



1-1-2000

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### Recommended Citation

Nash '00, Jennifer (2000) "National Political Influence and the Catholic Church,"

*Res Publica - Journal of Undergraduate Research*: Vol. 5

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/respublica/vol5/iss1/5>

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## National Political Influence and the Catholic Church

### Abstract

Democratic transitions recently became a topic of great discussion among political scholars as a domino effect of democratization began in Latin America in the 1970s and continued through Eastern Europe in the late 1980s. In many of these transitions, the Catholic Church 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 to promote the establishment of democracy. While the Church's political role in transition is important, significantly fewer scholars have explored how democracy affected the Catholic Church within the national context. Even fewer have attempted cross-national comparisons of the Church, thus permitting generalizations to be made about the political influence of the Church since the institution of democratic governance.

## **National Political Influence and the Catholic Church**

Democratic transitions recently became a topic of great discussion among political scholars as a domino effect of democratization began in Latin America in the 1970s and continued through Eastern Europe in the late 1980s. In many of these transitions, the Catholic Church<sup>[1]</sup> 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 to promote the establishment of democracy (Bruneau 1994, Levine 1980, Stepan and Linz 1996, Pérez-Díaz 1993, Ramet 1987). While the Church's political role in transition is important, significantly fewer scholars have explored how democracy 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 about the political influence of the Church since the institution of democratic governance (Casanova 1993, Gill et al. 1998).

With the establishment of democracy the Church was expected to flourish, due to its organizational and political advantage within new democracies. However, initial research suggests otherwise. Using the involvement of the Church in abortion policy as an indicator of political influence, it is clear the cases of Spain, Brazil and Poland vary extensively. The Polish Church maintained the most political influence, followed by the Brazilian and Spanish Churches (Neilsen 1991, Volenski and Gryzmala-Mosczyńska 1997, Gautier 1998, Casanova 1993, Linz 1991, Morris 1993). In Brazil and Poland, 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.

### **Theoretical Framework**

After an initial review of the literature, four factors emerge as possible explanations of variance in political influence among the Spanish, Brazilian and Polish Churches. It is important to note that although these explanatory variables are considered independently, they are invariably linked. Poland is a recent transition; a mere decade has passed since the fall of communist rule. Spain, on the other hand, experienced a democratic transition nearly two decades ago. Church influence is not static, rather a variable which works in one way at an earlier point in time, but may have a completely different impact in later years.

In selecting cases for this study, religious denomination was controlled for. In all the countries, Catholicism is the dominant religion (65% or more). An effort was also made to include cases with relatively recent transitions. Nonetheless, many differences still exist among these countries--the most consequential being region, type of transition and differing regime histories. Keeping these differences in mind, a distinction must be made between indirect and direct political influence. Indirect political influence will refer to the Church's ability to influence the laity and its ability to affect individuals. Direct political influence entails the Church publicly entering the political sphere, usually through Church elite. This may be through legal means (i.e. the court and legislation), the attainment of state positions, direct institutional participation in corporatist bargaining, or the hiring of permanent lobbyists. Direct influence is relevant at the institutional level while indirect is relevant at the individual level (Gauthier 1998). The distinction between direct and indirect influence is meaningful because the type of political influence the Church exerts is a major component in spelling out the relationships between variables. On a subconscious level, this differentiation assists in establishing which national Churches can be considered more or less influential within the study. Because the political influence will be viewed in terms of policy disputes, those Churches playing a more direct role in politics will be considered more politically influential. However, this is not to say direct political influence is more desirous than indirect influence, as will be suggested by the individual case studies.

### **Factors Affecting Political Influence**

Secularization is perhaps the most widely accepted explanation of the decline of the Church's political influence among scholars. Secularization theory posits that as a society becomes increasingly modernized, religion will begin to fade from the public and private arenas (Bruce 1992). This marks a distinguishing point between ecclesiastical secularization and religious secularization. The former suggests a decline in clergy and the institutional church, while the latter suggests a general decline in religiosity among the individual members of an organized religion (Pérez-Díaz 1993). This distinction implies secularization has the potential to affect both the direct and indirect political influence of the

Church. Secularization may explain the divergence of political influence among national Churches by suggesting that, with the removal of the Church's role as protector of civil society and guardian of democracy, the Church will remain politically proactive to vie for its position within the democratic state if threatened (Soper and Fetzer forthcoming). Religious institutions are more likely to become political when outside values threaten their religious community, potentially producing a religious cleavage (Lipset 1981, Lipset and Rokkan 1967). The Catholic Church's fundamental values are being challenged by the redefinition of societal values through the (re) institution of democracy. This suggests the national Churches being studied might be expected to become more political. Yet the presence of pluralism forced many Churches to reconsider how they influence the political sphere, and it is likely the more secularized a society becomes the less political influence (both direct and indirect) it will exert.

Religious pluralism is invariably associated with the institution of democratic governance, and its effects on Church political influence are similar to those found under secularization. With the introduction of democracy, civil society progressively takes on a market-like quality in which groups must compete for public support. The Church does not escape competition for various types of support. As already mentioned, one would expect the Church to prosper within this competitive environment, especially considering its organizational advantage over newly formed organizations within a democratic state. However, the literature suggests the opposite. As religion is subjected to the fragmenting forces of pluralism, the more difficult it becomes to mobilize politically (Jelen 1998). Thus the greater degree to which the Church is able to adapt to a pluralistic environment and remain flexible over time, the more indirect political influence it will achieve (Peréz-Díaz 1993, Vilarino and Tizon 1998, Long 1988). This idea of adaptability also suggests Churches in highly differentiated societies will gradually seek political influence through indirect rather than direct means.

Scott Mainwaring proposes 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 be more indirectly influential in politics. National churches perceiving their religious mission as the guardians of religion and morality among an entire *nation or society* would tend to be more directly involved in the political sphere. This is not to say a Church directly involved in the political sphere will be more politically influential at the individual level. Direct political influence can have negative repercussions if the Church's actions do not maintain public support. Therefore the religious mission of the Church should be directly correlated with political influence.

The influence of the International Church is an important variable effecting the political influence of national Churches. Levels of cooperation between the national and International Church 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. The imposition of International Church policies and general control over the national context of the Church can create a rift between the national Church and the citizenry of the nation. This could lead to a decline in indirect influence, which over time could diminish any direct political role of the Church (Della Cava 1990 and 1993, Casanova 1993).

Political Influence of the Church

When measuring the political influence of the Church, the line between indirect and direct political influence is decidedly blurred. The influence of a given Church is defined by the Church's ability to achieve certain moral and political objectives within specific policy areas. National Churches have differed in the policy disputes they chose to engage in, which is not surprising given the variety of historic contexts existing within these Churches. The table constructed below acts as a visual representation of how successful the Spanish, Brazilian, and Polish Church's have been in influencing abortion policy within their respective democratic governments and societies. As shown by the table, these Churches have varied in their success and many explanations exist for why these Churches have shown such a wide variance in political influence. 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 (Center for Reproductive Law). Thus, with such a firm stance being taken, it is easily seen to what extent national churches have been able to influence abortion politics.

Poland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>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).</li></ul>
(most politically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Abortion allowed with parental authorization (for minor), cases of rape and incest, and fetal impairment</li></ul>

influential)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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 health<sup>[2]</sup></li> <li>Support emergency contraception (CRLP Worldwide)</li> </ul>
<b>Brazil</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1940 abortion law</li> <li>Illegal under all circumstances except when pregnancy endangers the mother's life or is the result of rape (Lupiya 1998)</li> </ul>
<b>Spain</b>  (least politically influential)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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"</li> <li>172 favored, 173 opposed, 1 abstained (Bosch 1998)</li> <li>Currently abortion allowed in cases of rape, fetus malformation, or danger to mother's health (mental or physical)</li> <li>Passed under Socialist majority Oct. 6, 1983—186 favored, 109 opposed</li> </ul>

The table shows a great degree of variation in the restrictiveness of abortion policy. Spain is most likely to liberalize their current abortion law. In 1998, a liberal bill allowing abortion in cases of severe personal, familial, or social distress within the first trimester lost by one 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. Brazil's abortion law has remained unchanged since 1940, but high rates of illegal abortions indicate the declining moral hold of the Church over its citizenry. This may imply a loss of political influence for the Brazilian Church within moral bounds. The most influential case, Poland, reveals a switching back and forth between liberal and conservative abortion policies. The Church sponsored numerous anti-abortion bills and many have been successful. For example, on January 7, 1993, a Church sponsored anti-abortion bill passed allowing abortion only in cases of rape and incest, fetus damage, and when a woman's life was at risk (Kulczycki 1995). The bill also established criminal punishments for individuals found performing illegal abortions. When a liberalized anti-abortion law was passed in 1996, the Constitutional Tribunal quickly 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 Church blocked numerous referendum attempts over the issue, even when 1.3 million signatures were gathered (Hiller 1995).

Using the above criteria the Polish Church has unequivocally established itself as the most influential among the cases, probably due to its democratic youth and heritage as a symbol of Polish nationality. The influence of the other national churches proves much more difficult to characterize. Therefore, other policy disputes must be taken into account when ranking their political influence. The constitutional mandate of the church, the extent to which they are subsidized by the state, control over education, media and social policy are all factors to be taken into account when assessing the political hold in these cases. For example, the Brazilian Church played an enormous role in affecting the government's social policy by establishing direct governmental links via the Brazilian Conference of Bishops and creating a popular social plan within the Church known as *The Way to the New Millennium*.<sup>[1]</sup> The Spanish Church while being considered a sociological fact within the Spanish constitution publicly declared its neutrality and rejection of the political sphere, but still maintains a place within the moral sphere.

### Explaining the Variation

The following table gives a general overview of the patterns present and whether or not these patterns match the expected relationship detailed earlier between the explanatory variables and the political influence of the Church. The table is arranged from least to most politically influential and eldest to youngest democracy.

	<b>Poland</b>	<b>Brazil</b>	<b>Spain</b>
<b>Secularization</b>	-little conversion taking place, but may occur in near future	- large Catholic conversion to Pentecostal and Protestant Churches	-anticlerical past, decline in clergy but bouncing back

		-Between 1980-90 number of Brazilian Protestants jumped from 7.9 to 16 million (Vásquez 1998)	-decline in number of "practicing" Catholics
<b>Pluralism</b>	-difficulty adapting to democratic pluralist society	-initial period of internal Church conflict  -adapted well since adopted preference for the poor	-not big issue since transition was an evolution not a revolution; Church had time to adjust to pluralism
<b>Religious Mission</b>	-mission still appears to be national	-mission at both the individual and national level	-serve spiritual needs of individual
<b>Influence of the International Church</b>	-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 conservativeàsuppressing popular church which was created to be politically active and fight for justice	-no major occurrences of International Church exerting control or influence

## Secularization

Many scholars acknowledge the changing role of the Church within infant democracies, but many attribute this to a general process of secularization (Vilarino and Tizon 1998, Casanova 1993). With the achievement of democracy, the Church is no longer needed as a protector of civil society, leaving it with an ambiguous role within society. While this is a likely explanation for the Church's declining political influence in Brazil and Spain, signs of pluralism in Poland are likely to lead to secular attitudes. It is expected secularization will be most prevalent in Spain, then Brazil, and finally Poland. Despite continual debates among scholars regarding the measurement of secular attitudes, this study will rely heavily on the case of the Spanish Church due to the availability of data. Spain, being the oldest democracy of the three cases, should show the most variation longitudinally.

In an effort to understand reasons behind the differentiation among these Churches, it is necessary to mention that pluralism and secularization are global phenomena. Although the cases vary in the level of secularization occurring and in their ability to adapt to a pluralist environment, their explanatory power should not be overemphasized. Therefore, the religious mission of the Church and the influence of the Vatican emerge as the most important factors in explaining the variation in political influence among these three Churches.

While public opinion polls suggest a decrease in the intensity of Spaniards' religious beliefs and the frequency of their religious practices, there is still evidence to suggest the Spanish Church has maintained some moral hold on society. This could indicate a decline in the institutional church, while the religious dimension composed of personal beliefs and morals has been maintained. However, there has recently been an increase in the number of clergy and seminarians, suggesting even ecclesiastical secularization may not be as devastating as originally thought.

### Number of Secularizations<sup>[3]</sup>

#### Among Regular Clergy\*

1966	305
1967	344
1968	446

#### Number of Jesuits\*

1966	4,717
1975	3,077

#### Number of Seminarians\*

1950s	8,000
1971	2,100
1972	1,800

552

532

460

\*Payne, 1984. All data refer to Spain.

In 1969, the number of secularizations among the clergy began to decline. This notwithstanding, from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s, there was a 20% gross decrease in diocesan ordinations and a 32% net decline (Vilarino and Tizon 1998). Many theories account for this continual decline. Vilarino and Tizon attribute the decline to an increase in civil values and the Spanish society's conscious attempts to break with its clerical past.

The predicted decline in religiosity posited by secularization theory is not as apparent, as the tables below suggest. In 1990, over 30% of the population attended Church once a week or approximately 45% attended at least once a month. Also, 75% of Spanish Catholics still considered themselves religious people regardless of whether they attended Church or not. This was nearly a five percent increase since the 1981 survey. Such results call into question the extent to which secularization has occurred. Given the decline of diocesan ordinations and the increase in public religiosity, it seems as though secularization in Spain has been institutionally (ecclesiastical) rather than religiously based.

#### **Church Attendance of Spanish Catholics, 1990-91**

	More than once a week	Once a week	Once a month	Christmas and Easter	Holidays	Once a year	Less than once a year	Never
1981	11.6%	32.8%	13.8%	4.7%	6.3%	5.2%	6.8%	18.7%
1990	8.8%	24.8%	12.2%	4.5%	13.2%	3.7%	11.7%	21.4%

N = 4147

\*World Values Survey, 1990-91.

#### **Religiosity of Spanish Catholics, Independent of Church Awareness**

	Religious Person	Not a Religious Person	Convinced Atheist
1981	69.0%	30.0%	1.1%
1990	74.9%	24.0%	1.0%

N = 4147

\*World Values Survey, 1990-91.

It is clear that secularization is a reality in Brazil, but the consequences of such a phenomenon may have been avoided. With the onset of liberation theology and progressive factions within the Brazilian episcopate in the 1960s and 1970s, a conservative backlash manifested itself in 1972 and peaked in 1979 at the Puebla meeting of the Latin American Bishop Conference (CELAM). The conservative faction controlled the agenda of the Puebla meeting, citing secularization as the major problem in Latin America rather than more apparent structural problems and concerns about social injustice (Mainwaring 1986). Such action was an attempt to curb the progressive Catholic Church, but it proved unsuccessful as the Brazilian Church did not shrink from progressive ideology. Despite the increase of conflict between Rome and the Brazilian Church over issues, Rome did not actively oppose the progressiveness of the Brazilian Church. The National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB) continued pushing its innovative approach by approving the ordination of married men in 1969 and submitting various proposals for popular masses in 1982. Although the Vatican immediately vetoed these measures, it was not until the mid-1980s that the Vatican actively opposed the Brazilian Church's involvement in social questions by citing these actions as opposition to the International Church's religious mission. Such an attack internally divided the Brazilian Church between progressives and conservatives even among the laity. The clergy spent much of their energy on internal conflicts, allowing Protestant and Pentecostal Churches to actively convert Catholics. These new actors appealed to the rural poor mainly due to the equality existing between the Church as an institution and the laity. These 'new' religions were not controlled by highly educated clergy, but rather were based on a much more individual, spiritual consciousness.

#### **Importance of Religion in Brazil, 1990-91**

Very	Quite	Not Very	Not at All
57.1%	29.0%	7.8%	6.2%

N = 1782

\*World Values Survey, 1990-91.

Over 85% of the population consider religion quite important, suggesting the decline of the institutional church is much more apparent than any decline in religiosity among Brazilians. Just as in Spain, an institutional decline is not inevitably linked to a decline in religiosity. This would suggest that as the decline in the institutional Church becomes more apparent, the direct political influence of the Church would also decline and move toward a more indirect influence.

The Polish case portrays a very different view of secularization. While secularization is eventually inevitable with the growth of modernity and post-modern values, religious pluralism is probably the more visible sign of the Polish Church's decline in the post-transition. The information on the declining number of clergy is simply unavailable. However, the imposition of the Polish Church's own system of values on all Poles, regardless of personal and religious convictions, suggests that a decline in religiosity and eventual conversion away from Catholicism is highly likely in the near future. Public opinion is continually pitted against the moral and political role the Polish Church has taken within the emerging Polish democracy (Eberts 1998).

## **Pluralism**

Secularization theory attributes the political decline of religious organizations to a redefinition of values occurring within civil society, while religious pluralism targets the Church's ability to adapt to increased organizational competition. This includes competition for member support and representation, particularly within the democratic government. Pluralism forces the Church essentially to lobby for support at both the state and societal levels.

In Spain, the Church was forced to adapt quickly to a pluralistic situation brought on by the constitutional principles of religious freedom and a non-denominational state. If the Spanish Church chose not to adapt to changing times, its influence as a potent social and political force may have been jeopardized. There is a perception that the Church is increasingly irrelevant within the modern world, even within the realm of private morality. Pluralism explains this view via the influx of global ideas and the greater accessibility of information and education. Victor Pérez-Díaz suggests the extension of the values that redefine happiness and success through wealth, status, knowledge, and gratification is fundamentally opposed to the religious teachings of the Church. The Church has increasingly been forced to confront this ideological redefinition by society. The Spanish Church adapted by de-emphasizing the role of sacramental practices among the laity as a means of obtaining personal salvation, and shifted its focus to the importance of an individual's temporal activities. This shift intended to cause a reflection on the present state of societal values and one's own personal values: equating salvation with one's values and actions forces believers' to realign their views and carry them into the world. Another important adaptation within the Spanish Church has been its apology to the Spanish population for its involvement in the civil war. The wounds from the civil war are beginning to heal, breaking down many of the existing divisions between the Church and Spanish society.

In Poland the presence of pluralism may act as an indication of the level of secularization that could occur in the future. Prior to 1989, many minority religions were ignored or marginalized due to the larger problem of communist rule. However, with the establishment of democracy, religious minorities are voicing their concerns and demanding recognition of their rights. Many suggest minority opinions are welcomed, but only when their views coincide with the Catholic Church. In the case of mixed marriages, for example, a couple must marry within a Catholic Church and promise that all children will be raised Catholic. Minority religions fear a decline in membership, making their voice even smaller within the religious and political spheres of society (Eberts 1998).

The Polish Catholic Church's special status is further emphasized by the repossession of religious lands. In 1989, religious bodies were given the right to reclaim all previous property rights from the state which existed prior to the 1954 nationalization. A joint government-church commission was established to decide all property cases regarding the Catholic Church, while all other religious organizations have been forced to rely on the judgements of the Prime Minister. Many complain the lands returned to the Church were once hospitals and orphanages, forcing these institutions to relocate or completely shut down (Volenski and Gryzmala-Mosczyńska 1997). Internal divisions have already appeared within the Church over issues such as abortion and the influence of the Church within Polish elections. As society increasingly opposes the Polish Catholic Church over moral issues and its extension into the political realm, it is likely the Church will find itself in a crisis requiring adaptation or the loss of its national standing.

## **Religious Mission**

According to Scott Mainwaring, ideology and the religious mission of a national Church have the potential to influence a Church's political actions or reactions. In Poland and Spain, there is a sense of a single unified Church in comparison with Brazil where the national Church continues to patch up the progressive-conservative divide. Whether the Church caters to individual religiosity rather than national religiosity is an important indicator of how influential the Church is



politically. Exerting direct influence within a national context can create a backlash against the Church if its influence is unwelcome, as shown in Poland.

In Spain, as in Brazil, the Church historically has fought against modernity, but with the acceptance of religious pluralism and modernity under Vatican II<sup>[4]</sup> the Spanish Church was faced with ideological crisis. The Spanish Church could have either reverted to a model of evangelical simplicity, universal love and down play the Church's institutional aspects, or reverted to a model of national Catholicism whereby it continued to impose Christian morals on 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 declared its political neutrality following democratization, but the personal and ethical focus has allowed the Church opportunity to justify involvement in politics over moral and ethical issues.

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 of this ideology was the Catholic Action movement (Gill 1998). The new Christian ideology was founded upon a dualistic conception of history, one secular and the other religious. The Neo-Christian model attempted to plant Christian values within the secular world thus injecting it with religious principles. However, the documents of Vatican II reversed this ideology suggesting God created the world, and only one history exists. The secular, political world was autonomous and separate from religion. Such an ideological shift caused crisis in Brazil where the Catholic Action movement firmly implanted organizations among universities and the laborers. The Brazilian Church quickly adapted to Vatican II creating a model of grassroots organization with such innovations as base Christian communities (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). As already established, in the 1980s, 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 conservatives.

The taming of progressiveness caused a crisis of religious ideology and vision within the Brazilian Church. The first faction was conservative, according to theologian Clovdis Boff, and demanded centralization, hegemony and obedience within the Brazilian Church. This vision focuses 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 *Rumo ao Novo Milenio*. Under this plan the Brazilian Church focused on a different area of human rights each year, beginning with civil rights and ending with economic rights. This suggests the Brazilian Church 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, but some concessions are given to the tendency toward centralization in the Church. Clovdis Boff cites a direct link between the president of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (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 privilege status within the government (Cleary 1997).

The Polish case sharply diverges from the Brazilian and Spanish cases, most likely due to its historical position as the national church. Many parallels exist between the ideological evolution now occurring in Poland and those which have already taken place in Spain and Brazil. The Polish Church has officially accepted the tenets of modernity, but reality suggests the Church had difficulties accepting democratic rule. Unlike the Brazilian and Spanish Churches, which have either taken a role of service within society or a more personal approach to religion, there seems to be a tension within the ideology of the Polish religious mission. In the Polish episcopate's journey to Rome in January 1993, the inability of senior episcopate members to define a new style of public engagement was exposed. Evidence cited the slipping of the Church from the most to the fourth most trusted, falling behind even the army (Wiegel 1994). At this point, 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 that the Vatican, specifically Pope John Paul II due to his Polish heritage, is replacing the religious doctrine of national Catholicism. It is apparent that the religious mission of the Polish Church is still in a transitory state. However, since the Pope's clear statement in 1993, the episcopate quickly issued a national pastoral letter read in all Polish churches suggesting the laity's role was to carry Christian values into the public sphere and not the institutional church. With public opinion increasingly pitted against the Polish Church's carryover of former nationalist ideology, it is likely the Polish Church will offer a more personal religious stance but will not be deterred from its political calling. It

may follow Brazil by taking action within the society to try to earn its political rights within the democratic context.

The religious mission of the Church helps to clarify how and why a Church behaves politically. Religious mission as an explanatory variable acts to combine many components of pluralism and secularization. The perception maintained by a national Church with regards to its mission suggests how threatened it feels, and whether it must protect itself through indirect or direct political means. Pluralism also places pressure on the religious mission of the Church, forcing it to reconcile its secular decline (which should force direct political intervention) with pluralist demands for adaptation. Within Spain and Brazil, there seems to be a clear move toward indirect political influence while Poland still exerts direct influence.

### **Influence of the International Church**

Within the three 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 Brazilian social politics. 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 Churches experiencing a democratic transition. Poland was seen as a means to re-evangelize Europe or reunite the East and West. In each case it is clear the Vatican's influence has not played a particularly positive role. In Brazil, the Vatican interrupted a progressive experience that had the potential to increase the position of the Brazilian Church. In Poland, the Church's efforts to please the International Church hierarchy may be creating 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.

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 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 present Vatican relations. Ralph Della Cava has cited three basic goals of the International Church: (1) greater centralization within the papacy and the Roman Curia;<sup>[5]</sup> (2) the imposition of a unilaterally redefined doctrinal orthodoxy; (3) greater uniformity in liturgy and ecclesiastical organization (1990 and 1993). It is interesting the Vatican has chosen a conservative stand within an increasingly globalized, consumer oriented, pluralistic context. The International Church, understandably, wishes to maintain control over national churches due to limited financial and ecclesiastical resources; this has the potential to alienate the laity from the Church due to the national churches inability to stray. While in Poland this has not completely revealed itself, since religious vocations still remain high, public opinion is bitterly opposed to the Polish Church on a variety of moral and political issues (Eberts 1998). Given the social and economic benefits provided by the Church, it is unlikely the Polish Church will pull away from the Vatican or the political realm quickly. The case of Brazil provides quite a different perspective and could act as an informant of the future of relations between the Polish Church and the Vatican.

Within the Brazilian case, the Roman Curia 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 created episcopal commissions for doctrine within Brazil. These were designed with the intent purpose of curbing doctrinal dissent of the Brazilian Church under the policies of Vatican II (Della Cava 1993). Beginning in the post-war era, the International Catholic Church 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 as a 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 grassroots religious and social movements, increasingly resisted its required obedience as 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 cannot support the programs capable of improving conditions in these burgeoning democracies while simultaneously focusing on re-incorporating national Churches into the international hierarchy in an effort to create a World Church.

## Conclusion

- (1) Over time, national Churches seem to change their religious orientation from the national to the individual level. Moreover, this means Churches will change their political perspective from a direct political vision to an increasingly more indirect one.
- (2) 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.

Thus, what appears to be happening in these cases is a reevaluation or redefinition of the Church's political role. Churches are not only adapting to the market-like environment yielded by an increasingly democratic society and the continual presence of civil and secular values, but more importantly the way they participate in politics is also fundamentally changing. National Churches seem to be withdrawing to a place above politics. As shown in the examples of Spain and Brazil, Churches are increasingly seeking a more indirect influence. The degree to which the role of the laity is emphasized affects how a Church intervenes in politics. However, secularization and pluralism also force more individual attention. The vast majority of religious conversions have been from Catholicism to more laity-oriented denominations suggesting a rejection of Catholicism's hierarchical structure. The Catholic Church has, and must continue, to attempt a more effective incorporation of the laity into their religious organization. Yet, the International Church has only created tension by adopting an increasingly centralized stance.

The inclusion of the laity is likely to increase tensions between national Churches and the International Church. With the Vatican attempting to create a World Church, thus ignoring many of the needs of the laity and national Churches, there is an increasing tension placed on national Churches to accommodate both the laity and the Vatican. The choice of the International Church to become conservative in an era where the citizenry of nations demand flexibility is questionable. The Vatican's financial situation is dire, as are its human resources. Given the variety of national contexts and the differing degree of tension between the laity, the national Church, and the International Church, each Church will invariably react differently.

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[1] Throughout this paper, reference to the Church alludes to the Catholic Church within a national context. When referring to the Catholic Church's international hierarchy, references will indicate either the Vatican or the international Church.

[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. Holy See, however, has no voting rights.

[3] Secularization refers to the number of clergy that disaffiliated from the Church (i.e. transfer from ecclesiastical to civil).

[4] 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.

[5] The Roman Curia is the collection of ministries for governing the International Church (Della Cava 1993).

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[i] -"Way to the New Millennium" four plan introduced in 1997 by Church to focus on different area of human rights each year