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Eastern Orthodoxy in the European Union: Religion, Nationalism and European Support in Bulgaria and Cyprus

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Eastern Orthodoxy in the European Union:

Religion, Nationalism and European Support in Bulgaria and Cyprus

Master Thesis

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Public Administration:

International and European Governance

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Abstract

Trust in the European Union is a complex issue with many factors affecting it. Some of the factors that could also be influencing each other. This research focusses on how the relation between Eastern orthodoxy and trust in the European Parliament is influenced by nationalism. The question central to this thesis is:

To what degree does nationalism affect the relation between Eastern orthodox religiousness and an individual's level of trust in the European Union in Bulgaria and Cyprus?

The objective of the research is to find how strong the relation is between Eastern orthodoxy and European trust in an environment where the potential link between Eastern orthodoxy and nationalism is at its strongest. Existing literature suggested that in majority Orthodox countries, there seems to be a strong tie between nationalism, a variable with a historic negative relation to European support, and Eastern orthodoxy, a variable that has a historic positive relation with European support. Therefore the expectation is that when excluding nationalism from the analysis, the relation between Eastern orthodoxy and European trust would be more negative compared to the analysis with nationalism included. However, through a multiple regression analysis using the data from the European Social Survey, this hypothesis finds no supporting evidence for the supposed relation between Eastern orthodoxy and European trust. The inclusion of nationalism into the regression does not make a significant change to this result. Instead, nationalism seems to be a strong predictor for European trust without heavily affecting the effect of Eastern orthodoxy. This leads to the conclusion that to understand Euroscepticism, factors like country of residence and emotional attachment to a country make for stronger predictors of Euroscepticism compared to religion.

1. Introduction

“Support for Eurosceptic parties doubles in two decades across EU” (Henly, 2020)

Over the last decades, the European Union has had to deal with an increasing amount of Euroscepticism. In multiple countries, anti-EU parties are swiftly gaining support. Across the Union, politicians are calling for their own national version of the UK’s “Brexit”. Understanding and predicting Euroscepticism is an increasingly important part in understanding the Union itself, as well as predicting its future. News reports about the increasing distrust in the institution of the EU are readily available, (Henly, 2020; BBC News, 2016) but what is less clear is the cause for this increasing distrust.

An individual's view on the world is determined by a wide array of factors, religion being a prominent one of them. Therefore, one factor that might influence trust in the EU is religion. The European continent has historically been characterized by the struggles between different versions of Christianity, and the increase in the amount of non-western immigrants has also increased the amount of other religions on the continent. For Eastern orthodoxy, the expansion has been extraordinarily special. When the EU first started, all countries had either Catholicism or Protestantism as the major religion, but with the inclusion of Greece, then Cyprus, and eventually Bulgaria and Romania, countries were introduced with Eastern orthodoxy as the main religion.

With the interest of researchers into different reasons behind Euroscepticism, religion has been mentioned before. However, the focus on how a more nationalistic focussed religion as Eastern orthodoxy relates to trust in the EU has rarely been the true focus of research. This research will try to determine the impact Eastern orthodoxy has on European Support.

One of the key facets of this research will be the possible role nationalism has on this relation. In the literature review, articles will be discussed showcasing how religion does appear to have an impact on European support, but not every author agrees on how clearly or as direct this relation is. The idea that variables might intervene and be the actual causes behind the perceived relation has been mentioned multiple times. This research will try to answer (a) whether or not Eastern orthodoxy does have an impact on Euroscepticism and (b) how much nationalism impacts the relation between the two.

For this research, data from the European Social Survey (ESS) will be used to discover how nationalism affects the relation between Eastern orthodoxy and trust in the EU. In order to find a place where the expected effect is strongest, it will be best to focus this research on countries

where Eastern orthodoxy is the most practiced religion. This, combined with some limitations in the database, leads to a focus on Bulgaria and Cyprus for this research.

This all leads to the forming of the main research question that is to be answered by this research. This question is as followed:

To what degree does nationalism affect the relation between Eastern orthodox religiousness and an individual's level of trust in the European Union in Bulgaria and Cyprus?

To answer this question, it needs to be split up into three different sub-questions. First, without taking nationalism into account, the relation between Eastern orthodoxy and Euroscepticism will be analysed. This will be done to confirm the relation that the literature suggests. Second, the same analyses will be repeated, but with the inclusion of nationalism. This will show how much of the effect of nationalism on European support is exercised via nationalism. Finally, an analysis based on older data will be done to see how time has affected the relation between religion and trust in the EU.

1.1 Relevance

This research has practical relevance for EU policy-makers that have to deal with pushbacks on their legislation based on Euroscepticism. Giving them a better understanding of the cause behind distrust in the EU can provide focus and direction to their policy-making to help maintain the Union. With the current increase in Euroscepticism, it can no longer be ignored by politicians and civil-servants. However, a better understanding of Euroscepticism can lead to better strategies to deal with it.

Secondly, this research also has theoretical relevance for the science of Public Administration. Ever since the formation of the EU, much research has been done on the factors that increase or decrease public support for the Union. This has led to a wide array of articles claiming different relations and variables. This article could provide clarity in what variables affect Euroscepticism and how other variables can distort the results when not included.

2. Literature Review

In order to get a clear understanding of the link between religion, nationalism and Euroscepticism, it is important to look at research done on the subject in the past.

The relation between Euroscepticism and religion is something that has been analysed for decades. Nelson, Guth, & Fraser wrote in their article ‘Does Religion Matter?’(2001) about the relation between these two factors in the time period from the 1970s through the 1990s. At the time, the Orthodox Church was not especially prevalent in the EU, so they mainly focus on Catholicism and Protestantism. One thing they found among both of these forms of Christianity though, is that the more devout followers of the religion are also the most positive of European Integration. Besides this, they also mention that the effect Catholicism has on EU-support is constant over time, despite being relevant for less and less people. The added value of this research is that it presents the information that the relation between religion and support for the European Union appears to be consistent. Also we get the expectation that Catholics and Protestants are both mainly pro-EU, despite this relation being stronger among Catholics compared to Protestants. However, being written in 2001, this article has its limitations. As mentioned before, Eastern orthodoxy is not mentioned at all, and a number of predictions regarding the future of the EU have turned out different. This article proclaims that countries like Poland will be more in line with European integration compared to protestant countries like Sweden and Finland. Something that might be difficult to argue in light of recent news-reports considering Poland’s struggle with integrating European law with its own.

These problems were addressed when Nelsen, Guth, & Highsmith revisited this article in 2011 to re-evaluate their claims. With data from 2006 they found that although religiousness still leads to more support for the EU, this might soon change. They note that the rise in conservatism and nationalism among groups like Catholics and Orthodox might mean that soon the positive relation between EU support and faithfulness might turn around. Possible futures set aside, in the present they found that the most committed of both Protestantism, Catholicism and Orthodoxy are strong supporters of the EU. This is, however, not the same in every country. In the EU-nine, a group of countries the researchers call “the historic core of the EU”, Catholicism has the strongest positive relation with EU support. Muslims also have a positive view on the EU. Protestantism is however mixed between the more and less committed, with the more committed being positive towards the EU while the less-committed are largely negative towards

the EU. Eastern orthodoxy only really gets involved when we look at the group of countries that joined later. The first group being the ‘Accession six’ (Greece, Portugal, Spain, Austria, Finland, and Sweden). With Greece, this is the first group that includes an EO-majority country. Within this group, the researchers found a very strong relationship between Eastern orthodoxy and EU-support, while the other religions barely had any relations to EU-support.

For the countries that joined the Union in 2004, the researchers found a negative correlation between EU-support and religiousness for all religions, although this relation is very small. Interesting is the discoveries made for the 2006 candidate countries, the group that includes Bulgaria and Romania, both Orthodox-majority countries. Within this group there is a strong positive relation between Eastern orthodox religiousness and EU support. This is actually the most positive relation in the entire research, even more positive than the relation between Catholicism and EU-support in the EU-nine. Overall, this shows that the relation between religiousness and EU-support is positive, but not everywhere and not equally among different (sub-)groups of religions. Within groups that included Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania, the researchers found a strong positive relation between Eastern orthodox religiousness and EU-support.

Finally, the researchers also mention that nationalism might change these relations for Orthodox Christians, stating that “Orthodox believers also support a vision of a united Europe, but may be tugged in another direction by the nationalistic tendencies of their tradition”. Here the authors already hint at the duality of Eastern orthodoxy in the matter of EU support and nationalism that this research will dive deeper into. (Nelsen, Guth, & Highsmith, 2011).

The negative relation between Euroscepticism and Eastern orthodoxy is also confirmed in the research by Nelson & Guth (2020). They analysed the relation between European support and different religions. They found in both 2009 and 2014 a positive relation between Orthodox faith and support for the Union. In this time period, the relation between these two variables did seem to have lessened, but it was still highly significant. They did find a difference between the countries that were the fifteen first member states and the countries that joined the union later. Within the first fifteen member states, the relation between Eastern orthodoxy and EU support is mostly negative, while for the newer states it’s mostly positive. Greece is part of the first fifteen states, while Bulgaria, Cyprus and Romania are part of the group that joined later. Sadly, the researchers did not investigate whether this effect was similar in all countries within the selected groups. For this research it would be interesting to keep in mind if it is indeed the case

that the relation between Eastern orthodoxy and EU-support is different per country, even if they joined around the same time. Something the article does mention is that there appears to be a regional difference in the effect Eastern orthodoxy has on Euroscepticism, but it does not dive very deep into this issue. This research could be used as an addition to the article by Nelson & Guth to further explain the phenomenon noticed here.

With regards to the relation between the European Union and the Eastern Orthodox Church, Leunstein wrote about the history of the communication between the two. He states that for decades there have been offices in Brussels for representatives of the orthodox churches (2018). Initially this was seen as an example of 'East versus West' where the orthodox churches were closely aligned with their national governments (mostly Soviet states at the time). This eventually, in the post-Soviet era, resulted in more influence of Orthodox values in the Union. With this it turned the representatives of these churches into spokespersons in favour of European integration among the religious population. This shows a willingness to work together from both sides. With regards to this research, the article of Leunstein (2018) shows the duality of the Orthodox Church supporting both their national governments and European Integration.

In an article by Boomgaarden & Freire (2009), the link between religiosity and Euroscepticism is further examined. They find that the relation between the two is mostly indirect, with factors like stances on migration and authoritarianism as mediator variables. However, there is still a direct link noticeable between religion and Euroscepticism. This effect differs, not only based on the religion of the individual, but also based on the religion held by the majority of the country. This means for example that in a Catholic country, Catholicism leads to more EU support while in a mainly Protestant country, Catholicism leads to more Euroscepticism. With regards to Eastern orthodoxy, this research shows that in Catholic, mixed, and Orthodox countries there is a negative relation between religion and Euroscepticism. In Protestant countries, there appears to be no relation between Eastern orthodoxy and Euroscepticism. The relation between Eastern orthodoxy and Euroscepticism is most negative in mixed and Orthodox countries. So, for this research, focusing on Orthodox countries to find the way Eastern orthodoxy interacts with nationalism in affecting EU-support, should lead to the biggest chance of seeing a result. When it comes to the effect of religion on EU-support, the numbers are small to such an extent that choosing locations where this effect is most visible is necessary to get a clear answer. Besides this fact, this article also touches upon other relevant factors for this research. Boomgaarden & Freire mention that Orthodox (similar to Catholics) are opposed to the idea of a nation state and are more in favour of universalism, something that would lead

to support for the union, regardless of the stance of the national governance (2009). This would lead to the suspicion that Eastern orthodoxy has a negative relation to nationalism, something not universally agreed upon in the literature.

In the previously mentioned article by Nelsen, Guth, & Highsmith (2011), they mention multiple times that Orthodox faith has nationalistic tendencies and see this as a future problem for the EU as this could result in “tugging” Orthodox believers from a pro-EU stance towards Euroscepticism. In a different article discussing the literature on nationalism and orthodoxy, Malešević states the following “Hence, it is no surprise that most Eastern Orthodox Churches are generally perceived as the beacons of ethnic nationalism” (2019). This is based on statements from dignitaries from a wide range of Orthodox countries. However, the Orthodox churches have tried to limit the relation between state and church and thus tried to mitigate the relation between nationalism and Eastern orthodoxy. Despite this, the link between Eastern orthodoxy and nationalism is, although complex, still considered a widely shared view (2019).

All research so far is mainly focussed on the relation between religiousness and Euroscepticism. On the link between nationalism and Euroscepticism, a significant amount of articles have been written as well.

On the relation between nationalism and Euroscepticism much has been written. Halikiopoulou, Nanou, & Vasilopoulou explain how nationalism is the common denominator among Eurosceptic parties on both the right and left side of the political spectrum (2012). Studies in, among other countries, Greece show that extreme left and right side parties tend to be on the same side when it comes to European integration, citing mostly nationalistic arguments for their positions. They share the idea that a country has the right of self-rule and should be able to determine its own future. This article focuses more on the political side of this issue, so it cannot be said for certain that every voter for Eurosceptic parties does so out of nationalism, but the fact remains that politicians of these parties have been promoting themselves on a combination of the two.

Böttger & VanLooven (2012) performed a similar research into the politics of nationalism and Euroscepticism. However, instead of comparing left to right parties, these researchers analyse Eurosceptic parties in new and older European member states to see how the length of membership affects political Euroscepticism. In this research they find that Eurosceptic parties from all reviewed countries use arguments based on national identities and talk about protecting

these. Although it differs whom it needs protection from, the general message is the same among all researched member states. Euroscepticism in newer member states should, according to the researchers, not be seen as something other than it is in older member states. The nationalism involved is in broad strokes the same. For this research that could mean that the difference in the relation of nationalism and Euroscepticism between the newer member state Bulgaria and the older member state Cyprus should be minimal, unless the difference is made by some other variable like religion.

In the previous article, nationalism was seen as a tool to create Euroscepticism, in an article written by Çelebi (2016) it is stated that in Greece, Orthodox religion was used as a method to create nationalism. With the formation of Greek national churches, the idea of a strong united Greece was promoted. The idea was that the Greek Orthodox Church could serve as a provider of national identity to the entire country. Stories of the church being crucial in the preservation of the Greek language while under Ottoman rule were commonly used to instill the idea that the Orthodox Church and state of Greece are historically linked. For the spread of these stories, it was irrelevant whether or not it was historically valid (Çelebi, 2016). This article shows how religion can be used to unite an ethnically different population under one nationalistic ideology. For this research this could mean that religion could potentially lead to nationalism, but that religion is not an inherent part of nationalism. This could be especially relevant when trying to tie the results of this research to practical applications.

Using orthodoxy as a way to create nationalism is also addressed in the article 'Religion, Politics, and Nationalism in Post-communist Bulgaria: Elastic (Post)Secularism' by Anna Krasteva (2015). This article describes the flexible way in which secularism is used in Bulgaria. In some instances religion is kept out of the public debate by all means necessary, while in other cases religion and politics seem intertwined. Especially with regard to Orthodox Christianity a lot is allowed. This has to do with how the Orthodox Church is, just as in the article about Greece, linked with national identity. While, during the communist era, most forms of religion in politics were outlawed, in current day the politicians like to use Orthodox Christianity as a way to gain support through nationalism. Both the article by Krasteva (2015) and the one by Çelebi (2016) show Eastern orthodoxy being used as a method to create nationalism. This shows that in these countries, nationalism and religion can't be seen separate from each other. How far this connection goes and to what degree it affects Euroscepticism is something this research will try to answer.

In summary, literature has often touched on the subject asked in this research, without diving deep enough into it to form a definitive answer. It has been presented that Eastern Orthodox faith has a positive relation towards support for the EU, even though these results are not the same in all parts of the EU. Nelson & Guth (2020) have presented the possibility that in states that have been members of the EU for a longer period of time, the positive relation might lessen, or even revert. With this research grouping countries, it cannot be said with certainty if this applies for every majority Orthodox country. The link between nationalism and Euroscepticism is regarded in the aforementioned literature as a given. Even though some authors might use this more as an assumption rather than an argued fact, the relation between the two is accepted well beyond those authors alone.

Lastly, the link between Eastern orthodoxy and nationalism. Different political researchers in majority Orthodox countries have seen that nationalistic parties often manage to create and expand upon the sense of national unity by involving the local version of Orthodox Christianity into the party. The success of this strategy shows that Eastern Orthodox faith can be used to increase nationalism. The exact numbers will have to be produced by this research, but it would be highly surprising if belonging to the Eastern Orthodox Church does not lead to nationalism, considering the amount of times faith has been used to gather support for nationalistic ideas.

3. Theory

The previously analysed articles provide the framework for this research. The relations mentioned separate from each other will be combined into one overarching theoretical relation. In order to answer the main question, several smaller hypotheses need to be combined. The first one relates to the direct relation between Eastern Orthodox faith and trust in the EU. For this question a regression analysis will be done with belonging to the religion of Eastern orthodoxy as the independent variable, and support for the European Parliament as the dependent variable. Based on the literature reviewed, it seems that Eastern orthodoxy leads to a feeling of universalism and support for governmental organisations. The expected mechanism behind this is that universalism is a vital part of Eastern orthodoxy. This means that the church goes beyond the borders and all believers are united through faith. This idea of connection with other people beyond the border is likely to increase the feeling of connection with those people, and therefore increase the trust in organisations based on these broad unifying principles. Therefore, the hypothesis is that:

H1: When not correcting for nationalism, believing in the Eastern Orthodox Christian faith has a direct positive relation to an individual's trust in the European Parliament.

The second part of this research is the inclusion of nationalism and seeking the result that nationalism has on support for the European Parliament. In the literature it has been shown that an increase in nationalism has often been linked to a decrease in European support. Anti-EU politicians often speak to voters by calling to their sense of national pride and independence. In this relation, the independent and dependent variables are still the same. But as an additional control variable nationalism, expressed through emotional attachment to their country, will be added to the regression. This is expected to increase the relation noticed at the first regression. Assuming the first regression had the expected outcome, this could prove the role of nationalism as a mediator variable in the analysed relation. The reasoning behind this is that the national Orthodox Church is seen as a big part of national identity. This means that orthodox followers are more likely to feel nationalistic about their country. After all, their faith is part of the core values of the country. So the connecting tissue between nationalism and Eastern orthodoxy is this feeling of national Identity. With the close tie between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the state, it is expected that this results in more nationalistic tendencies among the Orthodox. This in turn leads to an increase in Euroscepticism. A high level of nationality means that people

believe that their national government should have a certain amount of power and self-determination, this is hard to combine with a European Union that takes away a lot of control from the national governments.

H2: When corrected for nationalism, the relation between Eastern Orthodox faith and Support for the European Parliament becomes more positive.

Lastly, this research will analyse if the relation between Eastern orthodoxy and EU support is dependent on the length of time the country in question has been a member of the European Union. This could add to the article from Nelson & Guth (2020) that already mentioned that in older member states the relation between Eastern orthodoxy and European support was negative while in the newer states it was positive. With focussing on specific countries with an Eastern Orthodox majority, this last regression can show if this shown result is indeed caused by the length of membership to the EU. The theoretical idea behind this relation is that in newer member states, the national government is most likely the same that advocated for membership and is happy to finally join. This is in contrast to older member states where the political opinion has had time to change, the anti-EU politicians have had space to argue that EU-membership has gone against national values. Therefore, the expectation is that, while in the early stages of membership nationalism does not affect the relation between Eastern orthodoxy and trust in the EP, it will gradually increase in relevance as time progresses.

H3: As a country is part of the EU for a longer period of time, the relation between Eastern orthodoxy and trust in the European Parliament decreases.

This all leads to the all-encompassing prediction that nationalism leads to a decrease in the relation between Eastern Orthodox faith and Trust in the European Parliament in majority-Orthodox countries, and this effect increases over time.

4. Methodology

This research will be done through three multiple linear regressions. In all three of these regressions, trust in the European Parliament will be used as the dependent variable. This has been measured on a scale of zero to ten, with a zero being no trust in the EP, and a ten being complete trust in the EP. The European Parliament is the highest democratically elected body of the EU. Being a representative organ, the EP is reliant on public trust. This makes the EP a good body to measure trust in. Respondents with the answers ‘refusal’, ‘don’t know’, & ‘no answer’ were removed from the regression. ‘Don’t know’ is emitted because it cannot be said how they feel. If the respondents don’t know how they feel about the EP, they cannot be considered pro or anti EU. So to keep the statistics correct and place no respondents in categories they would not agree with, they have been emitted.

As an independent variable, Religion or denomination belonging to at present will be used. This variable has been modified to have an output of one if the respondent answered Eastern Orthodox, and an output of zero if the respondent answered with a different religion, or if the respondent was not religious at all. Individuals with the response ‘Not applicable’, ‘Refusal’, & ‘No answer’ were removed from the list of observations. The variable works in a very binary matter, just a one or a zero. The reason behind this is that this most accurately describes the respondents view in a way that can be used to form conclusions. If instead factors were used to describe how active they were in practicing faith, results could be inaccurate. How active you are does not determine how strong your belief is, you could be active in the church for societal or familial reasons. This guarantees that everyone who feels like they believe in the Orthodox Church is included, without creating possible biases or errors.

Besides these, control variables have been added. First, variables that are commonly used in scientific literature to determine Euroscepticism. These are Education (based on the International Standard Classification of Education), and stance on immigration (based on the respondent’s agreement with the thesis: “Immigration is good for the country’s economy”). Also, because this regression is done over multiple countries (Bulgaria and Cyprus), country of residence is also added into the regression. This variable is operationalized by attaching a number to each respondent depending on their country of residence. Respondents from Bulgaria have been given a zero, where respondents from Cyprus were given a one. Reversing this would have no important impact on the research except reversing the effect seen from this variable (either positive to negative, or negative to positive). Furthermore, two other control variables

have been added that cannot be affected by something else and still affect worldviews. These are age and gender.

For the second analysis, the same data as the first is used as in the first, but with the inclusion of nationalism, measured in how emotionally attached the respondent claims to be to their country. This is a variable part of a larger part of the survey looking to find out how different people feel about their home country compared to Europe. This makes this question particularly focussed on how they feel about the country they live in now, regardless of their feelings on the EU. This might exclude people that have emigrated from other countries to Bulgaria or Cyprus. This, however, is not a problem since that was not within the scope of this research anyway. The aim of this thesis is to find out how Eastern orthodoxy relates to nationalism and trust in the EP in Bulgaria and Cyprus. People feeling nationalistic about other countries is not relevant since if they do feel that way, it is not because of the nationalistic aspects of the national identity of either Bulgaria or Cyprus. The national identity of which religion is an expected aspect. The third analysis will use the same variables as the first regression, but gathered from an older round of the ESS. Thereby giving a clear view of how the relation has changed over time. The model with nationalism will not be added to the 2012 regression. The specific question in the survey that measured this was only added to the ESS in 2016. Any questions asked before then that could vaguely relate to nationalism are substantially different. Adding that question to the regression would add more confusion and room for error, rather than clarity to the research.

This research is an empiric study using observations from international surveys to come to a conclusion, in so forming theory based on observations. Using these surveys based on the numbers generated by them instead of diving deeper into the reasons behind the answers makes this a quantitative study. All data in this thesis is gathered from the European Social Survey, a large scale international survey performed every two years by “face-to-face interviews” that are conducted “with newly selected, cross-sectional samples” (European Social Survey, n.d.). This database provides a large sample size of reliable data regarding trust in the European Union, religion, and all other factors relevant in this research.

5. Results

Using data from the European Social Survey (ESS), a database has been created that includes the relevant variables for this regression. That means that for both Cyprus and Bulgaria, all respondents that have filled in an answer to all questions (including for the control variables) are put together in one database. This database consists of the following variables: Trust in the European Parliament, Religion or denomination belonging to at present (with Eastern Orthodox being a 1, and everything else being a 0), Opinion on the impact of Immigration on the country's economy, Emotional attachment to your country, gender, age, education level, & country of residence.

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Before diving deep into a regression, it might provide some good insights to look at some general statistics coming from the database, the median, average, standard deviation, minimum and maximum result are presented in this table:

Table1: Describing statistics

Variable	Median	Average	St. dev	Min	Max
Trust in the European Parliament	4	3,78	0,06	0	10
Belonging to religion: Eastern Orthodox	1	0,73	0,01	0	1
Attachment to Country	8	7,78	0,05	0	10
Total amount of Respondents: 2291					

One of the most interesting observations that can be made from table 1 is the low amount of trust in the European Parliament, on a scale of 0-10, the average is only 3,78, with the median being at a 4. This stands in sharp contrast to the attachment people feel to their country. With an average of 7,78 and a median of 8 on the same 0-10 scale, people clearly feel more attached to their country than that they trust the representatives in Brussels. Besides this point, it can also be observed that the majority of the respondents is Eastern Orthodox. For this research, that is a good thing, because there will be enough observations to (hopefully) come to a significant conclusion. However, this does mean that future researchers trying to do similar research on a different religion might have to include more countries to come to a satisfying result. Lastly,

with the total amount of observations being at 2291, this sample size should be large enough to give a good view on the total population of the analysed countries.

5.2 Regression

For the first analysis, the only variables put against trust in the EU is Eastern orthodoxy and the control variables. The second analysis, or model 2, uses the same variables, but adds the variable attachment to country into the regression. This can show the difference nationalism makes on the relation of Eastern orthodoxy and Trust in the EU. Doing this results in two regressions with the following results.

Table 2: R-score regression model 1

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	St. Error Estimate	F	Sig.	N
1	0.30	0.09	0.09	2.57	37.92	4.39E ⁻⁴⁴	2291
2	0.34	0.12	0.11	2.54	43.39	7.60E ⁻⁵⁸	2291
3	0.15	0.02	0.02	2.79	8.53	3.43E ⁻⁹	2286

In the regression of model 1, the variables only account for 9% of the trust in the European Parliament, as shown by the adjusted R squared. This is low but expected given the wide range of factors that could possibly influence an individual's view on the EU. Finally, the significance of this regression is extremely small and well below the 0.01 mark. Therefore, although the variables only explain a small part of the trust in the EP, it is still a significant relation.

In model 2, the R square is noticeably higher. In this model 11% of the trust in the EP can be explained by the variables. This shows that attachment to your country can affect their trust in the EP, maybe more than religion does. Also the significance, which was already very good, became even more reliable. The first model already included variables that had to affect the dependable variable, but nationalism must have made an impact.

Model 3, the model that is an exact copy of the regression of model 1, but with data from 2012, shows a weaker R, F, and significance. This already reinforces the doubts regarding the reliable the effects from model 1. The exact same questions asked to respondents from the same country, only 6 years apart results in quite the change in result. The full regression would probably expand on this.

Table 3 shows the results of the three different models. With a relation slightly below zero, there does not appear to be any relation between Eastern orthodoxy and trust in the EU Parliament in the first model. The standard error (0.13) is substantial enough to show that the relation could really go either way, both positive and negative. Where immigration and country both show significant positive relations, this is not the case for religion. Furthermore, the link between Eastern orthodoxy and trust in the EP has a P-value (a significance) of 0.36, this is too high to be considered significant by the most common used standards to determine significance. A p-value of 0.36 means that the significance of the correlation between the two equals 64%, definitely not high enough to use these results in discussing the main question of this research. Interesting to note is that a lot of the control variables, like education, are not significant either. This while other research has been very clear on the positive relation between the two (Hakhverdian, van Elsas, van der Brug, & Kuhn, 2013). Although surprising, this research is not dedicated to look deeper into that, and specifying control variables to fit education might have resulted in a different result. Despite this lack of significance, the general direction of the effects are in line with what is to be expected. Higher education leading to more trust in the institutions of the European Union is something that scholars have agreed on for years, so this model does not throw any established knowledge regarding this subject into question.

Model 2 changes in a couple of factors compared to model 1. The biggest difference is in the effect Eastern orthodoxy has on trust in the EP. The effect seen in the first model (-0.00) got increased to a decisive positive of 0.12. The standard error is smaller though, and more strongly locks the perceived relation in the positive. This does not, however, mean that this is a stronger or weaker result compared to the previous model, since the P is still very high, thus indicating a low significance. Model 2 as a whole is more significant compared to model 1. This mainly appears to arrive from the newly introduced variable of 'attachment to country'. This variable is very significant with a p-value of $1.35E^{-16}$, the third lowest P-score after immigration and country. Immigration as a variable appeared to have stayed mostly the same with the addition of nationalism to the regression. The exact meaning of these results for the hypothesis is something that will be further discussed in the 'analysis' chapter. But based on these results it is undisputable that the inclusion of nationalism has had a great impact on the questions asked in the introduction of this thesis. Even with the same lack of significance, the control variables stay similar in terms of suggested correlation.

Model 3 confirms the insignificance of the relation portrayed in model 1 between religion and trust in the EP. If religion directly influenced trust in the European Parliament, this would have shown. Instead Model 3 shows a slightly positive relation that is very insignificant once again. The most interesting thing shown here is how education appears to have had a larger impact in 2012 on European support compared to 2018. Future research can expand on this, based on a sample size larger than just Cyprus and Bulgaria, and based on variables more related to education. Either way, this relation makes sense comparing it to other literature. What is most relevant for this research is the fact that the same variables in 2012 and 2018 give different results with regards to the relation between religion and Euroscepticism, the only similarity being the insignificance.

Table 3: Regression model 1, 2, & 3

		Dependent variable: Trust in the EU Parliament		
Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	
Religion	-0.00 (0.13)	0.12 (0.02)	0.04 (0.07)	
Immigration	0.22** (0.02)	0.23** (0.02)	0.13** (0.02)	
Gender	-0.02 (0.11)	-0.02 (0.00)	-0.08 (0.12)	
Age	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)	
Education		0.02 (0.03)	0.08** (0.03)	
Country	1.26** (0.12)	1.10** (0.12)	0.35** (0.13)	
Nationalism	--	0.21** (0.02)	--	
Constant	2.39** (0.30)	1.08** (0.34)	2.78** (0.46)	
R ²	0.09	0.09	0.02	
Figures in parentheses are standard errors.		*= $p < 0.05$, **= $p < 0.01$.		

6. Analysis

With the regression done, the results can now be applied to the hypotheses formulated earlier in this research. Comparing the predictions to the evidence will provide insights that can make it possible to either reject or confirm the hypotheses.

6.1 Analysis hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis formulated for this research was:

H1: When not correcting for nationalism, believing in the Eastern Orthodox Christian faith has a direct positive relation to an individual's trust in the European Parliament.

In contrast to earlier literature, even when leaving nationalism out of the regression, there is no noticeable significant relation between Eastern orthodoxy and trust in the European Parliament. The results of the regression shows a very small negative effect that is too small and too insignificant to tie any meaningful conclusion to. Although there are many factors that influence an individual's trust in the EP, like opinions on immigration and country of residence, this hypothesis cannot be confirmed.

To further confirm the result of the first model, the second regression also showed that Eastern orthodoxy has not the strong direct effect as suspected. Even when including nationalism into the analysis, there still is barely any change in the impact religion made on European Support. The thing Boomgaarden & Freiere (2009) noticed with different variables is not happening here. Where they already showed that religion impacts Euroscepticism through opinions on immigration and authoritarianism, this research shows that the same is not the case for nationalism.

For the literature discussing the influence of religion on European support this has the following impact: where there has been an assumption of anti- or pro-European tendencies within the Eastern Orthodox church, this cannot be maintained based on the data. At the very least, countries where Eastern orthodoxy is the major religion as in Bulgaria and Cyprus, will not be more or less Eurosceptic based on the religious majority. Therefore, for the most accurate predictions on Euroscepticism, factors like nationalism would make for far better and accurate predictions to follow. The hypothesis has to be rejected. There is no significant supporting evidence that being Eastern orthodox does directly increase trust in the European Parliament.

6.2 Analysis hypothesis 2

The second hypotheses formulated was as followed:

H2: When corrected for nationalism, the relation between Eastern Orthodox faith and support for the European Parliament becomes more positive.

This hypotheses was based on the prediction, provided by the literature, that there was a negative relation between nationalism and trust in the European Parliament. The evidence, however, points to a completely different conclusion. The relation between emotional attachment to your country and trust in the European Parliament has shown to be positive. This goes against the majority of scientific literature written on the subject. The reason why could be speculated upon. Perhaps the negative link between nationalism and trust in the Union is something that slowly develops as a country is a member of the Union, and Bulgaria and Cyprus have not been members for long enough time for this effect to set in.

Whatever the reason behind this surprising result is, this has a large impact on the formulated hypothesis. The idea behind this hypothesis was showing whether or not nationalism functioned as either a mediator variable between religion and European support, or a variable that influences European support completely separate from religiousness. However, with these result, the only plausible theory is that religion cannot be seen as a relevant variable when prediction European support. Instead, nationalism is a more reliable variable to predict this, regardless of Eastern orthodoxy among the population.

Religion changes a little when nationalism is added into the regression. However, due to the low significance and relatively high standard error, this change is not enough to suggest that religion indirectly influences Euroscepticism through nationalism. The change is too small and too insignificant to state that including nationalism into the database changes the observable effect of religion in any substantial way.

For the literature this means that when focussing on nationalism as a predictor of Euroscepticism, Eastern orthodoxy does not need to be an important factor to keep in mind when making that research.

6.3 Analysis hypothesis 3

The third and final hypotheses dealt the evolution of the expected effect over time. It was formulated as followed:

H3: As a country is part of the EU for a longer period of time, the relation between Eastern orthodoxy and trust in the European Parliament decreases.

Two regressions have been done with the exact same data gathered in different years to see how the results would change. The results of these regressions show no supporting evidence that the relation between Eastern orthodoxy and trust in the European Parliament decreases. Where in 2012 the relation appeared to be slightly positive, it changed into looking barely negative in 2018. This, however, does no longer provide sufficient evidence to confirm this hypothesis. These numbers cannot be used to formulate any meaningful conclusion with their current level of significance. With the results from all three models, it can clearly be said that Eastern orthodoxy cannot be seen as a cause for European Support. When looking at the data from 2018 with or without corrections for nationalism, the data looks similar to the results of 2012, a low relation with a very low significance. This means that, based on this research, the relation between religion and European support shows no sign of increasing or decreasing over time, because this relation is nowhere visible in any significant way.

One thing that can be learned from this model is that excluding nationalism in 2012 or in 2018 is enough to make religion look like a significant cause for either European trust or Euroscepticism. Different reasons could be suggested for this fact, one reason supported by the literature is that nationalistic parties have only recently used religion as a way to express their nationalist ideals. Although future research on this relation is definitely necessary, it would be no leap in logic to suspect that Eastern orthodoxy will become more related to nationalism over time. Nonetheless, this research was focussed on looking at the way religion influences European support, and looking at this over time only further support the lack of direct impact religiousness has on an individual's stance on the European Union.

7. Conclusion & Discussion

7.1 Conclusion

At the beginning of this research, the following question was asked:

To what degree does nationalism affect the relation between Eastern Orthodox Religiousness and an individual's level of trust in the European Union in Bulgaria and Cyprus?

After analysing multiple regressions, we can conclude that nationalism does not just affect the relation between Eastern orthodoxy and trust in the EU, it is a direct cause for it. When looking at the regression that did not include the nationalism a, as well as the regression that did, no relation between religion and trust in the EP is visible. With regards to the hypotheses, this is very different compared to the expected results. There are speculations on why results differed from the expected outcome. Other research already showed the general relation between religion and Euroscepticism to be small. Perhaps this research focus on Eastern orthodoxy in Bulgaria and Cyprus was too narrow for an already small relation. If, over the full Union, the relation is already small, focussing in on one small part of both the EU and of religiousness, it is possible to get no result if the main reasons behind the Europe-wide results are not present. This makes this thesis not an endpoint for the research into religion and Euroscepticism, but could lead to more focussed research that could point out the factors behind the results in other articles. This research shows that, when nationalism is left out of the equation, 'Eastern orthodox religiousness' cannot be seen as a cause or predictor of European support. Thereby rejecting the first hypotheses which was '*When not correcting for nationalism, believing in the Eastern Orthodox Christian faith has a direct positive relation to an individual's trust in the European Parliament*'.

The second analysis did nothing but validate this conclusion. The inclusion of nationalism into the calculations did not in any significant way change the perceived way in which Eastern orthodoxy influences Euroscepticism. One thing this research unintentionally did show was the strong relation between countries and trust in the EP, this already shows that per country the difference can be very substantial. Nationalism showed to be a strong factor, but one that did not affect the relation of religion and Euroscepticism. The expectation was that nationalism, which was expected to be negatively related to European trust, would have a mediating impact on religion and European trust. The results showed that religion did not affect Euroscepticism and nationalism has a completely independent impact on European trust. Interesting thing of note here is that the relation between nationalism and trust in the EP was positive. It could be

argued that, because these countries are relatively new to the Union, their national interests and the European interests are more aligned since the countries struggle to become a member of the union is still fresh in the memories of the participants. The national politicians they align with are the same ones that worked to get membership. This could be further expanded upon by future research, but for now the hypotheses “*When corrected for nationalism, the relation between Eastern Orthodox faith and Support for the European Parliament becomes more positive*” can, based on the statistical evidence provided in this thesis, only be considered debunked.

As for the third hypothesis, the expectation was as follows: *As a country is part of the EU for a longer period of time, the relation between Eastern orthodoxy and trust in the European Parliament decreases.* With the results seen in the second model, this already seems unlikely because the direct relation does not seem to exist. Completing an analysis from a few years back only confirms this. It shows that when reproducing the same analysis with data from 2012, there is still no sign of a significant relation between Eastern orthodoxy and trust in the EP. If there is no relation, it also cannot change over time. The idea from older articles that the relation does exist but is slowly declining might still be viable, but most likely not for majority Orthodox countries that only recently joined. This can be concluded considering that in 2012 the relation, if there ever was one, showed no trace. In the argumentation behind the third hypotheses something important was mentioned. The idea was that in the early stages of membership nationalism does not yet affect the relation between religiousness and Euroscepticism. This could mean that as time progresses, the relation between nationalism and Euroscepticism changes. This could create the idea that there is a possible relation between religion and Euroscepticism (if nationalism is not taken into account). Repeating this same research in a few years’ time could confirm or deny this prediction.

All in all, the conclusion can only be that nationalism does not affect the relation between Eastern orthodoxy and Euroscepticism. Instead, nationalism has a direct influence on European support. Where the influence of religion is too insignificant to mention, and mainly unaffected by nationalism.

7.2 Discussion

Finally, this thesis has tried to answer some of the questions regarding religion and nationalism. But still, many questions remain unanswered, and some even become bigger because of the results presented here. The positive relation between nationalism and trust in the EP was perhaps the most surprising result. Other research all suggested a negative relation between the two. Whether this differs per country, and what factors lead nationalism to be negatively associated with the EU is something future research could provide clearer answers to. Furthermore, this research was aimed to see if nationalism affected the relation of Eastern orthodoxy and Euroscepticism. Therefore countries were selected where this supposed effect would be most visible. Perhaps in other countries, where Eastern orthodoxy is a minority instead, it could have an impact on Euroscepticism. The point of this article was to shed light on an under-analysed part of the causes for Euroscepticism specifically related to nationalism and can hopefully function as a compass, guiding future research towards greater discovery.

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