WEAPONS OF THE MEEK
How Churches Influence Public Policy

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HOW do organized religions influence policy? Historically, for all their concern with the sacred and divine, religious groups have also been adept players at secular and pragmatic politics: legitimating monarchs, shaping public morality, exerting control over education and the welfare state, or simply securing a favorable legal status. Yet in the predominantly Christian democracies of the modern era, churches find themselves far more constrained and unable to act alone.[1] Legal firewalls stymie even those powerful churches whose pews are filled with loyal adherents: clerics no longer stand for office, and church delegates rarely sit in legislatures, governments, or administrative bodies.

Despite these constraints, however, religious influence on policy has been extensive. Religious groups, and specifically Christian churches, have successfully spearheaded efforts to ban abortion, offer religious education in schools, limit access to contraceptives, obtain favorable financial exemptions, and constrain stem cell research, to take just a few recent European examples. Curiously, however, this influence varies across countries that are similar in their profiles of religious denominational affiliation, religious participation, and general belief. Even more surprisingly, this influence occurs despite extensive popular opposition to church involvement in secular policy-making. How is it, then, that these actors—Christian churches in modern democracies—obtain their preferred policy outcomes?

* I am grateful to Jenna Bednar, Bill Clark, Skip Lupia, and especially Pauline Jones Luong, for very helpful comments and conversations, and to Timm Betz, Dustin Gamza, and David T. Smith for their excellent research assistance. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the 2013 meetings of the American Political Science Association, August 29–September 1, 2013, Chicago, Ill., and at workshops at the University of Chicago, Georgetown University, Harvard University, the Institute for Political Economy and Governance (Barcelona), Northwestern University, and Yale University.

[1] By "churches," I mean Christian religious groups organized by denomination. Predominantly Christian democracies included here are Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany (East and West), Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, and the US, all included in the 2003 and 2008 International Social Survey Programme surveys of religious and national identities.

World Politics 68, no. 1 (January 2016), 1–36

doi: 10.1017/S0043887115000301

To solve this puzzle, I identify the key channels used by churches to wield influence over policy, emphasizing the critical role of *direct institutional access* to policy-making and the conditions under which churches obtain it from an often-reluctant secular state. This access comprises the ability to propose and vet policy directly through joint church-parliamentary commissions, informal legislative proposals, extensive parliamentary and ministerial consultation, the vetting of state officials, and even control of state sectors such as welfare, health, and education. Such institutional access is covert, frequently informal, and highly desirable to churches because it maintains influence over time at relatively low cost. Yet only some churches—those with moral authority sufficiently high enough to be identified in the public mind as protecting and representing the national interest—can obtain this Holy Grail.

In short, churches are most influential when they have institutional access to secular policy-making, and only churches with high moral authority can obtain institutional access. This explanation amends and builds on a prominent literature that explains religious influence on policy as a function of popular mobilization or partisan coalitions. In these accounts, churches shape electoral demand for policy, and political parties may respond by channeling these demands into legislation. Churches also form coalitions with sympathetic political parties that exchange policy concessions for electoral campaigning. Electoral coalitions that include powerful churches have emerged as a dominant explanation of policy influence,[2] as follows: churches mobilize the support of their faithful for political parties and in exchange receive policy concessions from the government parties they help to bring into office. The Italian Christian Democratic Party (*Democrazia Cristiana*, DC), for example, relied on the public support of the Roman Catholic Church to remain in power for nearly five decades after World War II.[3]

I argue, in contrast, that among the "weapons of the meek"[4] available to religious groups, such overt political coalitions are costly, risky, and relatively ineffective. They are often counterproductive, as churches find themselves accused of petty politicking as a result of their participation in partisan coalitions. Indeed, explicit coalitions with political parties are often a sign of relative church *weakness*, rather than of strength. Similarly, as an extensive literature has shown, even religious voters are unreliable as a source of policy pressure and influence. They tend to care more about pocketbook issues than about morality, and their policy stances are often at odds with those espoused by their churches.[5]

[2] Donovan 2003; Gill 1998; Htun 2003; Meier 2001; Warner 2000.
[3] Hanley 1994; Kalyvas 1996; Warner 2000; Donovan 2003.
[4] With thanks, and apologies, to James C. Scott, and Scott 1985.
[5] Bartels 2008; Hillygus and Shields 2005.

Institutional access, by contrast, is both more effective and less costly for churches than relying on voters or on coalitions. It is more effective because it is direct and does not rely on mediation through political parties. It is less costly because it does not depend on the reelection of parties; nor does it publicize the policy influence of the church. The covert nature of institutional access is a boon to churches because, unlike members of other interest groups, most church adherents oppose their leaders' efforts to influence policy on their behalf. By using institutional access, churches therefore face less popular backlash and criticism. Churches thus effectively influence policy not simply through ballot boxes, but also in the back rooms of politics through hidden deals and covert pressure.[6]

Only a few churches can achieve such access, however: those with high moral authority. In this sense, the moral authority of churches goes beyond offering broad spiritual guidance or presiding over familiar religious rituals, such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Instead, it is the popular perception that the church represents the national interest, a political resource that allows churches to frame and influence policy. Moral authority is high when backed and reinforced by the fusion of national and religious identities, a specific and historically grounded religious nationalism that identifies the churches with the common good. Churches are then no longer limited to theology or to ritual. Moral authority is low when churches cannot lay claim to a historical defense of the nation and when national and religious identities are divorced from (or even opposed to) each other. Indicators of moral authority include the church's historical salience in public life, the deference of secular politicians across the political spectrum to the church, and public opinion polls that measure confidence or trust in the church.[7]

Churches with high moral authority are seen as impartial, trusted, and credible representatives of the national interest. This trust placed in a church does not mean popular demand for church influence on politics, but it does indicate a widespread identification of the church with the common good. When secular incumbents are threatened and churches with high moral authority can contribute to their survival by appealing to the nation and quelling societal unrest, churches can gain

[6] Berry 1977; Culpepper 2011; Hansen 1991; Hertzke 1988; Skocpol 1995; Wilson 1995; Wald, Silverman, and Fridy 2005.

[7] Specifically, salience is assessed through historical press accounts of the churches' active participation in secular holiday celebrations, state occasions, and public secular events. Deference is gauged by historical and contemporary press and church archive accounts of public meetings between politicians and clerics, clerical blessings of political activity, and statements of deference to religion and the church by national representatives. Finally, contemporary public opinion polls, such as the World Values Survey and the International Social Survey Programme, measured respondents' trust and confidence in the churches.

direct institutional access to policy-making. At lower levels of moral authority, churches can still form partisan coalitions that reward individual parties and represent narrower constituencies, but they lose moral authority by dint of overt politicking and, in addition, have to worry about their allies' reelection prospects.

In advancing this argument, this article contributes to a vibrant scholarship on religious participation and mobilization,[8] political parties and religion,[9] religious nationalism,[10] church-state relations,[11] and policy influence.[12] It does so by identifying important, if overlooked, strategies of church influence within the secular state and by showing how moral authority, and the religious nationalism on which it builds, is a critical condition for such influence. Section I examines the puzzle of church influence on policy—that countries with similar religious profiles exhibit very different levels of influence. Section II examines the competing explanations. Section III provides an account of the different forms of church influence and their roots in church moral authority. Section IV illustrates how institutional access and coalitions functioned in two countries, Ireland and Italy. Section V tests the propositions about institutional access, coalitions, and popular demand as channels of policy influence on a broader sample of Christian democracies. Section VI concludes.

I. Variation in Church Influence on Policy

Despite shared policy preferences, churches have varied widely in their ability to set the agenda for public debate and get their preferences enacted. Christian churches hold similar, theologically grounded preferences across several policy domains. The five examined here are abortion, divorce, education, same-sex marriage, and stem cell technology (including assisted reproduction and embryonic stem cell research). The Roman Catholic Church has the same stance on these issues across countries. Conservative Protestant churches share many of these stances, although they have differed on divorce and stem cell research. Table 1 summarizes the variation in church influence, popular views, regarding this influence, and the religious-nationalist underpinnings of moral authority.

[8] Gill 1998; Chesnut 2003; Trejo 2009.
[9] Hanley 1994; Kalyvas 1996; Kalyvas and van Kersbergen 2011; Warner 2000.
[10] Juergensmeyer 1993; Burleigh 2007.
[11] Fox 2008; Gill 2008; Gorski 2003; Hagopian 2009; Philpott 2007.
[12] Htun 2003; Minkenberg 2002.

Table 1
Variation in Church Influence in Predominantly Christian Democracies on Policy: Education, Divorce, Abortion, Same-Sex Marriage, and Stem Cell Technology

Country	*Influence*[a]	*% Rejecting Religious Influence on Policy*[b]	*Level of Religious Nationalism/Fusion*[c]
Philippines	9	76	84
Ireland	8	72	58
Chile	8	68	54
Austria	7	80	53
Poland	7	81	75
United States	7	51	66
Italy	4	68	52
Slovakia	4	71	50
Croatia	4	79	—
Spain	4	73	44
W. Germany	4	71	37
Australia	3	74	37
Bulgaria	3	79	76
Hungary	3	70	43
Portugal	3	89	66
Switzerland	3	69	39
Latvia	2	72	23
Canada	1	67	54
Denmark	1	84	33
Finland	1	58	23
New Zealand	1	73	38
Slovenia	1	73	32
United Kingdom	1	65	35
Czech Rep.	0	74	29
E. Germany	0	73	13
France	0	82	17
Netherlands	0	60	13
Norway	0	64	20
Sweden	0	52	17

[a] Influence on policy. In each of five policy domains, 1 point for influencing rhetoric and 1 point for influencing policy. See Appendix 2 for coding. Range: 0–10 (5 domains x 2 possible points in each), mean: 3.40, standard deviation: 2.97.

[b] Percent rejecting influence. World Values Survey, 1995–2008: percent responding that religious organizations should *not* influence politics. 2003 International Social Survey Programme data for Australia, New Zealand, and Switzerland: percent responding that "religious organizations should *not* influence government." Range: 51–89, mean: 71.3, standard deviation: 8.78.

[c] Level of religious nationalism/fusion of religious and national identities. Percent responding that it is "important to be [dominant religion] to be [national identity]." 2003 International Social Survey Programme data. Range: 13–84, mean: 42.2, standard deviation: 19.8.

Yet very different patterns of religious influence on politics prevail, even among countries with similar levels of religiosity (as measured by levels of professed religious belief, patterns of attendance, and denominational loyalties). Ireland and Italy, for example, are both nominally Catholic countries, yet the impact of the Roman Catholic Church on policy outcomes varies enormously. The Irish church historically set the terms of political debates and influenced their outcomes in ways that have eluded the Italian church. Similarly, the Roman Catholic Church in Poland has had a great influence on public policy, while in equally Catholic Croatia it has been unable to shape public debates or policy outcomes. Regardless of the outcome, church-preferred policies are legislated in the face of enormous popular opposition to religious influence on politics. In all the countries examined, an overwhelming majority of respondents oppose such influence. Where churches have been especially influential, the opposition is even higher, as in Ireland, the Philippines, and Poland (see Table 1).[13] In short, religion can influence politics even when the public does not want it to.

If churches have no direct role as legislators and if popular demand is insufficient to explain policy outcomes, how do religious groups influence policy? Piety is insufficient, and popular demand is minimal. Yet religious influence on politics still occurs in both new and developed democracies. We thus need an account of churches as political actors and the channels of their influence.

II. Existing Explanations: Mobilization and Coalitions

Churches can influence policy through several pathways. First, they can channel popular demand for policy by organizing protests, collecting signatures, and mobilizing affiliated organizations.[14] Second, churches can "contract" with political parties by mobilizing voters on behalf of parties in exchange for subsequent policy concessions.[15] Such exchanges can also invoke "debts of gratitude" from new democratic governments that had previously, as dissidents under an authoritarian regime, enjoyed church protection.[16] These tactics all rely on political parties as the key partners.

One prominent set of accounts for religious influence on policy focuses on the popular demand for religion and religious influence, and

[13] Moreover, these World Values Surveys data represent the low end of the estimates; International Social Survey Programme surveys show even higher rates of rejection of religious influence on votes and governments.

[14] Castles 1994; Fink 2009.

[15] Warner 2000.

[16] Htun 2003; Gill 1998.

on the conditions that foster such demand. Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, for example, argue that greater levels of social and economic deprivation increase religiosity, since they lead individuals to seek comfort and security in religion.[17] In turn, religious voters behave differently: the more poor people attend church, for example, the more likely they are to vote against left parties,[18] and religious voters also show less support for the welfare state.[19] Religious constituencies should be especially receptive to religious incursion into public policy issues framed as "moral."[20] Political parties in such cases act as representatives of religious constituencies demanding church influence. The greater the share of religious voters, the more their preferences should be reflected in policy.

Yet accounts that rely on public demand are belied by the large popular majorities that reject church influence in politics. As Figure 1 shows, the rejection of church influence on politics is always above 50 percent, as is found in very religious countries such as Malta, the Philippines, and Poland.

Moreover, politicians do not necessarily follow the preferences of conservative and religious voters. Voter attitudes change, but policies often do not. For example, in Italy and Croatia disapproval of abortion grew over the 1990s and 2000s, yet no new restrictions appeared.[21] In Ireland, by contrast, attitudes toward abortion liberalized considerably from 1980 to 2010, yet no party moved to liberalize access to abortion, seen as the third rail of Irish politics.[22] Similarly, increasing acceptance of abortion in the United States over the last thirty years has not brought about corresponding policy change.[23] Thus, shifts in voter preferences are not enough to create or to change policy, and, as I demonstrate below, religiosity itself is insufficient for gaining policy influence.

A second explanation emphasizes alliances formed with political parties and the exchange of electoral mobilization for policy conces-

[17] Norris and Inglehart 2004.
[18] De La O and Rodden 2008.
[19] Scheve and Stasavage 2006.
[20] Mooney 2001, 16.
[21] The percentage of Italian respondents who rejected abortion as "never" or "almost never" justified increased from 33 percent in 1990 to 50 percent in 2010. In Croatia, 26 percent rejected abortion as unjustifiable in 1996, and over 50 percent did in 1999 and 2010. (World Values Surveys, "When is abortion justifiable," with 1 as "never" and 10 as "always," responses 1 and 2 reported.)
[22] It took the High Court, rather than responsive politicians, and the Halappanavar tragedy in October 2012 to start reform. The issue continues to be framed as protecting unborn life, and the focus is on specifying when and how a mother's life is under threat such that an abortion is warranted.
[23] In Ireland the share of those who saw abortion as never or almost never justifiable dropped from 84 percent in 1981 to 55 percent by 2011. Fifty percent of American respondents rejected abortion in 1982, but only 30 percent did by 2011. (World Values Surveys, "When is abortion justifiable," with 1 as "never" and 10 as "always," responses 1 and 2 reported.)

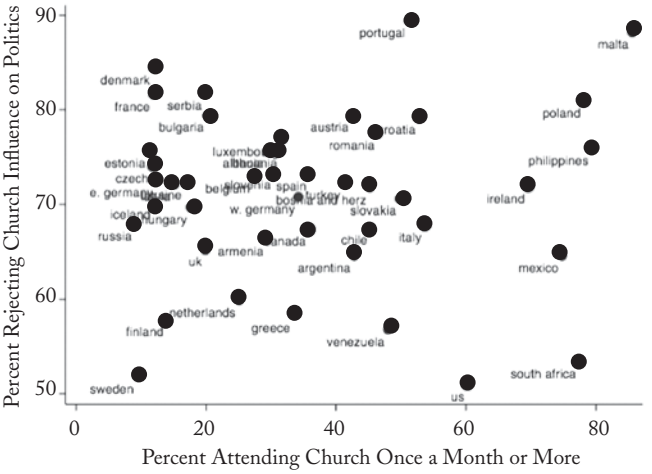

FIGURE 1
DEMAND FOR CHURCH INFLUENCE ON POLITICS

SOURCE: World Values Survey, 5th Wave. Results robust to using International Social Survey Programme data.

sions.[24] Churches pursue alliances with the parties that have the highest expected probability of translating preferences into policy at the lowest cost to the churches. Parties, in turn, will pursue these alliances depending on their need for electoral support, their ideological self-conceptions, and the structures of the churches in question.[25] Another variant of such contracts takes place over time, and emphasizes "debts of gratitude."[26] Thus, governments accede to church demands, especially in new democracies, because they feel beholden to churches for the years of rhetorical and physical protection.[27] In new democracies, where churches had earlier protected democratic dissidents, such parties, once elected to office, then reward the churches with policy concessions. Where the churches had been either neutral or on the side of authoritarian governments, we would expect little church influence on politics once democratic governments are in power.[28] Church influence on politics in such cases is the result of contract-like exchanges of votes for policy concessions between churches and parties.

[24] Warner 2000.
[25] Warner 2000, 12.
[26] Htun 2003.
[27] Htun 2003, 102.
[28] Juergensemeyer 1994; Gill 1998.

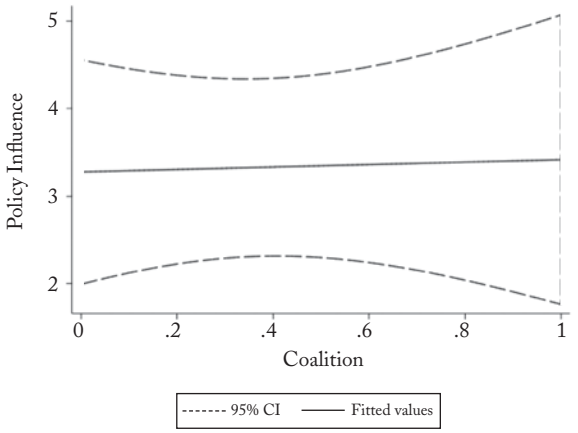

FIGURE 2
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PARTISAN COALITIONS AND CHURCH INFLUENCE ON POLICY

Yet as Figure 2 shows (and as the regressions in Section IV further confirm), there is little association between policy influence and party-church coalitions, for several reasons. First, potential partners are not necessarily obvious. One set of candidates might be the Christian Democratic parties, but these parties historically have had an uneasy relationship with churches and whenever possible preferred to assert autonomy and pursue broad, cross-class coalitions.[29] Empirically, we find that electoral support for Christian Democratic parties is not tied to the policy influence of the churches or to popular religiosity; there is little correlation across countries or over time.[30] Second, even if a partisan partner can be found, there are no guarantees in a democracy that the party will be elected to office. Third, enforcement is a problem: once churches mobilize their support on behalf of a party, the party can renege on its promises or it may find other ways to mobilize voters, as the Italian Christian Democrats did in the 1950s and 1960s. Churches calling in "debts" often find that political gratitude is notoriously short-lived and fragile, especially once church protection is no longer needed. In short, coalitions are risky—in that the political partners may not be found, may not be elected, and/or may not uphold the deal. They can also be costly—in that if majorities disapprove of church political activity, voter mobilization on behalf of parties is a risky strategy that may result in backlash.

[29] Kalyvas 1996.
[30] Grzymala-Busse 2011.

Thus, for churches eager to influence policy, the fundamental problem with relying on popular religiosity and/or on partisan coalitions stems from their public and contingent nature. Churches therefore prefer to rely on covert channels of policy influence because they are far less costly and risky. The next section examines why some churches can do so.

III. Institutional Access and Its Origins: Moral Authority

Paradoxically, to remain politically successful churches need to appear to be above the political fray. Given the enormous opposition to church influence on votes, governments, or policy, churches that seek to influence policy and to retain adherents prefer to keep their efforts hidden. Such a direct but covert channel exists. *Institutional access* includes the formulation of legislative bills, participation in government and parliamentary committees, vetting state officials, and even, in some contexts, administering state sectors such as education, the welfare system, and health care. In other words, churches share sovereignty with the secular rulers to differing degrees.

The key advantages of institutional access, then, are that it does not appear partisan and it remains largely covert. Specific policy pressure is applied behind the closed doors of ministries and high offices, with personal meetings substituting for public demonstrations or exhortations. Other forms of institutional access, such as running hospitals (and thus ministering to the sick), are hardly partisan. Further, they can be long-lasting and can operate under both democratic and autocratic regimes. They can even persist despite the transformation of a political regime from a communist autocracy to a postcommunist democracy. In Poland, for example, a joint commission with the church, originally established by the previous communist regime, still meets regularly, nearly seventy years later. Above all, churches can remain relatively unsullied by politicking while directly shaping policy.

It is not surprising, then, that churches prefer to wield influence through institutional access,[31] a far more attractive approach than engaging in partisan coalitions or mobilizing the electorate. Instead of having to rely on fickle voters or less-than-reliable parties, churches in effect share sovereignty with secular politicians. Institutional access can also be durable and self-reproducing (controlling education, for

[31] In more formal language, churches prefer to influence policy at minimum cost. Their ranked preferences are having their preferences legislated without participation in politics, followed by directly participating in policy-making, exchanging electoral support for policy concessions through partisan coalitions, and last, not influencing politics.

example, allows the church to inculcate generations of citizens with specific loyalties and identities). The preferences of secular incumbents are symmetrical. Since institutional access means sharing sovereignty, secular governments are loath to grant it. Instead, incumbents prefer a partisan coalition with a church—a coalition that makes policy concessions conditional on the church's continued support for the governing party. Institutional access is thus costly for the state but highly desirable for the church, whereas coalitions are less costly for the state but far less desirable for the church.

Under what conditions, then, would a state grant institutional access? The answer, to put it bluntly, is when it needs church support to stay in office—and when the church has the resources to ensure that survival. Institutional access is a price incumbents, whether democratically elected parties or autocratic regimes, are willing to pay if the benefits are high enough, for example, if politicians stand to lose office because the very regime or nation-state they have created will collapse and take them down with it. Thus, secular actors will grant churches institutional access when their hold on power is tenuous and their survival threatened. Such moments include a threatened regime collapse, newly gained state independence, the beginning of a brand-new democracy, and critical elections (where the vote determines the future of the regime, not just who the incumbent will be)—in short, during periods when a fragile secular state needs extensive support (and as part of this vulnerability may not have the capacity to run some sectors, such as education, on its own).

The churches, for their part, offer the guarantee of social peace—urging patience or nonviolence on moral grounds—in the interest of advancing the common good and preserving national stability.[32] They refrain from denouncing the new regime or mobilizing society against it in the media, during religious services, or in pastoral letters, and they reduce the likelihood of destabilizing protest or the mobilization of social discontent. They may mediate incipient conflict between state elites and societal representatives, as well as exercise a moderating influence on public rhetoric and actions by urging patience and offering direct counsel. Such support is especially critical when the new regime has not yet put down strong roots in society.

[32] Such denunciations and pressure can take the form of mass mobilization (or its threat), letter-writing campaigns, media announcements, and prohibitions on participation in and working for the state. Their success depends on the church's moral authority: for example, Pius IX's *non expedit*, which discouraged Catholic participation as either voters or candidates in Italian politics after unification, had little effect. It was widely seen as revenge for the taking of the Papal States (and suffrage itself was not widespread).

As result, churches with high moral authority can gain enormous policy influence during times of upheaval and instability, such as regime transitions—precisely when institutional and policy frameworks are also undergoing transformation. This is the story of the new Irish Free State handing over both education and welfare policy to the Catholic Church in the 1920s and of the British Crown bestowing the same domains on the church in Quebec.[33] The new Irish governments, starting with Cumann na nGaedheal in 1923, sought the church's support to legitimate their rule and the newly independent state.[34] In Quebec, the church counseled patience and quelled popular opposition to the British Crown's elimination of French as an official language and the suspension of French Canadian educational and legal institutions after the 1840 Act of Union.[35] In exchange, the Catholic Church gained control of the education, health, and welfare sectors, becoming a "crypto-state" within Quebec.[36]

Churches also obtain institutional access in even more dire circumstances, for example, when they can prevent fratricidal conflict. This was the case in communist Poland, where after the protests of 1956 and the enormous mobilization of 1980–81, the church calmed a furious populace and in the name of national peace and survival prevented violence and bloodshed. In exchange, it gained not only policy concessions from the ruling communist party, but also greater authority over its assets, continued consultations with high-ranking communist officials, and policy input through the newly reinvigorated episcopal-parliamentary joint commission. In short, if the secular actor (whether democratic or authoritarian) believes it may not survive without church support, the price of institutional access is worth paying.

Past the initial crisis, institutional access acts as an insurance policy for incumbents, whether or not they currently face a threat. It makes the church a stakeholder and gives it a vested interest in the survival of the regime and the state. It is thus a way of locking in church support, which may no longer be as necessary for survival but could prove useful in the future. Institutional access thus serves both as channel of communication (and influence) and as the church's stake in the regime's survival. Churches retain institutional access so long as they of-

[33] In both Italy and Ireland, the church was involved in the provision of services before the rise of an independent state. Yet such access has to be reaffirmed and can be revoked. In Poland, for example, the communist state took over health care and education from the church after 1946. Secure in Soviet support, the new state had little need for the backing of the church.

[34] Keogh 1986, 123ff.

[35] Baum 1986, 437.

[36] Zubrzycki 2013, 433.

fer valuable and needed support to the regime, that is, so long as their moral authority remains high and the probability of retaining office without church support is relatively low, whether in the present or in the anticipated future. If the church has less to offer or if the incumbent finds a substitute source of support, the incumbent can move to close off new institutional access to policy-making and may never allow it in issue domains that arise after the church's moral authority has waned. Yet even then existing institutional access can persist. The prior institutional influence of the church means that state officials appointed by the church or those employed in church-run sectors may resist, informal policies (and the constituencies they created) have to be reversed and new legislation must be written and passed, and a society educated in church-run schools and cared for in church-run hospitals may object. Under institutional access, the churches become part of the fabric of the state and policy-making and under such circumstances it is not easy to simply disentangle their influence without unraveling other institutional equilibria.

Yet not all churches can ensure regime survival and thereby gain institutional access. Only those with high moral authority can do so. Moral authority is the popular perception that churches are not only religious authorities but also representatives of the national interest and the common good. This is a role that is conceptually distinct from religiosity, as defined by religious observance, affiliation, or belief. That said, religiosity is a precondition; without those full pews, churches have a hard time convincing politicians or society that they embody broad national interests. Moral authority relies on the perception that churches are faithful representatives and loyal defenders of society as a whole—of the "nation"—rather than of narrower regional, partisan, or sectarian interests. It can originate in contemporary efforts by the church to protect national interests, but it most frequently stems from the churches' historical defense of national identity and interests against a colonial power or an alien regime and the subsequent fusion of national and religious identities (as in Croatia, Ireland, Lithuania, and Poland). Where the church shielded the nation, patriotism fused with religious loyalty and churches became powerful voices within society as trusted representatives of public national interest.[37]

Precisely because it relies on the perception that churches are *national* representatives and defenders, moral authority is a powerful but

[37] Such moral authority is distinct from the demand for church influence on politics: it is not the support for church policy preferences but recognition of the church's role as a representative of national interest. Opposition to church influence on governments and votes coexists with confidence in the churches as national representatives and institutions.

brittle resource. If churches appear to be partisan, narrowly self-interested, or siding with regional or local constituencies rather than "representing the nation," they risk dissipating this valuable stock. Claims of universal morality and national protection are immediately suspect if a church ties itself closely to a partisan government or a subnational group. Sponsorship or explicit mobilization on behalf of individual parties can thus have a perverse effect. Churches can make public declarations and public announcements without losing moral authority, as long as those claims are credibly based on theology and on the national interest. But once churches dirty their hands with partisan, regional, or sectoral politics, their claims to represent the national interest become far less credible.

We can now see why partisan coalitions may be a sign of church weakness—and why they are a costly tactic for churches. Churches are generally loath to be seen as partisan—and thereby risk losing what moral authority they have. Churches with high moral authority can get around this obstacle, however, by relying on covert institutional access, which does not damage their moral authority.[38] By contrast, where churches start off with lower moral authority by dint of a more compromised past, their options are constrained. They are not trusted as broadly and certainly are not trusted as national representatives, even if specific constituencies might be loyal supporters.[39] As a result, they cannot "speak to the nation" and therefore cannot significantly increase the incumbents' chances of survival. Under those circumstances, secular governments are unwilling to pay the price of institutional access. Churches can still expend moral authority to influence policy, but they have to rely on narrower coalitions with allied political parties, with all the attendant problems of credible commitment and backlash. Policy gains come at a steep price: what moral authority churches possess is eroded by partisan alliances and by overt politicking. Paradoxically, already weaker churches become even more vulnerable when they attempt to exert political influence. These churches are tragically dependent on political parties; they start off with less and obtain their goals at much higher costs to their stock of moral authority.

[38] Moreover, churches with high moral authority are likely to face deferential and respectful politicians; party competition is less likely to feature anticlerical critics. It is at lower levels of moral authority, where the church is *also* more likely to be involved in partisan coalitions, that greater incentives exist to criticize the church and form anticlerical political parties. Nonetheless, churches with strong policy preferences and high moral authority rely on institutional access, since open politicking will undermine their moral authority and subject them to more vociferous criticism.

[39] For the same reason, in religiously plural societies, such as the United States, no one church can claim a monopoly on representing the national interest. Moral authority is diffused among many churches, and we are more likely to see coalitions among churches and parties.

IV. Coalitions and Institutional Access in Practice

To show how coalitions and institutional access then translate into policy influence, I examine the domains of abortion, divorce, education, same-sex marriage, and stem cell research in the Irish and Italian cases. Although these five policy domains do not predetermine the relationship between moral authority, channels of influence, and policy outcomes, they are the explicit focus of the Roman Catholic Church, which holds the same doctrinal stance across countries and allows for few national differences in salience.[40] The church has also argued (1) that these are all moral issues and therefore its rightful domain and (2) that (its interpretation of) natural law in these domains and others trumps manmade legal frameworks.[41] Yet despite these similarities, the outcomes in policy influence vary across countries.

Ireland and Italy are examples of a broader universe of competitive and secular democracies—competitive in that religious groups are one of many striving for policy influence and secular in that both law and society recognize the distinction between state and religion. Both are also Catholic monopolies. In each country over 90 percent of the population declares itself to be Catholic, and over half the population attends religious services more than once a month. In both, over 60 percent of the population opposes religious influence on politics, and over 75 percent opposes such influence on votes. Yet despite these similarities, the Roman Catholic Church has had very different levels of success in influencing policy in the two countries, as summarized in Table 2.

The critical difference, I argue, lies in how different levels of moral authority translated into distinct channels of policy influence: where the church gained institutional access, it could exert enormous influence. In Ireland, high moral authority translated into institutional access and decades of policy influence, as it did in other countries such as Poland, the Philippines, Chile, and Quebec until the 1960s. High moral authority does not automatically lead to institutional access. In postcommunist Croatia, for example, a widely admired church did not gain it because the new regime of Franjo Tudjman did not need church

[40] The church has also focused on other particular issues in specific countries, ranging from alcoholism in Poland to nuclear disarmament in the United States, but the five domains examined here have been emphasized consistently across countries.

[41] In divorce and in education, the concern is more with the moral health of the nation and the primacy of (presumably religious) preferences of parents and church teaching, respectively, over secular state desiderata.

TABLE 2
POSTWAR CHURCH INFLUENCE ON POLICY DEBATES AND OUTCOMES[a]

	Ireland	*Italy*
Abortion restricted?[b]	2 framed as protecting life and Irish nation (1); unconstitutional as of 1983 (1)	1 framing successful (1); illegal until 1978 law and 1981 referendum affirmed access; informal strictures exist (0)
Divorce restricted?	2 framed as protection of family and women (1); unconstitutional since 1937, upheld by 1986 referendum; narrowly legalized in 1995 (1)	0 framing as protection unsuccessful (0); illegal until 1974 referendum affirmed legalization of divorce (0)
Religion in schools?[c]	2 framed as protecting youth (1); under church control, though 2010 report supports church withdrawal (1)	1 framing successful: most children enrolled in *optional* religious education in schools (1); officially removed in 1984 (0)
Stem cell research restricted?	2 framed as abortion (1); remains illegal as akin to abortion (1)	1 framing as akin to abortion failed (0); new restrictions passed in 2004 with church support, upheld by 2005 referendum (1)
Same-sex marriage prevented?	0 framing as protection of marriage unsuccessful (0); legalized in 2015 referendum (0)	1 framing unsuccessful (0); 2012 court decision allows it, but no new laws on same-sex marriage (1)
Summary score	8	4

[a] Points in parentheses refer to success in framing policy debates and in achieving policy outcomes, respectively.

[b] Abortion is defined as "unrestricted" if abortion is available freely up to twelve weeks of pregnancy. It is "restricted" if access is more constrained, either at the national level or across subnational units.

[c] State funds schools run by churches, or mandatory religion/ethics classes are taught in public schools.

support to survive.[42] Likewise religiosity itself does not mean automatic church influence on policy. In Italy, despite the primacy of the Catholic faith, the church was unable to obtain institutional access. Other examples of churches in primarily Catholic countries with lower church moral authority, no institutional access, and relatively little policy

[42] For the Tudjman/Hrvatska Demokraticka Zajednica (HDZ) regime, the initial challenges were extrication from the Yugoslav federation and the subsequent 1991–95 wars of Yugoslav succession, conflicts that the church could not mediate. See Grzymala-Busse 2015.

influence include Argentina, Portugal, Slovakia, and Spain, as well as historically Catholic but avowedly secular countries such as the Czech Republic and France.[43]

Ireland: High Moral Authority and Institutional Access

The central role of the Catholic Church in the emergence of an independent Ireland and in stabilizing the new republic gave it enormous moral authority in the twentieth century. Irish independence in 1922 meant considerable cooperation between the church and state. After the 1800 Union with Britain, "close identification between Irish nationalism and the Catholic religion developed, and nationalists defended the prominent role accorded the church in areas of public policy."[44] Catholicism became the core pillar of an Irish, as opposed to an English, identity, and the church actively promoted the intertwining of national and religious identities.[45] In the name of protecting the Irish nation, the Catholic Church was heavily involved in policing the moral and political spheres and indeed argued successfully that the two were the same.[46]

While the bishops were often ambivalent about republican tactics, they supported the cause of Irish national aspirations (and their fusion with Catholicism), resulting in both moral leadership and institutional access after 1922. The need of the young independent republic for church support was great. Its founders believed "that the state could not govern successfully if it were strongly opposed by the Church."[47] Desperate for church support, without which they would not be accepted or legitimated by society, "nationalists defended the prominent role accorded the church in public policy."[48] Both of the main governing parties subsequently enacted the church's preferences: Fianna Fáil, whose politicians demonstrated their religious credentials by reproducing church rhetoric and sustaining its policy preferences, and the socially more moderate Fine Gael, which governed with the center-left Labour Party. This elite consensus "effectively drained Irish politics of a clerical–anticlerical dimension . . . disputes over the role of the Catholic Church largely disappeared from mainstream political debate."[49]

[43] In all these countries, the Catholic Church openly allied itself with authoritarian regimes (and in the Czech and French cases, with forces hostile to national ambitions, specifically the Habsburg Empire and the ancien régime, respectively).

[44] Kissane 2003, 75.

[45] Taylor 2007, 153.

[46] Girvin 2002; Keogh 1986; Smith 2004; Whyte 1971.

[47] Inglis 1998, 79.

[48] Kissane 2003, 75.

[49] Conway 2006, 171.

The church repeatedly framed abortion, divorce, and education as falling within its purview and insisted on its right to impose restrictions in these domains as being essential to the moral health of the nation. The church publicly (and convincingly) argued that its mission was to protect the Irish nation, but its *direct* influence relied on institutional access. Church opinions were regularly sought both officially and in informal consultations between politicians and clerical officials. Repeatedly, the government set up policy committees that included church officials, and it legislated accordingly.[50] Beginning with the writing of the constitution, church officials and interests were explicitly represented, with the future archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, helping to write the first draft of the article on religion, church, and state, as well as providing advice on the drafting of other articles of the constitution.[51] Accordingly, the 1937 Constitution identified the common good with religious criteria and privileged the church with a special position that did not end until 1972. Furthermore, the church assumed nearly full control over the institutions of education, hospitals, juvenile justics, and welfare, making it an effective partner in governance—and a source of constraints—on whatever government was in office.[52]

Education illustrates both church authority and the mechanisms of its replication over time. Attempts by the British government to introduce a nondenominational educational system in 1900s were already frustrated by "an alliance between the new Sinn Fein party and the Catholic hierarchy"[53] in the name of Irish national identity and values. The Catholic Church was subsequently able to insist on its primacy, both from loyal cabinet ministers and through informal pressure. Ministers of education were inevitably observant Catholics, and the pervasive argument of both secular and religious authorities was that neutrality would translate into bias against belief. The result was that from the 1930s onward, the church controlled primary schooling and the administration of juvenile justice. Church officials dominated the Council of Education, established in 1950, with Catholic religious figures serving as the chair and constituting a quarter of the council's members.[54] The council confirmed the primacy of the Catholic Church in education, with the church running 96 percent of primary schools. Among the Rules for National Schools, published in 1965, Rule 68 stated that "of all parts of a school curriculum Religious Instruction is

[50] Whyte 1971, 38.
[51] Keogh 2007, 101–2.
[52] Inglis 1998, chap. 3 and 122ff. See also Larkin 1984, 121.
[53] Kissane 2003, 75.
[54] Coolahan 2003, 139.

by far the most important" and that "a religious spirit should inform and vivify the whole work of the school."

The church's role was not openly questioned until the 2010s, after the church's moral authority had dropped in the 1990s. It was then that demographic changes and immigration prompted the establishment of the new Programme on Patronage and Pluralism to review the church's role in education. The committee included explicitly secular advocates and eventually called for divesting the church of its patronage rights and repealing Rule 68.[55] By this point, however, the church itself did not object to the divestment: with fewer monks and nuns, the church had difficulty staffing the schools and had already long turned to secular teachers. Given the burdens of administering the educational system, the review did not overturn church preferences.

Throughout the twentieth century, the church successfully framed several issues as matters of fundamental morality, with politicians of all stripes picking up and amplifying the religious language in public debates and policy justifications. The church's fundamental role in creating the initial legal framework meant that abortion and divorce policies also accorded with church preferences. Divorce was prohibited by the 1937 Constitution and remained illegal until 1995. A church-supported referendum in 1983 made abortion, which was already illegal, unconstitutional[56] as well. "The result was clearly a vindication of the Catholic Church's authority and demonstrated the vulnerability of the political process to a campaign orchestrated by well-organized interest groups."[57] A 1992 referendum, on the heels of the notorious "X case" in which a raped girl was not allowed to travel to England for an abortion, resulted in the freedom to travel to obtain medical procedures including abortion—but added no further provisions for legalizing access to abortion. The reluctance of both politicians and medical authorities to run afoul of the church was so great that the parliament refused to clarify what would constitute the one ground for abortion—"threat to a mother's life"—even after a 2013 scandal surrounding the death from sepsis of a woman whose miscarriage at nineteen weeks of pregnancy was not treated by doctors for fear of legal prosecution.

[55] Coolahan 2003; Coolahan et al. 2012.

[56] The Catholic Church helped to orchestrate the referendum, rather than relying on access alone, because amendments to the Irish constitution must be approved by a popular referendum. The amendment was spurred by the *Roe v. Wade* decision in the United States and anxieties that the High Court, largely autonomous of the church, could also liberalize abortion in Ireland. In general, courts are more independent of churches' moral authority, since they are not as reliant on churches to stay in office. As such, however, they are more likely to be an independent veto point—and the target of church efforts to vet justices, as in the case of the US Supreme Court and the battles fought over its nominees.

[57] Kissane 2003, 81.

It was only once the church lost much of its moral authority that policies could depart from church preferences, and even then only in domains controlled by secular actors with less need for church support than elected officials. In the 1990s the church had betrayed the public trust it had insisted was its monopoly and lost a great deal of its moral authority with the exposure of rampant pedophilia and child abuse scandals.[58] Accounts of widespread abuse of the most vulnerable of Irish citizens emerged—in the educational and welfare sectors run by the church, including the reform schools, Magdalene laundries, and mother-and-baby homes. The loss of societal standing was swift and severe. Public opinion, which in some cases had already begun to shift away from church preferences, now became even more unmoored from the church.[59] Accordingly, a 1995 referendum repealed the ban on divorce, against church opposition. Homosexuality itself was illegal until 1993, when it was decriminalized despite church opposition. By 2011, moreover, two-thirds of the population was in favor of same-sex marriage. If no politician wanted to introduce abortion to Ireland, by 2012 the challenge was "to find a prominent politician prepared to oppose gay marriage out loud."[60] It passed decisively, with a 62 percent majority, in the May 22, 2015, referendum. Moreover, when courts rather than politicians or voters decided policy outcomes, the church was even less successful. In 2002 High Court decisions ended the ban on contraception and allowed for no-fault divorce.[61] (Fear of the High Court liberalizing abortion led to the 1983 referendum.)

Yet politicians and professional associations remained as reticent on assisted reproduction and stem cell technology as on abortion.[62] Since embryos were involved, the church had long framed all of those issues as part of the same moral domain and taught generations of Irish schoolchildren that abortion, assisted reproduction, many forms of contraception, and stem cell technology were equally objectionable. Moreover, the church continued to be heavily involved as an institutional gatekeeper in health care, whether running hospitals, sitting on

[58] The government charged the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse in 2009 with investigating the abuses and fate of the over two hundred thousand women, children, and adolescents who were placed into the church-run reformatory system. Five volumes of these reports can be accessed at www.childabusecommission.ie/rpt/pdfs/.

[59] Support for divorce grew enormously, from 12 percent of poll respondents finding it justifable in 1981 to 35 percent in 2011. The acceptance of homosexuality rose from 10 percent in 1980–82 to 36 percent by 2010–11. (World Values Surveys, "When is divorce/ homosexuality justifiable," with 1 as "never" and 10 as "always." Responses 1 and 2 reported as rejection, and responses 9 and 10 as acceptance.)

[60] *Irish Times*, July 14, 2012.

[61] See fn. 57.

[62] McDonnell and Allison 2006, 825.

ethics boards, or regulating the standard of care. Medical personnel depended on church endorsement for employment. The government refused to legislate directly on stem cell research (despite a 2009 High Court plea to do so) or on the legal status of embryos, thus leaving such technology in legal limbo. The collapse of the church's moral authority in the 1990s meant that where popular referenda decided policies (as in the case of divorce) or where new issue domains opened up after the 1990s (same-sex marriage), the church could not automatically obtain its preferred outcomes. But where the church retained its institutional access, and where it had framed issues as matters of life and death, public policy continued to defer to its preferences.

Italy: Lower Moral Authority and Coalition

Italy appears to be the stereotypical Catholic country, with churches on every corner and strong traditional religiosity. Yet the relationship between the church and state has been a complicated one. The Roman Catholic Church (and specifically, the Vatican) was opposed to the reunification of Italy in the nineteenth century, forbade Catholics from participating in the new democracy on pain of excommunication, and vehemently fought any attempts to constrain the power of the Vatican. Thus, since it was never able to claim to speak for the "Italian nation" or to be above local or partisan interests, it never gained the moral authority that the church had in Ireland. The result was that, on the one hand, a strong popular religiosity could survive, but on the other hand, the church was not offered the institutional access that its Irish counterpart enjoyed.

In the postwar Italian democracy, the Christian Democrats (and others) initially accommodated the church, one of the few institutions that had survived the Second World War.[63] The DC sought church support to win elections and bolster the new democracy—but the church did not have the moral authority to guarantee the party's success or the regime's survival. Instead, the DC relied on the church's mobilizational capacities in the elections to compensate for the party's meager organizational resources after the war.[64] In exchange, the church mobilized its flock to block the Communist Party, its main perceived threat. As one analyst put it, "the Church wanted guarantees of influence and of anti-Communism, and it was beginning to appear that the DC would be able to offer both."[65] The church therefore supported the party throughout

[63] Ignazi and Wellhofer 2013; Seymour 2006, 164.
[64] Pollard 2008, 123.
[65] Warner 2000, 108.

its rule, beginning with the 1948 elections and until the DC's collapse in 1993–94, largely because no other party was both conservative and credible. In return, the DC financed Catholic hospitals, seminaries, and schools, as well as Catholic cultural, educational, and social activities.[66]

Despite this marriage of convenience, the Italian church achieved far less than it had sought. First, it never received the institutional access it wanted. The closest it came was the inclusion of the Mussolini-era Lateran Pacts[67] in the 1947 Constitution, but the 1984 revision of the concordat ended much of this privilege. Second, the DC began to seek greater autonomy from the church. The Christian Democrats first sought coalitions with the "unacceptable" Socialists (*Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano*, PSDI), Liberals (*Partito Liberale Italiano,* PLI), and Republicans (*Partito Repubblicano Italiano*, PRI) after 1948, even after achieving an absolute majority, to "reduce the effects of ecclesiastical pressure [on the] government."[68] The DC then emphasized patronage, creating networks of state firms, funds, and agencies that funneled clientelist goods throughout Italy and especially in the South, which obviated the need for the church's mobilization of the voters and thus "severed its direct link to the Catholic hierarchy."[69]

Third, the DC not only sought greater autonomy, but it also often failed to deliver on the church's stated goals. In four out of the five policy areas examined, the church obtained far less than it sought. As early as 1946, the church was angered by the Christian Democratic government's laxity in including the sanctity of marriage in the constitution and allowing labor the right to strike.[70] Subsequently, a 1974 divorce referendum produced a majority in favor of new and permissive legislation, as did an abortion referendum in 1981 (which only reaffirmed the liberal law on abortion passed in parliament in 1978, much to the church's consternation and vituperation). The church continued to run most preschools, but much of its influence over education, such as it was, predated its coalition with the DC. The 1984 revision of the concordat ended compulsory religious teaching in schools (although most parents chose optional religious education for their children). More generally, the 1984 revision formally separated church and state,

[66] Ignazi and Wellhofer 2013, 38.

[67] The 1929 Lateran Pacts between the Vatican and Italy ensured the Vatican's independence and its financial standing, and they included a series of political concessions, including some control over primary education.

[68] Pollard 2008, 119.

[69] Guzzini 1995; see also Donovan 2003, 101; Furlong 1996, 60; Gundle and Parker 1996, 60; and Pollard 2008.

[70] Clark, Hine, and Irving 1974, 336; Warner 2000, 119.

removed Catholicism as a state religion, subjected church properties to taxation, and ended state stipends.

In many ways, the harder the church tried, the less it achieved through its coalition—yet it had nowhere else to turn. After 1994 and the sobering experience of the DC's fall from power, the church did not form an electoral coalition with any of the parties in the newly bipolar Italian party system. Instead, it turned to appealing to individual members of parliament, irrespective of their party affiliation, as a way of influencing policy. It was unable to change much in abortion, divorce, or education—issues that by then had been decided as far as the electorate and the parliament were concerned. Similarly, while the church has opposed same-sex marriage, legal measures to ban it have failed, and instead the Court of Cassation found in 2012 that same-sex couples share equal rights with heterosexual ones.

In one area, however, the church was able to influence policy: stem cell research and other bioethical policies. It was able to do so *after* its coalition collapsed with the implosion of the DC in 1993–94, when the church ironically became the one de facto national institution and gained the greater confidence of society.[71] In the late 1990s a veto by Catholic parliamentarians of bioethics legislation "resulted in a legislative vacuum, since regulation itself was seen as state recognition of, and participation in, immoral practice."[72] The church preferred this outcome to lenient legislation. However, the veto backfired and scientists were free to experiment, with controversial results, such as the implantation of embryos in postmenopausal women. It was not until 2004 and the return of a center-right government that a more restrictive bill was passed. A 2005 referendum would have liberalized the legislation, but the church persuaded enough voters to stay home to invalidate it—even though the repeal of the strictures was approved by 90 percent of those who voted, turnout was only 26 percent. The church was no longer relying on its ineffective coalition with the DC, but the complexity of the laws and voter apathy helped to defeat the referendum.[73] Thus, the church's one major modern policy success came in the absence of a partisan coalition and was achieved instead as a result of the passivity, rather than of the active support, of the voters.

[71] Ceccarini 2010, 195–96. The coalition collapsed along with the Italian party system. As new separatist political parties and movements arose, the church defended the idea of a united Italy. Public opinion polls showed that confidence in the church grew from 57 percent in 1999 to 75 percent in 2005 (World Values Surveys, Waves 4–6).

[72] Donovan 2003, 112.

[73] DiMarco 2009, 21.

V. A Further Empirical Test

To test the broader correlations, I rely on the Church Influence in Democracies data set I constructed. (See Appendix 1 for the variables and coding used.) It comprises twenty-nine countries for which survey data on moral authority was available, and it includes data on economic development, policy influence, public opinion, and religiosity, regarding church activity and authority.[74] While cross-sectional, the data set allows a suggestive snapshot of the accumulated impact of moral authority and institutional access on religious policy influence from 1945 to 2014.[75] I specify several different ordinary least squares (OLS)[76] models that test both the independent and the conditional impact of moral authority, institutional access, explicit coalitions between political parties and churches, and the popular demand for church influence, controlling for economic development and prevalence of Catholicism.

The outcome of interest, *policy influence*, is measured with the index of church ability to set the terms of political debates and policy outcomes across five domains (education, divorce, abortion, stem cell research, and same-sex marriage). In each of the five policy domains, organized religions can obtain 1 point for influencing rhetoric and 1 for influencing policy, for a possible total of 10. If secular politicians accept and use language first formulated by identifiable churches ("sanctity of life," "natural law demands," and so on), political rhetoric is coded as 1. If secular politicians have adopted church policy recommendations in explicit response to church demands, policy influence is coded as 1. Appendix 2 shows the coding and sources of this and the other variables.

The proxy for *moral authority* is religious nationalism, or the fusion of religious and national identities. It is measured by the percentage of respondents who consider the dominant religion in their country to be important or very important to national identity.[77] While an imperfect

[74] The countries included are Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany (East and West), Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, and the US, all included in the 2003 and 2008 International Social Science Programme survey of religious and national identities.

[75] The data set is thus useful for establishing broad correlations between the factors of interest. It does not allow us to trace the dynamics of moral authority and policy influence over time; the case studies make that possible.

[76] The dependent variable is an additive index that is bounded (values span from 0 to 10). This usually calls for using ordered probit, which allows modeling the latent continuous metric underlying the ordinal responses and how the independent variables affect the probability of moving from one ordinal category to the next. However, probit uses up additional parameters and the coefficients are more difficult to interpret, requiring the comparison of probabilities or odds ratios. Since both OLS and ordered probit regressions generated nearly identical results, the predicted values correlate at .99 (.000 *p* value), I report OLS results.

[77] International Social Survey Programme 2003.

proxy, it taps into the societal relationship to churches, their representation of national interests, and the favorable reputation that specific religions gain as a result. Such fusion is distinct from religiosity or religious observance.

Institutional access and political party-church coalitions are both binary measures.[78] *Institutional access* is coded 1 if an organized religion had gained formal representation in national legislative bodies or in joint episcopal-parliamentary commissions, ran a ministry or a ministerial sector funded from the state budget, was consulted formally during policy-making, or exercised vetting powers over national appointments, and 0 otherwise. *Coalitions* are coded as 1 if a political party in parliament and a church explicitly formed a coalition during the election, with the church mobilizing on behalf of the party and the party explicitly promising to enact church preferences in its electoral campaign or program, and 0 otherwise.[79] To measure *demand* for church influence on politics, I rely on an item from the 1998–2004 World Values Survey (WVS): agreement with the statement "religious leaders should influence government." I measure *religiosity* by using self-reported church attendance data (a more demanding measure than either belief in God or denominational affiliation, though still subject to positive reporting bias), *economic development* with a log of per capita gross domestic product (GDP), and *denominational monopoly* by the percentage of population estimated to be Catholic.[80]

To summarize the results, moral authority and the institutional access it produces are consistently associated with policy influence, even taking into account economic development, prevalence of Catholicism, church-party coalitions, and popular demand for church influence. Further, it is unlikely that we have the causation reversed and that influence on politics promotes moral authority or the fusion of national and religious identities. First, moral authority precedes influence on politics, by decades and sometimes even by centuries. More important, if vast majorities object to church influence on politics, it is unlikely that such influence strengthens the church's standing in society.

[78] Neither fusion nor institutional access correlates particularly strongly with coalitions: at −.07 and −.039, and with very high p values (.72 and .84, respectively), it suggests we cannot reject the null hypothesis that fusion, institutional access, and coalitions are simply related by chance. Fusion and institutional access correlate strongly at .54 (.003 p value), a substantively and statistically much stronger relationship.

[79] I exclude parties that ran in elections with church support but failed to enter parliament, potentially biasing the results in favor of coalitions.

[80] Using the religious fractionalization index from Alesina et al. 2003 produced very similar results: religious monopoly/pluralism was not a statistically or substantively significant predictor of policy influence.

The regression results are consistent with the proposition that institutional access is a powerful form of policy influence. Since moral authority of churches allows them to influence policy through institutional access or coalitions, I first test this *mediating* effect by comparing the impact of moral authority alone and then in the presence of institutions or coalitions. One possible alternative to the argument presented here, after all, is that it is simply moral authority that is responsible for policy influence. Yet a simple test suggests otherwise, as does a more demanding one that tests for the average causal mediation effects of institutions and coalitions.[81] The coefficient on moral authority drops when institutional access is included, as shown by models 1 and 2 in Table 3, and moral authority is no longer the chief correlate of policy influence. This is consistent with moral authority generating institutional access and institutional access then producing policy influence. I also test whether the coefficient on moral authority drops in the presence of partisan coalitions in model 3. It does not, suggesting that moral authority does not influence policy through coalitions. The impact of institutional access remains even after controlling for numerous likely confounders, such as religiosity, economic development, popular demand for church influence, and denominational monopoly, as model 2 in Table 3 shows. These results are consistent with the argument that that institutional access is the critical channel through which moral authority helps churches influence policy.

Second, institutional access should be more effective at higher levels of moral authority (and conversely, coalitions would be more effective at lower levels.) To test this *moderating* effect, I estimate the conditional impact of institutional access in Table 4, model 5. Since interaction coefficients are difficult to interpret, I graph the marginal impact in Figure 3. Here institutional access has a positive marginal impact on policy influence across all levels of moral authority. This conditional

[81] I also tested for the average causal mediation effect (ACME), following the procedure set out in Imai et al. 2011. The ACME for *Institutional Access* accounts for 28 percent of the total causal effect of moral authority, while the ACME for *Coalitions* is .06 percent of the total causal effect (95 percent confidence intervals in parentheses):

	Institutions	*Coalitions*
ACME	.028	.0006
	(.0065—.06)	(−.014—.017)
Direct effect	.073	.094
	(.037—.11)	(.056—.13)
Total	.10	.095
	(.05—.17)	(.052—.134)
% Total effect mediated	28%	.06%

TABLE 3
THE MEDIATING IMPACT OF INSTITUTIONS AND COALITIONS

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*
	Unmediated by Moral Authority	*Mediated by Institutions*	*Mediated by Coalitions*
Moral authority	0.053*	0.035	0.052*
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)
	[0.06]	[0.16]	[0.07]
Religiosity	0.065**	0.042	0.064**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
	[0.04]	[0.12]	[0.05]
Log GDP	-0.54	–0.71	–0.53
	(0.67)	(0.61)	(0.78)
	[0.42]	[0.33]	[0.51]
% Catholic	0.008	0.009	0.009
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
	[0.57]	[0.46]	[0.57]
Demand	-0.035	–0.011	–0.036
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
	[0.40]	[0.76]	[0.40]
Institutional access		2.235**	
		(0.77)	
		[0.01]	
Coalitions			–0.097
			(0.71)
			[0.89]
Constant	6.307	6.943	6.856
	(7.67)	(6.94)	(8.85)
	[0.42]	[0.33]	[0.45]
Obs	25	24	25
R-sqr	0.80	0.87	0.80

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1; standard errors in parentheses; p levels in brackets

impact of institutional access becomes statistically significant at a point when roughly 30 percent of poll respondents state that the dominant religious tradition is an important part of national identity. In short, as levels of religious nationalism and moral authority increase, institutional access has an increasingly positive impact on the policy influence of churches.[82]

[82] A caveat here is that since there are relatively few observations at the very lowest and very highest levels of national-religious fusion, the larger confidence interval in those areas may reflect lack of observations rather than a substantively weaker relationship.

TABLE 4
THE CONDITIONAL IMPACT OF INSTITUTIONAL ACCESS AND COALITIONS ON POLICY INFLUENCE

	Model 4	*Model 5*	*Model 6*	*Model 7*
	Institutional Access	*Access| Fusion*	*Coalition*	*Coalition| Fusion*
Moral authority	0.048**	0.047*	0.050*	0.057**
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)
	[0.04]	[0.06]	[0.06]	[0.05]
Religiosity	0.051**	0.044	0.073***	0.070**
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
	[0.05]	[0.11]	[0.01]	[0.01]
Log GDP	-0.389	–0.241	–0.304	0.253
	(0.56)	(0.60)	(0.65)	(0.66)
	[0.50]	[0.69]	[0.64]	[0.71]
% Catholic	0.008	0.010	0.002	0.003
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
	[0.45]	[0.36]	0.88]	[0.82]
Institutional access	1.328**	0.675		
	(0.67)	(1.09)		
	[0.06]	[0.54]		
Institution* Moral authority		0.016		
		(0.02)		
		[0.45]		
Coalitions			0.077	0.886
			(0.61)	(1.43)
			[0.90]	[0.54]
Coalitions* Moral authority				–0.019
				(0.03)
				[0.54]
Constant	2.658	1.313	1.694	0.894
	(5.97)	(6.27)	(6.87)	(7.08)
	[0.66]	[0.84]	[0.81]	[0.90]
Obs	28	28	29	29
R-sqr	0.83	0.84	0.79	0.79

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Coalitions between churches and political parties do not appear to correlate with church policy influence, in either a simple additive model (model 6) or a conditional one (model 7) in Table 4. Even a stripped-down model that includes only coalitions and the controls (not shown) similarly fails to show either substantive or statistical significance. Fur-

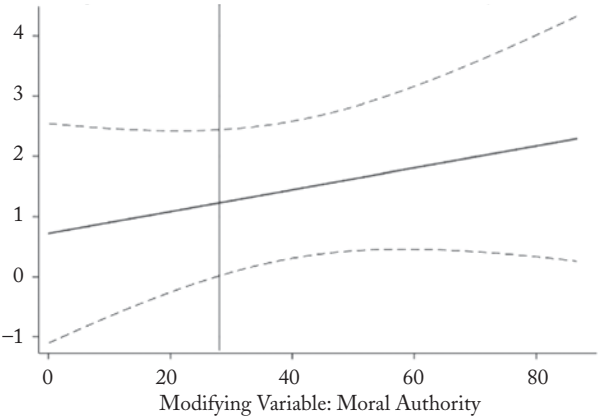

FIGURE 3
MARGINAL EFFECT OF INSTITUTIONAL ACCESS ON POLICY INFLUENCE

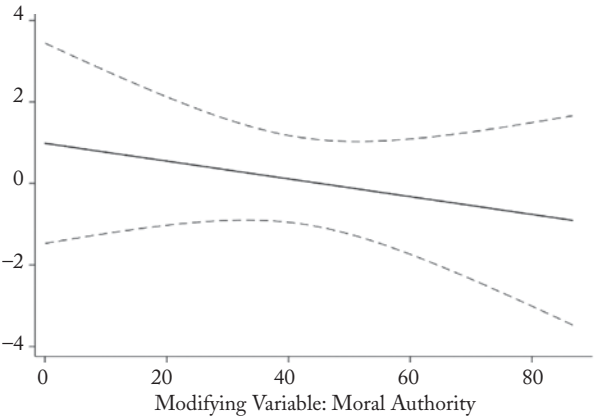

FIGURE 4
MARGINAL EFFECT OF COALITIONS ON POLICY INFLUENCE

ther, the impact of coalitions does not appear to be conditional on fusion of national and religious identities or the church's moral authority, as model 7 suggests (the same results hold if coalitions are interacted with religiosity). Once again, for greater ease of interpretation, I graph the results in Figure 4. There is no discernible impact of coalitions at any level of religiosity: the confidence interval always includes 0.

Popular *demand for religious influence* on government does not correlate with church influence. These results are robust to using WVS survey questions and International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) questions that explicitly ask respondents to agree that organized religions should

influence votes and incumbents. Even in bare-bones models (not presented here) that included popular demand and the controls, demand is neither substantively nor statistically significant. Finally, *religiosity* is a significant predictor of policy influence. In nearly every specification, attendance is correlated with religious influence on politics. This makes sense in light of the idea that moral authority is predicated on religiosity: a church cannot claim to represent the nation if few people are its members or faithful. Yet even religiosity loses both substantive and statistical significance once we include institutional access (Table 3, model 2).

VI. Conclusion

The main goal of this article has been to analyze how and when churches effectively influence public policy. The two case studies and broader correlations suggest that the key to success is institutional access, rather than popular demand, mobilization on behalf of a political party, or a grateful former protégé. In particular, allying with political parties is neither the predominant nor the most effective way for churches to exercise policy influence. Partisan coalitions also explicitly rely on competitive political parties, whereas institutional access does not. Institutional access is thus feasible because it is possible in the absence of party competition. While the analysis here is limited to largely liberal democracies, authoritarian rulers also turn to churches to survive: this was the case, for example, in communist Poland, where the Catholic Church gained considerable institutional access.

Institutional access is made possible by politicians' need for churches' moral authority. Secular actors, whether political parties or governments, concede some of their policy-making authority in exchange for church support that allows these secular actors to survive politically. Yet moral authority itself is brittle. It is undermined by overt and narrow politicking but can also crumble when churches do not live up to representing the nation in other ways (for example, when the definition of the nation itself changes, as it did in Quebec in the 1960s). That said, since religiosity is distinct from moral authority, even open politicking by the church need not affect popular piety, church attendance, or individual behavior.[83] Such loss of moral authority, however, does greatly limit *future* policy gains. Moral authority thus both establishes institutional access and sustains policy influence.

[83] Zubrzycki 2006, 222.

Two other implications follow. First, this analysis suggests we need to further unpack the notion of nation-state. "Nation" and "state" comprise two distinct identities and loyalties that may very well stand in opposition—and the churches that chose the side of the nation, as in Croatia, Ireland, Lithuania, the Philippines, and Poland, gain far greater secular influence than those that opposed it, as in the Czech lands, France, and Italy. Churches' earlier actions (and the careful interpretation and inculcation of these histories), often in the face of repression and persecution, legitimated their self-representations as the agents of national interests and thus allowed them to be a powerful influence on new states and their policies.

Second, if we take churches seriously as interest groups,[84] then one implication is that political back rooms—informal consultations, covert legislative proposals, and hidden vetting of officials—offer a far more powerful influence on democratic policy-making than ballot boxes, with their electoral mobilization and support of political parties. The argument presented here fills two gaps. First, while existing scholarship has explained how coalitions arise, it has not examined the alternatives to public and partisan coalitions. We see that institutional access is one such alternative. Second, in contrast to other interest groups, churches may be especially interested in the "quiet politics" of institutional access, since their official efforts to influence policy often go against the wishes of their adherents. As a result, while business and other groups pursue quiet lobbying on complex matters that benefit narrow constituencies,[85] churches pursue quiet access in highly salient domains that affect entire societies. In this way, institutional access allows a covert influence that is far less costly to the image of churches as nonpartisan and divinely inspired advocates of the national interest.

Appendix 1
Coding and Sources

Policy influence summary index: ranges from 0 to 10, with 2 points possible (1 for success in framing policy debates, 1 for achieving policy outcomes) in each of the five policy domains: abortion, divorce, education, same-sex marriage, stem cell research. Only major national policies were included, with statements by national legislators, newspaper editorials, and mentions in party manifestoes.

[84] Warner 2000.
[85] Culpepper 2011.

Framing is coded as 1 if (1) churches were the protagonists in the national public debate over the issue, if (2) churches first framed the issue on the national level in religious terms, using phrasing such as "sanctity of marriage," "the culture of life," and appeals to the "Christian character" of the nation or to "natural law," *and* if (3) secular national-level legislators then adopted the same language on the national level; and 0 otherwise.

Policy outcomes are coded as 1 if changes to policy were (1) compatible with church teachings *and* (2) justified by the national legislators passing them as having a Christian character or compatible with church teachings.[86]

The variable is cumulative. It represents the situation in 2014 as a snapshot of church efforts up to that point from 1945. A failure in framing or outcomes after years of success is coded as 0, to preclude overstatement of church influence. Each domain was traced using press and historical accounts to determine whether the conditions above held. Sources: press accounts (for example, *Anglican Journal, Canada NewsWire, Gazeta Wyborcza, Irish Times, La Repubblica, Osservatore Romano, Nacional, New York Times, Keesings' World News Archive, Pismo Okólne, Vjesti*), and scholarly publications (for example, Akmadza 2004, Christiano 2007, Gowin 1999, Inglis 1998, and Sachdev 1988).

Cronbach's alpha for the two components of the index is .863, suggesting the index is internally consistent. Mean: 3.40. Standard deviation: 2.97.

Coalition is coded 1 if an explicit, national-level electoral coalition existed between a political party and an organized religion in the postwar era (1945–2014.) Party manifestos and electoral appeals included positive references to churches and/or phrasings such as "sanctity of marriage," "the culture of life," appeals to the "Christian character" of the nation or to "natural law," *and* a church openly mobilized on behalf of a particular political party in elections, engaging in official pronouncements, canvassing, or widespread mobilization from the pulpit on behalf of particular parties that formally affiliated themselves with the church; and 0 otherwise.

Institutional access is coded 1 if an organized religion gained formal representation in national legislative bodies or joint episcopal-parliamentary commissions, ran a ministry or a ministerial sector funded from the state budget, was consulted formally during policy-making, or

[86] Churches also use nongovernmental organizations to make their case. If these NGOs are proxies: sponsored and vetted by the churches, they count toward a 1. If they are allies, sharing members and goals with churches but not necessarily strategies, their influence is coded as 0.

exercised vetting powers over national appointments in the postwar era (1945–2014); and 0 otherwise.

Fusion is percent responding it was important or very important to be (dominant religion in country X) and to be (national identity.) Source: International Social Survey Programme 2003, V15. The question was to be repeated in the 2013 ISSP survey, which had not been released at the time of analysis and writing.

Attendance is percent attending services more than once a month. Sources: World Values Survey 5th Wave, 2005–8; World Values Survey 6th Wave, 2008–11.

Log GDP is logged GDP per capita in 2000 purchasing power parity. Source: 2000 Penn World Tables.

% Catholic is percent of the population estimated to be actively Catholic. Source: 2010 CIA Factbook.

Demand is percent responding that religious organizations should *not* influence politics. Source: World Values Survey, 5th Wave, 2005–8. For Australia, New Zealand, and Switzerland, percent responding "religious organizations should *not* influence government." Source: International Social Survey Programme 2008. The question was not asked in the World Values Survey, 6th Wave, 2008–11.

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