**Religion Policy and Subnational Identity Construction: A Comparison of Alsace-Moselle, France, and Catalonia, Spain**

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**ABSTRACT**

Clashes between religious and secular institutions have contributed to the structure of political competition well into the 21st century. Yet subnational regions did not experience the secular-clerical cleavage in the same way as states. Historical experience with overlapping secular-clerical and center-periphery cleavages has shaped how (sub)national communities approach the relationship between religion and territorial identity today. This essay builds a theory of the strategic use of religion to strengthen subnational identity using the cases of Alsace-Moselle and Catalonia. I argue that the historical experience of intersecting secular-clerical and center-periphery cleavages—coupled with repressive state construction of a unified national identity—has created a contemporary political opportunity structure for subnational elites to leverage religion policy to strengthen community identity and obtain authority devolution.

**Introduction**

Clashes between religious and secular institutions have contributed to the structure of political competition well into the 21st century (Rovny and Polk 2019). Yet subnational regions did not experience the secular-clerical cleavage in the same way as states. Historical experience with overlapping secular-clerical and center-periphery cleavages has shaped how (sub)national communities approach the relationship between religion and territorial identity. This essay builds a theory of the strategic use of religion to strengthen subnational identity using the cases of Alsace-Moselle and Catalonia. I argue that the historical experience of intersecting secular-clerical and center-periphery cleavages—coupled with repressive state construction of a unified national identity—has created a contemporary political opportunity structure for subnational elites to leverage religion policy to strengthen community identity and obtain authority devolution.

Despite the de-coupling of church and state in the 20th century *de jure*, legal provisions offer *de facto* privileges for the historically-majority religion. However, at the subnational level, political elites may take the opposite approach and **reduce**the dominance of the historically-majority religion to portray the region as distinctively more tolerant of religious diversity. The objective of this strategy can be both fostering stronger subnational identity and tangible devolution of authority on cultural policy areas, where the question of “who governs?” matters deeply to residents (Hooghe and Marks 2016).

**Church-State Relations Today**

Today, though clergy no longer wield direct government power in Europe, religious organizations and governments relate to one another according to complex laws and norms, which contribute to constructions of community belonging (Shady 2022), yield material consequences, and contribute to political discourse, particularly in the context of minority rights (Weldon 2006). What is the *raison d’être* of the policy? How do political elites think about the communities affected by the policy? Framing language matters for how elites present the work they have done as community representatives.

One avenue for contestation over church-state relations that is salient to the public is education. As I show in the Spanish and French cases below, education is a policy area that elites have used to apply different religion policies at different levels of governance, precisely because of education’s socialization power. Religious groups have long sought to educate their children according to their traditions, which can pose challenges for the state in terms of resources and the civic goals associated with public education (c.f. Driessen and Merry 2006). A critical function of public education is to teach children national history, traditions and values, and citizen engagement. Anderson (1991) argues that the initial implementation of mass public education was necessary to construct national identity, and today this education continues both inside the classroom and out, particularly through dissemination of both secular and religiously-rooted norms (Griera 2016; Shady 2022).

Moreover, education is an issue area particularly ripe for center-periphery contestation. Education is tangible in daily life, as we can observe in multilingual regions where families and politicians have long debated the appropriate language(s) of instruction. The proximity of education to individuals and its deep links to community identity make it an optimal issue for political elites to leverage. As I show in the cases below, subnational elites today seek to expand devolved authority over religious education policy, relying on the work of their predecessors when the original secular-clerical cleavage was salient. Education is not the only path of subnational differentiation on religion policy. However, it is the one most closely related to the development and maintenance of regional identity across generations.

**A Theory of Subnational Identity Construction via Religion Policy**

Historical political structures set countries on paths to contemporary political cleavages and party systems (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Rovny and Polk 2019), and we can apply a similar framework to subnational politics. As the Spanish and French cases illustrate below, church-state relations, contestation along the secular-clerical divide, and autocratic repression using religious tools leaves lasting impacts on the relationship between religion and national identity.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Critically, subnational communities need not experience the secular-clerical cleavage in the same way as the state.** In order to understand conflict over religion, we must go beyond the national level and investigate how the concurrent center-periphery cleavage contributed to the structure of this conflict. Indeed, Lipset and Rokkan link differences in party systems to the “*joint* operation of two sets of cleavages: the opposition between the central nation-building culture and the traditions of the periphery” and a second cleavage (1967, p. 41).

I apply this framework of jointly-operating cleavages somewhat differently. While Lipset and Rokkan treat past cleavages as frozen, I argue that elites can strategically compete along a previously-frozen cleavage. The secular-religious cleavage was salient in the late 19th and early 20th centuries but has re-entered public discourse in a new form alongside the salience of Muslim migration. The thawing and transformation of this cleavage creates a new avenue for political elites to compete along an intersecting center-periphery cleavage. While Lipset and Rokkan were chiefly interested in the development of party systems, I focus on the effects of jointly-operating cleavages on the construction of (sub)national community identities. Indeed, this operation can supersede party family expectations or split parties at two levels of governance, as I show in the cases below.

My theory is illustrated in Figure 1 below and makes three core claims. **First**, the original secular-clerical divide occurred in different patterns at the sub(national) levels on both sides of the cleavage. Regions experienced the secular-clerical divide differently when their religious landscape distinguished them from the state, institutionally and socially. While many European countries have developed forms of secularity as a result of this cleavage, some regions have departed from the state’s resolution to fit the needs of their populations. From the position of elites who seek to construct a unified national identity, universalizing regional traditions, including religious ones, as “national” traditions is a common strategy for repressing subnational identity. Although when coupled with state tools such as violence or media gatekeeping, it can force temporary compliance with a national government—as in mid-Franco-era Spain or early 1920s France—deeply-rooted religious values, as a core source of culture, render religion a fruitful source of subnational resistance. Actors sit on both sides of the cleavage at both levels of governance, but the side that dominates in government, and why it dominates, varies.

This leads to the **second** claim, that these differences are linked to preferences for sub(national) identity distinction and demands for self-governance. Whether the region has a different majority religion, as in Protestant Alsace-Moselle, or a culturally-specific way of practicing the same majority religion, as in Catholic Catalonia, the region’s culture is developed through religious practices and norms that distinguish it from the state. When this culture is threatened by state repression and/or universalization of regional traditions, the secular-clerical and center-periphery cleavages operate in tandem. As members of the subnational community become increasingly aware of state strategies via changes in daily life, salience of their subnational identity increases, and we can expect the center-periphery cleavage to interact with the moment’s other primary cleavage. The salience of subnational identity fosters resistance to the larger state, especially if the community has the backing of civil society organizations like churches, which have organizational prowess; resources; and clout at the local, national, and international levels. The subnational community—both masses and elites—is likely to be internally divided along the center-periphery and other cleavages. Nevertheless, regions experience the congruence or contradiction of positions along a political cleavage in unique ways, and the patterns of (dis)agreement at the subnational community level shape future opportunities for strategic policymaking.

**Third**, this historic relationship has carried forward institutional and behavioral patterns to the present. The joint operation of the original secular-clerical and center-periphery cleavages created a foundation upon which contemporary politicians leverage these cleavages in a new context. Today’s new context is the debate over multiculturalism given the migration of a religious minority. National communities are attempting to define their identity in light of demographic change; so, too, are subnational communities. In order to avoid absorption into a universal national identity, subnational communities can take a different position from the state on the question of multiculturalism. As discussed above, education is the most effective arena for framing identity with long-term and wide-reaching impact, and it is one vehicle for differentiation on multiculturalism and religion policy.

The key strategy for elites seeking regional distinction is to **take the opposite approach from the state’s identity construction strategy vis à vis accommodation of religious diversity**, either advocating for preferential treatment of the country’s historically-majority religion (mono-culturalism) or celebrating religious pluralism (multiculturalism). Subnational governments need not move to the extreme of clerical government in response to national secularism with *de facto* majority favoritism; they can take a semi-clerical position by promoting religious diversity. Conversely, if the state promotes multiculturalism, subnational elites may advocate for the primacy of the historically-majority religion, as illustrated in Figure 1 below. The relevant past and present depend on the timing of territory absorption, contestation over church-state relations, and the ebb and flow of (sub)national identity salience.

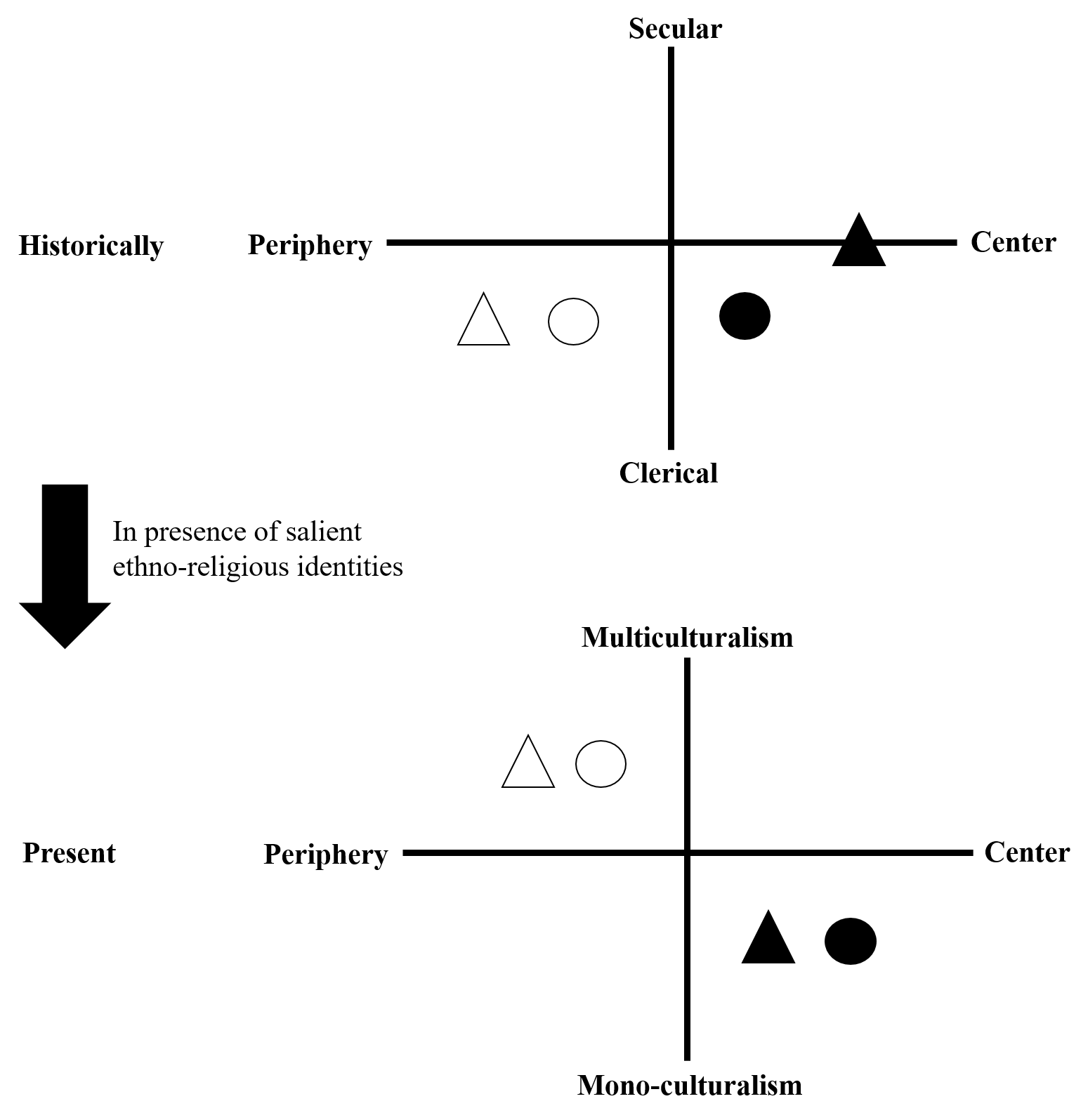
This theory does not assume that **all**political elites will behave according Figure 1. Although the center-periphery cleavage does transcend other cleavages, parties are limited by constraints of the party system and their own ideology, especially along their primary dimension of competition (Koedam 2022). Most relevant here is that TAN[[2]](#footnote-2) parties are unlikely to adopt multiculturalism because it conflicts with their anti-immigration position.

**Method**

To probe my theory’s plausibility, I leverage a paired comparison of Catalonia and Alsace-Moselle, most-similar cases that allow me to analyze the nuanced points at which seemingly similar systems vary to further refine the theory (Gerring 2007). Catalonia and Alsace-Moselle’s similar socio-political traits developed in unique historical contexts, which offers interesting insights into multiple paths to similar outcomes (Tarrow 2010). Although paired comparison suffers from low degrees of freedom, the deep knowledge it requires of the two cases boosts confidence in the inferences from antecedents to outcomes (Tarrow 2010).[[3]](#footnote-3)

Catalonia and Alsace-Moselle provide useful causal leverage in a most-similar cases design for several reasons. Both regions are nested within majority-Catholic states where the Church played a historical role in government nation-building projects, particularly during undemocratic periods. State unity promotion that centers the capital region as the hub of national culture has occurred in both countries, and both France and Spain have official policies that

**Figure 1. Theory of subnational differentiation via religion policy.**

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formally separate church and state today. Catalonia and Alsace-Moselle are culturally distinct from the rest of their states and have gained a measure of autonomy from the national government, including authority over religion policy. The origins and consequences of this authority differ, which provides an opportunity to understand how the development of church-government relations, not their static status, shapes the relationship between religion and (sub)national identity.

The essential contribution of process tracing is not only to connect independent and dependent variables through a plausible argument, but also to understand how they connect (Tarrow 2010). In each case, I establish the nature and elite framing of the intersecting secular-clerical and center-periphery cleavages, as identified in Table 1 below. I focus on the late 19th century to the present, where there are major inflection points for the religion-territorial identity relationship: changes in state authority, periods of state repression, and contestation over the balance of multi-level governance. It is this framing that makes strategy via religion policy effective later. In the contemporary sections, I first explain national church-state relations and how elites tie them to national identity in order to compare how subnational elites depart from this model to distinguish their regions and seek devolution of authority.

**Catalonia: Multiculturalism in a Non-Confessional State**

Catalonia, one of 17 *comunidades aútonomas*, has centuries-old history embroiled in conflict with Spain. Although Catalonia has not been shuffled between modern-day states to the same extent as Alsace-Moselle, it maintains a distinct culture and has a history of separatist movements. Autonomism was salient as Catalonia prospered during 19th century industrialization and as it fought for self-rule amid two 20th century dictatorships. Religion was and remains an

**Table 1. Key Variables and Cases.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variable** | **Spain** | **Catalonia** | **France** | **Alsace-Moselle** |
| **Historic secular-clerical cleavage position** | Nationalists and Franco strategically aligned with Catholic Church | Last remaining region with anti-clerical republicans before end of civil war; pro-clerical Catalans sought distance from Spanish nationalism | Highly secular from French revolution to Jules Ferry’s education reforms and onward | Highly religious with Catholic-Protestant divisions; autonomists sought protections for religious minority |
| **Historic center-periphery position** | Highly centrist via state repression under Franco | Sought to defend Catalan culture under Franco | Highly centrist from revolution onward; emphasis on identity via citizenship | Autonomist movement peaked 1920s |
| **Historical approaches to religion and (sub)national identity construction** | Nationalization of clergy; ban on use of regional languages in churches; combination of national and Catholic symbolism | Local churches contributed to resistance to Franco regime | Use of Protestant churches for Catholic services; erasure of Germanic Alsatian language; forced movement to increase representation of French Catholics | Underground usage of Alsatian, particularly in Lutheran churches; retained exception to French 1905 church-state law |
| **Contemporary multiculturalism-mono-culturalism cleavage** | Growing nationalism movement; restrictive immigration policy particularly towards Muslim migrants | Embraces multiculturalism outside European Christians | Emphasis on singular French identity via citizenship; restrictive immigration policy particularly towards Muslim migrants | Embraces multiculturalism outside European Christians |
| **Contemporary center-periphery cleavage** | Some authority devolution to *comunidades autónomas*; independence referenda unconstitutional | Independence referenda 2014/2017 | Unitary state that emphasizes universality of French identity via citizenship | No longer seeks independence but seeks to retain degree of self-governance |
| **Contemporary church-state relations** | Non-confessional; *de facto* Catholic privilege | Offers range of religious courses and exposure to other traditions | *Laïcité*; *de facto* Catholic privilege | Exception to *laïcité*; authority via 1801 concordat; education offers range of religious courses and exposure to other traditions |

important strategic tool for Catalan regionalists as they resist(ed) Spanish religious-nationalist strategies.

*The Center-Periphery and Secular-Clerical Cleavages in Spain*

Early 20th century Spain experienced simultaneous thawing of the center-periphery and secular-clerical cleavages, which reinvigorated a politically-constructed relationship between religion and (sub)national identities, as Table 2 outlines below. Leading up to *la Guerra Civil*, the Catholic Church and Spanish state were deeply intertwined, particularly under the brief dictatorship of Catholic António José Primo de Rivera: the Church had influence over Senate proceedings, the government had a say in clerical appointments, and Catholicism dominated public education (Linz 1991; Sánchez 1987, 2, 106). When Primo de Rivera lost power in 1931, anti-monarchists and socialists formed a new Republican movement (Casanova 2007). As Republican anti-clerical sentiment grew, tensions arose between Spaniards’ personal religious beliefs and their dissatisfaction with the Church’s ties to political elites and the landowning class, especially among rural populations in Andalucía and Extremadura and urban working-class populations in Madrid, Valencia, Seville, and Barcelona (Casanova 2007; Linz 1991; Sánchez 1987, 3).

As anti-clericalism grew, church leaders lamented secularization. President Niceto Alcalá Zamora and Prime Minister Manuel Azaña implemented socialist reforms and separated Church and State.[[4]](#footnote-4) Spanish priests wrote in a 1931 report to the Vatican: “Spain was becoming religiously impoverished” and needed a “restoration of Christian society” (Casanova 2007, 66).

**Table 2. Center-periphery and secular-clerical contestation in Catalonia and Spain over time.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Center-Periphery Cleavage** | **Years** | **Secular-Clerical Cleavage** |
| Limited authority devolved to the Catalan provinces | 1913 |  |
| Spanish dictatorship under Primo de Rivera | 1925-1931 | Catholic Church holds influence over Senate and public education |
| During brief Spanish republic, Catalonia establishes autonomous regional parliament | 1931 | Secular government and rise in anti-clericalism  *Acción Popular* loses election, combines with other pro-Catholic, pro-monarchy groups to form CEDA |
| Spanish Civil War. Concluded 1939 when Nationalists conquer Barcelona. | 1936-1939 | Catholic leaders killed in *paseos* and sacred objects destroyed  Catalan priests hold secret masses and support combatants indirectly |
| Spanish dictatorship under Franco begins | 1939 | Catholic Church internally divided over Franco |
|  | 1945 | Vatican and Franco regime sign accord, and Catalan priests participate in hunger strike in protest |
|  | 1958-1963 | Pope John XXIII leads Vatican and advocates for minority-language masses, including in Catalan |
| Spanish dictatorship ends with Franco’s death | 1975 |  |
| Catalan parliament re-established  Democratic constitution enters into force and recognizes *comunidades autónomas* | 1977-1978 | New constitution with non-establishment clause but recognition of special status of Catholic Church |
|  | 1980 | Religious Liberty Law passes |
|  | 1992 | Spanish government signs accords with Islamic, Jewish, and Protestant organizations |
| Reformed autonomy statute expands Catalonia’s self-governance authority and calls Catalonia a nation | 2006 |  |
| Amid global financial crisis, Catalan elites hold local, informal independence referenda | 2009-2011 | Law on Worship Centers passes in Catalonia |
| Catalan Parliament holds non-binding independence referendum despite opposition from Spanish PM Rajoy. | 2014 |  |
| Catalan Parliament holds independence referendum. Spanish government declares it unconstitutional and sends armed police to prevent voting. | 2017 |  |
|  | 2021 | Spanish education reform enters into force with additional restrictions on Catholic schools |

The speed and weight of these reforms deepened divisions along class and secular-clerical lines, and the new Republic lasted only until a military coup ignited civil war in 1936.

During and after the war, both Spanish nationalists and Catalans had sizeable groups who favored the clerical side of the secular-clerical cleavage, but they linked religion to distinct territorial identities. As I discuss below, Catalan clerics resisted the militant building of a unified Catholic Spanish identity. This intersection of the secular-clerical and center-periphery cleavages resulted in different outcomes at two levels of community.

Historians debate the primary fault lines of *la Guerra Civil*, but the religious and class cleavages were intertwined (Casanova 2007; Sánchez 1987). In the background, bishops supported the *Acción Nacional* (later *Acción Popular*), a political organization that sought to maintain rightwing Catholic interests in Spain (e.g. traditional family values, preference for social order, retention of local processions for rites of passage) (Casanova 2007).After failing in the 1931 election, *Acción Popular* members combined forces with other pro-Catholic, pro-monarchist, and landowner elite interest groups to form the *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas* (CEDA; Spanish Confederation of Autonomous Rights) (Casanova 2007; Sánchez 1987, 35-36).

In Catalonia, the Unió Democràtica de Cataluyna (UDC) party took a unique position among autonomists by opposing anti-clericalism, yet they did not support the Nationalists (Sánchez 1987, 134). The UDC played a major role in humanitarian relief efforts through the Catalan Catholic Church in hopes of gaining favor with Catalans and the Vatican alike, as an institution independent of the Spanish Church (Sánchez 1987, 134-135). Catalan leaders thus found a means of filtering the same religion through a lens that distinguishes them from the rest of Spain.

Though not direct combatants, priests encouraged defense of their side of the conflict, even when it involved violence (Casanova 2007; Sánchez 1987). Concurrently, anti-clericalists destroyed sacred objects and committed acts of violence against not only monarchist combatants, but clergy (Casanova 2007; Sánchez 1987). Nationalists had substantial military support and conducted organized attacks on Republican strongholds, in addition to civilian Nationalists’ operations (Casanova 2007). During *paseos*, Republicans killed elite representatives, including clergy, and left them in the streets (Beevor 2006). Over the course of the war, over 6000 church figures (priests, bishops, nuns, monks) were murdered, a third of whom were in Catalonia, and more than 4000 sacred buildings were destroyed in Catalonia alone, which closed off communal worship opportunities (Beevor 2006; Dowling 2012; Sánchez 1987, 9-12). Once Catalan churches were nationalized (1936-1939), priests offered clandestine masses to avoid further violence (Sánchez 1987, 61). The immense violence, including towards religious figures and in sacred spaces, matters for the duration and intensity of identity salience. The war’s conclusion left grieving and angry communities, a sense of affective injustice towards one’s social identity groups, which increases the likelihood that these identities will affect political behaviors (c.f. van Zomeren et al. 2008). Indeed, religious and sub(national) identity contestation continued into both the dictatorship and democratic years that followed *la Guerra Civil*, as I trace below.

Despite the Catholic Church’s institutional support for the anti-republicanism movement, as the war ended in 1939 and the Nationalist Falange party took power, it was internally divided over a role for the Vatican in the Spanish state (Linz 1991; Sánchez 1987). Yet even before the regime built official ties with the Vatican in 1945, Franco leveraged Catholicism to construct a specific form of unified Spanish identity. The regime funded national clerics, restored religious education, brought religious symbolism to official state ceremonies, and returned marital conflicts to the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts, including outlawing divorce (Linz 1991). The *Sección Feminina*, the women’s wing of the Falange party, spread propaganda implying the overlap of Catholicism and national identity by painting a portrait of a prototypical Spanish woman who is submissive to authority; serves as a caregiver, wife, and mother; and holds morally conservative values (Reeser 2019). The *Sección Feminina* also leveraged historic Spanish women as symbols of national role models, including Saint Teresa of Avila, who built convents in the country, and Queen Isabella of Castile, for her role in banishing Jews and Moors and conquering the territories that comprise modern Spain (Richmond 2003; pp. 40-42).

As part of Franco’s aim to build a monolithic Spanish identity amid fears of separatist movements, he banned languages other than *castellano* and re-framed local traditions for national purposes. He appointed Castilian bishops to Catalan bishoprics (Nagel 2015). Franco capitalized on Holy Week *pasos*,parades which feature altars depicting Christ and the Virgin Mary and are a time for community gathering, to construct a *nacionalcatolicismo* that painted the regime as the liberator of Spain and the descendent of past heroes:

The Francoist militants fought in the Civil War in Crusade terms, and this was precisely the mythical characteristic for the rituals of victory...a mythical projection outside of time, a reconstruction of past clashes—of the Reconquest in particular.... (Vincent 2017, 97)[[5]](#footnote-5)

As the state pursued *nacionalcatolicismo*, some regime opponents leveraged local Catholicism to construct alternatives to Franco’s concept of national identity, particularly between the late 1940s-1960s. Catholic churches in Catalonia provided cover and financial support for youth and labor groups as well as progressive Catholics to organize resistance, including the future Prime Minister of Catalonia Jordi Pujol (Nagel 2015). When the Holy See and Franco regime signed a concordat, Catalan priests were among the region’s hunger strike participants (Nagel 2015).

Moreover, support for Francoism in the Catalan Church waned as clergy sought to practice according to regional traditions (Dowling 2012), again highlighting that the secular-clerical cleavage can unfold differently at different levels of community. Under the leadership of Pope John XXIII (1958-1963), the Vatican defended minority rights and permitted Mass to be held in local languages, including Catalan (Nagel 2015). The regime did loosen some restrictions after the initial consolidation of power. By 1942, Catalan clergy were permitted to print religious materials (nothing explicitly political) in Catalan (Dowling 2012). During a feast for the *Virgen* *Montserrat* in 1947, Catalan leaders were permitted to print, but not broadcast, materials in Catalan (Nagel 2015). Later on, the Church began offering youth language classes, during which they also learned about the region’s history (Dowling 2012). Catalan clergy used this linguistic freedom in attempt to win over formerly anti-clerical populations, with some success while it remained the only legal way to express Catalan identity (Dowling 2012).

After the democratic transition sparked by Franco’s death in 1975, forcibly-unified Spain began to return authority to its distinct nations. The 1978 constitution permitted decentralized authority over 22 policy areas, including culture but not immigration, and the Spanish government approved Catalonia’s autonomy statute in 1979 (Hooghe et al. 2016, p. 496). In 2006 Spain expanded the region’s powers and explicitly defined Catalonia as a “nation,” but the Constitutional Court reversed this definition in 2010 (BBC 2018a). In combination with differentiated effects of the ongoing economic crisis, where Catalonia prospered relative to other *communidades autónomas*, support for independence grew among the public and across party lines. This culminated in the most recent referendum for independence in 2017, which the Spanish government under the conservative *Partido Popular* declared unconstitutional and violently repressed using armed state police before imposing direct rule for almost seven months (BBC 2018a,b). An important difference between the cases in this study is that Catalonia’s contemporary autonomist movement is stronger than Alsace’s, yet we can observe demands for self-governance through religion policy in both regions today.

*National-Level Religion Policy in Spain*

After decades of violent conflict and repression in which the Church was a point of division, it is remarkable that the decades following Franco’s authoritarian regime saw a peaceful transition towards new religion policies. Such processes were possible perhaps in part due to the *Pacto del olvido* (Pact of Forgetting). Whether or not a secular-clerical division remained at the societal level, it was stripped of its political power and no longer an effective cleavage for party competition for the first few decades of Spain’s new democracy.

The 1978 constitution outlines several basic principles of church-state relations, including a non-establishment clause (Constitución Española, Art. 16, S. 3). Notably, although Article 16 calls for cooperation with multiple religions and recognizes potential for religious plurality, it singles out the Catholic Church, thereby continuing to institutionalize the special social significance of Catholicism to the country.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Two years later, the Cortes Generales (national legislature), led by Union of the Democratic Center, passed the Religious Liberty Law (1980). The law reaffirms that there shall be no state religion (Acto Géneral 7, BOE no. 177, Art. 1, S. 3). For individuals, this law prohibits religious-based discrimination and guarantees the freedom to worship, including giving/receiving religious education (Art. 1, S. 1 and 2). For religious organizations, the law provides the right to establish places of worship, train leaders, share beliefs, and associate with other religious groups domestically and abroad (Art. 2, S. 2). The Spanish state in turn owes religious communities assistance in facilitating free religious participation in public institutions, including schools (Art. 2, S. 3).

To benefit fully from the measures in this law, religious associations must apply to be in a public registry with the Ministry of Justice (Acto Géneral 7, BOE no. 177, Art. 5). Importantly, the law recognizes that certain religions will hold particular gravitas in communities, and it states that the government shall undertake agreements with religious organizations “where warranted by their notorious influence in Spanish society, due to their domain or number of followers” (Art. 7, S. 1. Official translation by the Spanish Ministry of Justice). The role of the state in assessing the social importance of a religion to a community leaves room for interpretation, which creates a political opportunity structure at multiple levels of governance.

In the proceedings ahead of passing the 1980 Religious Liberty Law, legislators acknowledged the deeply personal and social aspects of religion yet reiterated that the role of government is to regulate religion as it relates to politics, where the relationship has changed over the course of Spain’s history (El Senado 1980). The words of Senator Manuel Iglesias Corral (an independent who worked with centrists) capture this spirit of the *Senado*’s discussion (El Senado 2021b), and several speakers following him echoed his sentiments:

What does this affirmation of religious liberty mean? **It means that the old law has concluded, that a historical period of law has concluded, that a moment developed over the centuries has been overcome, and that it has, here, a grand, majestic epilogue**…not only is religious liberty a logical, necessary consequence that is indeclinable of individual rights, but also religious liberty is already supported in the Constitution. (El Senado 1980, emphasis added)[[7]](#footnote-7)

In the same proceedings, Minister of Justice Iñigo Cavero Lataillade (Christian Democrat) distinguishes the Spanish approach from laicism (as in France) (El Senado 1980, 2021a). He calls laic states “belligerent and hostile,” affirms that they are as dogmatic as confessional ones, and defines Spain as a “neutral” state rather than a laic one (El Senado 1980). Whether neutrality and laicism differ meaningfully in this context or not, the way that politicians frame the state’s position towards religion differs somewhat between Spain and France in that laicism is not framed as an essential Spanish value. Thus in the Spanish case, there must be another impetus for political elites to link the old secular-clerical cleavage to contemporary politics in order for it to be an effective opportunity for Catalans. The salience of Muslim migration to Spain and the racial-religious rhetoric surrounding immigrant integration policy provides this impetus, as the state maintains differential relations with Catholic and Muslim associations.

Despite the dissolution of the Franco-era concordat with the Catholic Church, Catholicism continues to enjoy a special relationship with the state. Spain recognizes the special international legal status of the Vatican, so agreements with the Catholic Church, unlike others, are considered international treaties (Moran 1995). The legal clout of the Catholic Church intertwines the church with national civil law more closely than other traditions, particularly in areas such as ecclesiastical marriage and court opinions (Moran 1995). In recognition of historical importance of Catholicism to Spanish society, the state provides protection, with funding, for historic Catholic art and architecture (Moran 1995).

Additionally, per the 1980 law, Spain signed agreements with three religious organizations in 1992 according to their deeply-rooted status in society: the Federation of Evangelic Communities of Spain, the Federate of Israelite Communities of Spain, and the Islamic Commission of Spain (Moran 1995). While centrists held power when the 1980 law passed, it was the Socialist-led government that oversaw the 1992 agreements. Governance of religion was beginning to transcend ideological differences. All three agreements protect worship and burial sites and permit work arrangements for holy days outside the civil, Catholic-based calendar (Moran 1995). They further provide for religious leaders’ access to prisons, hospitals, and the military, and they recognize religious marriages in the civil system (Moran 1995). Unlike for the Catholic Church, the state does not actively fund protection of sacred sites, but it does provide tax exemptions, including for fundraisers and endowments towards cultural heritage protection (Moran 1995).

Significantly, only the Catholic Church receives a proportion of members’ income taxes for taxpayers who elect to have this money allocated (Moran 1995). In 2019, the Church received a record-high donation since the Vatican and Spain negotiated to increase the proportion donated from 0.5% to 0.7% of income tax, which took effect in 2007 (Bedoya and Hunter 2020). Notably, just 17.4% of taxpayers in Catalonia donated to the Catholic Church, compared to upwards of 40% of those in Castilla-La Mancha, La Rioja, Castilla y León, Murcia, and Extremadura (Bedoya and Hunter 2020). In sum, while the Spanish state does offer some protections for minority religions, its non-confessional government privileges Catholicism due to its historic importance to Spanish identity, and it therefore falls on the mono-cultural end of the multiculturalism-mono-culturalism cleavage.

*Religion Policy in Catalonia*

In the Civil War and Franco eras, Catalan elites leveraged religion to resist Nationalist authority. Today, compared to the rest of Spain, Catalonia is slightly more religious, but not as Catholic.[[8]](#footnote-8) The religious pluralism and history of resistance to the state’s center-clerical goals create both rhetorical and policymaking opportunities for Catalan politicians to assert the region’s distinctiveness and demand authority via religious avenues today.

At both the regional and national levels, some Catalan elites have embraced religious diversity and multiculturalism to gain material benefits and influence.[[9]](#footnote-9) Since the secular-clerical cleavage no longer dominates party competition, elites across party families can use religion policy to gain authority for the region. The mandate of Catalonia’s Dirrecció General d’Afers Religiosos, under the regional Department of Justice, includes managing accords between the regional government and religious organizations (Generalitat de Cataluyna 2021). Barcelona also has its own Religious Affairs Office (OAR), whose mission emphasizes “principles of interculturality” and recognizes the reality of the city’s religious plurality (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2021).[[10]](#footnote-10) The Catalan government has leveraged religion and migrant integration policies to a) socialize migrants from multiple religious backgrounds into Catalan language and culture, and b) assert the region as a bastion of religious diversity in contrast to the rest of Spain (Bowen 2007).

Although both cases discussed here no longer formally bind the Catholic Church and the government, the separation of church and state is not a monolithic concept. There is a subtle, yet socially important, distinction between an explicitly secular state and a non-confessional state, which Catalan elites have debated with the Spanish state. The Catalan *Law on Centers of Worship* (2009), proposed in 2007 by the *Esquerra Republicana de Cataluyna* (ERC), emphasized *laïctat* anddrew a sharp response from the PP. One former PP member (who later joined Ciudadanos), María Ángles Olano, framed questions of laicism in terms of the implications for religious liberty and replied to the worship center law:

The Spanish State is **a non-confessional state; it is not a state of secular confession**. This intended definition goes against religious liberty; religion is not a stigma to eliminate, and therefore it is important to recognize its presence. The State cannot ignore the existence of religion in society, it cannot situate itself at its margins, as laicism pretends to do, by excluding the religious dimension from the public sphere. (emphasis added; Parlamento de Cataluyna 2009:6, as quoted and translated to English in Astor et al. 2017)

Despite concerns from the PP, in July 2009, the Catalan Parliament approved the *Law on Worship Centers* (LLEI 16/2009), which details the conditions for constructing religious buildings and includes a non-discrimination clause. The preamble recognizes increasing religious plurality in the region due to immigration, among other factors, and affirms the government’s commitment to religious freedom by reference to both the Spanish constitution and European Union human rights law (LLEI 16/2009). It further underscores the government’s commitment to secularism and neutrality with respect to the right of individuals to practice a religion of choice:

Thus, this law, from the point of view of secularism, that is, from the respect of all religious and thought options and their values, as an integrative principle and common framework of coexistence, wants to regulate the centers of worship in terms of neutrality. and for the sole purpose of facilitating the exercise of worship and preserving the safety and health of the premises and the fundamental rights of all citizens relating to public order. In this way, and through collaboration, **it wants to strengthen values ​​that already characterize the common space of our society: coexistence, respect for plurality, equality in democratic rights and the responsibility of all citizenship, without discrimination of any kind, in the national construction of Catalonia**. (LLEI 16/2009, emphasis added)[[11]](#footnote-11)

There are two important themes in the preamble’s conclusion above. First, the meaning of *laïcitat* here is not absence of religion, but rather an absence of government favoritism, as is necessary for the co-existence of religious groups. Second, the text explains, from Parliament’s point of view, the relationship between religion and Catalan community identity. It constructs the idea of a multicultural, equitable community where diversity is actively celebrated, not merely tolerated. This contrasts with the Spanish constitution, which emphasizes the unique historical relationship between Spanish national identity and the Catholic Church and provides material benefits via the state on this basis.

One way Catalan political elites have sought to distinguish the region via religion policy and promotion of multiculturalism is through education. The ERC helped pass Spanish education reform, which entered into force in January 2021 and includes provisions that restrict public funds for Catholic schools if they do not implement changes such as expanding spaces for low-income students and teaching in mixed-gender classrooms (Eurydice 2021; Luxmoore 2020; Tomás 2020). As part of the negotiations, an earlier provision to guarantee the right to Castilian as the lingua franca of instruction was removed (Tomás 2020). Other pro-Catalan independence parties abstained in the *Congreso de los Diputados*, arguing that the law did not go far enough to protect the use of the Catalan language in schools (Tomás 2020).[[12]](#footnote-12) This example shows the limits of religion policy: if not sufficiently coupled with other autonomy goals, the religion policy alone may lose effectiveness depending on parties’ other programmatic constraints. At the subnational level, the OAR in Barcelona coordinated with the Ciutat Vella District’s Educational Resources Center to create a “Places of worship, spaces to discover” program in 2008 (Ajuntament de Barcelona, OAR 2016). As of 2016, over 4000 students between 14 and 16 years old visited sacred spaces of different faiths across Barcelona.[[13]](#footnote-13) This unique program further contributes to the multicultural portrait of Catalan identity that political elites seek to paint before national-level officials, one that is not only symbolic, but also results in resources directed to meaningful programs.

This portrait of a multicultural, religiously-plural Catalan community is not relegated to the policy sphere alone; it is reflected in its society. A survey conducted in 2020 by the Centre d’Etudis d’Opinió found high levels of knowledge about the presence of multiple traditions’ worship sites in the region: More than 80% of Catalans knew of mosques and Jehovah’s Witness churches in Catalonia, and 72.4% knew of evangelical or other Protestant churches. Additionally, 2/3 of Catalans believe that knowledge of different religions in the region is important. Nearly half have close friends of different faiths (DGAR 2020). Once the last land of resistance to the Nationalists, Catalonia continues to distinguish itself from Spain in its contemporary approach to religious pluralism.

**Alsace-Moselle: Multiculturalism in a Laic State**

Alsace-Moselle is one of 22 *régions* in France. The region has a unique identity stemming from a long history caught between two state powers. Although autonomist movements have tempered since the early 1900s, Alsace-Moselle elites continue to leverage the timing of their integration with France (see Table 3 below) to distinguish the region from the state. The Protestant Reformation brought new theology and everyday practice to Alsatian cities, particularly Luther’s (German) teachings in Strasbourg and Zwingli’s (Swiss) in Mulhouse (McQuillan 1999). Alsace-Lorraine was returned to France at the conclusion of World War I, occupied by Nazi Germany, and again restored to France in 1945, where it has since continued to grapple with questions of multi-level governance. Alsace-Moselle is a useful case for tracing strategic subnational differentiation due to its unique ability within mainland France to rely on historical legal exceptions, particularly regarding religion.

*Contestation Over Community and Authority in France*

When Alsace-Moselle returned to French rule in 1918, residents were divided on questions of identity (Carrol and Zanoun 2011). Under German rule, Alsace-Moselle had gained a measure of autonomy in 1911 with a regional legislature in Strasbourg (Carrol and Zanoun 2011), so residents had previous organizing power on this issue and had experienced a rapid loss of autonomy when France took over. Alsace-Moselle fit squarely on the pro-peripheral side of the center-periphery cleavage, and subnational identity was salient to the public, as early 1900s contestation demonstrates.

**Table 3. Center-periphery and secular-clerical contestation in Alsace-Moselle, France, and Germany over time.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Center-Periphery Cleavage** | **Years** | **Secular-Clerical Cleavage** |
| Franco-Prussian War  Prussian victory over France (1871) gives Alsace-Lorraine to Prussia | 1870-1871 |  |
|  | 1882 | Jules Ferry secular education law passes in France |
|  | 1905 | Law separating church and state in France passes |
| Alsace-Lorraine gains regional legislature from Germany | 1911 |  |
| World War I | 1914-1918 |  |
| Treaty of Versailles gives Alsace-Moselle to France | 1919 |  |
|  | 1924 | Alsatians organize for religious liberty |
| “Bloody Sunday” clashes between pro- and anti-French forces | 1926 |  |
| Colmar Trials | 1928 |  |
| World War II; Alsatians move closer to France in opposition to Nazis  Potsdam Agreement (1945) restores independent France under which Alsace-Moselle is subsumed | 1939-1945 |  |
|  | 2013 | French education reforms establish laicism curriculum; Alsace-Moselle retains right to religious instruction per 1801 concordat  French court upholds compatibility of 1801 concordat in Alsace-Moselle with French constitution |
|  | 2015 | Day of Secularity declared |
|  | 2018 | MPs from Alsace-Moselle seek expansion of religious instruction to Islam without success |

After 47 years under German rule, Alsace-Moselle was decidedly distinct from France (Goodfellow 1993). Nearly everyone in Alsace-Moselle spoke Alsatian German as their primary language, and German was the lingua franca in public and media discourse (Carrol and Zanoun 2011). Those who had retained French were primarily in the urban middle-upper class (Carrol and Zanoun 2011). The region had greater religious diversity than the rest of France: in the Bas-Rhin province (where Strasbourg is located), 62% of the population was Catholic and 29% was Protestant (Carrol and Zanoun 2011). Most Alsatian Protestants were Lutheran like their German neighbors and unlike the Calvinist French (Carrol and Zanoun 2011).[[14]](#footnote-14)

Although the French government initially promised respect for Alsace-Moselle’s cultural distinctiveness, in reality the state repressed attempts at distinction or autonomy. This dynamic parallels Catalonia’s history, particularly during the civil war and recent independence referenda, wherein the state repressed subnational authority claims when it was politically advantageous. The French state removed 100,000 Germans, Alsatians, and Lorrainers who had worked for Germany from Moselle—approximately 20% of its population—to create a more France-friendly territory, which harmed the government’s reputation (Carrol and Zanoun 2011). The *Services d’Alsace et de Lorraine*, the primary national government office responsible for this territory, later shifted towards cultural integration efforts, though Paris-based officials maintained assimilationist goals (Goodfellow 1993).

Importantly, the timing of authority transfers meant that Alsace-Moselle was not part of France when Prime Minister Jules Ferry successfully passed education reforms (Byrnes 1999), nor is it bound by the 1905 law that established new church-state relations. Education reforms in the 1880s mandated secular public education taught in French (another example of the state taking a pro-center position along the center-periphery cleavage) (Byrnes 1999; Kuru 2009).[[15]](#footnote-15) The French debate over church-state relations was not new; the 1905 law refers to a 1795 constitution that had established a secular state when Alsace-Lorraine was part of France (Kuru 2009). However, the shuffling of Alsace-Moselle between Germany and France meant that the region had an exception to what remains the French mode of church-state relations today, as I discuss below.

Within Alsace there is a history of division along the secular-religious cleavage dating back to the Enlightenment. The Lutheran Church accepted a compatibility between rational thought and religion and accommodated government secularization. The decoupling of church and state in France elevated the relative status of the Lutheran Church by weakening the absolute Catholic power in the state. In response to this status loss, the Catholic Church resisted Enlightenment ideas and state secularization, especially in rural, poorer Alsatian communities. This contestation reflected quotidian conflicts between Catholics and Lutherans leading up to Napoleon’s 1801 Concordat with the Vatican, which were fought over church facility use, the religion in which infants were baptized, and other community arrangements (McQuillan 1999). Alsatians had not been part of the most recent debates along the secular-clerical divide when they re-joined France. However, historic contestation had entrenched strong religious identities—particularly for Catholics (McQuillan 1999)—which re-emerge(d) when questions of religion and community regain(ed) salience in the past and today. Religious communities and leaders were among several groups that sought autonomy for Alsace-Moselle in the 20th century, with religion policy as a key path to (partially) achieving this goal.

Autonomy movements peaked in the 1920s. After the 1924 election, Premier Edouard Harriot proposed extending all legislation to the whole Republic, which worried Catholic leaders in Alsace-Moselle, as it would subject the region to the 1905 law (Carrol and Zanoun 2011; Goodfellow 1993). In response, 50,000 Alsatians protested in Strasbourg, and Alsatian Archbishop Ruch established the *Comité d’Action et de Défense des Libertés et Traditions Religieuses en Alsace et en Lorraine* as one of several religious and secular counter-mobilization forums (Carrol and Zanoun 2011; Goodfellow 1993).

In addition to civil society movements, the first Alsatian autonomist party, the *Parti Alsacien*, emerged in 1924, and several others followed (Carrol and Zanoun 2011). In Moselle, autonomist parties appealed to the Protestant minority, who sought insulation from secular (and historically Catholic) French authority (Carrol and Zanoun 2011). Alsatian Catholics also formed a Christian Democratic party, the *Union Populaire Républicaine* (UPR) as a guard against secular education reforms (Carrol and Zanoun 2011). Regionalist parties did not own the issue of autonomy in Alsace-Moselle; mainstream parties, especially socialist and communist parties, also negotiated for autonomy with state officials (Carrol and Zanoun 2011; Goodfellow 1993). These autonomist movements superseded ideological divides and did not align fully with either neighboring state:

...for most Alsatians autonomism was neither pro-German nor anti-French. Rather, it grew out of attachment to religious, cultural and linguistic particularities that had developed during the years of annexation, firstly in reaction to widespread anti-German sentiment, and secondly in response to the Reichsland’s position within a federal state. For Paris, on the other hand, it was a distinctly anti-French movement. (Carrol and Zanoun 2011, 475)

As these parties gained support, the central government felt a growing threat (Carrol and Zanoun 2011). Pro-French activists clashed with autonomists at a rally co-organized by UPR and the French Communist Party on “Bloody Sunday” in 1926, which strengthened polarization in the region (Goodfellow 1993). The state government further feared this movement as Germany financially supported autonomist publications such as *Die Zunkunft*, which gained 30,000 readers in its first year (Carrol and Zanoun 2011). Although most autonomists did not favor returning to German rule, there were more cultural affinities with Germany than with France, and the question of national identity was explored in media from journalism to theatre and literature (Goodfellow 1993). By late 1927, France banned separatist newspapers (though some continued underground) and arrested 15 leaders of the Alsatian autonomist movement (Carrol and Zanoun 2011; Goodfellow 1993).

The arrests created a conundrum for the central government, because among the arrestees were UPR members Joseph Rossé and Eugène Ricklin, who were elected to the *Assemblé Nationale* in April 1928 (Carrol and Zanoun 2011; Goodfellow 1993). In the highly publicized Colmar Trials in May 1928, four of them, including Rossé and Ricklin, were found guilty of plots against the state (Carrol and Zanoun 2011; Goodfellow 1993). They were subsequently pardoned in the wake of violent protests, which France feared would spread beyond Alsace-Moselle’s borders (Carrol and Zanoun 2011).

Autonomist movements faded around 1929 after the central government offered more authority to Alsace-Moselle and France appeared to have a more stable economy and government compared to Germany (Goodfellow 1993). As the Nazi Party gained control of Germany, Alsatians across party lines grew closer to France; among other reasons for opposition, the Nazis were anti-Catholic (Goodfellow 1993).

During the Nazi occupation of France, regional autonomy was unfathomable, but the underlying territorial identity question resurfaced at the end of World War II. The new French Republic was overall less forcibly assimilationist compared to the Interwar Period, though the Popular Front made a brief attempt to impose secular education in Alsace-Moselle in the 1950s (Goodfellow 1993). Since then, there has been a rigid divide between national French religion policy and the subnational policy in Alsace-Moselle, and regional elites continue to push to widen this gap as one tool of identity distinction.

*National-level Religion Policy in France*

In France, the government emphasizes freedom fromreligious influence in the public sphere. Universality and equality underpin the conceptualization of French citizenship; what binds individuals is a set of shared, secular values (c.f. Freedman 2004). French politicians and citizens have long debated how and under what conditions to apply the principle of *laïcité* (Bowen 2007), particularly with respect to Muslims (Fernando 2014; Kuru 2009).

Several foundational documents underpin the governance of religion in France. The 1905 *Loi sur la séparation de l’Église et l’État* severed the 1801 concordat between France and the Catholic Church and re-established a secular public sphere. This entailed eradicating state budgets for churches (resulting in 42,000 unpaid priests) and requiring all religious organizations to register with the state as *associations cultuelles* (Art. 2; Kuru 2009). Still, Catholic Church retains a privileged status today as the historically-majority religion, and the state retains ownership of and funds maintenance for religious buildings constructed prior to 1905 (Art. 3), most of which are Catholic buildings.

Although 1905 is frequently associated with *laïcité*, this term does not actually appear in the text of this law. Rather, *laïcité* enters public discourse with the 1946 and 1958 constitutions. During this period, the mainstream conservative party, *Mouvement Républican Populaire*, and Vatican II (1962-1965) softened their stances towards secularism, so long as secularism was conceptualized as a principle of religious liberty rather than an endorsement of atheism or absence of morality (Kuru 2009). Yet the debate over the meaning of *laïcité* continues to evolve with the composition of France’s religious diversity. The malleability of this term makes it a useful rhetorical tool that elites can shape to target particular constituencies. In a speech about his government’s proposed anti-(Islamist) separatism bill, President Emmanuel Macron (*La République en Marche!*, EM) speaks to the debate and defines *laïcité* in strategic terms to legitimize his policies (Macron 2020):

The problem isn’t laïcité [secularism]. As I’ve said on several occasions, laïcité in the French Republic means the freedom to believe or not believe, the possibility of practicing one’s religion as long as law and order is ensured. Laïcité means the neutrality of the State; in no way does it mean the removal of religion from society and the public arena. **A united France is cemented by laïcité.** (Official translation from the French Foreign Ministry; emphasis added)[[16]](#footnote-16)

Critically, Macron emphasizes throughout this speech the universality of *laïcité* and its meaning to a unified French identity, while simultaneously drawing attention to a specific religious out-group whose values differ from universal French values. He compares deviation from one type of value along the secular-clerical divide to deviation from French national community. Underneath the *nous et notre*, the “we and ours,” lies a set of principles about social organization and governance that is not as universal as the President paints it to be, as evidenced by increased state surveillance and “identity checks” in predominantly Arab and Black Parisian neighborhoods commonly referred to as *banlieues* (Human Rights Watch 2020).

Within the last decade, debates over *laïcité* have also referenced the past secular-clerical cleavage in France directly, thus highlighting the role of history in shaping contemporary political opportunity structures. In 2013, the *Assemblé Nationale* discussed a proposed law on religious neutrality in businesses and organizations. Éric Cotti (of the center-right *Les Republicans*, LR) opened the debate by implying that migration of Muslims to France has posed a new test of this semi-frozen cleavage (Assemblé Nationale 2019a):

This French laicism is the result of a long history that was not simple. **If we are, happily, today quite far from the affronts of the beginning of the 20th century, certain recent developments of religious practice in our country pose new questions** to which it is our duty to respond. This is a matter of the cohesion of our society. **A number of our citizens have the feeling, before the multiplication of attacks on the principle of laicism, of a certain recoil of our national unity.** It bears saying and repeating: without the respect of the principle of laicism, there cannot be national cohesion in our country. (Assemblé Nationale 2013b, emphasis added)[[17]](#footnote-17)

The debate over the meaning and application of *laïcité* has been particularly salient in the education system. In January 2015, under the *Parti Socialiste* (PS), the French government deemed 9 December a “Day of Secularity.” Additionally, education minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem announced a new moral-civic curriculum for public schools that would emphasize *laïcité* alongside the values of the national motto: *liberté*, *egalité*, *fraternité* (France24 2015; Vallaud-Belkacem 2015). This program fulfills part of a 2013 education reform law (*la loi du 8 juillet 2013*), which seeks to build a foundation of civic values and engagement (Vallaud-Belkacem 2015). In debating these reforms, MPs on the left discussed *laïcité* and referenced the Jules Ferry reforms. Thierry Braillard (*Parti radical de gauche*, PRG), praised laicism as a necessary element of republican French ideals (Assemblé Nationale 2019b):

This demand is all the more contemporary, as one observes sometimes, within the youth of our country, a revitalized individualism that does not recognize but few common moral rules. Believing in the virtue of education is also one of the foundations of the republican idea. You understand, therefore, that the representative of the party of Jules Ferry greets with enthusiasm the instilling of the moral of laicism! (Assemblé Nationale 2013a)[[18]](#footnote-18)

Then-education minister Vincent Peillon (PS) echoed Braillard and tied laic and republican values to the meaning of national community explicitly:

We are going to, therefore, remind the country that its tradition is to unite morals and politics, that **the moral of laicism is an essential element of the republican pact** and that **if one abstains from defending it**, one weakens the country and **one renders the construction of a national community impossible**. (Assemblé Nationale 2013, emphasis added) [[19]](#footnote-19)

No other party representatives discussed the laicism part of the reform bill in the formal question session, though we see through Macron (below) and 2017/2022 presidential candidate Marine Le Pen (*Rassemblément national*, RN) similar support for *laïcité* as an essential value of French identity.

Among the stated goals of this education reform was to counter “—isms” such as antisemitism, though notably, the education ministry did not mention islamophobia despite the fact that Islam is the largest minority religion in France and the salient out-group in conversations about *laïcité* (Ministère de l’Éducation national 2018).[[20]](#footnote-20) The moral-civic curriculum, the details of which are in Appendix C, includes lessons on the meanings of secularism, cultural competence, and respect for others’ beliefs (France24 2015). Of particular note is the emphasis on contrasting belief and knowledge—reminiscent of clashes between Catholicism and science during the Enlightenment, again illustrating the political opportunity structures created by the past—and contrasting the right to believe in a religion and to believe nothing. Minority religions are not the primary emphasis of this civic education initiative; rather, students are taught that a specific way of respecting or tolerating different individual belief systems is in itself a collective, and French,value.

In the same 2020 speech discussed above, Macron highlights education as a core pillar in his strategy towards combatting Islamist separatism and promoting French Republican values. Speaking to the value of schools for civic education, he calls the (nationally- and publicly-run) school “the heart of the laic space” (“*le coeur de l’espace de la laïcité”*) and “our collective treasure” that allows the French to discuss what is shared in the Republic (Macron 2020).[[21]](#footnote-21) He further announces in this speech that education in a formal institution—not homeschooling—will be mandatory from age three beginning in 2021 (Macron 2020). This change is part of anti-separatist reforms to ensure that youth receive civic education in a particularly-defined way with respect to approaches to religion and other civic values embedded in a national French identity. As I discuss in the next section, it is precisely via religious education policy that elites in Alsace-Moselle seek to differentiate the region from a national French order.

*Religion Policy in Alsace-Moselle*

Although separatism has waned in the region, Alsatians continue to leverage religion policy to construct a community identity that differs from the French national prototype and expand its devolved authority. On 1 June 1924, the region was legally shielded from the *Cartel des gauches* alliance’s attempt to reverse Alsace-Moselle’s exception 1905 church-state law (“Le droit des cultes” 2019; Goodfellow 1993). Although there is not an office dedicated wholly to religion as in Catalonia, the *Office pour la langue et les cultures d’Alsace et de Moselle* (OLCA) has overseen the region’s cultural affairs since 1994, including the promotion of German/bilingual church services (OLCA n.d., ab). The *Académie de Strasbourg* also partners with the national education ministry to manage the region’s unique religious education program, as I discuss below. Such programs matter to the region, as Alsace-Moselle’s population is more religious than the rest of France.[[22]](#footnote-22)

In lieu of the 1905 law, the 1801 concordat still applies in Alsace-Moselle. This provides public funding for Catholic clergy and public recognition of Catholic holy days. Given their historical status as core minority groups, rabbis and Protestant (Calvinist/Lutheran) ministers have also received public funding since 1831 and 1804, respectively (Fernando 2014, 111). The 1958 French constitution guarantees legal equality for all citizens regardless of religion and defines the country by its secularism (Art. I). In 2013, *le Conseil constitutionnel* upheld the status of Alsace-Moselle’s church-state framework as compatible with the French constitution (Décision no. 2012-297 QPC du 21 février 2013).

As in Catalonia, but unlike the rest of France, public schools in Alsace-Moselle offer instruction in the four traditions recognized by the 1801 concordat, though parents may opt out on their children’s behalf (“Le droit des cultes” 2019). Alsace-Moselle departs from Catalonia in its relations with Islam due to limitations from the French national government. In 2006, a commission proposed to include Islam in public education, at which time approximately 100,000 Muslims lived in the region (Ministère de l’Intérieur 2006). Political elites have continued to debate this possibility in national forums, without success thus far. However, the nature of their discourse illustrates how elites discuss the relationship between religion and community and are willing to break from their own party members at the national level on this policy area.

In the same 2013 education debate discussed above, a representative from Haut-Rhin raises the point that in her *département*, the concordatarian system offers a means of cooperation between government and religious organizations. There are pronounced differences between members of the same party who represent Alsace-Moselle versus other communities on this issue. Arlette Grosskost (LR) offers a different take on the effects of the changing religious landscape on the French community than her co-partisan Éric Cotti above (Assemblé Nationale 2019c):

Today, Islam is the second religion of France. Is it understandable that in 2013, Muslims, equally citizens and contributors, be excluded from the Concordat? **Should we continue to veil our faces, or take a courageous step to integrate Islam into the concordatarian regime?** (Assemblé Nationale 2013b, emphasis added)[[23]](#footnote-23)

Later in the debate, Grosskost reinforces her view that adapting Alsace-Moselle’s unique concordatarian system to include Islam would advance goals of “interreligious dialogue,” similar to the phrasing of Catalonia’s education policy initiatives, even while members of her own party espouse a less inclusive interpretation of *laïcité* (Assemblé Nationale 2013b). Interestingly, while Grosskost highlights the achievements and potential of Alsace-Moselle’s policy, she simultaneously points to benefits for the national community. The importance of subnational distinction need not necessarily be exclusive of national identity, but Grosskost counters the way the state constructs this national identity.

Absent a policy change, Bruno Fuchs, who represents Haut-Rhin in the *Assemblé Nationale* (EM), raised this question of religious education before the national education ministry in 2018 (Quéstion No 4739). Fuchs points to the values of diversity and cultural competence reflected in Alsatian-Mosellan classes that focus on religion as part of culture rather than confessional courses:

In effect, it is the school’s role to allow each child to have the possibility of discovering the culture of another from the youngest age possible and to be a vector of integration. **In a context of increasing ignorance about religious traditions**, a religious course designed as an education in interreligious and intercultural dialogue permits a better and reciprocal comprehension among students from different cultural and religious places and can help **reinforce tolerance**. (Quéstion No 4739, emphasis added)[[24]](#footnote-24)

Fuchs paints a contrast between French society and that of Alsace-Moselle, wherein the latter seeks to overcome the national dearth of interreligious understanding via public education. However, the state re-asserts its supremacy and underscores in its response to Fuchs that the French government intends to constrain Alsace-Moselle’s distinct authority to the letter of the historical law. That is, Alsace-Moselle is limited to public religious education for Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism. In the face of demographic change and dynamic policy needs, specifically to address the integration of Muslims, Alsace-Moselle authorities have the minimum autonomy possible to respond in any way that diverges from the will of the national government, as the *Ministère de l’Education Nationale*’s response to Fuchs makes clear:

The State therefore would not know, on the basis of local law, how to organize and finance the teaching of another religion, notably the Muslim tradition, in public schools in these departments...Another consequence resides in the fact that the **organization of confessional teaching in public schools in these departments for these four religions constitutes a truly heavy obligation upon the State**...So, **given that when the placement of courses of “religious culture” or “interreligious teaching” in place of religious teachings necessarily would have the consequence of emptying these teachings of their confessional character, such a measure could not be considered legal with regard to obligations for which the State is responsible in this domain**. (Quéstion No 4739, emphasis added)[[25]](#footnote-25)

This exchange between an Alsatian MP and the education ministry, headed by the same party, is an example of contestation over the nature of French community, wherein a regional elite seeks differentiation from the national framework of mono-cultural, laic republicanism in favor of multiculturalism.Here, this demand for self-rule comes from a member of the same party that governs at the state level, *En Marche!*, which differs from the range of Catalan regionalist parties contesting authority, none of whom are governing parties outside of Catalonia. Party families thus do not sufficiently explain subnational identity construction or demands for self-governance. Rather, as was the case in both regions in the early 20th century, issues of subnational identity transcend today’s multiculturalism cleavage (within geographic-specific contextual boundaries) by intersecting with the center-periphery cleavage.

**Discussion**

The cases in this study offer insights into the dynamic relationship between religion and (sub)national identity. In both Spain and France, the national government moved from intrinsic ties to the Catholic Church to formal separation of church and state over the 19th and 20th centuries, though France binds its *laïcité* to its national identity more strongly than Spain does today. Catalonia and Alsace-Moselle both house greater religious diversity than the rest of the state and have unique community identities that religious institutions have a history of defending. A comparison of the historical and contemporary contestation over religion and identity in these regions highlights several elements of subnational distinction strategy.

Historical political structures set countries—and regions within them—on paths to contemporary political landscapes, and these paths need not converge. Church-state relations, secular-clerical contestation, and autocratic repression using religious tools leave lasting impacts on the relationship between religion and (sub)national identity. Paired with violence and information control, universalizing regional traditions is a repressive strategy found in both 1920s France and mid-Franco-era Spain. Yet religion is a fruitful source of subnational resistance in Alsace-Moselle and Catalonia. As subnational community members became increasingly aware of nationalization through changes in daily life, salience of Catalan/Alsatian identity increased and found allies in the church.

Critically, elites in both national and regionalist parties have an incentive to leverage religion as rhetoric and as a policy tool. The religion-territorial identity relationship evolves according to context-specific political arenas and moments and is not bound by party family lines. In Spain, regionalist parties abound, and we can observe regionalists across the traditional left-right spectrum advocating for Catalan autonomy, though more recently these efforts lean left. A similar pattern undergirded autonomist movements in Alsace-Moselle in the 1920s. Today, Alsatian MPs are contesting members of their own national-level parties—recently LR and EM on the center-right—to advocate for religious diversity initiatives. Overall, regional political elites in both cases take the opposite approach from the state vis à vis accommodation of religious diversity. This phenomenon does not map perfectly onto the secular-clerical cleavage à la Lipset and Rokkan, in that subnational governments are not moving to the extreme of clerical government in response to secular national governments. Yet subnational political elites can take a semi-clerical position by promoting religious diversity in a way that distinguishes the community from the state.

An important caveat to the argument that tolerance of religious diversity is a useful elite strategy for subnational distinction is that public reception of such tolerance varies. The regions discussed here are divided on questions of religious diversity, especially regarding the accommodation of Muslim populations. Indeed, Marine Le Pen did well in Alsace-Moselle in the 2017 presidential election, and rural parts of Catalonia are less globally-oriented than Barcelona (see Maxwell 2019 for a discussion of rural-urban divisions on immigration). It is worth noting, therefore, that a subnational religious diversity strategy can be risky, and it may be de-emphasized or re-framed near election periods according to the perceived voter positions and issue salience (Koedam 2022).

Religion policy is not the only domain for constructing subnational distinctiveness. However, where authority allocation permits due to historic timing of changes in geo-political boundaries and church-government relations, religion offers a strong connection to historical territorial identities and new social identities brought by contemporary migration. What’s more, religious institutions have longstanding histories as supporters of and defenders against the state and continue to shape communities even as traditional practice declines (Shady 2022). As states grapple with changes in their religious population, their historic religious-community landscape will remain a useful tool for political elites seeking subnational authority.

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**Appendix**

**Appendix A. Original language quotes**

All translations into English are the author’s except where noted in the main text of the article. Emphasis added mirrors author’s emphasis in the main text.

**A.1**

« Los ejércitos franquistas lucharon en la Guerra Civil en términos de Cruzada, y esta fue precisamente la característica mitificada por los ritos de victoria…una proyección mítica a lo largo del tiempo, una reconstrucción de enfrentamientos pasados —de la Reconquista en particular…. »

**A.2**

« Ninguna confesión tendrá carácter estatal. Los poderes públicos tendrán en cuenta las creencias religiosas de la sociedad española y mantendrán las consiguientes relaciones de cooperación con la Iglesia Católica y las demás confesiones. » (Constitución Española, Art. 16, S. 3).

“No confession will have special state character. The public powers will keep in mind the religious beliefs of Spanish society and will maintain the relevant cooperative relations with the Catholic Church and the rest of the confessions.”

**A.3**

« ¿Qué quiere decir esta afirmación de la libertad religiosa? **Quiere decir que ha concluido el derecho antiguo, que ha concluido un período histórico del derecho, que se ha franqueado un trance desarrollado a través de los siglos y que tiene, aquí, un gran epílogo majestuoso**…no sólo la libertad religiosa es una consecuencia lógica, necesaria, indeclinable de los derechos individuales, sino que la libertad religiosa está ya aprobada en la Constitución. »

**A.4**

« Així, aquesta llei, des de la laïcitat és a dir, des del respecte a totes les opcions religioses i de pensament i a llurs valors, com a principi integrador i marc comú de convivència., vol regular els centres de culte en termes de neutralitat i amb l'única finalitat de facilitar l'exercici del culte i de preservar la seguretat i la salubritat dels locals i els drets fonamentals de tots els ciutadans relatius a l'ordre públic. D'aquesta manera, i des de la col·laboració, **vol enfortir uns valors que ja caracteritzen l'espai comú de la nostra societat: la convivència, el respecte a la pluralitat, la igualtat en els drets democràtics i la responsabilitat de tota la ciutadania, sense discriminacions de cap mena, en la construcció nacional de Catalunya.** »

**A.5**

« Le problème, ce n’est pas la laïcité. Je l’ai plusieurs fois rappel, la laïcité en République française, c’est la liberté de croire ou de ne pas croire, la possibilité d’excercer son culte à partir du moment où l’ordre public est assuré. La laïcité, c’est la neutralité de l’État et en aucun cas l’effacement des religions dans la société dans l’espace public. **La laïcité, c’est le ciment de la France unie**. »

**A.6**

« Cette laïcité à la française est le résultat d’une longue histoire qui n’a pas été simple. **Si nous sommes, heureusement, aujourd’hui bien loin des affrontements du début du XXe siècle, certains développements récents de la pratique religieuse dans notre pays posent de nouvelles questions** auxquelles il est de notre devoir de répondre. Il en va de la cohésion de notre société. **Nombre de nos citoyens ont le sentiment, devant la multiplication des atteintes au principe de laïcité, d’un certain recul de notre unité nationale.** Il faut le dire et le répéter: sans le respect du principe de laïcité, il ne peut y avoir dans notre pays de cohésion nationale. »

**A.7**

« Cette exigence est d’autant plus contemporaine que l’on observe parfois, au sein de la jeunesse de notre pays, un individualisme relativiste ne reconnaissant que bien peu de règles morales communes. Croire en la vertu de l’éducation est aussi l’un des fondements de l’idée républicaine. Vous comprendrez donc que le représentant du parti de Jules Ferry salue avec enthousiasme l’instauration de la morale laïque! »

**A.8**

« Nous allons donc rappeler au pays que sa tradition est d’unir morale et politique, que **la morale laïque est un élément essentiel du pacte républicain** et que **si l’on s’abstient de la défendre**,on affaiblit le pays et **on rend impossible la construction d’une communauté nationale.** »

**A.9**

« L’école est donc notre trésor collectif. C’est ce qui permet dans notre société de bâtir ce commun qu’est la République. »

**A.10**

« Aujourd’hui, l’islam est la deuxième religion de France. Est-il compréhensible qu’en 2013, les musulmans, également citoyens et contribuables, soient exclus du Concordat? **Devons-nous continuer à nous voiler la face, ou faire un pas courageux pour intégrer l’islam dans le régime concordataire?***»*

**A.11**

« En effet, c’est le rôle de l’école de permettre à chaque enfant d’avoir la possibilité de découvrir la culture de l’autre dès le plus jeune âge et d’être un vecteur d'intégration. **Dans un contexte d’ignorance croissante sur les traditions religieuses**, un cours de religion conçu comme une éducation au dialogue interreligieux et interculturel permettrait une meilleure compréhension réciproque entre élèves provenant de milieux culturels et religieux différents et peut aider à **renforcer la tolérance**. »

**A.12**

« L’État ne saurait donc, sur le fondement du droit local, organiser et financer l'enseignement d’un autre culte, notamment du culte musulman, dans les écoles publiques de ces départements…Une autre conséquence réside dans le fait que **l’organisation d'un enseignement confessionnel dans les écoles publiques de ces départements pour ces quatre cultes constitue une véritable obligation pesant sur l’État**…Ainsi, **dès lors que la mise en place de cours de « culture religieuse » ou « d'enseignement interreligieux » à la place des enseignements religieux aurait nécessairement pour conséquence de vider ces enseignements de leur caractère confessionnel, une telle mesure ne pourrait être considérée comme légale au regard des obligations qui incombent à l’État dans ce domaine***.* »

**Appendix B. Religious Affiliation Statistics.**

**B.1. Catalonia and Spain.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Religion** | **Catalonia (%)a** | **Spain (%)b** |
| Catholicism | 53.0% | 63.2% |
| Other Christian Denominations c | 9.3% | 3.5% |
| Islam | 4.3% | 1.5% |
| Other d | 3.4% | 0.1% |
| No religion | 27.2% | 29.7% |
| a Source: Baròmetre sobre la religiositat i sobre la gestió de la seva diversitat,  Direcció General d'Afers Religiosos (DGAR), 2020. Figures do not sum to 100% due to non-responses.  b Source: Redes Sociales/Religión III (Estudio n. 3194), Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS), 2018. With the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). <http://www.cis.es/cis/opencm/EN/1_encuestas/estudios/ver.jsp?estudio=14366> Figures do not sum to 100% due to non-responses.  c Non-Catholic Christians are collapsed in a single category for comparability across Catalan and Spanish surveys. In Catalonia, other Christian denominations include Evangelical Protestantism, Jehovah’s Witness, and Orthodox Christianity. In Spain, they include Protestantism, Jehovah’s Witness, general Christianity, and Orthodox Christianity.  d Judaism is a historically important religion in Spain, but was not disaggregated in either dataset. | | |

**B.2. Alsace-Moselle and France.[[26]](#footnote-26)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Religion** | **Alsace-Moselle (%)a** | **France (%)b** |
| Catholicism | 71.6% (Alsace), 81% (Moselle) | 59.63% |
| Other Christian Denominations c | 8.8% | 3.53% |
| Islam | 35.58%d | 7.60% |
| Judaism e | Percentage unavailable | 0.71% |
| Other f | Percentage unavailable | 1.63% |
| No religion | Percentage unavailable | 24.06% |
| a Source: Zwilling 2020. Zwilling’s sociological study of religion in Alsace-Moselle v. France compiles the most recent subnational statistics available, whose years vary across traditions because religion data is rarely systematically collected in France, even less so at subnational levels, due to legal restrictions. The Catholic figure is from 2010; Protestant (other Christian) from 2006.  b Source: Brown, Davis, and Patrick James. (2019, February 10). Religious Characteristics of States Dataset Project - Demographics v. 2.0 (RCS-Dem 2.0), COUNTRIES ONLY. <https://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/RCSDEM2.asp>  Data represent percentages in 2015, and they are roughly similar to the percentages in 2011 for comparison to available data for Alsace-Moselle (see Zwilling 2020). Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding and aggregated nature of dataset.  c All non-Catholic Christians collapsed for comparability across datasets. In the France data, this contains all Protestants, including Anglicans, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Pentecostals, and Orthodox Christians. In France, Lutherans, the Protestants most historically relevant for Alsace-Moselle, comprise 0.45% of the population. In the Alsace-Moselle data, this contains Lutherans, the Reformed Church, various evangelical sects, and Mennonites. Zwilling (2020) considers Orthodox and Coptic populations separately but no precise figure of these groups in Alsace-Moselle is available.  d According to 2018 nationality stats (<https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/5397757?geo=REG-44&sommaire=5397790>), 35.58% of the population of Grand-Est (region that includes Alsace-Moselle plus just added small Champagne region in 2016), was born in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, or Turkey. Although this is an imperfect measure of those identifying as Muslim, the most recent religion data available at this level from IFOP, is from 2011, which is extremely outdated for a count of Muslims given 2015-present migration trends.  e While a precise figure of Jews in Alsace-Moselle is unavailable, it should be noted that the region has an Ashkenazi Jewish population (Judaism of the East) as well as a Sephardic Jewish population from French Algeria post-1970. The Jewish populations in the rest of France is predominantly Sephardic (Zwilling 2020).  f In France data, this includes Shintoism, Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Chinese folk religions, and Hinduism. No exact figure for other religions in Alsace-Moselle is available, but Zwilling (2020) notes a small presence of Hindu and Buddhist temples. | | |

**Appendix C. Moral-Civic Education Curriculum in France.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Cycle** | **Associated knowledge and competencies (*Connaissances et compétences associées*)** | **Teaching objectives**  **(*Objets d’enseignement*)** |
| **2** | Introduce laicism as the liberty to believe or to not believe  (*Aborder la laïcité comme liberté de croire ou de ne pas croire*) | Values and principles: liberty, equality, fraternity, laicism  (*Les valeurs et principes: la liberté, l’égalité, la fraternité, la laïcité*)  Beginning of the differences between believing and knowing  (*Initiation aux différences entre croire et savoir*) |
| **3** | Understanding that laicism affords everyone an equal right to exercise their own judgement freely and to demand respect of this right among others  (*Comprendre que la laïcité accorde à chacun un droit égal à exercer librement son jugement et exige le respect de ce droit chez autrui*) | Values and principles: liberty, equality, fraternity, laicism  (*Les valeurs et principes: la liberté, l’égalité, la fraternité, la laïcité*)  Laicism as liberty to think and to believe or not believe according to the School Laicism Chart[[27]](#footnote-27)  (*La laïcité comme liberté de penser et de croire ou de ne pas croire à travers la Charte de la laïcité à l’École*) |
| **4** | Understanding the concepts of rights and responsibilities of individuals in a society  (*Comprendre les notions de droits et de devoirs des individus dans une société*)  Understanding the stakes of laicism  (*Comprendre les enjeux de la laïcité*) | The principle of laicism and the expression of philosophic and religious convictions  (*Le principe de laïcité et l’expression des convictions philosophiques et religieuses*)  The principles of laicism: liberty of conscience and equality of citizens  (*Les principes de la laïcité: liberté de conscience et égalité des citoyens*)  School laws, the 1905 law, the 2004 law  (*Les lois scolaires, la loi de 1905, la loi de 2004*) |

Source: Le Minstère de l’Éducation Nationale. 2018. *Bulletin officiel no 20 du 26-7-2018*. Original French in parentheses, author’s translation. For additional educational tools regarding *laïcité*, see <https://eduscol.education.fr/1618/la-laicite-l-ecole> .

1. In Lipset and Rokkan’s (1967) framework, Spain and France are allied with the Catholic Church following the Reformation, then experience democratic-secular revolutions. The states diverge during the Industrial Revolution, with Spanish politics focusing on landowner class interests and French politics on the urban working class. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Traditional/Nationalist/Authoritarian (Hooghe and Marks 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In addition to careful study of historical accounts, I select two cases for which familiarity with the states’ primary languages permits me to read government documents and political elite exchanges in original contexts. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. These leaders were Catholic yet advocated for a new relationship between the Church and a republican Spain (Casanova 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. All translations in the text are the author’s unless otherwise noted. Original text Appendix A.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Full text and translation Appendix A.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Original text Appendix A.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See Appendix B.1 for religious affiliation statistics. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. VOX, a Spanish nationalist party and currently the fourth largest party in the Catalan regional parliament (opposition party, 11 seats, 7% vote share) does not embrace religious diversity; it holds islamophobic positions. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The OAR defines “principles of interculturality” as follows: “1. To guarantee the **right to freedom of religion and conscience** among Barcelona’s citizens, reversing situations of inequality and difficulties in access that may arise in this area. 2. To facilitate knowledge and recognition of the **religious plurality** found in the city. 3. To create **spaces for participation, dialogue and positive interaction** between people of various beliefs and convictions and with all other citizens” (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2021; original in English; emphasis in original). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Translated via Google. Original text Appendix A.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. These parties include JxCat, PDeCat, and CUP. In the Congress of Deputies, the vote was 178 votes in favor, 147 opposed, and 17 abstentions. Other parties in favor include PSOE, Podemos, and PNV. Primary opposition stems from the PP. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The program was designed for students in the third and fourth years of secondary school. Girona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet schools also participated. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Moselle was both more francophone and more Catholic (92% of the population in 1918) than Alsace. Resistance to French rule in this province still existed to a lesser extent than in Alsace (see Carrol and Zanoun 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Students had a day off to access religious instruction if parents so wished (Kuru 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Original text Appendix A.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Original text Appendix A.6. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Original text Appendix A.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Original text Appendix A.8. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. President Emmanuel Macron uses the same tactic in his October 2020 speech on separatism. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Original text Appendix A.9. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See Appendix B.2 for religious affiliation statistics. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Original text Appendix A.10. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Original text Appendix A.11. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Original text Appendix A.12. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. French law considerably restricts data collection on religious and ethnic identities, and even non-governmental data is sparse. Although the European Values Survey has collected data on religious identification down to the NUTS II level, comparison with other sources suggests that the EVS undersamples religious minorities, and there is a small-N for the NUTS II region containing Alsace and Moselle. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. This is a visible set of principles regarding laicism and the respect for individual religious liberty that is displayed in public schools. For full text, see: <https://www.education.gouv.fr/bo/13/Hebdo33/MENE1322761C.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-27)