

When Catholicism meets the EU: it's not always Euroenthusiasm

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Abstract

This paper examines why, when and how Catholicism adopts a Eurosceptic narrative and whether religious Euroscepticism can emerge in post-communist countries, also comparing how the narrative changed before and after accession. The scope is threefold: (i) first, it seeks to provide an in-depth study on Catholicism and European integration. While religion has generally been considered as supportive of a positive attitude toward the European Union (EU), this analysis shows it can also become an element of Euroscepticism; (ii) second, it focuses on the case study of Poland, using CBOS and PNES data; and (iii) third, it suggests an original framework, and explores, from a comparative perspective, when and how the Roman Catholic Church (or a branch thereof) has sought an alliance with a political party.

Keywords

Catholicism, EU integration, Euroscepticism, Poland, public opinion

Introduction

As Christians, Roman Catholics are universalists by convenience' and favour transnational organizations, considering the Church as the cradle of culture and civilization (Nelsen and Guth, 2003). In a speech at the College of Europe in 1953, Pope Pius XII stated that the Christian faith had to be central to European integration: 'we fear that without it Europe does not have the inner strength to preserve either the integrity of its ideals or its territorial and material independence in the face of more powerful adversaries' (Nelsen and Guth, 2003: 18).

The fathers of European integration were led by their Christian Democratic values. Robert Schuman, Alcide De Gasperi and Konrad Adenauer shared a common political strategy, which based its values on the Church's teachings. The European People's Party in the European Parliament was based on the European Christian Democratic parties and supported a deeper and widening integration process (Philpott and Shah, 2006: 51–53).

The history of European integration also shows that those countries that shared common Catholic values were viewed as able to join the EU at a smoother pace than those countries that did not have, or only partly had, a Christian Democratic tradition. The latter group of countries includes some that remain outside the EU (e.g. Norway), or joined later (Great Britain, Sweden, and Denmark). Bulgaria and Romania, sometimes dubbed the 'laggards of the fifth enlargement', as they were able to join only in 2007, were the only Orthodox countries among the ten candidate states of the 2004 enlargement (Philpott and Shah, 2006).

Europe is historically linked to Catholicism, the clash with Islam and the papacy that created a *'Respublica Christiana'*; and the Christian Democratic fathers of the EU were considered to be an underlying blueprint to further political developments in the European integration process. Nonetheless EU integration can represent a challenge for any religion that at one and the same time constitutes or has constituted a symbolic and fundamental element of national identity, with secularism representing a major test (Guerra, 2012). Controversies emerged in the negotiations over the proposed Constitutional Treaty, and particularly with the Preamble, when the EU tried to identify a few common core values in search of a common European identity. At the time, in May 2008 (EB69, 2008), 54 percent of the EU-27 citizens asserted that 'in terms of shared values' EU member states are close to each other. In particular, this 'closeness' was most important when comparing 'European values' to the broader global context. Similarly to what Europe represented in the past, the EU is likely to find its strength in opposition more than in itself. 'The majority of Europeans believe[d] that a set of common

European values exist[ed] and that these values [were] different from those of other continents' (EB69, 2008: 13). Thus, when the EU proposed an agreed-upon reference in the Constitutional Treaty to common values pertaining to Europe's 'cultural, religious and humanistic inheritance', the formula was acceptable to all the Convention members¹.

Nevertheless, Europe and the EU have often overlapped, and Christianity became a sort of synonym for the notion of Europe. The European Economic and Steel Community was founded on the attempt to re-construct Europe after two devastating world wars. Peace became, and continues to be, the founding core value. When the Constitutional Treaty attempted to return to the EU's roots, religion became a salient part of a debate that ultimately led to the absence of a reference to Europe's Judeo-Christian roots. This, however, as Nelsen et al. (2001; 2011) have shown and as this analysis illustrates, can become an important and controversial factor whenever either 'Europe' in general, or specifically the EU, are debated at the domestic level, as it happened in Poland in the run-up to its EU accession. This article addresses the controversial relationship between religion and Euroscepticism, exploring the case of Poland.

Euroscepticism

The definition of Euroscepticism commonly used is provided with reference to political parties, and has been termed 'the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration, that can be, on principle, 'too inclusive' or 'too exclusive' (Taggart, 1998: 365–366, see Guerra, forthcoming). The different degrees of Euroscepticism have been further defined as 'soft', i.e. when 'there is NOT a principled objection to European integration or EU membership', but opposition to one or more policies, or a party opposes the EU because it may be against the 'national interest'; and 'hard', which indicates 'a principled opposition to the EU and

1 http://europa.eu/scadplus/european_convention/objectives_en.htm.

European integration, usually in those political parties aiming to withdraw their country from the EU or opposing EU integration or its further development (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2002: 7, in: Guerra, forthcoming).

Euroscepticism is multi-faceted; it changes its colours and shifts its targets (Guerra, forthcoming). Hence, its study would require tackling the issues it claims to represent, how the EU is viewed, and how perceptions of the EU are created within each domestic context. Almost ten years ago, Taggart (2006) suggested proceeding by analysing domestic politics. This is even more urgent today, when the imposed austerity measures and multiple crises have reinforced debates on the lack of legitimacy within the EU and the economic versus democratic controversy. Also, domestic debates on the EU are dynamic and prone to change in the years moving towards a country's accession. As already noted in the literature, the 'debate on Europe is complex, but... it is coherent, not chaotic. It is connected to domestic political conflict, not *sui generis*' (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). It is this conflict, at the domestic level, that can help us to understand and analyse Euroscepticism – its emergence, its drivers, and its successes (or failures).

Poland has consistently shown very high levels of support for EU integration since the early 1990s. It was estimated that about 80 percent of Poles would have voted yes if in a referendum on accession held in May 1996 (CBOS data, see Guerra, 2013), but a sudden decline in support in 1999 was based on a changed narrative on EU integration at the domestic level, driven by new social and political actors.

Religion and public life

As stressed in the literature, comparative research on the involvement of religious actors across societies is quite infrequent (Gautier, 1997: 290). Anna Grzymala-Busse (2012) suggests that the role of religion itself is fundamental to an examination of identity, the state, and institutional actors in comparative political studies. This is especially critical in the post-communist EU region, where the repression of churches during the communist regime froze affiliations but, especially in the case

of Poland, did not diminish people's beliefs. Even if one could argue that religion no longer represented an important factor impacting on mass political behaviour, still it represented a 'cultural and institutional force in political processes at the turn of the century' (Broughton and ten Napel, 2000: xix).

Studies on attitudes towards European integration have generally neglected religion as an independent variable (notable exceptions are: Nelsen et al., 2001; Nelsen et al., 2011). When it is examined at all, the standard assumption is that religion tends to strengthen support for European integration, and it is generally studied by sociologists, anthropologists and scholars in theology and international relations. Yet, religion affects attitudes and behaviours, and the relationship between the EU and the Churches is increasingly described as 'a pro-European commitment under stress' – due to the churches' status, disillusion with 'secular' (i.e. 'atheist') Europe, and a dominant national sovereignty on ethical issues (Leconte, 2010: 223–227). The churches' status was regulated only in Treaty of Amsterdam (1997), whereby it was declared that the EU 'respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States'. But debates over identity are still high on the agenda of religious institutions and church representatives themselves. The Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) and The Conference of European Churches (CEC) supported the Treaty of Lisbon (2009), but expressed their reservations about the developing progressive philosophy of the EU, pointing to the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the last draft of the Preamble, which simply referred to 'Europe's cultural, spiritual and humanist' heritage. The CEC noted 'the degeneration of European integration into an increasingly soulless, materialistic project... Is it a community of values or a mere expanding market?' (Leconte, 2010: 225). This secular dimension of the European Union also affects members of the Catholic Church community, with people worried about the potential of increasing normative integration on issues such as abortion, euthanasia and gay marriage (see Guerra, 2016a).

At the end of the 1990s, Jeff Haynes (1998: 87) pointed to the progress of secularization and the decreasing political and social significance of religious institutions. Jose Casanova (2006) observed that joining the EU when the process of secularization is taking place provides the churches with more chances to enter the political and social discourse. This analysis suggests that the alliance between a conservative or radical-right party and an ultra-conservative branch of the Roman Catholic Church can enter the social and political discourse in both the run-up to EU accession and after it, and that in seeking to influence the domestic religious discourse can oppose the process of EU integration, even when there is no alternative credible Eurosceptic actor within the domestic political arena.

This scenario follows a similar path to that of the Western European countries after World War II. Carolyn Warner (2000) examined this issue and how the Roman Catholic Church, as an interest group, sought to pursue a strategy and an alliance, through political parties, in order to establish its authority in the political debate, and influence the social and cultural agenda. 'Mainline churches are, by nature, conservative' (Ramet, 2006: 148) and a political party can become a 'channel' for such churches. An ultra-conservative discourse can raise its relevance as source of common identity, attach itself to Euroscepticism, and influence a Eurosceptic narrative in the public discourse. In particular, religious institutions can be willing to join the political debates in order to influence the cultural and social agenda at a time when religiousness itself can increase, even as the Church may lose believers, in the form of a religious individualization that is termed 'believing without belonging' (see Casanova, 2006).

Recent comparative studies (Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan, 2012; 2013a; 2013b) underline that religiosity has an ambivalent political attitude and cannot be understood as a single-faceted phenomenon. Different components of religious attitudes can combine with different attitudes towards democracy and opposing views. On one hand, religious belonging, personal involvement in social networks and an engaged civic attitude influenced by religiosity can impact on more positive attitudes

towards democracy; on the other, religion can strengthen conservative values that oppose liberal ideas and support law and order (in opposition to democratic values) (Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan, 2012a; 2013a; 2013b). In particular, Pazit Ben-Nun Bloom and Gizem Arikan demonstrate that a negative attitude can be influenced by ‘traditional and survival values’ (2013b). These can be triggered by the process of EU integration in those cases where membership is perceived as a threat to national values.

While this explanation does not seem to be sufficient to justify a great impact on the part of religion on Eurosceptic attitudes, it can represent a factor influencing the Eurosceptic discourse of religious actors. Opposition based on identity is likely to emerge across the conservative right and extreme-right wing political parties, as Euroscepticism can address sovereignty and national values in the run-up to accession (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2004). In the case of Poland, Catholicism is enshrined in the Polish national identity, hence the Catholic Church could play the role of strengthening national identity and political resistance, as it did first against the Soviet regime, and later (albeit to a lesser, but growing extent) against the process of EU integration, especially its accompanying secularization.

Catholicism and EU integration in Poland

Poland, and in particular Polish society, resisted the communist yoke and maintained a distinctive regime compared to similar countries across Central and Eastern Europe. A combination of societal pluralism and Catholicism provided the opposition to the imposition of the Soviet-controlled totalitarian system (Linz and Stepan, 1996). The Catholic Church provided both the moral and actual support for Polish resistance and autonomy, while also providing a legitimising strength to the communist opposition. The arrest of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński (1952–1956) represented an attempt to defeat the challenge posed by the Church, but in fact it further reinforced the dichotomy dividing ‘us’ (Poles) versus ‘them’ (the communist apparatus), which also permeated the democratization process. Before Poland’s EU accession, the trends at

the aggregate level reported the highest levels of EU scepticism among those going to church once or several times a week. More than one third of those attending church several times a week would have voted 'no' in the accession referendum in 1995, while the same was true of only 18 percent among those who never went to church (CBOS data, see Guerra, 2013). Although Catholicism is generally positively related to support for the EU (Nelsen et al., 2001; 2011), in the case of Poland the role played by religion may be seen as a deviant case, as a prominent Polish 'value' in defeating the foreign domination, i.e. communism. In this context, it thus becomes important to examine the perceived – by Polish citizens – credible actors who used religiosity as a wedge in attitudes towards the EU before accession.

The role and attitude of the Catholic Church and various religious circles and groupings in Poland have already been the subject of several studies (Szumigalska, 2015; Zubrzycki, 2008). This analysis aims to explore the particular issues that became significant for voters and that can help explain the success of political parties that campaigned on values close to the Catholic electorate, as well as the position of Poland towards the EU. Catholicism and the role of the Catholic Church have been persistent in the Polish social and political agenda. The Church supported the Solidarity movement (see Casal Bertóa and Guerra, 2016; Kubik and Lynch, 2006) and further strengthened the division between 'us' versus 'them'. This dichotomy endured and was brought to political legitimization and fruition with the presidency of Lech Wałęsa (1990–1995) (see De Lange and Guerra, 2009). His personality and his speeches representing civil society and the Polish people created a symbiotic relationship between the Church and the Polish people and boosted people's enthusiasm towards their 'tribune' (Zubek, 1991). It was at this time that religion became a salient factor explaining political behaviour (Jasiewicz, 2008; Markowski, 1999), which later also affected Polish attitudes towards EU integration. Although it never became a determinant for explaining opposition towards the EU at the individual level (Guerra, 2013), a Polish political party, the League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin*: hereinafter LPR) brought issues

such as the Polish national identity, Catholicism, and Euroscepticism to the forefront of the social and political debates (Casal Bertò and Guerra, 2016; De Lange and Guerra, 2009) at a time when there was still a widespread political consensus in favour of EU accession.

Religion was used by this extreme-right conservative party to draw attention to the threat of secularism deriving from EU membership. Around the same time a concerted campaign began on Radio Maryja, led by Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, and upped the Eurosceptic rhetoric prior to the pope's speech in Rome for the celebrations surrounding the 25th anniversary of his papacy in 2003, a few weeks before the Polish referendum. When Pope John Paul II, the most trustworthy public actor among Polish citizens, indirectly called for the 'yes' vote – he mainly spoke about Poland belonging to Europe, with an invitation to take part in the referendum – the credibility of these political leaders and religious actors still opposing the EU accession was partly lost. However, the 2001 and 2005 Polish National Election Study (PNES) revealed that certain segments of the population who could be more sensitive – because of their attitude towards religion and the overlapping possible meanings of Polishness and Catholicism – were still sensitive to the appeal of the LPR campaigns before and after accession, i.e. during the time when the LPR was electorally successful (2001–2005).

From the League of Polish Families to the Law and Justice Party

The Catholic Church in Poland did not take a coherent position on EU integration and the Eurosceptic narrative remained at the centre of the debates, when fears of membership emerged. The Church had already absorbed the loss of an important role in the new Polish constitution. In the first Polish written constitution (3 May 1791), the opening article read 'In the name of Almighty God', and in the 1990s the Episcopate was successful in securing a reference to the 'Christian heritage of the nation' (Guerra, 2012), although this phrasing lost the centrality it previously had.

The Church was also falling behind in its leadership role in people's life. During the communist regime, the Church would not only listen to the believer, but also spiritually guide believers' lives. In the 1990s, many Poles felt that the Church was providing less-than-adequate advice with respect to some sectors of their private life, in particular with reference to the 'social problems facing the country today' (see Guerra, 2012). This impacted on the narrative of some religious circles, which radicalised their discourse. At the same time, the Church could be perceived as distant and unable to respond to contemporary challenges and changes, and many believed that 'religious leaders should not influence how people vote in elections' (see Guerra, 2012).

In her study on the Catholic Church in Europe after World War II, Carolyn Warner (2000) suggests examining the alliance that the Church could establish with a Christian Democratic party, able to politically represent the Church's social agenda. The ultra-conservative branch of the Church and Father Tadeusz Rydzyk of the Redemptorist order supported the LPR and were definitely fundamental to the party's electoral success. The LPR used its Eurosceptic rhetoric as an entry into the social and political discourse as a successful political actor from 2001 to 2006 based on its nationalist narrative and the perceived threat of a secular Europe.

It is clear that the religious community as a whole shared the concerns with the issues that were salient for the LPR voter. As previously presented (Guerra, 2012), we can suggest that Father Rydzyk saw in the LPR a political ally and that, together, the LPR and Rydzyk shared a common goal. The LPR represented the political channel for the social agenda of the ultra-conservative branch of the Church. Time was deemed to be of the essence, as in the run-up to accession the social costs of the reforms and the path towards the future impacted on the growing fears. It became easier to pitch EU integration as a threat, in particular to some significant segments of society, such as pensioners, housewives and unskilled workers. The LPR thus filled a political space, as a sort of 'subculture' party (Enyedi, 1996) and represented those Christian values that were widely dispersed in other political parties. As

such, the LPR could deviate from the generally more mainstream and EU-supportive attitudes that Christian Democratic parties generally assumed. Father Rydzyk provided resources to the LPR through radio, newspaper and public channels, and this was an important factor for the LPR's (short-lived, as it turned out) success. Finally, Poland was experiencing a triple transition; the political system was not yet stable and parties were not fully institutionalized. Poles feared the impact of EU membership, and the costs of transition became a politically sensitive issue after the opening of the negotiation process in the spring of 1998, and from 1999 to 2001. Catholicism and opposition to the EU could link together those voters for whom 'the question of Polish policy towards EU' was important (PNES data). On a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being of 'no importance' and 10 as 'very important', the index for the average Polish voter was at 4.96, while for the LPR voter it increased to 6.10 (see also De Lange and Guerra, 2009). Inasmuch as across the Polish party system there was no other contrasting voice opposing the EU, the League of Polish Families stood out as clearly opposed to EU membership and strongly opposed on issues such as abortion, euthanasia, gay rights, and the legalization of soft drugs. Together with Father Rydzyk the LPR filled a political gap.

Thus, although Catholicism generally represents a salient positive factor affecting Euroenthusiasm, there are also cases when it can vocalize opposition. Further, in Father Rydzyk's words it also reflected anti-Semitic attitudes (Graff, 2006). A new wave of anti-Semitism, linked to the Polish past, revived and revolved around young radical-right groupings and led to the success of the LPR, with the support of Radio Maryja. Previous research has found that anti-Semitic attitudes doubled between 1999 and 2002 (from 8 to 16 percent), and the increase was partly attributed to the increased presence of anti-Semitic discourse in the public debates. Also, up until the end of the 1990s Poland had not discussed sexuality publicly. Civil liberties were not applied to sexual preferences. Together with democratization and the process of European integration, lesbian and gay movements began to organize campaigns (Graff, 2006). In LPR member, Wojciech Wierzejski's words, gay rights

demonstrators had to be ‘beaten by batons’, a reference to the fact that a few days earlier the All-Polish Youth organization (*Młodzież Wszechpolska*: MW), a young far-right group, was involved in acts of violence against gay rights marchers in Krakow. Roman Giertych, the LPR leader, himself ‘publicly called for a ban on a pro-gay Equality March in Warsaw on June, 12, 2006’ (Balsler and Foxman, 2006: 10–11), and during these years the League targeted gay and feminist groups.

Giertych’s appointment as Minister of Education provoked fierce reactions that, however, did not halt his agenda. The Council of Europe supported the translation of a handbook on human rights education for young people, but its publication by Mirosław Sielatycki, director of Polish In-Service Teachers Centre (CODN), cost Sielatycki his office. Giertych banned the distribution of the handbook on the basis that it presented homophobia as a source of discrimination. Furthermore, Giertych supported the idea that the teaching of history be separated from classes on Polish history – which had to have special separate hours – and sought to promote a ‘patriotic education’ in the Polish schools.

In 2007, when the European Parliament passed a resolution on homophobia, the LPR became a debated topic in the European Parliament and in the resolution itself, as most of the points concerned Poland and the LPR. In the public discourse the League and Giertych often referred to gay people as ‘pedophiles’ and the All-Polish Youth linked the pro-EU integration attitude with excessive and unwarranted privileges for the gay community, and began to attack gay marches chanting ‘pedophiles and pederasts – these are Euro-enthusiasts’, ‘labour camps for lesbians’, ‘faggots to the gas’. During the accession negotiations, and until 2002, Poland aimed to protect its sovereignty, and particularly its policy on abortion; and over time abortion and homosexuality came to be at the centre of debates over support of EU integration.

In July 2005, in an opinion poll survey only 4 percent of Polish citizens agreed with the assertion that ‘homosexuality [was] a normal thing’; and in December 2008 58 percent were ‘overwhelmingly hostile’ to the equality marches. Graff asserts that it became acceptable to assert

‘it’s okay to be a homophobe’; and a ‘dislike of sexual deviance’ was attached to heartfelt Polish patriotism and a sense of belonging; closely linked to the idea of Polish national pride was the suggestion that, in Europe, there existed a ‘homosexual lobby’ (2006: 446–447). Nevertheless the resolution presented to the European Parliament was approved, including with the support of Polish MEPs. Poland was moving towards secularism, living the ‘believing’ aspect of religion and incrementally abandoning the ‘belonging’ aspect. Such a fundamentalist rhetoric could only be short-lived, and the League of Polish Families fell far short of obtaining the necessary votes in the 2007 national elections (1.28 percent) to maintain its position in the Polish parliament (Sejm).

During its heyday, the League of Polish Families represented the political party that could (at least temporarily) promote and guarantee a Christian social programme in Poland and defend Polish values in the run-up to accession, and later in the European Parliament. When support for the EU suddenly dropped, the League gained electoral success by capitalizing on national values and patriotic themes, and in particular on Catholicism. According to the LPR, Catholicism remained the basic Polish value, keeping the Polish nation together. It has played the function of protecting Poland against ‘the other’ (Krzeminski, 2001: 6), and historically the ‘others’ (Prussia, Austria, Russia), and strengthened the role of religion in Polish life, thus impacting on the Polish national character. As Jasiewicz found, in terms of voting and attitudes, ‘economic conditions play(ed) only a limited role, compared to support for political parties and candidates, that (were) secondary to religiosity in almost all the cases’ (Jasiewicz, 2003: 20).

It is worthy of note that although Polish Euroscepticism was not centred on national identity (Szczerbiak, 2004), the League of Polish Families structured its opposition to European integration on Polish national values and Catholicism. As Szczerbiak (2004) wrote, the LPR sought to preserve the Polish national identity, co-operating ‘with everyone who want[ed] to build social relations with Poland on

a Christian basis' (Szczerbiak, 2004: 257). Between 2001 and 2006, the League of Polish Families found an ally in Radio Maryja; together they shared a common agenda with issues debated on in heated tones of political confrontation, and there was some consistency between the political and religious leaderships (Guerra, 2012). While they did not represent the official Polish Church, the Polish experience proves that the political and social transposition of ultra-conservative Catholic values to the domestic and European debates can be successful, even in a political setting.

As mentioned, the LPR lost support in the 2007 general elections. In order not to lose a channel in the Polish party system, Father Rydzyk shifted his support to the Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* – PiS) party, the mainstream social conservative party. It was in the interests of Father Rydzyk to select a party through which to impact policy choices at salient turning points of the domestic political process, and his new alliance is now yielding its fruits.

The PiS voter is more conservative in matters of economy and with respect to identity, while supporting Polish sovereignty over EU integration. In 2011, the average Polish voter massively supported privatization (9.9 on a 10-point scale whereby 0 equalled no support at all), but the PiS voter registered at 6.1. Similarly, the PiS voter supported more involvement of the Church in politics (3.7 compared to 1.7 for the average Polish voter overall), and is sceptical of EU integration while supporting the maintenance of Polish sovereignty (5.2 for the PiS voter versus 1.2 for the average Polish voter, supporting deeper EU integration) (Guerra, 2016b). These attitudes combine well with the Church (as represented by the ultra-conservative branch), which would oppose a pluralistic society.

When religion and political orientations combine, attitudes can become more radical (see Guerra, 2012). The public discourse and support for a political party can provide the Church with the opportunity to have greater impact on the social and public debates of the country. This was successful not only in the run-up to and aftermath of Poland's EU accession, but also during moments of crisis. On December 7th,

2015, Marek Jurek, Speaker of the Sejm (Polish parliament) travelled to Toruń to give a speech at Radio Maryja, Father Rydzyk's radio station, to celebrate the 14th anniversary of Radio Maryja itself, and to stress that PiS values 'the Catholic voice in (Polish) homes'. In January 2016 PiS secured 20 million PLN of state funding for Father Tadeusz Rydzyk's institution of higher education in Toruń, celebrating a new alliance with the aim and scope of influencing the social and political agenda.

The new PiS government can be seen as representing the ideal ally for Father Rydzyk. Although the mainstream Catholic Church in Europe is pro-EU, more conservative religious groupings and circles, such as the ones around Radio Maryja in Poland, can gather around their national sovereignty and national values. As Paul Taggart (1998) indicates, Euroscepticism emerges at the interface of identity politics, the positioning of conflict resolution, and relative position in the political system. The network led by Father Tadeusz Rydzyk of the Redemptorist order was established in 1991, and gathered together listeners from among the elderly and those with a lower level of education, but also among the All-Polish Youth organization, a young far-right group (see De Lange and Guerra, 2009).

When the Church decides to enter the social and political discourse, the party needs to respect the Church's privileges and promotes explicit guarantees regarding their 'Christian social programme'; wherein the ultimate target becomes attaining a 'hegemonic position' on life and orientations of the collectivity (Warner, 2000). The Church in Poland has long had concerns about the consequences of EU integration, linked to its 'secularization, consumerism and individualism' (Zuba, 2006). The focus was and is on the position of Poland towards EU integration and on Polish culture and values, and the Church can successfully become both a provider (Szumigalska, 2015) and defender of these values. 'Catholicism, the Nation and Patriotism' are part and parcel of the message broadcasted by Radio Maryja, strongly opposing, in their words, abortion, euthanasia, homosexual marriage and feminist movements (Guerra, 2012).

Conclusions

The 'rewriting of the past on Eastern Europe went hand in hand with religious revival across former communist lands and the return of organized religion into public life' (Byford, 2008: 2). Although Catholicism never represented the determinant factor impacting on negative attitudes towards the EU in Poland (Guerra, 2013), it could become a source of opposition to the EU and influence a Eurosceptic narrative in the public discourse during the integration process itself, whereby the language of forgiveness becomes the language of extremism.

This analysis herein, based on the Polish case study, has aimed to explore and examine if, why and when the Catholic Church can enter into or seek to enter the debate on EU accession in Eurosceptic terms. In Poland the Church has played a fundamental role in the development of Polish national history and domestic politics. In the countries of Central and Eastern post-communist Europe where there is a predominant religion, belonging to that religious community is 'linked to belonging to the nation' (Bremer, 2008: 265). The notion of belonging together, free from the communist regime, can overlap with those values and norms that protected or strengthened the nation during the democratization process – in the case of Poland, with Euroscepticism and national values.

It is not unexpected that in Roman Catholic countries with a predominant Catholic post-communist society the Catholic Church and the elites can be viewed as 'rather actively [seeking] (political) power' (Jakelić, 2010: 67). In Poland, an alliance was realized between the (ultra-conservative branch of) the Church, allied with a radical-right wing political party, first LPR, and later with the social (ultra) conservative party (PiS). The Polish Catholic Church does not reject globalization, but tries to give it 'a Catholic direction' (Buchenau, 2005: 130), and shows, as Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikian found, that it can affect evaluations of the democratic system. Buchenau stresses and agrees with the analysis that 'Catholicism is controversial in the sense that it is, on the one hand, fairly largely included in modernization processes, and on

the other, in the traditional resistance to that same modernization'. As in the past, religion can act as a symbol in both the fight for democracy, or against modernization and democratization. And as in the Spanish case, it seems to remain ambivalent in the post-communist region.

However, there are several factors which determine the success of religious Euroscepticism – in particular the role of the Church at the domestic level and the political space, time and resources. When the necessary factors are realized, the result can be a social and cultural alliance to control and influence the government agenda within a Eurosceptic framework, based on a political alliance, which represents a channel for a Church wishing, willing and able to resist the change.

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