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Secularization in Governance: How Religion and Politics Explains Variations in Europeans'
Attitudes

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Abstract

Secularization in Governance: How Religion and Politics Explains Variations in Europeans' Attitudes

By Brijette Kimaya Brown

Is religion or politics more likely to explain variation in Europeans' attitudes toward the secularization of governance? This thesis theorizes that the rise of the contemporary state due to modernization reinforced medieval religious structures that restricted religious pluralism. A limited religious environment created less religious participation and interactions with religious authority. Religious leaders intertwine religious and political views when they pose political issues as moral dilemmas. The increased exposure to these messages leads to individuals having attitudes that combine religious and political matters (i.e., religious leaders being involved in politics). This thesis argues that religion is better than politics in explaining variation in Europeans' attitudes toward secularization. Statistical testing shows that religion is six times more powerful than politics at explaining these variations in attitudes. This paper intends to add to the literature regarding secularization by providing a comparative study of how religion and politics explain secularization.

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Is religion or politics better at explaining Europeans' attitudes toward secularization in governance? This question stems from a literature concerning secularization and its function in society. During the medieval period, Western European territories were Christian religious monopolies (polities with most citizens practicing one religion and political leaders aligning them with the same religious institution) (Iannaccone and Stark 1994). The religious marketplaces (religious environments where governments control religion's availability to citizens and individuals decide how to practice religion) during this period were restrictive due to governments' religious regulations (Iannaccone 1991). The Thirty Years' War dissolved religious monopolies and enabled the flourishing of "institutional separation doctrine" (a principle stating governments nor religious institutions could interfere with one another) (Audi 1989).

Institutional separation doctrine creates the liberal state (polities without laws governing religion) and allows for less restrictive religious marketplaces (Iannaccone 1991). The liberal states' less restrictive religious markets enable more individuals to engage in religious behavior. When discussing religion, scholars (Durkheim 1912; Norris and Inglehart 2011; Allen and Allen 2016) define religion as beliefs and practices performed in a moral community. Religion becomes institutionalized through the bureaucratic administration (Norris 2012) to separate it from the political sphere. The creation of the contemporary state (polities with laws governing religion and other aspects of life) (Iannaccone 1991) reinforced Christian religious monopolies that disappeared with the liberal state. Contemporary states restrict the religious marketplaces, which decreases religious pluralism and behavior. Scholars (Stark and Bainbridge 1985; Norris and Inglehart 2011; Allen and Allen 2016) create a theory to explain why religious behavior (and, ultimately, religion) decreases with the contemporary state: secularization.

Secularization (referring to monks returning to ministry with the laity) (Gorski and Altinordu 2008) highlights that secularization has two meanings: individuals turning away from religion or religious authority (defined as eliciting compliance by legitimizing power through supernatural components) (Stark and Bainbridge 1985). Theorists of secularization copiously debate which meaning of secularization applies to real-life interactions between religion and politics. Many scholars theorize about secularization through the frame of religion. Asad (1993) labels the religion framework as the ideological theory of secularization because religion is a tool to predict the effects of secularization. Modernization (characterized as industrialization) drives secularization (Berger 1996) and causes individuals to lose their religious beliefs and decrease religious practices in moral communities. Recent scholars (Stark and Bainbridge 1985, Stark and Finke 2000, Stark and Iannaccone 1994) demonstrate that previous theorists' assumptions about religion decreasing with modernization (Berger 1996) are not empirically supported. Stark and his colleagues also explain that earlier scholars' works relied on incorrect interpretations of religious history during the medieval period.

This thesis investigates secularization's other meaning: a turning away from religious authority. Casanova (2009) calls the religious authority framework as the state-craft theory of secularization (interchangeable with secularization in governance). The state-craft theory explains that religion's institutionalization allows religious authority to separate from political authority. Modernization reinforces the mechanisms of the disappeared former monopolies' structures that restricted religious marketplaces. The more regulated religious marketplaces cause less religious participation of individuals, which leads to fewer interactions with religious authorities who can influence people's decisions.

Exposure to religious authority is an individualistic experience. Consequently, the statecraft theory of secularization uses micro-level (or individual-level) data to analyze people's attitudes toward secularization in governance. This thesis also will use micro-level data, but this paper will only evaluate individuals' attitudes toward secularization in governance in European Union (EU) countries. The EU is central to this research to move from current American-centered secularization theories that pertain to characteristics unique to the US. For instance, America is a classist society that identifies individuals based on socioeconomic status and race. Other countries, such as European countries, do not emphasize class as the defining social characteristic of people. Besides exploring new regional traits of the region, the focus of the European Union countries allows this paper to control for Christianity. Religion may account for variations in individuals' attitudes toward secularization in governance. Even more, the EU enables this thesis to study secularization where it began and examine the residual attitudes of this historical phenomenon.

This thesis will use the International Social Survey Program (2008): Religion, which is an attitudinal survey about religious and social issues. Survey questions enable this paper to operationalize variables to test a hypothesis. This study hypothesizes that religion is a better explanatory variable than politics for variation in people's attitudes toward secularization in governance. To understand this hypothesis, one must examine the relationship between religion or politics and secularization in governance. Individuals who participate in more religious behaviors (like attending church services) are less likely to favor secularization in governance. Individuals engaging in religious behavior within moral communities expose themselves to their religious leaders' religious ideas on political issues (McCarthy et al. 2019) that influence people's attitudes toward secularization. Conversely, people who are more politically right-

leaning are less likely to favor secularization in governance. Right-winged individuals also tend to be more religious people who tend to vote for more conservative policies (Stegmueller 2013). These policies mirror religious leaders' views that would alter people's views on secularization in governance. Both relationships underline the influence of religious authority in religion and politics, which means religion will determine views of secularization in governance. Seven multivariant models empirically support this hypothesis.

The findings of this thesis add to the literature on the state-craft theory of secularization. Previous scholars (Casanova 2009; Stegmueller 2013) concentrate on the effects of religion or politics on secularization. They do not compare which variable is more powerful at explaining secularization. This thesis – in the following pages – provides a comparative examination of religion's and politics' influence on people's attitudes toward secularization in governance. The next section presents the theories of secularization, including the ideological and state-craft frameworks. Then, the paper will explain its focus on Europe as a case study and introduce the dataset and arguments. The following section reports the results of the multivariant models and highlights key takeaways. The last portion concludes the thesis.

THEORY

History Before Secularization Theory

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, many territories in Western Europe were Catholic monopolies. Catholic monopolies were nations with a majority Catholic population and political leaders who aligned themselves with the Catholic Church (Stark and Iannaccone 1994) through concordats (Ferrari 1988). The Protestant Reformation created Christian diversity in a once homogenous Catholic region. Religious diversity encouraged Charles V to initiate *cuius*

regio, ejus religio,¹ which gave ruling princes authority to decide their subjects' religion and established their supremacy over clerical authority. This Peace of Augsburg (1555) principle enabled the creation of Protestant monopolies. Protestant monopolies were territories with a majority Protestant citizenry and political leaders that aligned themselves with a Protestant sect using bureaucratic administration to restrict other religious groups from forming within the region (Stark and Iannaccone 1994). Protestant monopolies are more restrictive of religion than Catholic monopolies because Protestant monopolies had government structures to limit other religions whereas Catholic monopolies did not (Iannaccone 1991). While Christian religious monopolies existed, there were some levels of religious freedom for religious minorities to ensure relative peace from religious violence in the Holy Roman Empire (Rice and Grafton 1994).

Peace crumbled within the Holy Roman Empire with the commencement of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). War started in Germany following Ferdinand II not assuring Protestants of their religious rights. Phase one of the Thirty Years' War was a civil conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Germany. Phases two, three, and four were inter-territory conflicts between (modern-day) Spain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, and Austria that used religion as a unifying tool to manipulate war participants for political gains (i.e., more territory and diminishing influence in the region). The war ended with the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), which reaffirmed the Peace of Augsburg (1555), established the concept of sovereignty, and created the modern-day nation-state² (Rice and Grafton 1994).

¹ A Latin phrase that translates to "whose realm, their religion." This principle was created and initiated through the Peace of Augsburg (1555).

² A sovereign state or country. France is an example of a nation-state.

Besides ending the Thirty Years' War, the Treaty of Westphalia ushered in a new era of thinking about religion and politics: the Enlightenment Period. One idea of the Enlightenment was the institutional separation doctrine. Colloquially known as the separation of church and state, institutional separation doctrine is viewed “in a free and democratic society ... [as governments] neither establish[ing] a church nor impair[ing] religious liberty” (Audi 1989, 260). When political leaders implemented the separation of church and state, they institutionalized religion³ through public administration by formulating rules, norms, and structures (Norris 2012) that separate religion and its authority from political authority. The separation of church and state is a political⁴ program (Gorski and Altinordu 2008) that aims to keep religion within its sphere (Casanova 2009). Scholars (Ferrari 1988) theorize that institutional separation doctrine allows religion to become a private matter that individuals govern since governments no longer interfere with religion.

States did not interfere in religious matters by not creating laws that governed religion, which Iannaccone (1991) calls deregulation of the religious marketplace. The religious marketplace is the religious environment in politics where governments create laws that increase or decrease the availability of religion to citizens and practitioners determine the demand for religion. Deregulated religious marketplaces lead to greater religious diversity and religious pluralism because states' lack of interference in religion allows for individuals to make decisions regarding religious and social matters. Levels of religious participation are high in a deregulated religious marketplace (Stark and Iannaccone 1994). Also, the Catholic and Protestant

³ Religion will be defined later in this paper. A rudimentary definition of religion is beliefs, practices, and communities organized to invoke supernatural or “divine” figures (Durkheim 1912, Allen and Allen 2016).

⁴ The definition of politics stems from the concept of power relations. Foucault (1981) defines power relations as “*the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere which it operates and which constitutes their own organization*” (92). This definition explains that power is the basis of social formation. Power – at its height – can shape institutions and organizations in addition to the mechanisms governing interactions between institutions and subjects. The study of governments, according to Aristotle (James 1920), is the definition of politics. Politics is the study of governments, their citizens, and their power relations.

monopolies of the medieval period dissolved. This type of relationship between religion and politics is the definition of a liberal state.

Over time, states began to interfere with religion by creating policies that affect religion. Ferrari (1988) calls these politics contemporary states because governments involve themselves in all aspects of individuals' lives to ensure citizens' welfare and social justice. While contemporary states do not intervene in church doctrine, they do provide resources to ensure citizens' interests (Ferrari 1988). A state may supply church subsidies through taxes (Chaves et al. 1994). The increased intervention of the state in religious affairs creates regulation in the religious marketplace. Regulation in the religious marketplace will lead to individuals' decreased participation in religious activities like going to church (Stark and Iannaccone 1994). Scholars (Berger 1996, Casanova 2009, Gorski and Altinordu 2008, Kuru 2009, Norris and Inglehart 2011, Stark 1999, Stark and Bainbridge 1985, Stark and Iannaccone 1994) try to explain the decrease in individuals' religious behavior through the theory of secularization.

Secularization

Secularization derives from *saeculum*, which means the present time of a century or age (Gorski and Altinordu 2008). For instance, we are in the 21st century. Secularization has another Latin conjugation *saecularizatio* that alludes to the notion of a monk renouncing his order and returning to life as a secular clergy ministry (Gorski and Altinordu 2008). This Latin conjugation has two meanings: 1) religious people turning away from religion, or 2) religious people turning away from institutionalized religion or religious authority. The rest of this theory section explores the theoretical underpinnings of secularization by analyzing secularization as a time when individuals turn away from religion or religious authority.

The religion framework of secularization is entitled the ideological theory of secularization. The ideology theory postulates how religion produces predictable effects that are synonymous with modernization (Asad 1993). Durkheim (1912) – the founder of sociology – defines “religion” as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, ... which unite into one ... moral community called a church" (327). Some modern-day scholars (Norris and Inglehart 2011) develop Durkheim’s definition of religion as belief and practices by specifying religious rites (i.e., attending worship services and committing to religion). Allen and Allen (2016) emphasize beliefs, rites, and belonging to a church. By this definition of religion, the ideological theory of secularization is individuals turning away from religion by people no longer believe in sacred things, practice rituals with sacred things, or congregate in church.

Scholars (Berger 1996, Maddox 2015, Stark 1999, Taylor 2007, Wallace 1966, Wilson 1985, Wuthnow 1991) theorize that modernization is a mechanism of the ideological theory of secularization that affects religious beliefs, practices, and communities. Wuthnow (1991) defines modernization as the industrialization of nation-states. Modernization takes place with the creation of the contemporary state. A country-level example of modernization in the ideological theory of secularization is younger people are more spiritual than religious. On an individual level, modernization is the adopting of Enlightenment ideals (of rationality, knowledge, and science) that lead to a rejection of religion. Both examples of the modernization mechanism highlight how thoughts of religion change with industrialization. With the mechanism of modernization, secularization has consequences for religion. Modernization could lead to an erosion of individual faith (Stark 1999). Wallace (1966) provides the grim prediction that religion is “doomed to die out” as individuals gain scientific knowledge. Maddox (2015) builds upon this theory to explain that Enlightenment ideals will take the place of religion.

Modern-day theorists (Stark and Bainbridge 1985, Stark and Finke 2000, Stark and Iannaccone 1994, Wuthnow 1985) have two main critiques of the ideology theory of secularization, but this section will highlight one counterargument. When scholars posit that the ideological theory of secularization is central to modernization, they imply that religion is regressive (Maddox 2015), an “illusion,” and “poison” (Freud 1927). The negative comments about religion predicate incorrect interpretations of the religious history of the medieval period. According to Stark (1999), earlier scholars contrived that the medieval period’s religious level was higher than in modern times. Recent scholarship on this history declares that the Catholic Church aligned itself with the nobility and imposed requirements upon the peasants to induce conformity (Bruce 1997). Peasants were folklore worshippers that incorporated Christian elements into their religion (Delumeau 1977). With new historical analysis, the ideology theory of secularization is no longer supported.

Other than the framework of religion, secularization also means turning from religious authority or institutionalized religion. Casanova (2009) calls the religious authority frame the state-craft theory of secularization⁵ because this framework theorizes how the institutionalization of religion affects religion. The state-craft theory of secularization views religion as a religious institution. Weber (1968) conceives religious institutions similar to political organizations. Political organizations have political authority, which Weber (1968) defines as the means to use actual or the threat of force. Religious institutions are parallel to political organizations because they, too, have authority: religious authority. Political and religious authority alludes to the means to prompt individuals’ compliance. Religious authority induce compliance by using supernatural components to legitimize structures that enforce its order and individuals’ behaviors and social institutions (Chaves et al. 1994, Stark and Bainbridge 1985). Additionally, religious

⁵ State-craft theory of secularization will be used interchangeably with secularization in governance.

authority is narrowly defined in the Christian context; religious authorities are priests, preachers, pastors, and other clerical leaders in Christian faiths. Under the guise of the Christian conceptualization of the state-craft theory of secularization, scholars theorize that a decrease in individuals' religious behavior will affect religious authority (Norris and Inglehart 2011).

Like the ideological theory of secularization, the mechanism of state-craft theory secularization is modernization, but the implementation of modernization differs. A country-level example of modernization is states having increased administrative capacities to collect taxes to fund churches. Meanwhile, an individual level example of modernization is a person's less frequently interacting with a religious institution and its leaders. These illustrations of modernization emphasize how people and institutions interact with religious organizations. Modernization has consequences for religion. Mainly, modernization reinforces Western European countries' relationships with religious and political authorities that date to the *ancien régime*⁶ (Kuru 2009), which are the Protestant and Catholic monopolies of the medieval period.

Despite the disappearance of religious monopolies in Western Europe, the structures of Protestant and Catholic religious monopolies still exist within governments. The most visible structures of religious monopolies are state churches. Many Swedish people, for instance, converted from Catholic to Lutheranism during the medieval period. King Gustov I established the Church of Sweden (which is Evangelical Lutheran) in 1536 (Rice and Grafton 1994). This church still exists, and most Swedish citizens are Protestant. The institutional structures of the dissolved religious monopolies strengthen the effects of restrictive religious marketplaces when states increased their involvement in religious affairs through the contemporary state. More state intervention leads to people's decreased religious behaviors. Individuals' religious behaviors allow them to have more exposure to religious authority. More religiously conservative leaders

⁶ *Ancien régime* refers to a political era between 15th and 18th century Europe.

code their political stances as “moral” or religious issues (Beatty and Walter 1989). These religious leaders’ views combine religion and politics. The greater amount of time that participants are subjected to the ideas of religious authority leads to a greater chance of individuals’ political thinking mirroring their religious leaders’ political stances (Djupe and Gilbert 2003).

Unit of Analysis for State-Craft Theory of Secularization

The purpose of this thesis is to examine variations in individuals’ attitudes toward the state-craft theory of secularization. To understand differences in people’s perspectives, this thesis needs to study causes that can lead to variations in attitudes toward secularization in governance. The previous section theorized that individuals’ religious behavior leads to interactions with religious authority that can affect variations in people’s attitudes toward secularization. The focus on individuals’ behaviors and attitudes leads this paper to use the individual-level of the unit of analysis. Micro-level (or individual-level) analysis studies the individualization of religious practices and beliefs. Survey data about individuals’ attitudes toward religious issues is an example of micro-level analysis. Dobbelaere (1989) explains that individual-level data allows scholars to investigate the impact religion has on the micro-level motives of citizens (i.e., attending church services). He would agree that micro-level data is the best approach to studying secularization in governance.

Why the Europe Union?

Besides an individualistic approach, this thesis focuses on European Union (EU) countries. Many modern-day scholars (McCarthy et al. 2019) evaluate secularization in

governance through the American context and study the cultural characteristics of America to understand current secularization trends. For instance, scholars analyze how political affiliation affects people's attitudes toward secularization. Jones (2016) theorizes that liberal Americans tend to be more secular people. Other scholars (McCarthy et al 2019) explore how Americans' religious behavior like attending church leads to people believing that religious and political beliefs should be intertwined. These patterns of attitudes toward secularization in governance are specific to America and may not be prevalent in other countries. Due to secularization theorists concentrating on American concepts, this field is heavily American-centered. This thesis moves away from analyzing secularization in governance in America and situates this theory in another regional context.

To identify a non-American context, this thesis uses the most similar systems design to limit the research to a region of countries with similar religious and cultural backgrounds. Countries that have repeated interactions with one another share cultures that influence their citizens and customs. The proximity of these countries enables cultures to permeate through national borders more easily. These cultures may only concentrate in one region of the world. By distinguishing countries with alike histories, this thesis controls for cultural factors that influence individuals' attitudes toward secularization in governance.

The European Union is a group of countries with similar backgrounds rooted in Christianity that originates before the Enlightenment. These Western European polities were Catholic or Protestant religious monopolies that dissolved with the creation of the liberal state. The inception of the contemporary state strengthened the effects of restrictive religious marketplaces because governments interfered in religious matters. Western European countries still have religious monopoly structures that influence the present. This thesis captures

individuals' residual attitudes toward secularization, namely how religion is an explanation for variations in individuals' perspectives about secularization in governance.

Looking at this thesis's dataset, **Table 1** highlights average citizens in EU countries think about secularization in governance. The operationalization of secularization in governance occurs in the next section. At this moment, secularization in governance is a composite variable that indicates Europeans' attitudes toward religious authorities being involved in political matters. The higher an EU country is on the list in **Table 1**, the less individuals' attitudes favor secularization in governance within that polity. Eight out of the first ten countries in the table have Catholic majorities. Individuals in Catholic countries tend to not favor secularization in governance. These results stems from the structures of former Catholic monopolies that enable more religious freedom than once Protestant monopolies. Iannaccone (1991) had similar empirical findings as Table 1 despite her analyzing the International Study of Values (1981-1983) while this paper evaluates data from the International Social Survey Program (2008): Religion.

Table 1: Countries' Mean and Standard Deviation Values of Secularization in Governance

Countries	Mean Value	N
All Countries	3.72 (2.03)	29403
Northern Ireland	4.35 (1.99)	1029
Latvia	4.34 (1.81)	1022
Czech Republic	4.12 (2.23)	1443
Sweden	4.08 (2.24)	1159
Portugal	4.08 (2.06)	973
Great Britain	4.02 (2.15)	1878
Ireland	4.02 (1.86)	1981
Belgium/Flanders	3.93 (2.16)	1206
Hungary	3.88 (2.14)	972
Slovakia	3.84 (2.22)	1092
Austria	3.79 (1.98)	982
Cyprus	3.73 (1.90)	977
Slovenia	3.69 (1.91)	1033
Netherlands	3.66 (1.94)	1881
Finland	3.62 (1.93)	1043
Croatia	3.53 (1.92)	1162

Italy	3.53 (1.66)	278
West Germany	3.51 (1.93)	1068
Spain	3.44 (1.99)	2263
France	3.30 (1.84)	2324
Poland	3.25 (1.87)	1226
East Germany	3.20 (1.81)	468
Denmark	3.06 (1.93)	1943
Data: International Social Survey Program (2008): Religion		
Note: The dependent variable is secularization of governance. This variable encompasses two questions from the ISSP: Religion III (2008). Both questions' answers range from "1" (more secular) to "5" (more religious). The questions were combined to create a "2" (more secular) to "10" (more religious) scale. The table lists countries from less to more secular.		

DATA

International Social Survey Program (2008): Religion (ISSP (2008): Religion) is a dataset comprising questions from a 2008 survey that asks respondents questions regarding their attitudes toward religion and other values. Survey respondents live in forty countries and range in age from fifteen and older. The survey participants provide individualized data, which means that the unit of analysis for this thesis is micro-level. ISSP (2008): Religion is one of four ISSP: Religion series surveys distributed in the last thirty-one years.⁷ The sampling and data collection procedures vary depending on the country that conducts the survey. Countries use simple random sampling or multistage sampling to choose participants for this survey. To administer the survey, countries use face-to-face interviews (with paper and pencils or computer assistance), self-administered questionnaires, or telephone interviews.

Out of the ISSP: Religion surveys, this thesis uses ISSP (2008): Religion because of its range of questions. The questions that operationalize my dependent variable were present in every survey. Meanwhile, the questions that operationalize my independent and control variables

⁷ The International Social Survey Program Religion series was distributed to participants in 1991, 1998, 2008, and 2018.

were not in every conducted survey.⁸ Additionally, this thesis uses ISSP (2008): Religion because it is a dataset that was never cited in research surveyed for this research. One goal of this thesis is to test the robustness of previous scholars' works (which this paper is predicated on) while adding to secularization literature by analyzing a dataset that is not widely used.

This thesis excludes some data from ISSP (2008): Religion to fit the parameters of the analysis. The analysis only includes respondents from twenty-one European Union countries.⁹ Conductors of this survey aggregated some countries' data by region, in particular Belgium, Germany, and the United Kingdom.¹⁰ This thesis left the regional and country grouping as the survey conductors aggregated the data, and analyzed data based on those groupings. As a result of the groupings, Northern Ireland drops from this thesis's analysis because individuals from this region did not respond to questions used to operationalize one of the two independent variables of this study.¹¹

HYPOTHESIS

Based on the ISSP (2008): Religion dataset, this paper argues that religion is better than politics at explaining variations in Europeans' attitudes toward secularization in governance. The literature examined for this thesis did not compare whether religion or politics is more likely to

⁸ It should be acknowledged that ISSP (2008): Religion is not the most recent dataset in the survey series. The collection date of the survey is irrelevant. This paper is a cross-sectional study that analyzes a group's data from one point in time. Time is not a variable to consider in the analysis of this thesis. So, the year of the survey is not important when choosing a dataset from the ISSP: Religion series.

⁹ The countries are Austria, Belgium, the Republic of Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

¹⁰ For instance, surveyors collected data about Belgium's religious attitudes from a region called Flanders; surveyors also labeled Belgium's data as "Belgium/Flanders." Germany, in another situation, is divided into East and West Germany. The United Kingdom also is divided into two regions: Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

¹¹ Surveyors did not collect data for individuals living in Northern Ireland regarding political leanings (the political variable of this study). According to the conductors of the surveys, Northern Ireland does not have a political landscape that fits into the left-right political scale.

explain variations in people's attitudes toward secularization in governance. Due to the lack of research on this topic, this thesis will evaluate previous hypotheses on religion's or politics' relationships with secularization in governance. Examining these hypotheses may give an indication of whether religion or politics influences individuals' attitudes toward secularization in governance more.

Scholars argue that more religious individuals are less likely to favor secularization in governance. Religion indicates individuals' involvement in activities that exposes them to religious authority. Church participation creates social networks around religious behaviors that subject participants to ideas influenced by religious doctrine (Green 2007, Putman and Campbell 2010) like political thinking reflective of religious leaders' political stances (Djupe and Gilbert 2003). Even more, people who engage in religious activities like praying communicate with a higher power (Stark and Finke 2000) to ask for a particular outcome to overcome disenfranchisement (Krause and Chatter 2005). Those who engage in religious behaviors like attending church services – according to McCarthy et al. (2019) – are more likely to have intertwined religious and political beliefs. Comments from McCarthy et al. (2019) indicate that individuals who engage more often in religious behaviors are less in favor of secularization in governance.

Scholars also argue that more left-leaning individuals are more likely to favor secularization in governance. American research highlights conservatives or Republicans tend to have more non-secular attitudes whereas liberals or Democrats are more secular individuals based on Americans' voting on policies (Green 2007, Putman and Campbell 2010). Joffe (2016) builds upon the political leanings landscape of America and other countries to develop the following theoretical framework. Political ideologies (on a left-right political scale) are ascribed

characteristics synonymous with ideas of secularization. Left-leaning individuals support ideas such as equality and social justice; these ideas can exist outside of the Christian context that they derive from. These ideas led to the conclusion that left-leaning people prefer for religion to be separate from other aspects of life. Politically left-winged individuals also would favor secularization in governance.

Both previously explored hypotheses underline the importance of religion in the causal relationship between religion and secularization in governance as well as politics and secularization in governance. Religion determines the frequency of religious behavior like going to church, which leads to more exposure to religious leaders' thoughts on political issues that could influence parishioners. Additionally, religion impact individuals' views on life, including their political leanings. The prominence of religion in explaining the causal relationships between religion and politics leads to the argument: that religion better explains variations in people's attitudes toward secularization in governance than politics.

The dependent variable of this study is secularization in governance which is conceptualized as the decrease of religious authority in public affairs. Secularization in governance is operationalized by creating a composite variable of two questions from ISSP (2008): Religion. The first indicator of the composite dependent variable is "Should religious leaders try to influence how people vote?" This survey question contains five possible responses: "1" (strongly agree), "2" (agree), "3" (neutral), "4" (disagree), and "5" (strongly disagree). Secularization in governance's second indicator asks respondents, "Should religious leaders try to influence government decisions?" This survey question follows the same response scale (of 5 possible answers) ranging from "1" (strongly agree) and "5" (strongly disagree). These questions

are strongly correlated (.75),¹² which shows that the questions are related and capture overlapping aspects of secularization. As a result of the strong correlation, the survey questions were combined into a ten-point scale (“2” meaning most secular and “10” meaning most religious) of secularization in governance.

There are two primary independent variables: religion and politics. Religion is conceptualized as the beliefs in and practice of sacred things within a congregation. This research paper operationalizes religion using a three-question composite variable about religious activities that the ISSP (2008): Religion asks respondents. Question one of the religion composite examines the frequency of respondents’ attendance to church-related activities. Individuals can choose eight possible respondents ranging from “1” (less than once a year) to “8” (several times a week). The second question within this variable is church attendance frequency. Respondents’ answers to this question extended from “1” (never attending church service) to “9” (attending church services several times a week). Question three of the religion variable inquiries individuals about their frequency of prayer. Survey respondents have nine possible answers covering “1” (never praying) to “9” (praying several times a week). ISSP (2008): Religion’s three questions had a moderate correlation,¹³ so the questions were combined to create the religion variable. The independent variable of religion will range from “3” (never exhibit religious behavior) to “28” (conducting religious behavior several times a week).

The second major explanatory independent indicator is politics. Politics is conceptualized as the study of governments, their citizenries, and power relations between governments and citizens. This thesis operationalizes politics using a demographic question within ISSP (2008):

¹² See **Correlation Matrix 1** in Appendix.

¹³ The correlation between the frequency of attending church-related activities and church services is .53. The correlation between the frequency of attending church-related activities and prayer is .42. The correlation between attending church services and frequency of prayer is .65. The correlations between the individual survey questions (attendance to church-related activities, attendance to church services, and frequency of prayer) and the composite variable are strong (.69, .86, and .90, respectively). (These correlations are in **Correlation Matrix 1** in the Appendix.)

Religion regarding the left-right ideological self-placement. Surveyors asked respondents their political leanings. Individuals could answer the question in five possible ways: “1” (far left), “2” (central left), “3” (liberal), “4” (conservative), and “5” (right). The variable politics will use this five-point scale.

RESULTS

Table 2 presents the estimates of four different multivariate regression models utilizing ordinary least squared (OLS). This table lists the estimates of each explanatory variable in each model on the dependent variable of secularization in governance. Column one of each model displays unstandardized coefficients. Standardized coefficients are placed in column two. Standardized coefficients permit comparison of the independent variables’ relative explanatory power to each model.

Model 1(A) depicts the relationships between the two main explanatory variables (“religion” and “politics”). The unstandardized coefficient of “religion” was .07. This finding was statistically significant, which means there is confidence in religion being positively correlated with secularization in governance. This model also shows that “politics” has an unstandardized coefficient of .05. “Politics” as measured by ideological self-placement is statistically significant, so attitudes toward secularization in governance are related to ideological self-placement. Turning to the standardized coefficients of *Model 1(A)*, “religion” (with a coefficient of .18) is six times more powerful at explaining the variation in attitudes toward secularization in governance than “politics” (.03).

Table 2: Linear Regression of Secularization of Governance

	Dependent Variable							
	Secularization in Governance							
	Model 1 (A)		Model 2 (A)		Model 3		Model 4 (A)	
	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficient						
Religion	.07 *** (.00)	.18	.07 *** (.00)	.19	.07 *** (.00)	.18	.07 *** (.00)	.19
Politics	.05 ** (.01)	.03	.04 ** (.02)	.02	.04 * (0.02)	.02	.04 * (.02)	.02
Childhood Religion			-.05 (.05)	-.01				
Voted in Election			.26 *** (.06)	.04	.21 ** (.06)	.03	.21 ** (.06)	.03
Sex					.06 (.04)	.01	.05 (.04)	.01
Age					-.00 (.00)	-.01	-.00 (.00)	-.01
Years of Schooling					-.00 (.00)	-.01	-.00 (.00)	-.01
Self-Reported Social Status					-.03 ** (.01)	-.03	-.02 ~ (.01)	-.02
Happiness							.10 *** (.03)	.03
Constant	2.86 *** (0.05)	.00	2.53*** (.10)	.00	2.80 *** (.13)	.00	2.55*** (.15)	.00
Observations	13998		11567		11145		10972	
R ²	.034		.039		.037		.038	
Adjusted R ²	.034		.039		.037		.038	
Residual Standard Error	1.916 (df = 13995)		1.865 (df = 11562)		1.877 (df = 11137)		1.875 (df = 10963)	
F-Statistic	245.9 (df = 2; 13995)		116.9 (df = 4; 11562)		61.3 (df = 7; 11137)		54.68 (df = 8; 10963)	

Note: ***Significant at $p < .001$, **significant at $p < .01$, *significant at $p < .05$, ~significant at $p < 0.1$

Further Note: The dependent variable (*secularization of governance*) is continuous variable (2 = “extremely secular,” 3 = “strongly secular,” 4 = “moderately secular,” 5 = “somewhat secular,” 6 = “neither secular nor religious,” 7 = “somewhat religious,” 8 = “moderately religious,” 9 = “strongly religious,” 10 = “extremely religious”). The independent variables are *religion* (ranging from 3 = “never conduct religious behavior¹⁴” to 26 = “conduct all religious behavior several times a week”) and *politics* (1 = “far left,” 2 = “central left,” 3 = “liberal,” 4 = “conservative,” 5 = “right”). The control variables are *childhood religion* (0 = “no religion,” 1 = “religion”), *voted in election* (0 = “no,” 1 = “yes”), *sex* (0 = “female,” 1 = “male”), *age*, *years of schooling*, *self-reported social status* (1 = “poorest/bottom of socio-economic status,” 10 = “richest/ top of socio-economic status”), and *happiness* (1 = “very happy,” “fairly happy,” “not very happy,” “not at all happy”)

¹⁴ Prayer, attend church-related activities, or attend church services

The results from *Model 1(A)* help to draw some conclusions. The hypothesis of this thesis states that religion would be a better indicator of people's attitudes in favor of (or against) secularization in governance than politics. *Model 1(A)* supports this argument. Religion is not a separate sphere unto itself; it interacts with other realms of a person's life like their political leaning. Right-winged individuals support religious ideals like "family values" (McCarthy et al. 2019). These religious ideas may indicate that right-leaning individuals exhibit more religious behaviors and expose themselves more often to religious authorities' views. Political leaders cloak political ideas in religious rhetoric (Beatty and Walter 1989), which can lead to religious and political thoughts intertwining. The influence of religion in politics may explain why and to what extent religion better explains variations in Europeans' attitudes toward secularization in governance than politics.¹⁵

Models 2(A) introduces other variables into the model that captures different aspects of "religion" and "politics." "Childhood religion" is introduced to this model because scholars (Keysar 2014) theorize that adults participate in religious behaviors more often if they were involved with religion as a child. This variable captures how much religious upbringing contributes to religion's explanatory power of Europeans' attitudes toward secularization in governance. The unstandardized coefficient of "childhood religion" was .05, and the variable did not affect the explanatory variables. Besides "childhood religion," *Model 2(A)* introduces "voted in election." Individuals who vote more often also are politically right-leaning individuals (McCarthy et al. 2019). This variable captures the political behavior of politically leaning individuals. "Voted in election" is conceptualized as whether people who were eligible to vote

¹⁵ It should be noted that *Model 1*, like all the other models in **Table 2**, only accounts for a small variation in individuals' attitudes toward the secularization of governance (3.4%). The percentage of variation in EU citizens' attitudes is not relevant to this thesis, because the purpose of this study is not to account for every variable that could lead to variations in attitudes. The goal of this thesis is to compare two variables (religion and politics) to see which factor is more powerful in explaining attitudinal variations.

participated in their nation's last election. "Voted in election" is operationalized as "0" (no) and "1" (yes). The unstandardized coefficient of "voted in election" was .26. This variable was statistically significant. The statistical relationship demonstrated that political behavior is important to a political variable in explaining the variations in people's attitudes toward secularization.

With the two additional variables in *Model 2(A)*, the coefficients and statistical significances of the explanatory variables of "religion" and "politics" were stable. The stability of these variables furthers our confidence in the interpretation of *Model 1(A)*. The introduction of controls does not affect the causal direction that explains the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Even more, "voted in election's" standardized coefficient (.04) is two times more powerful than "politics'" standardized coefficient of .02. The reason why "voted in election" is a stronger variable in explaining variations in attitudes toward secularization in governance may have to do with what it measures. "Politics" (conceptualized as ideological self-placement) captures individuals' views on the implementation of government services and the extent of government regulations (Minar 1961). "Voted in election" – on the other hand – is a political behavior. The statistical results show that political ideology and political activities are not the same things or capture similar aspects of politics. Also, "voted in election" provides a better causal explanation of variations in individuals' attitudes toward secularization in governance.

Model 3 drops "childhood religion" because this variable is not statistically significant, so it was not carried over to *Models 3* and *4(A)*. These models also introduce four rather standard demographic controls (sex, age, years of schooling, and self-reported socioeconomic status) to

Model 2(A)'s variables. "Sex"¹⁶ is operationalized as "0" (female) and "1" (male). Age" is a continuous variable that ranges from age fifteen to age ninety-eight. "Years of schooling" is a continuous variable that ranges from "0" (no years of schooling) to "37" (thirty-seven years of education). In terms of results, it is interesting to note that the estimates of these controls were not statistically significant or impacted the estimates of the two main explanatory variables.

"Self-reported socioeconomic status" presents a different story than the other demographic controls. This control is measured from "1" (self-identify as poorest or bottom of socioeconomic status) to "10" (self-identify as wealthiest or top of the socioeconomic hierarchy). The lower the social class self-placement, the less an individual's attitude favors secularization in governance. This thesis is confident in the relationship between this control and the dependent variable. Scholars like Gaede (1977) explain that socioeconomic status is an intervening variable for the causal relationship between education and secularization. He found that education and socioeconomic status are positively correlated, but education is more crucial to explaining religious participation that determines views on secularization. *Model 3* shows the positive correlation between "years of schooling" and "self-reported socioeconomic status,"¹⁷ but the latter is a more powerful control.

The introduction of these more demographic and sociological control variables very importantly did not alter the independent variables. The coefficients for "religion" and "politics" remained the same as in *Model 2(A)*. "Politics" and "voted in election" slightly lost some statistical significance, which suggests that these variables' relationships with secularization in

¹⁶ To note, sex is different from gender. Sex is the hormonal intervention that individuals are born with and remain constant throughout one's life. Gender is the traits and behaviors that are presupposed onto sexes (McDermott and Hatami, 2011). For instance, one's sex is female while one's gender is woman or girl. These terms are not synonymous, but many scholars use the "sex" and "gender" conceptual interchangeably. When this study refers to "sex" or "gender," it refers to sex.

¹⁷ See **Correlation Matrix 1** in Appendix.

governance are somewhat related to the treatment variables as well. “Self-reported socioeconomic status” is just as statistically significant as “voted in election.” The standardized coefficients reveal that “self-reported socioeconomic status” and “voted in election” have equal power in explaining the variation in people’s attitudes toward the secularization of governance. “Voted in election’s” standardized coefficient decreased by .01, but the control is still more powerful at explaining secularization in governance than “politics.” *Model 3* still supports this thesis’s hypothesis.

Model 4(A) adds one more control to the list of variables found in *Model 3*: “happiness.” This thesis controls for happiness because it is a psychological factor that indicates individuals’ levels of satisfaction in their attitudes toward secularization in governance. The structures of the religious monopolies impact how today’s governments regulate religious marketplaces. The restrictiveness of the religious marketplace affects individuals’ freedom to practice religion. The extent to which individuals practice religion influences people’s attitudes toward secularization in governance. *Model 4(A)* shows that, with the introduction of “happiness,” “self-reported socioeconomic status” became statistically insignificant. “Happiness” interacts with “self-reported socioeconomic status,” which is unexpected considering the weak correlation of -.29.¹⁸ These controls may capture another indicator that is not widely discussed in the religion or secularization literature. While “happiness” influenced “self-reported socioeconomic status,” the former control does not affect the primary explanatory variables of “religion” and “politics” nor the other control variables. All other variables remained stable in statistical significance and coefficients. *Model 4* upholds the hypotheses of this thesis.

Table 3 reruns *Model 2(A)* (from **Table 2**) but includes “religious denominations.” The purpose of *Model 2(B)* is to evaluate if individuals’ religious identity influences their attitudes

¹⁸ See **Correlation Matrix 1** in Appendix.

toward secularization in governance. “Religious denominations” is measured as “1” (for Catholics) and “2” (for Protestants) Catholic individuals are the less likely to favor secularization in governance. This relationship mirrors the findings of **Table 1** that show Europeans in more Catholic-majority countries are less likely to favor secularization. “Religious denominations” have an unstandardized coefficient of -.03. Also, this variable was not statistically significant. While there is a drop in standardized coefficients of “religion”¹⁹ and “politics”²⁰ and the statistical significance of “politics,” it is difficult to attribute those changes to “religious denomination” since there is no confidence in the relationship between “religious denominations” and secularization in governance. The statistical significance of “politics” also drops. “Religious denominations” only slightly affect the explanatory variables of “religion” and “politics,” which demonstrates a person’s religious identity as Catholic or Protestant affects his/her religious behavior and political leanings. The affected explanatory variables alter an individual’s attitude toward secularization in governance. Despite this fact, **Table 3** supported the hypothesis of this thesis.

In addition to the previous table, **Table 4** also reruns models from **Table 2**. This table introduces EU countries as dummy variables to determine if some of the variations in people’s attitudes toward secularization are attributed to individual countries. *Model 1(B)* shows that some individual countries are statistically significant, which means that states are important to the variations in people’s attitudes toward secularization in governance. With this said, the introduction of the dummy variables does not alter the statistical significance of the explanatory variables. The standardized coefficient for “politics” remained stable, but these dummy variables increase the standardized coefficients of “religion” by .03. This finding shows that religion can

¹⁹ The standard coefficient of “religion” dropped from .18 in *Model 1(A)* to .16 in *Model 2(B)*.

²⁰ The standard coefficient of “politics” dropped from .03 in *Model 1(A)* to .01 in *Model 2(B)*.

better explain the variations in individuals' attitudes toward secularization, which is more evidence to support the paper's hypothesis²¹ and answer the question of this thesis.

Table 3: Remodeling of Model 2 (A) With A Replacement Variable for "Childhood Religion"

	Dependent Variable	
	Secularization in Governance	
	Model 2 (B)	
	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients
Religion	.06 *** (.00)	.16
Politics	.02 (.02)	.01
Religious Denominations	-.03 (.05)	-.01
Voted in Election	.27 *** (.08)	.04
Constant	2.69 *** (.12)	.00
Observations	8150	
R ²	.028	
Adjusted R ²	.027	
Residual Standard Error	1.922 (df = 8144)	
F-Statistic	58.17 (df = 4; 8144)	

Note: ***Significant at $p < .001$, **significant at $p < .01$, *significant at $p < .05$, ~significant at $p < 0.1$

Further Note: The dependent variable (*secularization of governance*) is continuous variable (2 = "extremely secular," 3 = "strongly secular," 4 = "moderately secular," 5 = "somewhat secular," 6 = "neither secular nor religious," 7 = "somewhat religious," 8 = "moderately religious," 9 = "strongly religious," 10 = "extremely religious"). The independent variables are *religion* (ranging from 3 = "never conduct religious behavior²²" to 26 = "conduct all religious behavior several times a week") and *politics* (1 = "far left," 2 = "central left," 3 = "liberal," 4 = "conservative," 5 = "right"). The control variables are *religion denomination* (1 = "Catholic," 2 = "Protestant") and *voted in election* (0 = "no," 1 = "yes").

²¹ Religion is a better variable for explaining the variations in individuals' attitudes toward secularization in governance.

²² Prayer, attend church-related activities, or attend church services

Model 4(B) – in **Table 4** – introduces the controls from *Model 4(A)*.²³ The standardized coefficients remained stable for both explanatory variables, but there is an increase in the statistical significance of “politics.” This suggests that the control variables affect “politics” in particular countries. Political ideologies that influence individuals’ attitudes toward secularization differ depending on the political landscape of the country. Besides the change in the statistical significance of “politics,” both variables have positive relationships with the dependent variable. The direction of the causal relationship supports the first and second arguments of this thesis. Also, “religion” is almost six times more powerful at explaining the variations in people’s attitudes toward secularization in governance. This finding supports the argument that religion better explains variations in individuals’ attitudes toward secularization in governance.

Other than the explanatory variables, *Model 4(B)* demonstrates how the introduction of countries as dummy variables affects the controls. “Voted in elections” is less powerful than “politics” at explaining the variations in people’s attitudes toward secularization in governance. These results differ from other models that show the inversed relationship. It shows that political ideology is better at explaining variations in individuals’ attitudes toward secularization in governance when evaluating particular nations. Furthermore, “sex” and “happiness” are the two control variables with the most explanatory power, which means that they may have contributed to the increase in the statistical significance of “politics.” The “happiness” control having significant explaining power mirrors *Model 4(A)*. On the contrary, “sex” was not statistically significant in explaining variation in individuals’ attitudes in *Model 4(A)*. This result leads to the conclusion that sex is important to Europeans’ attitudes depending on the nation people live in.

²³ The control variables are “voted in election,” “sex,” “age,” “years of schooling,” “self-reported socioeconomic status,” and “happiness.”

Males are less in favor of secularization in governance. This finding differs from scholars (Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle 1997, Furseth 2010) who state that men are less likely to engage in religious behavior and more likely to favor secularization.²⁴ Further research is needed on this subject.

Table 4: Remodeling of Models 1 (A) and 4 (A) With EU Countries As Dummy Variables

	Dependent Variable			
	Secularization in Governance			
	Model 1 (B)		Model 4 (B)	
	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficient		
Religion	.08 *** (.00)	.21	.08 *** (.00)	.22
Politics	.05 ** (.01)	.03	.06 *** (.02)	.04
Childhood Religion Voted in Election			.06 (.07)	.01
Sex			.08 * (.04)	.02
Age			-.00 (.00)	-.00
Years of Schooling			.00 (.00)	.01
Self-Reported Social Status			.00 (.01)	.00
Happiness			.06 * (.03)	.02
Croatia	-.49 *** (.14)	-.03	-.54 *** (.14)	-.04
Czech Republic	.58 *** (.11)	.07	.52 *** (.11)	.07
Denmark	-.60 *** (.09)	-.10	-.65 *** (.10)	.11
Finland	-.18 (.12)	-.02	-.24 * (.12)	-.02
France	-.38 *** (.09)	-.06	-.40 *** (.10)	-.07
Hungary	.37 **	.03	.23	.02

²⁴ The data agrees with other scholars' research on the relationship between sex and religious views. Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle (1997) contend that women are more active in religion than men. Scholars (Furseth 2010) further specify that men in Western Europe are more likely to be non-believers of an afterlife and to "never pray." Men also are two times more likely to identify as secular.

	(.12)		(.12)	
Ireland	-0.27 **	-0.03	-0.31 **	-0.04
	(.11)		(.11)	
Latvia	.84 ***	.06	.67 ***	.05
	(.14)		(.15)	
Netherlands	-.11	-.01	-.13	-.02
	(.10)		(.10)	
Poland	-1.05 ***	-.08	-1.09 ***	-.10
	(.13)		(.13)	
Portugal	.19	.02	.16	.02
	(.13)		(.13)	
Slovakia	-.22	-.02	-.27	-.02
	(.14)		(.14)	
Slovenia	-.15	-.02	-.19	-.02
	(.11)		(.11)	
Spain	-.27 **	-.03	-.28 **	-.04
	(.10)		(.10)	
Sweden	.48 ***	.06	.45 ***	.06
	(.10)		(.10)	
Belgium/Flan ders	.23 *	.03	--	
	(.10)			
West Germany	-.36 **	-.04	-.41 ***	-.05
	(.11)		(.11)	
East Germany	-.24	-.02	-.28 *	-.02
	(.13)		(.14)	
Italy	-.60 ***	-.03	-.66 ***	-.04
	(.18)		(.18)	
Great Britain	.38 ***	.05	--	
	(.10)			
Austria Cyprus				
Constant	2.84 ***	.00	2.60 ***	.00
	(0.09)		(.17)	
Observations	13998		10972	
R ²	.077		.079	
Adjusted R ²	.076		.076	
Residual Standard Error	1.874 (df = 13975)		1.836 (df = 10945)	
F-Statistic	53.07 (df = 22; 13975)		35.86 (df = 26; 10945)	

Data: International Social Survey Program (2008): Religion

Note: ***Significant at $p < .001$, **significant at $p < .01$, *significant at $p < .05$.

Further Note: The dependent variable (*secularization of governance*) is continuous variable (2 = “extremely secular,” 3 = “strongly secular,” 4 = “moderately secular,” 5 = “somewhat secular,” 6 = “neither secular nor religious,” 7 = “somewhat religious,” 8 = “moderately religious,” 9 = “strongly religious,” 10 = “extremely religious”). There are dummy variables for *countries*. The independent variables are *religion* (ranging from 3 = “never conduct religious behavior²⁵” to 26 = “conduct all religious behavior several times a week”) and *politics* (1 = “far left,” 2 = “central left,” 3 = “liberal,” 4 = “conservative,” 5 = “right”). The control variables are *childhood religion* (0 = “no religion,” 1 = “religion”), *voted in election* (0 = “no,” 1 = “yes”), *sex* (0 = “female,” 1 = “male”), *age*, *years of schooling*, *self-reported social status* (1 = “poorest/bottom of socio-economic status,” 10 = “richest/ top of socio-economic status”), and *happiness* (1 = “very happy,” “fairly happy,” “not very happy,” “not at all happy”)

²⁵ Prayer, attend church-related activities, or attend church services

Other than the explanatory variables, *Model 4(B)* demonstrates how the introduction of countries as dummy variables affects the controls. “Voted in elections” is less powerful than “politics” at explaining the variations in people’s attitudes toward secularization in governance. These results differ from other models that show the inversed relationship. It shows that political ideology is better at explaining variations in individuals’ attitudes toward secularization in governance when evaluating particular nations. Furthermore, “sex” and “happiness” are the two control variables with the most explanatory power, which means that they may have contributed to the increase in the statistical significance of “politics.” The “happiness” control having significant explaining power mirrors *Model 4(A)*. On the contrary, “sex” was not statistically significant in explaining variation in individuals’ attitudes in *Model 4(A)*. This result leads to the conclusion that sex is important to Europeans’ attitudes depending on the nation people live in. Males are less in favor of secularization in governance. This finding differs from scholars (Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle 1997, Furseth 2010) who state that men are less likely to engage in religious behavior and more likely to favor secularization.²⁶ Further research is needed on this subject.

All multivariant models in this thesis are multinational comparative studies that analyze variations in Europeans’ attitudes toward secularization in governance. The estimates from **Tables 2, 3, and 4** are from regression tests that analyze individuals’ attitudes toward secularization in governance. Individual-level is the unit of analysis for this thesis. Besides micro-level analysis, this section highlighted aggregate units like countries. The results of aggregated analyses show that countries still have a collective influence on individuals.

²⁶ The data agrees with other scholars’ research on the relationship between sex and religious views. Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle (1997) contend that women are more active in religion than men. Scholars (Furseth 2010) further specify that men in Western Europe are more likely to be non-believers of an afterlife and to “never pray.” Men also are two times more likely to identify as secular.

Conclusion

This research project questioned whether religion or politics is better at explaining variation in EU citizens' attitudes toward secularization in governance. Religion's explanatory power (six times more powerful than politics) remained stable under a variety of controls in the seven models in **Tables 2, 3, and 4**. This finding provided statistical evidence to the state-craft theory of secularization. This theory presented the argument that the structure of institutionalized religion (which was created by the government) affects individuals' religious behavior and exposure to religious authority. State-craft theory underscores the significance of religious systems and behavior in informing people's attitudes toward secularization in governance. Religion, operationalized as religious behaviors, shows how powerful it is in explaining variations in individuals' attitudes toward secularization in governance.

In comparison, the explanatory power of political ideologies varied depending on other factors like "voted in election" and "self-reported socioeconomic status," which were introduced to the model. Political participation ("voted in election" in *Model 2(A)*) and religious identification ("religious denominations" in *Model 2(B)*) decreased the explanatory power of political ideologies. These results show that political participation and religious identification are factors that impact the relationship between people's political ideologies and secularization in governance. Political behavior affected political ideology. After all, it was a more powerful political indicator than ideological self-placement because it captures participation. This finding parallels Casanova's (2009) findings on state-craft secularization. Religious behavior is a more powerful explanation for secularization. Religious identification affects politics because politically leaning individuals ascribe to certain belief systems. Politically left-leaning individuals are more secular and right-winged people are more non-secular based on policy

voting patterns (Green 2007, Putman and Campbell 2010). This theory shows that religious values influence the principles associated with political leanings.

As the other of the two broad explanations tested here, “politics” increased in statistical significance with the introduction of EU countries as dummy variables in *Models 1(B)* and *4(B)*. These results demonstrate that political ideologies are important to any explanation of EU citizens’ attitudes toward secularization in governance. Historically, EU countries had different variations of Catholic or Protestant religious monopolies (Stark and Iannaccone 1994) even though they largely disappeared with the rise of the modern liberal state. The creation of the modern democratic state reinforced former religious structures that continue to influence contemporary people’s religious behaviors and, ultimately, their attitudes toward secularization in governance.

This thesis’s findings have important implications. Building upon the state-craft theory of secularization, it explored how politics (conceptualized as political-ideological self-placement) contributes to individuals’ attitudes toward secularization in governance. The institutionalization of religious authority through government also impacts variations in EU citizens’ attitudes toward secularization in governance. This thesis supports other scholars (Ferrari 1988, Iannaccone 1991) analysis of secularization in Europe. It also thickens their research by comparing how religion and politics affect individuals’ perceptions of secularization in governance in all EU countries.

This paper demonstrated that religion is more powerful than politics in explaining variations in Europeans’ attitudes toward secularization in governance. The findings reported here suggest areas for further research. Future researchers could explore whether the state-craft theory of secularization applies to other geographical contexts. Greater exploration might focus

on the relationship between psychological controls' influence on religion and politics as well as socioeconomic status. While "happiness" did not affect the primary explanatory variables of this study, it did interact with "self-reported socioeconomic status." Social class clearly affected "politics." Consequently, there may be an interactive relationship between psychological and sociological controls that affect the causal relationship studied here between politics and Europeans' attitudes toward secularization in governance.

Finally, the results of the research show that the standard demographic control did not affect the explanatory powers of the independent variables. Future research might explore other sociological controls that may affect the relationship between religion, politics, and individuals' attitudes toward secularization in governance. Taken together, such research on factors that affect secularization is important both academically and in our understanding of the relationship between religion and politics. Secularization is more than an academic concept; it is a phenomenon that occurs in everyday life. The more we understand how other variables affect everyday people's attitudes toward secularization in governance, the more we will comprehend the aspect of the complex interaction between religion and politics.

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