



Communism as the unhappy coming

Simeon Djankov^{*,a,b}, Elena Nikolova^{c,d,e}

^a London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

^b Peter G. Peterson Institute for International Economics, USA

^c Central European Labor Studies Institute, Slovakia

^d Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies, Regensburg, Germany

^e University College London, London



ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Attitudes
Communism
Eastern Orthodoxy
Religion

JEL classification:

D02
P35
Z12

ABSTRACT

We show that Eastern Orthodox believers are less happy compared to those of Catholic and Protestant faith using data covering more than 100 countries around the world. Consistent with the happiness results, we also find that relative to Catholics, Protestants and non-believers, those of Eastern Orthodox religion have less social capital and prefer old ideas and safe jobs. In addition, Orthodoxy is associated with left-leaning political preferences and stronger support for government involvement in the economy. Compared to non-believers and Orthodox adherents, Catholics and Protestants are less likely to agree that government ownership is a good thing, and Protestants are less likely to agree that getting rich can only happen at the expense of others. These differences in life satisfaction and other attitudes and values persisted despite the fact that communist elites sought to eradicate church-going in Eastern Europe, since communists maintained many aspects of Orthodox theology which were useful for the advancement of the communist doctrine. The findings are consistent with Berdyaev's (1933, 1937) hypothesis of communism as a successor of Orthodoxy.

1. Introduction

Following the pioneering work of Weber (1904), scholars have examined the link between religion and happiness (Campante and Yanagizawa-Drott, 2015; Djankov et al., 2016); attitudes toward market economy, work ethic and thrift (Guiso et al., 2003; McCleary and Barro, 2006); trust (La Porta et al., 1997); and women and members of other religions (Clingsmith et al., 2009). A broader literature studies the impact of long-run historical factors on cultural preferences (Becker et al., 2016; Nunn and Wantchekon, 2011). Moreover, recent work has argued that culture is an important determinant of economic and political development (Gorodnichenko and Roland, 2015; Tabellini, 2010). If religion affects preferences, and preferences affect (or even co-evolve with) economic and political institutions (Aghion et al., 2010), then the question of how exactly religion enters into the broader process of institutional evolution deserves scrutiny.

Although the existing scholarship has explained long-run institutional development across countries with a variety of different factors, the literature remains largely silent on the role of religion. For example, high settler mortality, along with the dominance of labor intensive activities such as mining or sugar growing, may have prompted European colonizers to adopt extractive institutions which, once in place, were difficult to change after independence (Engerman and Sokoloff, 2000; Acemoglu et al., 2001). Similarly, the quality of political regimes has been linked to redistribution pressures arising from income inequality (Boix, 2003), income per

* Corresponding author at: London School of Economics and Political Science, UK.

E-mail addresses: S.Djankov@lse.ac.uk (S. Djankov), e.nikolova@ucl.ac.uk (E. Nikolova).

capita (Boix, 2011), revolutionary threats (Aidt and Franck, 2015) and migration (Nikolova, 2017).

Using multiple waves of the World Values Survey (WVS) and the 2010 and 2016 rounds of the EBRD-World Bank Life in Transition Survey (LiTS), we investigate the association of three Christian denominations (Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Protestantism) with personal attitudes and behavior, focusing on satisfaction with life in particular. We also examine the link between religion and social capital; opinions about change and tradition; and views on government. The LiTS includes all transition countries with the exception of Turkmenistan, along with Turkey, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden and the UK (in 2010), and Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Italy and Germany (in 2016). The WVS covers nearly 100 countries and territories around the world, including 26 post-communist countries.

Two inter-related findings emerge from our analysis. First, Catholics and Protestants are happier relative to non-believers (which comprise the omitted category in the regressions). Interestingly, the life satisfaction of those of Eastern Orthodox religion is not different from that of the non-religious group. Consistent with these results, we find that, relative to those belonging to the Catholic or Protestant religion and non-believers, Eastern Orthodox respondents have fewer children, less social capital and are more risk-averse. They also prefer old, rather than new, ideas and safe jobs. Orthodox believers have more left-leaning political orientations and a stronger opinion that governments (versus people) should take more responsibility.

Moreover, compared to non-believers, Catholics and Protestants are less likely to agree that government ownership is a good thing, and Protestants are less likely to agree that getting rich can only happen at the expense of others. Along both of these dimensions, Orthodox believers are no different than those who do not follow a particular religion.

Our empirical setting presents a number of advantages. First, the survey data allow us to control for a wide variety of observable characteristics that may be correlated with preferences, such as employment status, self-reported health, educational attainment, urbanity, and parental background (education and membership in the former communist party).¹ Second, we can include country dummies in all specifications. Our results are therefore less likely to be driven by fixed national characteristics which may explain both the prevalence of a particular Christian denomination and cultural attitudes. Third, we exploit a battery of surveys, such as four waves of the World Values Survey (spanning the time period 1995–2014) and two waves of the Life in Transition Survey (2010 and 2016). Finally, it could be that certain cultural characteristics (discussed below) could have prompted the adoption of different strands of Christianity throughout history, which raises the possibility that our results are contaminated by reverse causality. While we do not have data on preferences before 1989, we believe that this is inherently unlikely for at least two reasons. On the one hand, early kings and khans had little knowledge of the cultural preferences of their respective populations. On the other hand, the decision to adopt Christianity from Byzantium or Rome was driven largely by geo-political considerations, as evidenced, for instance, by Bulgaria's choice of Eastern Christianity in 865.

We then use these data to evaluate among three competing theories linking Orthodoxy and communism. According to Marx, capitalist countries at an advanced stage of development (such as those in Western Europe) were most likely to experience a socialist revolution, which then would lead to the redefinition of social structures and the victory of communism (Marx, 1977). Lenin, on the other hand, believed that a joint revolution of the proletariat *and* the peasantry was necessary to bring social change in Russia (Lenin, 1960, p. 40–43). At the same time, Lenin also argued that Orthodox Christianity, which was most prevalent among the peasant population and the exploited working class, must be eradicated completely in order for the class struggle to succeed (Lenin, 1960, p. 403–411). In contrast, Berdyaev (1933, 1937) argues that communism succeeded precisely in those countries with a strong Eastern Orthodox tradition. As he explains, “The best type of communist, that is to say, the man who is completely in the grip of the service of an idea and capable of enormous sacrifices and disinterested enthusiasm, is a possibility only as the result of the [Orthodox] Christian training of the human spirit, of the remaking of the natural man by the [Orthodox] Christian spirit” (Berdyaev, 1937, p. 170).

Our argument builds on the idea that deep-rooted theological differences between Orthodoxy and the other two Christian denominations are responsible for differences in attitudes today. Western Christianity (which gave rise to Catholicism and Protestantism) placed emphasis on rationalism, logical exploration, individualism, and the questioning of established authorities. Eastern Christianity (from which Eastern Orthodoxy originated) was associated with mystical and experiential phenomena, was more affectionate and communitarian, and put less emphasis on law, reason and questioning authorities. Remarkably, these long-run attitudinal differences survived after nearly fifty years of communism. Religious activities were suppressed in most former communist countries during the totalitarian period, as political elites believed that religion was incompatible with the advancement of communism. Marx (1844) writes that, “Religion is the exhausted creature's sigh, the state of animus of a heartless world, the spirit of spiritless situations. Religion is the people's opium.” Berdyaev (1933, p. 159) explains that according to Marx, “Religious beliefs reflect human slavery, slavery to the elemental powers of nature and the irrational forces of society. They exist only until man, social man, finally overcomes the elemental and irrational forces which surround him with mystery.” Clergy were persecuted, killed and imprisoned and churches were demolished or closed. Church-going was prohibited, and religious education was removed from the school curricula.

At the same time, communist governments maintained those aspects of Orthodox theology - including the emphasis on tradition and communitarianism - which were useful for spreading and solidifying communist ideas. In this regard, Orthodoxy provided a useful condition for the growth of communist regimes. As Janos (2000, p. 326) points out, communism fared much better in the paternalistic and communitarian Orthodox societies of south-east Europe than in the legalistic, contract-based countries in north-west Europe. Communist policies and institutions - collectivization of agriculture, youth socialist organizations, a powerful secret service, and control over internal and external mobility - were highly compatible with pre-existing Orthodox norms, including

¹ Data on parental background are only available in the LiTS.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10153662>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10153662>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)