Burning the bridges
Religion and national identity after the fall of the Berlin Wall

Francesco Molteni

EVS International Workshop, TBILISI 2019
Religious evolution in Europe

WHAT Decline in religiosity, de-churching

HOW Cohort replacement

WHY Modernization
Western countries (wave 1 - wave 5 EVS)

Believe in God (pr)

Weekly attendance (pr)

Cohort

Sweden
Spain
France
Germany
Denmark
GreatBritain
Finland
Luxembourg
Netherlands
Norway
Switzerland
Eastern countries (wave 2 - wave 5 EVS)

- Believe in God (pr)
- Weekly attendance (pr)

Cohort:
- Armenia
- Belarus
- Bulgaria
- CzechRepublic
- Estonia
- Georgia
- Hungary
- Lithuania
- Poland
- Romania
- RussianFederation
- Slovakia

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Eastern countries

- Many confused patterns. No strong evidences of a common tendency behind
- Need to focus on the impact that the Communist regime had as well as on the consequences of its collapse
- The fall of the regime as a very clear example of a period effect, in the sense of an event which had an impact on the whole population
Looking for a period effect

- Easter countries joined EVS after the Communist period (2nd wave)
- General reading still based on cohort replacement
- Few countries show a period effect going against this dynamic

**Western-like** Belarus, Czech R., Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia

**High stability** Armenia, Georgia (2 waves)

**Period effect** Bulgaria, Hungary, Russia (bel.), Romania (att.)
Something to explain: the increase of religious belief in Bulgaria, Hungary, (Romania), Russian Fed.

- A "bounce" effect
- People taking the distances with what was before
- Political use of this sentiment to boost national identities
Design and Methodology

**AIM:** To test whether the relation between religiosity (belief) and national identity has increased over time (waves)

**DATA**
- Wave 2 - Wave 4 Longitudinal EVS data file + Wave 5 Integrated file
- All Eastern countries in the Wave 5 pre-release (but focus on some)

**VARIABLES**
- How proud are you to be a [COUNTRY] citizen? (1/0 dummy)
- Which, if any, of the following do you believe in? [GOD] (1/0 dummy)
- Waves, 10-years cohort
- Avoid questions about denomination or self-definition because ”include” a potential religious-political identification

- Drop country cohorts with n < 100
- Issue of reverse causation between religiosity and national identity
How proud are you to be a [COUNTRY] citizen?

Bulgaria

Hungary

Romania

Russian Federation

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bulgaria</th>
<th>Hungary</th>
<th>Romania</th>
<th>Russia</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proud</td>
<td>0.893</td>
<td>1.394</td>
<td>3.907***</td>
<td>1.111</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wave 3 (1999)</td>
<td>2.253***</td>
<td>1.788*</td>
<td>2.685**</td>
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<td>Wave 5 (2017)</td>
<td>4.052***</td>
<td>1.675*</td>
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<td>Proud # Wave 4</td>
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<td>1.621*</td>
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<td>Proud # Wave 5</td>
<td>2.038***</td>
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<td>1930.cohort</td>
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<td>1940.cohort</td>
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<td>1950.cohort</td>
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<td>1960.cohort</td>
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<td>1970.cohort</td>
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<td>1980.cohort</td>
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<td>0.569</td>
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<td>1990.cohort</td>
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<td>0.141***</td>
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<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.144</td>
<td>4.489***</td>
<td>5.447***</td>
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<td>Observations</td>
<td>4,297</td>
<td>4,409</td>
<td>4,981</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
In Bulgaria, Hungary and Russian Federation the association between religious belief and national identity got stronger between wave 2 and 5.

In Romania it is the opposite. There was an association in wave 2 which disappeared in wave 5. WARNING (very few ”non believers”)

SIDE NOTE: Religious decline due to cohort replacement is strong in Bulgaria, Hungary and Russia, but is much weaker in Romania.
General Reading

**BULGARIA**  Increase in belief, increase in national identity, increase in their association

**RUSSIA**  Increase in belief, increase in national identity, increase in their association

**HUNGARY**  Increase in belief, fairly stable national identity, (weak)increase in their association

**ROMANIA**  (very small) Increase in belief, fairly stable national identity, decrease in their association + augmented attendance, but not explained by augmented national identity
Interpretation

- The interplay between religiosity and national identity seems to have had (and still has) a role in leaving behind the Communist regime.

- This results in very small period effect. Avoid over-interpretation!

- There is a cohort-based demographic mechanism working behind.

- This period effect is more visible for religious belief. The eradication of regular churchgoing has been more successful.

- Noise introduced by the regime. When this noise ends, Eastern countries will likely follow Western in their paths toward secularization.
THANK YOU!

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LIMITATIONS

- Very far from a causal reading, just evolution of an association over time
- Very broad idea of national identity
- Lack of country-by-country reading
- The use of other Eastern countries as counterfactual can strengthen the argumentation