

COMMUNIST LEGACIES AND OPPOSITION CHURCHES: Religiosity in Post-Communist Europe

JUSTIN CLARDIE, *Northwest Nazarene University.*

ABSTRACT: The interaction between religion and the state in post-Communist countries has naturally received a great deal of scholarly attention. The situation provides a natural experiment to examine the influence that government policies can have on religiosity. The bulk of research has attempted to explain religiosity in post-Communist countries using either the secularization approach or the supply-side approach. Both of these models were developed with respect to non-Communist countries and have not been able to fully explain religiosity patterns. The current study suggests that two key factors are crucial to account for religiosity in post-Communist countries: the strength of the Communist legacy and the role of religious organizations in opposition movements. A Most Similar Systems design is employed by analyzing religiosity, as measured by religious values, beliefs and participation indicators, in Estonia and Latvia. Some support is found through the analysis. Latvia, where the Lutheran Church was involved in opposition and which displays a slightly weaker Communist legacy, has greater levels of religiosity than Estonia. By grounding expectations of post-Communist religiosity within characteristics of the transition, the current study makes a valuable contribution to the existing literature.

KEYWORDS: religious participation; Communist transitions; post-Communist society.

INTRODUCTION

The study of the role of religion in society has received a fair amount of attention throughout history. The more modern academic studies have focused on the secularization of society and the diminishing role of religion. The focus and debate on this topic was revived somewhat, as a result of the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe. The opportunity to study religious society in this context provides an almost natural experiment to examine the influence that government policies can have on religiosity, as well as to extend theories developed mainly within the Western European context. The bulk of research has attempted to explain religiosity in post-Communist countries using these theories, but has not been able to fully explain religiosity patterns. Outlier countries, such as Poland, provide a challenge, while debates

about measures of behaviour and whether religion has revived in places like Russia have also complicated matters.

The current study suggests that two key factors are crucial to account for religiosity in post-Communist countries: the strength of the Communist legacy, and the role of religious organizations in opposition movements. A Most Similar Systems design is employed by analyzing religiosity in Estonia and Latvia. Some support is found through the analysis. Latvia, where the Lutheran Church was involved in opposition and displays a slightly weaker Communist legacy, has greater religious participation and belief than Estonia. By grounding expectations of post-Communist religiosity in characteristics of the transition, the current study makes a valuable contribution to the existing literature. The current study also adds to the existing literature by isolating key variables within a simple case study research design.

The paper follows, in four main sections. The next section reviews the existing literature, with a focus on general theories of secularization and religiosity, as well as on the post-Communist countries. The literature review is followed by a presentation of the proposed theory and explanation of key variables. The research design is discussed next, including the surveys used and conceptualization of variables. The findings discussion identifies key differences in religiosity, as measured by indicators of religious values, beliefs and participation, between Estonia and Latvia. The next section then proceeds to examine the role of the church in opposition movements, and the extent of a continued Communist legacy.

REVIEW OF EXTANT LITERATURE

The literature on religious participation and belief is voluminous and interdisciplinary. Indeed, a thorough and complete review is quite beyond the scope of the current study. There is, however, a large volume of literature on religiosity in the industrialized world in general, and in the former Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe specifically. This body of literature will be the main focus of this review. Three definitive schools emerge from the literature, each attempting to explain patterns of religious participation and belief: demand-side theories, supply-side theories, and plausibility structures.

The observation of declining religiosity in Western Europe has dominated discussion in this area, as have authors' attempts to explain the phenomenon. There are a number of potential explanations that fall under this broader secularization theory. The two main variants, however, focus on the modernizing influence of education/science (Durkheim 1976, Weber 1904), and on the influence of economic advancement on concerns about personal security (Norris and Inglehart 2004). Both variants suggest that the demand for religion decreases as societies modernize. Increased levels of education and the greater importance of science result in the decreased importance of religion as an explanatory factor (Weber 1904). Not only does modern society replace religious explanations with the scientific, but it also replaces religious rituals with secular rituals (Durkheim 1976; Norris and Inglehart 2004). The long-term result is that society finds religion less "useful" as the benefits it provided in the past can now be supplied through secular institutions and beliefs.

Secularization theory has been challenged on a number of different fronts. One criticism suggests that the perceived decline in religiosity is the result of an over-estimation of religious adherence in the past (Swatos and Christiano 1999). Others have noted the religious revival occurring in developing nations around the world and have held this up as evidence that a decline in religion is not inevitable (Jenkins 2011). Norris and Inglehart (2004) have been most prominent in responding to this criticism by focusing on the importance of "existential security". The existential security of individuals is a major factor in determining individual demand for

religion. Individuals concerned about basic necessities of life (such as food, shelter, etc.) look to religion as a source of comfort. Once these needs are satisfied, the comforting benefits of religion are less important (Norris and Inglehart 2004). The logic that applies at the individual level can then be aggregated at the national level, to explain variation among countries in terms of religiosity. The existential security focus has been instrumental in shaping debate about variations in religiosity between the global north and south, as well as in looking at religiosity in post-Communist Europe. The post-Communist countries that have experienced the greatest resurgence in religion are the ones that experienced the most difficult transitions (Poland, Russia) or had lower levels of wealth from the beginning (Romania, Bulgaria) (Norris and Inglehart 2004).

Supply-side, or religious market, theories date back to the initial arguments made by Tocqueville with respect to the nature of religiosity in the United States, relative to France. Scholars such as Finke, Iannaccone and Stark have revived the tradition. The modern version argues that religiosity increases when there is greater competition in the religious market (Finke 1997; Iannaccone 1991; Stark and Iannaccone 1994). In a more competitive market, churches are forced to compete for members and will provide a better “product”. This approach places greater importance on the role of the state than do the demand-side theories. In addition, supply-side theories help explain an outlier like the United States.

When applied to post-Communist Europe, supply-side theories have not performed as well. Poland and Russia are perhaps the two countries most associated with religious revivalism, but they also both have dominant state churches. Froese (2004b) has argued that, when considering state atheism as a competitor in the religious market, supply-side theories have more validity. However, most quantitative studies find little evidence for the supply-side theories in post-Communist Europe (Bruce 2000; Fox and Tabor 2008; Norris and Inglehart 2004).

The literature on plausibility structures employs much of the same logic as the demand-side literature in general. In essence, it posits that individuals will display higher levels of religiosity when they view religious establishments as viable (Berger 1969; Muller and Nuendorf 2012). As societies advance economically and begin to look to education and science for explanations, the plausibility of religion decreases, as does religious participation. The concept of plausibility structures can be viewed as somewhat unique from demand-theories in general. Societies can create conditions that increase the plausibility of religion, resulting in greater participation. Indeed, the application of plausibility structures to post-Communist Europe has yielded some evidence that this is the case (Muller and Nuendorf 2012). As mentioned above, the countries of Poland and Russia confound the supply-side theories and, to a lesser extent, the demand-side theories in general. Yet they fit nicely within the framework of plausibility structures. Studies have, in some cases, found an inverse relationship between religious freedom and behaviour (Fox and Tabor 2008; Muller and Nuendorf 2012). In other words, the countries that tend to regulate religion more, and that end up with religious monopolies, experience the greatest participation. Countries in which the religion is tightly woven into the national identity may also have stronger plausibility structures that increase participation (Johnston 1993).

Post-Communist Europe has been a popular area for the study of religiosity. This is partly due to general characteristics that make the region well-suited for comparative study in a number of disciplines. The countries all had a prolonged experience with a similar type of political, economic and social system, which they transitioned away from around roughly similar time periods. The region also represents a particularly interesting case to study the influence of state actions on religiosity and to apply existing theories of religiosity to a new situation. As indicated in the review above, the results have been somewhat mixed. Demand-side theories have received more support than have supply-side theories, but they are not without their own limitations. The continued growth of religious participation and belief in

some countries (Bordeaux 2000; Evans and Northmore-Ball 2012; Gautier 1997; Greeley 1994; Tomka 2010) contradicts the modernization variants of demand-side theories. Such growth is especially challenging, considering the high levels of education in most countries to begin with and the push to offer scientific atheism as a stronger alternative than religion (Froese 2004a, 2004b). The existential security variant offers a valid explanation for the resurgence of religion during the transition away from Communism, but it hypothesizes that religiosity should decrease as the economy stabilizes and begins to grow. The evidence here is somewhat mixed (Muller and Nuendorf 2012; Need and Evans 2001; Norris and Inglehart 2004).

The literature examining post-Communist Europe largely assumes that the Communist experience of various countries was similar. There are exceptions, when considering the uniqueness of the Catholic Church in Poland (Need and Evans 2001) or the more aggressive secularization policies of some countries relative to others (Froese and Pfaff 2001; Gautier 1997), but these differences are rarely built into the theory from the beginning. Part of this is due to the real difficulty in actually measuring the impact of secularization efforts. Most often age is used as a proxy, to differentiate those coming of age during Communist rule from those coming of age either before or after Communist takeover (Muller and Nuendorf 2012; Norris and Inglehart 2004). Yet even here it is assumed that secularization efforts were largely successful. This assumption is problematic, as Froese (2004a) has most notably argued with respect to the Soviet Union.

The lack of consensus in the literature is somewhat related to the broad brush-strokes with which the region is often painted, and to the lack of theoretical development specific to the post-Communist experience. The next section lays out a general theory about religiosity, specific to post-Communist Europe, and then discusses a simple, initial test of the theory.

THEORY

The experience of Communist rule and the transition away from it are events that dramatically altered society. They both disrupted existing social networks and attempted to replace them with new types of relationships. Under Communism, this entailed a reorganization of society, oriented toward the state and fostered through policies such as collectivization and the promotion of scientific atheism. In the transition away from Communism, the attempt was to create a new democratic civil society or to rebuild society based on a pre-Communist experience. All of this is true when considering economic and political structures as well. The literature on the economic and political transitions seems to take these realities into account more than does the literature examining religiosity. The basic approach, here, builds off many of the concepts within this literature while attempting to include the relevant aspects of the literature reviewed above.

The starting point is that the transition away from Communism is a pivotal point in the development of post-Communist society. Countries cannot easily go back to a pre-Communist history or develop new structures independent of the transition process. The characteristics of the transition set the countries on paths that influence future development. Each country's experience with Communism is also obviously important for its development, and this experience differs between countries. There are certainly similarities, but the extent to which Communist values permeate society and are able to change behaviour varies between states. An example of this concept, within a different area, is the varying degrees of success with collectivization in different countries.

It is important to consider these influences on religiosity. Social and economic development did not proceed in a "natural" fashion, as in Western Europe, and because of great periods of

disruption it is not unreasonable to suggest that theories developed for Western Europe may not be completely applicable to post-Communist Europe. Religiosity at the individual and national levels will be influenced by many of the same factors as in Western Europe. Yet these factors, such as wealth, education, and age, may have been conditioned by concerted state efforts to eliminate religion or an overhaul of state-society relations, which happened within a period of a decade. The two key factors in considering religiosity in post-Communist Europe derive from the two points of disruption. Thus, when considering post-Communist religiosity, the role of the church(es) during the transition period and the extent of continued Communist influence will have the greatest impact.

Under Communism, the relationship between the church and Communist governments varied from country to country and during certain periods within countries. Stalin's warming to the Russian Orthodox Church during World War II is a prominent example of the latter. The state could do great damage to the church in one of two ways. First, the government could succeed in its attempt to completely marginalize the church and religion. As the church becomes increasingly irrelevant to the needs of society, participation falls dramatically. The church could also be harmed if it is viewed as being close to the government and complicit in its crimes. In this scenario, the church has little role in the post-Communist society because it is seen as part of the previous social networks that are being replaced. It is therefore important for the church to find an identity outside of the state. This is especially important during the transition away from Communism, as the actors prominent in that transition will likely be viewed more positively afterward and have a role to fulfill in post-Communist society. By showing that the church is in opposition to the Communist government and playing a key role in the transition, the plausibility and viability of the church increases. Thus, if churches play a prominent role in opposition to the Communist government, then religiosity is likely to increase in the post-Communist period.

The Communist push for secularization may not have been completely successful in all areas, but it certainly had an impact. The theoretical impact is four-fold. The obvious impact is the overt policies trying to marginalize religion and replace it with scientific atheism. The other three influences are subtler and relate more to the natural secularization process. Education levels increased throughout the Communist countries. According to demand-side theories, this should reduce the need for religious explanations as individuals turn more toward science. Most of the Communist countries also industrialized fairly rapidly, leading to economic growth, urbanization, and a decline in "traditional" values. As mentioned above, this was a key goal of the collectivization campaigns. As a result of this more industrial, urban society, the type of existential security that Norris and Inglehart discuss should become less important and the demand for religion should decrease. In addition, the overwhelming safety net provided by Communist governments should also have limited demand for religion, as individuals could always rely on the state for basic survival needs. Many of the countries experienced difficult transitions and most of these economic measures went into reverse, perhaps explaining initial resurgences in religion. However, it is difficult to imagine that decades of Communist efforts to marginalize religion, along with processes that have been theorized to reduce demand for religion, would not have some impact on religiosity during the post-Communist period. Countries varied in how deeply Communism permeated society; thus, we would expect the level of Communist influence following transitions to vary as well. Countries in which the Communist legacy is weaker should have higher levels of religiosity than countries with a strong Communist legacy.

The impact of the two key factors and their interaction can be seen in Figure 1. All things being equal, we would expect to see the greatest levels of religiosity in the post-Communist period when churches within the country played a prominent role in the opposition and when the legacy of Communism is weak. Conversely, a country with a strong Communist legacy

and whose churches did not play a prominent role in the opposition should result in lower levels of religiosity. The off diagonals represent mixed situations, with the degree of religiosity expected to lie somewhere in the middle.

		Church as Opposition	
		Yes	No
Continuing impact of Communism	Strong	Mixed results	Decreased religiosity
	Weak	Increased religiosity	Mixed results

FIGURE 1: Theoretical Expectations of Religiosity

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study of religiosity illustrates many of the difficulties associated with cross-national research. It is difficult to find consistent and reliable data on religious activities, and to find valid measures for key variables of interest from country to country. The latter is especially true in defining and measuring continued Communist influence or the success of Communist secularization efforts. In addition, there is great variation among the countries in terms of their transitions, their situations prior to Communism, their experiences under Communism, their relationship between national identity and religion, and so forth. There are a number of potential ways to tackle these problems, all of which have strengths and weaknesses.

The current study employs a fairly straightforward Most Similar Systems (MSS) design. The advantage of this approach is that we can limit the immense variation among the countries described above and instead attempt to isolate a few key factors. The two countries under examination are Estonia and Latvia. The analysis will draw heavily on four sets of surveys: one World Values Survey, conducted in 1996, and three surveys from the European Values Study conducted in 1990, 1999 and 2008.

Estonia and Latvia are similar in many ways important to the study of religiosity within this context. They have similar pre-Communist experiences, were part of the Soviet Union for the same time period, and both have a Lutheran plurality with significant religious minorities from other denominations (Froese 2008). They also have similar histories in terms of religious affiliation. In 1900, approximately 54% of Estonians and 45% of Latvians were affiliated with the Lutheran Church (Froese 2008). Hart (1993) even estimates the number of Lutheran adherents at around 78% after World War I. Johnston (1993) argues that neither country has strong ties between religion and national identity, historically. Others, however, argue that, at least in Estonia, there is a link between the Lutheran church and national identity (Hart 1993, Kilp 2009, 2013). If we consider demand-side and supply-side factors, the two countries are similar in these respects also, as demonstrated in Table 1. Levels of wealth and education do not differ greatly. They are both largely urban and industrialized countries. Religious freedom in both countries is fairly high, suggesting that the levels of competition important to supply-side theories are evident. The two countries vary a great deal in terms of their religiosity, however, which will be discussed later.

	Estonia	Latvia
Urbanization %	67.5%	67.4%
Life Expectancy	76.47	74.23
Literacy Rate	99.8%	99.9%
GDP per capita (PPP)	\$28,700	\$24,500
HDI	.861	.819
Regulation on Religion Index	0	1.67

TABLE 1: Demand and Supply Side Factors in Estonia and Latvia

Note: Data for Urbanization, Life Expectancy, Literacy Rate and GDP from CIA World Factbook. Data for HDI from UN Human Development Report. Data for Regulation on Religion from Grim and Finke International Religious Freedom Data.

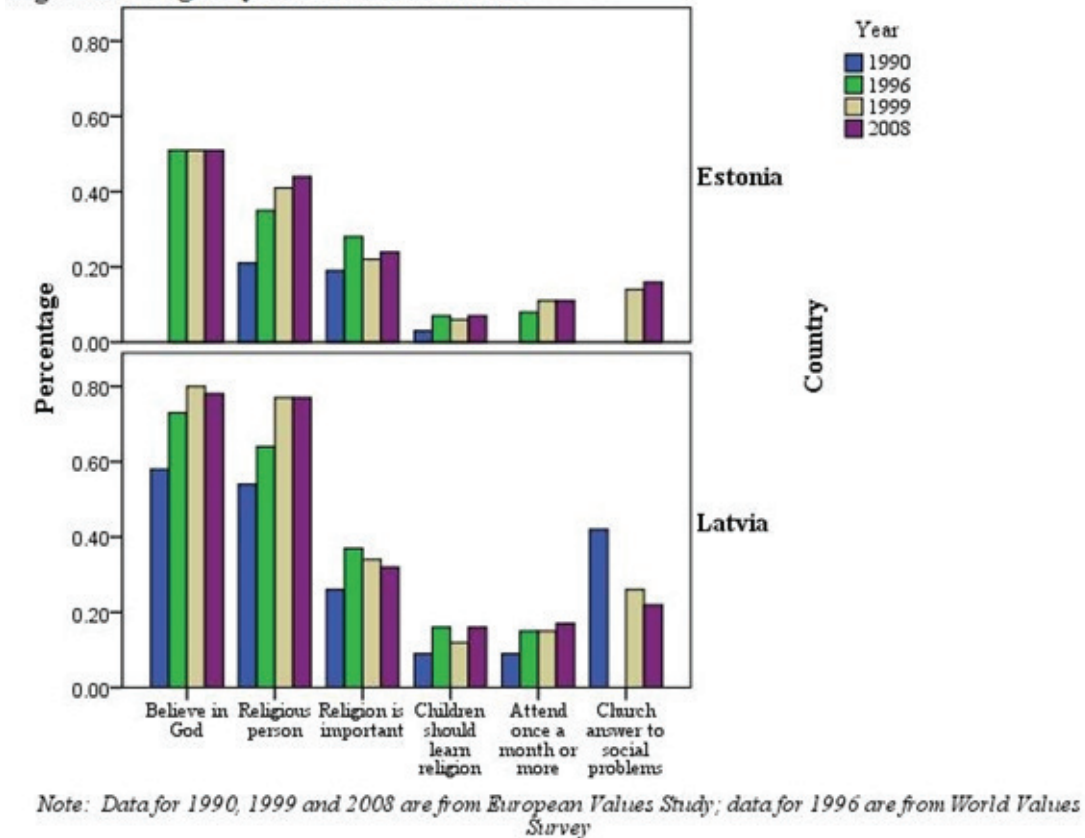
The dependent variable of interest is religiosity. This is a complex concept that can have a number of different aspects. However, most studies include a fairly common set of measures that are generally drawn from the World Values Survey. This study will follow in that tradition and include a number of measures drawn from the World Values Survey and the European Values Study. These survey questions measure three different dimensions within the broader concept of religiosity: religious values, religious beliefs and religious participation. Religious values are represented by the importance of religion, self-identification as a religious person and whether children should learn about religion questions. The survey items that ask about belief in God and whether the church provides adequate answers to social problems are indicators of religious belief. Finally, religious participation is indicated by the frequency of church attendance.

The two key independent variables indicated are the role of the church in the opposition and the strength of the Communist legacy. These two variables are much more difficult to measure. In determining what role the church played in the opposition movements in Estonia and Latvia, the study will examine accounts of the transition in both countries and the paths that led to independence. Churches are considered to be in opposition if they are seen as antagonistic to the Communist government and if they work in association with non-religious opposition groups. A church that is closely tied to the government or is completely disconnected from politics is not in the opposition.

The influence of the Communist legacy will be considered in a number of different ways. The most prominent method within the literature is to examine the religiosity of age cohorts. The current study will use this approach, as well as considering the Communist influence in national parliaments during the post-Communist period. The World Values Survey and European Values Study also ask a number of questions about economic beliefs that can be used as proxies for the extent to which Communist economic teachings continue to have influence. Some of these questions ask about income equality, private property, and preference for the free market. These will also be considered as potential indicators of Communist legacies.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The first thing is to establish the differences, in terms of religiosity, between Estonia and Latvia and then to consider what may account for these differences. The difference in terms of religiosity between the two similar countries is pretty remarkable. Figure 2 displays data from the four survey years and the differences between the countries clearly stand out. No matter the year or question, Latvia displays higher levels of religiosity, as measured by the survey.

Figure 2: Religiosity in Estonia and Latvia

This is especially noteworthy when examining the first two items in the graph; belief in God and self-identification as a religious person. In both of these survey items, around 80% of Latvian respondents answer positively in the years of 1999 and 2008. In Estonia, the percentage of positive answers increases but only reaches as high as 51% for the first item and never exceeds 50% for self-identification as a religious person. Examining the other four items reveals greater levels of religiosity in Latvia as compared to Estonia, but the differences are not as stark as compared to the first two items. The difference in percentages indicates on a common-sense level that religiosity is higher in Latvia than in Estonia. Table 2 presents the results of simple chi-square tests indicating that the differences are statistically significant as well, particularly when considering respondents of all religious persuasions.

There are two additional noteworthy observations that stand out when examining the data from the four surveys spanning 18 years. First, there is remarkable consistency in the findings across the years and surveys. This is true across the different dimensions of religiosity as well. There are differences between the dimensions, such as lower levels of religious participation as compared to belief, but Latvia displays higher levels of religiosity across all three dimensions indicated above. As a result, there is a fair amount of certainty in the general trends observed. The second interesting aspect to emerge is that, in almost all the items, the trend is an increase in religiosity from 1990 to 2008. This may be expected from 1990 to 1996, but the continued general trend of greater religiosity is not entirely consistent with concepts of secularization.

Considering this data at the aggregate level, most of the common factors used to explain differences in religiosity are held constant between Estonia and Latvia. The one potential exception is that in the surveys, as is the case in general, Latvia had much larger numbers of Catholic respondents than Estonia. The presence of Catholic respondents in Estonia was virtually non-existent, for example only 0.3% (or 3 people out of 1005) of respondents were

Catholic in the 1996 survey. In Latvia's 1996 survey, the total was around 19% (222 out of 1148). Some studies have found evidence that religiosity is higher among Catholics than other religious groups (Froese and Pfaff 2001; Need and Evans 2001; Norris and Inglehart 2004) so, before we move on to the two key factors outlined in the theory, it is important to examine the influence of Catholicism on how respondents answered. Because the number of Catholic respondents in Estonia was so low, it makes a comparison of Catholic behaviour in both countries impossible. One reasonable solution is to consider the difference between the non-Catholic respondents in each country. If Catholics are removed from the data and we still see meaningful differences, then we can conclude that the higher rate of Catholicism in Latvia cannot explain differences in religiosity completely. Table 2 also contains the results of chi-square tests for the non-Catholic respondents to the surveys on all of the measures of religiosity previously discussed. The differences between Estonia and Latvia are smaller if we remove Catholic respondents, suggesting that adherence to Catholicism does account for some of the differences. However, the differences between the two countries are still significant in most items, with the exception of only a few. So even though there is some impact from Catholicism, we can reasonably assume that the difference in levels of religiosity between the two countries needs to be explained with other factors as well.

	1990 (All)	1990 (W/O Catholic)	1996 (All)	1996 (W/O Catholic)	1999 (All)	1999 (W/O Catholic)	2008 (All)	2008 (W/O Catholic)
Believe in God	-	-	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.
Religious Person	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.
Religion is important	Sig.	Not	Sig.	Not	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Not
Attend once a month or more	-	-	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Not	Sig.	Sig.
Children should learn religion	-	-	Sig.	Sig.	-	-	-	-
Church answers to social problems	-	-	-	-	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.

TABLE 2: Chi-Square Significance Tests for Religiosity in Estonia and Latvia

Church Role in Opposition

It is difficult to quantify the role of religious organizations in opposition movements to the Communist governments, and would not be very useful in the current study of only two countries. What is most beneficial is to explore qualitatively the role of various religious groups in the opposition and independence movements in Estonia and Latvia. The comparison of these two countries is again beneficial because of the historically similar roles of the church and the relationship between the church and government. Many studies have examined the importance of Catholicism to Poland, or the relationship between Russian national identity and the Russian Orthodox Church. In both Estonia and Latvia, the historically predominant

Lutheran Church is not a major part of the national identity (Johnston 1993), although in the post-Communist setting some argue that there is a link between the Lutheran Church and Estonian national identity (Hart 1993; Kilp 2009, 2013). In neither country was the church consistently in opposition to the Communist government. The Lutheran Church was for the most part either disconnected from politics or implicitly supportive of the Communist regime (Hill 1991; Froese 2008; Ringvee 2015; Sapiets 1990).

The difference in the role of the church emerges during the rising independence movement and transitions in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In Estonia, the Lutheran Church, and other religious groups as well, played a very small formal role in opposition groups, such as the Estonian National Independence Party or the Estonian Popular Front (Hill 1991; Ringvee 2015). Individual clergy were not prohibited from participating in the opposition movements, but the official stance of the Estonian Lutheran Church was one of neutrality (Altnurme and Remmel 2009; Ringvee 2015). This is not to suggest that individual clergy did not have an impact in the opposition or in the formation of social movements such as the Estonian Heritage Society (EHS) (Rohtmets and Ringvee 2013). Indeed, clergy of the Lutheran Church played a key role in the formation of the EHS. There was, however, some conflict within the church reported by the head of the KGB branch in Estonia in 1988 (Rohtmets and Ringvee 2013; Ringvee 2015). The main conflict was over the role the church should play in opposition to the Communist government, but ultimately the church stayed out of the larger political issue. Discontent with the neutrality of the Estonian Lutheran Church is evident in the story of Harry Motsnik. As a Lutheran pastor, he used his position to deliver sermons critical of the Communist government and was arrested in 1985. He was also critical of the church's weakness relative to the government, and suggested that the church's lack of opposition was reducing its support and trust among Estonians (Rohtmets and Ringvee 2013; Ringvee 2015).

Religious groups in Estonia did see an opportunity for greater religious freedom and friendlier legislation during the late 1980s. They sought to capitalize on Gorbachev's less restrictive stance toward religious groups. Yet their actions did not involve working against the government, but rather with it. Lutheran, Catholic and Orthodox clergy created the Estonian Christian Union in 1988 and the Estonian Council of Churches, which included most of the Christian churches in Estonia, was formed in 1989 (Ringvee 2015; Saard 2009). Neither of these groups was intimately tied to the opposition movements, however, and attempted to achieve church interests through normal channels (Hill 1991; Ringvee 2015; Saard 2009). Although there is substantial evidence of individual clergy playing roles in opposition groups, the churches in Estonia as formal institutions appeared to have remained neutral, and in many cases worked with the Communist government to achieve better policies.

The role of Latvia's religious groups in independence and transition is very different. Of special importance to us is the role of the Latvian Lutheran Church. The Lutheran Church, and not the Catholic Church, played the main role in connecting religious groups to the mainstream opposition groups in Latvia. Similar to Estonia, there was a split in the Latvian Lutheran Church about the proper role of the church relative to the government. The conflict came to a breaking point with the refusal of ordination for Maris Ludviks; the formal protest by several clergy, including Modris Plate; and the subsequent suspension of Plate. The refusal of ordination and suspension of Plate were both dictated by the Council for Religious Affairs within the Communist government. Ludviks was targeted, and arrested briefly, because of his "religious activities among young people" (Sapiets 1988). Plate was well known within Latvia and posed a greater problem to government authorities because of the respect he commanded (Hill 1991). After his suspension, many clergy members issued letters to both the Lutheran Archbishop Mesters and the Council for Religious Affairs. In addition, Lutheran parishioners, members of other Christian denominations, and rights groups such as Helsinki 86 also protested the government's decision to suspend Plate. The "Rebirth and Renewal"

movement was formed within the church in 1987. The movement's aim was "to defend openly the right of Latvians to lead a Christian life" (Sapiets 1988, p.242) and it challenged both the Lutheran hierarchy and the government. Eventually, support for Plate spread internationally and Lutheran Churches abroad began pressuring the Latvian Lutheran Church and the Soviet government. In the spring of 1989, leaders within the "Rebirth and Renewal" movement replaced those in the Lutheran hierarchy who opposed them.

The Latvian Lutheran Church became intimately tied with the larger independence movement and the institution involved itself in an open conflict with the Communist authorities. Plate and Juris Rubenis, another Lutheran clergyman, were members of the central council of the Latvian Popular Front and the "Rebirth and Renewal" movement was one of the founding organizations (Sapiets 1990). Archbishop Mesters was replaced by Galitis in 1989; Galitis was an outspoken supporter of both the Popular Front and the Latvian National Independence Movement. The Lutheran Church also held religious services at the founding congress of the Popular Front (Sapiets 1990). The importance of the Latvian Lutheran Church to the opposition can be summed up in the following quotes:

"The Latvian Lutheran Church...became the first in Soviet history to demonstrate that it could vote out compromised leaders and vote in those whom the faithful trusted" (Bordeaux 1990, p. 156).

"Thus, although weak, the Latvian Lutheran Church did serve as the vehicle for expression of rising societal disaffection and the renaissance of national identity" (Goeckel 1995, p.208).

In operationalizing the church's role as opposition, two factors were considered important: whether the church was antagonistic to the Communist government and whether it formed relationships with secular opposition groups. These two criteria are clearly met in the case of Latvia and not met in Estonia. The Latvian Lutheran Church had an antagonistic relationship with the existing Communist government in Latvia, as seen by the number of suspensions and arrests of prominent Lutheran clergy, which ultimately led to the Rebirth and Renewal movement and to changes at the highest level of the Lutheran Church. The important role of the Latvian Lutheran Church in the opposition and subsequent transition away from Communism allowed the church more of a role in the post-Communist era. Because it was seen as separate from the outgoing government and was connected to secular opposition movements, the plausibility of the church as an organization was increased in Latvia and its relevance to society increased. In Estonia, the "overall role of the church in the resistance movement remained rather modest" (Altnurne and Remmel 2009, p. 122). Individual clergy were involved in various groups, but the relationship between the formal church institutions and the Communist government was less antagonistic and more peaceful. As Rohtmets and Ringvee comment about Estonia in comparison to Latvia, "...the situation was more peaceful and there were no such suspensions apart from that of Motsnik" (2013, p. 363). It is not that the Estonian Lutheran Church played no part in the transition away from Communism, but their stance was more moderate than that of their Lutheran counterparts in Latvia and their relationship with the Communist government less antagonistic.

The theory suggests that the role of the church during the transition influences religiosity by creating a more positive public perception of the church. The qualitative analysis above suggests that the church in Latvia played a larger role in opposition to the Communist government than did the church in Estonia. If this is true, according to the theory we would expect to see differences in perceptions of the church between Estonia and Latvia. Unfortunately there is not much data, but what we have in this study suggests some support for this expectation. In the 1990 European Values Study, the only relevant question asked in both Estonia and Latvia inquired about respondents' level of confidence in the church. In Estonia, 54% of the 993 respondents indicated a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the church, whereas in

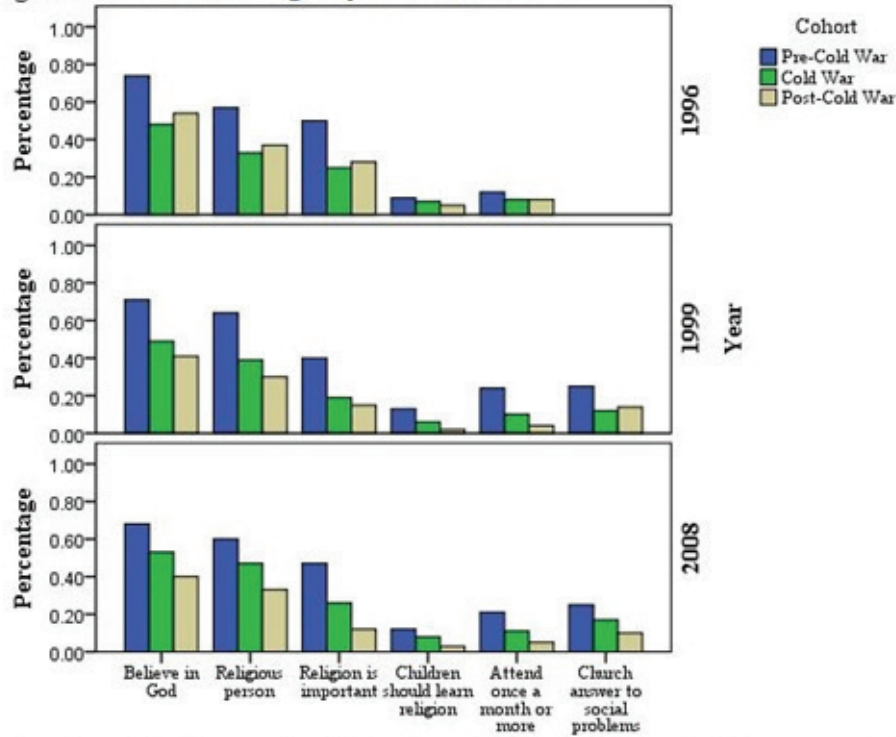
Latvia 64% of 879 respondents indicated the same. The difference is statistically significant and indicates slightly higher confidence levels in Latvia, consistent with theoretical expectations. The theory also argues that the transition period has significant impacts on the future as well. We would expect these differences to continue beyond the transition, and perhaps grow even larger. This is what we see in the 1999 European Values Study. In 1999, 44% of 871 respondents in Estonia indicated high levels of confidence in the church and 67% of 943 Latvian respondents indicated the same. Respondents in both countries were also asked if it would be better for their country if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office. This question speaks somewhat to attitudes about religion in public life and the trust the public has in religious organizations. In response to this question, 25% of respondents in Estonia agreed or strongly agreed with this statement compared to 44% in Latvia. We also can see differences, as indicated in Table 2, with respect to the question of whether the church provides adequate answers to social problems. Although the data is limited, it does provide some support to the theory's casual mechanism of how the role of the church in opposition influences religiosity.

Communist Legacy

The first way in which the Communist legacy will be considered, here, is to examine the relationship between various age cohorts and religiosity. The assumption here is that those coming of age during the Communist period will be most influenced by secularization efforts and should be less religious in their behaviour. Figures 3 and 4 display the religiosity variables discussed previously, relative to age groups in Estonia and Latvia respectively. The figures display three different age cohorts: those coming of age pre-Cold War, those coming of age during the Cold War and those coming of age post-Cold War. To determine the age cohorts, the study followed Muller and Nuendorf (2012) and the literature suggesting that the age of 14 is important for religious identification (Kelley and De Graaf 1997; Myers 1996). Respondents born before 1932 are placed in the pre-Cold War cohort, those born between 1932 and 1974 are in the Cold War cohort, and those born 1975 or after are placed in the post-Cold War cohort. In addition to the theoretical support for using religious coming of age to determine cohorts, there are also methodological benefits of including more respondents in the post-Cold War cohort.

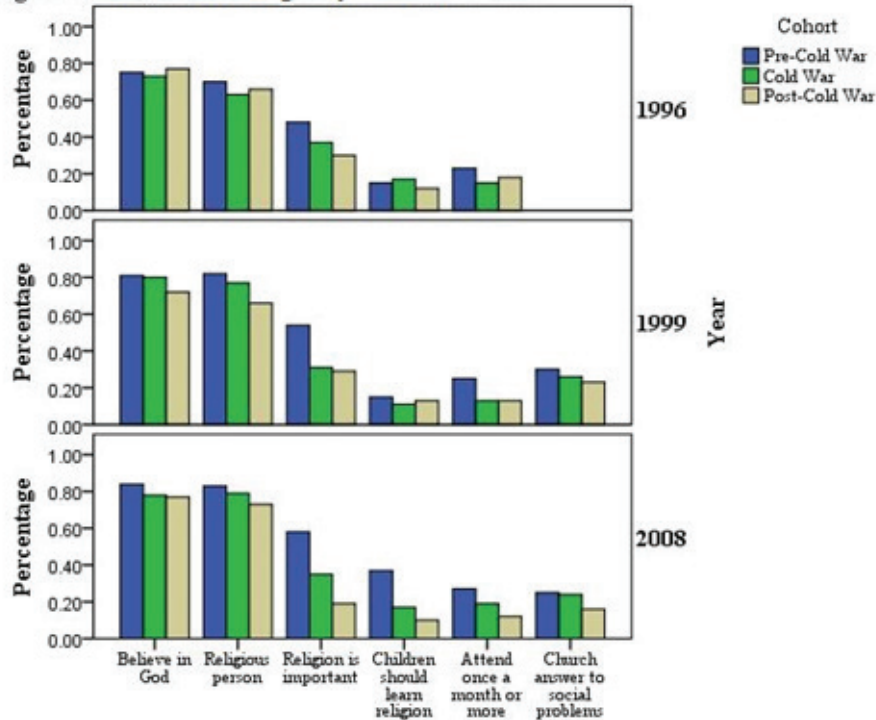
Using age cohorts as a proxy for Communist influence suggests that the Cold War cohort should be most influenced by secularization attempts and displays the lowest levels of religiosity. We are also concerned with the continuing influence of Communism after the transition. If there is some continuing Communist legacy we would expect to see similar levels of religiosity in the post-Cold War period as compared to the Cold War period. We would also expect to see religiosity in the Cold War cohort stay fairly static, with no great increase. In examining Figures 3 and 4 we find that Estonia follows this model fairly well. There are large differences across the various measures of religiosity from the pre-Cold War age cohort, in comparison to the other two. There is a slight uptick on most measures in the post-Cold War period, but nothing significant. The results from Latvia do not display this trend. On most measures of religiosity, there is essentially no difference among the age cohorts. The only measure that displays a trend consistent with a continuing Communist legacy is the question of religious importance. Thus, if we use age as a proxy for Communist influence, it appears there is a stronger influence in Estonia than in Latvia.

Figure 3: Cohorts and Religiosity in Estonia



Note: Data for 1996 are from World Values Survey; Data for 1999 and 2008 are from European Values Study

Figure 4: Cohorts and Religiosity in Latvia

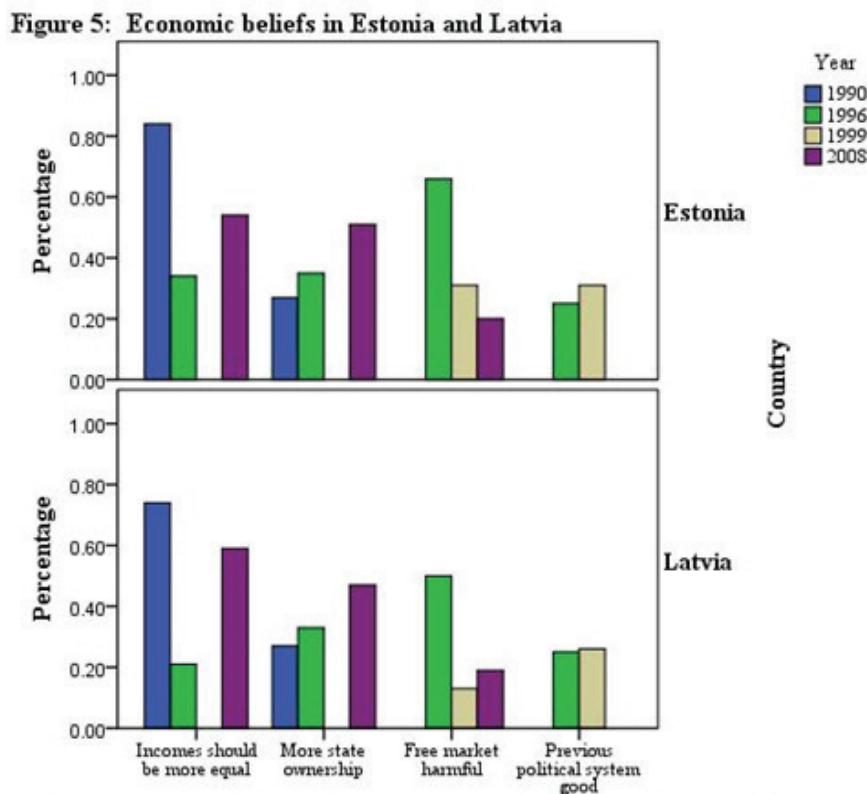


Note: Data for 1996 are from World Values Survey; Data for 1999 and 2008 are from European Values Study

Another way we can measure Communist legacies in the post-Communist period is to examine the number of former Communist party members and officials that participate in the post-Communist governments. Here, there is little difference between Estonia and Latvia. Matonyte (2009) conducted a comprehensive study on the participation of former Communist party members and former dissidents in the post-Communist governments of Estonia and

Latvia, among other countries. The study found that Estonia and Latvia were somewhat unique in the lack of both Communist party officials and dissidents. In terms of members of the legislature, there is little difference between the two. Matonyte does note that, in Estonia, the last Chairman of the Supreme Soviet (Arnold Ruutel) became the first Chairman of the post-Communist parliament and was also elected president in 2001 (2009). In Latvia, the “political scene does not so vividly display the ex-communist dignitaries” (Matonyte 2009, p. 28). The study also notes that the trend in Estonia is of increased participation by former Communists, whereas in Latvia the break with the Communist past remains intact. By this measure neither Estonia nor Latvia displays a strong Communist legacy, although Estonia’s is slightly stronger than Latvia’s.

The last aspect we can consider deals with economically related questions presented in the survey. The logic here is that the Communist legacy may manifest itself in economic beliefs in the post-Communist period. Economic beliefs more in line with Marxism could serve as a proxy for a strong Communist legacy. Three economic-related questions, along with a question about the suitability of the previous Communist regime, are considered here with answers displayed in Figure 5 and chi-square tests displayed in Table 3. First, we can examine questions related to the desirability of the free market economic system. In the 1996 World Value Survey, respondents were asked whether the free market was right for the future and in the 1999 and 2008 European Values Study respondents were asked if competition was harmful. In the 1996 and 1999 surveys Estonian respondents were clearly more negative on the concepts of the free market, but in the 2008 survey we see the two countries converging in their views. The last two questions asked respondents to answer on a scale of 1 to 10. For ease of comparison, the answers have been collapsed into two categories. First, respondents were asked about income equality, with 1 indicating incomes should be made more equal. This measure displays little difference between the two countries. The last question relates to private versus government ownership of businesses, with 1 indicating more state ownership. Here, again, we see less difference between the two countries. However, the t-test on the variable keeping responses on the scale from 1-10 does display statistically significant results.



Note: Data for 1990, 1999 and 2008 from European Values Study; data for 1996 from World Values Survey

	1990	1996	1999	2008
Incomes should be more equal	Sig.	Sig.	-	Sig.
More state ownership	Not	Not	-	Sig.
Free market harmful	-	Sig.	Sig.	Not.
Previous political system good	-	Sig.	Sig.	-

TABLE 3: Chi-square Significance Tests for Economic Beliefs in Estonia and Latvia

The different measures of the Communist legacy, employed here, provide some slight evidence that the Communist legacy is stronger in Estonia than in Latvia, although at an absolute level it is not particularly strong in either country. The relative strength of the Communist legacy in Estonia is especially true when considering the cohorts and religiosity data. This finding fits into the expectations of the theory. Estonia, with a slightly stronger Communist legacy, displays weaker religiosity levels than Latvia.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the analysis provided here offers some support for the proposed theory. Many of the usual explanations for religiosity do not account for the difference between Estonia and Latvia. As countries similar in economic development, education levels, historical church-state relations, religious freedom and experience with Communism, other factors must explain the variation in religious outcomes. This paper has argued that two important factors have emerged from the transition process. One is the role that religious organizations play in the opposition movements during transition. In Latvia, the Lutheran Church was strongly connected and intertwined with opposition movements and had very vocal and public conflicts with the Communist authorities. This helped provide the church more legitimacy in the post-transition society. Religious organizations in Estonia were somewhat involved in the opposition movements, but the church as an institution had more peaceful relations with the Communist authorities. They attempted to achieve their objectives through peaceful negotiations, resulting in less open conflict. The second factor is the continuing Communist legacy post-transition. Here there is less difference between Estonia and Latvia. Yet, in examining religiosity levels by age cohorts and considering economic beliefs, some evidence of a stronger Communist legacy in Estonia than Latvia does emerge.

There are certainly limitations to the current study. A longer time-frame in terms of data would be preferable. This includes more recent data as well as more data prior to and during the transition period. Some basic evidence has been provided, but a more detailed study of the place of religious organizations in the post-transition society would be beneficial. The study has provided some examples of differing views in terms of confidence in the church. Yet the extent to which current views about and acceptance of these organizations are tied to their role in the transition, or to lingering Communist thought, is an important aspect of the proposed theory and more information is needed. The current study focuses on religiosity at the aggregate level, but the theory could certainly be applied at the individual level along with the usual demographic and socio-economic considerations of religiosity. Future studies could also expand the number of countries examined. While Latvia and Estonia provide a unique comparison, looking at the characteristics of the transition in other places can also yield valuable insights. Lastly, more detailed information about the roles of different denominations

within a country would also add to the analysis of the theory presented here. We would expect variation in post-Communist opinion and involvement in specific denominations and non-traditional religions, based on their involvement in the transition or the Communist regime. One possibility for this line of thinking could be applied to the current surge of involvement in pagan beliefs in Estonia.

The examination of countries as similar as Estonia and Latvia allows for an isolation of key factors in religiosity that is difficult to provide in broader studies. The main insight for future studies is that the characteristics and process of the transition period are important to understanding the post-transition society. This is an accepted proposition when considering political and economic structures, as well as secular civil society. However, when analyzing religiosity in post-Communist societies, this consideration has been underappreciated.

APPENDIX

	1990(Est)	1990(Lat)	1996(Est)	1996(Lat)	1999(Est)	1999(Lat)	2008(Est)	2008(Lat)
Believe in God	-	162(278)	468(904)	805(1094)	407(802)	710(893)	703(1375)	1072(1370)
Religious Person	188(887)	311(572)	344(966)	725(1128)	355(860)	715(930)	640(1442)	1088(1405)
Religion is important	178(956)	192(747)	279(996)	429(1148)	52(614)	107(737)	85(1036)	152(1073)
Attend once a month or more	-	38(439)	88(1020)	189(1191)	107(987)	148(981)	159(1509)	258(1495)
Children should learn religion	33(1008)	83(903)	70(980)	174(1087)	59(1000)	121(1013)	105(1511)	232(1440)
Church answer to social problems	-	88(212)	-	-	98(694)	191(727)	191(1229)	281(1304)
Incomes should be more equal	802(961)	590(794)	341(1000)	247(1167)	-	-	806(1485)	1018(1477)
More state ownership	249(939)	205(771)	328(988)	421(1168)	-	-	722(1427)	643(1370)
Free market harmful	-	-	595(896)	527(1059)	297(950)	129(961)	298(1491)	271(1461)
Previous political system good	-	-	246(971)	285(1151)	266(1064)	238(917)	-	-
Catholics in survey	4(1004)	135(903)	3(1005)	222(1148)	4(1005)	198(1013)	20(1510)	298(1506)
Cold War cohorts(pre/cold/ post)	-	-	117/840/64	124/991/85	137/710/158	155/761/97	115/1052/351	81/983/442
Total N	1008	903	1021	1200	1005	1013	1518	1506

Frequency Table for Items of Interest. Note: Data for 1990, 1999 and 2008 from European Values Study; data for 1996 from World Values Survey. Total number of respondents for given item and year in parentheses.

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