



2000

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National Political Influence and the Catholic Church

Jennifer Nash

Previous literature has focused on the political importance of the Catholic Church within democratic transitions, while little research has followed the role of the Church in post-transitional settings. The present research acknowledges a marked variation in the political influence among the national Churches of Poland, Brazil, Hungary and Spain following the institution of democracy. Within the national context, the Church's religious mission, the association of the Church with the former regime and the influence of the International Catholic Church emerge as explanatory factors.

Democratic transitions have become a topic of great discussion among political scholars in recent years with what seems to be a domino effect of democratization beginning in Latin America in the 1970s and continuing in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s. In many of these transitions the Catholic Church¹ has played a crucial role as the protector of civil society during periods of communist and right-wing authoritarian rule, as well as taking an active role in promoting the establishment of democracy (Bruneau, 1994; Levine, 1980; Linz and Stepan, 1996; Pérez-Díaz, 1993; Ramet, 1987). While the Church's political role in transition is important, significantly fewer scholars have explored how democracy has affected the Catholic Church within the national context (Eberts, 1998; Ramet, 1999; Vilarino and Tizon, 1998). Even fewer have attempted cross-national comparisons of the Church, thus permitting generalizations to be made regarding the political influence of the Church since the institution of democratic governance (Casanova, 1990 and 1993; Gill, 1998).

With the establishment of democracy, one would expect the Church to flourish. In many instances the Church was the only organized body capable of exerting political authority within a burgeoning democratic society. However, using abortion policy disputes as an indicator of the Church's political influence, it is clear the cases of Spain, Brazil, Hungary and Poland vary extensively. The Polish Church has maintained the most political influence followed by Brazil, Hungary and Spain (Neilsen, 1991; Volenski

¹ Throughout this paper when referring to the Church, I am alluding to the Catholic Church within a national context. When referring to the Catholic Church's international hierarchy, I will refer to either the Vatican or the International Church.

and Gryzmala-Mosczyńska, 1997; Gautier, 1998; Casanova, 1993; Linz, 1991; Morris, 1993). In the Brazilian and Polish cases, the Church played an instrumental role in the democratic revolution, making a political decline in the Church almost inconceivable. While initially these Churches exerted great political influence, questions arise as to why their influence has gradually declined since the inauguration of democracy.

Political Influence of the Church

The influence of a given Church is defined by the Church's ability to achieve certain moral and political objectives within specific policy areas. The Churches included in this study have differed in the policy disputes they have chosen to engage. In Hungary, the Church in the post-communist period has clashed with the government over levels of religious funding and the restitution of religious lands. The Brazilian Church has been active within the realm of social policy. All of the Churches, however, prefer policies that restrict abortion. Only some are able to achieve or maintain restrictive policies. Abortion policy is an effective indicator for determining the political clout assigned to each case because the Catholic Church is fundamentally opposed to induced abortion of any kind. In April 1999 the Vatican went so far as to condemn the distribution of emergency contraception by United Nations agencies to Kosovo refugees who had been raped (A Church Disguised, 1999). In terms of influence, if a restrictive law is in place the Church will, in most instances, not exert itself politically unless there is a challenge to the law. In countries where a more permissive abortion law exists, this is telling of the Church's inability to influence policy in a direct, concrete manner. The following table illustrates this idea.

Spain (least politically influential)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sept. 22, 1998 liberalized abortion bill sought to allow an abortion if “severe personal, family, or social conflict within the first twelve weeks of pregnancy” • 172 favored, 173 opposed, 1 abstained (Bosch, 1998) • Currently abortion allowed in cases of rape, fetal malformation, or danger to mother’s health (mental or physical) • Passed under Socialist majority Oct. 6, 1983—186 favored, 109 opposed
Hungary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dec. 17, 1993 Hungarian parliament officially sanctioned country’s abortion practices, allowing women abortions when it presented a risk to her health or in cases of rape or if other “weighty social considerations” (normally financial) are accepted by a committee • Public abortion debate 1990-92 because the Supreme Court ruled the right to life was safeguarded by Hungarian Constitution. Court mandated parliament to decide under which conditions to allow abortion while still maintaining this safeguard • Woman must visit social worker from family protection for counseling on abortion, its risks, and contraception; must sign statement admitting in “crisis situation; must wait three days before procedure; husbands must attend, if possible; hospitals and doctors decide whether they will perform abortions; price of procedure doubled; parental consent for those under 18 (Gal, 1994) • Support emergency contraception (CRLP Worldwide)
Brazil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1940 abortion law • Illegal under all circumstances except when pregnancy endangers the mothers life or is the result of rape (Lupiya, 1998)
Poland (most politically influential)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 28, 1997 liberalized law considered unconstitutional on grounds that human life is of fundamental value and protected from conception. Reestablished 1993 anti-abortion law (Eberts, 1998). • Abortion allowed with parental authorization (for minor), in cases of rape and incest, and fetal impairment • Polish Federation for Women and Planning submitted restrictive law to UN committee; UN recommended it be changed because it presented a threat to women’s right to health² • The Polish Church submitted restrictive law just following institution of democracy, failed but restrictive measure involving Church compromise instituted in 1993 • Support emergency contraception but costly and difficult to obtain (CRLP Worldwide)

The table shows a great degree of variation in the political influence of national Churches with regard to abortion policy. The Spanish Church is characterized as least influential because the liberalization the current abortion law is possible in the near future. In 1998, a liberal bill allowing abortion in cases of severe personal, familial, or social distress within the first trimester lost by a single vote in the Spanish legislature

(Bosch, 1998). The push for a more liberal law, which is backed by public opinion, suggests that the Church is engaging in a losing battle over abortion policy. The Spanish Church has publicly declared its neutrality and rejection of the political sphere, but still maintains a place in moral political debates. Its inability to prevent liberal abortion legislation clearly shows the Church's lack of direct influence even in the moral arena, despite the fact that the majority of Spaniards are Roman Catholic (Casanova, 1993).

The Hungarian Church ranks as more influential than the Spanish Church, despite the fact that Hungary today has a more liberal abortion policy than Spain. Under communism abortion was available on demand, suggesting Hungary's "liberal" abortion policy has become more restrictive over time. As Susan Gal points out "there are other aspects of the law that leave very much open the possibility of informal and structural effects that could have restrictive consequences" (1994, p256). The 1956 Abortion Admissibility Law provided abortion on demand until 1970s when the communist state became concerned with the declining birth rate. In 1974 regulations required women to appear before a committee prior to obtaining an abortion. Although the committee could refuse to consent, in general it was simply a formality and abortion remained readily available (Corrin, 1992). Keeping this legacy in mind, the Hungarian Constitutional Court gave the parliament until the end of 1992 to codify an abortion policy which neither outlawed abortion nor made it freely available (Moss, 1994). Thus, the parliament was forced to create a relatively liberal law since it could not ban abortion and 86% of Hungarians favored a woman's right to an abortion (Corrin, 1994). Despite concerns over the ability of the Hungarian population to replace itself, the liberal policy was instituted³.

² March 21, 1964 the Holy See is regarded as a non-member state permanent observer allowing it to occasionally participate in General Assembly discussions and decisions and participate in UN International Conferences. The Holy See, however, has no voting rights.

³The abortion debate in Hungary is very much motivated by the inability of the population to replace itself. When viewed in this light, the abortion debate becomes a discourse of national survival and not solely an issue of women's rights.

The greater political influence of the Brazilian Church can be seen in the fact that Brazil's highly restrictive abortion law has remained unchanged since 1940. Despite high rates of illegal abortions and the inaccessibility of sufficient means of birth control, organized and influential women's groups in Brazil have not sought to oppose the Church on abortion issues. The legalization of abortion is generally seen as an "impossible dream" by feminists (Waylen, 1994). The prestige of the Brazilian Church is further exemplified by its enormous role in affecting the government's social policy. The Church has established direct governmental links via the Brazilian Conference of Bishops (CNBB) and recently created a popular social plan known as *The Way to the New Millennium*⁴.

The Catholic Church in Poland has been the most directly active in the political realm of all the cases in this study. The Church has sponsored numerous anti-abortion bills and many have been successful. On January 7, 1993, the Church sponsored an anti-abortion bill that passed allowing abortion only in cases of rape and incest, fetus damage, and when a woman's life was at risk (Kulczycki, 1994). This bill established criminal punishments for individuals found performing illegal abortions. When a liberalized anti-abortion law was passed in 1996, the Constitutional Tribunal ruled it to be unconstitutional in 1997. The court argued that human life is of fundamental value and must be protected from conception (Eberts, 1998). The Polish Church has blocked numerous referendum attempts to resolve the issue, even when 1.3 million signatures were gathered (Hillar, 1995). Using the above criteria the Polish Church has unequivocally established itself as the most influential among the cases.

⁴ "Way to the New Millennium" four year plan was introduced in 1997 by Church to focus on different area of human rights each year.

Explaining the Variance

Any number of factors can help to explain why Church influence might decline in the aftermath of a transition from authoritarianism. The literature points to secularization (Soper and Fetzer, forthcoming; Pérez-Díaz, 1993; Casanova, 1990 and 1993; Martin, 1978); pluralization (Volenski and Grzymala, 1997; Mainwaring, 1986; Long, 1988); the former regime type (Waylen, 1994; Ramet, 1997; Wolchik and Jaquette, 1998); the extent to which the Church was associated with the former regime (Casanova, 1990 and 1993; Pérez-Díaz, 1993); the influence of the Vatican (Della Cava, 1990 and 1993), the religious mission of the Church (Mainwaring, 1986; Pérez-Díaz, 1993); and the type of transition that occurred (Waylen, 1994; Ramet, 1987). Secularization is a global trend so it cannot explain variations across the four cases in this study. Likewise, increased religious pluralism is a natural by-product of democratization and therefore affects all of the selected cases. Denominational differences are controlled for in the research design, as Catholicism is the dominant religion (65%+). The type of transition is held constant throughout the study; all four cases have been described by scholars as “negotiated” or “gradual” transitions (Waylen, 1994). The literature suggests the legacy of communist and atheist rhetoric should create an initial surge of support for freedom of religion, thereby giving the Church in post-communist systems greater political leverage than Churches in former rightist authoritarian regimes (Pérez-Díaz, 1993; Casanova, 1993; Wolchik and Jaquette, 1998). The cases selected, however, include two formerly communist countries (Poland and Hungary) and two countries with a rightist-authoritarian past (Brazil and Spain); and there is no correlation between the political influence of the Church and the former regime type, the Brazilian Church is more influential than the Hungarian Church.

Having eliminated several explanations throughout the case selection, three factors remain as possible predictors of Church influence after democratic transition: the degree of association between the Church and the former regime, the religious mission of

the Church, and the influence of the International Church. The table below describes these variables in each of the cases.

	Poland (most influence)	Brazil	Hungary	Spain (least influence)
Church Association with Former Regime	-little co-optation of Church under communism -nurtured civil society and nationhood under communism -instrumental in the transition to democracy	-little co-optation of Church -nurtured civil society and dissent aimed at regime -key in transition to democracy	-Church associated with communist regime -seen as a sell-out to the regime in the eyes of the laity and religious orders	-pillar of the Francoist state until the documents of Vatican II issued (1962-65)
Religious Mission	-mission still appears to be national	-mission at both the individual and national level	-individual mission -national mission not spiritual but financial	-serve spiritual needs of individual
Influence of the International Church	-seen as means to re-evangelize Europe -example for other Churches dealing with democratic transition -intervene in Polish Church's political outlook	-liberation vs. conservative theology -Vatican replacing liberal bishops with more conservative→suppressing popular church which was created to be politically active and fight for justice	-no major instances of International Church exerting control or influence	-no major occurrences of International Church exerting control or influence

Influence in politics is greatest where the Church opposed authoritarian rule, sees its mission as national, and is strongly influenced by and tied to the Vatican. The following case studies more sufficiently explain why such a variation exists among the four national Churches where Catholicism is undoubtedly the dominant religion.

Church and Former Regime: Friend or Foe?

Perhaps one of the single most important indicators of political influence is the degree to which the Church fostered civil society under the former regime. In the Polish and Brazilian cases, the Church was highly involved in protecting the societal

organization within the country and in many cases the Church allowed opposition forces to meet within the church. In Spain, and to a lesser degree in Hungary, the Church was the puppet of the former regime. The Church's association with oppressive regimes acts as an indicator of the public perception of the Catholic Church. In countries where the Church was a leader in the democratic movement, the laity easily view the Church as reformist, adaptable, and "for the people". In cases where the Church is psychologically associated with the former regime in the mind of the public, the Church is seen as more traditional or conservative, static, and statist, thus distancing the Church from the laity.

In Poland the Church has long been the protector of Polish nationhood. David Martin rightly observes that "where religion is imposed from above by a conqueror it is thereby weakened, whereas when it is the focus of resistance it is thereby strengthened" (Casanova, 1990, p25). Throughout partitioning and the rule of many conquerors, the Polish nation has been protected by the people and the Church. José Casanova observes that, historically, "given the absence of a Polish state, the crucial factor [was] the identification of church and nation at a time when the Catholic Church [was] the only institution able somewhat to cut across the partition of Prussian, Russian and Austrian Poland" (1990, p26). This fusion of Polish nationalist sentiment and Catholicism took place in spite of Vatican disapproval of Polish uprisings.

When communism took hold in Poland in 1944, the communist regime continually tried to break the bond between Catholicism and the nation without success. The regime failed to incorporate the Church into the state machinery. The communist party attempted to exert selective repression on certain members of the Catholic hierarchy. However, the use of coercive means actually consolidated the Church's position by transforming the repressed figures into national heroes or martyrs. The regime attempted to re-write history, to make the Church appear as the enemy to Polish nationhood, privatize religion, and even create a "socialist man" adherent to a new civil religion (Ramet, 1997). In essence nearly every tactic used by communist leaders to

weaken the influence of the Church failed, allowing the Polish Church to counteract the socialization efforts of the regime and increase the number and strength of its believers. Not only did the Church escape attempts to weaken its hold on Polish society but it also put up a formidable resistance to further encroachment of the state, inevitably ending in the downfall of the communist state. The Polish Church over time has protected the sense of Polish nationhood, rejected association with communism, and played a major role in the formation of a democratic state. Therefore, the Polish Church maintains it has a rightful place within the political sphere, in a way which the Spanish or Hungarian Church does not.

In comparison with Polish Catholicism, the Brazilian Church has been a historically weak institution. In general the evangelization of Brazil was left to religious orders, particularly the Jesuits. In 1890 the Brazilian Church was officially separated from the state. The Church was against the principle of separation; however, the liberation from state controls was welcomed. Nonetheless, the absence of state funding took its toll on the Brazilian Church and it was not until Vargas came to power in 1937 that the Church, under Dom Leme, was able to reestablish close ties with the state. Under Leme, Catholic Action took hold and advocated the christianizing of the elite in an effort to gain access to the state (Schneider, 1991). The Church was certainly not as entangled in the state as the Spanish Church under Franco, but it still maintained ties to the state until the mid-1960s. In the early 1960s the Brazilian Conference of Bishops (CNBB) contained an elite core of progressives who attempted to adopt radical reform from above in association with the radical Catholic Left and the Popular Action party. The conservative members of the CNBB saw this progressiveness as unrepresentative, but in 1964 a military coup ended all hopes of radical reform from above or below (Mainwaring, 1986). In the early 1970s “the People’s Church” emerged in Brazil, acting as a bastion of opposition to authoritarian rule. The Church fought for reform under authoritarian rule, specifically the end of state violence, agrarian reform, and the

colonization of the Amazon (Mainwaring, 1986). While the history in Poland and Brazil differ, both Churches opposed the regime and were seen as the purveyors of reform and democracy. The Polish Church has battled in the name of the nation for centuries; however, the Brazilian Church has just recently begun to fight for the people.

In both Poland and Brazil the Church acted as a voice for the people when regimes silenced both civil and political society. In Brazil, the most widely noted form of political influence by the Brazilian Church has been the creation of base Christian Communities (CEBs)⁵. CEBs were more influential in Brazil than any other Latin American country for several reasons. First, the poor were leaving the Catholic Church and converting to Protestant sects and Afro-Brazilian religions (Vasquez, 1998). Traditional clerical means were no longer capable of tending to the spiritual needs of the Brazilian population. The Brazilian Church has always been short on priests, given the size and population of Brazil. CEBs became an alternative model of the Church promoting self-organization and communal growth, while requiring minimal clerical supervision (Casanova, 1990). CEBs essentially promoted participation at various levels giving the Brazilian people the tools they needed to change the world they were accustomed to. During the transition, the Church encouraged political participation, voting, and was accused of favoring leftist parties such as the Workers' Party (PT). Because the Church fostered civil society under authoritarianism it has generally kept its privileged position within Brazilian society.

In Poland, the Church was more politically active beginning in 1976 when an amendment was added to the constitution giving the communist party a monopoly within the state. The Church and the people protested against the amendment since it implied a social contract ensuring personal rights provided citizens abided communist doctrine. This action eventually led to the formation of the Workers Defense Committee (KOR)

and culminated in the emergence of Solidarity which was symbolic of the nation, democracy and the workers . Catholic intellectuals unified with workers, students and artists against the communist enemy. These intellectuals played an instrumental role in the founding of the KOR and have remained official and unofficial advisers to the movement (Taras, 1995).

The Polish Church was eager to capitalize on its high support by the public and carve out its political niche in the new democratic order. Many churches became campaign headquarters for Solidarity in the semi-free 1989 elections. In the 1990 presidential elections the Church had a vested interest in two Catholic candidates, Lech Walesa and Tadeusz Mazowiecki. Walesa was favored mainly because Mazowiecki was espoused to be more liberal (Eberts, 1998). While the Polish Church remained officially neutral, individual priests had no qualms in leading parishioners to vote one way or another (Eberts, 1998). While such political activism has since led to divisions within the hierarchy and the laity of the Polish Church, the public initially embraced the activism of the Church understanding the role it played in the reform process (Eberts, 1998).

In Hungary, by way of contrast, the Church has never played the role of the dominant Church as is so characteristic in Poland. During the Reformation, the Hungarian Church allied itself with the Hapsburg government to fend off the threat of Protestantism. This required the Church to fuse with a secular state that set up commissions to check the Church's power (Moss, 1994). The Church generally submitted to state enforced restrictions and in 1781 the Edict of Toleration came to pass allowing Protestantism to re-emerge. In 1867 during the *Ausgleich*, which produced a dual monarchy, Catholicism remained the state religion in the Austrian portion of the dynasty but not in the Hungarian half (Ramet, 1987). Following the *Ausgleich*, the government provided subsidies to Protestant Churches but none to the Catholic Church

⁵ CEBs are small (10-70 members) grassroots organizations sponsored by the Church. Meetings are used to discuss scripture and the bearing it had on members lives. These groups emphasize equality and

forcing the Church to cooperate with the government. It is not surprising the Hungarian Church simply accepted communist control, because there was little history of real institutionalization. This pattern of acquiescence and weakness continued into the late communist era. In the 1970s and 1980s the Hungarian opposition forces received little support from the Church. As a consequence, when the communist regime collapsed in 1989, the Church was excluded from roundtable negotiations (Moss, 1994). The Church's past has discredited it as a political force and separated it from participation in nationalist and right wing populist movements. The failure of the Christian Democrats to win seats in the 1998 election testifies to this point.

The Spanish Church is even less influential than the Hungarian though it has no significant religious rivals. The CIA World Factbook claims 99% of Spaniards consider themselves Catholic, but other statistics suggest 94-95% are Catholic (World Values Survey, 1991). Víctor Pérez-Díaz describes the alliance between the Church and the Francoist state as the realization of a denominational state. The Church's ideal was a state "consistent in its structure, its legislation and its civil servants, subordinate to it in at least some areas, and providing resources for the Church to carry out its objectives" (1993, p132). The Francoist state met these criteria allowing the Church to share in the decision-making process with regards to education and the controlling of social customs. The state supported the Church financially. It is estimated that the state gave the Church nearly 5 million pesetas per year in the early 1970s, the equivalent of a medium sized ministerial budget (Pérez-Díaz, 1993). Franco's regime depended on the Church for legitimacy both within the country and the international community (Gunther, 1986). So, the Spanish Church essentially aligned itself with the Francoist regime in order to receive a political voice and the resources necessary to effectively assert its platform of National Catholicism.

participation. While not inherently political, many groups espoused Liberation Theology (Gautier).

In 1971 following years of internal division over the Church's religious orientation, Archbishop Enrique y Taracón was nominated as president of the Conferencia Episcopal. He was a moderate and was extremely influential in moving the Spanish Church to break ties with the regime and embrace liberal pluralism. By 1975, the Spanish Church was utilizing rhetoric associated with freedom and liberty, estranging itself from the regime which had based itself on Catholic ideals (Gunther, 1986). The Church increasingly fostered a relationship with the democratic opposition. According to Pérez-Díaz this was possible only because the Church leaders of the opposition had discarded their anti-religious/anti-clerical attitudes, a new political class to some extent had been formed by the Church, and the Church deliberately did not form or support a Christian Democratic party. Although the Church played an important role in the transition from 1975-1978, nothing can erase its huge influence within the Francoist regime or its role in the Civil War. The Spanish Church understood this and appropriately proclaimed its political neutrality. The Church accepted the principles of a non-denominational state and religious freedom. The Church was recognized as a "sociological fact" within the 1978 constitution, thus acknowledging the symbolic role the Catholic Church has maintained within Spanish society.

While the Spanish Church battles to maintain its religious core of believers, its political decline has been taken more gracefully than in the other cases. The Spanish Church has acknowledged its mistakes and tried to heal the wounds created by its role in the Civil War. The withdrawal of the Spanish Church from the political realm while certainly attributable to an increase in consumerism, secularization, and the decline in morality, the Church's association with the Franco regime should not be overlooked.

Religious Mission

Scott Mainwaring claims that the way the Church intervenes in politics depends fundamentally on how it perceives its religious mission (1986). One would expect those

national Churches seeing their role as moral and religious providers to *individuals* would seek a less overtly political role. National churches perceiving their religious mission as the guardians of religion and morality among an entire *nation or society* would tend to be more involved in politics. This, although, is not to say that a Church involved in politics at the institutional level will be publicly supported. The intense politicization of a Church can have negative repercussions if its actions are not supported by the laity.

Victor Pérez-Díaz extends Mainwaring's assertion by outlining the major components of a religious message. The religious message of a church can be reduced to three elements, "a message of *meaning*, a message of *salvation*, and a message of *moral community*, all of which take as their point of reference a god or other supernatural figures, which the church represents, from which it receives its spiritual resources and with which it mediates" (1993). Meaning refers to an explanation for the causes of the apparent chaos of reality, i.e. life, death, unexplained events. Salvation "is not only setting the mind at ease by creating order but also, and more especially, a case of satisfying human affections and emotions" (Pérez-Díaz, 1993). Finally the moral community involves a group of the faithful both visible and invisible, i.e. clergy, believers, God, virgins, and saints. Pérez-Díaz unduly limits this category by failing to suggest that the bounds of this moral community are not set. It seems likely that a moral community could include society as a whole if the Church felt it was their duty to "moralize" the national society and not just the faithful. The moral community is the most beneficial component of Pérez-Díaz's definition of a religious message because it establishes the scope of influence a church is seeking within a democracy.

Clearly during the protracted transition from Communist rule, the Polish Catholic Church never wavered as the protector of civil society and the Polish nation. The Church under communism was the symbol for freedom and dissent (Casanova, 1992; Taras, 1995). Mirella Eberts writes,

Poles flocked to the Churches in symbolic opposition to the communist authorities, as they had done for centuries whenever Poland was under foreign occupation. During the turbulent Solidarity years, Catholic and non-Catholic activists and intellectuals gathered in churches across the country. The Church once again became the symbol of freedom and firmly established itself as the only legitimate authority in the country. (1998)

In May 1989, just following the collapse of communism, the Sejm passed numerous measures relating to the position of the Church. The Statute on Freedom of Conscience and Creed reintroduced freedom of religion, including the right to express or keep silent on religious matters. The Statute on Social Insurance of Clergymen put the financial burden of the clergy almost entirely on the state. The Church was given autonomy from the state thus permitting the Church to make its own hierarchical appointments. The Church was offered major tax concessions and within a year of the fall of communism it had won the battle to reintroduce religious instruction in public schools (Eberts, 1993). The legal concessions bestowed on the Polish Church were the culmination of its battle against foreign domination and communism. The Church successfully protected Polish nationality and was granted a variety of legal rights during the transition. The Polish Church interpreted these concessions as supportive of the dominant political role that it maintained for so many years. Thus, the Polish Church secured a position as a dominant institution giving it the means to promote itself at the national level.

In the Brazilian case, under the vision of “New Christendom,” the Church sought to combat “alien” ideologies with organizations that targeted the “faithless” segments of society. This neo-Christendom vision took place throughout Latin America and Spain from the late 1800s to the 1950s mainly targeting university students, middle-class youth, urban professionals and urban workers. The thrust behind this ideology was the Catholic Action movement (Gill, 1998). The neo-Christian ideology was founded upon a dualistic conception of history, one secular and the other religious. This model attempted to plant Christian values within the secular world in an effort to inject it with religious principles.

However, the documents of Vatican II⁶ reversed this ideology suggesting God created the world and only one history exists. Such an ideological shift caused crisis in Brazil where the Catholic Action movement had firmly implanted organizations in universities and the labor force. The Brazilian Church quickly adapted to the ideology of Vatican II creating a model of grassroots organization with such innovations as CEBs. The Brazilian Church in the 1960s and 1970s was the model of a progressive church. Membership in CEBs was nearly one million and there was a 700% increase in the number of seminarians during this period (Cleary, 1997). In the 1980's, under the direction of Pope John Paul II, the Vatican began to curtail the progressiveness of the Brazilian Church by continually replacing progressive bishops with conservative bishops.

Such a move caused a crisis of religious ideology and vision within the Brazilian Church. The first faction was conservative, according to theologian Clodovis Boff, and demanded centralization, hegemony and obedience within the Brazilian Church. This vision focused on the Church as an institution while the progressive faction characterized the church as a "servant within society requiring the church and its laity to be more participatory." Yet Edward L. Cleary proposes the days of partisan politics and religious divide are ending in Brazil as shown by the four year plan introduced by the Brazilian Church in 1997 known as the *Way to the New Millennium*. Under this plan the Brazilian Church proposes to focus on a different area of human rights each year, beginning with civil rights and ending with economic rights. What this suggests is that the Brazilian Church has sought to build civil society and bolster the sense of Brazilian citizenship and democracy. There has also been a reduction of the public role of the Brazilian Church since the progressiveness of the 1970s and concessions are still given to the tendency

⁶ Vatican II theology "stressed a very different notion of the Church as the people of God, assigned a more important role to the laity, redefined the authority of the Pope over the whole Church and the bishops over the diocese" (Mainwaring, 1986). Vatican II theology stressed the need for social justice and vowed to help the less fortunate, this came to be known as the option for the poor. The International Church accepted pluralism and rejected all forms of authoritarianism and totalitarianism. The Church accepted the principles of liberal democracy (Pérez-Díaz, 1993).

toward centralization in the Church. Clovodi Boff cites a direct link between the president of the CNBB and the government since 1991 to coordinate and advise on governmental efforts to resolve social questions. The Brazilian experience of ideological division and recent reconciliation has led the Church to acquire prestige through its effort to improve the social conditions within the country rather than through a privileged status within the government (Cleary, 1997).

The Hungarian Church undoubtedly appeals to individuals rather than the entire nation, mainly due to its past connections with the communist party. The Catholic hierarchy initially supported Hungary's alliance with Nazi Germany mainly because it gained land and people through the alliance. Eventually, however, the Church resisted the government's control through the Catholic Social People's Union. Under communist rule all Catholic orders were banned, half of the seminaries were closed, and all Church appointments were required to be approved by the State Office of the Church (Gautier, 1998). The committed members of the Catholic order and the laity felt the institutional Church sold out to the communist regime. Those orders dissolved on legal grounds by the regime continued underground. Base communities stepped in to act as a substitute for the withdrawal of the institutional Church. Thus, with the institutional Church severely weakened during the communist rule and the belief among the public and laity that the withdrawal was self-imposed, it is no wonder the Hungarian Church has maintained little political influence since the establishment of democracy. In 1989 when the Hungarian communist government met with the leaders of the major opposition factions for roundtable negotiations, the Church was absent (Moss, 1994). The Hungarian Church's apathy, the high levels of secular values, and the mental association linking the Church to Hungary's communist past have forced the Church to reestablish its legitimacy as an institution through individuals.

The religious mission of the Spanish Church is not as explicit as the other cases. As in the case of Brazil, the Spanish Church has historically fought against modernity.

With the acceptance of religious pluralism and modernity under Vatican II the Spanish Church was faced with ideological crisis. The Spanish Church could have either reverted to a model of evangelical simplicity, universal love, and downplayed the Church's institutional aspects or reverted to a model of national Catholicism whereby it continued to impose Christian morals on the whole of the Spanish nation. The Spanish Church chose the former. Its present ideological approach places more emphasis on the personal and ethical constructs of religion. The Spanish Church maintained its political neutrality following democratization, but its personal and ethical emphasis has left the Church space to justify involvement in politics over moral and ethical issues, as shown in the case of abortion policy. Over time the Church has "devalued the laity's expectations and aspirations for achieving their salvation through sacramental practices" and stressed temporal activities (Pérez-Díaz, 1993). The Spanish Church struggles to maintain influence even within the realm of private morality, the likelihood of it adopting a more national religious mission is unlikely.

Influence of the International Church

The influence of the International Church is an important variable affecting the political influence of national Churches. As the earlier table shows, there appears to be a connection between a higher degree of Vatican involvement and high levels of Church influence in politics. Levels of cooperation between national Churches and the International Church, however, vary over time and region. The relationship between the International Church and the political influence of a national Church is a tenuous one and a more thoughtful analysis of post-transition political influence would need to be pursued to fully understand such a relationship.

Within the four cases, only the Polish and Brazilian Church have been highly influenced by the international Catholic hierarchy. Brazil, as previously mentioned, has been chided by the Vatican for its increasingly progressive role in social politics in

Brazil. Poland, on the other hand, being the first of the Central and Eastern European countries to obtain democracy was chosen by Pope John Paul II to be an example for other Catholic Churches experiencing a democratic transition. Poland was also seen as a means to re-evangelize Europe, thus reuniting the East and West (Eberts, 1998).

Under the former communist regime, official ties between the Vatican and Poland were severed. One of the first actions made within the new Polish democracy was the renewal of full diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Poland on July 17, 1989. More importantly, the Polish Church was seen by the Vatican, specifically Pope John Paul II, as a means to reincorporate Central and Eastern Europe into the world church and to create a unified Europe. The selection of the Polish Church as an example for other Central and Eastern European countries belonging to the third wave of democratization is not surprising considering the Pope's Polish roots. The establishment of democracy within Poland and other Central and Eastern European countries has given the International Church a clean slate and a chance to reform the present International Church and its relations with national churches. Ralph Della Cava has cited three basic goals of the International Church: (1) greater centralization within the papacy and the Roman Curia⁷; (2) the imposition of a unilaterally redefined doctrinal orthodoxy; (3) greater uniformity in liturgy and ecclesiastical organization (1990 and 1993). The Vatican has remained active in Poland in order to curb the Polish Church's excessive political role. The Polish Church has not fought Vatican control. Just following the institution of democracy, a group of Catholic lawyers drafted a restrictive abortion with the hope of receiving quick legislative approval. The Polish Church expected to give the ratified law to Pope John Paul II as a gift during his first visit to democratic Poland (Eberts, 1998). Although the bill failed, a restrictive law was eventually instituted.

⁷ The Roman Curia is the collection of ministries for governing the International Church (Della Cava, 1993).

Within the Brazilian case, the Roman Curia have retained the right to control episcopal nominations and even the nomination of bishops rather than allowing the CNBB this right. At the national and diocesan levels, the Roman Curia has created episcopal commissions for doctrine within Brazil. These were designed with the intent purpose of curbing doctrinal dissent characteristic of the Brazilian Church under the policies of Vatican II (Della Cava, 1993). Beginning in the post-war era, the International Catholic Church has granted the Brazilian Church, along with many others, control of their own resources as well as choice over the direction of their allocation and disbursement of funds. Nonetheless, this was reversed in the mid to late 1970s. This was the result of the Vatican's increasingly dismal financial situation and the misuses of philanthropy in the eyes of the Vatican (Della Cava, 1990). The requirements of hierarchical obedience from the upper to lower echelons of the Catholic Church, has created tension within the Brazilian Church. The Church, known for its innovative grass roots religious and social movements, has increasingly resisted its required obedience. Conflicts continually arise over ideology and resources. Financially, Brazil is one of the main benefactors of the Vatican's budget since it houses the largest Catholic population in the world and many Brazilians rely on the Church for social and financial support (Della Cava, 1990). It is likely this will become a concern in Central and Eastern Europe as well, given the current financial situations within many of these states. It is plausible the lower echelons of the hierarchy will begin soliciting aid outside the realm of the Vatican. Thus the International Church has increasingly shown it is incapable of dealing with all the repercussions of democratization and the new societal problems resulting from it. With institutional and financial crisis continually looming over the International Church, it is obvious it cannot support the programs capable of improving conditions in these new democracies while simultaneously focusing on re-incorporating national Churches into the international hierarchy in an effort to create a 'World Church'.

Conclusions and Predictions

Each of the explanatory variables not only affects the Church's religious hold within a new democracy, but they are also fundamental in explaining the Church's political influence. These are in no way the only forces influencing the Church's political role since transition but only those with the most relevance. As shown, Poland emerged from the transition with a Catholic Church claiming a right to exert influence within the political realm. It has successfully exerted this influence over policy issues ranging from abortion to religious education to clerical funding. On the other end of the spectrum, the Spanish Church emerged from the transition voluntarily choosing a position of neutrality. Despite the variance between these two extremes of political influence, there is evidence the Polish Church, and to a lesser extent the Brazilian Church, may decline in influence over time for a variety of reasons.

With the centralization and reintegration efforts of the Vatican becoming increasingly prominent, there seems to be an increasing strain on national Churches to pacify the International Church while also accommodating the distinct needs of the laity. This will especially be the case in Churches where questions of secularization and plurality continually threaten a Church (i.e. Poland and Brazil). Excessive interference of International Church policies in the national context may create a rift between the national Church and the citizenry. This could lead to a decline in influence over the laity, which over time could diminish any direct political role of the Church (Della Cava, 1990 and 1993; Casanova, 1993). In both Brazil and Poland, it is unclear whether the Vatican's influence has played a positive role. In Brazil, the Vatican interrupted a progressive experience that potentially could have increased the position of the Catholic Church within Brazil. In Poland, the Church's efforts to please the Vatican hierarchy may have actually created a chasm between the laity and the Polish Church. This gap may be

impossible to overcome, as the Polish people become more alienated from the Polish Church.

The trend toward the inclusion of the laity is likely to increase tensions between national Churches and the International Church. The Vatican's financial situation is dire, as are its human resources. These international dilemmas stemming from secularization and a general decline in church attendance have limited the International Church's financial resources. However, there are signs the International Church may try to reach out directly to the laity in an effort to diminish laity alienation. In March 2000, Pope John Paul II publicly apologized for the Church's treatment of Jews and women, and its role in the Crusades and the Inquisition. More recently the Pope made a highly publicized tour of Israel. The increased visibility of the Pope and the willingness of the International Church to apologize for its mistakes can be interpreted as the Church's willingness to reach out to the people, thus acknowledging potential difficulties with its centralizing stance. It is too soon to know, however, if the International Church is simply bypassing national Churches by appealing to the laity or seeking to work with them.

Over time Churches must adapt to the market-like environment yielded by democracy. This will inevitably require Churches to adopt a more individualist posture. The present research suggests a reevaluation or redefinition of the Church's political role is occurring. This means Churches are not only adapting to pluralism and the continual presence of civil and secular values, but they are fundamentally changing the way they participate in politics. This occurring not only in Churches that maintained close ties with the former regime, but also in Churches that played an instrumental role in the transition to democracy. Since the documents of Vatican II, the Brazilian Church has protected the voice of the people through CEBs and conveyed social concerns to the government. Although the Brazilian Church maintains a hybrid of individual and institutional political influence, its concern for the laity surpasses that maintained by the Polish Church. In Brazil, the vast majority of religious conversions have been from

Catholicism to more laity-oriented denominations, mainly Pentecostals, suggesting a rejection of the hierarchical structure of Roman Catholicism.

Poland has been unable to downplay its direct political influence and been incapable of playing by the democratic rules of the game. This was expressed in January 1993 when the Polish episcopate journeyed to Rome for scheduled visits required by all Bishops every five years. The visit clearly demonstrated the senior members of the Polish episcopate had been unable or unsuccessful in defining a new style of public engagement. Evidence of this was the slipping of the Church from the most trusted institution to the fourth most trusted, falling behind even the army, the ombudsman and the police (Weigel, 1994). At this juncture, Pope John Paul II took action stating “the Church is not a political party nor is she to be identified with any political party; she is above them, open to all people of good will, and no political party can claim the right to represent her” (Weigel, 1994). This suggests the religious doctrine of national Catholicism is being replaced by the Vatican, specifically, Pope John Paul II. Since the Pope’s clear statement in 1993, the episcopate has issued a national pastoral letter read in all Polish churches stating it was the laity’s role to carry Christian values into the public sphere and not the role of the institutional church. With public opinion increasingly pitted against the Polish Church’s carryover of former nationalist ideology, it is likely that the Polish Church will be forced to offer a more personal religious stance in the future and distance itself from the political realm.

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