories	0 = no restrictions and no government activity in this category
	1 = slight restrictions including practical restrictions/government engages in this activity slightly
	2 = significant restrictions, incl. practical restrictions/government significantly engages in this activity.
	3 = activity is illegal or the government engages in this activity on a large scale.
Variables	Restrictions on religious political parties.
	Arrest, continued detention, or severe official harassment of religious figures, officials, and/or members of religious parties.
	Restrictions on formal religious organizations other than political parties.
	Restrictions on the public observance of religious practices, including religious holidays and the Sabbath.
	Restrictions on public religious speech including sermons by clergy.
	Restrictions on access to places of worship.
	Restrictions on the publication or dissemination of written religious material.
	People are arrested for engaging in religious activities.
	Restrictions on religious public gatherings that are not placed on other types of public gathering.
	Restrictions on the public display by private persons or organizations of religious symbols, including religious dress, nativity scenes, and icons.