Religiosity and Openness to Authoritarian Governance

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As forces structuring political life, religion and democracy seem to represent a stark contrast. Democracy has characterized a portion of the world's political systems for what amounts to a sliver of history. It involves checks on power, commitment to procedural rules, and compromise on matters of deep social importance. And it consists of institutions and norms that check or redirect proclivities for tribalism and outgroup animosity. In contrast, religion has been central to human social organization and the way power is distributed since the earliest recorded history. For many people, religion satisfies needs to find certainty and clear purpose in a complex and unpredictable world. It is also frequently at the heart of important social identities that structure behavior and experience, often in ways that defy commitment to impartiality and deference to secular institutional procedures.

This chapter addresses a straightforward question about the link between religion and democracy: are religious citizens more open to authoritarian governance than secular citizens within countries around the world? This question has importance as both a theoretical and practical matter. On the theoretical front, social scientists have long sought to understand whether religiosity and related attributes organically relate to anti-democratic sentiment (e.g., Adorno, Frenkel-Brenswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Altemeyer, 1996; Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2012; Canetti-Nisim, 2004; Ludeke, Johnson, & Bouchard, 2013). As a practical matter, understanding the link between religious commitment and democracy attitudes can shed light on risks to the development and preservation of liberal democracy. A range of leaders who have taken authoritarian actions in their societies - such as Viktor Orban, Vladimir Putin, Narendra Modi, and Donald Trump - attract and mobilize support with appeals to traditional religion. Others, of course, do not make religion central to their appeals. Are religious people especially amenable to a leader using autocratic means to achieve desired ends?

Writing a few weeks prior to the 2020 United States election, I note that this seems to be an important time for Americans in particular to reckon with this type of question. The United States is characterized by sharp political polarization with a clear cultural-religious dimension (Mason, 2018). Within this polarized context, Americans seem to prioritize partisan and ideological considerations over democratic principles in their political behavior (Graham & Svolik, 2020). Moreover, the major American political party that appeals most to religious citizens has contributed disproportionately to the recent degradation of American democratic norms (e.g., Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018) and is lead, as of this writing, by a president who has remained overwhelmingly popular among his partisan base while flagrantly defying democratic values. How open different ideological groups are to authoritarian governance will of course vary across political and social contexts. And, historically, both secular and religious ideologies have motivated authoritarianism. But political psychologists should be open to the possibility that there are attitudinal correlates of anti-democratic sentiment within mass publics that largely transcend political contexts. In this chapter I evaluate evidence addressing whether religiosity is one such correlate. I do so with a focus on measurement and analytic issues that often complicate the interpretation of findings in this area, and I provide substantive and methodological suggestions for future research.

Religiosity

Religion manifests itself in a great variety of experiences and behaviors. This makes it challenging to settle on a single definition of religion, and likely underlies the widespread appeal of multi-dimensional conceptualizations of religiosity (e.g., Batson & Ventis, 1982; Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2012; 2013a). Of particular relevance to the potential undesirable social consequences of religion, some have distinguished religious fundamentalism from more benign

expressions of religiosity, using fundamentalism items such as, "God's true followers must remember that he requires them to constantly fight Satan and Satan's allies on this earth" (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992, p. 131) and "The Bible is the final and complete guide to morality; it contains God's answers to all important questions about right and wrong" (McFarland, 1989, p. 138).

In contrast, I presently conceptualize religiosity in the bare-bones way characteristic of survey research (e.g., Malka, 2013). First, I define religion as a belief system involving notions of supernatural power, sacredness, and transcendence, and the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that are associated with commitment to such a belief system (Saroglou & Cohen, 2013; Wulff, 1997). I then regard religiosity as individual differences in behavioral and experiential commitment to religion. In the studies reviewed here, religiosity is generally operationalized as one or more behavioral (e.g., religious attendance), experiential (e.g., personal importance of religion), belief (e.g., belief in God), or identity-based (e.g., considering oneself religious) manifestations of religious commitment. Sometimes this operationalization is unidimensional and sometimes it is multi-dimensional.

I see two advantages to this type of bare-bones conceptualization. One is widespread applicability of the components and indicators across religious cultures around the world. Belief that the bible is inerrant is characteristic of religious belief within some traditions, but not others (Layman & Green, 2006). The same is true of belief in Satan, allegiance to supreme religious figures such as the Pope or a Caliph, and adherence to specific dietary restrictions. However, individual differences in subjective importance of religion, participation in religious ritual, and prayer capture variation in a general religiosity construct that is broadly applicable across religious traditions. The second advantage of this sort of conceptualization is that indicators such

as these are not inherently tied to the liberal democratic mindset, as is the case with some religious fundamentalism items that tap intolerance of those with divergent religious beliefs or acceptance of absolute moral imperatives to block actions that contravene religious strictures. The religiosity indicators on which I presently focus, on the other hand, are neither inherently democratic nor undemocratic.

Democracy Attitudes

Narrowly defined, democracy is a political system characterized by free elections that determine who holds power. But a polity can hold regular elections while institutions and norms are in place that assure uninterrupted rule by one group regardless of the public's preferences. This is accomplished by harassing or jailing political opponents, weakening or dismantling institutions that constrain executive power, rigging electoral rules, punishing critical speech and reporting, and so on. Therefore, democracy scholars typically opt for a conceptualization that is described as "liberal democracy" or a "thick definition" of democracy, which, in addition to elections, involves separation of powers, protection of minority rights, free speech and press, institutional constraints on executive power, impartial application of the law, freedom from unjustified detention, and other features related to rule of law and open political competition (e.g., Diamond, 2008; see also Chapter 30). Of course no country is or has been fully democratic when applying this definition. However, democracy, defined this way, may be represented as a latent continuum on which countries at a particular time vary (e.g., Lindberg, Coppedge, Gerring, & Teorell, 2014).

What, then, are attitudes toward democracy? A key distinction here is that between abstract allegiance to the concept of "democracy" and unconditional rejection of authoritarian actions. Most people around the world will say in response to survey questions that

"democracy" is desirable. However, a number of these people will also report an openness to, or will fail to firmly reject, authoritarian alternatives (e.g., Graham & Svolik, 2020; Inglehart, 2003). Also, a number of these people will express unwillingness to tolerate the basic democratic rights of disliked groups (e.g., Sullivan, Pierson, & Marcus, 1982; Gibson & Gouws, 2005). Such people might continue to express support for "democracy" because they are misdefining democracy as whatever societal conditions they desire (e.g., Bratton, 2010; Kirsch & Welzel, 2019), or because they fail to consider ways in which authoritarian actions might appeal to them when they are not explicitly prompted to do so by the survey question (Kiewiet de Jonge, 2016). Therefore, I conceptualize democracy attitudes as a broad continuum reflecting both high vs. low professed support for democracy and rejection of, vs. openness to, non-democratic actions, governance structures, and norms. Such a definition captures a favorable orientation toward democracy, commitment to the "democratic creed" (political tolerance, separation of powers, etc.), and rejection of authoritarian options that might be appealing at certain times.

Why might Religiosity Relate to Democracy Attitudes?

A common view about the relationship between religiosity and democracy attitudes is that these forces are inherently in a state of tension (e.g., Altemeyer, 1996; see Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan, 2012; 2013a). This is because religious people favor traditional social structures and behavioral patterns rooted in transcendent, sacred, and nonnegotiable moral imperatives. Liberal democracy may be viewed as contradicting these imperatives because it confers on citizens who work against them equal rights to try to access power. It also defers to institutional procedures no matter the implications for sacred religious values.

This type of viewpoint is consistent with several observations. For example, Sullivan et al. (1982) noted that Western norms for political tolerance - that is, willingness to accept

political freedom for those deemed malign - evolved from efforts to moderate violent religious

conflict in Europe. Thus, a key component of liberal democracy might have specifically

emerged to counteract the destructive consequences of religious zeal. Others argue for a

natural congruence between religious sentiment and an authoritarian orientation characterized by

prioritizing obedience to traditional sources of authority and desire for such authority to deal

decisively with challenges to traditional social life (Ludeke et al., 2013; Canetti-Nissim, 2004).

Religiosity is associated with low inclination and ability to think effortfully (Razmyar & Reeve,

2013; Zuckerman, Silberman, & Hall, 2013), endorsement of traditional morality (Ben-Nun

Bloom & Arikan, 2013a; Malka, 2013), and, in some cases, ethnic antipathy (Johnson, Rowatt,

& LaBouf, 2010), all of which are linked with anti-democratic sentiment (Bartels, 2020;

Drutman, Diamond, & Goldman, 2018; Miller & Davis, 2018; Sullivan et al., 1982; Welzel,

2013). Finally, it is useful to consider attitudes toward democracy as in part reflecting a position

on the political trade-off between order and autonomy (e.g., Miller, 2017), and adherence to

religion may reflect a prioritization of order, stability, and harmonious coherence of the social

unit (e.g., Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2012; Norenzayan & Shariff, 2008).

Having said this, it quite clear that many religious people do not hold absolutist religious

convictions that incline them to support the subversion of democracy. Moreover, there are

reasons to expect that aspects of religion might even promote democracy support, at least in

certain contexts. Perhaps most importantly, as Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan (2012; 2013a;

2013b) note, social involvement in religious life has often nurtured civic mobilization skills,

which might promote greater commitment to achieving desired ends through the democratic

process. The Black American civil rights movement, which pressured the federal government to

codify and enforce liberal democratic ideals during the 20th century, was largely religious in

nature (Harvey, 2016). It is also the case that religious power structures have facilitated democratic transitions, as was the case with Catholicism during the third wave of democracy from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s (Philpott, 2004). Thus, religion has been mobilized to both promote and subvert democracy.

The Empirical Relationship between Religiosity and Democracy Attitudes

I now summarize evidence concerning the relationship between religiosity and democracy attitudes among people around the world. Space limitations preclude a comprehensive summary, but I aspire to cover large survey studies that address this relationship. Importantly, I review this literature with a focus on specific methodological features that I believe complicate interpretations of findings. These are: (a) simultaneous entry of multiple inter-related religiosity variables as predictors of democracy attitudes without first noting their zero-order relationships with democracy attitudes, (b) simultaneous entry of religiosity variables and potential mediators of the effect of religiosity on democracy attitudes without first noting effects of religiosity variables free of such covariates, and (c) under-representation of content directly pertaining to amenability to authoritarian actions and norms within democracy attitude measures.

Survey studies of One or a Few Nations. Some studies have tested relationships between individual differences in religiosity and attitudes toward democracy within a single or a small number of national contexts. These studies often show small to moderate relationships between religiosity and anti-democratic sentiment. For example, using a large sample of Jewish Israeli students, Canetti-Nissim found a correlation of -.29 between a belief-based religiosity measure tailored to Jewish respondents and an index of support of the democratic creed, focusing on equal political rights, free speech, and unconditional deference to democratic procedures. Using

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Public Opinion Barometer data from 2005 in Romania, Sandor and Popescu (2008) found that a broad religiosity index (encompassing religious beliefs, attendance, and personal importance) correlated positively with preference for a non-democratic strong leader ($r = .10$) and preference for a military regime ($r = .08$), negatively with preference for a democratic regime ($r = -.10$), and not at all with the democratically ambiguous preference for granting experts decision-making power. Using the 1993 Polish General Social Survey, Karpov (1999) examined the association between three religiosity measures (church attendance, religious commitment, and political support for the Roman Catholic Church) and political intolerance (measured as willingness to allow political rights for atheists and Communists). Correlations between the religiosity measures and political tolerance were all significantly negative, ranging from -.25 to -.37. Even when the author simultaneously entered these strongly inter-correlated religiosity measures (rs between .48 and .57), each had a significant negative main effect, although the independent effect of religious participation was very small. In these studies, much of the effect of religiosity seemed to be accounted for by indicators of socio-cultural conservatism, which had a large negative effect on tolerance.

The relationship between religiosity and political intolerance has also extended to the United States general population, and to intolerance measures that extend beyond left-wing groups. In their landmark study on political intolerance in the United States, Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus (1982) found a strong link between possessing no religious affiliation and a "content-controlled measure" of political tolerance, for which each respondent rated willingness to extend political rights to the specific group they disliked the most. Using General Social Survey data from 1974, 1977, and 1980, Smidt and Penning (1982) found that religious attendance was strongly associated with unwillingness to extend political rights to Communists,

atheists, and homosexuals. Using GSS data from 1988, Ellison and Musick (1993) found that religious attendance predicted lower tolerance, measured as a composite of willingness to extend civil rights to racists, militarists, communists, atheists, and homosexuals. This was so even though fundamentalist denominational preference was controlled. In this study, the effect of religious attendance was accounted for by "theological conservatism", which represented doctrinal certainty and fundamentalism and, itself, displayed a large negative link with political tolerance.

Because Islam has been singled out as a religion that might be inimical to liberal democratic governance (e.g., Huntington, 1996), several studies have tested religiosity variables as predictors of democracy attitudes within Muslim majority nations (also see Chapter 10). These studies often conclude that religiosity has negligible relations with democracy attitudes among Muslims. However, as I explain below, certain methodological choices might account for these null findings.

In one example, Tessler (2002) examined associations between religiosity and democracy attitudes in four Arab countries (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Algeria) using data from Wave 4 (2000-2002) of the World Values Survey (WVS). The author simultaneously entered as predictors "personal religiosity" (composite of mosque attendance and participation in mosque activities), a 2-item composite measure of belief that religious people should hold office, a single item measure gauging belief that religious leaders should influence how people vote, and a set of control variables. The democracy measures were a 2-item composite involving professed support for "democracy" and a 3-item composite of belief that democracy has bad side effects. Personal religiosity did not predict either dependent measure in any country, and the two "political Islam" measures had small, inconsistent, and usually non-significant effects.

Ciftci (2010) ran similar analyses using Wave 4 of the WVS, but expanded Tessler's (2002) analysis to 10, rather than 4, Muslim majority nations. Religious attendance, support of political Islam, views about gender equality, and several control variables were entered simultaneously to predict the same dependent variables used by Tessler (2002). Religious attendance did not predict either democracy attitude measure, and support of political Islam displayed an overall negative association with democracy support and belief in democracy's efficaciousness, but this effect varied considerably across nations.

Jamal and Tessler (2008) used Arab Barometer data from 2006 from Morocco, Algeria, Palestine, Jordan, and Kuwait to test the relationship between belief in political Islam and a single item gauging belief that democracy is the best system of government (see also Tessler, 2010). Across all countries, support for democracy was only 4 percentage points higher among those opposing political Islam than among those supporting it. Belief in equal gender opportunity and racial tolerance were only 6 and 4 percentage points higher, respectively, among those opposing political Islam. The authors conclude that "the persistence of authoritarianism in the Arab world cannot be explained by the religious orientations and attachments of ordinary men and women" (Jamal & Tessler, 2008, pp. 101-102).

The results of these studies might seem to contrast with those of non-Muslim majority countries in which religiosity often predicts lower democracy support. Although this possibly reflects a difference in predictors of democracy attitudes across Muslim and other societies, it is important to consider some methodological choices that might account for their null effects. First, Tessler (2002) and Ciftci (2010) simultaneously entered inter-related religiosity measures as predictors. This might obscure an effect of a general religiosity construct, represented by the shared variance across these measures, on democracy attitudes. Second, these studies did not

include available democracy attitude items that capture openness to authoritarian arrangements (such as military and strongman rule), rather than professed allegiance to "democracy". Religious individuals might profess support for "democracy" but still be open to authoritarian governance in practice (e.g., Kirsch & Welzel, 2019). Finally, Tessler (2002) and Ciftci (2010) included a measure of perceived outcomes of democracy which, as acknowledged (Tessler, 2002, p. 243), is not an indicator of democracy support.

Large-Scale Cross-National Studies. The most comprehensive cross-national analyses on the religiosity-democracy attitudes link that I am aware of were reported by Meyer, Tope, and Price (2008) and Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan (2012; 2013a). I describe them here.

First, Meyer et al. (2008) examined 46 nations using data from Wave 3 (1999-2001) of the WVS. They measured "support for democracy" using a five-item composite containing two items expressing professed support for "democracy" and three items (reverse-scored) assessing belief that democracy has negative economic and political consequences. They simultaneously entered three religiosity variables as predictors, along with a set of nation- and individual-level control variables. The three religiosity variables were religious attachment (4-items gauging importance of religion and God in one's life), a single-item religious attendance measure, and a 4-item measure gauging support of blending religion and politics. They found that support of blending religion and politics negatively predicted democracy support, religious attachment positively predicted democracy support, and religious attendance had no effect on democracy support. The authors concluded that, although religiosity does not make one less supportive of democracy, "individuals seeking a prominent role for religion in government are likely to be substantially less supportive of democracy" (p. 625).

Second, Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan (2012) used Wave 4 (1999-2001) WVS data from

45 democratic nations. They used a measure of support for democracy (which included a reverse-scored item asking about approval of a non-democratic strong leader) and a measure of the perceived efficaciousness of democracy (a reverse-scored measure of belief that democracy has bad consequences). They simultaneously entered religious belief and religious social behavior variables as predictors, along with a set of nation- and individual-level control variables. They found that religious belief negatively predicted both support for democracy and belief in democracy's efficaciousness, with effect sizes larger than those of all other covariates. Meanwhile, controlling for religious belief, religious social behavior displayed a small positive effect on support for democracy and belief in its efficaciousness. The authors concluded that while religious belief strength is detrimental to democracy support, religious social behavior promotes greater democracy support.

Finally, Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan (2013a) expanded on the above analysis by incorporating both Wave 4 and Wave 5 (2005-2007) WVS data, spanning 54 democracies. Again, they computed measures of support for democracy and belief in the efficaciousness of democracy. In addition, for Wave 5 respondents, they computed measures of "substantive support for democracy" (endorsement of a mostly correct definition of democracy as essentially involving free elections, civil rights protections, ability to change laws in referendums, and equal rights for women and men) and "non-instrumental support" for democracy (rejection of an incorrect definition of democracy as essentially involving government redistribution, state aid for the unemployed, economic prosperity, and severe punishment of criminals). Religious belief had consistent and strong (typically stronger than any other covariate) effects on anti-democracy stance, belief that democracy is not efficacious, low "substantive support" for democracy, and low "non-instrumental" support for democracy. Religious social behavior (entered

simultaneously) displayed a small effect on support for democracy, belief that democracy is efficacious, and "substantive" support for democracy. The negative effects of religious belief were mediated by holding traditional and survival values, whereas the small positive effects of religious social behavior were mediated by political involvement and trust in institutions. The authors concluded that detrimental effects of religious belief on democracy support are explained by values pertaining to traditionalism and security, and that the beneficial effects of religious social behavior on democracy support are accounted for by an active civic orientation.

These cross-national studies were broad in scope, informative, and based in well-grounded theoretical propositions. Nonetheless, it is worth considering how their conclusions might be affected by certain methodological features of the work.

First of all, analyses were limited to data from one survey project, the WVS. Though it is common for cross-national studies of political attitudes to use data from a single survey project, the fact that other projects include different kinds of items measuring democracy attitudes and the possibility of house effects underscore the value of including multiple survey projects.

Second, the above studies excluded one or more WVS items querying support for autocratic government that may be particularly appealing to religious people. Specifically, the WVS administers a four-item democracy-autocracy preference battery that includes two items asking about clearly authoritarian forms of governance: desirability of a non-democratic strong leader and desirability of military rule. Meyer et al. (2008) did not include either of these items in their composite, whereas Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan (2012; 2013a) excluded the military rule item.

Third, these studies included some content in their democracy attitude measures that do not reflect support for democracy vs. autocracy. This includes belief that democracy produces

bad political and economic side effects (i.e., instrumental efficaciousness items, included in all three studies), and correct and incorrect personal definitions of democracy (included in Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2013a). One may believe that democracy has some bad side-effects but still reject authoritarian governance, and one may support actual democratic institutions and norms unconditionally while possessing an inaccurate definition of democracy.

Fourth, all three studies involved the simultaneous entry of inter-related religiosity variables as predictors (e.g., r = .56 in Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2012) and reported the effect of each controlling for the others(s). However, they did not report effects of these religiosity variables without controlling for the other(s), and it is unclear if these effects reflect a suppressor situation. For example, religious social behavior may have no link or a negative link with democracy support, but a positive effect when religious belief is controlled. And religiosity variables that relate to openness to authoritarian governance may no longer show this effect (and indeed show an opposite effect) when potentially endogenous variables (such as cultural conservatism and desire for religion to influence politics) are controlled. Such situations would warrant a more complex interpretation that is mindful of potential causal influences among the various facets of religiosity, as well as the value of a general religiosity construct, akin to a superfactor in personality trait research (John & Srivastava, 1999).

Finally, as the authors of these studies acknowledge, the cross-sectional correlational data used is inadequate for drawing causal inferences of the effect of religiosity on democracy attitudes, a matter addressed next.

Experimental Research on the Religiosity-Democracy Attitudes Link. To the extent that religiosity correlates with democracy attitudes, a variety of causal explanations are possible. For example, cognitive attributes (Zuckerman et al., 2013) and value orientations (Welzel, 2013)

could underlie both, with little to no causal influence exerted between religiosity and democracy attitudes. Similarly, both religiosity and openness to authoritarian governance may reflect a general genetic predisposition to obey traditional sources of authority (e.g., Ludeke et al., 2013). Or, openness to authoritarian governance could impact religiosity, as political orientations seem to causally impact religiosity in certain contexts (Margolis, 2018). And, of course, religiosity might causally impact democracy attitudes, the implicit assumption in much of the survey research in this area.

Given that religiosity is a largely temporally stable (e.g., Patrikios, 2008) and heritable (e.g., Vance, Maes, & Kendler, 2010) attribute, it is a great challenge to experimentally study its effects in an ecologically valid way. Recognizing this difficulty, Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan (2013b) used a religious priming approach. Two small undergraduate samples - one of Israeli Jews (N=91) and one of Muslim Turks (N=97) - reported their democracy attitudes after reporting (based on random assignment) either their religious belief, their religious social behavior, or neither. The democracy attitude dependent variable consisted of five items pertaining to allegiance to democracy, rejection of authoritarian governance, and belief that democracy has favorable instrumental consequences. As the authors predicted, priming religious belief significantly decreased support for democracy, whereas priming religious behavior significantly increased support for democracy, when the two samples were combined. These effects did not significantly differ across individuals of different levels of religiosity, although this study had low power to detect interaction effects.

Variation Across Cultural and Religious Groups. This chapter focuses on the link between religious commitment and democracy support. However, scholars debate whether certain cultural and religious groups possess attitudes, values, and norms that are incompatible

with liberal democracy. Needless to say, this is a sensitive and controversial topic. It is also one for which conclusions at one historical juncture might soon reveal themselves to be inapplicable to other historical junctures (e.g., Philpot, 2007).

Two key examples of such views in relatively recent scholarship are the "Asian values hypothesis" and the view that Islam is incompatible with democracy (see Huntington, 1996). The former stipulates that Western liberal democracy is incompatible with East Asian cultural traditions rooted in principles of Confucian philosophy emphasizing social duty and collectivism. The latter stipulates that Western liberal democracy is incompatible with Islam because Islam requires absolute and uncompromising allegiance to its religious tenets and rejects pluralism, tolerance, and open competition among ideas.

A comprehensive summary of literature on religious cultural groups and potential for democracy is well beyond the scope of this chapter. Here, I will briefly note evidence about relationships between religious affiliation memberships and democracy attitudes. Analyzing Wave 4 (1999-2001) of the WVS, Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan (2012) concluded that "religious affiliation by itself is not a decisive factor affecting individual attitudes towards democracy. With the exception of Hindu identifiers, identifying with major religious traditions does not, in and of itself, lead to anti-democratic attitudes" (p. 250). This was based on analyses of data from 45 democratic countries, with democracy attitudes being predicted by two religiosity indicators, a set of religious affiliation dummy variables (with no affiliation as the comparison category), and several other individual- and nation-level covariates. Interestingly, being Muslim was associated with slightly greater democracy support in this model. Being Hindu was associated with less support for democracy, consistent with the finding of Meyer et al. (2008) that members of Eastern Religions in general were less supportive of democracy. It must be noted, though, that

religious affiliation effects might be mediated by variables included as controls in these analyses, such as religiosity and authoritarian disposition. Thus, if members of a certain religious affiliation are especially open to authoritarian governance because they are, on average, highly religious or possess an authoritarian disposition, this would not be detected in these analyses. Also, the Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan (2012) analysis was limited to democratic countries and, thus, did not include the non-democratic Middle Eastern Muslim countries or China (but see Meyer et al., 2008; and Norris & Inglehart, 2013). Next, other evidence suggests that citizens of Muslim nations are especially likely to define democracy in authoritarian terms (Kirsch & Welzel, 2019), a finding that reinforces the notion that research on mass democracy attitudes should include measurement content that taps support of specific authoritarian actions without invoking the term "democracy". Finally, although being Muslim did not predict anti-democracy attitudes in Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan's (2012) models, Muslims did display a stronger link between religiosity and anti-democratic sentiment in these analyses.

Tentative Summary of the Findings

The link between religiosity and democracy attitudes is difficult to pinpoint both because of methodological choices in prior work and because the link might be a moving target that varies across time and place. That being said, the following tentative conclusions are warranted. Indicators of religious belief strength and commitment do seem to correlate, on average, with openness to authoritarian governance. The existence and size of this effect likely varies across religiosity and democracy attitude indicators as well as context, which makes it difficult to discuss the effect size in relation to effect sizes of some other predictors of democracy attitudes, like political engagement and college education. These effects are most apparent when the democracy indicators deal with support for the democratic creed, especially political tolerance

(e.g., Canetti-Nisim, 2004; Karpov, 1999). And religious attendance might not relate to opposition to democracy - in fact, the opposite might be the case (Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2012; 2013a; 2013b).

Second, notwithstanding the difficulty of pinpointing an effect size for religiosity, indicators of social conservatism (Malka, Lelkes, Bakker, & Spivack, 2020), fundamentalism (Ellison & Musick, 1993), and desire to blend religion and politics (Meyer et al., 2008) all seem to have larger and more reliable relationships with openness to authoritarian governance than do bare-bones religiosity indicators. Indeed, these might constitute the main mechanism by which religiosity influences openness to authoritarian governance.

Recommendations for Future Research

I offer the following recommendations for future research on religiosity and democracy attitudes.

First, research should use a wider range of cross-national survey projects that differ in their assessments of democracy attitudes and religiosity. The WVS is an excellent source of information on this matter, but one must be mindful of the limited measurement of democracy attitudes in this data source and the possibility that findings will differ across data sources.

Second, research should clearly distinguish between attitudes toward democracy per se and other related constructs such as correct vs. incorrect definitions of democracy and instrumental beliefs about the efficaciousness of democracy. These latter variables may be integrated into testable theory about the mechanisms linking religiosity and democracy attitudes, but they should not be treated as interchangeable with direct indicators of democracy support.

Third, it would be worthwhile to examine the extent to which religiosity relates differentially to professed support of "democracy" on the one hand, and openness to

actual authoritarian actions, on the other. These types of indicators are often combined into single measures, and sometimes the latter type of indicator is not examined at all (e.g., Meyer, 2008; Tessler, 2002). Given links between religiosity and social desirability response bias (e.g., Leak & Fish, 1989) and the fact that many people express allegiance to "democracy" while simultaneously expressing openness to authoritarian governance (e.g., Kiewiet de Jonge, 2016), the possibility that religious people are especially inclined toward this pattern is worthy of investigation.

Fourth, research should explicitly incorporate both unidimensional and multidimensional views of religiosity in analyses. There is utility in both types of conceptualizations, just as there is utility in examining both facet-level and superfactor-level personality traits and general and domain-specific cognitive abilities. Crucial here is that researchers should clearly report when a religiosity indicator (e.g., religious attendance) has a notably different effect depending on whether or not other religiosity indicators (e.g., religious belief) are controlled. In such situations, researchers should offer testable theory to account for this situation, and should not automatically assume that the analysis with other religiosity covariates yields the most accurate estimate of causal influence.

Fifth, and related to the above, researchers should report effects of religiosity with and without controlling for potentially endogenous control variables, especially cultural conservatism, fundamentalism, and desire for religion to impact political life.

Finally, researchers should further address causal direction using both panel and experimental designs. It now seems likely that religiosity (Margolis, 2018) and other presumably pre-political characteristics (Egan, 2020) are influenced by political orientations in certain contexts. Furthermore, religiosity and amenability to authoritarian actions might stem

from a common genetically rooted predisposition to favor traditional sources of authority (e.g., Ludeke et al., 2013).

Conclusion

The last few years have brought concerning news for the prospects of liberal democracy around the world. Several transitioning democracies have experienced backsliding, and the established liberal democracies of the West are experiencing stressors to their democratic institutions and norms. Because polarization between cultural progressives and traditionalists is one such stressor (see Chapter 13), it is uncomfortable to consider the possibility that one side of this divide is a greater threat to liberal democracy than the other. But respect for truth requires an honest reckoning with this question. This review focused on religiosity, specifically, as a predictor of democracy attitudes, and reached some tentative conclusions about the nature of this link. But a related matter that is far more clear is that a broader religiously relevant social traditionalism vs. progressivism construct -- including sexual morality, immigration, nationalism, and other traditional vs. progressive attitudes -- is a reliable predictor of openness to authoritarian governance, definitions of democracy, and actual democratization of societies. Cultural traditionalists are more open to authoritarian governance than cultural progressives (Malka et al., 2020), they are more likely to define "democracy" in autocratic terms (Kirsch & Welzel, 2019), and a high concentration of them in a society predicts a lower likelihood of democratization (Welzel, 2013). Moreover, when religiosity does predict openness to authoritarian governance, constructs related to cultural traditionalism are likely to account for this effect (Ben-Nun Bloom & Arikan, 2013a; Canetti-Nisim, 2004; Karpov, 1999). It is no accident that authoritarian leaders have found it useful to base appeals on culturally traditional messages. Given the centrality of religiosity to many people's lives, the prospects for liberal

democracy may depend on a larger number of religious people attaching less of a broad

culturally traditionalist meaning to their religious conviction.

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