RELIGIOUS PARTIES AND SECULAR POLITICS
IN MEXICO AND TURKEY

A Dissertation
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Government

By

Luis Felipe Mantilla, M.A.

Washington, DC
May 1, 2012
THE GROWING PROMINENCE OF RELIGIOUS PARTIES IN GLOBAL POLITICS

IN MEXICO AND TURKEY

Luis Felipe Mantilla, M.A.

Dissertation Advisor: Thomas Banchoff, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

The growing prominence of religious parties in global politics raises pressing questions. Why do religious parties feature prominently in some elections and not in others? How do patterns of religious mobilization change over time? What role do religious traditions play in shaping these organizations? My dissertation examines the contrasting trajectories of Catholic parties in Mexico and Sunni Muslim parties in Turkey in order to explain patterns of religious mobilization in the political arena. It develops an analytical framework centered on religious community structure and electoral incentives that builds on existing institutionalist and rationalist approaches. Relying on a mixed-methods strategy that combines carefully contextualized historical case studies and an original cross-national dataset, it finds that religious party strategies are not simply a function of tradition and regime type but evolve in response to the internal dynamics of religious communities and changes in electoral laws. At a time when the political role of religion is becoming increasingly prominent, this study problematizes overarching generalizations about the compatibility of religion and democracy by building and testing a framework that captures the impact of religious communities and political institutions in practice.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people who contributed to this project. Writing a dissertation is not a task I could have accomplished without their aid, and I have been incredibly fortunate to spend these years with them.

First I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee, and especially Professor Thomas Banchoff. He has been a truly exemplary advisor and committee chair, challenging me when I needed to be challenged and helping me overcome the many obstacles that emerged along the way. His support made this dissertation possible, and over the years he has become a true mentor and friend. Professor Marc Howard’s dependability, constructive criticism, and seemingly boundless energy made him a cornerstone of my experience at Georgetown. Professor José Casanova’s erudition and insight helped me immensely in developing the concepts and comparisons that structure this dissertation. Professor Alfred Stepan generously contributed his incomparable experience and broad-ranging knowledge of the intersection of religion and politics.

I wrote much of this dissertation while at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University, which provided an invaluable set of resources for studying the complex interaction of faith and politics. During my time at the Berkley Center I have had the good fortune to work with many outstanding scholars and excellent people. In particular, I would like to thank Paul Beccio for helping me strike a happy balance between work and life.
My fieldwork in Mexico benefited greatly from the help of the Rafael Preciado Hernández Foundation and the CEDISPAN archives. In Turkey I enjoyed the hospitality of the SETA Foundation for Political, Economic, and Social Research and the Turkish Statistical Institute. Scholars in both countries were consistently willing to share their unique resources and connections, to the great benefit of the dissertation as a whole.

My fellow graduate students at Georgetown have been a crucial source of inspiration and support. In particular, I would like to thank Krzysztof Pelc, David Buckley, Leah Gilbert, Payam Mohseni, Enrique Bravo, Lorena Buzón, and Hamutal Bernstein for their continuing friendship and their help at various stages in this process. Their solidarity and companionship has made all the difference.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, who selflessly encouraged me to pursue my goals even when these took me far from home, and my fiancée, Tracey, whose love, patience, and encouragement kept me moving forward. This dissertation is dedicated to them.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction 1
   The Puzzle 3
   Explaining Religious Mobilization: Alternative Approaches 6
   Forms of Religious Mobilization: A Typology 13
   Explaining Religious Mobilization: An Analytical Framework 16
   Methodology and Case Selection 19
   Outline of the Dissertation 27

Chapter 2: Explaining Religious Mobilization 29
   Defining Religious Parties and Religious Mobilization 31
   Explaining Variation in Religious Mobilization 43
   Data Overview 57
   Statistical Analysis 64
   Conclusion 72

Chapter 3: Comparing Mexico and Turkey 76
   Goals and Methods 77
   An Overview of the Cases 84
   Historical Background 103
   Conclusion 118

Chapter 4: Religious Mobilization in Mexico 120
   Emergence and Crisis of Assertive Religious Mobilization (1939-1961) 123
   The Perils of Transformation (1962-1978) 139
   Religious Mobilization in Contemporary Mexico (2000-2012) 172
   Conclusion 183

Chapter 5: Religious Mobilization in Turkey 188
   Beginnings of Religious Mobilization (1946-1960) 191
   A Contested Adaptation (1981-2001) 222
   Religious Mobilization in Contemporary Turkey (2002-2011) 239
   Conclusion 251

Chapter 6: Conclusion 256
   Summary of Findings 258
   Beyond the Basic Model 268
   Catholic and Sunni Parties in the 21st Century 284
   Toward a New Approach to the Study of Religious Politics 292

References 296
CHAPTER I

Introduction

The resurgence of religion in the public sphere has transformed the political landscape of dozens of countries over the last half century. Since the 1960s, and particularly in the post-Cold War era, religious activists have entered politics in places as different as Paraguay and Indonesia, Kuwait and Poland. Religious political engagement has taken place in democracies and authoritarian regimes, developed and developing nations, countries with strict church-state separation and ones with firm ties to specific traditions, in religiously heterogeneous and homogeneous societies, and in virtually every region of the globe. These instances of religious activism, however, have varied substantially in terms of their impact on patterns of electoral competition. In some cases, activists and political entrepreneurs have collaborated to form assertive religious parties that appeal to sectarian identity, maintain strong alliances with religious groups, and frame their policy proposals in terms of religious doctrine. In others, activists have joined mainstream parties that use religion selectively to mobilize devout voters. In yet another set of cases religious activism has remained largely outside the political arena, in the hands of groups that eschew partisan identification and prefer to negotiate independently with government representatives.

Mexico and Turkey during the 1990s are paradigmatic cases of the contrasting trajectories taken by resurgent religious parties. In Mexico, the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN – National Action Party), despite its deep roots in Catholic activism, increasingly
focused on developing secular sources of support and largely abandoned its doctrinal religious arguments. In contrast, the Refah Partisi (RP – Welfare Party) in Turkey maintained a much more assertive approach to religious mobilization, with its candidates relying on their devout reputations to differentiate themselves from the secular establishment and to cultivate ties to religious associations in civil society. Mexico and Turkey have comparable levels of economic development ($9,166 and $10,106 per capita GDP), religious pluralism (~85% Catholic and ~80% Sunni), and state regulation of religion, as well as a strikingly similar history of religion-state relations. Yet despite these similarities, the electoral success of the PAN in Mexico was accompanied by a decline in religious political mobilization while the victories of the RP in Turkey signaled its success.

Why did political parties in these countries adopt such strikingly different patterns of religious mobilization? What can a structured comparison of two critical cases tell us about the broader role of religion in world politics today?

This dissertation will argue that the contrasting trajectories of religious parties in Mexico and Turkey are not due to essential differences between Roman Catholicism and Sunni Islam or to the idiosyncratic preferences of individual party leaders. Instead, they result from transformations taking place within their societies and states, which alter the opportunities and incentives faced by politicians seeking to mobilize religious supporters in electoral contests. Specifically, they reflect the shifting structures of religious communities and the incentives and constraints generated by their electoral laws. In order to develop and evaluate this argument, it puts forth an original typology of religious parties and proposes an analytical framework for explaining the cases of Mexico and
Turkey that has application to the broader set of Catholic and Sunni majority countries and beyond.

The balance of this chapter introduces the key ideas, arguments, and methods of the dissertation. First, it sets out the puzzle of Catholic and Sunni divergence and surveys the longstanding limitations and recent developments in the existing literature on religious parties and mobilization. The, it sketches analytical frameworks for classifying religious parties and explaining variation among them and briefly describes the methodology and case selection for this project. Finally, it concludes by providing an outline of the rest of the dissertation.

The Puzzle

Sunni Muslims and Roman Catholics jointly account for almost a third of the global population, and approximately the same proportion of the world’s countries have either Catholic or Sunni majorities. The social impact of these two traditions has long been a point of interest for scholars and has been proposed as an explanation for patterns of political and economic development, as well as the absence thereof, among other central concerns of comparative politics (e.g. Huntington, 1991, pp. 72-85; Weber, 1993 (1922), pp. 246-274). Most recently, substantial numbers of studies have recently come forth to explore the political impact of Catholicism on democratization and Islam on violence (Philpott, 2007; Toft, Philpott & Shah, 2011). This implicit normative distinction between a democracy-oriented Catholicism and an anti-democratic Islam
reflects in no small part the perceived de-politicization of the former and hyper-politicization of the latter.

Religious parties in Catholic- and Sunni-majority states have undergone a far-reaching transformation over the last half-century. In the 1950s, Christian Democracy was the dominant political force in much of Western Europe and was emerging as a leading contender in Latin America. The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) initially appeared to reinforce this trend, with key documents calling on Catholics, from bishops to lay activists, to become more involved in the social, economic, and political debates of the time. However, over the course of the next four decades, political parties in the Catholic-majority countries in Europe, Latin America, and elsewhere increasingly seemed to eschew assertive religious mobilization. Even as pro-democracy movements empowered by the Church proved strong enough to sweep military dictators from power, political parties often drifted away from sectarian appeals, failed to maintain links with religious associations, and generally avoided framing their policy positions in terms of religious doctrine. Catholic political mobilization faded from the electoral arena, with religious parties gradually becoming less distinctive, less effective, or both.

The general trajectory of religious mobilization in Sunni-majority over the same period took a different path. The 1950s were a low point for religious mobilization in many Sunni-majority countries across the Middle East, North Africa, and South and Southeast Asia. Highly influential leaders like Gamal Abdel Nasser promoted secular doctrines like socialism and pan-Arabism, which seemed likely to remain dominant forces in the political arena. As late as 1969, even Richard P. Mitchell, among the most insightful scholars of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, described the object of his study as a
movement whose moment of historical relevance had passed (Mitchell, 1969). Yet by the 1980s, religious mobilization had become one of the most widely noted features of political contention in Sunni-majority countries. Generic appeals to religious identity became a staple of electoral competition. Party leaders formed ties to Islamic movements and associations originally aimed at non-political ends such as social service provision or the revival of religious mores. These ties provided them with a steady supply of cadres and voters. In further contrast to Catholic cases, candidates became adept at framing their policy proposals in explicitly Islamic terms, for example by pointing to the importance of *shura* or consultation for democratic reforms or by developing economic frameworks that accommodate the religious ban on *riba* or interest.

Few scholars have systematically explored these contrasting trends in a comparative perspective. The scarcity of empirical work comparing Catholic and Sunni political parties has paved the way for essentialist arguments about the inherent and inflexible differences between the two traditions. Yet there are significant differences among Sunni religious parties as well as Catholic ones, which historically and contextually sensitive comparisons can identify and rely upon to generate more robust causal arguments, and this variation belies the notion that current patterns of religious political engagement are a product of essential qualities of the religions themselves.

I argue that two key variables play a central role in shaping religious mobilization: the structure of religious communities and the institutions that govern electoral institutions. A full explanation of the emergence and development of religious political engagement involves exploring how these two key variables interact with a range of other factors, but their contrasting, systematic, and theoretically compelling
effects make them a particularly valuable starting point for a research program on religious mobilization in the electoral arena.

Before setting out the typology of religious parties and the analytical framework used to explain their emergence and development, I will very briefly outline prominent established theories, pointing out the difficulties they face in explaining variation among religious parties. Until recently the theoretical frameworks available to political scientists simply did not provide an adequate foundation upon which to develop causal arguments that could account for complex patterns of religious political mobilization across boundaries of tradition and regime type.

Explaining Religious Mobilization: Alternative Approaches

Three approaches have been particularly influential in the contemporary study of religious politics: secularization, civilization, and religious marketplace theories. Although they have all contributed notable insights regarding the intersection of religion and politics, each also has important, distinctive limitations when it comes to examining religious parties. Literature on political parties, in turn, has not paid much attention to religious parties as distinctive organizations, often treating them as the byproduct of pre-established social cleavages rather than dynamic agents capable of shaping their political environment.

For over a century, secularization theory has been the dominant approach to the study of religion and politics. In the most general terms, secularization proposes that economic development leads to the differentiation of religious authority from other
arenas of social life, the decline of individual religiosity, and the retreat of religion from the public sphere (Casanova, 1994). Among political scientists, secularization theory, also known as secularization-modernization, expects economic development to change the beliefs and preferences found among members of the electorate, making religious political engagement less effective and appealing (e.g. Lipset, 1960; Norris & Inglehart, 2004). Yet the deterministic and universalistic quality of secularization-based models leaves little room for agency on the part of religious leaders or politicians, and takes little note of potential differences among religious traditions. Moreover, the often implicit premises associated with this approach, such as the tendency to treat any religious involvement in modern electoral contests as marginal or dangerous or both, stand as substantial obstacles to the study of religious parties in particular.

The civilization approach treats religions as the core components of clearly defined cultural units that extend beyond the nation state, and argues that their essential principles and doctrines determine the attitudes and beliefs of their followers towards democracy, human rights, and religion-state relations (Huntington, 1995; Lewis, 2002). Like secularism, the civilization approach is deterministic, deriving political choices from fixed doctrinal imperatives. From this perspective, the presence of religious political parties reveals a tendency to fuse political and religious authority, and thus betrays the essential incompatibility of particular traditions and democratic institutions. The civilization approach is also hampered by its essentialist underpinnings, which make it difficult to address variation within traditions or changes over time.

The third dominant approach is the religious marketplace model. Taking their cue from economics, theorists working in this vein highlight the importance of competition
among religious denominations in driving popular religiosity and shaping the relationship
between religion and state (Finke, 1990; Finke & Stark 1992). Yet by focusing almost
exclusively on religious pluralism and interdenominational competition, this tradition has
difficulty in addressing the changes taking place within particular traditions, and thus
loses sight of a broad range of incentives and constraints shaping religious-political
interaction.

Like these three religion-centered approaches, the mainstream literature on
political parties also faces difficulties when examining religious political organizations.
Rationalist-institutionalist analysis of political parties starts from the premise that parties
advocate policies in order to win votes, rather than pursue vote in order to implement
policies, and thus consciously neglect their ideological preferences and associational
linkages (Downs, 1957; Cox, 1997). Religious parties, whose members and supporters
often seem to display a remarkable resilience in the face electoral challenges, at first
appear as an irrational exception to the rule. Structuralist work on political parties, which
focuses on the social foundations of party systems and organizations, in turn has
difficulties explaining why religious cleavages are activated in some cases but not in
others, and tends to treats parties as the passive inheritors of pre-existing social
conditions (Kalyvas, 1996). Moreover, by focusing almost exclusively on the generative
impact of church-state conflicts, it tends to treat religious parties as inherently reactive
and reactionary (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). Thus, while rationalist approaches are
inadequate because they purposefully remove religion from their calculations,
structuralists are impaired by an excessively rigid approach to religion’s effect on
political competition.
Recent Developments

Over the last decade, scholars examining the resurgence of religion in politics have begun to address and overcome these limitations. In doing so, they have developed new analytical and theoretical resources, resulting in increasingly favorable conditions for comparative research on religious parties.

There is a growing awareness of the complexities of state-religion relations, and a movement away from the inflexible association of liberal secularism and democracy. The strict separation of religion and state, often taken as an unproblematic baseline by the modernization and civilization literature, is neither common nor somehow a default position. The vast majority of states, even democratic states, are deeply engaged in the regulation of religion, and religious communities frequently operate in democratic public spheres (Casanova, 1994). This prompted Alfred Stepan to speak of the “twin tolerations”, or the democratic requirement of minimal “boundaries of freedom” for political institutions vis-à-vis religious communities and vice-versa (Stepan, 2001, p. 216). This not only clarifies the normative debate about the relationship between secularism and democracy, but also sheds light on the variety of institutions that can govern religion in democratic environments. In addition, more inductive and empirical explorations of the varieties of state involvement in religion reinforce the notion that there is a substantial range of institutional arrangements structuring state-religion relations around the world, and that these are compatible with a range of religious traditions and regime types (Fox, 2008; Monsma & Soper, 2008; Stepan, 2011).
Rationalist scholars have also begun to explore the complex interaction between religious and political institutions. Working in the religious marketplace tradition, Anthony Gill effectively points to the contingent nature of religious freedom, and how its various institutional supports emerge in response not only to growing religious diversity but also through religious interaction with secular authorities (Gill, 2008). Building upon a different strand of scholarship, Stathis Kalyvas points out how the presence of strong religious authorities can aid religious parties in demonstrating their commitment to competitive politics (Kalyvas, 2000). Guillermo Trejo convincingly shows that the decision by religious authorities to encourage lay activism derives from the way in which religious communities are organized as well as the opportunities created by local political conditions (Trejo, 2009).

Scholarship on Islamic politics has become increasingly aware of the diversity of religious parties and the variety of links between religious and political mobilization. Scholars have paid increasing attention to differences among Islamic parties, finding substantial contrasts both among and within parties, most often along the moderation-radicalism continuum (Stacher, 2002; Schwedler, 2006). Arguments postulating the importance of specific party types, such as Vali Nasr’s “Muslim Democrats” contain implicit categorizations and arguments about the conditions under which various types of parties are most likely to emerge (2005). The incorporation of social movement theory has further enhanced this kind of research. The volume edited by Quentin Wicktorowitz contains several essays that use this framework to analyze to explore the diverse ties between religious and political activists in the Middle East (Wicktorowitz, 2004). Jillian Schwedler uses them to examine the causes of moderation by Islamists in Jordan and
Yemen (Schwedler, 2006), and Janine Clark shows how middle-class networks sustain political activism in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen (Clark, 2004).

Similar developments are taking place in the study of Catholic political organizations. Mainwaring and Scully remark on the striking diversity of Christian Democratic organizations in Latin America (Mainwaring & Scully, 2003), pointing out that they exhibit a broad range levels of institutionalization and ideological commitments. Historical studies of Catholic political parties in Europe have also shown that there is substantial variation among these organizations regarding their organizational foundations and policy preferences (Kalyvas, 1996; Kalyvas & van Kerstenberg, 2010). Carolyn Warner examines of the conditions under which the Catholic Church aligned itself with various parties in Europe (2000). In all these cases, scholars emphasize the divergent roles played by religion in shaping the resources and preferences of parties.

All of these accounts suggest a more complex and fluid pattern of interaction between politicians and their religious supporters in civil society than was contemplated in earlier literatures. Thanks to these theoretical developments, it is increasingly possible to engage in the systematic examination of the varieties of religious parties.

However, there are still significant conceptual and empirical lacunae that need to be addressed if a coherent and sustainable research program on religious parties is to emerge. There is still a general scarcity of work comparing religious politics across traditions and over time. With a few recent and notable exceptions (Altınordu, 2010; Kalyvas, 2000; Tepe, 2008), cross-country comparative studies tend to restrict themselves to cases within the same religious contexts. As Kalyvas points out, this can result in important misconceptions about the likely causes of religious phenomena. For
example, scholars of Islamic politics often view it as uniquely salient, with little consideration given to similarities with Catholic activism earlier in the century (Casanova, 2001; Kalyvas, 2003).

This lack of comparative work is matched by the scarcity of research examining religions’ “differential appeal, persuasiveness, and political salience over time” (Bellin, 2008, p. 316). This is most present in studies that treat religious traditions as clusters of clearly bounded doctrines with stable implications for political engagement (e.g. Lewis, 2002). For example while scholars of theology and the sociology of religion have spent substantial time examining the dramatic change in Catholicism’s *aggiornamento* during the 1960s, political scientists have generally been hesitant to hypothesize about its impact, though again with important exceptions (Sigmund, 2003; Manuel, Reardon & Wilcox, 2006). One reason is that changes in religious doctrines such as those associated with Vatican II are often assumed to apply evenly and immediately across a transnational religious community, while changes in political-religious behavior, such as shifts in willingness to engage in democratic advocacy, are rarely, if ever, observed to occur uniformly (Gill, 1998; Trejo, 2009). But clearly the first assumption is flawed – there are numerous local dynamics and conditions that interact with doctrinal change to produce different effects. Equally importantly is the temporal dimension of doctrinal reform, which, even in the case of apparently bounded events such as Vatican II, in fact unfolds over extended periods of time that can vary substantially across cases. For social scientists focused on short-term causation, the often slow-moving character of religious change can disguise its significant causal impact (Pierson, 2004).
Forms of Religious Mobilization: A Typology

The comparative study of religious parties requires a definition that highlights what makes these organizations distinctive while allowing for comparison across religious traditions. The minimalist definition of political parties proposed by Anthony Downs represents a good starting point for this effort. In his account, political parties are best understood as organizations that field candidates to compete in elections (Downs, 1957). In the process of competition, parties seek to mobilize voters in support of their candidates. Religious parties can consequently be understood as those organizations that systematically rely on religion in their mobilization efforts.

Religious mobilization in the electoral arena can take place along multiple dimensions, reflecting the various ways in which party leaders and candidates can coordinate and recruit voters and supporters. The typology of religious mobilization developed in this study distinguishes between three dimensions: appeals to voters’ religious identity, cooperation with religious associations in civil society, and the framing of policy proposals in terms of religious doctrine. Chapter 2 provides a detailed treatment of these components, which will only be briefly illustrated here. Each represents a distinct dimension of religious mobilization, and religious parties may use one or all of them to compete in elections.

The first dimension of mobilization consists of direct appeals to sectarian identity. These allow parties to signal their commitment to the wellbeing of a religious community, becoming rallying points for what are often only weakly coordinated religious groups. These can range from the explicit, such as the Egyptian Muslim
Brotherhood’s “Islam is the Solution”, to more subtle appeals such as the RP’s references to Turkey’s Ottoman-Islamic identity during the 1980s and 90s (Yavuz, 2003, pp. 222-5) or the PAN’s flirtation with Christian Democracy in the early 1960s and late 80s (Loaeza, 1999). Direct appeals can act as cognitive shortcuts, conveying to voters that the party upholds, abides by, or is influenced by the principles of the religious community, without providing too much detail about what this entails in terms of policy preferences.

Politicians that hope to effectively appeal to identity need to invest in developing a credible religious reputation and cultivate the endorsement of widely recognized religious authorities who can explicitly or implicitly vouch for their religiosity.

The second dimension of mobilization consists of ties to religious associations in civil society. These can do more than just vouchsafe appeals to identity, they also provide an independent mechanism through which political parties can mobilize voters and recruit cadres. These associations provide crucial resources for political actors, lending them resources and volunteers, as well as a capacity to penetrate society beyond the reach of all but the most institutionalized mass parties. In Mexico, the PAN’s links to religious associations such as Catholic Action allowed it to appeal to attract activists and voters despite a state of near-bankruptcy that lasted from the 1940s to the early 1980s (Loaeza, 1999; Greene, 2007). Similarly, the RP emerged as a powerful contender due in part to its links to Sufi Brotherhoods and Nurcu circles (Mardin, 2006, pp. 15-17), and expanded exponentially as the resources available to these groups grew (Öniş, 1997; Gumuscu & Sert, 2009). Yet this strategy too is not without cost. On the one hand, it can increase the cost to politicians of adopting pragmatic political positions that challenge those of an
affiliated movement. On the other, corruption scandals among politicians can threaten the reputation and legal standing of religious associations.

The third dimension of religious mobilization, framing policy appeals in terms of religious doctrine, is in many ways the most familiar form of the three. Parties mobilize along this dimension when they claim that specific policies advocated by them are in accordace with the doctrines and values of a particular tradition. In contrast to appeals to identity, which often lack substantial content, appeals to doctrine typically leave the party open to criticism from religious professionals, who may object to the interpretations or legitimacy of the arguments used by the party. Thus, in Mexico, attempts to highlight and expand the religious content of the party platform in 1961 and 1976 were met with skepticism by the Catholic hierarchy, who saw in these efforts a potential threat to their authority (Loaeza, 1999). In Turkey, the MSP and RP developed an elaborate framework linking Islamic beliefs to political policies, which caused tension with religious leaders like Said Nursi as well as the secular establishment (Yavuz, 2003).

These three dimensions of religious mobilization in the electoral arena cover a broad but conceptually bounded set of party behaviors and strategies that distinguish religious parties from their secular counterparts. Crucially, mobilization through identity, association, and doctrine can be observed across various faiths and regime types, enabling wide-ranging comparisons. All three dimensions could be potentially pursued by parties linked to any religious tradition, insofar as its members share some sense of identity, agree upon a more-or-less defined corpus of doctrine, and possess some associational structure. All three are also compatible with democracy and authoritarianism, as they can be pursued even where electoral environments are far from
free and fair. In this manner, the definition enables systematic comparisons across these seemingly intractable boundaries.

Religious parties can mobilize religion along one, two, or all three dimensions. This means that religious parties bear a “family resemblance” to each other (Goertz, 2006), in that they share some subset of a cluster of traits rather than a single defining characteristic. The typology of mobilization thus encompasses a diverse but clearly defined set of organizations, ranging from highly competitive parties relying on appeals to religious identity to expand their appeal in democratic elections to niche parties utilizing associations and doctrinal platforms to convince highly devout voters to support them against secular authoritarian incumbents. Thus, the framework provides enough flexibility to include the wide range of religious traditions operating across faith traditions and political regimes.

With this typology in hand, we can move forward and begin to consider the analytical framework for explaining the emergence and development of religious parties.

**Explaining Religious Mobilization: An Analytical Framework**

I argue that two factors best explain the divergent strategies adopted by religious parties in Catholic and Sunni majority countries: the structure of religious communities and the institutions governing of political competition. Each of these generates powerful constraints and incentives for religious mobilization in the electoral arena. Their dynamism contrasts with the often static and inflexible notions of regime and tradition that pervade the debate regarding the relationship between political Islam and democracy.
The first factor, the structure of religious communities, can constrain or facilitate religious mobilization depending on the relative strength of professional clerics and lay activists. Clerical leaders tend to act as gatekeepers and to contest the legitimacy of religious political claims in order to safeguard their authority, while lay activists are more disposed to cooperating with and joining political organizations. The ability of political entrepreneurs to mobilize religion therefore depends on the relative capacity of clerical authorities vis-à-vis lay activists. When the clerical authorities operating in a community are better coordinated than their lay counterparts, they can effectively challenge attempts by politicians to leverage religion (Kalyvas, 2000). In contrast, when lay associations are better coordinated and equipped to influence the broader religious community, political parties have more opportunities to form alliances and rely on religious networks to mobilize voters. When clerical authorities are unable to coordinate their efforts, the presence of robust lay associations facilitates religious mobilization by providing the resources required to overcome collective action problems.

Crucially, I argue that the relative degree of coordination exhibited by clerical and lay actors is not built in to particular traditions. Although a strict theological perspective presents a sharp contrast between a mediated and hierarchical Roman Catholicism and an unmediated and egalitarian Sunni Islam, this disguises a much more dynamic distinction between clergy and laity. As the term is used in this dissertation, clerical authorities can be found in both Catholicism and Sunni Islam, and include bishops and ulema, Papal representatives and Sufi leaders (Esposito & Voll 1996, p. 4). As the case chapters will demonstrate, the relative power of clerical and lay groups in both traditions has varied substantially over time, and must therefore be understood historically.
The second favor in the analytical framework is the restrictiveness of electoral rules. Specifically, this refers to the district magnitudes and vote thresholds that determine how difficult it is for parties to gain representation in the national legislature. More restrictive rules make it more challenging for small parties to gain entry, and thus alter the incentives and constraints faced by religious mobilizers. The role of these rules in shaping political party behavior is well known, and has long constituted one of the most fertile areas for comparative institutional scholarship, but they are often absent from discussions of religious parties, which tend to limit their focus to the distinction between authoritarianism and democracy despite the fact that even authoritarian rulers increasingly rely on electoral rules to manipulate religious oppositions (Lust-Okar & Jamal 2002; Wiktorowicz 2001).

Unlike religious community structures, which directly facilitate or impede religious mobilization, electoral institutions influence the kinds of parties that mobilize religion in the electoral arena. Restrictive electoral rules encourage religious mobilization through large, mainstream parties, and discourage the emergence of small, niche-oriented competitors. Mobilization by mainstream organizations is more likely to result in governments led by religious parties, thus heightening the profile of religious activists but exposing them to stronger incentives to calibrate their appeals based on public demand. Less restrictive electoral environments make it feasible for religious activists to pursue niche party strategies by encouraging politicians to maintain a secure legislative presence by establishing strong links with smaller, more devout constituencies. Consequently, mobilization through niche organizations is less likely to produce governments led by
religious parties, but more likely to result in parties that are firmly committed to religious mobilization along multiple dimensions.

In short, the analytical framework sketched here and developed in more detail in the next chapter centers on how religious community structures affect the overall ability and willingness of politicians to mobilize religion, while electoral rules affect whether this takes place through mainstream or niche parties. The framework demonstrates how religious community structures and electoral institutions interact with other factors that affect the strategic calculations of key actors in the electoral arena, while demonstrating that they have a powerful independent influence on their choices and operate in similar ways across varied traditions and regimes, making them a cornerstone for a research program on religious parties. Refocusing attention at the level of sectarian community structure and electoral institutions allows this dissertation to identify significantly more variation than is available from regime- and tradition-based classifications. Moreover, it provides a useful set of bridges to the broader scholarship on political parties that are crossed repeatedly throughout this dissertation.

**Methodology and Case Selection**

The study of religious mobilization across countries and traditions poses a number of difficulties, not least regarding how to address important contextual differences and historical contingencies without losing all claims to generalizability. I address this challenge by adopting a mixed-method approach, which allows me to first evaluate the hypothesized causal effects of religious community structures and electoral rules across a
broad range of countries and then to identify changes over time and causal mechanisms through process-tracing in the crucial cases of Mexico and Turkey.

The dissertation begins with a preliminary cross-national investigation of patterns of religious mobilization in the contemporary Sunni and Catholic worlds. I construct an original dataset of religious mobilization in virtually every multi-party election held in these countries during the period from 1990-2002. Drawing on a broad range of secondary sources, the data describe whether participating parties engage in any of the three forms of religious mobilization. I then use a series of regressions to test whether the hypothesized effects of structures and institutions are indeed observable after controlling for factors like economic development, state regulation of religion, and religious fragmentation, among others. The statistical analysis is heuristic, aimed at assessing the general plausibility of the argument. Due to measurement constraints that will be discussed at length in the second chapter, I use religious tradition as a proxy for community structure and rely on a dichotomous measure for electoral restrictiveness. These constraints, combined with limited variation over time, represent significant limitations for the statistical analysis. Consequently the results are tentative, but they are consistent with the hypothesized expectations.

At first glance, qualitative analysis also faces a number of daunting obstacles. Studying religious parties that vary in terms of regime and religious tradition poses a number of important methodological challenges. Comparative strategies for the assessment of causal arguments, such as Mill’s methods of agreement and difference, rely on claims about the equivalence of causes or outcomes that are hard to defend when considering cases that vary along such broad dimensions (Ragin, 1987). Other methods,
such as process tracing, put aside these assumptions to focus on the identification of causal mechanisms, but making claims about the comparability and generalizability of findings based on these strategies also demands careful consideration of the context in which causal mechanisms are embedded (George & Bennett, 2005; Falleti & Lynch, 2009). In other words, arguing that a specific set of mechanisms is at play in countries that vary in significant ways requires identifying cases that, despite these differences, show sufficient contextual similarity to be comparable. These empirical challenges can best be met by leveraging the unique advantages of paired comparison (Tarrow, 2010). Paired comparison allows the researcher to devote the kind of attention to specific cases that is usually beyond the scope of all but the most expansive multi-country studies (e.g. Collier & Collier, 1992). In this fashion, it allows for the systematic evaluation of contextual differences and similarities, explicitly addressing concerns about the validity of findings.

Mexico and Turkey constitute a uniquely useful pair for context-sensitive comparative research. In structural terms, Mexico and Turkey have comparable population size (106 and 77 million, respectively), very similar levels of development (GNP per capita of 12.4 and 12 thousand), and both are located on the edges of major centers of economic and political power with which they have well-established but complex relationships. Their levels of religious fragmentation are very similar, and according to the religious fragmentation measure developed by Fearon and Laitin, these are .20 for Mexico and .21 for Turkey (2003). Conveniently, these levels also place them at the mean level of fragmentation for the total sample of Sunni- and Catholic-majority countries that is used in the large-N statistical analysis. Similarly, the degree of formal
state regulation of the majority religion is also very similar in both countries. Using Jonathan Fox’s measures (Fox 2004), during the period 1990-2002, it ranges from 11 to 12 in Mexico and from 9 to 11 in Turkey.

Yet by far the most important similarities between the two cases lie in their parallel historical trajectories (see table 1). The historical sequences are strikingly similar, given the geographic and cultural distance between the two countries. Both engaged in large-scale, contentious attempts at liberalizing reforms during the mid-nineteenth century, many of which were aimed at asserting the dominance of the state apparatus over the religious establishment. These efforts lay the grounds for modernizing dictatorship later that century and for revolutionary struggles during the beginning of the twentieth. These devastating conflicts, each of which cost millions of lives, ended with the imposition of single-party regimes committed to assertive secular policies. During this period, a variety of laws endowed political authorities with the power to regulate public worship and other expressions of faith, while prohibiting political activism by religious groups and individuals. These laws aimed to secure state autonomy from the influence of established religious groups, to promote the emergence of an enlightened, i.e. privatized, religious faith, and to encourage the spread of secularized worldviews. Anticlerical and secularist reforms produced violent and unsuccessful revolts in the 1920s, exemplified by the Sheik Said rebellion in Turkey and the Cristero War in Mexico. The violent suppression of these movements established the supremacy of the secular state, but also demonstrated the high cost of insisting on the effective application of secularist projects. This realization paved the way for political liberalization and
increased religious tolerance in the 1940s and 50s, although the latter often took the form of informal or de facto shifts in policy enforcement rather than full-fledged reform.

Table 1: Timeline for Mexico and Turkey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Type</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Reforms</td>
<td>Juárez &amp; Reforma</td>
<td>Tanzimat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1858-1872</td>
<td>1839-1876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modernizing Dictatorship</td>
<td>Porfirio Díaz</td>
<td>Abdülhamid II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1877-1911</td>
<td>1876-1909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitutional Uprisings</td>
<td>Plan de San Luis Potosí</td>
<td>Young Turk Revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>1908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War and Revolution</td>
<td>Mexican Revolution</td>
<td>WWI &amp; Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1910-1920</td>
<td>1914-1923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergence of Secular Single Party State</td>
<td>Calles &amp; Cárdenas Reforms</td>
<td>Atatürk Reforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1926-1938</td>
<td>1922-1937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent Resistance</td>
<td>Cristero War</td>
<td>Said &amp; Ararat Rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1926-1929</td>
<td>1925 -1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Liberalization and Religious Tolerance</td>
<td>Ávila Camacho</td>
<td>RPP &amp; DP Reforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1940-1946</td>
<td>1946-1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic and Religious Liberalization</td>
<td>De la Madrid &amp; Salinas</td>
<td>Özal Reforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition Success</td>
<td>PAN &amp; Fox Victory</td>
<td>Refah &amp; AKP Victories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1997-2002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 1980s witnessed the fundamental restructuring of the economic arena, with the deregulation of substantial sectors of the economy. They also marked a period of further religious liberalization, particularly with regards to long-fought battles over education policy. Finally, the late 1990s and 2000s was characterized by deep changes in the
political arena, as formerly marginal political actors came to the fore through dramatic electoral victories.

Alongside these broad similarities, there have been significant differences between Mexico and Turkey in terms of the electoral institutions governing electoral competition and the structure of their religious communities. In Mexico, despite an avowed commitment to multiparty competition, the regime combined unfair competition with a highly disproportionate electoral system, which it modified incrementally over the course of decades. This ensured that for many years opposition parties like the PAN could not win more than a few seats and municipal offices. Changes to this status quo were always gradual and tentative: electoral reform in 1946 diminished local discretion in monitoring electoral results, 1961 saw the establishment of a weak system of compensation that guaranteed the opposition a small number of seats in the lower chamber, finally, in 1977 there was a transition to a mixed system with a real proportional component, but the regime retained its legislative supermajority for another decade. Only the last of these adjustments could be construed as a real step towards democratization, yet each had a powerful albeit gradual impact on the political behavior of religious groups.

In Turkey, electoral reforms were more drastic and less unidirectional. The initial opening was a more thorough affair, with the governing party accepting the defeat at the hands of the conservative Demokrat Partisi (DP – Democrat Party) but remaining entrenched in the core institutions of the state. Yet here too changes to electoral rules had significant impact on religious behavior. Elections during the 1950s were held under a highly disproportionate electoral system that delivered enormous supermajorities to
parties capturing a plurality of the vote. A military coup in 1960 led to the adoption of proportional representation with virtually no minimal threshold for entering the political arena. Another military intervention in 1980 resulted in the establishment of a highly restrictive national threshold for representation that significantly diminished the proportionality of seat allocation in the national legislature.

There were also important differences in religious community structure. In Mexico, as in much of the Catholic world, the Second Vatican Council (1962-4) encouraged the emergence of a myriad of lay Catholic groups and discourses. Established encompassing organizations, such as Mexican Catholic Action, were weakened by internal discord and competition from new organizations. From this process emerged a structurally fragmented and doctrinally diverse lay associational sphere. At the same time, Vatican II also encouraged the reorganization and expansion of clerical institutions. After decades of leading a skeletal existence, the Mexican Episcopal Conference gained a new vitality, setting the stage for much more assertive and coherent stances by bishops regarding the pressing social and political questions that pervaded Mexican politics from the 1970s onward.

Religious communities in Turkey experienced no single event of equivalent magnitude, but the religious sphere ultimately underwent a no less striking transformation. From virtual non-existence in the late 1940s, religious associations began to expand rapidly over the next few decades. Although initially restricted to local associations, there were several larger beneficiaries from this process, perhaps most notably the communities led by Said Nursi and the Nakşibendi Sufi order. The expansion of these groups created a new crop of committed religious activists who, generally
preferring to work outside the political arena, nevertheless dramatically expanded their communities’ capacity for religious mobilization. The Milli Görüş (National Outlook) movement, led by Necmettin Erbakan, drew on these resources to forge an explicitly political project, but other religious associations also forged more or less explicit alliances with political parties. The increasingly well-coordinated groups were generally unfettered by clerical establishments, which remained beholden to and strictly supervised by the state. Thus, when economic liberalization expanded the resources available to members of these religious networks, they reinforced vibrant networks and politically engaged religious associations.

These divergences shaped the strategies adopted by politicians, activists, and candidates, and thus explain the divergent patterns of religious mobilization in Turkish and Mexican elections throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Restrictive electoral institutions in Mexico led well-organized lay activists to coordinate their efforts around the PAN and prevented the formation of a niche competitor until the 1980s, by which time the rise of a well-coordinated clerical organization acted as a substantial impediment to assertive religious mobilization. In Turkey, the initial weakness of lay activists combined with a restrictive electoral system to discourage politicians from aligning themselves with religious causes, resulting in low levels of religious mobilization until the late 1960s, at which time growing lay coordination and a shift to less restrictive electoral rules resulted in the rise of a successful niche party that engaged assertive religious mobilization. The return to restrictive rules after 1980 and increasingly powerful lay associations led party leaders to transform their organization into a mainstream party engaged in more selective religious mobilization.
The social, economic and historical similarities between Mexico and Turkey highlight the particular importance of these two key causal factors, and allow for the systematic evaluation of their causal mechanisms in the two cases. The detailed exploration of Mexico and Turkey facilitates the evaluation of the analytical framework’s utility and thus lays out the possibility of applying it to other cases, a task that will be undertaken in the conclusion.

**Outline of the Dissertation**

This introduction has provided a very broad outline of the theoretical foundations, general arguments, and methods used throughout this dissertation. Chapter 2 explains the definition of religious parties by drawing upon and synthesizing existing literature on Catholic and Islamic politics. It goes over the three dimensions of religious mobilization in detail, and proposes a strategy for measuring them in practice. Then, it elaborates the two causal hypotheses that constitute the core of the dissertation’s analytical framework. It goes on to describe the original dataset of 182 elections in 54 Catholic- and Sunni-majority countries. It details the process used to create the dataset, with particular emphasis on the challenges involved in coding qualitative historical data. Then, it uses multivariate regressions to assess the impact of religious tradition and political institutions on religious political mobilization, finding results that are broadly consistent with the hypothesized causal relations.

Chapter 3 frames the historical case studies of Turkey and Mexico by systematically comparing their religious demography, levels of religiosity, economic
development, regime type, regulation of religion, and foreign affairs. It then provides a short summary of the evolution of religion and politics leading up to the formation of religious parties in Mexico and Turkey. It pays particular attention to the rise and fall of clerical authority and the emergence of lay sectarian associations, as well as to evolving patterns of religion-state relations that set the stage for later institutional developments. Most importantly, it shows how comparable religious community structures and political opportunities gave rise to initially similar party organizations and patterns of religious mobilization.

Chapters 4 and 5 explore the contrasting evolution of religious parties in Mexico and Turkey since the 1940s, paying particular attention to how changes in electoral institutions and religious community structures gradually or suddenly modified the patterns of mobilization adopted by party leaders and other key actors. Each chapter is divided into sections exploring particular periods, punctuated by major shifts in religious and institutional contexts. Through a systematic consideration of the incentives and constraints produced by each of these contexts, I apply and test the analytical framework in order to expain tease prevailing patterns of religious mobilization. I place special emphasis on temporal effects, particularly issues of timing and sequence.

Chapter 6 concludes by briefly summarizing and contrasting the findings from the statistical and case study sections, proposing avenues for further research, and engaging in theoretically-driven speculation about the future of religious parties in the Catholic and Sunni worlds. In doing so, it moves beyond the two cases to explore the broader applicability of the analytical framework.
CHAPTER 2
Explaining Religious Mobilization

In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, Samuel Huntington provocatively noted that the “third wave” of democratization was largely driven by Catholics, and likely to halt once it reached Muslim shores (Huntington, 1991). Scholarship on religion and democratization is still often driven by Catholic cases, while work on religion and violence is dominated by research on Islam (Toft, Philpott & Shah, 2011). The purported contrast between an accommodative, depoliticized Catholicism and a recalcitrant, hyper-political Islam extends to the study of religious parties, where it has produced a tacit division of labor. While parties associated with Catholicism are generally studied in terms of their roles in democratic transition and consolidation (Hanley, 1994; Philpott, 2004), Islamic parties are often viewed as potential sources of instability and vehicles for authoritarian reaction (Roy, 1996; Tibi, 2002).

A growing number of studies cast doubt on these generalizations about religious parties, as empirical case studies reveal substantial within-tradition diversity in terms of policy proposals, mobilization styles, and framing efforts. Among Christian Democratic organizations, for example, some have strong roots in Catholic associations and social thought while others are personality-driven and lacking in distinctive doctrines (Kalyvas & van Kerstenberg, 2010; Mainwaring & Scully, 2003). Similarly, Islamic parties range from loose coalitions of traditional authorities to highly centralized organizations led by urban professionals, and they vary dramatically in terms of their religious policy preferences (Kurzman & Naqvi, 2009; Schwedler 2006).
Yet these case studies lack a critical comparative dimension, as they are almost always formulated and evaluated within a single tradition, rarely compare the behavior of parties linked to different faiths, and tend to ignore the internal dynamics of religious communities. What comparative empirical work exists is usually restricted to a small numbers of cases, often separated by large spans of time (e.g. Altinordu, 2010; Kalyvas, 2000; but see Tepe, 2008). These comparisons have provided important insights regarding broader patterns of religious political engagement, but have difficulty in isolating the conditions that lead to its emergence or shape its evolution.

This chapter develops an analytical framework that will allow comparative analysis. The chapter is divided into five parts, including these introductory remarks. Section 2 begins with an overview of the various definitions of religious parties used in current scholarship on Catholicism and Islam. By identifying and distilling commonalities, it develops a working definition that can be applied across both faith traditions. Rather than center the definition on fixed beliefs or voter attitudes, the approach proposed here focuses on the variety of means that political parties use to mobilize religion in electoral contests, revealing processes that can be identified and traced in both Catholic and Sunni cases. It closes by laying out a pragmatic strategy for observing and measuring the incidence of religious mobilization.

Section 3 presents sets out an analytical framework centered on the two key causal factors, sectarian community structures and electoral restrictions, which shape the religious mobilization strategies used by political parties. Questioning deterministic explanations based on secularization-modernization and civilization arguments, it hypothesizes that the presence of robust and autonomous lay associations provides the
impetus for religious mobilization, while electoral institutions affect whether religion is mobilized by mainstream or niche parties.

The following two sections provide an initial test of the plausibility of the framework. Section 4 describes an original dataset containing observations for virtually every multi-party election in Catholic- and Sunni-majority state during the period from 1990-2002, for a total of 182 elections in 54 countries. Relying on this panel, section 5 carries out regression analyses to evaluate the relationships between tradition and institutions on the one hand and religious mobilization on the other. The analysis also includes variables linked to prominent alternative accounts, including the secularization-modernization and religious marketplace theories. The findings provide an insightful first assessment of the similarities and differences between Catholic and Sunni parties, challenging the notion of a stark dichotomy between the two. In addition, it suggests that small and large parties are shaped by incentives and constraints in noticeably different ways, with small parties being more sensitive to changes in independent variables while large parties appear to be generally less affected by them.

The conclusion summarizes the definitional typology and the analytical framework put forth throughout the chapter. It highlights the strengths and limitations of the cross-national statistical test of the analytical framework and points to the important areas that remain beyond its scope. Finally, it points the way forward by suggesting how in-depth historical case studies can provide a fuller account of religious mobilization and a more complete analysis of causal dynamics.

**Defining Religious Parties and Religious Mobilization**
What is a religious party? This deceptively simple question represents the first, and perhaps most formidable, conceptual obstacle to the comparative study of religious involvement in the electoral arena. There is no generally accepted definition of religious parties, and its absence makes it difficult to engage in systematic comparison across faith traditions. The following section provides a brief overview of identification strategies used by scholars working on Catholic and Islamic parties. Then, I propose an operational definition that links both bodies of literature by emphasizing the central role of religious mobilization.

**Distilling Existing Definitions**

The classic view of Catholic religious parties is provided by Lipset and Rokkan, who treat them as agents of the church hierarchy and representatives of a clearly defined sectarian community seeking to resist encroachment by the secular state (1967). The main thrust of the strategy is associational, focusing on the formal and informal links between parties and the broader Catholic community. This matches the approach of many political commentators writing from the mid-19th until the mid-20th century, who often saw Catholic parties as agents of the clergy. The view was particularly widespread among opponents of early Catholic parties, who argued that these parties were consequently compromised by links to an external authority and could not be trusted to be unbiased representatives of the nation (Casanova, 2001). Although this position has been substantially undermined by more recent studies (Buchanan & Conway, 1996; Warner, 2000), there is still a tendency to identify as Catholic parties those that maintain links to
the Catholic Church, just as Catholic politics is often reduced to the politics of the church hierarchy (Gill, 2008). A different version of this strategy is used by Kalyvas, who looks beyond the hierarchy to the various lay associations that sprung forth during the late 19th and early 20th centuries and recognizes them as the social foundations of Catholic parties (1996).¹ This approach consciously problematizes the links between political and religious authority, examining how the relationship between political and sectarian activists shapes the identity of religious parties. Yet, despite their differences, in both cases religious identity is drawn from the association to religious groups external to the party, whether clerical or lay.

A second commonly-used strategy for identifying religious parties in the Catholic world focuses on the use of particular labels that appeal to religious identity. Thus, recent cross-national studies of Catholic-inspired parties often focus exclusively on self-identified Christian Democratic organizations (Mainwaring & Scully, 2003; Van Hecke & Gerard, 2004). There are good empirical reasons for focusing on these organizations. Christian Democratic parties are intrinsically important, having played a central role in the emergence, consolidation, and occasionally the decline, of democracy in Western Europe and Latin America (Huber, Ragin & Stephens, 1993; Valenzuela, 1988; Van Kersbergen, 1995). There can also be little doubt that, in terms of religious engagement in politics, the existence of a broadly acknowledged Christian Democratic label, associated with a well-developed but flexible set of proposals and a record of substantial electoral success in a broad range of political environments, has acted as a focal point for

¹ Elsewhere, Kalyvas defines religious parties as “political actors who rely on appeals that incorporate and appropriate religious symbols and rituals” (2000: 393 f1). While this takes us in the right direction, it remains a narrow formulation which nevertheless fails to exclude cases that Kalyvas does not consider religious.
potential Catholic party-builders. Moreover, this strategy produces a clear set of organizations,² and sidesteps the need to put forth potentially more contentious definitions.

In contrast to the relative paucity of attempts to define Catholic parties, there is a substantial body of work addressing their Islamic counterparts.³ Theoretically grounded approaches tend to define Islamic parties by means of the doctrinal positions of party supporters and their use of broadly recognized religious symbols to appeal to religious identity (e.g. Esposito & Voll, 1996). In this approach, Islamic parties, despite their manifest diversity, are associated with a set of more or less contested beliefs that shape the values and beliefs of supporters. Some variants of this argument emphasize the rigid nature of these doctrinal elements, often stressing their incompatibility with democratic politics (Tibi, 2002). However, more complex accounts emphasize that Islamic discourses can be applied and contested in numerous ways, a number of which are suitable for democratic regimes (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1996).

These approaches tend to emphasize religious doctrine, which is held to have a direct influence on the policy proposals of organizations. For example, some observers point to references to Sharia as the key property of Islamic parties (Salih & El-Tom, 2009). These proposals, in turn, are understood to appeal to religious voters, who are drawn to parties that seek to implement them. This second half of the argument has come under fire as public opinion research suggests that support for Islamic parties is often

² Although even in this context the identification of some parties remains contentious, as the case of the Dominican Republic, discussed below, shows.
³ Many otherwise excellent comparative studies of Islamic parties depend on surprisingly ambiguous definitions, such as “organized efforts to increase the role of Islam in political life” (Kurzman & Naqvi, 2009, p. 4). In addition to the problematic use of a relative and directional standard, there is no explicit consideration of what is meant by Islam, or by “political life” – many far-right parties in Europe are certainly aiming to increase the salience of Islam in political contests, but it would seem counter-intuitive at best to consider them Islamic.
related to secular positions such as anti-corruption agendas rather than to religious proposals narrowly understood (Kurzman & Naqvi, 2009).

A more recent body of work on Islamic politics examines religious parties through the language of social movement theory, particularly the concepts of framing strategies and mobilizing structures (Clark, 2004; Schweder, 2006; Wickham, 2002; Wiktorowitz, 2004). These scholars highlight the importance of addressing how Islamic movements and political organizations are constructed and maintained. They bring attention to the associational underpinnings of religious electoral participation and to the contentious and contingent meanings of religious symbols and rituals. As authors working in this vein readily acknowledge, the contribution of social movement approaches does not typically lie in identifying a radically new set of elements influencing religious mobilization, as much as in providing a more systematic framework within which the influence of identities, doctrines and networks can be interpreted.

These definitions suffer from a series of limitations that inhibit their usefulness for comparative analysis. In particular, they tend to focus excessively on tradition-specific doctrines and under-emphasize the dynamic quality of religious structures. Yet this overview reveals that they also have a substantial number of commonalities. Specifically, they suggest three distinct ways in which political parties become linked to particular religious communities: by using labels and symbols to appeal to religious identities, by forming ties with religious associations in civil society, and by putting forth programs and policy proposals that explicitly draw on religious doctrines.

**Religious Parties: An Operational Definition**
I define religious parties as organizations that compete in elections by mobilizing religion along any of three distinct dimensions: identity, association, and doctrine. The concept of mobilization is the cornerstone of this definition. Mobilization plays a central role in the articulation and representation of religious communities. The scholarship on religious politics tends to assume that religious groups are fixed features of the electorate and that their members consistently exhibit a strong and clearly defined collective identity. Yet the salience of religious rhetoric, the coherence of religious voting blocks, and the political involvement of religious associations cannot be understood without taking into account the behavior of political actors (De Leon, Desai & Tuğal 2009; Disch, 2011). Political entrepreneurs, religious activists, and clerical authorities, to mention only the most obvious candidates, actively shape the manner in which religion manifests itself in the electoral arena. Political parties, as the key mediators between citizens and voting, are the primary vehicle through which electoral religious mobilization takes place.

Conceptually, each of the three dimensions of religious mobilization can be understood as a continuum with thresholds. A party can engage in more or less explicit appeals to identity, forge stronger or weaker links to religious associations in civil society, and develop more or less salient references to religious doctrine. However, clarity and pragmatism demand a minimum threshold that needs to be crossed before these activities can be considered meaningfully present. If any instance in which a party leader made a positive statement about religion counted as an appeal to identity, virtually every party could be considered to engage in religious mobilization. Alternatively, if religion needed to be incorporated into every public statement, no party would qualify. The following descriptions of each dimension of religious mobilization include brief
examples to illustrate the reasoning behind their operationalization and pays particular attention to conditions under which parties can be considered to cross the minimum thresholds.

First Dimension: Appeals to Religious Identity

A political party can use religious labels, symbols, and rituals in order to appeal directly to the religious identity of voters. In doing so, the organization seeks to establish itself as a part or representative of the religious community, and thus secure its support during political contests. There is a broad range of instruments that are suitable for this purpose, ranging from explicit slogans such as “Islam is the solution” to the incorporation of symbols into party banners or resonant terms into party names. Thus even Christian Democracy, whose adherents and supporters display an enormous range of policy preferences, typically suggests some sort of affiliation with the Catholic community, a set of values consistent with Catholic norms, a belief in the common good, and other similar, if often vague, religiously-inspired positions (Sigmund, 2003). The typical vagueness of direct appeals is not coincidental. In contrast to doctrinal references, which will be discussed below, appeals to religious identity are characterized by the absence of a substantive set of proposals or a precise set of claims about the role of religion in the party’s policies. Rather than provide concise arguments about the way in which religion affects they party, it refers a set of broadly shared religious values and a commitment to communal well-being by the party’s candidates and leaders.

The Dominican Republic provides a useful example of how simply using a potentially religious label during an election is not sufficient to cross the minimum
threshold. Participating parties must make explicit claims about the significance of this label and its connection to a religious community before it becomes an effective means of coordinating and mobilizing religious activists and voters. Thus, the Reformist Social Christian Party in the Dominican Republic, established as a vehicle for the political ambitions of President Joaquín Balaguer and organized around personalist patronage networks, does not qualify.

**Second Dimension: Links to Religious Associations in Civil Society**

The second dimension of religious mobilization in the electoral arena is the formation of ties to religious associations in civil society. The function of these ties can vary widely, with associations acting as act as agents for the recruitment of cadres and voters, or vouching for the religiosity of politicians. As noted above, works using a variety of conceptual approaches have consistently emphasized the importance of links between religious parties and civil society organizations (Eickleman & Piscatori, 1996; Kalyvas, 1996; Wickham, 2002). This should come as no surprise, since religious parties are typically parties of external origin, in the sense that they emerge outside the walls of representative institutions from a broader web of social organizations (Duverger, 1954), and these links typically remain significant over extended periods. The civil society organizations to which parties are linked can be quite diverse, as Clark’s study of health clinics, charitable associations, and women’s groups demonstrates (Clark, 2002; see also White, 2002). Moreover, as already noted, they can fulfill a broad range of functions, allowing parties to build trust, provide selective benefits to supporters, engage in discreet proselytism, and identify and recruit potential candidates.
As with direct appeals, there is a minimum threshold below which associational linkages lose substantive impact. In particular, one-time tactical cooperation and situations in which religious associations provide a small fraction of party support are not treated as positive instances. Thus, there is a clear difference between Catholic groups joining the opposition bandwagon in Brazil in the 1985 presidential election, when their preferences were better aligned with those of candidates who were not allowed to run (Bruneau & Hewitt, 1989), and their support for the Christian Democrat-led Concertación in Chile in 1990, where there was a long history of cooperation.

Third Dimension: Incorporation of Religious Doctrine into Policy Proposals

The third component of religious mobilization is the explicit incorporation of religious doctrine into party programs and manifestos. This is related to appeals to religious identity, in that mobilization along both dimensions links the party to concepts and ideas tied to particular denominations. However, it differs from the first dimension in significant ways. As noted above, appeals to identity are not grounded in specific policy proposals, but rather in the shared membership in a religious community. Moreover, policies based on religious doctrines need not be presented as disproportionately favorable to a specific denomination, and can be framed as conducive to the wellbeing of the entire national community.

By grounding its agenda in specific doctrinal positions, a political party lays claim to religious legitimacy for these policy aims, and can thus become a focal point for similarly motivated voters. In contrast to vagueness associated with direct appeals to sectarian identity, this mechanism entails making positive claims about the appropriate
content and interpretation of religious doctrine. Crucially, these can vary widely among political parties appealing to the same religious community. For example, many Islamic parties are associated with calls for the application of Shari‘a, but even within a single country they can differ substantially in terms of what this implies in terms of the rights of religious minorities or women, to name but a two areas of contention (Diederich, 2009). Similarly, Catholic parties vary dramatically in how they interpret the significance of religious doctrines, notably on issues pertaining to state-led redistribution and social justice (Mainwaring & Scully, 2003). In other words, religious policy proposals are neither monolithic nor automatically derived from essential characteristics of a religious tradition. Ideally, the links between policy and doctrine should be both distinctive and explicit. In particular, they should draw a direct line between particular religious principles and party proposals.

For example, Catholic parties can leverage communitarian interpretations of social doctrine to call for structural economic change (Schmidt, 2003: 339), or oppose divorce and abortion by referencing explicitly Catholic interpretations of proper family life (Blofield, 2006). These links do not necessarily have to be aligned with mainline interpretations of doctrine. In the Muslim world, appeals to religious doctrine have often been constructed against the cautious doctrines associated with traditional religious scholars and associations, a process facilitated by the attempts at co-optation of the latter by authoritarian states (Barraclough, 1998, pp. 237-9; Moustafa, 2000, pp. 4-11). However, generic references to Catholic social thought or Shari‘a are in themselves insufficient to qualify as doctrinal foundations, insofar as they fail to establish a clear link between these religious concepts and policy proposals.
As these descriptions show, the three dimensions of mobilization are conceptually distinct. Yet they inevitably blend in practice: appeals to identity can be embedded in doctrinal frameworks, links to associations may be consolidated through doctrinally informed platforms, and visible closeness to religious associations may act as implicit appeals to identity. Despite these empirical gray areas, distinguishing conceptually between the three dimensions brings clarity to what otherwise remains an under-theorized arena and thus facilitates the formulation of causal hypotheses.

Throughout this dissertation, it will often become necessary to refer to the religious mobilization strategy of a political party in the aggregate, that is, in terms of its manifestation across all three dimensions. In order to avoid the repetition of awkward terms like ‘multi-dimensional mobilization,’ I refer to parties that mobilize religion along all three dimensions as being engaged in assertive mobilization. In contrast, those that mobilize religion along only one or two dimensions are described as pursuing selective mobilization.

Observing and Measuring Religious Mobilization

Religious mobilization is a concrete strategy willfully pursued, and often debated, by the leaders and candidates of a political party, and can thus be identified by observing their public behavior and intra-party polemics. Candidate speeches, party manifestos, public endorsements of (and by) religious associations, website content and links, banners and slogans, newsletters and communiqués, among a variety of other materials associated with electoral campaigns provide direct evidence of appeals to identity,
associational linkages, and doctrinal references. Internal party documents and records of debates are particularly valuable sources of information. Field and archival research are therefore the ideal means for assessing whether or not parties have engaged or are engaging in systematic religious mobilization.

When field and archival research are not viable methods one must rely on descriptions and assessments provided by other specialists, either directly solicited or gleaned from relevant publications. There are some datasets and regional comparisons that can be useful guides for identifying potential religious mobilizers (e.g. Coppedge, 1997; Kurzman & Naqvi, 2009; Mainwaring & Scully, 2003). However, these wide-lens studies often provide only a scant description of party strategy.

Due to the aforementioned scarcity of comparative research on religious parties, coding typically entails drawing observations from a variety of different scholars and works. Although it raises problems of comparability, this diversity also constitutes a useful check on individual observer bias when multiple independent sources are used to examine each case. Moreover, the set of relevant studies need not be limited to works explicitly dedicated to analyzing religious parties. Studies of religious movements frequently describe ties to political parties, and historical descriptions of particular periods often comment on prominent campaigns to mobilize religious constituencies. Complementing political analyses with sources written from different perspectives, such as history and sociology, can also help compensate for potential biases. Descriptions of rallies, discussions of party platforms, and summaries of speeches are the most useful bits of information derived from secondary sources. Less compelling, but nonetheless
indicative, are broader statements referring to close ties between parties and religious traditions.

Converting these observations to comparable measurements depends on the consistent application of minimal threshold criteria, both in terms of the substantive content, as noted above, and with regard to data quality. Does any secondary source provide compelling evidence of repeated appeals to religious identity, substantial links to religious associations, or doctrinally-driven platforms? Do several sources suggest that any of these strategies were being pursued? Smoking-gun evidence is not as rare as one might think, and consideration of multiple sources usually reveals converging assessments. Because evidence is coded dichotomously, all we need is a clear indication that the threshold has been crossed. If one source suggests that appeals to Catholic identity by Croatia’s HDZ were very frequent, while another argues that they were notable but sporadic, the party can still be considered to mobilize religion along this dimension.

The most serious concern when it comes to the empirical observation of religious mobilization concerns with false negatives: in cases where scholarship is not abundant and religion is not typically considered a salient feature of political contestation, as in some Latin American countries, efforts by small parties to mobilize religion may go unnoticed. In these situations, journalistic accounts and party websites often provide useful supplementary material, as long as the sources are carefully contrasted and triangulated with each other.

**Explaining Variation in Religious Mobilization**
Alternative Explanations

Established explanations for the emergence and development of religious parties focus on the socioeconomic, cultural, and demographic characteristics of environments in which parties operate. The literature on religious and politics contains three dominant explanations for cross-national variation in patterns of religious mobilization, directly derived from the secularization, civilization, and marketplace approaches discussed earlier. In addition, structuralist theories of party formation have also become a launching off point for various studies focusing on conflict between states and religions as the key explanation for religious party formation. Finally, other scholars have focused more narrowly on state imposed restrictions on religious and political freedoms as a causal factor explaining the rise and development of religious parties.

The first alternative framework is derived from secularization-modernization theory. According to the classic works in this vein, differing levels of economic development are the key factor behind differences in the role of religion across states and societies (Lipset, 1960). In countries where modernization has progressed most, states and markets are secure in their autonomy from religious influence, and religion is relegated to the private sphere. In this framework, religious parties may emerge in an attempt to forestall the secular trend, but whither as individuals reject religious identities, norms, and associations in favor of their secular variants (Smith, 1970, p. 124). A related body of scholarship highlights differences in existential security as the key source of variation in attitudes towards religion, with greater security leading to the dealignment of religion and partisan preference (Norris & Inglehart, 2004, pp. 196-213). However, a
diverse body of work on the rise of Islamic activism suggests that this impact may even be reversed, with economic expansion empowering previously marginalized religious communities (Göle, 2000; Gumuscu & Sert, 2009) and granting them greater voice in the political arena.

Explanations based on civilization focus on the differences between religious traditions, arguing for their continuity over time and stable implications for public and political behavior. In contrast to modernization theory, which tends to sideline religious actors and treat them as reactionary, this approach places an onus on the distinctive properties of religious communities, albeit with an unfortunate and widespread tendency to reduce these to a fixed and narrow set of texts and beliefs (Huntington, 1995). In its strong variant, civilization-based accounts of religious engagement in politics are highly deterministic: in the absence of firmly enforced secularist restrictions, such as those imposed by totalitarian Communist regimes, religious parties should emerge wherever the population adheres to systems of belief that do not embrace the distinction between religious and political authority.

The religious marketplace account draws on economic and rational choice models to propose the degree of inter-denominational competition as the driving force behind variations in religious behavior, not least in the political arena (Gill, 1998, 2008; Trejo, 2009). In contrast to much of modernization and civilization theories, state intervention is an important component in this research program. In particular, the role of regulation in sustaining religious monopolies is often used to explain differences in levels of competition, which in turn diminish the vibrancy of the religious marketplace (Finke, 1990; Iannaccone, Finke & Stark, 1997). Looking specifically at the interaction between
religious communities and political entrepreneurs, Gill argues that greater religious
diversity facilitates the emergence of religious liberty, as minority denominations push
politicians to craft neutral rules that will allow them to grow peacefully in civil society,
rather than clash in the political realm (Gill, 2008). However, he also notes that these
tendencies are likely to be resisted by the majority, potentially leading to greater religious
mobilization in the short run.

Structuralist scholarship on political parties has offered its own explanations for
the rise of religious parties, focusing primarily on conflicts between states and religious
communities (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). This focus on religion-state conflict has become a
starting point for scholars working from a variety of different theoretical positions but
united by their interest in the role of state actors in intentionally or unintentionally
encouraging religious political mobilization. From a rationalist perspective, Stathis
Kalyvas convincingly points out that liberals’ attempts to diminish the political influence
of the Catholic Church led the latter to encourage forms of political mobilization that
eventually led to the emergence of religious parties (1996). By distinguishing religious
communities as uniquely dangerous to national politics, secularist lawmakers in effect
encourage their organization and mobilization, either by strengthening religious presence
in existing parties or by encouraging the formation of new electoral vehicles.

Writing in defense of religious freedom, Toft, Philpott and Shah argue that state-
led efforts to restrict religion in the public sphere can provoke the rise of extremist
movements, which in turn can become the foundations for militant religious parties
(2011). Work on the rise of Islamic parties often points to the repression carried out by
authoritarian regimes as a factor distorting electoral competition and encouraging the
salience of politicized religion. In this view, authoritarian regimes repress secular competitors more effectively than religious ones (Wickham, 2002). Religious communities frequently maintain robust informal networks, allowing them to better endure periods of heightened repression (Singerman, 2004). There is no equivalent literature on authoritarianism and Catholic parties, but Christian Democratic organizations did a better job of enduring sustained exclusion under authoritarian regimes than many of their competitors, and often succeeded in operating in challenging environments like Central America in the 1980s (Mainwaring, 2003; Williams & Sari, 2003). Restrictions imposed by authoritarian states may therefore constitute an important explanation for the success of religious mobilizers.

A New Explanation

Religious mobilization does not occur mechanically or automatically. Political actors, particularly party leaders and candidates, choose to invest time and energy into crafting appeals to sectarian identity, forming alliances with religious associations, and designing doctrinally-influenced policy proposals. Mobilizing religion can be a powerful means for attracting and consolidating voter support, but like any political strategy it has costs and risks. Will the use of religious symbols and slogans be perceived as manipulative and illegitimate? Do potential associational partners have the ability to reach a substantial number of voters? Will authorities challenge the appropriateness of associational links or doctrinal policy prescriptions? The answers to these kinds of questions weigh heavily on the calculations of political actors, and they are
systematically affected by features of the electoral context. In other words, politicians choose to mobilize religion, but do so while facing exogenous constraints and incentives.

I hypothesize that the most significant factors affecting whether and how politicians mobilize religion in the electoral arena derive from the structure of religious communities and the restrictiveness of electoral rules. Religious community structures shape religious mobilization by affecting whether political entrepreneurs are likely to encounter resistance or support in their efforts to mobilize religion. When clerical authorities are well coordinated, they tend to resist efforts by politicians to mobilize religion. In contrast, when lay associations operate without clerical interferences, their leaders are more likely to favor political activism and contribute to electoral mobilization. Electoral rules in turn alter the forms that religious mobilization is likely to take. When electoral rules are restrictive, that is, when district magnitudes are low or vote thresholds are high, religious activists tend to operate within broad electoral coalitions, making religious mobilization part of mainstream party strategies but diluting activists’ influence and making them more sensitive to the preferences of median voters. In contrast, when electoral rules are permissive, religious activists can promote smaller, niche parties that engage in assertive religious mobilization, which reduces the incentives for mainstream parties to engage in religious mobilization.

This emphasis on religious community structures and electoral institutions builds upon established research on the emergence and evolution of parties, which has long been divided into a sociological school focusing on the role of social cleavages (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967), and an institutionalist one that deals with electoral rules and regulations (Duverger, 1954; Sartori, 1976). The former recurrently explores how social divisions
produced by episodes of church-state conflict lead to the emergence of religious parties, but is often hampered by its difficulty in explaining why cleavages are mobilized in some situations but not others. The latter has made important claims about the role of electoral laws in shaping party systems and strategies, but has generally shied away from making claims about the substantive content of mobilization. The emerging consensus in the field transcends this longstanding divide by emphasizing the interaction between electoral rules and social cleavages. Models that include information on both electoral institutions and cleavages have been used effectively to account for the number of parties that compete in a variety of settings (Amorim Neto & Cox, 1997; Clark & Golder, 2006; Ordeshook & Shvetsova, 1994).

My own approach diverges in significant ways from these traditional frameworks in order to address the particular features and puzzles of religious mobilization. Work on social cleavages typically relies on measures that leave the content of these cleavages underspecified (Stoll, 2008), and the religious communities that constitute these cleavages are often treated as if they were natural features in the demographic landscape. In doing so, conventional structuralist scholarship ignores any distinctive internal features that may impede or facilitate the mobilization of particular communities. Yet as I point out, religious communities vary significantly in the associational resources they have available for mobilization and in the extent to which those who control these resources are likely to support partisan engagement.

Similarly, my emphasis on the way in which electoral rules effectively channel religious activism towards mainstream or niche parties adds a crucial dimension to institutionalist approaches. In doing so, it connects with recent scholarship that suggests
that the impact of electoral institutions on these two types of organizations is substantially different (Adams, Clark, Ezrow & Glasgow 2006; Ezrow, 2010; Calvo & Hellwig, 2011). It matters whether religious mobilization is pursued by mainstream parties or by niche organizations. For example, the first may provide significant opportunities for sustained collaboration with secular actors and expose religious activists to electoralist incentives for moderation (Schwedler, 2006). In contrast, niche parties typically benefit from maintaining their distance from centrist parties, adopting extreme policy positions, and increasing the salience of religious-secular cleavages in the electorate (Meguid, 2005; Ezrow, 2008).

The two hypotheses presented here thus draw on the basic insights of the literature on political parties to explain patterns of religious mobilization, but they also consider the distinctive challenges associated with mobilizing religious communities and the types of religious parties that are likely to emerge.

**H1. Centralized clerical authorities impede religious mobilization, while autonomous, well-coordinated lay associations encourage it.**

Clerical leaders that enjoy a secure position at the center of religious networks are typically loath to share their status as representatives of the religious community with lay activists and politicians. They are therefore likely to resist religious mobilization along all three dimensions. That is, they will typically reject efforts to formally link sectarian and partisan identities, seek to maintain veto power over alliances between religious associations and political parties, and object to efforts by political entrepreneurs to frame

---

4 However, they may often be in favor of treating certain partisan identities as *incompatible* with religious identity – particularly for those parties, like Communists and other anticlerical forces, which threaten or challenge the power of clerical authorities.
policy proposals as the realization of religious doctrines. This does not mean that religious-partisan cooperation is impossible, but rather that when clerical authorities are strong it remains contingent, indirect and often informal. Thus, clerical leaders will often prefer to provide tacit support for parties with only partially-overlapping preferences, rather than entangle themselves in potentially compromising public alliances (Hagopian, 2008). This is in part a survival strategy, since having close ties to a particular political party can backfire dramatically when its opponents come to power or if the party is brought down by corruption scandals, exposing religious authorities to state reprisals and public rebuke.

When they are well organized, religious leaders can present a united front and defend their status vis-à-vis potential usurpers operating in the electoral arena. However, when clerical authorities are unable to effectively coordinate their responses to important social and political developments, they are less able to restrain or direct the political strategies adopted by lay activists (Mantilla, 2011). Similarly, when religious authorities are co-opted by states and disconnected from their social base, their effectiveness of their interventions can be significantly reduced (e.g. Wickham, 2002).

In contrast, the presence of robust lay associations and networks greatly facilitates voter coordination and makes it easier for religious communities to influence existing parties or sponsor the formation of new ones (Altinordu, 2010; Rosenblum, 2003). Lay activists, whose survival does not depend on monopolizing religious authority and who are typically better positioned to benefit from electoral participation, are less likely to object to appeals to religious identity or references to doctrine, particularly when they can influence the way in which doctrine-based policies are formulated. More importantly,
they are more likely to form partnerships with political entrepreneurs, thus contributing directly to the establishment of associational linkages. The situation exerts a pull on politicians, as the presence of a well-articulated religious community encourages them to court religious voters in coherent and sustained ways, whether by appealing to identity, incorporating religious doctrine into party programs, or forming alliances with religious organizations (e.g. Wicktorowitz, 2001; White, 2002). When religious associations are weak, they lack the ability to put pressure on politicians or to mobilize independently to compete in elections. The relative capacity of clerical authorities and lay activists varies over time, and the ahistorical treatment of religious community structures can lead to overdeterministic assumptions about their ability to effectively participate in politics (Schwedler, 2011, p. 354).

These constraints may affect parties differently depending on their size and the resources available to them. Smaller organizations, particularly niche parties that aim to secure the support of a devout fraction of the electorate by focusing on a narrow set of issues (Meguid, 2005; Ezrow, 2010), often depend on robust ties to religious associations in civil society. In the absence of ties to well-rooted religious partners, they are vulnerable to secularist reactions and clerical vetoes. In contrast, large parties often possess enough resources to implement religious mobilization strategies with relatively little support from established religious associations. The long noted tendency of electorally successful parties to gradually distance themselves from their social foundations suggests that their mobilization strategies will be more affected by vote-maximization considerations than by the structure of religious communities (Kirchheimer, 1966; Przeworski & Sprague, 1984). Their autonomy and substantial
resources suggest that their ability to mobilize religion along all three dimensions will be not be as contingent upon existing lay associations and less susceptible to clerical vetoes than that of their smaller competitors.

**H2. Restrictive electoral institutions discourage mobilization through niche parties and encourage mobilization through coalitions.**

Lay associations provide a crucial impetus for religious mobilization, but electoral institutions influence the manner in which politicians and activists choose to pursue it. When electoral rules are restrictive, that is, when district magnitudes are low or vote thresholds are otherwise kept high, it becomes difficult to mobilize religion through niche parties. The mechanical and psychological effects of restrictive institutions sharply diminish the legislative gains to be had from mobilizing voters around a single issue, such as religion (Duverger, 1954). Difficult does not mean impossible, since parties can focus their energies on winning a small number of districts, or campaign primarily at the subnational level (Kim & Ohn 1992). Yet only the most committed politicians and motivated activists are likely to pursue assertive religious mobilization strategies if these do not yield seats. Lacking the resources necessary to carry out conventional campaigns, religious niche parties in restrictive electoral environments necessarily lead a tenuous existence.

Unable to form independent partisan organizations, religious activists have to choose between remaining outside the electoral arena altogether or forming coalitions with secular political actors in order to better pursue median voters (Cox, 1997; Taagepera & Shugart, 1989). Coalition-building entails diminished control over party
decision-making and less capacity to pursue religious mobilization strategies. Religious leaders and activists, whose support is often crucial to the effective implementation of religious mobilization along any dimension, may hesitate to join parties whose behavior they are unable to predict. Instead, they may favor conditional alliances, encouraging friendly mainstream parties to adopt associational mobilization rather than identity-based or doctrinal forms of mobilization. Restrictive electoral rules limit the political risks inherent in alienating the most devout fraction of voters, since they reduce the likelihood that assertive religious competitors will arise to compete for their votes.

Less restrictive electoral institutions make it possible for religious activists to organize niche parties that can gain legislative seats by engaging in assertive religious mobilization and without relying on costly pre-electoral alliances with secular partners. In contrast to their equivalents operating in restrictive electoral environments, these niche organizations can attract support from more pragmatic supporters and donors, who may see them as an effective means for reaching office or to promote the implementation of desired policies. The ensuing flexibility enables parties to pursue religious mobilization along any or all three dimensions in order to secure the support of religious voters. The presence of religious niche parties in turn deprives mainstream parties of potential allies in civil society and limits their ability to implement associational mobilization strategies. At the same time, large parties may still seek to pursue alternate, less demanding measures of religious mobilization, such as appeals to religious identity, in order to prevent niche competitors from poaching too many of their supporters.
The two hypotheses presented here yield clear expectations about the contexts in which politicians are most likely to engage in religious mobilization. The likelihood of observing religious mobilization along any dimension should be greater where clerical authorities are disorganized and lay associations are strong. When these structural conditions coincide with restrictive electoral institutions, mainstream parties should become the primary vehicle for mobilization, and when they coincide with permissive electoral institutions, religious mobilization should take place primarily through niche parties. Finally, when clerical authorities are dominant, overall levels of mobilization should be lower for both types of parties.

In the contemporary global-historical context, this translates more religious mobilization among Sunni-majority states than Catholic-majority ones, due to the greater capacity and organization of clerical authorities among the latter. Whether this manifests itself through major, mainstream parties or minor, niche ones will depend in great part upon the constraints imposed by electoral rules. This in turn also affects the dimensions along which religion is most likely to be mobilized, with niche parties tending towards assertive, multi-dimensional mobilization, while mainstream parties will lean towards selective mobilization, particularly through associational links and appeals to identity.

When analyzing the impact of these causal factors empirically, it is crucial to note that religious parties are composed of individuals, and that their members will often disagree over the best course of action to follow at any given point in time. Actors invested in particular styles of religious mobilization may resist adopting new strategies despite shifting incentives. The effects of community structures and electoral institutions are consequently probabilistic, not deterministic, and mediated by the debates and
struggles taking place within party apparatuses. Religious mobilization can still be attempted in the face of staunch clerical resistance, and party leaders who have built up religious reputations and invested in forming links to sectarian associations may try to convince supporters to remain committed to assertive mobilization despite the poor payoffs offered by new restrictive electoral institutions. Yet the constraints imposed by community structures and electoral institutions are real, affecting the success or failure of religious parties operating across various regimes and traditions. Efforts by entrenched party leaders to resist changes in party strategy may lead to schisms, intra-party coups by rising activists, or persistent electoral failure.

In addition, these two explanations necessarily operate in conjunction with other causal factors. Religious community structures and electoral institutions are not the only forces at play in shaping the emergence and evolution of religious parties. State regulation of religion, shifting religious demographics, or rapid changes in the economic environment, to name but a few prominent features, may interact with structures and institutions in surprising ways, shaping the religious mobilization strategies favored by party leaders and candidates. However, as this dissertation will repeatedly show, religious community structures and electoral institutions are important factors in their own right. The case studies will provide an ideal opportunity for considering how they interact with multiple other causal factors weave to shape religious mobilization. In contrast, the statistical tests carried out below are a primarily intended to play the role of heuristic exercises aimed at assessing the plausibility of the two hypotheses across a wide range of cases.
Data Overview

This section presents an original dataset describing distribution of religious mobilization across Sunni-majority and Catholic-majority countries in the dozen years following the end of the Cold War. The next section will use these data to carry out a preliminary statistical analysis of the two main hypotheses. However, the correct interpretation of its findings requires careful consideration of the strengths and limitations of the data being used. This section begins by describing the sample and the units of analysis. It proceeds with a summary description of the dependent variables, and then examines the two independent variables linked the hypotheses developed above. It closes with a brief description of the controls associated with alternative explanations.

Sample and Units of Analysis

The sample includes every multiparty election held in a Catholic or Sunni majority country between 1990 and 2002, for a total of 182 elections in 54 countries. The spatial scope is thus encompassing, but the time span is relatively brief. Its brevity reflects the limited period for which adequate information is available for the requisite number of countries, and makes it very difficult to use the data to evaluate how within-case changes in electoral institutions and the structure of religious communities have affected religious parties. Indeed, many of the cases show no inter-temporal variation during the observed time span, which has real consequences for the kinds of statistical

---

5 The sample only includes countries with more than half a million inhabitants, since the dynamics of participation may be very different in microstates. Elections in which parties are formally banned but coherent blocks of independents can participate (e.g. Kuwait) are included, but single-party elections (e.g. Uzbekistan) are not. When in doubt about the role of independents, I have tried to err in favor of inclusiveness – excluding borderline countries from the sample did not alter the substance of the results.
models that can be used for the analysis. Yet in terms of the specific time period of observation, the immediate post-Cold War era has often been treated as uniquely significant in terms of religious politics and may thus be considered particularly deserving of attention (Fox, 2003; Huntington, 1992).

The unit of analysis in the dataset is the country-election. Relying solely on country units would unnecessarily sacrifice the precious little information we have available to construct informative comparisons, as there have been some important changes within countries during the period covered by the data. At the same time, reliance on the more conventional country-year format would misrepresent the real number of observations, since the measurement of religious party strategies during non-election years is unfeasible. Country-election thus appears as the most pragmatic and accurate choice.

**Dependent Variables**

The dependent variables are dummies describing the presence or absence of religious mobilization along each of its three dimensions. Each country-election receives a score noting appeals to identity, another for links to religious associations, and a third for doctrinally informed policy proposals. In order to test whether the effects of structures and institutions affect large and small parties differently, I also differentiate between religious mobilization carried out by major and minor parties. A party is considered major if it secures over 20% of the legislative seats or if it has over 10% of seats and is one of the two largest parties in the legislature.\(^6\) This distinguishes between organizations that benefit from electoral disproportionality and those that are punished by it, while

\(^6\) Reliance on seats rather than votes is a consequence of data availability
including parties that can reasonably hope to form a government or constitute the main
electoral vehicle for the opposition.

The result is three sets of three dependent variables. The first considers religious
mobilization by any party. That is, if a minor party mobilizes religion by appealing to
religious identity, the country-election is coded positively for that dimension. The second
set of measures for the dependent variable considers whether a major party mobilizes
religion, and mobilization is only coded positively in those instances. The third and final
set is coded positively only if a minor party mobilizes religion, regardless of the
strategies adopted by major parties. Figure 1 describes the proportion of elections
featuring religious mobilization along any dimension, broken down by dominant tradition
and the type of party engaged in mobilization.

A number of observations can be drawn from this graph. Slightly more than half
of all elections feature religious mobilization along at least one dimension by some
political party. Contrary to what portrayals in the media might suggest, the proportion of
elections featuring some form of religious mobilization is very similar in Catholic and
Sunni majority countries, a result driven in large part by the scarcity of religious
mobilizers in the Sahel region as well as the absence of multiparty elections in several
Arab countries. Religious mobilization by major parties is noticeably less frequent than
mobilization by minor parties, and the frequency of each is also remarkably even across
Catholic and Sunni cases.

---

7 Due to limited information availability, this paper does not include data on very small parties. I limit the
set of observed parties for all country-elections to those that obtained at least 1% of the national vote or a
seat in the legislature. This omission is unfortunate, but also reduces the danger of over-emphasizing the
presence of religion in the electoral arena.
Independent Variables

In the absence of a plausible multi-country measure of religious community structures, I rely on a dummy variable coded 0 for Catholic-majority and 1 for Sunni-majority. This binary distinction captures the widely noted difference in their contemporary religious communities, with the former characterized by a coherent and capable centralized authority which the latter is largely lacking. It does not capture the internal diversity of these two traditions, which is inarguably significant. There is simply no viable data with which to assess the vibrancy of religious networks or the centralization of religious authority on a country-by-country basis, let alone by country-election. Constructing an original multi-level indicator would create greater opportunities for incorrect measurement, and in the current historical context the most well-organized
clerical authorities in Sunni-majority countries typically lack the degree of coordination exhibited by even their most weakly organized Catholic counterparts.

Nevertheless, results need to be taken with some caution. Sunni countries with a relatively coherent religious authority structure, such as Senegal and its neighbors in which hierarchical Sufi orders remain highly influential despite recent challenges (Villalón, 2007), are treated as equivalent to the much more dispersed and contested authority structures in Morocco and Algeria (Voll, 1997). Similarly, countries with a robust and well-organized Catholic Episcopal Council, like Colombia or the Philippines, are treated as equivalent to those in which these organizations possess very limited resources, like Paraguay or Nicaragua.

Electoral restrictiveness is also coded using a dummy variable that takes on a positive value when elections have a magnitude of two or less or when there is a national vote threshold higher than 5% of the vote. The key to the coding is whether a small party can effectively enter the legislature, which primarily depends on tolerably large district magnitudes and the absence of a severe national threshold. Because available datasets often lack information on the details of the electoral system such as thresholds or do not cover all the countries of interest, particularly electoral authoritarian regimes (e.g., Golder, 2005), I rely primarily on the International Parliamentary Union’s PARLINE Database for information and complete missing observations with data provided by national electoral authorities and country-specific studies.

---

8 Using a four level code scheme does not substantively alter the results, but contained greater risk for measurement error for both vote thresholds and average district magnitudes. Coding Rules: 1 if PR M>5 AND no National Threshold OR mixed PR dominant; 2 if PR 2<M<5 OR NT <5% OR mixed; 3 if PR M=2 OR NT>5%; 4 SMT OR equivalent.
Controls

In addition to the two key independent variables, several models include controls associated with the alternative explanations presented above. Following convention, economic modernization is measured in terms of gross domestic product per capita, which is taken from the World Bank’s Development Indicators. This is logged in order to account for the greater significance of variation at the lower end of the scale: the fifteen thousand dollars separating high-income France and middle-income Chile in 2000 matter far less than the six thousand between Chile and low-income Mali. According to conventional readings of modernization theory, there should be a robust negative relationship between income and religious mobilization.

A second measure of secularization focusing more directly on attitudes and beliefs is the proportion of the national population self-identifying as agnostic or atheist, taken from the World Christian Database (2001). Assuming that agnostics and atheists represent the tail end of a normal distribution of individuals along the continuum of religiosity, the proportion of the population they represent may be taken as an indicator of overall religiosity. A glance at the data suggests that this is plausible, with the greatest number of nonbelievers found among the secularized populations of Western Europe and post-Communist countries, much lower levels of disbelief among Latin Americans, and virtually none in North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. Moreover, there is a clear positive correlation between percentage of nonbelievers and per capita GDP, as expected if the first is a proxy for lower levels of individual religiosity (Norris & Inglehart, 2004). If religious mobilization declines with the spread of secular worldviews, there should be a clear negative correlation between this indicator and all three dimensions of mobilization.
Data on religious fractionalization is used to estimate the effect of denominational pluralism as hypothesized by the religious marketplace model. The fractionalization index, taken from Alesina, Devleeschauwer, Easterly, Kurlat and Wacziarg (2003), is a standard measure capturing the likelihood that two individuals taken at random from the population will belong to different religious communities. All the countries included in the dataset have clear Catholic or Sunni majorities, and consequently possess relatively low levels of pluralism. Although very high levels of pluralism may well lead to the relative de-politicization of religion (Gill, 2008), the presence of large minorities may well prompt political activism by members of the majority if it increases the salience of religion in the public sphere.

State regulation of religion is captured by using the summary measure for regulation on majority/all traditions from the Religion and State dataset (Fox 2004). As its label implies, this describes whether states impose constraints on the ability of worshipers to practice their faith and express it in the public sphere or the political arena. Its eleven components include restrictions on the formation of religious parties and other religious organizations, constraints imposed on religious speech and gatherings, and limitations on access to places of worship, among others. Each of these specific restrictions is coded from zero to three according to its severity, and the summary is an additive measure with a maximum value of 33. Regulation increases the cost of political participation, but also facilitates mobilization by reinforcing secular-religious cleavages and providing grievances that can be leveraged by religious mobilizers.

Finally, the effect of regime type is measured using the dichotomous measure proposed by Cheibub, Gandhi and Vreeland, in which regime is considered a democracy
if it meets four conditions: the chief executive is popularly elected, the legislature is popularly elected, there is more than one party competing in elections, and there has been an alternation in power (2009). All the elections observed in this dataset satisfy the second and third conditions, but many lack turnover or popularly elected executives. These are consequently electoral authoritarian regimes, and include both competitive variants in which governing parties struggle to hold on to power and hegemonic ones in which competitors are kept largely powerless (Howard & Roessler 2006, 2009; Schedler 2006). Electoral authoritarian regimes constitute crucial cases often used to explain the rise of religious parties in the Middle East; if the relationship extends beyond this region, we should observe a negative relationship between the democracy measure and religious mobilization.

**Statistical Analysis**

Using the resulting panel data, I run a series of pooled probit regression models to assess the impact of community structure and electoral restrictions on the incidence of religious mobilization.\(^9\) The analysis proceeds in two stages. The first set of models tests whether religious mobilization takes place at all, without distinguishing between the behavior of mainstream and niche parties. This framework presents evidence that pertains to testing Hypothesis 1, regarding the overall positive relationship between permissive community structures and religious mobilization. As discussed above, Sunni majority is

---

\(^9\) Using random effect probit regressions produces comparable results for the key independent variables in terms of coefficient direction and significance. Collapsing measures into single country observations and running standard probit and logit models with robust standard errors does not alter the direction of the main coefficients, but the reduced number of observations increases standard errors and deprives several findings of statistical significance.
used as a proxy variable for a permissive community structure, under the assumption that during the relevant time period the associational spheres of Catholic-majority countries was more firmly under clerical control than those of Sunni-majority countries. The second series of models examines whether the effects are observable among both types of parties, or whether the causal variables affect them in different ways. This should provide evidence consistent with Hypothesis 2, regarding the discriminatory effect of electoral constraints which discourage mobilization by smaller parties but encourage it among larger parties.

These are heuristic tests aimed at providing an initial assessment of the plausibility that the hypothesized causal effects are present across a range of countries and elections. Data restrictions mean that these regressions are not capable of meaningfully identifying variation over time. Several cases do not exhibit changes in the dependent variables. As for the key independent variables, tradition is of course invariant and in many instances so is electoral restrictiveness. Thus, the data is simply too coarse to allow for a meaningful estimation of the substantive magnitude of the effects. Rather, it is the direction and significance of the coefficients that are the points of interest. Results should therefore be treated with care. They represent a starting point for investigation, not a set of conclusions.

**Religious Mobilization by Any Party**

The first set of models examines whether any political party, regardless of size, mobilizes religion by appealing to religious identity, forming associational links, or putting forth doctrinal proposals. Table 2 summarizes the findings, and its results are
consistent with expectations. I run two models for each dimension, the first using only the key variables and the second with controls for factors associated with alternative explanations. While the short models may suffer from omitted variable bias, they check whether the impact of the key variables is conditional upon the presence of controls. This proves not to be the case, as the Sunni majority variable is positive and significant across all dimensions under most specifications. This is in keeping with Hypothesis 1, which argues that a community structure with weak clerical authorities encourages religious mobilization. The weakest result comes in the doctrine dimension, where the inclusion of controls wipes out the statistical significance of the coefficient on Sunni majority.

Table 2: Pooled Probit Regression Analysis of Religious Mobilization Along Three Dimensions by Any Party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Association</th>
<th>Doctrine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunni Majority</td>
<td>0.72**</td>
<td>1.05**</td>
<td>0.61*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.38)</td>
<td>(0.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral Restriction</td>
<td>-0.58*</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
<td>(0.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>1.14**</td>
<td>3.00***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.36)</td>
<td>(0.52)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Secularism</td>
<td>-0.03†</td>
<td>-0.05**</td>
<td>-0.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Fragmentation</td>
<td>1.29†</td>
<td>3.39***</td>
<td>1.90**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.68)</td>
<td>(0.86)</td>
<td>(0.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Regulation</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.19***</td>
<td>0.13***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.30)</td>
<td>(0.46)</td>
<td>(0.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countries</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Results are unstandadized regression coefficients, standard errors shown in parentheses. ***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, †p<.1
Although they may initially appear disappointing, the results for the electoral restriction variable are also consistent with expectations. Hypothesis 2 posits that these restrictions will shape the form taken by religious mobilization, not whether it occurs at all. Electoral rules do not in and of themselves push parties to pursue religious mobilization or effectively prevent them from doing so. If electoral rules discourage religious mobilization through niche parties but encourage it among mainstream parties, the overall effect will be ambiguous. More precise data and a larger number of observations might reveal whether one of these effects outweighs the other for particular dimensions of mobilization, as the observation that only negative coefficients approach statistical significance suggests.

In addition to these key variables, there are a number of interesting observations regarding the behavior of the controls. The direction and significance of the economic development variable strongly contradicts the expectations of more deterministic versions of secularization theory, lending credibility to the notion that economic development actually enhances the capacity of many groups, including religious ones, to participate in the political arena.\(^\text{10}\) Social secularism, measured as the proportion of declared atheists and agnostics, has a consistently negative effect, consistent with the argument that more secular societies are less likely to experience religious mobilization. As expected, religious fragmentation consistently increases mobilization, suggesting that the presence of minorities encourages political activism by majorities. State regulation of religion is positive and significant along two dimensions, signaling that attempts by secularists to impose restrictions on religious majorities can lead to at least some forms of political

\(^{10}\) The significance of the coefficients on economic development remains firm if the social secularism variable is removed from the model.
reaction by religious communities. Finally, the data does not identify a clear effect by democracy on patterns of religious mobilization.

**Disaggregating Religious Mobilization by Party Type**

In order to test Hypothesis 2, one must examine whether the effect of electoral restrictions varies between major, mainstream parties and minor, niche parties. To examine this proposition, I coded the use of mobilization by each of these two types of organizations separately. The two are not mutually exclusive, as many elections include religious mobilization by both types of organizations. Consequently, factors that encourage mobilization by large parties may also encourage it among small parties, although not necessarily to the same extent. This is what one would except for the Sunni majority variable, for example. Recall from Figure 1 above that mobilization by small parties is more frequent than mobilization by large ones, but the latter is still found in around a quarter of all cases.

Table 3 describes the results of six models, with two for every dimension of religious mobilization.\(^{11}\) Comparing each pair of columns reveals the contrasting effects of independent variables on major and minor parties. Looking at these results, the effect of electoral restrictions proposed by hypothesis 2 is plainly visible. The coefficient on the restrictions variable is consistently positive on major parties, although it only reaches statistical significance in the associational dimension. In contrast, its effect on minor parties is consistently negative, and reaches statistical significance for both the identity and associational dimensions. Only the democracy variable switches the direction of its

---

\(^{11}\) To simplify the reading of the results, I do not include results for regressions including only the key independent variables. These are consistent with the results shown in the table.
effect in a similar fashion, and in that case the negative coefficients never approximate statistical significance. A more consistent pattern of statistical significance would instill greater confidence in the findings, but they point in the right direction.

**Table 3: Pooled Probit Regression Analysis of Religious Mobilization Along Three Dimensions by Major and Minor Parties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Association</th>
<th>Doctrine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major Parties</td>
<td>Minor Parties</td>
<td>Major Parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni Majority</td>
<td>0.77†</td>
<td>1.21**</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.44)</td>
<td>(0.40)</td>
<td>(0.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral Restriction</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>-0.77*</td>
<td>0.65*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.32)</td>
<td>(0.30)</td>
<td>(0.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>1.04**</td>
<td>1.50***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.42)</td>
<td>(0.35)</td>
<td>(0.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Secularism</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Fragmentation</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.75)</td>
<td>(0.67)</td>
<td>(0.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>0.09*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Regulation</td>
<td>0.93*</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.37)</td>
<td>(0.30)</td>
<td>(0.39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countries</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Results are unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors shown in parentheses. ***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05, †p<.1

In contrast, the effect of Sunni majority is only statistically significant among minor parties. This is in keeping with the arguments presented above, but clashes with classic civilization-based positions, which predict consistent differences between Sunni and Catholic parties. If religious mobilization were driven by Muslim demands for
religious politics, large parties as well as small should gravitate towards religious mobilization strategies in Sunni-majority elections. In contrast, the logic of the argument laid out here suggest that the restrictions imposed by clerical authorities and the capacity of lay associations are more acutely felt by small parties than by larger competitors with more autonomous resources. Indeed, the models offer very little information about the strategies adopted by major parties. This matches our expectation that the strategies of small parties are more dependent upon the kind of exogenous constraints included in these models. In contrast, the behavior of larger parties may be more directly affected by factors like temporary shifts in public opinion, which are not captured by the data (Adams et al 2004, 2006). Alternatively, large parties may converge on a homogeneous set of mobilization strategies, aimed to maximize their appeal to the electorate at large.

The control variables behave much as they did in the earlier models, albeit with generally less statistical significance. The positive impact of economic development is the most consistently significant effect, although it does not appear to transfer onto the doctrine dimension. Social secularism is consistently negative, although it does not reach statistical significance in most models. In contrast, religious fragmentation and state regulation do appear to have a clear positive effect, albeit with weak results in the identity dimension. The pattern for state regulation is particularly intuitive, since prohibitions on religious partisanship may hamper open identification with a particular denomination while encouraging indirect forms of mobilization that may be more difficult to sanction. Finally, the effect of democracy, if any, remains relatively elusive, although it does appear to facilitate identity-based mobilization among large parties.
Overall, the set of variables used in these regressions appears most useful for explaining the formation of associational links, and least informative regarding mobilization along the doctrinal dimension. In addition to the two main independent variables, mobilization through association appears to be particularly tied to economic development, and to a lesser extent to religious fragmentation and state regulation of religion. These are factors that may affect the supply of religious associations available for mobilization in civil society. In contrast, only religious fragmentation and state regulation, and to a lesser extend social secularism, appear tied to doctrinal mobilization. These threats to dominant faith communities may be motivating efforts to emphasize the public relevance of religious beliefs and doctrines.

The cross-national statistical findings presented in this section are consistent with the two proposed hypotheses. Despite the limitations of the data, the findings suggest that political parties in Sunni majority countries, that is, those with permissive religious community structures, are more likely to mobilize religion than their counterparts in Catholic-majority ones. In contrast, electoral institutions do not appear to facilitate or prevent religious mobilization on the whole, but rather encourage it among larger parties while discouraging it among smaller competitors. The broader contrast between large and small parties also appears significant, with the former being far less susceptible to structural and electoral constraints than the latter. Small confessional parties, which are often single issue parties focusing on religion, seem vulnerable to clerical vetoes and often dissuadable through high vote thresholds.

The data also suggest that disaggregating religious mobilization along its three dimensions matters for how we think about its causes. There are numerous differences
observed across the three dimensions of religious mobilization. Some, like associational linkages, appear to be highly correlated to the factors included in the model. Others, like the influence of doctrine, appear to be more resistant to explanation. This is the case with the two key independent variables proposed here, but also for potential causal factors associated with alternative explanations. Economic development, for example, is closely linked to associational linkages, but appears to have less of an effect on appeals to identity, and no discernible impact on doctrine. In contrast, secularist restrictions by states may discourage parties from identifying with a particular denomination, but appear to encourage the formation of associational links and doctrinal platforms.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to perform two distinct tasks. First, it presented a definitional typology, arguing that religious parties are best understood in terms of religious mobilization. Second, it developed an analytical framework to explain religious mobilization and carried out preliminary tests of the impact of religious community structures and electoral institutions on this phenomenon. These tests were heuristic rather than conclusive, but they suggest that these two factors affect the behavior of religious parties across a broad range of cases.

Section II defined religious parties as organizations that mobilize religion to compete in elections, and differentiated between three dimensions of mobilization: appeals to religious identity, links to religious associations in civil society, and inclusion of religious doctrines in platforms and policy proposals. By defining religious parties in
terms of how they mobilize supporters to compete in elections, rather than who votes for them or what beliefs their members hold, it established a straightforward connection to the mainstream scholarship on political parties, while still engaging directly with the concerns of the religion and politics scholarship. One important advantage of this strategy is that it can be effectively applied across religious traditions and regime types.

Section III elaborated a pair of hypotheses regarding the causes of variation in patterns of religious mobilization. First, it proposed that religious communities with strong clerical authorities constrain mobilization, while those with more autonomous lay associations facilitate it. Second, it argued that electoral institutions affect whether mobilization takes place through major, mainstream parties or minor, niche organizations. After discussing these hypotheses, it contrasted them with expectations derived from other approaches to religious politics, including modernization-secularization theory and the religious marketplace model.

Section IV presented an original dataset describing religious mobilization in the elections of Catholic and Sunni majority countries in the post-Cold War era. It identified which elections featured religious mobilization along each dimension, distinguishing between mobilization carried out by major and minor parties. It also included additional variables associated with prominent alternative explanations. However, the data have a number of significant limitations, particularly in its lack of meaningful variation over time and in its use of Sunni majority as a proxy for religious community structure.

Section V applied a series of regression analyses on the data and found results consistent with both hypotheses. Elections in Sunni majority countries appear more likely to include religious mobilization than their Catholic majority counterparts, a relationship
that remains clear after including a range of control variables. The relationship is driven primarily by its effect on minor parties, with the strategies of majority parties appearing less contingent upon majority tradition. Electoral institutions do not seem to have a clear effect on whether religious mobilization takes place, but rather to have opposite effects on major and minor parties. Religious mobilization by major parties is more likely in restrictive electoral environments than in permissive ones, while the opposite is true for religious mobilization by minor parties.

These findings are tempered by the acknowledged limitations of the analysis. The data available for cross-national comparisons is simply too coarse to yield compelling correlations or evidence of causal relationships. A dummy variable for majority tradition tells us little about the specific features of religious structure that encourage or discourage mobilization and masks substantial differences among cases within the same religious tradition. The lack of significant variation over time means that the results depend primarily on variation between cases, rather than within cases. Since the arguments advanced here depend on religious mobilizers responding to changes in institutions and structures, they demand attention to temporal, within-case variation. In addition, the restricted time frame of the available data means that the dynamism behind these processes remains obscured. Pre-Vatican II Catholicism was far more conducive to religious mobilization than its contemporary counterpart, while religious activists were notably less abundant in the political arena of Sunni-majority countries until the last few decades.

Historical case studies provide a way to overcome these limitations and move forward with the empirical analysis. The careful examination and comparison of religious
mobilization in thoughtfully selected cases offers the possibility of identifying recurrent causal mechanisms linking electoral institutions and community structures with patterns of religious mobilization. By showing how politicians’ decisions to mobilize religion are influenced by incentives and constraints generated by institutions and structures, it shifts the discussion from correlation to causation. Historical case analysis can also pinpoint the role of specific features of the religious community structure, such as the prevalence of lay associations or the degree of coordination among clerical authorities, or of electoral rules, such as national thresholds or compensatory mechanisms, in shaping the strategies adopted by political entrepreneurs. Perhaps most importantly, bringing in history enables meaningful within-case comparisons and the analysis of change over time, permitting observation of how actors respond to changing incentives and constraints.

Case studies can therefore both complement and extend the statistical analysis developed in this chapter as they more fully explore and test the causal connections at the heart of the analytical framework. The next chapter lays out the methodological and substantive considerations that guide the selection of two critical cases: Turkey and Mexico. Chapters 4 and 5 then carry out the in-depth historical analysis of religious mobilization in these two countries.
CHAPTER III
Comparing Mexico and Turkey

This chapter provides a methodological framework and contextual background for the subsequent comparative analysis of Mexico and Turkey. Over the last decade there has been a flurry of work on qualitative research methods and their potential contributions to theory development and testing. Case studies in particular have benefited from this scholarly attention. Many insights derive from the realization that a single case can provide a plethora of observations, thus easing concerns raised by quantitatively-oriented scholars about having “more inferences than observations” (King, Keohane & Verba, 1994, pp. 115-122). Techniques for leveraging these multiple implications include congruence testing, which assesses the consistent correspondence between hypothesized causal factors and observed effects, and process-tracing, the identification of causal sequences leading from initial conditions to outcomes (George & Bennett, 2005). The logic of case selection has in turn benefited from systematic attention to the importance of context and its interaction with other variables as a central concern (Falleti & Lynch, 2009; Gerring, 2007). Similarly, attention to temporal dynamics and how causal processes unfold over time has greatly enriched the theoretical contributions from case studies (Pierson 2004). Along all these lines, scholars now posses a number of clear guidelines and best practices for qualitative case analysis.

Drawing on the literature on qualitative methods, the next section provides an overview of the concrete, theory-driven goals of the case studies and the specific
qualitative methods used to attain them. It briefly describes the combination of iterated congruence testing and process-tracing that structures the case studies, along with the strategies used to assess alternative explanations and explore relevant temporal effects. The third section explains the selection of Mexico and Turkey based on a most-similar research design. It then lays out the contextual similarities and differences between both countries in terms of their levels of religious pluralism, overall religiosity, economic development, regime type, regulation of religion, and foreign affairs. The discussion demonstrates striking parallels between the two, while highlighting their potentially significant divergences to be addressed in the case studies.

The fourth section provides a basic historical background of the Mexican and Turkish cases. Covering the period from the early early 19<sup>th</sup> to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, it explains the historical origins of their similarities and differences and introduces key actors and their most relevant predecessors. For example, the depth of the secular-religious cleavage in both countries becomes comprehensible only against the backdrop of century-long reform processes culminating in secularist single-party states. Similarly, the combination of intransigent opposition and commitment to non-violence exhibited by religious activists in both countries is directly shaped by previous experiences with costly and ultimately failed insurrections. The historical overview concludes with the years immediately prior to the beginning of sustained multiparty competition, or the onset of the period covered by the case studies.

**Goals and Methods**
The cases of Turkey and Mexico provide clear examples of how the intersection of religious community structures and electoral institutions shape religious mobilization. From the beginning of sustained multiparty competition in the 1940s to the dramatic electoral events at the turn of the early 21st century, both countries witnessed the emergence of parties pursuing religious mobilization along all three dimensions of identity, associations, and doctrine, followed by periods of decline and re-emergence. The shifts in patterns of religious mobilization responded to the strategies adopted by party leaders and candidates in response to the incentives and constraints generated by religious community structures and electoral institutions.

Each case study chapter is divided into four empirical sections, corresponding to periods of relative stability in electoral institutions and religious community structures. Each section covers approximately two decades, and ends with the occurrence of substantial changes in the key independent variables. Thus, Mexico is divided into a first section (1939-1961), when clerical authorities were weak, lay associations well-organized, and electoral rules were highly restrictive, a second (1962-1978) when clerical authorities gained capacity, lay associations fractured, and electoral rules became marginally less restrictive, a third (1979-2000) when clerical power consolidated itself while lay associations remained divided and electoral rules became significantly less restrictive, and finally a section (2001-2010) when, despite major political events, the continuity of structural and institutional incentives meant that there were few changes to predominant patterns of religious mobilization. Each section describes the prevalent religious community structures and electoral institutions, examines how party leaders
responded to these incentives and constraints, and considers the impact of other factors suggested by alternative explanations.

Through this organizational framework, the case studies chapters seek to achieve four specific theory-related goals. First, they test the hypothesized effects of religious community structures and electoral institutions by examining their consistent impact on religious mobilization over time. Second, they pinpoint the causal mechanisms linking these causal factors and observed outcomes. Third, they consider alternative explanations for observed patterns. Fourth, they examine how changes unfold over time and identify recurring temporal dynamics. I shall briefly describe each of these goals in turn.

Testing the consistent relationship between causal factors and outcomes requires a “structured, focused comparison” of religious mobilization across time and space (George & Bennett, 2005, pp. 67-72; George & McKeown, 1985). The division of each case study chapter into clearly defined temporal sections provides the structure necessary for an evaluation of consistent co-variation. For example, Turkey from 1946 to 1960 is characterized by a highly restrictive electoral system and a poorly coordinated associational arena. According to the hypotheses that guide this dissertation, this is a low-likelihood environment for successful religious mobilization. Consistently with this expectation, an examination of the period reveals that the largest conservative party did not substantially mobilize religion along any of its three dimensions, and that parties that attempted to do so promptly failed. In 1960 a coup dramatically altered the foundations for mobilization, resulting in a new situation: Turkey from 1961 to 1980 had highly permissive electoral institutions and a moderately coordinated associational arena. This is a high-likelihood environment for successful religious mobilization, and indeed we
observe the emergence of a durable party dedicated to mobilizing voters along all hypothesized dimensions.

According to the analytical framework, increasing levels of lay coordination in the associational arena should push political entrepreneurs toward more assertive religious mobilization, while restrictive electoral institutions should constrain these tendencies and encourage limited forms of religious mobilization. The careful sectioning of the case studies allows for the consideration of “recurring empirical regularities” where similar relationships can be observed in a range of settings within each country (Collier 2011, p. 824). In addition, the contextual continuities over time provide an opportunity to recurrently evaluate the impact of country-level properties, such as geographic location and historic legacies, while focusing on those causal factors that change from one period to another.

The second goal of the case studies is to identify clear causal pathways linking independent variables and outcomes. For each temporally defined section, careful process tracing reveals the mechanisms through which electoral institutions and community structures shape religious mobilization. Thus, within-case analysis provides a crucial complement for the observed correlations, demonstrating the sequence of events underpinning each correlation and greatly increasing the reliability of observations (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 207). In order to achieve this purpose, each section provides evidence that party leaders, activists, and key supporters were aware of the risks and benefits of pursuing religious mobilization under specific institutional and structural conditions, and that the divergent interests of various factions often led to differing preferences with regard to strategy.
Process tracing is a method of within-case analysis, and applying it in a comparative framework requires paying careful attention to the context in which causal sequences are embedded. Unless the comparison is sound, identifying similar sequences in two countries, even during multiple, distinct periods, does little more than suggest evidence of their broader generalizability. However, if the problem of contextual heterogeneity can be convincingly addressed, identifying recurrent causal sequences offers a valuable complement to evidence drawn from within-case analysis and shallower but more generalizable findings derived from multi-country statistical analysis. Moreover, in addition to testing already posited causal mechanisms, the examination of causal chains can also contribute to improving the theory. By demanding a thorough analysis of all links in the causal chain, process tracing helps to identify potential shortcomings in the analytical framework and suggests additional factors to take into account in further research. These arguments are taken up again in the conclusion to the dissertation.

Third, comparative case studies provide clear opportunities for the systematic consideration of alternative explanations. This task is taken up in two ways in the following chapters. First, the process-tracing components of each section repeatedly address potentially important factors affecting patterns of religious mobilization. These include features like levels of economic development, which changed substantially in both countries over the relevant time periods, and changing legal regulations regarding religion are repeatedly explored and addressed. These examinations yield interesting findings, for example regarding the often contradictory role of economic development in the emergence of new religious associations. The findings also indicate that the effects of
religious community structures and electoral institutions cannot be treated as spurious consequences of development, civilization, religious pluralism, or any of the other alternative arguments.

Another opportunity to evaluate alternative causal explanations comes in the final empirical section of each case study chapter. These examine situations in which major political events, in particular the coming to power of religious parties, did not coincide with changes to electoral institutions or religious community structures and thus failed to bring about new styles of religious mobilization. These sections question the notion that limited religious mobilization is contingent upon exclusion from office and will be replaced by assertive mobilization once political power is attained. They also challenge the idea that obtaining political power lowers the attractiveness of religious mobilization, since in both cases the shift preceded entry into office.

Finally, case studies also offer a unique opportunity to examine the temporal dynamics of religious mobilization, and particularly issues of tempo and sequence (Pierson, 2004; Grzymala-Busse, 2011). The temporal dimension plays a central part in the evaluation of the causal argument, since even a preliminary examination of the cases reveals that religious mobilization strategies often vary during the periods under observation. Accounting for the temporary misalignments between hypothesized and observed outcomes demands paying direct attention to the speed at which political actors respond to shifting incentives and the order in which religious mobilization strategies are adopted. The concluding section of each case study addresses the evidence derived from the overall trends observed during the decades covered in the chapter.
Some initial observations act as signposts for the analysis of temporal dynamics. A glance at the cases shows the speed at which religious actors adapted their strategies to changes in institutional and structural constraints varied sharply. Some adaptations took place over a matter of months while others took almost a decade to unfold. Explaining this divergence may provide important clues about the significance of misalignments between causes and effects, and whether they constitute a serious challenge to the hypotheses that guide this dissertation.

The order in which party leaders adopted different religious mobilization strategies also influenced how mobilization patterns unfolded, with earlier strategies acting as precedents that guided later efforts. Thus, the strategies adopted by one set of party leaders amidst restrictive electoral conditions and weak clerical authority in 1940s Mexico continued to influence mobilization long after these conditions had abated in the 1980s. Similarly, the experience with assertive religious mobilization in Turkey during the 1970s shaped the strategies adopted by party leaders not only in the 1980s, but also by dissident cadres in the 2000s. In this sense, the sequence in which changes to religious community structures and electoral institutions take place suggests some measure of path-dependence. A closer examination of the cases is required before the quality and depth of this sequencing effect can be fully understood.

The case studies are designed with these four goals in mind. The result is less a free-flowing historical narrative than a series of carefully organized analyses describing the structural and institutional conditions during particular historical periods and providing a detailed examination of the strategic choices and struggles taking place within relevant political parties. The concluding sections of each case study summarize
the correlations and within-case findings of each case and engage with the temporal
dimension of the argument.

An Overview of the Cases

The feasibility of the comparative process-tracing strategy devised above rests a
great deal on the logic of case selection. Specifically, it requires a “most similar” research
design, that is, one which limits contextual variation and thus makes it possible to focus
on the causal impact of a limited set of variables that vary across and within cases. The
similarities not by any means constitute a set of controls, since “experimental variables
cannot be singled out” (Przeworski & Teune 1970, pp. 33-34), but this does not
invalidate the logic of the research design (Tarrow, 2008, p. 234). Rather, the general
similarities between cases make it possible to systematically identify and address
differences so that their causal impact can be taken into account when focusing on the
effect of critical variables (Gerring, 2007, p. 133). This eases the problem of unit
heterogeneity that bedevils many cross-tradition comparisons (e.g. Kalyvas, 2000), where
the sheer number of differences between cases makes it virtually impossible to address
complex causal interactions and leads to deterministic, decontextualized claims
(Schwedler, 2011). Limiting background variation makes it possible to directly address
differences across cases and thus recurrently identify and meaningful compare causal
relationships and sequences (Falleti & Lynch, 2009).

Turkey and Mexico represent a uniquely well-suited pair of cases for this strategy.
They share a number of crucial contextual attributes in terms of their demographic
profiles, geographic locations, economic situation, degrees of social secularization, and state regulation of religion. These similarities help to address some of the most frequently postulated alternative explanations for patterns of religious mobilization, including religious pluralism, international relations, levels of development, popular demands support for religious politics, and type of legal secularism. Through careful preliminary observation the impact of these secondary factors can be taken into account when developing the case studies in the next two chapters.

Demography and Religious Diversity

A glance at Mexico and Turkey’s contemporary demographic profiles reveals countries that are quite comparable in terms of their broadest characteristics. Mexico has a slightly larger population than Turkey (113 million vs. 73 million), with both countries among the top twenty most populous in the world. They also have very similar literacy rates (93.4% and 92.6%, respectively) and comparable levels of urbanization (77% and 69%) and life expectancy (76.2 and 71.8). Mexico ranks slightly higher than Turkey in all these broad development indicators, but both countries have followed similar trends over the last half century.

Their patterns of ethno-linguistic fragmentation are also slightly different, but not in ways that suggest complications for paired comparison. Standard measures describe Mexico as slightly more fragmented than Turkey (e.g. Fearon, 2003), even though minorities make up a larger percentage of the population in the latter. This is because there are numerous indigenous groups in Mexico, several of which have over half a million members. As a whole, speakers of native languages make up slightly less than
10% of the population. In contrast, the minority population in Turkey is highly concentrated, with Kurds by far the largest group. Although the number of Kurds in Turkey is disputed, estimates range from 10 to 20 million, which makes up roughly between 10% and 25% of the total population. However, these patterns of ethno-linguistic diversity do not map clearly onto the religious arena.

In terms of religious diversity, both countries are relatively homogeneous. The overwhelming majority of Mexico’s population self-identifies as Catholic (~85%), despite the recent growth of Pentecostal and Evangelical communities. Some Mexican states, particularly in southern parts of the country, exhibit significantly higher levels of religious pluralism as a result of ongoing Protestant missionary activity. The rise of Protestant competitors is a relatively recent development, with the number of adherents in Mexico expanding rapidly over the last three decades. For most of the period covered by the case studies, conversions were concentrated among indigenous minorities in the south of the country, long neglected by Catholic authorities and far from the centers of political power. These populations still represent a disproportionate number of alternative Christian denominations compared to their non-indigenous counterparts elsewhere in the country. High conversion rates have occasionally resulted in local conflicts and encouraged political activism by Catholic leaders (Trejo, 2009). Nevertheless, the new religious communities tend to avoid direct political engagement, a strategy that has limited their political influence.

The Turkish population evinces a comparable level of religious pluralism. Although the Ottoman Empire included substantial Christian minorities, modern Turkey emerged from a series of devastating international conflicts and population transfers that
resulted in a substantial Sunni Muslim majority (~80%). The most significant religious minority in Turkey is the Shi’a Alevi community, whose members constitute between 15% and 20% of the total population. Alevis are present throughout the country, but disproportionately concentrated in east-central Anatolia. Like many other Muslims in Turkey, Alevi Turks have been influenced by Sufi traditions, particularly those associated with the Bektaşi order. Alevis have deep roots in Turkey, but their political salience has varied significantly over time, and over the last decades it has manifests itself primarily through support for secularist candidates. Kurds tend to be Sunni, although there are Alevi Kurds, and have historical ties to various Sufi communities. Sunni Nakşibendi sheikhs led several Kurdish revolts during the early 20th century, but contemporary Kurdish nationalism is largely secular.

The hegemonic position of the Catholic and Sunni traditions is not immediately threatened by the presence of religious minorities, and was secure throughout the period covered by the case studies. However, their interdenominational interactions are not trivial, and have taken contrasting paths in the last twenty years. The growth of Protestant denominations in Mexico has long been a source of concern for Catholic authorities, but only recently has the absolute number of Protestants become significant beyond a few regional enclaves (Gill 2008: 114-168). The more longstanding tensions between Protestants and Catholics in southern Mexico have had important consequences for local politics, but these have not directly impacted the national arena. In the Turkish case, the Sunni-Alevi cleavage is poorly mapped, since the census does not distinguish between the two communities, but there is no sign of significant numbers of conversions from one denomination to the other. The distinction is nevertheless politically relevant, as it
correlates with partisan preferences and episodes of conflict between Alevis and Sunnis have had tragic consequences, particularly during the early 1990s. Despite these trends, throughout the period covered by the cases studies religious politics in both countries has been dominated by a secular-religious divide, rather than one between members of different faiths.

**Secularization and Religiosity**

Religiosity is another potentially significant factor shaping the emergence of religious parties. Unfortunately, data on religiosity is not available for much of the period covered in this study, with the World Values Survey data used below only covering the period after 1990. There is no reason to expect that religiosity was lower in Mexico in the past than it has been over the past twenty years; indeed, it may have been higher in terms of religious attendance. In contrast, it is conceivable that the transnational “Islamic revival” of the last quarter of the 20th century has impacted Turkey and led to an increase in popular religiosity (Lapidus, 1997). However, the declines observed from 1990 to 2007 in religious attendance, along with stable numbers with regard to trust in religious communities and belief in their public relevance, suggest that the revival has had a limited impact.

Table 4 summarizes polling data from four waves of the World Values Survey, covering the period from 1990 to 2005/7. The first column for each country covers responses from the first three waves, while the second column contains the responses from the latest survey taken in each country. The first set of responses includes indicators of personal religiosity. The second describes attitudes towards religious communities
(“churches” is the label used in the WVS data) and their perceived relevance to addressing social problems, as opposed to moral, spiritual, or family affairs. The third section covers responses to questions about the specific intersection of religion and politics.

Table 4: Religious Attitudes in Mexico and Turkey, 1990-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attend Religious Services at least once a week</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>46.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pray outside services at least once a week</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe in God</td>
<td>94.8</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Person</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in churches</td>
<td>77.2</td>
<td>70.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churches give answers to social problems</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious leaders should not influence government (d/sd)*</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better to have more religious politicians</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-believers unfit for office</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Values Survey
* Disagree or Strongly Disagree

Measures of religiosity are notoriously imprecise, and particularly difficult to compare across traditions. Given these limitations, the first part of Table 4 suggests that
overall levels of religiosity in the two countries are rather similar. Both countries have an overwhelming number of believers and self-described religious persons. While weekly religious attendance is slightly higher in Mexico, Turks are somewhat more likely to pray outside religious services, suggesting that these differences reflect the contrasting ritual practices of Catholicism and Islam rather than any inherent difference in levels of religiosity. These parallels suggest that, if aggregate levels of personal religiosity drive religious mobilization, both countries should manifest similar types of mobilization.

The second section of the table shows further, strong parallels in attitudes towards organized religious communities. A substantial majority of respondents in Mexico and Turkey have a lot or quite a lot of confidence in their religious communities. Moreover, both countries are evenly divided on the social significance of religious teachings, suggesting that, at least in terms of popular demand, there is potential room in both countries for parties that inform their proposals with religious doctrines. These numbers suggest that religion has not been substantially privatized in either country, insofar as its associational and doctrinal manifestations remain relevant in the public sphere.

Finally, the third section shows important contrasts regarding the political implications of religion. On the one hand, Mexican respondents were less likely to object to clerical influence on government. Notably, the percentage of Mexicans disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the exclusion of religious authorities from government decision-making has increased over the last decade. In contrast, intervention by religious leaders in government has been consistently unpopular in Turkey, and dropped further by the 2007. In contrast, religiosity among politicians is slightly less desirable in Mexico than in Turkey, and Turks are significantly more likely to object to non-believers holding
public office. The data suggests that, at least since 1990, Mexicans have more pro-clerical political attitudes while Turks are stronger supporters of lay involvement in politics.

These differences in the relative support for clerical and lay political activism are at the heart of the argument about the effects of religious community structures proposed in this dissertation, and it is highly unfortunate that the surveys cover only the post-1990 era. Civilization-based theories argue that the relative weight of clerical and lay authorities is fixed and built into religious traditions: Catholicism is inherently clerical, while Sunni Islam is not. In contrast, this dissertation proposes that the salience of clerical and lay authority is historically contingent, with the level of coordination and mobilizing capacity of each group changing over time.

**Economic Development**

Patterns of economic development have followed roughly parallel trajectories in both countries. As of 2010, the per capita GDP of both countries was very similar, $10,106 in Turkey and $9,166 in Mexico in current US dollars, and both countries have tracked each other closely over the last half century. Figure 2 illustrates the overall trends. Both countries experienced sustained average growth from the 1940s to the early 1980s, with slowdowns in the late 1960s for Turkey and the mid 1970s for Mexico. The early 1980s witnessed prolonged recessions in both countries, while the 1990s witnessed recoveries and slowdowns. Finally, both countries grew rapidly during the 2000s, entering recessions at the end of the decade.

These parallel trajectories were driven by fundamentally similar processes. Mexico and Turkey remained largely agrarian societies into the early 20th century, when
post-revolutionary state-builders became active in promoting rapid industrialization.
Statist models of development called for public sector investment in infrastructure and
industry, a process that in effect channeled resources away from the countryside and
towards growing urban centers. In addition, state-led modernization radically expanded
the resources available to governments and created large public sectors, which became
crucial sources of support for de facto single-party states (Greene, 2007).

Figure 2: GDP per Capita 1960-2011


The late 1940s and 1950s were a period of sustained growth. Both countries
moved away from the more assertive statism of the inter-war era, allowing for the gradual
expansion of a private sector which nonetheless retained a substantial public sector and
strong regulatory bureaucracies. The countryside, large swaths of which had remained
beyond the scope of earlier developmental projects, was increasingly transformed by its interaction with international markets. In the 1970s, the oil embargo and the subsequent spike in oil prices affected the countries differently. Turkey, as a net importer, was adversely affected while Mexico, a net exporter, received a sudden windfall. However, both countries relied on foreign debt to finance mounting expenditures. The debt crisis then struck both countries severely in the early 1980s, prompting drastic shifts towards liberalization and a sharp reduction of the public sector.

Sudden economic liberalization led to significant social dislocation and protests, but eventually gave way to sustained, if uneven, economic growth starting in the mid 1980s. In the mid 1990s both countries once again experienced sharp recessions characterized by sudden devaluations and reductions in middle class living standards. Mexico recovered promptly from the Peso Crisis, with new growth facilitated by its entry into NAFTA and the dramatic expansion of its trade with the United States. In contrast, Turkey limped out of the recession and entered another in 2001, driven in part by persistent deficit spending and failure to meet the demands of international lenders. However, by 2003 both Turkey and Mexico were experiencing economic growth, with the former expanding faster than the latter. By 2008, both countries had a nearly identical per capita GDP, driven by export-oriented manufacturing and a liberalized economic arena. The impact of development and liberalizing economic reforms had a powerful impact on the resources for non-state collective action. In both countries, the growth of private sector businesses created pools of resources that many groups, including religious activists and political entrepreneurs, could draw upon in their struggles against authorities entrenched in bureaucracies and ruling parties.
**Regime Type**

At first glance, Mexico and Turkey appear to have had very different experiences with democracy and democratization during the period covered by the case studies. While Turkey transitioned rapidly to multiparty competition in 1946, Mexico moved much more gradually and only entered plausibly democratic terrain in the early 1990s. Moreover, while Mexico’s liberalization has been continuous and monotonic, Turkey has experienced four sharp reversals via military coups followed by relatively rapid restoration of civil governments and democratic procedures. Yet their contrasting regime trajectories, aptly captured by Figure 2 below, disguise several important similarities. Despite their many differences, both regimes remained rigorously committed to holding periodic elections, the results of which formally determined the distribution of power in the legislature and the executive branches of government. Yet while Mexican elites manipulated competition to shape outcomes before elections took place, ensuring the continuity of the governing party, Turkish elites relied on the presence of reserved domains of power to guarantee that elected governments did not pursue policies that went against their interests.

While the single-party Kemalist regime came to an end in 1946-50, the electoral transition was not matched by an equally important restructuring of the state apparatus, particularly the military, which retained substantial independence vis-à-vis the elected government. These sectors acted as veto holders with regard to policy decisions. Although this role was informal during the first decade after the transitions, the 1960 coup and the new constitution that emerged from it enshrined the role of the military as a
guardian of Atatürk’s legacy and the Turkish nation. Since then, all Turkish governments have had to operate with the military openly looking over their shoulders, and demonstrably willing to intervene when civilian authority is deemed to have failed in its governing role. The democratic troughs visible in the Turkey series in Figure 3 represent episodes of direct military intervention. More importantly, the peaks that identify the intervals of civilian rule should be qualified by the presence of powerful reserved domains that operated beyond government oversight.

Figure 3: Standardized Polity Scores, 1939-2007

![Graph showing standardized Polity Scores](image)

Source: Polity IV Project (2007), corrections by author

* The Polity scores for Turkey are corrected to show military interventions in executive recruitment and restrictions on political participation in 1960-1 and 1997-8, and limited competitiveness of political participation from 1946-50.

The limits of democratic institutions in Mexico were far more visible during much of this period. In contrast to the Turkish case, the inauguration of multiparty competition
in 1939 did not lead to alternation in power. The ruling party continued to use its
dramatic resource advantage, as well as more direct manipulation and intimidation when
necessary, to maintain its grip on the vast majority of elected offices. However,
multiparty elections were held continuously throughout the following six decades, and
opposition parties always occupied a small number of seats in the legislatures and had a
relatively free hand in terms of the electoral strategies they could pursue. Another key to
the success of the ruling party was its commitment to non-reelection, which prevented
individuals from becoming entrenched in office and allowed the party to circulate
resources, accommodate rising politicians, and prevent internal schisms. Thus, Mexico in
many ways pioneered the institutions and mechanisms of hegemonic electoral
authoritarianism. When the resources available to the state began to decline as a
consequence of liberalizing policies during the 1980s, the electoral system became
gradually more competitive, culminating with the handover of the presidency in 2000 to
an opposition party that had pursued it for over sixty years (Greene, 2007; Magaloni,
2006).

Both Mexico and Turkey held multiparty elections regularly throughout this
period, but their claims to democratic status were undermined by a variety of formal and
informal political arrangements. The restrictions applied in each country were clearly
different: reserved domains of power in Turkey and a heavily tilted electoral playing field
in Mexico. The case studies in the next two chapters therefore take these differences into
account when examining patterns of religious mobilization.

Regulation of Religion
Another prominent parallel between Mexico and Turkey derives from their patterns of state regulation of religion. During the period covered by the cases studies, both countries formally maintained what Kuru calls assertive secularism, a situation in which states seek to exclude religion from the public sphere (Kuru, 2005). Until the late 1990s, leading politicians in Mexico and Turkey recurrently presented themselves as guardians of the secular state, advocating and personifying a privatized form of religiosity. Yet the specific style of exclusion and their mode of implementation in each country have varied substantially over time.

The Mexican Constitution of 1917 contained powerful language which deprived religious communities of any corporate identity and contemplated direct state supervision of all public religious activities. Early efforts by anticlerical politicians to enforce these articles met with stiff and often violent resistance from the Catholic Church and lay activists. In particular, the Cristero War (1926-9) made clear the costs to both sides of continuing aggression. Enforcement of the most draconian provisions was abandoned after the 30s, but the articles remained in place until 1992. In addition to leaving churches without legal standing, these articles deprived religious officials of the right to vote or stand for office, banned religious orders, and severely restricted religious influence in education and the media. The presence of these articles kept churches operating in a legal vacuum, and vulnerable to pressure from both local and national authorities. The 1992 reforms did away with some of the more severe and unimplemented provisions, while leaving in place a more limited number of effectively implemented restrictions.

The three Turkish constitutions in place during this period have consistently enshrined secularism as a guiding principle of the state, and contemplated severe
penalties for any group seeking to undermine it or providing support to those who do. The Constitution of 1924 was repeatedly modified by Kemal Atatürk, who put in place a series of secularist policies governing everything from appropriate headgear to civil marriage. Some of the most severe restrictions were abandoned in the late 1940s, for example allowing for the use of Arabic in the call to prayer and providing religious education. Nevertheless the constitutions of 1961 and 1981 have retained the basic commitment to Atatürk’s vision of secularism. Thus, according to article 14, basic rights cannot be exercised in ways what threaten the secular character of the republic, and article 68 requires all political parties to commit to upholding secularism. Finally, article 174 prohibits any modification of Atatürk’s reform laws. Conflicts over these provisions, particularly those regulating the use of headscarves, continue to shape Turkish politics.

Translating these complex institutional realities and histories into indicators of state regulation of religion is a difficult and contentious task. Despite these limitations the similarities between Mexico and Turkey have earned both countries similar scores in major indices measuring state regulation of religion. For 2002, Fox gives both countries an 11/33 in his additive index of regulation and restriction of majority religions (2004). Marshall gives Mexico 4/7 and Turkey 5/7 in the Religious Freedom Scale, where lower scores indicate more freedom (2007). Finally, Grim and Finke assign Mexico a 3.1/10 and Turkey a 5.1/10 in government regulation of religion, a larger margin than either of the others but not a striking difference overall (2006).

There are notable differences in state policies regarding religion, however, which bear directly on patterns of religious mobilization. While the two countries have maintained a similar set of restrictions on dominant religions during much of the 20th
century, the Turkish state has pursued a much more robust agenda of co-opting religious authorities and directing the Muslim community. In Mexico, the Catholic Church lacked any formal legal recognition and Catholic education was severely hampered until 1992. In contrast, the Turkish state has adopted a variety of policies intended to ensure that its preferred vision of Islam is actively promoted among Turkish Muslims. Thus, all legally sanctioned religious officials became employees of the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs or Diyanet, which wrote all Friday sermons until 2006. Moreover, by the 1980s the Turkish government had come full circle from its restrictions on religious education and made it mandatory for all Muslims in public schools.

These endorsements, however, have been at least as much about state control over religion as about supporting a particular religious community. Even as it sought to promote its interpretation of Islam, the state repeatedly purged its bureaucracies and armed forces of suspected Islamic activists, and repeatedly shut down religious organizations with agendas perceived as incompatible with its own notions of Islam and secularism. These forms of repression and regulation have been far less prominent in Mexico, where officials have generally limited themselves to vocal criticisms of religious authorities. In this sense, assertive secularism has taken a different form in both countries, albeit one that has not been friendly to religious mobilization by non-state actors.

**Foreign Affairs**

Turkey and Mexico have both been deeply shaped by their proximity to global powers based in Europe and North America. Their influence has been felt in a variety of ways, as geographic proximity first made Turkey and Mexico the targets of expansionist
policies and then facilitated their increasing participation in international trade. Overall, there is a striking similarity in both countries’ interactions with their powerful neighbors, which have ranged from conflict and competition-driven modernization in the 19th and early 20th centuries, through anti-communist cooperation during the Cold War, to growing economic and institutional integration in the post-Cold War period. These trends have had similar impacts on religious communities in both countries, limiting their plausibility as explanations for cross-country variation in patterns of religious mobilization.

Early encounters were often devastating and played a prominent role in processes of state formation. The Mexican-American War of 1846-8 cost Mexico virtually half its territory and the Ottoman Empire was dismembered by the victors of the First World War. These episodes triggered efforts to strengthen the state through dramatic reforms, many of which aimed to replicate the institutions and policies used by global powers. However, the conflicts also provided ample material for crafting anti-Western nationalist doctrines. Many of these were adopted by religious leaders and activists, who emphasized the religious differences between their countries and those of their antagonists and often urged resistance to state-building reforms. This early nationalist-religious convergence thus became a prominent characteristic of reactionary movements during the state-formation period in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As late as the Second World War, there were significant sectors of both countries that displayed pro-German sentiments, largely as due to their suspicion of Allied powers.

These trends were dramatically reversed by the Cold War. Despite historic antagonisms and flirtations with socialism, both countries aligned themselves with the
Western block against a perceived communist threat, albeit in different ways. While Mexican governments repeatedly spoke against communism and persecuted communist sympathizers domestically, they resisted developing closer military ties to the United States and sought to avoid entanglement in foreign wars. In contrast, Turkey embraced Western powers and joined NATO in 1952, becoming a key part of the alliance’s eastern border. Despite these differences, in both countries government fears of leftist subversion became a prominent feature of national politics. This had direct consequences for state-religion relations, as the mutual anti-communist struggle encouraged cooperation between state and religious authorities. Increasingly, state representatives saw religion as a useful antidote to atheistic Marxism. In turn, religious leaders gradually overcame their distrust of the modern state, increasingly seeing it as an important bulwark against Marxist revolutionaries. However, this cooperation remained asymmetrical, with state authorities retaining a dominant position and setting explicit and implicit limits to autonomous religious intervention in the political arena.

The post-Cold War era brought yet another international configuration with parallel consequences for both countries. Rapidly expanding international trade fostered closer links between Turkey and Europe and Mexico and the United States. Already established patterns of migration to the United States and Europe sustained enormous expatriate communities and generated substantial flows of remittances. In both countries, growing economic integration was given solid institutional foundations during the mid-1990s. In January, 1994, Mexico became part of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), leading to dramatically greater levels of trade with its northern neighbor. By 2010, the United States took in 74% of Mexican exports and provided 61%
of its imports. Turkish integration has been only slightly less dramatic. Turkey established a Customs Union agreement with the European Union in December, 1995. By 2010, trade with the EU represented 46% of total Turkish exports and 39% of its imports. Turkey has repeatedly sought to move towards EU membership, although this process has faced numerous complications and appeared to stall early in the new millennium. Driven in part by these increasingly robust international ties, mainstream religious conservatives in both countries have largely abandoned their previous xenophobic postures, cautiously embracing globalization (Kuru, 2005). Their partisan allies have come to be among the chief supporters of ongoing economic integration and international cooperation.

Summary

The parallels between Mexico and Turkey in terms of their level of religious pluralism, popular attitudes towards religion, regime types, economic development, state regulation of religion, and foreign relations make them highly comparable cases. Despite the great distances that separate these two countries and the lack of sustained contact between them, they share key features that significantly facilitate parallel process tracing. Yet along with these similarities there are important differences. Both countries have similar levels of religious pluralism, but minorities in Mexico have emerged only recently and experienced dramatic growth in the last two decades, while those in Turkey have remained stable throughout the entire period covered by this study. Similar levels of personal religiosity and trust in religious authorities coexist with clear differences in attitudes towards clerical and lay political involvement. While both countries have
combined multiparty elections with constraints on democratic outcomes, these restrictions have taken notably different institutional forms. Economic development in both countries has taken place along similar lines, although particular shocks have not always affected both countries equally. Finally, although both countries have developed close ties to neighboring powers, Turkey has stronger military links due its NATO membership, while Mexico has a higher level of economic integration. Remaining alert to these differences is crucial to a proper understanding of the cases.

The parallels between the two countries have deep historical roots, with many stretching at least as far as the early late 18th century. The following section describes these trends, beginning with the old regimes in place in the 18th century, through the upheavals of the 19th and early 20th centuries, and concluding with the inauguration of sustained multiparty competition in the 1930s and 40s.

**Historical Background**

Religion and politics intersected often in Mexico and Turkey during the hundred years before the emergence of sustained multiparty elections, in ways that bear directly upon the episodes of religious mobilization examined in the case studies. Given this complex interaction, examining the historical background of religious mobilization in Turkey and Mexico serves three several important purposes. First, it sets out the historical roots of the religious community structures and electoral institutions that are at the center of the analytical framework. The effects of these structures and institutions during the mid 20th century can only be properly understood when they are taken in a
historical perspective. Second, it further clarifies and establishes the similarities of the cases, pointing out how parallel historical trajectories created a comparable set of historical legacies in both countries. These legacies go a long way towards explaining the structural similarities outlined above. Third, these similar historical legacies came to constitute a powerful frame of reference for the strategies and decisions taken by actors in later periods. In this sense, history remains an active element shaping religious mobilization in both countries.

This section describes the strikingly similar sequences of conflict and accommodation between state and religious authorities. Covering a vast swath of history in a few paragraphs, it cannot provide a detailed analysis of these historical trajectories. Rather than aim to provide an encompassing historical overview, it focuses on the emergence of structural and institutional elements that remained in place during the period covered by the cases studies, and on those events and figures that found an echo in the religious mobilization strategies used by modern party leaders.

Old Regimes (~pre-1800)

The old regimes in Turkey and Mexico were based on centralized, imperial authority and a close relationship between political and religious power. In the Ottoman Empire, the head of state was also the leader of the largest religious denomination. The Ottoman Sultans claimed the title of Caliph since 1517, endowing them with a nominal leadership over the global Sunni community. However, the title was used sparingly until

---

12 In addition to the sources cited in the text, the accounts below draw on standard histories for both countries. For Turkey, the most prominent and comprehensive are Ahmad (1993), Lewis (1968), and Zürcher (2002), all of which include a discussion of the continuities between the 19th and early 20th centuries.
the 19th century, and the institutions of the caliphate remained only weakly developed. The lack of emphasis on religious authority reflected at least in part the multi-confessional character of an empire that had numerous Christian subjects, particularly in its strategically and economically important Balkan and Caucasian provinces. Non-Muslims were largely governed by their own communal authorities, which dispensed justice and collected taxes from members of their millet, or nation (Barkey, 2008). Until the 19th century, the Sultan nominally had absolute authority over his subjects, although he frequently delegated the running of the empire to powerful advisers and family members.

The situation in New Spain, as Mexico was known when it formed part of the Spanish colonial empire, was also characterized by the convergence of political and religious authority. The Spanish crown had effectively claimed the patronato real, or the right to appoint bishops and to collect and administer the revenues of the Catholic Church across its territories. In exchange, imperial authorities protected and upheld the religious monopoly of the church over its subjects. Moreover, the church was the largest landowner in the country. Unlike the Ottoman Empire, New Spain had limited religious diversity. Native American traditions were formally banned, although there were many instances of syncretism leading to the emergence of distinctive practices and beliefs under the banner of Catholicism. The Catholic Church also acted like a crucial pillar for the colonial administration, handling marriages, burials, and civil registries, among other crucial tasks. The effective power of the monarchy varied over time, although 18th century the Bourbon monarchy set forth a series of reforms aimed at implementing a more effective absolute imperial authority throughout its domains.
A Time of Troubles (~1800-1840)

The status quo of the old regimes came under increasingly severe pressure during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. For the Ottomans, this was a period of accelerating decline in the face of assertive European powers. A series of wars lost to Russia and Austria-Hungary cost the empire many of its European provinces. The Napoleonic invasion of Egypt (1798-1801) further demonstrated Ottoman weakness, and ultimately allowed Egypt’s ruler Muhammad Ali to secure virtual independence from Ottoman control. In addition, the Ottomans briefly lost control of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina to a rising Saudi state and recovered them only with the aid of Ali’s Egyptian forces. The spread of nationalism among its subject populations in Europe was an equally pressing challenge, as unrest threatened some of the richest and most populous parts of the empire. The struggle for autonomy by Serbs (1804-35) and Greeks (1821-32) threatened to put an end to the empire’s longstanding Balkan presence. Domestically, reformist Sultan Selim III faced stiff resistance from the traditionalist Janissaries and their allies, who successfully deposed him in 1807. He was replaced by his cousin, Mustafa IV, who was in turn overthrown a year later and replaced by the reformist Mahmud II.

The decline of the old order in Mexico was equally dramatic. Napoleon’s invasion of Spain in 1807 provoked a crisis across the Spanish Empire. In New Spain, as elsewhere, this led to largely ad hoc elections to choose members of governing bodies, or cortes, tasked with resisting the French (Colomer, 2004). Yet the struggles in the metropolis made conservatives into revolutionaries who called for the restoration of the
legitimate monarchy while channeling local resentment against the privileges of *peninsulares*, those born in Spain. The Spanish priest Miguel Hidalgo launched the Mexican War of Independence in 1810, but his defeat by Spanish forces the following year and the execution of his successor and fellow Catholic priest José María Morelos in 1815 nearly brought the war to an end. However, when an uprising in Spain forced the recently reinstated Bourbon monarchy to adopt a liberal constitution in 1820, the ambitious General Agustín de Itúrbide went over to the insurgents and rapidly secured Mexico’s independence. The new governing coalition established a conservative constitutional monarchy and guaranteed the privileges of the Catholic Church, but in order to appease their liberal allies it also called for a representative congress and equal rights for Mexican-born whites or *criollos*. However, the Mexican Empire proved a short-lived polity, and never consolidated its institutions. Itúrbide declared himself Emperor and failed to call for a congress, alienating his liberal supporters. An uprising in 1822 brought an end to his regime, and it was replaced by an unstable republic characterized by ongoing struggles between liberals and conservatives.

**Liberal Reforms (~1840-1880)**

After the failed efforts to reaffirm the old order under Mustafa IV and Itúrbide, the 19th century witnessed a series of reforms that fundamentally altered debates about religion and representation in both countries. Sultan Mahmud II initiated what became known as the *Tanzimât*, or reorganization, an attempt to transform the Ottoman Empire while preserving its traditions and the authority of the sultanate (Karpat, 1972; Deringil, 1993). The initial wave of reforms were largely aimed at the military, but also sought to
reduce the autonomy of religious authorities by controlling their finances and incorporating them into the national bureaucracy. The reforms continued under Mahmud’s successor Abdülmecid I. Among its many changes, the Tanzimat brought an end to the millet system by extending universal rights and guarantees instead of religious community-based ones. Royal decrees such as the *Hatt-ı Sharif Gülhane* (1839) and the *Hatt-ı Hümayun* (1856) formalized equality in education and legal rights for all subjects irrespective of faith, opening up administrative posts for minorities and putting an end to the capitulation tax on non-Muslims. The Nationality Law of 1869 went further by establishing a common, secular Ottoman citizenship. Finally, in 1876 the Ottoman Empire obtained its first constitution, which, among other provisions, established an indirectly elected representative body that remained largely under the shadow of the sultan.

In Mexico, the mid-19th century witnessed a period known as *la Reforma*. In contrast to the top-down quality of the Ottoman reorganization, the Mexican reforms were characterized by violent conflict and civil strife. Although Mexico had been ruled as a republic and held elections since 1924, these were managed by local officials and manipulated by dictators like Santa Anna (Di Tella, 1994). The disastrous failures of this dictatorship led to the Ayutla Revolution in 1855 and the liberal Constitution of 1857. Electoral institutions remained weak during the subsequent period, with highly restricted suffrage and the calamitous interruptions of war (Colomer, 2004). Yet throughout this period liberals successfully implemented a number of legal changes that dramatically altered the Mexican political landscape. The new constitution restricted the rights and influence of the clergy and transferred much of its administrative power to the central
state. Moreover, it was buttressed by laws expropriating church lands and limiting the
collection of church taxes. The reforms triggered a conservative response and led to a
civil war, which was eventually won by liberals under Benito Juárez in 1861. However,
the costs of the war forced Mexico to renege on its sovereign debt, leading to an
international crisis culminating in occupation by French forces and the establishment of a
Second Mexican Empire. Yet the withdrawal of French forces doomed the regime, and
liberals swept back to power in 1867.

Conservative Reactions (~1880-1910)

By the late 19th century, the defeat of traditional forces coupled with the ongoing
unrest caused by the reform process led to a new form of conservative reaction. The
regimes led by Abdülhamid II (1876-1908) and Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911) emerged from
liberal foundations, but consolidated their power by reviving their relations with
conservative forces and repressing political dissent. Abdülhamid II rose to power vowing
to uphold the Ottoman Constitution of 1876, a document that called for an indirectly
elected parliament and asserted the equality of Ottoman citizens while preserving the
supremacy of the sultan. Yet within two years he had suspended the constitution, closed
down the parliament and moved towards an emphatically autocratic form of government.
Abdülhamid II used the growing power of the central state to impose severe restrictions
on intellectual freedom and persecute political opponents. He also moved away from the
religious pluralism of the Tanzimât era. The loss of much of the empire’s European
territory in 1878 left it with a substantial Muslim majority for the first time since the 15th
century. In order to strengthen his position, Abdülhamid II increasingly emphasized his
position as Caliph, shifted resources towards the religious establishment and called for pan-Islamic unity (Buzpınar 1996; Deringil 1991). Although these policies gained him some popular support, by the opening years of the 20th century, he faced growing opposition among the emerging domestic intelligentsia and the substantial exile community his persecution had created.

In Mexico, conflicts among members of the liberal camp led to a series of brief civil wars, which culminated with the victory of Porfirio Díaz and his capture of the presidency in 1877. Like many of his predecessors, Díaz retained the formality of elections but manipulated them to ensure his reelection. The Porfiriato, as his decades in power came to be known, was a period of autocratic modernization, with Díaz committed to securing his own power through a combination of repression and rapid economic development (Roeder, 1973). Although clearly influenced by positivist ideology, his government had a highly pragmatic character, co-opting figures from across the political spectrum (Raat, 1973). Thus, despite his liberal background, Díaz developed a constructive relationship with the Catholic Church, which found in his informal support the stability and security that had eluded it since independence. Jesuits and other orders were welcomed back to the country, and the Catholic Church expanded its influence by building schools, clinics, and other institutions. The Papal encyclical Rerum Novarum of 1893 had a direct influence in Mexico, prompting the emergence of new religious associations for students and workers that often pushed for social reforms that did not coincide with the preferences of the government (Super, 2000). Indeed, by the early 20th century, severe repression of political dissent, striking income disparities, and widespread corruption led to mounting popular discontent.
Revolutions (~1910-1920)

The modernizing dictatorships in both countries were brought to an end by constitutionalist uprisings that sought to place constitutional limits on autocratic power. Both soon moved in a more revolutionary direction however, driven in part by stalwart conservative opposition. As early as 1889, domestic opponents to Abdülhamid II had formed an underground opposition called the İttihat ve Terakki Fırkası (İTF – Committee for Union and Progress). Despite continuous persecution, the İTF managed to form links with discontent military officers. In 1908 they staged a military revolt, calling for the restoration of the 1876 Constitution. The Sultan conceded, lifting restrictions on political life and calling for parliamentary elections. Religious members in the new parliament organized the İttihad-ı Muhammedi Fırkası (Committee for Muhammedan Unity), a short lived religious party that supported a counterrevolutionary uprising by theology students and rank-and-file soldiers in 1909. The İTF-led army crushed the revolt, disbanded the religious opposition, and deposed Abdülhamid II, replacing him with the figurehead Sultan Mehmet V. Over the next decade, the İTF sought to consolidate its power, but faced increasingly severe challenges. Two successive Balkan Wars (1912-1913) deprived the Ottoman state of virtually all its European provinces. The First World War (1914-8) proved even more disastrous. Attempts to maintain Arab support by appealing to pan-Islamic sentiments ultimately failed, leading to the loss of the Arab provinces. Indeed, the partition plan forged at the end of the war left the Ottoman state controlling little but the Anatolian heart of the empire, and threatened further encroachment by European powers.
In Mexico, an escalating economic crisis led to growing popular discontent with Díaz, whose repeated reeelections through uncompetitive contests had already alienated a large portion of the political class. Discontent escalated to revolt following the fraudulent elections of 1910, when opposition candidate Francisco I. Madero called on his supporters to seize power. Within a few months revolutionary forces spread across the country, and by 1911 Díaz was forced to resign. The subsequent elections saw Madero elected to the presidency, and legislative election in 1912 witnessed the rapid formation of the first party to engage in assertive religious mobilization, the Partido Católico Nacional (PCN – National Catholic Party). The PCN was built as an oppositional coalition of Díaz supporters and Catholic activists, and was directly linked to prominent individual members of the hierarchy (Rojas, 2001). In 1913, a counterrevolutionary coup led by General Victoriano Huerta succeeded in taking over the government and executing Madero. The Huerta regime found support among members of the PCN and much of the Catholic clergy, earning the latter the lasting enmity of the remaining revolutionary forces. Huerta’s defeat in 1914 led to the suppression of the PCN and deepened the anticlerical currents of the revolution (O’Dogherty Madrazo, 2001). Fighting soon broke out again among revolutionary factions, but by 1917 the new government led by Venustiano Carranza was sufficiently secure to ratify a new constitution. Among its many reforms, the Constitution of 1917 deprived churches of any legal corporate identity, prohibited them from owning lands or properties, and guaranteed a secular public education.

**Rise of Single Party States (~1920-1930)**
The devastation wrought by wars and revolutions paved the way for the emergence of powerful single-party states in both countries. With foreign forces occupying Istanbul and Ottoman authorities ready to concede to their demands, military commanders in Anatolia established a parallel government and mounted a military counteroffensive. The success of this struggle endowed its leader, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, with enormous popularity and enormous authority over the fledgling Turkish state (Mango, 2002). Atatürk’s government consolidated its power by abolishing first the Sultanate (1922) and then the Caliphate (1924), thus setting up a secular republic. It moved the capital of the country from Istanbul to Ankara, highlighting the Anatolian orientation of the new country. In addition, it granted universal suffrage and rested sovereign power in the legislature, known as the Grand National Assembly, but the country was far from a representative democracy. The assembly selected the president, and Atatürk held this position until his death. His control over the legislature was secured by his leadership of the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP – Republican People’s Party), which was the only recognized party competing in elections. His popularity and control over the entire governing apparatus allowed Atatürk to pursue a series of dramatic reforms aimed at achieving Turkey’s rapid modernization.

Mexico’s struggle also continued despite the signing of the 1917 Constitution. Infighting among revolutionary leaders continued until the 1920s, when Álvaro Obregón and Plutarco Elías Calles managed to secure their supremacy by defeating and executing Carranza. Their Sonora faction, known for its fervent anticlericalism, became the dominant force in the emerging revolutionary regime. Elections remained highly controlled affairs, with Obregón secured the presidency in 1920 and passing it over to
Calles in 1924. Obregón won the presidency again in 1928, but was killed by a Catholic activist before he could take office. In the aftermath of the assassination, Calles established the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* (PNR – National Revolutionary Party) as a means of incorporating the various factions and securing the peaceful transfer of political offices. The PNR also served as an informal means to preserve his authority after he left office since, as a legacy of the abuses of Díaz, the constitution prohibited consecutive reelection for any political office. With the aid of the PNR, Calles established what came to be known as the *Maximato*, a period during which he effectively controlled politics despite not being president.

**Secularism and Its Opponents (~1925-35)**

Among the most notable policies pursued by Turkish and Mexican governments was the development and implementation of “assertive secularism” (Kuru, 2007), a process that met with vigorous reaction from religious communities. Atatürk was convinced that modernization could only be achieved by a dramatic overhaul of Turkish society and its reorientation towards the West. Secularism played a key role in this process, becoming one of the pillars of Kemalism, as his ideas came to be known. Under Atatürk, the office of the *shaykh al-Islam* was abolished, along with all religious schools and the Ministry of Religious Endowments. The Sharia was replaced by the Swiss civil code, completing the process begun with the legal reforms of the Tanzimât. Sufi orders were abolished and their monasteries shut down. Religious headgear, such as the fez, was banned. The Qur’an was translated into Turkish, and the call to prayer was now made in Turkish. These reforms had a profound effect on Turkey’s society, and met with various
forms of resistance. Members of the Nakşibendi Sufi order led a series of unsuccessful Kurdish revolts in the southeast, notably as the Sheik Sait Rebellion in 1925 (White, 2000). Smaller, local conflicts pitting religious traditionalists against agents of the state, such as the Menemen Incident in 1930, were used by the government as evidence of the need to continue with the secularization campaign (Lewis, 1952, p. 39). The threat of religious reaction was also used by the government as an excuse to limit electoral opposition. Two regime-initiated attempts to form loyal opposition parties came to a premature end due to their excessive success, and in both cases the charges of religious reaction were used to close down the organizations (Emrence, 2000).

In Mexico, the evolution of assertive secularism took an equally dramatic path. The anticlerical provisions of the 1917 Constitution had remained largely unimplemented while the country was torn by war. Upon Calles’ ascent to the presidency, he and his supporters committed themselves to breaking the power of the Catholic Church (García Ugarte, 1995). Anticlerical governors began expropriating church properties and arresting or expelling recalcitrant priests. In 1925, Calles endorsed the formation of a Mexican Apostolic Catholic Church, which would operate independently from Vatican control. Then in 1926 he passed a law aimed at bringing the anticlerical articles of the constitution into effect. The Calles Law closed down religious schools, expelled foreign priests, limited the number of priests that could operate in a particular territory and demanded that they obtain a license from local authorities. The response among Catholics was dramatic. Bishops suspended mass on the day when the law took effect and Catholic associations such as the Asociación Católica de la Juventud Mexicana (ACJM – Catholic Association of Mexican Youth) mobilized to resist its implementation. Thousands of
peasants took up arms in the conservative Bajío region of central Mexico, marching under the banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The result was a three year civil war known as the *Guerra Cristera* (Bailey, 1974; Meyer, 1973). This concluded only when both sides, weary of the enormous cost of the conflict, agreed to the *arreglos* of 1929, by which the bishops accepted the constitution and the government agreed to limit the implementation of its most anticlerical provisions. The arreglos kept the clergy largely out of politics, even as enduring conflicts over secular education and other policies led to continuing clashes between the government and its lay Catholic opponents.

**Towards Multiparty Elections (~1935-45)**

By the late 1930s, the secular single-party regimes in both countries were experiencing significant challenges. In Mexico, the grip of the *Maximato* was finally broken by President Lázaro Cárdenas, who outmaneuvered Calles and had him arrested and deported in 1936. Cárdenas pursued an ambitious set of policies including a massive agrarian reform and the nationalization of oil companies. In addition, he created workers and peasants unions and affiliated them to the governing party, establishing a far more robust social foundation for the renamed *Partido de la Revolución Mexicana* (PRM – Party of the Mexican Revolution). Cárdenas also continued with efforts at educational reform, proposing a new socialist education system. While his efforts gained him fervent support among many popular sectors, they also provoked intense opposition from landowners and businessmen, who joined recalcitrant Catholics as the main opposition to his government (Guerra Manzo, 2007; Meyer, 2003). The economic crisis that gripped the country during his final years in office led many to consider the 1940 elections a
unique opportunity to redirect the revolution in a more conservative direction. Cárdenas recognized the dangers this coalition posed and adopted a conciliatory tone, supporting the centrist Manuel Ávila Camacho as his successor. His opponents rallied around the candidacy of Juan Andreu Almazán, a revolutionary general who promised to turn back the perceived excesses of the Cárdenas administration. The months leading up to the election were characterized by substantial uncertainty about the extent to which it would be a real competition and pave the way for further multiparty elections.

In Turkey, the pressure for reform came from both domestic and international sources. Although Turkey managed to remain neutral until the final moments of the Second World War (1939-45), the conflict forced the government to adopt highly unpopular restrictions on individual and collective rights and put a severe strain on its economy. Atatürk’s successor, President İsmet İnönü, saw limited liberalization as a way to ease domestic discontent and gain favor with the United States, which was rapidly emerging as a crucial strategic partner (Karpat, 1959). What form this liberalization would take, however, was far from clear. Prior attempts to adopt multiparty competition had come to naught when faced with the challenge of opposing the CHP without threatening the foundations of the Kemalist state. Indeed, the most challenging dimension of the transition to multiparty competition was disentangling the complex state-party knot created by twenty years of single-party rule. Since the beginnings of the Kemalist political project the CHP had become co-joined with the state apparatus. Thus, İnönü was at the same time Permanent Chairman of the party, President of the Republic, and National Leader, while chairmen of provincial party organizations were heads were governors of the provinces and the six principles of Kemalism, as spelled out in the 1934
CHP party congress, were embedded in the 1937 Constitution. As was the case in Mexico in 1939, Turkey in 1946 was caught up by uncertainty regarding the credibility of the electoral process.

**Summary**

This overview of the hundred years preceding the period covered by the case studies provides a striking example of distant countries following parallel historical trajectories. The contemporaneous character of key events in Mexican and Turkish history resulted in comparable legacies of contentious religion-state interaction and deep secular-religious social cleavages. By the 1940s, their secularist establishments were firmly in place, heirs to a reformist legacy stretching through to the early 19th century but most directly shaped by violent struggles during the first half of the 20th. Lay opposition movements had deep roots as well, although they had not yet found a stable organizational form and were recovering from extended periods of conflict and persecution. Clerical authorities, in turn, were severely weakened by persecution and suppression. Despite these historical parallels, changes in electoral institutions and the structure of religious communities would lead to dramatically different patterns of religious mobilization over the next fifty years.

**Conclusion**

This chapter provided the necessary methodological and empirical background for a constructive comparative analysis of Mexico and Turkey. Section II discussed the
theory-oriented goals of the case studies and the specific qualitative methods used to attain them. Section III covered the case selection criteria, examining the similarities and differences between the cases along several dimensions associated with potential alternative explanations. Finally, Section IV examined the historical trajectory leading up to the period covered by the case studies, describing the striking parallels between Mexico and Turkey and introducing key actors and historical trends that remained relevant after the inauguration of multiparty competition. The purpose of this effort has been to provide a well-defined background against which the relationship between electoral institutions, community structures, and religious mobilization strategies can be highlighted.
Religious mobilization in Mexico has taken a variety of forms since the mid-20th century, driven by politicians’ and activists’ responses to ongoing changes in Mexico’s electoral institutions and the structure of its Catholic community. The overall trend has been away from assertive religious mobilization: early efforts at mobilizing religion in the electoral arena combined appeals to identity, doctrinal references, and associational linkages more openly and frequently than their later counterparts. However, this trajectory has not been smooth or uncontested. Party leaders invested in established forms of mobilization recurrently resisted the adoption of new strategies, even in the face of shifting incentives generated by electoral reforms and constraints put forth by an increasingly well-coordinated clerical hierarchy. The ensuing conflicts between leaders and rising cadres often resulted in costly defections, bitter schisms, and collapsing parties.

In the 1940s, the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN – National Action Party) maintained close ties to Catholic associations and drew heavily on Catholic doctrine to shape its programs, while the Partido Fuerza Popular (PFP – Popular Force Party) pursued full-fledged assertive religious mobilization. By the 1970s, the PFP was defunct, and the PAN still sustained religiously-inspired doctrines but had weakened its ties to religious associations. In the 1980s, the Partido Demócrata Mexicano (PDM – Mexican Democratic Party) attempted to revive assertive religious mobilization, while the PAN abandoned religious doctrine and instead depended on its remaining associational ties and
good relations with the Catholic hierarchy to appeal to religious voters. By the 2000s, the PDM had disappeared, while the PAN was increasingly entrenched in its selective style of mobilization.

Why was religious mobilization in Mexico salient during some periods and not in others? The diversity of mobilizing strategies and their dramatic shifts appears to suggest that the role of religion was highly idiosyncratic and contingent upon the personalities and preferences of particular party and movement leaders. Yet a closer examination reveals the systematic influence of changing electoral institutions and religious community structures.

The chapter is divided into six main sections, including this introduction and a brief conclusion. Each of the four empirical sections focuses on a specific historical period. Table 5 describes the overall organization of the chapter, listing the relevant time period, the key political parties operating at the time (with minor parties in brackets), the prevalent community structure and electoral institutions, and the dimensions along which religion was consequently mobilized (with mobilization strategies used exclusively by minor parties in brackets once again). Cut-off points were selected based on major changes in Mexico’s political and religious environment.

The first empirical section stretches from 1939 to 1961, covering the period before the inauguration of the Second Vatican Council and the first move away from the historic single-member plurality electoral system. The next covers the period from 1962 to 1979, ending with a major electoral reform and Pope John Paul II’s visit Mexico. The following section examines the decades from 1979 to 2000, ending with the PAN’s presidential victory. The final empirical section covers the first decade of the 21st century.
It is separated from its predecessor by a dotted line because the continuity of community structures and electoral institutions resulted in only minor adjustments in the dominant patterns of religious mobilization.

### Table 5: Summary of Empirical Sections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>Community Structure</th>
<th>Electoral Institutions</th>
<th>Mobilization Observed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1939 - 1961</td>
<td>[PAN]</td>
<td>Height of Catholic Action; expansion, schism and decline of Sinarquista movement</td>
<td>Single member plurality with no compensation</td>
<td>[Identity] [Association] [Doctrine]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[PFP]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962 - 1978</td>
<td>PAN</td>
<td>Reorganization of Bishop’s Conference; decline of Catholic Action; emergence of progressive associations</td>
<td>SMP with weak compensation; manipulated elections</td>
<td>Association Doctrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979 - 2000</td>
<td>PAN</td>
<td>Consolidation of Bishop’s Conference; decline of progressive associations; expansion of conservative groups</td>
<td>Mixed electoral system with PR component; improvement in electoral monitoring</td>
<td>Identity Association [Doctrine]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[PDM]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 - 2012</td>
<td>PAN</td>
<td>Height of Episcopal influence; continued fragmentation of laity</td>
<td>Mixed electoral system</td>
<td>Identity Association</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Minor parties in brackets. Dimensions of mobilization used exclusively by minor parties are also in brackets.

Each of the four empirical sections begins with a brief outline, followed by a discussion of the structural properties of the Catholic community, and a presentation of the electoral institutions that governed political participation during that period. It then proceeds to analyze how structural and institutional features encouraged or discouraged the particular forms of religious mobilization by the PAN and other religious political parties, while noting how these causal factors interacted with other variables such as
changing economic conditions and evolving patterns of church-state relations. After this analysis, brief conclusions summarize the evidence presented throughout each section.

The chapter’s conclusion provides an overview of the findings from the Mexican case. It highlights the consistent correspondence between the strategies adopted by party leaders and the structures and institutions that constrained them. The section closes by considering broader temporal dynamics, including the different paces of change produced by structural and institutional changes, and how misalignments between them can produce partisan crises with significant consequences for religious mobilization.

**Emergence and Crisis of Assertive Religious Mobilization (1939-1961)**

**Introduction**

The 1940s and 1950s in many ways marked the peak of assertive religious mobilization in Mexican politics. During this time, there were two important political organizations that mobilized religion: the *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN) and the *Unión Nacional Sinarquista* (UNS). The PAN was formed in 1939 as a coalition of liberal and Catholic political entrepreneurs who saw in the crisis of the late Cárdenas presidency an opportunity to re-direct the energies of the revolution in a more conservative direction (Pérez Franco, 1999). The first generation of Panistas, as its members are often called, displayed important differences over the proper role of Catholicism in the party and its efforts to mobilize voters (Mabry, 1973, pp. 29-30). Over its first decade the party increasingly relied on religious mobilization, driven by the growing influence of Catholic
activists. By the early 1950s the party was largely driven by a growing Catholic faction, with its members wielding significant influence throughout the organization.

The UNS emerged as a mass movement with hundreds of thousands of members, staging demonstrations and effectively taking over towns and cities in central Mexico (Aguilar & Zermeño, 1992, p. 23). In contrast to the PAN, the UNS had little doubt about the role of religion in its mobilization strategies, and it appealed openly and directly to highly conservative versions of Catholic identity and social doctrine (Wiechers, 1988). However, the translation of this movement’s energy into the electoral arena proved a difficult and contentious task (Serrano Álvarez, 1992, pp. 299-302). Its main electoral vehicle at that time, the Partido Fuerza Popular (PFP) was never able to gain a substantial portion of the vote, and by the 1950s the movement had been effectively excluded from politics and reduced to a regional player with virtually no national influence.

In order to explain these outcomes one must analyze the structure of Mexico’s Catholic community and the rules that governed electoral competition. Both the temporary dominance of religious factions in the PAN and the failure of the more openly religious PFP resulted from the combination of highly restrictive electoral institutions and well-coordinated lay associations during the 1940s and 50s. The high level of coordination found among the laity and the relative passivity of the clerical hierarchy, both resulting from active confrontation with the state during the 1920s and 30s, encouraged religious activism among Catholics. Lay associations produced activists eager to mobilize Catholic identity and doctrine in the political arena. At the same time, the highly restrictive electoral arena made it impossible for niche parties like the PFP to
gain a foothold in the elections, in part by encouraging religious opposition voters to coordinate around the larger PAN. Nevertheless, the failure to gain significant numbers of seats also limited the attractiveness of the PAN, depriving it of support among pragmatists whose primary goal was obtaining places in the legislature. As a result of this combination of institutional and structural factors, the energies of Catholic activists increasingly operated as a lifeline for the PAN, while the PFP withered.

**Structural Foundations**

By 1939, decades of Catholic activism in Mexico had produced a broad range of confessional associations, varying dramatically in terms of their size, geographic scope, formality, and primary constituencies. Above these stood the clerical hierarchy, which despite the conflicts and crises of the previous three decades retained its formal leadership over the religious community. However, it was severely weakened by decades of conflict with the state and suffered from chronic shortages of personnel. Into the vacuum left by its weakness stepped in lay associations, which can be broadly classified into three main types: the mainstream associations of tied to Catholic Action, the formal associations that remained outside the mainstream framework, and the informal groups that operated in the rural center of the country. Each of these had a distinct profile and broadly different views regarding the appropriate role of religion in Mexican politics. Moreover, they tended to align themselves differently in the political arena. The hierarchy did not officially endorse any political party, but some individual bishops and priests encouraged and supported the conservative opposition. Formal, urban associations also tended to support the PAN while informal, while rural ones supported the UNS and
the PFP. Consequently, gradual changes to their coherence and influence played a central role in shaping religious mobilization.

During the 1940s and 50s, Mexican bishops focused primarily on securing and maintaining a tolerable mutual accommodation with the state, replenishing clerical ranks dramatically depleted by decades of violence, and consolidating their influence over the laity (Loaeza, 1985, p. 161). The first of these goals was achieved through the modus vivendi with the government of President Ávila Camacho, an informal agreement according to which the state would leave the anticlerical provisions of the 1917 Constitution unenforced and the clergy would abstain from political involvement. In this context of cautious adjustment and accommodation, many members of the hierarchy went further and succeeded in developing a functional relationship with sectors of the ruling party (Eckstein, 1975). This situation allowed the Church to recruit new priests and re-activate parishes that had lain dormant for years due to the lack of clergy. More tenuously, it facilitated re-investment in religious education, particularly through the creation of independent religious schools.

While the modus vivendi and the costly conflicts of the post-revolutionary period left the clergy with few options to intervene in politics, the same could not be said for the laity. In the eyes of many lay Catholic activists the modus vivendi was a shameful institution that sustained the illegitimate oppression of Catholicism by a radical secularist clique. Even among those who accepted the importance of rebuilding the resources of the organized Church, many felt that it was incumbent upon lay Catholics to represent its interests during this period of temporary incapacity. As part of its efforts to prevent this discontent from having potentially destabilizing political consequences, the hierarchy
found it necessary to encourage the transformation of the lay associational sphere into a coherent bloc which it could monitor and direct. Its successes and failures in this regard played a central role in structuring the rest of the Catholic community structure.

The first set of lay associations was composed of those groups that the bishops effectively incorporated into the Catholic Action framework. Catholic Action, which was actively promoted by the Vatican under Pope Pius XI (1922-39), sought to incorporate the laity into encompassing mass organizations that would facilitate social and political engagement while assuring its obedience to the clerical hierarchy. Many of the Mexican organizations brought under its umbrella could trace their roots back to the final years of the Porfiriato, and not a few of their members had actively supported the Cristero war of 1926-29 (Meyer, 1973). The devastation cause by that conflict provided the initial impetus for the hierarchy’s efforts to reorganize and consolidate lay associations. As early as 1929, it promoted the coordination of lay associations under Acción Católica Mexicana (ACM), the local branch of Catholic Action. Among those groups that were successfully integrated was the Asociación Católica de la Juventud Mexicana (ACJM), a youth organization dating back to 1912 that had trained many leading activists and played a prominent role in providing support for the Cristeros (Espinosa, 2003). In addition, numerous women’s and workers’ groups that had been formed under in the corporatist spirit of Leo XIII’s Rerum Novarum (1893) found themselves under increasingly explicit clerical direction, which often entailed substantial ideological shifts and internal reorganization.

The process of incorporation was gradual, but by 1939 only a few formal, urban organizations remained outside this centralized framework. Among the most influential
of these was the *Unión Nacional de Estudiantes Católicos* (UNEC), founded in 1931, which organized university students and was more progressive and less hostile to the principles of the revolution (Calderón Vega, 1962; Mabry, 1973, pp. 23-24). Under the sponsorship and protection of influential Jesuit priests, it retained a degree of autonomy that granted it greater doctrinal flexibility than many of its counterparts. This allowed it to play a more salient role in the establishment of the PAN in 1939, when the religious character of the party was still contested. The UNEC was consistently under pressure to integrate into the encompassing ACM framework, and was brought under its umbrella in 1949. Many of PAN’s founders came from the UNEC (Pérez Franco, 1999), and over the 1940s and 1950s the party recruited heavily from the ACM and its affiliates, which enjoyed a substantial presence across much of the country.

Informal and rural organizations proved more difficult to incorporate, particularly those operating in the heartland of the Cristero insurgency, the Bajío region that included the populous states of Jalisco, Guanajuato, Michoacán and Querétaro. Many of these groups engaged in guerrilla operations against the government throughout the 1930s, and maintained a secretive cell structure that made them resistant to formal incorporation. Once again Jesuits forged links where the hierarchy could not, and their efforts to reorganize these quasi-insurgent groups and re-direct them towards civic-social activism made some progress towards the middle of the 1930s. However, they remained only indirectly linked to the hierarchy. Their openly anti-regime profile and ties to armed groups made explicit incorporation under the Catholic Action brand, or even the establishment of open ties to the Church hierarchy, impossible. It was these groups that provided the foundations for the UNS, which was formed in 1937 as a way of facilitating
coordination, creating a unified lay leadership, and giving the Church hierarchy a measure of control over their activities. The UNS thus stood out as a significant outlier in terms of the broader schema of religious organization in Mexico, and one that became increasingly troublesome for the hierarchy as it expanded exponentially and became more outspoken about political engagement. The PFP drew the overwhelming majority of its voters from the politically engaged factions of this movement. Yet the electoral consequences of these structural features were directly affected by the institutional constraints imposed by electoral rules.

**Institutional Constraints**

Mexico’s political institutions posed a number of serious challenges to religious participation in the electoral arena. For example, until 1945 the responsibility for running and supervising elections was solely in the hands of municipal authorities (Castellanos Hernández, 1996, pp. 121-124), with little or no supervision of their activities. This created enormous opportunities for fraud at all stages of the electoral process. Specifically, since governing party candidates often forged alliances with local officials, they enjoyed a very substantial advantage throughout the election.

The advantages of establishment candidates were enhanced by the coherence of the ruling party. President Calles’ efforts to consolidate the revolutionary cadres into a single dominant party, founded in 1928 as the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* (PNR – National Revolutionary Party), combined with President Cárdenas transformation of the organization into a mass corporatist one that included branches for peasants and workers, had made the ruling party into an extraordinarily effective electoral machine. Renamed
by Cárdenas the *Partido de la Revolución Mexicana* (PRM – Party of the Mexican Revolution), it proved able to hold together a broad ruling coalition and mobilize voters with great effectiveness across the entire national territory. The no-reelection rule facilitated the rotation of party cadres and inhibited the formation of locally-entrenched power holders, dramatically reducing the likelihood of significant within-party splits.

These barriers to successful participation were made more severe by the electoral institutions that governed competition. The electoral system consisted of single-member plurality (SMP) elections, favored by dominant parties for the difficulties it poses for resource-poor oppositions (Posusney, 2002). In Mexico during the 1940s, the consequences were doubly severe, since in order to win seats, oppositions had to defeat the candidates of a powerful and organized ruling party, in districts where the latter maintained strong ties to non-independent electoral monitors. For new, under-funded parties like the PAN, the system forced them to engage in asymmetrical competition with powerful local candidates, which it could only hope to contest, let alone win, in a very select number of districts in which its supporters were clearly clustered.

A small, first step towards greater electoral competitiveness took place in 1945, when an electoral reform law appeared to breathe new life into the opposition. In a bid to gain some control over local politics and prevent the more transparent forms of electoral fraud that tarnished its image in 1943 (Garrido, 1982, p. 339), the PRM-dominated legislature modified elections in two crucial ways. First, it placed responsibility for elections in the hands of the federal government, depriving municipal authorities of their control over the process. Second, it formalized the requirements for party registration, eliminating local organizations and demanding that parties establish a substantial
nationwide presence in order to participate in elections. Specifically, it required that parties possess at least 30,000 members distributed across two thirds of Mexican states in order to register (Castellanos Hernández, 1996, pp. 132-142).

These changes did not go as far as those the PAN and other opposition groups had been advocating, which included the establishment of an autonomous electoral oversight body and the move to proportional representation (Loaeza 1999: 213). Nevertheless, they momentarily strengthened the PAN, which as the second electoral force in the country became a natural focal point for opposition consolidation and saw the new federal oversight as an improvement over the absolute discretion of local authorities. Even the UNS initially benefited from the change, which allowed its pro-participation faction to initiate proceedings to organize a political party, the *Partido Fuerza Popular* (PFP – Popular Force Party). However, these reforms ultimately failed to provide a sustainable basis for electoral competition. The PAN soon saw its expectations of increased prominence corrected by the enduring advantages of the governing party, since 1946 renamed the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI – Institutional Revolutionary Party); the PFP faced an even more disappointing debacle and lost its registration in 1948. The specific effects of electoral rules, like those of religious community structures, were mediated by the strategies adopted by party leaders and the subsequent debates these generated within their organizations.

**Patterns of Religious Mobilization**

The combination of a divided associational environment and restrictive political institutions had a direct impact on patterns of religious mobilization by the PAN and the
PFP. The PAN was empowered by the nation-wide network of formal Catholic associations, on which it came to depend for support once it became clear that, despite its position as Mexico’s second largest party, political institutions would keep seats scarce. As this reliance grew, the PAN deepened its informal ties to Catholic Action, maintained a doctrine that emphasized its Catholic roots, and gradually moved towards more explicit appeals to Catholic identity. The PFP in turn was weighed down by its dependence on the UNS, a movement with limited appeal beyond its regional base and a poor relationship with the Catholic hierarchy. Given these impediments to the development of broader support among either mainstream voters or other Catholic activists, the PFP leadership was forced to constantly re-mobilize its core constituency by emphasizing its Catholic identity and adherence to reactionary versions of Catholic social doctrine, adopting a strident tone that made it virtually impossible to capture elected offices in a restrictive institutional environment.

The trajectory of the PAN from 1939 to 1961 was characterized by the growing influence of Catholic activists at the expense of liberals and pragmatists. The PAN began as a broad coalition of all three of these groups, united in their opposition to President Cárdenas, The founder of the PAN, Manuel Gómez Morín, had an extensive personal network linking him to many of the regime’s most significant opponents (Calderón Vega, 1967). The founding coalition included Catholic students and activists who had fought with him against the project of socialist education, middle- and upper-class professionals who resented the president’s moves towards socialism, and politicians of various stripes who had been marginalized by the administration (Pérez Franco, 1999).
The leading voice among this first generation of religious Panistas was Efraín González Luna. He provided Gómez Morin with a powerful political ideology, which complemented the latter’s commitment to producing an intellectually rooted, coherent alternative to Cárdenas and his socialist project (Loaeza, 1996, pp. 430-2). For the first years of the party’s existence, González Luna and his supporters viewed electoral participation with suspicion, advocating instead an extra-electoral focus on capacity-building and raising public awareness (González Luna, 1999; Calderón Vega, 1967, pp. 33, 101). They feared that electoral participation would weaken the party’s ideological commitment and dilute its organic ties to like-minded religious associations (Mabry, 1973, pp. 37-41).

The 1946 party program was the first fully-developed electoral manifesto put forth by the PAN. Its platform represents a balancing act among the various groups in the party. It argues for the need to reform church-state relations and enhance religious freedom, but these positions are presented obliquely and embedded in broader arguments about essential liberties. “Institutions of faith” are included together with the family, labor and cultural organizations as a type of fundamental association meant to enable the “fulfillment of [Mexican man’s] material and spiritual destiny”, but unable to do so due to existing regulations (Partido Acción Naclional ,1990, p. 19).

By the late 1940s, Catholic fears regarding electoral engagement had largely abated due to the deepening links between the PAN and religious associations and the effect of restrictive political institutions. Concretely, repeated participation in elections had demonstrated that the PAN was the second largest party in Mexico, but the failure to capture more than a handful of legislative seats eased concerns about cooptation
Most pragmatic seat-seekers and many liberals left the organization, allowing Catholic activists to move rapidly up the ranks (Loaeza, 1999, p. 225). Reflecting their increasingly secure position within the party, Catholic activists like González Luna shifted their position to favor electoral participation, framing participation as a moral duty rather than as a means of gaining political power (Mabry, 1973, p. 43).

The leadership of the party changed to reflect the new influence of religion within the PAN. Gómez Morin stepped aside in 1949, and the next three presidents of the party reflected the growing influence of religious activists in the party. Gutiérrez Lascuráin (1949-56) had been a leader in the ACJM, Ituarte Servín (1956-8) was a prominent member of Mexican Catholic Action and the president of the Unión de Católicos Mexicanos (UCM), and González Torres (1958-61) had been national president of the ACJM, general secretary of the Unión Nacional de Padres de Familia (UNPF), president of the professionals branch of Catholic Action, and president of Pax Romana, the international Catholic university.

During this time there was also a surge in religious rhetoric and an ambition on the part of many new members to redirect the party towards a more openly religious identification. Christian Democracy became the banner of choice for this group, which maintained strong links to Venezuela’s COPEI as well as Christian Democratic organizations in Germany (Fuentes Díaz, 1972, pp. 44-49). They forcefully demanded the explicit and public acknowledgement of links to Catholic identity and doctrine (La Nación, 1958). In their eyes, the future of the party lay in political mobilization through direct religious appeals, partnerships with domestic and foreign associations guided by
similar principles, and forcefully articulated and religiously-grounded critiques of the establishment.

The party platform was modified to highlight the growing importance of religion. References to the need for constitutional reform and religious freedom became lengthier and more explicit. Most striking, however, are changes in the tone of the party’s discourse: the program describes the status quo as a cause for “mutilations and persecutions” that give freedom of worship a “monstrous and delinquent character”. Similarly, in rejecting any notion of favoritism for one church or another, it references conflicts that have “bloodied and continue to darken our lives” and contribute to the “tearing apart of Nation and State” (Partido Acción Nactional, 1990, pp. 19-20). These powerful phrases marked the most explicit attempt by the PAN to craft an explicit Catholic identity.

However, the attempted confessional turn of the PAN was actively resisted by many of its most prominent members. Key party leaders blamed poor electoral performance on the party’s growing emphasis on Catholic identity and doctrine, and by 1961 the PAN was approaching electoral competition with much less enthusiasm (Gómez Morin, 1961; Loyola Pérez, 2000, pp. 279-284). González Torres remained a staunch defender of religious mobilization and committed participation, citing the sacred duties of the organization (Vives Segl, 2000, p. 262), but the party had serious difficulties finding the candidates and resources necessary to compete. Problems deepened after the PAN attempted to force its representatives to surrender their seats to protest electoral fraud, an effort that led to the expulsion of four recalcitrant party members (Romero Silva, 1993, pp. 228-233). Furthermore, increasingly prominent cases of official intimidation had
substantially raised the costs of participation (Mabry, 1973, p. 64). In 1961, the party was only able to run candidates for 53% of districts, a substantial decline from the 86% that had been covered in 1958. The disappointing results of this limited effort were evident, and the party was recognized only 8% of the vote and 5 delegates to the national legislature, representing the first decline in the PAN’s vote share since 1946, and its first ever decline in seats.

The PAN was not the only organization seeking to mobilize religion during this period. The UNS entered the electoral arena in 1945 by registering its first electoral vehicle, the PFP. Its members had come under increasing pressure from the Church hierarchy, which took exception to its intemperate manifestations, penchant for incendiary rhetoric, and insistence on attacking the friendly government of Ávila Camacho. This drove a deep wedge between many UNS cadres and many Catholic bishops.

In the early 1940s, disagreements over the appropriate stance to take vis-à-vis the Church and the governing party provoked a series of crises within the UNS, ultimately leading the formation of the PFP. The bishops did not hesitate to use their influence to push the organization away from explicitly political causes, and a significant number of sinarquistas heeded its warnings (Meyer, 2003). However, an important faction opted to break its links with religious associations dominated by the hierarchy and promote an explicitly political project. This strategy was made possible by the relative isolation of the UNS from the Catholic hierarchy and by the appearance of electoral opportunity created by the 1945 reform. The followers of Manuel Torres Bueno leveraged their remaining strength to register the PFP as their political vehicle, despite the strident objections of
other factions of the UNS (Wiechers, 1988). The resulting break was acrimonious and revealed the factious and personalistic character of the UNS leadership. By 1946, when the break was completed, the politically-oriented part of the movement was significantly reduced in size and influence, and even more isolated from other Catholic groups and organizations elsewhere in the country.

The PFP, with its restricted geographic scope and contested support base, fared worse than the PAN once it became clear that political institutions would not allow substantive electoral gains. Competing with both the hegemonic PRI and an increasingly religious PAN, it obtained a minuscule percentage of the nationwide vote and a single representative. The demise of the PFP unfolded rapidly after that. Its strength was highly concentrated in the Bajío region, where it made some inroads at the municipal level. Yet, in an effort to regain national relevance, the PFP recruited aggressively, organized large marches in its zones of influence, and staged protests and demonstrations against presumed electoral fraud in Mexico City. At one of these events, activists read harsh speeches against the revolutionary regime and placed a hood over the head of a statue of Benito Juárez. This demonstration caused the government to accuse the PFP of sedition, revoke its registration as a political party, and launch a campaign against the UNS. Despite staging manifestations against these policies in the Bajío, the UNS failed to prevent the rapid decline of the movement (Serrano Álvarez, 1992, pp. 271-3). The PFP was unable to regain its registration, and the UNS was left without a political party.

Conclusion
The period from 1939 to 1961 marked the high tide of assertive religious mobilization in Mexico. The PAN and the PFP offered contrasting versions of a Catholic political project, with the former drawing on Catholic Action and its affiliates while the latter attempted to mobilize supporters of the UNS among the peasantry of the Bajío. By any standards both the PAN and the PFP were minor parties, securing only small fractions of the vote and minimal numbers of legislators. Yet while the PFP was clearly a niche party, the PAN had been organized as a proto-mainstream organization, albeit one still torn by its profound and growing reliance on religious activists.

Both of these organizations depended on the existence of substantial Catholic associations with relative autonomy vis-à-vis the Catholic hierarchy. Although individual bishops provided occasional support for these parties, the Catholic hierarchy as a whole generally objected to their attempts to mobilize religion in a systematic and explicit manner. Yet while the PAN drew on a nationwide network and avoided direct confrontations with the hierarchy, the PFP depended on a single association with a troubled relationship to the broader Catholic Church. These differences in their bases of religious associational support proved fateful for their development, particularly in light of the limited electoral opportunities created by Mexican political institutions.

The single-member district system forced opposition candidates to compete against a hegemonic party whose candidates drew heavily upon the resources of the state. In a tilted playing field, this virtually ensured that neither the PAN nor the PFP would secure a sufficient number of seats to be attractive to pragmatic candidates. However, while the PAN developed a nationwide presence and a close relationship to Catholic Action, which provided a consistent base of support and helped it endure the long
electoral drought, the PFP depended on its core of UNS members, whose confrontational tactics constantly complicated the party’s efforts to expand its appeal or challenge its eventual exclusion.

The Perils of Transformation (1962-1978)

Introduction

The 1960s and 70s were a period of crisis and contestation, with advocates of contrasting approaches to religious mobilization competing for influence in a rapidly changing social and political environment. For the PAN, the period was one of reform, debate, and conflict. The internal divisions between the liberal and religious wings of the party, which had been building up during the previous decades, came to the fore in 1962-3. This conflict marked a watershed, as recruitment patterns shifted away from reliance on religious associations and appeals to Catholic identity were abandoned or re-embedded in the discourse of human rights. Yet the next decade witnessed the reemergence of a sharp distinction between a doctrine-oriented abstentionism and a more pragmatic participationism. Catholic activists increasingly saw elections as compromising the party’s doctrinal coherence and broader mission, an attitude that gradually isolated them from a party base that remained oriented towards elections. By 1976, these divisions threatened to dismember the PAN.

The same period represented a long nadir for the UNS. The group was reduced to a regional movement whose commitment to socio-political transformation was increasingly under fire by the very religious community it claimed to represent. In this
context, the movement increasingly found itself without the means to organize local labor unions and peasant cooperatives, let alone a national party (Argudín 1992). Although the symbols and legacy of Sinarquismo remained relevant in the Bajío, their electoral manifestations were virtually without consequence. Although a change in leadership within the movement led to an attempt to enter the political arena once again in the 1970s, the inhospitable electoral environment and the lack of an adequate associational base presented insurmountable obstacles.

The timing of these crises reflected ongoing changes in the structural and institutional conditions in Mexico: the dramatic transformation of the Catholic community brought about by the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) and the reform of electoral institutions in 1963. By formally accepting and incorporating principles like human rights and the separation of church and state, Vatican II paved the way for the unequivocal endorsement of democratic politics, although these opportunities were not always seized upon. It also brought about the end of the encompassing system of lay organizations built around Catholic Action. This was gradually replaced by a variety of organizations with myriad voices, ranging from revolutionary socialism to pro-market liberalism, all claiming to draw on Catholic ideas and doctrines for inspiration. At the same time, it encouraged bishops to strengthen their coordinating institutions, particularly the Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano (CEM – Mexican Episcopal Conference). Thus, just as lay Catholic Action was diminishing in its capacity and salience, the clerical CEM was emerging as the effective core of organized Catholic life in Mexico.

The electoral reform installed a weak compensatory mechanism that softened the disproportionality of the single-member plurality system. By this means, the governing
party aimed to provide the opposition a modicum of voice while guaranteeing the continuing acquiescence of the legislature. The reform had only a limited impact on the UNS, which was too distant from the legislature to effectively benefit from these small concessions. In contrast, it brought about an immediate adjustment by the PAN, and contributed to undermining the shaky liberal-Catholic and pragmatic-doctrinaire coalitions that sustained the party.

**Vatican II and Structural Change**

The Second Vatican Council had a dramatic impact on religious mobilization in Mexico, as it did across the Catholic world. By abandoning the organicist notions of state-society relations that had been prominent in its earlier social thought, encyclicals like *Pacem in Terris* (1963) diminished the sense of inherent illegitimacy that many devout Catholic activists associated with secular post-revolutionary governments. By emphasizing the need to combat economic inequality and social injustice, documents like *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) opened the door to cooperation with a broad range of groups in society. Vatican II and the subsequent Latin American Bishops Conference in Medellín (1968) also opened the way for religious activists to make claims regarding redistributionist and interventionist policies traditionally associated with secularist and leftist movements. This is not to say that the ideas of Vatican II favored reconciliation between Catholic thinkers and Mexican political practice. In most cases the new thinking reinforced longstanding polemics of the PAN against government policy, perhaps most notably in the areas of political rights, religious freedoms and education. Thus, *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965) advocated a notion of religious freedom that clashed directly with the
assertive secularism embodied in Mexican laws, a point that was widely understood among the Mexican laity and clergy (Blancarte, 1992, pp. 227-229). What it did do was initially empower those who sought to articulate original political arguments that drew on Catholic doctrine.

Equally important, but less often appreciated, was Vatican II’s impact on the structure of the Catholic communities in Mexico and elsewhere. The foundations for this transformation lay in documents like Gaudium et Spes, which emphasized the legitimacy and importance of activism grounded in the individual moral conscience of members of the laity. This subtly undermined the form and mission of Catholic Action and its affiliated associations, which had been based on the principles of hierarchy and corporatist organization (Himes, 2006, pp. 21). Over the course of the next decades, the lay associational sphere in Mexico would be dramatically transformed.

Before Vatican II, the well-coordinated system centered on Mexican Catholic Action had been produced and sustained in large part by the support given to it by the hierarchy, which insisted that it constituted the sole legitimate means for lay participation in civil society. With the withdrawal of this support, it was gradually replaced by a much less coordinated universe of Catholic organizations, ranging from businessmen’s unions to ecclesial base communities or CEBs, only weakly linked to one another and often upholding very different understandings of the implications (if any) of Catholicism for politics (Norget, 1997). Initially, this process appeared to strengthen the lay associational sphere, giving progressive groups like the Secretariado Social Mexicano (SSC – Mexican Social Secretariat) and the Centro Nacional de Comunicación Social (Cencos – National
Center for Social Communication) a far more prominent role and voice in religious affairs (Blancarte, 1992, pp. 212-215).

Ultimately these developments caused friction between progressive and conservative communities, and further accelerated the fractionalization of the lay Catholic community. The ACM withered, experiencing a sharp decline in membership and the rapid erosion of its once-hegemonic position. This meant that where a narrow lay leadership had once been able to shape the agenda for Catholic political involvement, there now emerged an increasingly pluralistic environment in which Catholic voices could be heard advocating policies along the entire political spectrum. The transformation of Christian Democracy is a case in point. During the previous decade, it had been a banner for the traditionalist right, but now it gradually became associated with the ideas of its reformist and moderate left. Groups such as the Instituto Mexicano de Doctrina Social Cristiana (IMDOSOC) emerged as influential centers for progressive Catholic thought, advocating the values of solidarity and political pluralism.

In the midst of this diversification of lay Catholic voices, the Mexican Episcopal Conference (CEM) underwent its own quiet transformation. In particular, it encouraged bishops to re-engage with diverse groups within the lay community and to increasingly discuss and coordinate their efforts at the national and international level. Clerical recruitment accelerated, for the first time returning to the absolute levels of the late colonial period (Pomerlau, 1981, pp. 546). During this time, new branches were added that aimed to engage with the needs of groups like students and indigenous communities, and the permanent secretariat began formulating clear stances on pertinent public issues. The increasing organizational capacity of Mexican bishops did not put an end to the
diversity of their positions (Blancarte, 1992; Godínez Valencia, 2011), but rather created spaces where diversity could be managed and assimilated, and ultimately transformed into consistent policy statements.

The bishop’s formal status as heads of the Catholic community was thus made more effective by internal reforms that the church in general and the ecclesiastical hierarchy in particular had undergone since the Second Vatican Council. The *Christus Dominus* decree (1965) had already called for the reorganization of bishops to facilitate collective action, emphasizing the need to strengthen national Episcopal Conferences. In response, the Mexican Episcopal Conference (CEM) spent much of the 1970s putting its house in order (Blancarte, 1992, pp. 333). This entailed both the expansion of its members’ capacity for collective action, for example through the rationalization of its organizations and the reorganization of its territorial distribution (Loaeza, 1999, pp. 352-4), and the pruning of internal dissenters. This included groups on the right and left of the spectrum, that is, those who rejected the reformist trends and those who took them further than the hierarchy was willing to tolerate. Exemplifying the reaction to the latter was the bishops’ attitude towards the Mexican Social Secretariat. In 1969 the CEM revoked its role as official spokesman for the hierarchy. Over the next decade, the CEM pursued a strategy of sanctions and incentives designed to weaken the organization while encouraging it to adopt more moderate positions (Blancarte, 1992, pp. 290-293, 350-353; Tangerman, 1995). Their enhanced capacity allowed bishops to be more effective at determining the legitimacy of specific manifestations of Catholic religious discourse in the public sphere.
As bishops became increasingly capable of well-coordinated collective action, they strongly resisted calls for political engagement that might drag them into a disadvantageous conflict with state (Loaeza, 1985). Indeed, during this period bishops developed increasingly cooperative ties with the state, not least due to the greater flexibility afforded to them by the Vatican II framework (Turner, 1967, p. 602; Blancarte, 1992, p. 8). Thus, the 1960s and 70s became a period of internal reform and capacity-building, during which the CEM shunned explicitly political arguments and devoted its resources to consolidating its position at the center of the increasingly diversified set of Mexican Catholic networks. These structural changes were not the only challenges to established patterns of religious mobilization, however, as the development of religious mobilization was also shaped by institutional reforms.

**The Discreet Power of Electoral Reforms**

The dramatic changes in the religious community coincided with apparently minor but actually quite significant changes in electoral rules. The PAN had long called for electoral reform, but until the 1960s there were only cosmetic modifications to the 1946 law (Castellanos Hernández, 1996, pp. 142-152). Under pressure to improve the quality of its representative institutions, the Mexican government opted to expand opportunities for opposition participation. In 1961 the regime signaled its willingness to compromise with the PAN regarding the establishment of new electoral procedures. Adolfo Christlieb, a protégée of Gómez Morin and a prominent figure in the pragmatic wing of the party, was selected to join the official committee discussing the reforms. The result, passed into law in 1963, established a two-tier system for electing candidates.
While districts would still elect representatives following the SMP method, parties that obtained at least 2.5% of the vote nationwide would be entitled to 5 “party deputies,” with an additional deputy for each .5% scored above this threshold, up to a maximum of 20; those selected would be the top losers in the SMP contests (Martínez Valle, 2000, p. 64). In exchange, the law prohibited seat-winning parties from boycotting the legislature, with the penalty being deregistration (Wuhs, 2008, p. 151).

The new law electoral was never applied as written, however, because the state opted to reinterpret its norms and extend representation to registered parties that had not crossed the 2.5% barrier. The Partido Popular Socialista (PPS) and the Partido Auténtico de la Revolución Mexicana (PARM), two puppet parties that endorsed the PRI’s presidential candidates, were granted representatives despite falling significantly below the threshold. This elicited protests from the PAN, which insisted on the strict application of the law. The maximum number of seats allowed through the compensation system was 20, so the new version of the rules in fact posed a serious challenge for largest opposition party, which was relatively disadvantaged compared to both the hegemonic PRI and its semi-autonomous supporters. For example, in 1967 the PRI obtained 83.8% of the votes and 82.8% of the seats, while the PAN secured 12.4% of votes but only 9.5% of seats. In contrast, the PPS obtained 2.2% of votes and 4.8% of seats, and the PARM 1.4% and 2.9%. The only party significantly disadvantaged by the new system was the PAN, and the mirage of multipartyism gave the system a gloss of legitimacy that undermined the opposition’s efforts to bring about fundamental reform.

Yet the disadvantageous disproportionality and the danger of legitimizing the regime were not the only concerns for the PAN. The incorporation of minor parties into
the legislature despite their inability to cross the 2.5% barrier, which the PRI argued was in keeping with its spirit of enhancing proportionality, was perhaps most troubling because it signaled the extent to which electoral results were still driven by the preferences of the ruling party, rather than by the application of publicly known rules. An even more unequivocal signal of this underlying feature of electoral was the sudden decline in SMP victories for the PAN following the modification of the electoral law. Even under the dismal conditions of the 1961 election, the party had been recognized as the absolute winner in five districts. Despite the superior effort put forth in 1964, the party secured SMP victories in only two districts. In 1967, this number would drop to one, and in 1970, to zero. The dominant party had found a way to avoid having to sacrifice any of its own candidates and still maintain opposition participation in the legislature. The way in which party leaders adapted their style of religious mobilization in the face of these changes, like their responses to religious reforms associated with Vatican II, gave rise to significant intra-party contestation.

**Religious Mobilization in Turbulent Times**

The structural and institutional changes of the early 1960s had notably different effects on the PAN and the UNS. For the PAN, the electoral reform initially favored a moderate shift towards electoralist strategies at the expense of religious mobilization. Yet over the next two decades, the rise of new religious associations and evolving patterns of religious authority, together with the continued difficulties posed by the electoral system, revived debates over the proper role of religious mobilization, particularly through doctrine, in the party. In doing so, it pitted a new progressive religious wing against a
rising coalition of liberal pragmatists and economic conservatives. For the UNS, in contrast, the period was characterized by electoral impotence, deepened by its continuing difficulties with the electoral laws and an increasingly hostile Catholic associational environment.

The UNS wrestled with contradictory incentives, moving back and forth between attempts to engage in electoral politics and isolationism. The growing influence of progressive Catholicism did little to reinforce the appeal of the traditional, nationalist and reactionary UNS. In response it attempted to increase its influence by sponsoring labor unions and peasant cooperatives, but these efforts generally met with failure, even in the Bajío region (Luna Argudín, 1992). In 1963 the group reacted to electoral reforms by attempting to form an alliance with a conservative-nationalist proto-party known as the Partido Nacionalista Mexicano. However, as with many of the initiatives launched by the UNS during this period, the effort came to naught as the government revoked the party’s registration and declared that it lacked the necessary requirements for electoral participation, even after it had captured three seats in the legislature (Mabry, 1974, p. 222).

The most interesting detail in this otherwise fruitless episode has to do with the role of formal electoral reform in prompting strategic adjustment by intransient political groups. The quasi-autarchic UNS of the 1960s appears as a least-likely case for responsiveness to formal electoral reform, but nevertheless clearly reacted to modest adjustments in the formal institutional context (Rodríguez Lapuente, 1989). A leadership change in 1970 led to further attempts to engage in the electoral arena, but these remained frustrated by the movement’s inability to meet party registration thresholds.
For the PAN, 1962 marked the eruption of the long-building reaction against religious influence and the difficulties it had generated for the party. Adolfo Christlieb Ibarrola headed these efforts (Loaeza, 1999, pp. 263-277; Martínez Valle, 2000, pp. 61-65). A UNEC member in his youth, he represented a sector of the party that, without questioning the importance of religion, rejected assertive religious mobilization (Lujambio, 1994). He publicly challenged the notion that a Mexican party could unfurl an explicitly religious banner without becoming openly entangled with the Catholic Church, to the detriment of both (Christlieb, 2001, pp. 57-58). He proposed a clear separation of labor, in which the PAN proposed a platform indirectly informed by Catholicism, but did so without formulating open appeals to Catholic identity or flaunting its partnerships with religious associations (Calderón Vega, 1965).

At this crucial juncture, individual members of the Catholic hierarchy seized on the opportunity provided by Christlieb to reaffirm the distinction between political and religious arenas and thus both reassert its claims to the non-political character of Catholicism and reclaim its hegemony over explicitly religious action. In a newspaper interview a few months after the convention, Bishop Méndez Arceo declared:

Frankly, I dislike the concept of Christian Democracy. The social doctrine, the strictly social, corresponds to civil society… For that reason, may I add, I find that the position of Christlieb Ibarrola hits the mark, in that it has straightforwardly articulated the non-interference of the Church in his party, in all parties. (Cited in Fuentes Díaz, 1972, p. 62)

The bishop’s public aversion to assertive religious mobilization was grounded in the above-mentioned pattern of accommodation between church and state emerging in Mexico during that time (Turner, 1967; Blancarte, 1992, p. 8). The ability of liberals to redirect the PAN away from assertive religious mobilization was thus enhanced by the
support of religious authorities. Many prominent Catholic activists in the party, faced with stinging rebukes from the very groups they aimed to defend, became increasingly marginalized, and in 1963 they presented their collective resignation.

The electoral reform thus initially contributed to re-consolidating the party, but by 1968 concerns regarding manipulated elections and fraud became increasingly severe. That year, elections for municipal and state legislative elections in Baja California were widely condemned as fraudulent, with the governing party denying the PAN a range of hard-fought electoral victories (Mabry, 1974, p. 229). Christlieb’s protests and demands for an investigation were abruptly rebuffed (González Hinojosa, 1991, p. 11), demonstrating that the government had no intention of allowing the system to become anything but a mechanism through which it could control electoral outcomes and pick and choose its opposition.

These developments had a direct consequence on the attractiveness of PAN to religious activists. Participating in elections, once a badge of moral courage (Calderón Vega, 1978, p. 98), now acquired a dubious tone. For religious activists eager to challenge the legitimacy of the regime, this was no longer a particularly tempting proposition, and the recruitment of new religious activists to the PAN diminished sharply (Pérez Franco, 2007). In contrast, for those who, without being willing or able to join the PRI, privileged gaining access to government office, the PAN once again became a feasible alternative. The ensuing changes in patterns of recruitment would dramatically alter the balance of power between Catholic-doctrinaire and liberal-pragmatic party members in the long run.
Members who had joined the PAN during the period from 1947 to 1962, the period of greatest confessional influence, held much of the leadership. Yet new party members were increasingly drawn from the ranks of business entrepreneurs and other economic conservatives with few ties to religious associations (Arriola, 1977; Greene, 2007). The stage was thus set for confrontations between pragmatists who wanted to ensure that their resources were used to achieve the greatest electoral effect and Catholic ideologues for which electoral participation was but part of a broader project aimed at promoting doctrine and transforming Mexican society.

The contested status of religious doctrine during this period is visible in the statements put forth by the PAN. The platform for the period 1970-1976, maintained its predecessor’s explicit critique of the extra-legal arrangements that characterized church-state relations, but abandoned much of the hyperbolic language of the prior era. It shifted emphasis to underscore that the PAN sought freedom of conscience for both believers and non-believers, and did not seek any type of privileges for specific creeds. However, in deference to the firm doctrinal commitments of its members, its critical posture remained front and center, with the party condemning the “simulation and hypocrisy that greatly weaken the moral energy of a free society” and the “shameful extralegal tolerance” to which religious bodies were subjected (Partido Acción Nacional, 1990).

Differences regarding mobilization strategies reinvigorated the old debate between liberal participationists and religious abstentionists. Until the early 1970s, their leaders were able to collaborate in order to avoid crises. For example, in 1970 the party came close to boycotting the election when participationists secured only 51% of convention members’ votes. Indeed, their endorsement was only obtained thanks to the
selection of Efraín González Morfín, leader of the religious-doctrinal faction, as the party’s presidential candidate. From this position, religious activists could use a vigorous election campaign as a platform from which to promote their doctrinal positions. In exchange for this opportunity, González Morfín supported José Ángel Conchello, leader of the pragmatist-liberal faction, in his successful bid for the party presidency in 1972 (Martínez Valle, 2000, p. 77).

But tactical accommodation did little to ease discontent with an electoral system prone to manipulation by the government or ameliorate the growing distance between progressive Catholics and pragmatic conservatives. Discontent with the electoral system was widespread in the party, and played into the arguments of religious abstentionists. Conchello conceded that the electoral reform of 1963, and particularly its manipulation by the regime, had increased skepticism in the electorate regarding the representation of minorities (González Hinojosa, 1991, p. 37). However, he argued that growing discontent with the system actually played into the hands of the PAN, which had increasing opportunities to force the government to accept its electoral victories. Moreover, the leftist policies of the Mexican government after 1972 provided the PAN with the support of an increasingly alienated business community, allowing the party to launch a vigorous electoral campaign the following year. While Conchello applauded these developments, González Morfín saw in them a threat to the party’s doctrinal commitments.

The conflict between the two tendencies came to the fore in 1975, when a bitterly divided party assembly supported González Morfín’s bid to replace Conchello as party president. The latter proceeded to construct a parallel structure within the party and publicly criticize the decisions taken by the new president (Martínez Valle, 2000, pp. 82-
These actions forced González Morfín to renounce the presidency by the end of the year. In response to their failure to secure control over the party, the abstentionists refused to support the presidential candidate proposed by Conchello and a majority of PAN members at the 1976 convention. Exploiting procedural rules and their majority positions in the National Executive Committee, they successfully impeded the election of an official candidate, forcing the party to abstain from the presidential contest of that year. After thirteen consecutive hours in session and seven rounds of voting, the convention broke down into a virtual brawl with no decision having been reached.

The crisis had a direct impact on the electoral fortunes of the party. After a decade of running candidates in over 90% of districts, in 1976 it participated in only 67%. In 1973, the party had secured 16% of the vote. Three years later, it was only able to capture 8.5%. The most dramatic consequence was the absence, for the first time since 1946, of a PAN contender for the presidency. As the debacle unfolded, the party undertook a series of policies aimed at reducing the damage. Conchello and his most active supporters were suspended from the party for two years (Arriola, 1977, p. 552). By 1978 the party remained weakened and seriously divided. Much of the leadership remained in the hands of the religious-abstentionist wing associated with González Morfín, but his position was only endorsed by a minority among the rank and file, who bitterly resented their role in the crisis. Conchello’s supporters remained active within the party, and agitated for a return to the electoralist policies that had led to sustained growth in the early 1970s.

Conclusion
The crises experienced by religious mobilizers during the 1960s and 70s reflected the transformations taking place within the Catholic community as well as the challenges posed by a restrictive and manipulative electoral system. The UNS, crippled by its ongoing conflicts with both church and state, failed repeatedly in its attempts to re-enter the electoral arena. Even the PAN, with its experienced cadres, deeper roots in civil society and broader network of religious support, experienced serious schisms.

These developments reflected the tension between a diverse set of Catholic civil society associations, with members eager to promote doctrinally committed visions of politics, and an electoral system that severely restricted their ability to do so. Fears of manipulation by the regime pushed many Catholic activists to seek alternatives to party organization, weakening the party’s religious associational links. For those who were already invested in the PAN, restrictive electoral laws made it necessary to work together with liberals and conservatives in order to remain competitive. However, the party’s limited electoral successes and the open manipulation of the electoral process by the ruling party made it increasingly difficult to sustain the resulting coalition. Thus, while religious doctrine continued to play a central role in the party’s mobilization efforts, it faced increasing resistance within the party.


Introduction

During the final two decades of the twentieth century Catholicism reemerged as a significant issue in Mexican politics, buoyed by the electoral success of the PAN, the
emergence of a new conservative party, and the rising profile of Mexican bishops. The PAN gradually adopted a new style of religious mobilization, appealing to Catholic identity while moving away from distinctive Catholic doctrines and associational ties. Operating in an increasingly competitive electoral environment, it sought to present itself as the party of democratic reform and the focal point for the anti-PRI vote. Religious associations were marginalized by growing secular sources of support, and social doctrine primarily became an instrument for the socialization of party elites (Castillo Peraza, 1990; Loaeza, 1997, p. 334). At the same time, the PAN appealed to Catholic identity to differentiate itself from the PRI. The electoral triumph of Vicente Fox in the 2000 presidential election, which included the occasional striking use of Catholic symbols but limited references to religious doctrine or associational links, marked the culmination of this process.

The UNS, after thirty years of electoral frustration, launched the Partido Demócrata Mexicano (PDM – Mexican Democratic Party), which steadily gained adherents during the 1980s and even expanded beyond its regional base in the Bajío region. The PDM successfully attracted several prominent Panistas disenchanted by their party’s abandonment of doctrine. However, it never obtained more than a handful of legislative representatives. Its limited appeal to the mainstream electorate, strained ties with the hierarchy, and the growing importance of a presidential race in which it could not hope to compete, made it difficult for the party to remain relevant in the 1990s.

The increasing salience of religious mobilization in the 1980s and its partial decline in the 1990s resulted from changes in Mexico’s electoral institutions and its Catholic community. The electoral reforms begun in 1977 expanded opportunities for
electoral opposition. By lowering the barriers for representation they allowed marginal actors like the PDM to gain access to the legislature. To the PAN, they offered an increase in the size of its legislative contingent and the opportunity to compete for higher offices. The consolidation of these reforms through the establishment of a credible electoral commission in the 1990s favored opposition parties capable of contesting high-profile races, such as governorships, SMP seats, and especially the presidency.

At the same time, the enhanced capacity of Mexican bishops, the conservative turn following the election of Pope John Paul II, and the successful negotiation of long-awaited constitutional reforms put the Mexican Episcopal Conference (CEM) solidly at the helm of the Catholic community. Concerns about the costs of public exposure brought about a shift away from confrontation with the government. Bishops preferred negotiation over confrontation, and indirectly supported the PAN while sidelining the more assertive PDM.

**Structural Foundations**

The last two decades of the twentieth century witnessed a fundamental readjustment of state-church relations in Mexico, including the first substantial overhaul of state secularism. Yet these formal, legal changes, discussed below, reflected an even more fundamental transformation unfolding within the global Catholic Church. After two decades of upheaval and adjustment following the Second Vatican Council, the 1980s witnessed a new and distinctive reassertion of clerical influence. While pre-conciliar Catholic Church had hesitated to accept the legitimacy of the secular state and dealt with political authorities by means of informal and conditional arrangements, the new
approach was built on the separation of secular and religious authority, whereby the latter understood its role to be one of moral supervision. The consolidation of this post-conciliar model of church-state relations had a direct impact on the possibilities for religious mobilization in Mexico, as indeed in much of the Catholic world.

The new period was inaugurated in a dramatic fashion in 1979, when the recently elected Pope John Paul II began the first of his five visits to Mexico. His public appearances drew enormous crowds and demonstrated that the Catholic Church could still energize broad swaths of the Mexican population, surprising a secular establishment used to low rates of public participation. This no doubt imbued the entire Catholic community with new confidence and had a direct impact on the ongoing debates and struggles within the community (Gill, 2008, p.157). In particular, John Paul II spoke against the perceived excesses of liberation theology and encouraged a move toward more centralized patterns of religious authority. Speaking to a gathering of Mexico’s priests, John Paul II emphasized the unique and irreplaceable role of the clergy, thus placing limits on the more controversial extensions of lay activism, and called for a refocusing on pastoral duties, reminding clergy that they “are not social or political leaders or officials of a temporal power” (John Paul II, 1979). This segregation of religious and political powers enhanced the influence of the bishops, who, by asserting their distance from political authority, in fact reaffirmed their claim to authority over religious activism in the public sphere.

This reaffirmation of clerical leadership, together with the restructuring of the Catholic Church during the 1970s, meant that by 1980 the CEM was once again ready to take the helm of public Catholic discourse. While careful to frame their positions in
doctrinal and religious terms, the bishops became increasingly willing to use their authority to intervene directly in political disputes during the following decade. Several bishops became explicit and vocal in their criticism of corruption and fraud, and repeatedly called for the state to remain neutral in electoral contests (Loaeza, 1999, pp. 349-354). Moreover, the CEM made increasingly overt criticisms about the constitutional articles governing religion, taking over a role that had traditionally been associated with the PAN and lay groups in civil society. Actions by the bishops included hosting workshops to train citizens in democratic practices including how to challenge electoral fraud, publicly criticizing the liberal economic policies of President Zedillo’s administration, and even making thinly veiled statements in support of PAN candidates (Dresser, 2003). The earthquakes that devastated Mexico in 1985 and the poor government response led to vigorous action by the Catholic community (Camp, 1997, p. 31; Loaeza, 1989, pp. 223-4). Overall, the impression among the public was one of a highly active church hierarchy, much more connected to mundane affairs and willing to take public stances on the contentious topics that were sweeping Mexico at the time.

The climax of this process was the long-awaited reform of articles 3, 5, 24 and 130 of the Constitution (Carrillo Nieto, 2010). The manner in which this was achieved highlighted the new relationship between the Catholic Church and the government. Though publicly framed as a response to growing religious pluralism, the reform was widely seen as a concession by the state to the Catholic hierarchy (Loaeza, 1999, p. 484; Blancarte, 1993, p. 784). The PAN, which had doggedly pursued this reform since its foundation and presented similar legislation in 1987, played a very minor role in the actual reform, which was negotiated between President Salinas and the Papal Nuncio
The Catholic Church was the main beneficiary of the reform, which allowed it to openly offer religious education, legalized monastic orders, and let it own assets necessary for the performance of its functions (Blancarte, 2004). Thus, despite some misgivings, the CEM ultimately issued a statement that many interpreted as an endorsement of the reforms (García Ugarte, 1992, p. 241; Loaeza 1996).

However, increased exposure also brought important setbacks for the hierarchy in its efforts to maintain a unified front and affirm its strictly supervisory role in Mexican politics during the 1990s. Two events were particularly notable in terms of demonstrating the potential risks of open involvement in public affairs. The first was the death of Cardinal Posada Ocampo, who was killed during a shootout between drug gangs at Guadalajara airport. The murky circumstances surrounding his death caused some bishops to openly question whether the government had been involved, which in turn prompted the CEM to issue a public statement in which it accepted the official account of the events (Loaeza, 1996, p. 117). Even more disruptive was the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, which highlighted the continuing divisions within the church. Through a combination of dramatic civic and military actions, and savvy engagement with the media, the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), drew international attention to the plight of marginalized indigenous communities in southern Mexico. Their efforts in this area brought them into contact with progressive members of the clergy and laity, many of who sympathized with the movement’s emphasis on social justice. Thus, while largely secular in nature, the revolutionaries established a friendly relationship in Samuel Ruiz García, the bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas (Harvey, 1998). Bishop Ruiz was a longstanding advocate of the more progressive readings of Vatican II, and had
been the subject of disciplinary actions by the Vatican for his closeness to liberation theology. Ruiz’s prominent role as mediator between EZLN and the government heightened his profile and breathed new life into schisms that many in the hierarchy had considered successfully overcome.

In this context of internal tension and high public exposure, the CEM drew back from direct political engagement until the vigorous 2000 contest for the presidency effectively forced their hand. Yet throughout this period, bishops remained effectively at the head of the Catholic associational sphere. In doing so, they managed to provide religious legitimacy for the democratic process, indirectly supporting the PAN’s efforts while avoiding open entanglement with specifically partisan forces. In their efforts to encourage selective mobilization by the PAN, the bishops found unexpected support from changes to the electoral rules, but institutional incentives did not always align so neatly with their preferences.

**Institutional Context**

The period from 1978 to 2000 witnessed the fundamental restructuring of Mexico’s electoral institutions. Unlike earlier instances of limited reform, like the 1963 changes to electoral and party laws, the series of reforms carried out by the state during the last two decades of the century added up to a real instance of regime change. This had a series of important but contradictory effects on religious mobilization. On the one hand, the legislative electoral environment became more permissive, encouraging the entry of more explicitly religious groups into the political arena. On the other hand, by making bigger prizes available for the opposition, particularly the presidency, they encouraged
more effective coordination around mainstream platforms. Thus, the possibility of gaining seats by appealing exclusively to a narrower, more religiously-oriented fraction of the electorate improved, but ran up against incentives to form broad coalitions to contest higher offices.

The reform process began in the aftermath of the 1976 elections. The presidential contest of that year proved an embarrassment to the PRI. The PAN was paralyzed by internal crisis, and the remaining parties supported the establishment candidate. As a result, the PRI was deprived of the nominal legitimacy provided by multiparty competition. For a government that proclaimed itself firmly committed to democratic practices and electoral legitimacy, the situation was unacceptable (Méndez de Hoyos, 2006, p. 34). Moreover, it was dangerous, as it suggested that the opposition might shift away from relatively benign electoral strategies to the subversive activities associated with guerrilla movements (Cornelius, 1988). The renewal and consolidation of the party system became an important element in President José López Portillo’s agenda. Buoyed by the discovery of new oil reserves during his first year in office and confident in the enduring popularity of his party and the marginality of the opposition, López Portillo accepted the need for more fundamental reform.

In 1977 the governing party passed the Ley Federal de Organizaciones Políticas y Procesos Electorales (Federal Law on Political Organizations and Electoral Processes, known as the LOPPE). This reform package represented a dramatic attempt to transform the electoral institutions in Mexico. The law had two primary components. First, in an effort primarily aimed to draw the left into the electoral arena, it eased requirements for party registration. Second, and crucially for the PAN, it discarded the much maligne
party deputy system in favor of a new compensatory mixed electoral system. While the majority of seats would still be drawn from single member districts, one fourth of seats in the lower house (100) would now be distributed in proportion to overall votes among parties that had won less than 60 SMP seats. Other reforms expanded the availability of mass media space for opposition parties, and all registered political parties were given a presence on the electoral oversight body (Middlebrook, 1988; Méndez de Hoyos, 2006).

The law was adjusted throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, in ways that reflected the diminished confidence of the PRI in its ability to obtain overwhelming vote majorities. In 1986 the number of proportional seats was doubled, but these were made available to all parties that secured between 1.5% and 51% of the vote. An additional clause guaranteed the largest party an absolute majority in the legislature. In 1989, the system was changed again, with proportional seats distributed differently depending on whether the winning party obtained less than 35%, 35-60%, or more than 60% of votes. The awkwardness of the process led to the adoption of a standard mixed system in 1993, with proportional seats distributed independently of the SMP results (Díaz-Cayero & Magaloni, 2001, p. 276). A similar set of reforms was undertaken in the senate, culminating with the introduction of a PR component that brought greater procedural symmetry in the two legislative chambers.

The LOPPE signaled an enormous expansion of electoral opportunities that would clearly enhance the PAN’s ability to capture seats. Nevertheless, the party was initially wary of the new law. Still recovering from the shock of the 1976 schism, led by beleaguered doctrinaire activists, and with a vivid memory of the disappointments of the 1962 electoral reform, the PAN leadership did not support the LOPPE. Its leaders
correctly assessed the initial intent of the PRI, which was to maintain control over the legislature while providing enough rewards to keep the opposition engaged (Martínez Valle, 2000, pp. 252-253). As Díaz-Cayero and Magaloni point out, the law was openly designed to prevent coordination by the opposition (2001). Since 1945, party registration laws had required parties to maintain a presence across much of the national territory. By encouraging opposition parties to focus their resources on competing with each other for PR representatives, it diverted them from the more abundant, but also more expensive, SMP constituencies.

The COFIPE law of 1990 moved the country towards an effectively autonomous electoral court, the *Tribunal Federal Electoral* (TRIFE). This was a substantial improvement over the previous institutions, whose partiality was vividly exposed by the electoral contest of 1988. Although the 1990 version of the law kept the Minister of the Interior, a presidential appointee, as head of the commission, the credibility of the reforms led to a dramatic expansion in turnout in the 1994 presidential election. In 1996, these trends were further strengthened when the head of the tribunal was formally replaced by independent authorities selected by the legislative branch. These changes, together with the transformation of the Mexican economy, had a significant impact on the plausibility of competing for higher office (Magaloni, 2006; Greene, 2007). The 1988 election demonstrated the competitiveness of presidential races. That year the PAN captured its first governorship, in Baja California, and repeated its victory by capturing Guanajuato in 1991 and Chihuahua in 1992. Throughout the 1990s it gradually acquired a substantial presence in the senate, from which it had been entirely excluded until then. As elections for these offices heated up, their more restrictive electoral mechanisms
dampened popular enthusiasm for marginal parties that were effectively excluded from the possibility of gaining them.

**Religious Mobilization**

The expansion of electoral opportunities and the growing organizational capacity of the Catholic hierarchy brought about a transformation of religious politics in Mexico during the last two decades of the 20th century. Electoral reforms created new spaces for contestation, with a new UNS-sponsored niche party participating during the 1980s and the PAN rising to become an increasingly meaningful competitor for the PRI. However, while the UNS remained committed to assertive religious mobilization, the PAN increasingly moved towards a new selective style of mobilization that combined appeals to religious identity with indirect support from the Catholic hierarchy, relying less on Catholic social doctrine or lay associations.

After decades of marginalization, the 1977 electoral reform led the UNS to register a new electoral vehicle. It did so under a newly available “conditional registry”, which required it obtain at least 1.5% of the vote in order to retain legal status. In the 1979 election, the new *Partido Demócrata Mexicano* (PDM) crossed this threshold with a relatively comfortable margin, securing 2.2% of the vote and 10 seats. The PDM subsequently maintained consistent fraction of the vote, obtaining 2.3% in 1983 and 2.7% in 1985. This stability masks a robust growth in its absolute number of supporters, which nearly doubled from 1979 to 1985, making it one of the most rapidly expanding parties during these years. Nevertheless, despite its avowed intention to become a competitive party nationwide (Aguilar & Zermeño, 1992, p. 25), the PDM never managed to make
substantial gains beyond its traditional strongholds, or appeal to groups that did not have a previous affinity with the UNS.

Religious mobilization played a central role for the PDM. A 1989 survey of party members revealed that 40% of them were affiliated with religious associations and 80% of them claimed to attend mass “without fail” (Aguilar & Zermeño, 1992, pp. 282-287). Moreover, in contrast to the PAN, which was moving away from an emphasis on religious doctrine, the PDM openly embraced the conservative interpretation of Catholic social thought that had characterized the UNS for decades. Although it platform was primarily focused on secular concerns regarding economic and political reform, it also contained notable references to religious freedom and religious education, as well as a strong dose of anti-communist statements drawn from the pre-conciliar Catholic tradition (Gómez Tagle, 1984, pp. 84-86). In addition, adherence to Catholic social doctrine was named by virtually all polled militants as a reason for membership in the party (Aguilar & Zermeño, 1992, p. 293).

The party approached the 1988 election with high expectations, but the unexpected competitiveness of the presidential race effectively sidelined the party (Aguilar & Zermeño, 1992, p. 26). The PDM obtained less than 1.5% of the vote and lost its legal registration. Lacking committed supporters beyond its UNS base, and with little institutional support from the Catholic hierarchy or other lay associations, the PDM proved unable to recover from this first real test.

The PAN’s adjustment to the new electoral environment was equally rapid and far more fruitful in the long run. The post-1976 settlement between religious and pragmatist factions of the PAN collapsed almost immediately, as rank-and-file members
pressured a reluctant leadership to engage in a full-fledged electoral effort. Supporters of doctrinal-based mobilization attempted to resist their demands, but weakened by the debacle of 1976 they had no real alternatives to offer their fellow party members. González Morfín left the party in 1978, along with other prominent members from the party’s progressive religious wing (Loaeza, 1999; Pérez Franco, 2007). In the 1979 election, the PAN, still recovering from these divisions, secured only 10.8% of votes, well below its result in 1973. However, this effort was still enough to secure 46 legislative seats, which due to the party list system could no longer be selected by the PRI.

The PAN’s ability to benefit from the new electoral opportunities was dramatically improved by a severe economic crisis and the nationalization of the banks in 1982. Mexican business, particularly in the economically expanding areas in the north of the country, began to shift seriously toward the opposition, supporting the PAN and providing it with a supply of candidates and financial resources much greater than it had ever possessed. These Neopanistas, as they came to be known, were not interested in doctrinal battles, and did not depend on religious associations to carry out their campaigns. They were, moreover, committed to winning elections and gaining political power (Loaeza, 1989). Riding on this massive influx of dedicated capital and candidates, the PAN’s presidential candidate obtained 16.4% of the votes in 1982. Legislative results were even more encouraging, with the party obtaining 17.5% of votes and 51 seats in the lower house.

During the next decade Neopanistas’ resources were often effectively combined with religious activism, but in contrast to earlier periods this was now typically directed
by clergy rather than party activists. The 1986 gubernatorial election in Chihuahua became emblematic of the new form of religious mobilization. The PAN candidate, Francisco Barrio, was a newcomer to the party and a prominent business executive, and benefited from the support of the local Catholic hierarchy. Although church officials denied being partial to any party, numerous public statements left little doubt as to what candidate they favored, with the bishop of Ciudad Juárez declaring to the press that people only voted for the PRI because “they benefit economically from the current regime, because they are under strong pressure from labor leaders or peasant associations… or finally due to a profound ignorance or lack of awareness of what has happened in Mexico over the last decades” (cited in Loaeza, 1999, p. 392). When the PRI declared itself the winner by an implausibly large margin, Catholic churches in Chihuahua read a homily by the Archbishop in which he declared that mass would be suspended the following week in protest (Blancarte, 1992). This was a direct reference to the events that had marked to beginning of the Cristiada sixty years earlier. The Mexican government promptly requested that the Vatican prevent the Archbishop’s threat from being carried out. The Vatican veto, delivered by Papal Nuncio Girolamo Prigione, provoked substantial discontent among local bishops (Loaeza, 1996, p. 114), but also served as a demonstration of the authority of the hierarchy over rank-and-file priests and activists, many of whom had been eager to force a direct confrontation with the regime.

The PAN’s presidential candidate in 1988, Manuel Clouthier, was also a Neopanista, and in many ways exemplified the emerging style of mobilization. Drawn into opposition politics by the nationalization of the banks in 1982, he was political newcomer with substantial personal wealth. He was a committed conservative with links
to Catholic organizations like the Movimiento Familiar Cristiano and particularly strong ties to an increasingly vocal set of secular civil society organizations linked to conservative economic interests (Pérez Franco, 2007; Loaeza, 1999, p. 448). In the lead-up to the election, he relied on his personal connections to mobilize followers for confrontational mass demonstrations, relegating the official party apparatus to the sidelines.

Clouthier’s style became a model for later elections, but the events of the 1988 campaign ultimately overshadowed his candidacy. The PRI experienced its first substantial split, as its left wing, under the leadership of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, rejected the ruling party’s newfound commitment to liberal economic policies. These defectors, joined by a broad coalition of leftist parties and civil society organizations, mounted a powerful challenge to the PRI. The official victory of the PRI candidate, Carlos Salinas, was broadly considered fraudulent and attained at the expense of Cárdenas. Crucially for the PAN, the split also deprived the PRI of its legislative supermajority, which, given the new government’s ambitious plans for liberal economic reform, meant that it would have to seek the support of the conservative opposition.

The PAN took full advantage of this juncture, using its newfound leverage to demand greater electoral transparency. The policy of collaboration with the government, however, troubled many longtime members and led to the formation of a recalcitrant faction within the PAN, the Foro Democrático, which called for a return to doctrinal principles. The group included notable religious members like González Schmal, linked to the tradition of González Morfín, and González Torres, the historic leader of the Catholic wing during the 1950s (Arriola, 1994, pp. 113-258). After a prolonged period of
internal debate, most of the leadership of the Foro left the party in 1992. After failing to launch an independent party, several joined the PDM, which shared many of the premises of the doctrinal wing of the PAN (Rodríguez Lapuente 1989: 457; Blancarte 1991: 163). The resulting conservative coalition was known as the *Unión Nacional Opositora* (National Opposition Union – UNO), and dominated by ex-PDM members. Lacking an organized base, its presidential candidate, an ex-Panista, obtained only 0.28% of the vote. The utter failure of this effort signaled the implausibility of launching an effective niche party on the right given institutional incentives and structural constraints.

The PAN moved to buttress the support of devout Catholics by affirming its religious identity. In 1993 the party accepted an invitation to become a permanent observer at the Christian Democratic Organization of America and in 1998 joined the broader Christian Democratic International. These shifts were justified in terms of the ideological affinity between the PAN and Christian Democracy (Loaeza, 1999, p. 530), but there is little to suggest that these affinities had not existed, or been less salient, in the 1960s. Rather, with the influence of religious activists in its ranks reduced and the CEM firmly at the helm of religious activism, the party leadership was safe to make appeals to Catholic identity that had limited significance in terms of policy commitments. Thus, although party elites identified themselves as conservative on issues of personal morality and economic policy, PAN voters in the 1990s tended to be spread out along the ideological spectrum (Magaloni & Moreno, 2003, pp. 265-7). Insofar as it retained its relevance, religious doctrine was used as a means of maintaining the internal coherence of the party.
Vicente Fox, the PAN’s candidate in 2000, replicated many of the tactics pioneered by Clouthier. He was independently wealthy, supplemented the PAN’s limited mobilizing infrastructure with a substantial inflow of external resources, and did not hesitate to distance himself from the party leadership when it proved necessary for his candidacy. To mobilize voters, Fox relied primarily on a massive, expensive media campaign. This was largely funded through para-party organizations like “Amigos de Fox”, which raised enormous sums from local and international sources, often in ways that violated laws governing fundraising (Magaloni, 2006; Greene, 2007).

At the same time, Fox made significant efforts to signal his personal religiosity. In sharp contrast to the doctrinal treatment of religion that had characterized PAN campaigns earlier in the century, this was framed as a personal, emotional connection to Mexican tradition (Loaeza, 2006b, pp. 10-12). These included the use of the image of the Virgen de Guadalupe in his campaign, which met cautious criticism from the Catholic hierarchy (Reveles Vázquez, 2002, p. 367). He met with more success when he sent a letter to the leaders of several churches in which he made ten promises, including his willingness to defend life from conception until natural death, along with the easing of restrictions on media access for religious associations (Blancarte, 2006, p. 433). These were presented as personal compromises, reflecting the beliefs of the candidate, rather than doctrinal positions developed by the party.

In keeping with its efforts to guide voters without openly endorsing any particular party, the CEM issued an extensive message entitled “From the Encounter with Jesus to Solidarity with All: The Encounter with Jesus Christ, Road to Conversion, Communion, Solidarity, and Mission in Mexico at the Threshold of the Third Millenium” (Conferencia
del Episcopado Mexicano, 2000). This forty thousand word document expounded the hierarchy’s vision of the role of the Catholic Church in Mexican society, with particular emphasis on its role as the social and cultural foundation of the Mexican nation. This concept of the nation is juxtaposed with that of a state that imposed an alien ideology that suppressed Mexico’s Guadalupean-Catholic identity (Blancarte, 2004, p. 238-40).

Analyzing politics, the document does not hesitate to speak of a looming “democratic transition” and warn against the possibility of electoral fraud (Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano, 2000, pp. 107-109). Despite the absence of open partisan endorsement, these and other statements were seized upon by Vicente Fox and the PAN as declarations of church support for their political project, a point that was largely agreed upon, though harshly criticized, by candidates from the PRI and PRD (Blancarte, 2004, p. 254). The mechanisms of indirect religious mobilization, planted since the 1980s, were thus fully established by the time of Fox’s campaign.

Conclusion

The consolidation of political competition in a mixed electoral system and the concentration of religious authority around the Catholic hierarchy checked the rise of assertive political religion and led to the consolidation of the new model of indirect religious mobilization in Mexico. By 2000, the PDM was largely forgotten and PAN was an electoralist party that enjoyed the open support of lay activists and the covert favor of the Catholic hierarchy. The CEM, despite the challenges posed by a rapidly evolving socio-political environment, was firmly entrenched as a key arbiter of the legitimate use of religious claims.

Introduction

Despite the momentous significance of the 2000 presidential election, which brought the first partisan alternation in post-revolutionary Mexico, the event brought few changes in established forms of religious mobilization. The underlying patterns of electoral incentives and structural constraints that encouraged reliance on selective mobilization strategies based on limited appeals to identity and associational linkages were not modified by the political transition. In other words, despite the practical and symbolic significance of Fox’s successful presidential bid, it had little impact on the causal factors that sustained established patterns of religious mobilization. Moreover, despite the demonstrated possibilities for opposition mobilization, there was no subsequent development of a new Catholic partisan alternative to the PAN.

The continuity is striking given the dramatic changes that had taken place over the previous four decades. In the 1950s, many members of the PAN’s first crop of presidential candidates carried out campaigns in which Catholic doctrines and associations played a significant role. In the 1970s, the party maintained ties to progressive religious associations and relied on distinct religious-political doctrines to structure policy proposals. In contrast, by the 1990s the party had shed its most militantly Catholic activists and embraced a broadly liberal platform. Instead, there was a growing reliance on religious labels and symbols, along with indirect cooperation with the Catholic Church to tilt conservative Catholics in its direction. Vicente Fox’s declarations
of religiosity and promises to religious leaders shocked many secularist observers, but his platform was not driven by religious content nor did he depend on religious associations for support. After six years of Fox’s administration, the 2006 presidential campaign by Felipe Calderón retained these features, combining limited appeals to religious identity and indirect support by the clerical hierarchy.

Neither the structural nor the institutional underpinnings of indirect religious mobilization was altered by the transfer of power in 2000. Although the contentiousness of the 2006 election tested popular confidence in electoral oversight mechanisms, there were no significant changes to Mexican electoral laws. The institutional incentives faced by politicians were still what they had been in the 1990s.

In terms of structure, the religious community was still characterized by a fractionalized laity and a well-coordinated hierarchy. The hierarchy continued to emphasize its role as the guardian and moral compass of the Catholic nation as a whole. In doing so, it frequently re-asserted its independence vis-à-vis political parties. The influence of the CEM was felt particularly through its public declarations and its members’ consistent willingness to position themselves as spokespersons for the community as a whole on a broad range of social issues. Moreover, although bishops had played a role in mobilizing Catholic voters in favor of the PAN, they found much to be critical of in the Fox and Calderón administrations.

Due to these similarities between the pre- and post-transition period, and in sharp contrast to theories that emphasize the importance of office-holding in bringing about the moderation of religious parties, the style of religious mobilization that characterized the periods following the transition bear a remarkable resemblance to those that preceded it.
This section is focused on describing continuity rather than change, and consequently proceeds more rapidly than the previous three. It reviews the institutional and structural patterns described in the previous section and describes some of their most salient consequences for religious mobilization.

**Structural Continuity**

In the first decade of the 21st century, the multiplicity of lay associations has limited the benefits and increased the risks of assertive religious mobilization by political parties. Lay groups have not ceased to play a vital role in Mexican civil society, but the ability of any one association to act as a credible, autonomous resource for Catholic political mobilization has been dampened by fractionalization vis-à-vis an increasingly well-coordinated hierarchy. Catholic Action, although a shadow of its former self, remains an active player, as do progressive Catholic institutions that resist the conservative turn of the church and reactionary groups that embrace and promote it (de la Torre Castellanos, 2006). These groups advocate often incompatible readings of Catholic doctrine and its implication for Mexican politics, sustaining a pluralistic and contentious environment in which robust, public ties to any given organization are more likely to be a burden than an asset (de la Torre Castellanos & Gutiérrez Zúñiga, 2008).

In contrast, the CEM maintains a centralized pattern of communication with the Mexican laity and the public at large, both through messages aimed at church members and through direct communiqués issued in its name to the public at large. Through these mechanisms, it has managed to make its voice heard in policy debates about contentious topics like abortion (Maier, 2010), birth control (González López, 2011), and gay
marriage (Bustillos, 2011). Although its recommendations have not always been heeded, its broader notions regarding the nature of the family and human life remain both prevalent and generally endorsed by the state (Bárcenas Barajas, 2011). Moreover, in each of these contentious cases the CEM has retained the ability to frame its statements as manifestations of a single, coherent and official, Catholic position. It has also managed to reaffirm its independence vis-à-vis political authority, criticizing the administration’s policies and consistently asserting its above-partisan status.

The CEM has continued to provide a narrative within which its efforts to guide public discourse can be understood. These framing projects are particularly important for the hierarchy, insofar as they allow bishops to affirm their status as arbiters of the social and political significance of Catholicism in Mexico. Moreover, they highlight the continuing ability of Mexican bishops to present a united front and thus deter alternative readings of Catholicism’s implications for politics. As discussed earlier, the 2000 document by the bishops proposed a broad reinterpretation of Mexican history that emphasized the country’s Catholic heritage. This broader effort was not directly linked to the electoral campaign, nor was it dulled by the transition. In 2010, the bicentennial of Mexican independence and the centennial of the revolution opened up a unique opportunity for bishops to put forth a yet another comprehensive discussion of Mexican history in which Catholic identity and doctrine are assigned a central and constructive role (Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano, 2010).

Bishops have also continued to emphasize the principle of religious freedom as a banner for legal reform. Religious freedom has secured its place as the dominant theme used by the CEM to describe its desired relationship to political power in Mexico.
Bishops firmly deny that their vision of religious freedom entails privileging one religious denomination over another, or over non-believers. Instead, they see it as an effort to consolidate the autonomy of religious associations vis-à-vis the state, secure the place of faith in the public sphere, and establish grounds for voluntary cooperation between secular and religious authorities (Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano, 2010a, p. 27). Concretely, the search for religious freedom entails lifting restrictions on media ownership, as well as remaining restrictions on religious education and political participation.

The CEM has not hesitated to make several pronouncements regarding the security crisis. To a large extent these echo the administration’s claims that the wave of crime and violence sweeping contemporary Mexico is due in large part to prior patterns of official indifference and collaboration with criminal organizations (Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano 2010a: 8). However, it has also pointed to structural causes for violence, particularly in the free-market economic model and its inability to improve conditions on inequality or substantially improve the lot of vulnerable populations (Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano 2010a: 12-14). While avoiding detailed policy proposals, the CEM advocates a more robust degree of government involvement to ensure a more equitable distribution of wealth, as well as the articulation of robust social policies that can reduce the burdens of poverty. Needless to say, these proposals do not fit well with the PAN’s commitment to market-driven solutions and limited state intervention.

**Institutional Continuity**
The evolution of the mixed SMP-PR system in 1977 and its consolidation in the early 1990s created a moderately permissive electoral environment, and this remains in place following the 2000 transition. Parties compete for both single-member and proportional party-list seats, enabling the presence of smaller parties focused on capturing the latter but favoring those that can credibly compete for both across the national territory. Moreover, because legislative elections are held concurrently with executive ones, they tend to favor coordination around parties that can contest higher offices, particularly the presidency (Hicken & Stoll, 2011). Originally intended to encourage divisions among the opposition and thus sustain a dominant party system (Magaloni & Moreno, 2003), the system has gradually produced a viable environment for moderate multi-partyism.

The shift to a mixed SMP-PR initially facilitated multiparty competition and allowed small parties to secure seats in the legislature, an environment not inhospitable for the emergence of niche-oriented, assertive religious parties. Thus, during the 1980s, the PDM found some success by following a niche-party strategy and reaching out to a subset of conservative Catholics. However, the system ultimately limited the viability of parties that could not capture a broad segment of the electorate, especially if they proved unable to form robust ties to an adequate and stable fraction of the population. The inability of the PDM to expand beyond its support base of UNS members meant that with the continuing decline of that organization and the growing salience of executive contests, the party proved unable to continue surmounting the moderate 1.5% vote threshold.
The PAN, as the larger and more institutionalized party, successfully adapted to the new electoral environment by becoming the focal point for a broad, center-right opposition to the regime. This was difficult for a party that had endured an extended struggle for representation in a highly restrictive electoral environment. Nevertheless, the consolidation of the electoral system encouraged its candidates, and ultimately its leadership, to favor pragmatic strategies and position as the primary competitor to the PRI. In addition, the growing significance of presidential contests created opportunities for personalized appeals to religious identity. The full transformation of the electoral system did not happen overnight, but these institutional incentives were largely in place by the mid-1990s and remained firmly entrenched in the following decade.

**Religious Mobilization during the Fox and Calderón Administrations**

The decade following Fox’s election was characterized by continuity in terms of religious mobilization. The PAN, both in government and during electoral campaigns, largely refrained from mobilizing supporters by means of religious doctrine or by forming substantial ties to religious associations. Instead, religion was primarily mobilized through appeals to religious identity and discreet cooperation with the Catholic hierarchy. Thus, after the election, President Fox behaved much as candidate Fox had done: he combined symbolic allusions to his personal Catholicism with a governing style that revealed limited influence from Catholic doctrines and associations. For reasons that will be explored below, the presidential campaign of 2006, led by Felipe Calderón, included fewer striking symbolic gestures (Blancarte, 2008, pp. 96-98), but nevertheless adopted a tone that was consistent with selective mobilization.
The continuity in mobilization strategies is striking. On the one had are the numerous examples of appeals to Catholic identity, presented as manifestations of personal religiosity, that characterized the Fox presidency. Many of these events scandalized his secularist critics, who repeatedly condemned them as efforts to subvert the separation between church and state. Thus, in the morning before being sworn in as Mexico’s president, Fox visited, kneeled, and prayed at the Basilica de Guadalupe, and left to cheers by a large crowd. In 2002, Fox seized upon Pope John Paul II’s visit to Mexico to promote the canonization of a Mexican saint. This visit also produced the most emblematic image of Fox’s religiosity when he kissed the Pope’s ring upon receiving him. When John Paul II died in 2005, Fox attended a ceremony in the Vatican, after which he gave a press conference in which he emphasized the central role of the Catholic Church in Mexico and the constructive and positive relations between it and the state during his administration (Fox, 2005). And as his term in office came to an end, Fox publicly announced his intention to visit the Basilica of Guadalupe once again, to thank the Virgin for the opportunity to govern the country (Fox, 2006).

These events were often portrayed as an attack upon the secular character of the state and the office of the presidency. Yet they contrasted sharply with the general absence of substantial policy shifts. The Fox administration entered office with the promise of making significant changes to the laws governing religious institutions, particularly those relating to continuing restrictions on media ownership, but these largely failed to materialize, much to the chagrin of some of his lay supporters. His administration also did little to change laws governing contraception, which had been widely criticized by Catholic circles (Loaeza, 2006, p. 114). Notably, despite the renewed
salience of the abortion debate in Mexico in the lead-up to the 2000 election and his declaration of a personal pro-life position, President Fox did little to stem the ongoing shift towards a more frank discussion of the issue and the growing acceptance, both legal and social, of abortion under certain circumstances (Kulczycki, 2007, pp. 56-57).

One limited exception came in the form of political appointments, as Fox nominated individuals with longstanding links to Catholic associations to some significant cabinet posts. The most prominent of these was Carlos Abascal, who was initially secretary of labor and then secretary of the interior. He was a leading member of lay Catholic associations like IMDOSOC and the Unión Social de Empresarios Mexicanos (USEM – Social Union of Mexican Businessmen). In addition to these associational linkages, Abascal consistently exhibited the strong influence of Catholic social thought (Pérez Franco, 2007, p. 16; Blancarte, 2008, p. 79). Another was Ana Teresa Aranda, who was appointed Secretary of Social Development and had been a leader of the Asociación Nacional Cívica Femenina (Ancifem – Feminine Civic National Association), a conservative group emblematic of the Catholic reaction to the left-leaning movements and government policies during the 1970s (Blancarte 2008, pp. 71-75). These were exceptions, however, more notable for their contrast with the independent technocrats and politicians who made up a large section of Fox’s cabinet. Moreover, as noted above, their ability to actually shape policies was sharply limited.

The administration of Felipe Calderón, who came to power in a very close contest with the leftist PRD candidate, was equally ineffective at implementing a recognizable Catholic set of policies. Calderón proved more hesitant than his predecessor to mobilize religious identity. This may appear surprising, since before becoming president Calderón
was vice-president of the Christian Democratic International and a strong supporter of the role of ideology within the PAN. Indeed, unlike the neo-Panista Fox, Calderón is a quintessential party insider. Son of distinguished party leader, archivist, and activist Luis Calderón Vega, he became an active member at the age of 17. He rose rapidly through the ranks of youth wing secretary, general secretary, and president of the party. These deep roots in the organization aligned him with the more ideological wing of the party, but also separated him from the personalist style of candidates like Clouthier and Fox. The contrast reinforces the notion that personalism provides the foundation for religious mobilization on the basis of Catholic identity. However, the differences should not be overdrawn: President Calderón has publicly and repeatedly asserted his support for core Catholic policies regarding abortion and same sex marriage.

It is precisely in those areas that the Calderón government has faced an important set of challenges, and demonstrated its unwillingness to make religious values a core part of its mobilization strategy. Mexico City’s legalization of same-sex unions in 2006 and same-sex marriage in 2009, for example, set off a storm of protest among conservative Catholics. The bills were passed by the PRD-dominated city legislature and opposed by PAN delegates in the same body (Hernández Vicencio, 2011). The national PAN government also opposed these proposals, but courts recognized the validity of marriages performed in Mexico City across the national territory in 2010 (Bustillos, 2011). The inability of the Calderón government to successfully challenge this reform, despite substantial popular opposition to same-sex marriage and the strenuous objections of the Catholic Church, are characteristic of situation in which the PAN has found itself, in
which assertions of religious identity are not matched by the implementation of doctrinally-informed policies.

In summary, the Fox and Calderón administrations were largely consistent in their indirect approaches to religious mobilization, even as they exhibited some differences in terms of their approach to religious identity. The entry of the PAN into government did not bring about significant changes in its religious mobilization strategy. Contrary to the fears of its critics, and to the disappointment of some of its most devout supporters, it did not push for a radical expansion of Catholicism’s role in politics.

Conclusion

The consolidation of the indirect religious mobilization strategies developed during the 1990s responded to the constraints and incentives generated by contemporary electoral institutions and religious community structures. A semi-permissive set of electoral institutions with concurrent executive and legislative elections favors moderate multi-partyism. The fragmented and pluralistic quality of the Catholic laity and the high coordination of the hierarchy make it difficult for any parties to form direct associational links or put forth policies grounded in their own interpretation of Catholic doctrine.

The combination of structural and institutional constraints encourages mainstream parties catering to Catholics to adopt strategies based on personalized appeals to religious identity and to defer to the hierarchy for more robust attempts to mobilize devout voters. Moreover, it virtually precludes the long-term viability of Catholic niche parties such as the PDM. The discontent expressed by the Catholic hierarchy regarding the inability (or unwillingness) of PAN governments to implement policies more closely aligned with its
doctrinal preferences captures the implicit division of labor and the tensions inherent in the strategy. These differences strain cooperation, but ultimately highlight the differentiation between religious and political authority that underpins the current form of selective mobilization as a whole.

**Conclusion**

The diachronic analysis of Mexico reaffirms a number of claims central to this dissertation regarding the importance of political institutions and religious community structures. Taken as a series of key phases, each section provides evidence of the consistent correspondence between hypothesized causal variables and observed patterns of religious mobilization.

Section II highlights how a robust, lay-led associational environment encouraged religious mobilization in the electoral arena, and how this was stifled by restrictive electoral institutions. The growing influence of religious activists in the PAN and its subsequent drift towards assertive religious mobilization, like the attempts by the UNS to set up the PFP as a niche party aimed at conservative Catholics, signal the energy of the activist laity. Similarly, the failure of the PFP and the limited success of the PAN show how the institutional environment constrained their efforts.

Section III demonstrates how institutional adjustments and shifts in the Catholic associational environment encouraged political party leaders to adapt their mobilization strategies. Small changes to the electoral law pushed the PAN candidates away from assertive mobilization, a trend that was reinforced by the Catholic hierarchy. However, it
proved insufficient to force the exit of well-entrenched Catholic party leaders, who kept the party committed to doctrinal mobilization. Similarly, the reform did not produce an environment sufficiently permissive to allow the emergence of a viable conservative alternative to the PAN.

Section IV shows the immediate impact of substantial electoral reforms, as well as the more gradual but no less significant consequences of the concentration of clerical authority. The PAN underwent a rapid transformation, as a rising crop of party leaders pushed the party away from an emphasis on doctrine and towards indirect strategies of mobilization. The electoral opening also allowed the formation of an assertive Catholic niche party, but the PDM’s inability to connect to the broader Catholic electorate made it impossible for the organization to become permanent part of Mexico’s party system.

Finally, section V demonstrates that, in the absence of significant electoral and structural changes, even dramatic political events, such as the capture of the presidency by the PAN, are unlikely to bring about a change in religious mobilization strategies.

The case study also contributes important information about the temporal dimension along which the impact of institutions and structures unfold. At the most basic level, the evidence goes against the notion that religious communities are essentially static or inflexible in terms of how they participate in the electoral arena. The relative salience of clerical and lay voices in the Catholic community has varied substantially over time, and changes in the prevalent forms of Catholic organization have had a clear impact on patterns of religious mobilization, as discussed above.

Yet there is an element of truth in the argument that religious communities are inflexible, as structural shifts tend to be slow and continuously contested. For example,
the growth of lay organizations during the first half of the 20th century was met with hesitation and resistance by many members of the hierarchy. It took decades for the laity to accumulate substantial mobilizing capacity, and years for the hierarchy to bring it back into the fold through the articulation and domestication of Catholic Action. The Second Vatican Council offers starker evidence of this dynamic. Although the council itself was limited to a relatively short time span of three years, its effects took decades to unfold. The undermining of the corporatist Catholic Action model met with resistance from those invested in that form of organization, and the call for social engagement by Catholics created not a few instances of contradictory mobilization. Yet in the long run, the increasing pluralism of the laity aligned with the growing coordination of the bishops in ways that made autonomous religious mobilization by partisan force increasingly less viable.

In contrast to the slow pace of structural change, responses to institutional reforms have typically been prompt, with activists and political entrepreneurs quick to grasp the implications of shifts in formal electoral laws. For the PAN, even minor reforms have consistently been accompanied by a rapid re-accommodation among religious and pragmatic factions. The 1961 electoral reform, which established the first compensatory mechanisms, triggered a moderate shift away from religious mobilization, albeit one tempered by the investments made over the previous decades of exclusion. Young Catholic members exited and recruitment of new Catholic activists declined, but much of the leadership remained in place and promoted doctrinal mobilization. It took a further electoral reform in 1977 to bring about the replacement of the doctrinal cadres by the rising pragmatists. Finally the abandonment of assertive Catholic mobilization and its
replacement by more limited selective mobilization was substantially fortified by the consolidation of the competitive electoral system.

A similar temporal dynamic can be observed among the smaller Sinarquista parties, which entered and exited the electoral arena in a rhythm very much shaped by the modification of electoral laws. From the 1940s to the 1970s, entries followed electoral reforms that promised greater opportunities for seat capture, but they were consistently followed by rapid exits when the limitations of electoral competition became evident. Only in 1979, following the establishment of a significantly more permissive electoral formula, did a niche-oriented Sinarquista party, the PDM, succeed in temporarily establishing itself as a non-trivial player in the national arena. The failure of the PDM in the 1990s, despite the reinforcement provided by the doctrinal ex-Panistas moving into its ranks, was most immediately due to the salience of the presidential race. The impact of presidential races, not adequately incorporated into the theory thus far, represents one important element that could be added to improve the institutional dimension of the model proposed in this dissertation.

What do these observations yield from a theoretical perspective? First, they point to ample possibilities for misalignments between structural and institutional incentives for mobilization, such as those that wracked the PAN during the 1970s or crippled the rise of the PDM in the late 1980s and 90s. In both cases, the slow shift in structural foundations took time to catch up with sudden alterations in the institutional incentive structure, and party leaders that had invested in doctrinal and associational mobilization found their resources ill-matched to new institutional environments.
Second, they highlight the contrasting role of institutional and structural changes. Institutional reform can trigger relatively rapid adjustments in party strategy, but these are ultimately constrained by the availability of organizational resources that depends far more on structural feature of the religious community. Changes in structural conditions, in turn, can gradually pull parties away or toward particular mobilization strategies, but it frequently requires the sudden impetus of institutional change to dislodge entrenched party elites or draw new groups into a partisan coalition.

Are these findings idiosyncratic features of the Mexican case? How well do they travel beyond a Catholic-majority environment? In order to answer these questions the following chapter examines the case of Turkey.
Patterns of religious mobilization in Turkey have varied substantially over six tumultuous decades of competitive elections, in ways that directly reflect changes in Turkey’s political institutions and the structure of its religious community. In contrast to the Mexican case, where a single party remained the dominant agent for religious mobilization, Turkey has witnessed the rise and fall of several major and minor parties that relied on some combination of appeals to sectarian identity, links to religious associations, and references to religious doctrine. Moreover, while in Mexico the general trend was towards less religious mobilization, Turkey exhibits significant fluctuations between periods of limited and assertive mobilization. Party leaders, candidates, and activists recurrently revised and debated religious mobilization strategies in response to the gradual but virtually continuous rise of autonomous lay associations as well as sudden changes to electoral rules resulting from military interventions.

In the 1950s, the Demokrat Partisi (DP – Democrat Party) formed some ties to religious associations and made limited appeals to religious identity, but avoided explicit identification with religion or appeals to doctrine. The Millet Partisi (MP – Nation Party) attempted to pursue more assertive religious mobilization, but failed. The Adalet Partisi (AP – Justice Party) largely replicated the DP strategy in the 1960s, but by the early 1970s, the Milli Selamet Partisi (MSP – National Salvation Party) appealed explicitly to Islamic identity, maintained open relationships to religious associations, and formulated proposals that drew directly on religious doctrines and ideas. In the early 1980s, the
*Anavatan Partisi* (ANAP – Motherland Party) pursued limited religious mobilization but formed robust ties to religious association, while the *Refah Partisi* (RP – Welfare Party) sought to maintain the MSP style of mobilization. Yet by the mid-1990s, the ANAP had secularized and RP had significantly toned down its religious appeals. In the 2000s, the *Saadet Partisi* (SP – Felicity Party) once again revived assertive religious mobilization, while the *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP – Justice and Development Party) proved enormously successful by combining strong associational linkages with qualified appeals to religious identity. This somewhat bewildering set of actors, pursuing distinctive mobilization strategies in rapid sequence and even in parallel, provides a fertile environment for testing the consistency of expected correlations between religious community structures and electoral institutions on the one hand and patterns of religious mobilization on the other. They also facilitate the exploration of the causal mechanisms behind variation, and the temporal dimension of adaptation and continuity in the face of changing incentives.

As with the chapter on Mexico, this one is divided into six sections, including this introduction. Each of the subsequent empirical sections focuses on a particular time period, summarized in Table 6. The periodization is built around the incidence of major changes in the institutional and structural foundations of mobilization. The second section stretches from the transition to multiparty competition in 1946 to the 1960 coup. During this time, electoral institutions were highly restrictive, and religious associations began to expand but remained weakly coordinated. The second covers the period from 1961 to 1980, and was characterized by a highly permissive electoral environment as well as an increasingly robust associational setting. The period from 1981 to 2001 was shaped by
the introduction of new electoral constraints, along with the rapid and substantial expansion of religious associations. The last empirical section covers the period after 2002, when the AKP became the governing party but faced an unchanging set of institutional and electoral incentives.

Table 6: Summary of Empirical Sections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>Community Structure</th>
<th>Electoral Institutions</th>
<th>Mobilization Observed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946 - 1960</td>
<td>DP</td>
<td>Expansion of local associations; Growth of Nurcu movement</td>
<td>Highly disproportional electoral system (de facto MMP)</td>
<td>Identity [Association] [Doctrine]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[MP]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961 - 1980</td>
<td>JP</td>
<td>Continued associational growth; Pluralization of Nurcu movement; Emergence Milli Görüş</td>
<td>Proportional electoral system; Establishment of NSC</td>
<td>Identity Association [Doctrine]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[MSP]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981 - 2001</td>
<td>ANAP</td>
<td>Expansion of Nurcu communities; Pluralization of Milli Görüş</td>
<td>Proportional representation with 10% threshold</td>
<td>Identity Association Doctrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 - 2012</td>
<td>AKP</td>
<td>Continuing expansion of neo-Nakşibendi and neo-Nurcu groups</td>
<td>Proportional representation with 10% threshold</td>
<td>Identity Association [Doctrine]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[SP]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Minor parties are in brackets. Dimensions of mobilization used exclusively by minor parties are also in brackets.

Each empirical section begins with an overview of the patterns of religious mobilization during the period, noting the degree of reliance by major and minor parties on appeals to religious identity, linkages to religious associations in civil society, and doctrine-based policy appeals. The second describes the situation of religious community structures, and the third does the same for political institutions. The fourth focuses on
mechanisms, presenting a more detailed account of how party leaders and candidates shaped, contested and modified their approaches to religious mobilization in response to structural and institutional constraints. A brief conclusion summarizes each section’s findings.

As in Mexico, the various shifts in the dominant style of religious mobilization were never instantaneous or smooth. In addition to reiterating and clarifying the observed correspondence between causal factors and outcomes within each time period, the conclusion therefore explores broader temporal dynamics, including questions of sequencing, legacy, and speed of change.

Beginnings of Religious Mobilization (1946-1960)

Introduction

The 1940s and 1950s were a period of limited religious mobilization in Turkish politics, which nevertheless contrasted sharply with the aggressive state-enforced secularism of the single-party era that preceded it. The first successful post-revolutionary opposition party in Turkey, the DP, brought together a coalition including landlords threatened by land reform, businessmen wary of statist policies, peasants impoverished by wartime scarcity, and religious conservatives who resented the imposition of assertive secularism. To use Şerif Mardin’s influential formulation, the DP was able to attract and maintain the support of a broad “periphery” that had been sidelined by the urban, military-bureaucratic elite represented by the ruling Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP – Republican People’s Party) (Mardin, 1973).
Religious mobilization played a controversial role in the DP’s campaigns, and scholars still dispute the relevance of Islam for the party (compare Ahmad, 1993 with Yavuz, 2003). On the one hand, its leadership, including Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and President Celâl Bayar, was consistently outspoken regarding its firm commitment to the principle of laiklik, and framed its efforts to relax some restrictions on public religious expression in terms of liberal rights (Karpat, 1959). On the other, prominent members included severe critics of Atatürk’s reforms, such as Fehmi Ustaoğlu, who openly called for a return to Islamic values in politics (Reed, 1954; Brockett, 2009), and local party congresses routinely produced documents that called on the party to stand as a representative of religious identity and justify its policies in religious terms (Karpat, 1959, p. 287). Overall, DP candidates generally opted for weak appeals to religious identity, and the party’s informal links to religious associations, like its references to religious doctrine, were kept at a distance by the party leadership.

The period also witnessed attempts to engage in more assertive forms of religious mobilization. The most successful of these was the MP, which appealed more explicitly to religious identity, referred to Islamic principles, and maintained close ties to an outspoken segment of the Nakşibendi Sufi community. Despite attracting some prominent candidates and avoiding immediate closure, the MP never managed to become a central player in Turkish elections, and its influence diminished continuously throughout the period.

Both the DP’s success and the MP’s failure resulted from the presence of clear institutional incentives and a particular religious community structure. The lack of formal networks or mobilizing capacity among the Sunni Muslim community made the
mobilization of religious voters challenging and reduced the cost of sidelining religious constituencies. At the same time, the highly disproportionate and restrictive electoral institutions encouraged the bulk of religious activists to operate under the umbrella of the DP, while ensuring that control over the party remained firmly in the hands of a pragmatic leadership committed to mainstream strategies.

**Structural Foundations of Islamic Political Mobilization**

At the eve of the formation of the DP, the Sunni Muslim community in Turkey was largely structured around neighborhood and village groups, occasionally linked by a small number of informal networks, most notably the Nakşibendi order and the emerging Nurcu movement. These did not possess a sophisticated organization. Rather, they sustained and aggregated a variety of local notables and networks, bonding them by means of mutual recognition and a shared idiom. Neither the local nor the national-level groups had a legally recognized existence, since the 1938 Law of Associations banned, among others, “groups based on religion, sectarianism or mystical orders […] groups whose goal is to destroy the territorial integrity of the state and political and national unity [and] groups that are secret or that conceal their goal” (Bianchi, 1984, p. 113). From the perspective of the secular leadership of the country, religious movements effectively violated all three of these restrictions.

In 1946 the government passed a new Law of Associations in anticipation of the transition to real multiparty competition, which limited government control over civil society while maintaining restrictions on group participation in political activities (Bianchi, 1984, p. 114). This liberalization produced real changes in religious
organization in Turkey (Reed, 1954, pp. 277-8). The most notable was a substantial expansion in the number of associations, which went from .6 per million people in 1946 to 7.3 in 1950. This expansion continued through the 1950s, reaching 45.4 per million inhabitants in 1955 and 184 by 1960. Initially, the overwhelming majority of these new associations were local, task specific bodies, particularly mosque-building groups, which later expanded to include religious schools, Qur’an courses and philanthropic societies (Bianchi, 1984, pp. 158-164). These highly fragmented local religious associations played only a secondary, supporting role in the electoral success of the DP, facilitating mobilization and recruitment in the countryside but remaining distant from the heads of the party.

Equally important for the future development of political Islam in Turkey was the gradual institutionalization of Turkey’s larger religious movements, particularly the Nakşîbendis and the Nurculuk. Progress in this front was slow during this period. Even after the associational reform, their position remained ambiguous at best, as they lacked legal recognition and their leaders were often subjected to persecution. Prominent Nakşîbendi leaders were arrested for performing unauthorized religious services (Reed, 1954, p. 275), and Said Nursi, founder of the Nurcu movement, was sanctioned by state authorities on various occasions (Mardin, 1989). However the gradual expansion and consolidation of these networks-of-networks played a central role in the subsequent development of religious communities and political parties in the country (Yavuz, 2003). They contributed to the establishment of structural foundations for mobilization by organizing lodges, schools, and prayer and discussion groups, among a myriad of other
forms of local organization. In particular, they facilitated the channeling and coordination of resources that had until then remained dispersed at the village level.

In addition to acting as coordinating mechanisms, their greater scope allowed Nurcus and Nakşibendis to contribute to the emergence of a particular approach to religious mobilization. Having witnessed decades of repression and benefited directly from partial liberalization, their leadership was highly conscious of the potentially devastating impact of a secularist reaction by the state. The Nurcus and Nakşibendis were thus cautious in their attitude towards political mobilization. Said Nursi favored the development of broad coalitions in the political arena, hoping that this would avoid polarizing the country along a religious-secular cleavage (Yavuz, 2003, p. 156). The Nakşibendi community, lacking a single, dominant figurehead, showed a greater variation of responses to political Islam, but was generally disinclined to challenge laiklik (Sunar & Toprak, 1983; Mardin 2003).

The moderating impact of these networks contrasts with the more radical activism associated with other religious groups, notably the Ticani religious community. Among the most important actions undertaken by the Ticani was the reading of the call to prayer in Arabic in the National Assembly by members of the sect in 1949, the defacement of monuments to Atatürk by its members in 1951, and the manifestations during the funeral of Marshal Fevzi Çakmak, leader of the MP, on April 12, 1950, when his “coffin was snatched from the gun carriage and carried on the shoulders of the crowd led by chanting imams” (Karpat, 1959, p. 284). This last event involved a large crowd, which closed cinemas and theatres and called on the radio to stop broadcasting music. In all three cases, political reaction was swift and resulted in the arrest of numerous participants as
well as the hardening of secularist institutions, for example through the passing of law 5816 in 1951 which criminalized attacks against Atatürk’s memory. Members of the Ticani order were pursued under its auspices, leading to incarceration of its leader, Kemal Pilavoğlu, and the dramatic decline of the order (Ahmad, 1977, p. 367; Yavuz, 2003, p. 62). These events, taking place at the crucial moment of transition, appeared to justify the prevailing attitude among most Nurcus and Nakşibendis against direct political engagement and discourage calls for rapid, fundamental reform.

**Institutional Foundations of Limited Mobilization**

While the structure of religious communities in Turkey in the 1950s played an important role in shaping patterns of religious mobilization, political institutions also proved crucial to the emergence of a selective style of religious mobilization. The enduring uncertainty regarding the government’s commitment to democratization and the entanglement of party and state that resulted from 25 years of CHP rule posed important challenges to the peaceful and effective incorporation of religious groups into the political arena. In this context, two sets of institutional constraints played a central role in bringing about the emergence of a robust coalition that included, but was in no way dominated by, religious activists.

The most obvious constraint on religious mobilization derived from the red lines drawn by the Kemalist regime during the transition period (1946-50). Political liberalization in Turkey was a top-down process spearheaded by President İnönü, and bounded by the preferences of the military, bureaucracy, and ruling party (Ahmad, 1977, pp. 6-7). Secularism, specifically the regulation of religious expression in the public and
political spheres, quickly emerged as one of the most important of these red lines. Previous responses by the Kemalist establishment to any suggestion of religious reaction, such as the dramatic prosecutions and policy reforms that followed the Menemen incident, set a strong and highly credible precedent regarding its willingness to defend the secular nature of the republic (Kadioğlu, 1996).

A more subtle but equally important set of incentives derived from the electoral system. The electoral system was highly disproportional and converted small electoral advantages into enormous differences in seats. From 1946 until 1960, Turkey used a multiple non-transferable vote (MNTV) electoral system, with voters allowed to cast votes for as many candidates as there were seats in the district. Formally, voters were allowed to split their tickets and vote for fewer candidates than there were seats available in a district, features intended to enhance the representative quality of the results. In practice, the electorate overwhelmingly relied on pre-printed ballots issued by the political parties and thus voted for straight party tickets, transforming the system into a simple plurality with multi-member lists (Hale, 1980, p. 402). The result was an overwhelming degree of disproportionality in favor of the largest party. Thus, in 1954, 57.5% of the vote secured an astounding 93% of seats for the DP.

By delivering overwhelming majorities to whomever could capture a plurality of votes, the system encouraged the DP to adopt a centrist platform. More precisely, it strongly discouraged religious groups that clearly preferred the DP to the CHP from shifting their allegiance to any explicitly religious party: if successful at the polls, such a party would capture the entirety of government and threaten the bureaucracy and the military, potentially triggering de-liberalization and repression; if unsuccessful, it would
split the conservative vote and deliver a massive victory to the CHP. Dramatic electoral disproportionality thus steered all but the most radical conservative voters towards the center right, occupied in this case by the DP.

Religious Mobilization during the DP Era

The low organizational capacity of religious associations and a highly disproportional electoral system generally discouraged assertive religious mobilization. The DP repeatedly balked at making direct appeals to the religious identity of voters, and its leadership never relied on theological or doctrinal arguments to defend its policy proposals. Although it was content to recruit religious activists with ties to groups like the Nurcus and Nakşibendis, these links remained weak and distant from the party leadership (Ayata, 1996, p. 44; Yavuz, 2003). How political institutions and religious structures produced specific patterns of religious mobilization can be best appreciated by examining the party’s responses to the various challenges it faced in its early years, that is, at the time when its attitude towards religious mobilization was taking shape.

When it was inaugurated in 1946, the DP faced a complex situation created by twenty years of single-party rule, which generated real uncertainty about the viability of emerging as a real opposition party. The CHP was effectively co-joined with the state apparatus and felt confident that it could dictate the precise limits of the political opening. Indeed, the ruling party hoped that the opposition would be moderate and retain a minority status for “forty to fifty years” (Karpat 1959: 152). To ensure the first of these goals, the formation of the new party was entrusted to well-known and highly regarded members of the governing party with a long track record of commitment to the principles
of Mustafa Kemal, most notably Celâl Bayar. For the second, the CHP relied on its established reputation and voters’ familiarity with the party.

Faced with the possibility of being regarded as puppets of the CHP, the DP leadership actively sought to demonstrate its distinctiveness. Given the CHP’s notorious distaste for public Islam, appeals to religious identity were considered as a potential means to this end. Press organs affiliated to the DP began to discuss to the moral superiority of the party vis-à-vis the Kemalist establishment, and the first DP convention included an extended discussion of the possibility of introducing courses on religion. As early as 1946, the DP was accused of “injecting religious propaganda, such as the promise to introduce the Arabic script and allow the reading of Ezan (call to prayer) in Arabic” into its electoral appeals (Karpat 1959: 162).

The rapid growth of the DP in the countryside led President İnönü to open the door to moderate reform, particularly in the area of education. The National Assembly modified the religious education law in 1948-9, including the establishment of imam-training schools and the foundation of the Faculty of Divinity in Ankara. This convergence on a centrist platform left little distance between the parties with regard to religious policy (Ahmad, 1993, pp. 108-9), while the continuing presence of Kemalist hardliners little doubt that further relaxation of secularist norms would be hard-fought, and attempts at fundamental reform were potentially threatening to the democratic system as a whole.

Despite this convergence, electoral mechanisms convinced religious voters and activists to remain loyal to the DP. In 1948, religious members of the DP who considered that coordination between Bayar and İnönü compromised the principles of the opposition
came together to form the MP (Zürcher, 2004, p. 215). Its leader was Fevsi Çakmak, a well-known hero of the liberation war and devout Muslim. The MP appealed directly to voters’ religious identity and maintained publicly visible ties to religious associations (Reed, 1954, p. 271). Among its central goals was “to uplift moral standards by strengthening the family and by giving the youth a nationalistic and religious education” (Karpat, 1959, p. 220). Concretely, the MP was most assertive in calling for the relaxation of secularist norms, including permission to wear the fez, and the establishment of religious schools.

This conservative challenge initially appeared as a real threat to the Democrats. MP members briefly equaled DP members in the assembly after a second wave of defections in 1949 (Karpat, 1959, p. 235). However, in the lead-up to the election, it became increasingly clear that the MP was having difficulty convincing the already mobilized anti-incumbent voters to switch allegiances from the DP. The organization was only able to win just under 4% of the vote in the crucial 1950 elections, and due to the disproportionality of the electoral system this translated to a single seat in the 487 member National Assembly. Electoral rules thus ensured that only the DP would emerge as a viable challenger to the CHP. In the aftermath of the election, the MP suffered a wave of defections. Its remnants were banned in 1953 for “political use of religion” and reformed in 1954 as the Republican Nation Party but with even less electoral success (Zürcher, 2004, p. 223).

The 1950 contest was a watershed for the DP: the party captured 53.3% of the vote and, thanks the disproportionate electoral systems, 83.8% of seats. In the aftermath of its massive electoral victory, the DP came face to face with the reality of governing
and the need to satisfy its broad constituency. It embarked upon a series of legal initiatives and reforms aimed at the partial liberalization of the religious sphere. These included an amendment to Article 526, which allowed the call to prayer to be read in Arabic; the lifting of the ban on religious radio programs, allowing the Qur’an to be read on the airwaves; and the shifting of voluntary public religious education from opt-in to opt-out, virtually ensuring that the overwhelming majority of Turkish children would receive it (Ahmad, 1977, p. 365). The CHP, struggling to recover from its dramatic fall from power, adopted an intransigent position and systematically criticized the DP’s liberal religious policies, although these reforms were largely in keeping with the limited liberalization endorsed by the CHP during its final years in government.

These reforms proved sufficient to earn the DP the enthusiastic support of religious leaders like Said Nursi and several influential Nakşibendi figures (Mardin, 1989; Yavuz, 2003, p. 156). However, other religious activists operating in Turkey’s fragmented religious environment were not satisfied and considered that the DP was not doing enough to roll back laïlik and restore Turkey’s Islamic identity. The Ticani community engaged in a campaign of vandalism against images of Atatürk. Around the same time a new style of religious activism also came to the fore, led by a cluster of religious-political periodicals which called for the reincorporation of Islamic values and ideas into politics (Lewis, 1952; Brockett, 2006). Although many of these had links to peripheral, short-lived parties, others had direct links to the more religious members of the DP. This emerging religious movement, which brought together traditional religious actors and a new generation of activists, put direct pressure directly on the party to cater to its preferences.
The fragmentation and weakness of the incipient religious movement greatly reduced its efficacy. An assassination attempt against the influential secularist journalist Ahmed Emi Yalman in 1952 proved to be the trigger. The attack was widely understood to have been religiously motivated, and the DP drew a sharp distinction between the mainline parties and radical political actors (Ahmad, 1977, p. 47). In the aftermath of assassination attempt, DP members with more religious views were expelled from the party, including Ustaoğlu, who had recently published a series of provocative articles in Büyük Cihad, one of the prominent anti-secularist periodical (Brockett, 2009). A large-scale campaign of repression, including the arrest of various prominent activists and the closure of religious-political periodicals, effectively razed the foundations of the more outspoken wing of the rising religious movement. The relative ease with which the DP cut off the more activist elements in its religious base highlights how the limited mobilizing capacity of Islamic activists allowed the DP to remain committed to a limited style of religious mobilization.

The expansion of religious associations throughout the 1950s subtly strained this situation. Most associations remained small, local affairs – schools, mosques, and neighborhood charities – but there was also a notable expansion of the larger, informal communities as well. The Nurçuluk became prominent enough to provoke concerns among hardline secularists, and Said Nursi was put on trial and not allowed to enter Ankara (Ahmad, 1977, p. 368). However, highlighting the equivocal attitude of the DP towards religious activism, Nursi was also courted by Menderes (Ahmad, 1988, p. 756) and, more importantly, conditions were established for the publication of his main text, the Epistles of Light (Yavuz, 2003, p. 62). This equivocation was also pronounced with
respect to the Nakşibendi. Members of the order were often able to secure employment in the Directorate of Religious affairs and state-sponsored mosques (Gözaydın, 2008, p.223). However, a prominent Nakşibendi sheikh, Suleyman Hilmi Tunahan, was arrested and tortured in 1957, dying a few months after his release (Yavuz, 2003, p. 145). In a symbolically charged display, his followers attempted to bury him in the garden of Istanbul’s Fatih Mosque, an effort that was ultimately blocked by police (Yavuz, 2003, p. 62). The rapid expansion of Turkey’s religious constituency put pressure on the DP to demonstrate its commitment to religion.

During the same period, the consolidation of the electoral environment also began to cause difficulties. Embattled by a declining fiscal and economic situation in the late 1950s (Ahmad, 1977, pp. 138-40), Menderes prominently advertised his administration’s involvement in the construction of 1500 mosques and his personal gift of 100,000 Turkish Lira for a mosque in Istanbul (Weiker, 1963, p. 9). More spectacularly, Menderes’ survival of a plane crash at Gatwick airport in 1959 was used in propaganda to suggest divine sanction for his government (Ahmad, 1977, p. 61). The ensuing demonstrations of public religiosity, many of which were attended by prominent DP members produced a spectacle suggestive enough to cause substantial unease among both local and foreign observers.

Moreover, consistently disappointing results at the ballot box, made even more lopsided by the mechanical effect of the electoral system, convinced many members of the CHP and its allies in the military that they had limited chances to capture the government by electoral means. Combined with the DP’s willingness to pass laws that directly challenged their ability to criticize the government, the opposition became
convinced that their influence would only diminish with time. The turn towards sedition in the armed forces was felt as early as 1957, when nine army officers were charged with conspiracy (and then promptly released by a Menderes, who did not want to test the loyalty of the military), but became increasingly urgent over the next two years. In this polarized atmosphere, the DP launched a partisan investigation into the ties between the CHP and the military, endowing the committee charged with its execution with extraordinary powers. It was an announcement that the commission would publish its results earlier than expected that ultimately convinced the military to overthrow the government. The May 27, 1960 coup was not primarily a response to the DP’s shift in favor of more direct appeals to religious identity, but this had doubtlessly contributed to the growing polarization of the country (Weiker, 1963).

Conclusion

Limited religious mobilization during the period from 1946 to 1960 was the result of a fragmented religious community structure and restrictive electoral institutions. Incentives for mobilization were tempered by the electoral system and fears of a secularist reaction. Although the mobilizing power of religious appeals was demonstrated early on, prompting convergence of the CHP and the DP on a moderate reform platform, efforts by a rising religious movement proved easy to suppress and ignore. At the same time, disproportional electoral rules handed overwhelming majorities to the mainstream DP and severely punished smaller organizations catering to more devout voters, such as the MP.
The resulting pattern of selective religious mobilization by a mainstream party was somewhat undermined by shifting structural conditions. The growing resources of religious associations, though still limited during this period, increased the influence of religious leaders and encouraged minor adjustments to the DP’s religious mobilization strategy. Yet ultimately it was the exclusive quality of the electoral system that brought about the end of the system by systematically keeping the CHP from power. This pushed its leadership to support a military coup that dramatically altered the institutional environment.


Introduction

The two decades following the May 27 coup witnessed a dramatic overhaul of the dominant pattern of religious mobilization in Turkey. The subsequent political reforms included a substantial modification of electoral institutions, which made them dramatically more permissive. Combined with increasingly robust religious networks and associations, this encouraged the emergence of assertive religious mobilization. The transformation, however, did not occur overnight.

For nearly a decade, patterns of religious mobilization remained very similar to those prevalent in the DP era. Despite the substantial changes in the electoral systems and constitutional reforms intended to diminish the relative importance of political parties in national life, the Adalet Partisi (AP – Justice Party) was surprisingly successful at reestablishing the broad-based coalition that had led the DP to power. Like its
predecessor, it managed to secure the support of a substantial fraction of religious activists without pursuing assertive mobilization. Among the few notable differences was the AP’s more open relationship with religious associations, but even here the difference was one of degree rather than kind.

It was not until 1970 that a new party emerged that could effectively seize upon the political opportunities created by the institutional and religious changes taking place in the country. The short-lived Millî Nizam Partisi (MNP – National Order Party) signaled the emergence of a new style of religious mobilization. Its successor, the Millî Selamet Partisi (MSP – National Salvation Party), successfully established itself as a serious political contender and consolidated the new style of religious politics. These parties forged much closer links with religious associations than the DP or the AP, directly appealed to voters’ Muslim identity, and called for policy reforms that drew directly on their interpretation of Islamic principles.

The shift from one model to the other responded to the mismatch between low intensity mobilization strategies and the opportunities made available by the institutional framework and the structure of religious communities. The continuing expansion and consolidation of religious networks and associations, which benefited from the growing economic integration of conservative Anatolian merchants and peasants, created a power base that was not efficiently leveraged by means of DP-style religious mobilization.

At the same time, the electoral reforms put forth after the 1960 coup dramatically diminished the costs of supporting an independent religious party. These were initially tempered by fears of a prompt authoritarian reversal. However, the new proportional representation system in fact made it possible to participate in elections without
undermining potential conservative allies, since support could always be negotiated in the post-election legislature.

**Changing Structural Foundations**

The 1960s and 70s witnessed the continuing growth and diversification of its religious associations. The new legal frameworks created by the 1961 Constitution greatly facilitated this process by providing a variety of guarantees of associational rights, allowing large and small religious communities to build mosques, sponsor charities, and invest in education. The trajectory of the largest religious movements in Turkey during this period, such as the Nurcus and the Nakşibendis, was also one of growing pluralization, albeit structured by the presence of recognized leaders and authorities that gave these movements a measure of coherence and articulation.

Said Nursi’s death in 1960 was a catalyst for the transformation of the Nur movement from a relatively univocal to an increasingly pluralistic religious community. In an effort to prevent the disintegration of the movement, after his death his closest disciples formed a Board of Trustees to act as the authoritative voice of the Nurculuk after his passing. Several members advocated strict control over the dissemination of Nursi’s texts, arguing that the unique bond between reader and text could be best preserved through an oral tradition in which written documents were individually crafted and handmade. However, by the late 1960s this status quo was increasingly challenged by a new generation committed to expanding awareness of Nursi’s teachings. In 1967, a group of educated Nurcus started a new publishing house that turned out a religiously-oriented periodical, *Ittihad* (Union). This magazine was closed down by military
authorities following the 1971 coup, but it was promptly replaced by the newspaper Yeni Asya (New Asia). This was the beginning of an explosion of Nurcu activity in the media, which would grow rapidly over the next three decades. This pluralism was also furthered by the rapidly increasing number of reading circles or dershanes. While many were under the indirect supervision of prominent Nurcu leaders, others were only nominally under the oversight of the Board of Trustees. Increasing availability of Nur texts, along with members committed to expanding the movement’s presence across the country, resulted in the emergence of hundreds of dershanes. The participative quality of these associations, in which local leaders took up positions of authority, virtually ensured that diverse voices would emerge under the broad umbrella of the movement.

Crucially, however, growing pluralism was constrained by the presence of broadly recognized movement elites, who also acted as points of reference for the Nurcu community as a whole. While encouraging discussion and cooperation, the Nurculuk also emphasized the importance of hierarchies, and new communities were typically built around the leadership of a particular learned individual. Fethullah Gülen, who led the community in Izmir during the 1960s before becoming the leader of a global religious movement, is but one prominent example. As the Nur movement became increasingly involved in formal economic and educational ventures, these individuals frequently came to occupy positions of authority within these associations as well, giving their charismatic authority a new measure of legal recognition.

Many of these dynamics were also visible within the Nakşibendi community. Under the leadership of Mehmet Zahit Kotku, the order became an increasingly influential player in Turkish politics (Yavuz, 2003). He encouraged the re-engagement of
the order with secular concerns by emphasizing the importance of combining spiritual
and material well-being, and encouraged followers to pursue and secure success in this
world as well as the next. As a formal leader of the Nakşibendi and head of one of its
most influential communities, the İskenderpaşa congregation, he was in a position to
exert significant influence. In the long run, this was enhanced by the success of his
methods, which saw him emerge as the religious mentor of such prominent politicians as
Turgut Özal, Necmettin Erbakan, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. His injunction to engage
the world was not entirely new to the Nakşibendi, who had provided the leadership to the
1930s revolts against secularization and maintained a presence in the Directorate of
Religious Affairs.

The transition to active engagement in the public arena led to the gradual
pluralization of the order, even as its leadership provided a measure of coherence.
Nakşibendis became actively involved in a variety of economic and civil society
enterprises. The shift away from seeking refuge within the state in favor of securing
influence in civil society was unwittingly facilitated by legal reforms. Concerns among
the secularist establishment about the rising profile of the order led to the Directorate of
Religious Affairs Law of 1965, which ruled that only graduates of the state-sanctioned
Imam Hatip schools and Divinity faculty could be employed by the Directorate. This law
dealt a blow to the Suleymancı and other Nakşibendis who had found it a useful avenue
through which to remain involved in mainstream religious affairs. In 1971, private Qur'an
seminaries were nationalized, further distancing Nakşibendis from official religious
authority. This effectively encouraged many to turn towards civil society, publishing,
media and other economic activities as a means of expansion (Yavuz, 2003, p. 146-7).
Thus, throughout these two decades the Sunni Muslim community in Turkey witnessed the rise of increasingly robust coordinating associations, which operated at a distance from the clerical religious authorities associated with the state’s Directorate of Religious Affairs. These groups provided the necessary foundations for assertive religious mobilization.

**Institutional Incentives**

The institutional transformation brought about by the 1960 coup was more dramatic than the gradual changes in religious community structures. The seriousness of the military’s commitment to political change was demonstrated by the treatment afforded to the DP leadership following the coup. After a dramatic trial, Menderes and two key ministers were executed, Bayar and eleven others received commuted death sentences, and hundreds of others received lengthy prison sentences. These exemplary punishments made a deep impression on the Turkish public.

To secure their legacy, the coup leaders aimed to re-make Turkish politics by crafting a new set of fundamental laws and institutions. The result was the 1961 Constitution, which differed from its predecessor in a number of crucial ways and, unbeknownst to its architects, had a direct, positive impact on the ability of parties to pursue new styles of religious mobilization. The new document ultimately made it much easier to form niche religious parties by increasing the expected benefits of independent religious competition, reducing the costs of breaking away from secular partners, and mitigating the risks of secularist reaction.
Greater permissiveness was largely an unintended consequence of the reforms. Their central purpose was to prevent the accumulation of power in the hands of a single party that had, in the eyes of the military, enabled the DP to threaten the wellbeing of the republic. To achieve this purpose, the new document adopted a proportional electoral system, established an upper legislative chamber, set up a constitutional court with the power of judicial review, institutionalized the supervisory role of the military by means of the NSC, and formalized and expanded constitutional guarantees of individual and collective rights. All of these reduced the stakes of electoral competition. Whereas in the 1950s capturing a plurality of votes formally granted the winning party power over the entirety of state and government, the new system made it far more difficult for a single party to control the legislature, let alone the judiciary or the military (Weiker, 1963).

Proportional representation made it much more difficult for a single party to dominate the legislature or the electoral arena. By pushing coalition bargaining into the post-electoral phase, it created incentives for potential coalition partners to maintain autonomy in the electoral arena and negotiate support for the government during coalition formation, or even on an issue-by-issue basis. Given the diversity of the periphery that had supported the DP, the military and its political allies could reasonably hope that this would prevent the emergence of a unified party that could systematically threaten its interests. Although there was some tinkering with the electoral formula as parties sought to secure advantages on the margins (Hale, 1980, p. 410), the basic framework remained firmly in place until 1980.

The establishment of the NSC and the constitutional court produced a system in which the civilian government operated side-by-side with an independent military
authority and a largely self-selecting judiciary (Sakallioğlu, 1997). The upper chamber, with its appointed members and senators-for-life, provided additional protection for the Kemalist state from unexpected surges of the popular will. The new document thus institutionalized intervention by the state bureaucracy in representative politics. This reduced the likelihood that political conflict would result in a full-fledged coup by multiplying both the buffers and points of contact between the military and the political class.

The 1971 coup by memorandum, as it was labeled, demonstrated the limits of the new mechanisms. The NSC, dissatisfied with the civilian government’s apparent unwillingness to put forth reforms it considered urgent and worried about rumors of coup-plotting by junior officers, issued a communiqué in which it demanded the resignation of the government and its replacement by a non-partisan coalition (Nye, 1977, pp. 212-3). While dramatic, this intervention was markedly different from, and far less deadly than, the elimination of the previous political associated with the 1960 coup.

**Religious Mobilization from the AP to the MSP**

Why did it take ten years for the new, assertive style of religious mobilization to emerge? One reason is that religious mobilization in the 1960s, like virtually every other aspect of political life, took place in the shadow of the May 27 coup and its aftermath. Political risk calculations were directly affected by the tragic fate of the DP leadership. The severity of their punishments, particularly the executions, stood in striking contrast to the ambiguous legitimacy of charges leveled against the accused (Ahmad, 1977; Szyliowicz, 1962, p. 430). Many accusations were based largely on hearsay and
circumstantial evidence, and even sympathetic observers note that they would not have
stood up in most European courts (Weiker, 1963). Others rested on an arguably
tendentious reading of the 1924 Constitution, which had vested all sovereign powers on
the assembly and stated that representatives could not be prosecuted for their votes. The
severity with which the DP was treated dramatically altered politicians’ risk calculations,
discouraging them from pursuing risky strategies, including more explicit forms of
religious mobilization.

However, even during the early 1960s, parties had clear incentives to engage in
religious mobilization. With multiple potentially viable political actors competing to
secure the support of the ex-DP voters, religious networks could provide much-needed
support. Moreover, while its leadership was decimated, the DP’s enormous provincial
and sub-provincial resources, including its activist networks and infrastructure, remained
in place. Three tentative successor parties to the DP emerged after the May 27 coup, and
did so largely by aggregating largely intact regional clusters of DP groups (Sherwood,
1967, p. 60). The DP’s links to religious associations were a significant part of its broader
organizational legacy, and the new parties competed to curry their favor. As they
maneuvered to position themselves as the optimal partner for Nurcus, Nakşibendis, and
other religious communities, the latter acquired a new leverage vis-à-vis their potential
political representatives.

Two contradictory forces thus came to bear on political parties pursuing religious
mobilization in the 1960s. On the one hand, they were constrained by demonstrated
willingness of the NSC and the secularist judiciary to impose severe punishment on those
that threatened the established order. On the other hand, the possibility of inheriting the
DP’s infrastructure pushed them to form alliances with rising religious movements that could tilt the field in favor of one party or another.

During the 1960s, it was the AP, first under Ragip Gümuşpala and then under Süleyman Demirel, that emerged victorious from the competition to become the new DP. In doing so, the AP forged more significant ties to the Nur and Naksibendi movements than Menderes and the DP had maintained (Yavuz, 2003, p. 65). The AP government gave movement members greater access to public resources, and defended their members and organizations from secularist demands emanating from the state (Ayata, 1996, p. 44). Yet Demirel also cultivated a progressive, secularist-friendly image. He had been educated in the United States, worked in a multinational company, and his best known public post had been as head of State Water Resources Development Agency, which strengthened his technocratic credentials. After Gümuşpala died in 1964, Demirel rose through the party ranks by displacing more traditional-conservative competitors such as Sadettin Bilgiç (Sayari 1976: 190; Sherwood 1967: 61). Under his leadership, the party generally sidestepped direct appeals to Muslim identity, and entirely avoided referring to religious doctrines. Like Menderes before him, Demirel instead relied on the liberal language of individual and associational rights enshrined in the new Constitution in order to carve out legal room for public manifestations of piety.

The sweeping victory of the AP in the 1965 elections, in which it obtained 52% of the votes and 53% of National Assembly seats while support for other major right-of-center parties declined sharply, appeared to confirm the success of its overall approach and solidified its claim to the DP mantle. However, electoral victory also paved the way for greater dissent within party ranks. The main point of contention was economic policy,
but even this division had a distinctive religious dimension. Under Demirel, the AP opted to pursue rapid modernization through foreign investment. In doing so, it favored large industries and businesses based in major urban centers, which enjoyed the international connections and orientations needed to realize Demirel’s vision. This came at the expense of the small businessmen, artisans, and merchants, who felt distinctly vulnerable to competition from multinationals and state-supported industries. Crucially, this increasingly alienated petite bourgeoisie was the most religiously conservative part of its constituency. During the AP’s first two years in power, overall economic growth partially compensated for the distributive effects of economic policies. However, as the economic climate turned more challenging in 1967, contention became more acute.

Demirel’s policies provoked the crystallization of a clear nationalist-religious faction within the AP (Salt, 1995, p. 15). A first challenged by conservative delegate Osman Turan, was effectively rebuffed in 1967 (Ahmad, 1977, p. 242). In the 1969 elections the AP again secured a majority of seats, but this time with only a plurality of votes and with a sharply diminished voter turnout.

It would be Necmettin Erbakan’s MNP and its successor, the MSP, which would ultimately seize upon these opportunities to engage in assertive religious mobilization. Like Demirel, Erbakan was an engineer by training with work experience in the West (Göle, 1997: 55), but unlike Demirel he combined his technical credentials with an abiding commitment to conservative Islamic principles. Drawing on these two elements in his background Erbakan openly challenged the notion that the Muslim world had to choose between “Mecca and mechanization” (Lerner, 1958), arguing that Turkey could and should modernize on its own cultural and religious terms. His overt appeals to
religious identity, incorporation of religion into policy proposals, and well-known personal ties to the Nakşibendi order made him an object of scorn among secularist and leftist intellectuals (Ahmad, 1977), but Erbakan and his supporters gradually emerged as a near-permanent feature in the Turkish political landscape.

Upon entering politics, Erbakan published a manifesto entitled *Milli Görüş*, or National Outlook, which became the ideological centerpiece of an eponymous social movement and a series of political parties. Erbakan drew on two related networks in order to establish Milli Görüş as a social and political force. First, he drew heavily on the personal networks and ideological support of Mehmet Zahit Kotku, the influential leader of the Nakşibendi order (Yavuz, 1997). Kotku used his religious connections to support Erbakan’s various campaigns, and this proved decisive in kick-starting the latter’s national political career. Second, he leveraged his ties with religiously conservative and economically protectionist elements in the Anatolian business community (Onis, 1997, p. 757). After returning from Germany, Erbakan became a prominent figure among the more conservative segment of this group, and occupied positions of authority in a variety of business associations during the mid- to late-1960s.

These sources of support came together to propel his political career, and ultimately provided the foundations for a series of political organizations. This began when Erbakan, with Kotku’s blessing, ran for head of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges in 1968. This was a calculated provocation against the AP establishment, as he was running against Demirel’s favored candidate. Although successful at the ballot box, Erbakan’s election was annulled by Demirel, who argued that there had been irregularities in the process (Yeşilada, 2002, p. 65). Undeterred,
Erbakan then sought the AP nomination for the Konya electoral province. Once again, Demirel vetoed his candidacy. However, he could not prevent Erbakan from competing as an independent, which the latter successfully did. Once in parliament, Erbakan began to coordinate with a set of delegates with ties to the Nakşibendi and Nurcu communities. The result was the formation of the MNP.

The MNP never competed in national elections, as it was banned by the military along with other suspect groups as part of the 1971 military intervention. Erbakan was forced to flee to Switzerland and was initially banned from participating in Turkish politics. However, the group of activists that was coalescing around the Milli Görüş banner remained active. A group of Erbakan’s supporters began lobbying military authorities almost immediately to facilitate his return and allow the reorganization of the party.

In October, 1972, these came together to form the MSP, which was unambiguously intended as a continuation of the banned MNP. The party was built on virtually identical associational foundations, conservative businessmen and Sufi networks, and retained its calls for the restoration of “national” (milli) values and traditions, a transparent allusion to Islamic principles (Yildiz, 2003). The policy proposals of the party were also framed in terms of thinly veiled religious arguments, with party members demonstrating sustained interest in topics like promoting modesty via state censorship (Toprak, 1984, p. 124).

The 1973 elections demonstrated the effectiveness of assertive religious mobilization, with the MSP securing 11.8% of the votes and 10.7% of seats. The impact of the electoral system was crucial, resulting in a highly proportional allocation of seats
that favored small parties. Moreover, neither of the two largest parties, the AP and CHP, obtained the number of seats necessary to form a viable single-party government. The distrust between their leaderships impeded the formation of a grand centrist coalition, and the MSP thus found itself in the position to play kingmaker.

The MSP seized upon its success with a combination of political pragmatism and doctrinal rigidity that played to its strengths in the area of religious mobilization. Confident in its ability to use its associational depth to retain voter support, it entered into governing coalitions on three different occasions during the 1970s, once with the CHP and twice with the AP. Each time, Erbakan succeeded in obtaining several ministries for his party, including a position as deputy prime minister for himself. While in government, the party pursued policies including the ban of “pornographic” images and stricter enforcement of alcohol-sale and nightclub regulations (Ahmad, 1977). It also used its position in the ministries to reward religious activists, strengthening its presence in the state bureaucracy (Yeşilada, 2002, pp. 65-7). In this fashion, the party managed to continue to appeal to religious voters and promote a doctrinally-informed policy agenda without formally overstepping the red lines set out by the military.

This pragmatism and willingness to cooperate with disparate political forces caused predictable friction within the party. Many members were particularly uncomfortable with the CHP alliance, which they saw as contrary to the party’s principles. This tendency was particularly pronounced among the Nurcus, who had always been divided in its support for the Milli Görüş project (Yavuz 2003). Nurcu defections became increasingly common, and by late 1977 the overwhelming majority of the contingent had left the party and re-aligned itself with Demirel (Ayata 1996). These
defections, together with the mixed results of its participation in government, contributed to the decline in support for the MSP in the 1977 elections, in which it received 8.6% of votes and 5.3% of seats. However, the party retained prominent Nakşibendi support, ensuring that the religious appeals, policies, and associational links of the party remained firm. The electoral system also proved crucial to the survival of the party. Thanks to its proportionality, allowing it to weather its decline while remaining a crucial player in the legislature.

The late 1970s witnessed an escalation of violence that remains controversial and poorly studied (Sayari, 2010). There is little doubt that politically-motivated attacks in Turkey escalated during this period, driven by confrontations between leftists and nationalists (Mardin, 1978; Tachau & Heper 1983). Although the MSP, Nurcu, and Nakşibendis were all firmly anti-communist and did not hesitate to voice their condemnation of these movements, they shied away from the strategies of the nationalist Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP – Nationalist Movement Party) and its paramilitary arm, the Grey Wolves, which carried out brazen violent attacks.

This context produced conflicting incentives for the MSP. On the one hand, it encouraged the party to distance itself from radicals on both fronts, in order to consolidate its standing as a plausible governing partner for the DP or CHP in an otherwise radicalized environment. The commitment to non-violence that characterized both the contemporary Nakşibendi and Nurcu movements, and their preference for gradual over revolutionary change, provided important support in this direction. Moreover by remaining in government, the MSP was able to continue to secure state
employment for its supporters, which held the additional promise of enhancing its influence in the still largely hostile apparatus of the state.

However, the MSP also needed to keep itself relevant in an arena that appeared increasingly dominated by leftists and nationalists. One way to do so was to engage in heightened forms of peaceful but explicit religious mobilization. Mobilizing religion in this way was a calculated risk, as the military remained hypersensitive to independent religious activism. The most salient religious demonstration during this period took place on September 6, 1980, when Erbakan and the MSP organized a rally in Konya to protest Israel’s decision to make Jerusalem its capital (Gunter, 1989, p. 69). The event was the largest and most vocal religious demonstration in decades.

On September 12, 1980, only six days after the Jerusalem march, the military intervened directly in Turkish politics once again. Despite the marginal role played by religious mobilization in the violence leading up to the intervention, the Jerusalem demonstration played a prominent role in the justification for the coup (Ahmad, 1988, p. 750; Lombardi, 1997, p. 208; Tachau & Heper, 1983, p. 25). The military declared itself committed to taming not only dysfunctional Turkish politics, but its society as a whole. The generals included the safeguarding of secularism, or at least their understanding of secularism, as one of the key features of the new regime. To do so, it proposed a project of fundamental transformation that in many ways closely resembled the uprooting of the political system in 1960.

Conclusion
The transition from the limited religious mobilization of the AP to the assertive religious mobilization of the MSP was gradual, reflecting the establishment and consolidation of permissive electoral institutions and the steadily growing capacity of religious associations. The AP initially benefited from the continuing weakness of lay associations, which along with the threat of military intervention and the organizational legacy of the DP discouraged risky political strategies and facilitated the re-creation of a broad conservative coalition. Yet over time, this inertia was overcome by the incentives emerging from the new institutions and religious community structures.

Despite its inherently provocative nature, the MSP was able to remain a significant, legitimate player in Turkish politics throughout the 1970s. It did so not by attracting an enormous number of voters (its vote share hovered around 10% of the electorate), but rather by successfully exploiting a fragmented party system and reinforcing its associational foundations. The institutional and structural environment in which the MSP operated dramatically facilitated the development of this niche party strategy.

The ability of the MSP to mobilize religious voters in consistent but not overwhelming numbers enabled it to enter into three coalition governments and to extract symbolically and strategically important concessions from its secular governing partners. By 1980, when Turkey’s escalating domestic strife, in which Islamic forces played little part, prompted the military to intervene in politics yet again, the MSP had successfully established assertive religious mobilization as a viable instrument for political contestation in Turkey.
A Contested Adaptation (1981-2001)

Introduction

The next two decades were marked by the coexistence of groups advocating limited religious mobilization with others pursuing assertive religious mobilization. Initially, the division was between Turgut Özal’s Anavatan Partisi (ANAP – Motherland Party), a center-right party, and Erbakan’s Refah Partisi (RP – Welfare Party), a Milli Görüş vehicle that gathered the remnants of the MSP. The decline of ANAP led to an uneasy but electorally successful convergence of both groups within the RP. This was driven by the dramatic expansion of Islamic associations amidst a restrictive electoral environment. However, a political crisis at the end of the 1990s led to the collapse of the RP and ultimately to a schism between its reformist and traditionalist wings.

The ANAP pioneered a new style of selective religious mobilization. Özal seized upon the opportunities provided by the uncertain post-coup environment to position his party as the leader of a broad conservative coalition. In doing so, he took advantage of his close ties to religious associations while abstaining from open appeals to religious identity or from putting forth doctrinally-driven platforms. Relying on this strategy, the party maintained a hegemonic position during much of the 1980s. However, its dependence on a single dominant figure ultimately caused the party to fail following Özal’s exit from the party and unexpected death.

In contrast, the RP initially attempted to revive the assertive approach that had paid off well for the MSP. The failure of these efforts led its leadership to realize that electoral success under altered institutional and structural conditions required a re-
thinking of its religious mobilization strategy. Grudgingly, the party turned away from
the more assertive elements of its religious mobilization strategy, often developing a dual
track approach that reflected the growing distance between its doctrinally-committed old
guard and an increasingly influential set of reformers. Nevertheless, the new strategy led
the party to electoral success, and the RP formed the first Islamist-led government in
Turkey in 1996. However, the military toppled the government in 1997 and banned the
RP the subsequent year. The crisis strained the traditionalist-reformist partnership and led
to a formal schism in 2002.

The growing salience of religious mobilization was powered by dramatic changes
to Turkey’s religious community structure and the incentives generated by its restrictive
electoral rules. The rapid expansion of Islam-oriented businesses and business
associations during this period, along with the consolidation of transnational networks
and the growing institutionalization of prominent association created an enormous pool
of resources for religious activists and their representatives. At the same time, restrictive
electoral institutions made it virtually impossible to pursue a niche-party strategy. A
dramatic electoral threshold rewarded pre-electoral coalition building, while preventing
smaller parties from entering office, in effect pushing the RP to adopt a more limited
style of religious mobilization. Even after the military intervention brought its collapse,
these incentives remained in place to shape the strategies of its successors.

**Shifting Foundations of Religious Mobilization**

The 1980s witnessed the accelerating expansion of religious associations and the
further consolidation of both domestic and transnational religious networks. There was
some continuity in terms of form, with broad communities, such as the Nurculuk and Nakşibendi, providing a loosely coordinated framework and a common language, and more coherent and specialized associations within them, such as the Gülen movement and Milli Görüş, serving as vehicles for more concrete collective action. However, the scope and resources of these associations were dramatically expanded, and new associational types emerged as important players alongside these increasingly well-established groups. In particular, the expansion of business enterprises owned by religious groups and persons, and their organization through associations like the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (MÜSİAD), had a direct impact on religious mobilization. The overall result was an increasingly confident and effectively coordinated religious community, with an enhanced capacity for collective action but significant pluralism and no community-wide veto players.

This broad-based transformation of the religious community structure was made possible by a crucial shift in public policy following the 1980 coup: the move away from a centralized, statist economy in favor of liberalizing economic reforms. This facilitated an economic take-off in the religiously conservative and historically less-developed provinces of central Turkey, a phenomenon often referred to as the rise of the “Anatolian Tigers” (Cizre-Sakallioglu & Yeldan 2000; Demir, Acar & Toprak, 2004; Öniş & Türem, 2002). This process, alternatively described as the emergence of the “Islamic subeconomy” (Kuran, 1995) or “Islamic capital” (Demiralp, 2009), was characterized by the rapid emergence of small and medium enterprises that embrace an explicit religious discourse and orientation. It was powered by a variety of mechanisms, the relative impact of which remains contested: an improved investment climate for small and medium
employers, remittances from Turkish workers in Western Europe, and newly legalized institutions of Islamic or interest-free banking (Hosgor, 2011, pp. 343-4). These mechanisms facilitated capital accumulation in regions where it had previously been absent, allowing the formation of new, competitive firms in Turkey’s historic periphery, and directly reinforced existing religious communities and networks.

Remittances sent by Turks working in Western Europe played a direct role in both the emergence of a religious business sector and the consolidation of transnational religious movements. Religion served as a common bond within the enormous Turkish expatriate community in places like Germany, and religious associations such as Milli Görüş, the Nurcu and Gülen movements found this to be a propitious environment for expansion and recruitment (Kuru, 2005; Maigre, 2007). These organizations in turn nudged the flow of remittances towards conservative businesses and institutions, thus coordinating investments by conservative Muslims (Yavuz, 2003: 228). In doing so, it allowed them to engage in the modern, globalized economy without sacrificing their religious identity (Göle, 2000; Keyman, 2007).

The process of capital accumulation, investment, and consolidation of Islamic networks was further enhanced by the 1983 legalization of interest-free or Islamic banking (Demir, Acar & Toprak, 2004, p. 170). The formation of the interest-free banks greatly facilitated the effective flow of capital among devout Muslims that had previously been hesitant to put their money in conventional banks or take out loans due to their concerns about the legitimacy of interest payments. The emergence of this increasingly transnational, but distinctly Turkish, business-associational nexus created a vast new pool of resources that religious parties could potentially tap into.
The community’s capacity for collective action was dramatically enhanced by the emergence of new business associations, the best-known and most important of which was MÜSİAD. Formed in 1990 by a collection of young, religious business owners, MÜSİAD rapidly expanded to become a plausible alternative to the well-established Turkish Industrialist and Businessmen’s Association, TÜSIAD, which had existed since the 1970s and represented the largest companies in Turkey. In contrast, MÜSİAD emphasized that it aimed to provide a voice for small and medium firms that resented the favoritism and tight links that characterized the relationship between the state and larger companies typically located in or around Istanbul (Gulalp, 2001, p. 439). As part of its effort to reassert its difference from the establishment, it explicitly relied on Islamic referents in its public statements and maintained explicit links to other religious associations (Keyman & Koyuncu, 2005, p. 112). The public policy dimension of their work rapidly transferred onto the political arena, where its members supported rising Islamist candidates against more secular establishment forces.

It was far from obvious, however, whether this new structural configuration would lead to more or less assertive forms of religious mobilization. By de-linking economic resources from the preferences of the secularist elite and empowering critics of Kemalist secularism, it potentially increased the expected yields from explicit appeals to religious identities, doctrines, and associations. Yet by encouraging religious activists to become formalized and invested in the global economy, it simultaneously discouraged them from adopting tactics that might prove unduly disruptive or provocative. Moreover, the continuing diversity within the religious community, which included groups with clearly distinct preferences, resources, and organizational styles, suggested the possible
emergence of multiple, viable religious parties pursuing different styles of mobilization. Therefore, while the structural transformation of the 1980s and 90s gave religious mobilization new impetus, it did not in itself provide it with a clear direction.

**New Institutional Opportunities and Constraints**

The new institutional environment directly encouraged the formation of broad, centrist parties capable of capturing substantial fractions of the national vote. The main goal of the architects of the 1982 Constitution had been to strengthen the state vis-à-vis society, as a reaction to the polarization and social conflict of the 1970s (Gunter, 1989; Lombardi, 1997). The new document contained a series of institutional reforms intended to alleviate this shortcoming, including a ten percent threshold for parties seeking seats in the national legislature, substantially expanded powers for the National Security Council, and a strengthened presidency. Jointly, these were intended to prevent the fragmentation of the legislature, while increasing the power of unelected and indirectly elected state institutions.

The new 10% national vote threshold represented a momentous change for political parties in Turkey. One of the military’s central concerns during the 1970s had been the inordinate power wielded by small parties, such as the MSP, in the legislature, and the ensuing fragility of governing coalitions. By repeatedly depriving the largest parties of an outright majority and making them dependent on the favor of fringe parties, permissive proportional representation had resulted in weak governments that consistently failed to provide the military with a civilian working partner. The solution to this problem was sought in the threshold, which dramatically limited the ability of small
parties to secure any seats in the legislature with which they might hold the government hostage. Under the new constitution, no party that obtained less than 10% of the nationwide vote could obtain a seat, even if they won an overwhelming majority in specific electoral districts. The new law thus severely penalized small parties, especially regionally concentrated ones, and encouraged the formation of broad, pre-electoral coalitions.

The effect of this threshold on political outcomes has been dramatic. Relying on Taagepera’s formulas for predicting party sizes (Taagepera, 2007), we can estimate that without the threshold the Turkish electoral system since 1983 would have created legislatures with an average of 7.25 parties holding at least one seat, average parties holding 13.7% of seats, and a largest party holding about 37% of seats. This would be a highly fragmented legislature, even more so than the one operating during the 1970s due to the greater number of total seats available in the assembly. Winners would almost certainly have had to form coalitions in order to govern. Instead, due to the 10% threshold, since the 1983 elections Turkish legislatures have contained an average of 3.7 seat-holding parties, an average party with 29% of seats, and a largest party holding 48% of seats (see also Shugart, 2011). Absent the threshold, single-party government would be extremely unlikely, but with the threshold, it has emerged in half the elections (1987, 2002, 2007 and 2011). Moreover, while clearly still capable of producing minority and coalition governments, the new electoral system effectively ensures that any government-formation negotiations take place between large parties representing significant swaths of the political spectrum, rather than single-issue or niche associations.
The enhanced powers of the NSC and the indirectly chosen presidency also shifted power away from the elected government and representative institutions. While Turkey remained a parliamentary regime, the presidency was set up to act as a restraint against populist excesses and as a bridge between the NSC and the government. The presidency had very limited executive authority, and its new powers were largely oriented towards sanctioning and controlling the legislature. The president could also use his power vis-à-vis the NSC to pressure the legislature, since by setting the agenda for the former he could force the council of ministers, which is formally responsible to the Assembly, to prioritize his concerns (Heper & Cinar, 1996, pp. 491-2). The first post-coup president was General Evren, leader of the coup. The military therefore understandably considered the presidency a far more reliable institution than the government or the legislature.

Patterns of Religious Mobilization

The most successful political party of the 1980s was the ANAP, which relied on a limited form of religious mobilization. Its success was initially a consequence of the military’s efforts to directly alter Turkey’s political landscape. General Evren did not allow any of the pre-coup parties or their direct successors to participate in the 1983 election, leaving the field open for their own candidates and those of the ANAP. The latter benefited greatly from the eclectic background of its leader, Turgut Özal, who combined ties to the military with credible independent appeal and religious devoutness (Ahmad, 1988, p. 767; Salt, 1995, p. 17). The ANAP’s relative autonomy vis-à-vis the generals made it a focal point for critics of the coup, allowing it to benefit from their
support without having to directly challenge the military. In this context, the party proved enormously successful, with Özal becoming Prime Minister with a solid majority of seats (Sayari, 2008).

Özal pursued a limited mobilization strategy adapted to a restrictive electoral environment in which religious associations were increasingly salient. He used religious referents in many of his speeches, but avoided portraying his party as the unique bearer of religious identity. In addition, he maintained well-known links to religious associations that more closely resembled those of the Islamist Erbakan than those of his center-right predecessors. Like Erbakan, he had direct ties to Mehmet Kotku, the influential leader of the Nakşibendi Iskenderpaşa community, who acted as his spiritual mentor. Özal’s ties to religion were also indirectly strengthened by the military’s embrace of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis as a doctrine for legitimizing its efforts to transform society and politics (Yavuz, 1997, 2003). This was particularly manifest in educational reform, which ultimately made religious education compulsory (Yavuz, 1997, p. 67). Although these policies were largely driven by the military, their implementation under Özal strengthened his reputation as a supporter of religious identity.

In summary, Özal and the ANAP benefited from the particularities of the post-coup environment: the threshold delivered a disproportionate number of votes in its favor, and the support of several religious groups, including the Nurcu and several Nakşibendi communities contributed to its success. However, the ANAP was not the only party attempting to mobilize religion in the electoral arena.

Erbakan’s supporters formed the RP in 1983 as a replacement for the MSP and a vehicle for the Milli Görüş movement. It was prevented from participating in that year’s
national elections, however, and it was not until the municipal elections of 1984 that it was able to measure its strength at the polls. In that contest, it managed to secure representation in Van and Urfa, but overall it captured less than 5% of the national vote, a disappointing result albeit one that could still be partly attributed to the aftereffects of the coup and particularly to the banning of its most popular candidate, Erbakan (Yavuz, 1997, p. 71).

Over the next three years, the RP sought to gain prominence in an electoral environment dominated by the ANAP, in part by engaging in more assertive forms of religious mobilization. Among the most notable events in the RP’s campaign was a demonstration on January 16, 1987, in favor of raising the ban on Erbakan’s candidacy. Held in Istanbul, it drew on the party’s enduring connections to religious associations in order to gather Erbakan supporters, and included explicit appeals to religious identity and doctrine (Ahmad, 1988, p. 751). Özal, under pressure from pre-coup political forces and debilitated by difficulties in Turkey’s adjustment to economic liberalization, decided to hold a referendum on whether banned candidates should be allowed to participate in the 1987 national elections (Karabeilas, 1999, p. 137). This pitted the ANAP and supporters of the 1982 coup against a broad coalition of forces, ranging from conservative Islamists to social democrats. The referendum passed by a minute margin, with 50.2% of valid votes in favor of allowing banned politicians to participate.

With Erbakan’s return the RP expected to do well in the 1987 elections, but the results were disappointing. The party secured only 7.2% of votes, an improvement over its performance in 1984 but nevertheless well short of the requirements for gaining representation in the national legislature. This failure provoked serious debate within the
party. Some members argued for the need to focus on assertive religious mobilization and promote social transformation, while other began to explore the possibility of diversifying the party’s support base by de-emphasizing openly religious appeals (Ahmad, 1988, p. 768). Neither of these strategies had substantial support, however, and the party gained 9.8% of votes in the 1989 municipal elections, which put the threshold tantalizingly within reach (Yıldız, 2003, p. 195).

For the 1991 election, the party formed an alliance with the Milliyetçi Çalıșma Partisi (Nationalist Working Party – MÇP) and the smaller Reformist Democratic Party. Establishing this coalition necessarily entailed some dilution of the RP’s distinctive style of religious mobilization. The success of this stratagem, through which the coalition partners gained 16.2% of votes and 62 seats in the legislature, made it a crucial moment for the party. The success of this coalition vividly demonstrated the value of expanding the party’s support base, a lesson that would not be lost on younger cadres.

The RP now pursued religious mobilization on different scale. Its members used the legislature as a new platform, arguing that the party represented a “deeper Turkey” that held Islam as a core referent but was primarily concerned with honest government and liberalized economic development (Yavuz, 1997, p. 70). At the municipal level, the party developed explicit links to local religious groups, while emphasizing pragmatic reforms and service delivery (Akinci, 1999). Religious activists managed to form collaborative partnerships that linked RP representatives to women’s groups, neighborhood prayer groups, and local businesses, forming remarkably effective and resilient instruments for mobilization (White, 2003).
The RP’s ability to move into the mainstream without losing religious support was greatly facilitated by the other parties of the Turkish right. The ANAP found itself on the defensive since the 1987 referendum and especially since Özal’s ascent to the presidency in 1988 (Heper & Cinar, 1996). The growing antagonism between Özal and Demirel resulted in a deep split in the center right. Özal’s sudden death in 1993 and his replacement in this post by Demirel did nothing to ease the animosity between ANAP and the successor to Demirel’s AP, the Doğru Yol Partisi (DYP – True Path Party), now led by Tansu Çiller. Moreover, the ANAP and DYP competed to position themselves as defenders of moderate, that is privatized and quiescent, Islam against the more outspoken RP (Lombardi, 1997, p. 194). The purging of religious activists from ANAP’s ranks in the early 1990s, coupled with the DYP’s ongoing criticism of religious activism (Yıldız, 2003, p. 195), cost them support among religious voters and Nurcu and Nakşibendi groups.

The municipal elections of 1994 proved to be a second crucial moment for the RP. Its candidates, buoyed by their reputation as effective administrators and credible political outsiders, managed to capture 19.7% of the national vote and the mayoral offices in Istanbul and Ankara, along with 27 other major cities. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, newly elected Mayor of Istanbul, instantly became a prominent and controversial figure in national politics. The following year the party continued along the road of electoral success, securing 21.4% of votes and 158 seats in the legislature, a result that made RP the single largest party in the assembly. During this time, the RP’s campaign brought Islamic identity into in speeches and policy proposals, calling for stronger links to Muslim-majority countries and the protection of the rights of pious individuals (Yavuz,
1997, pp. 73-4). It also stood for economic policies associated with the religious business groups associated to MÜSİAD, such as the defense of private enterprise and institutions of interest-free banking (Mecham, 2004, p. 342).

However, electoral success brought with it a new set of challenges to a party that billed itself as both a pragmatic problem-solver and a committed advocate of religious reform. After some maneuvering, and seizing upon divisions among center-right parties, Erbakan became Prime Minister in a coalition with Çiller’s DYP (Meyer, 1998, pp. 491-2). However, this tenuous alliance, built largely on the threat of exposing corruption by Çiller’s previous administration, clashed directly with its religious mobilization strategy.

Constrained by his coalition partner and wary of provoking an extra-electoral reaction from the NSC, Erbakan put forth mixed signals. On the one hand, he spoke warmly of Atatürk, the military, and the recently deceased Özal; more credible (because costly) was his signing of a military agreement with Israel (Gulalp, 1999, p. 38). On the other, he pursued a set of largely symbolic efforts aimed at sustaining religious support. Much to the chagrin of the military, he conducted his first foreign policy trips to Iran, Libya, Egypt and Nigeria. These trips proved ineffectual and, in the case of the Libyan venture, deeply embarrassing (Çevik, 1996). Domestically, Erbakan also adopted strategies that did little more than provoke secularist protests. In a typical instance, he invited leaders of various Sufi communities to join him for Ramadan dinner, which was portrayed by media as a symbolic religious assault on the Prime Minister’s residence (Küçük, 2002, p. 244). The party also made a point of the need to allow women to attend universities while wearing the traditional Islamic headdress, an issue that had already emerged as a point of serious contention (Toprak, 2005, p. 175). More concretely, the
rapid expansion of religious cultural and educational institutions, along with the entry of RP affiliates into the national bureaucracy and military establishments, caused significant concerns in the NSC and other secularist groups in the state and civil society (Mecham, 2004, p. 344; Yavuz, 2003, p. 242).

Even as he courted repression from secularist forces, his failures to pursue the religiously-infused pragmatism and honest government that were the hallmark of RP’s municipal administrations were eroding his base of support (Akinci, 1999). Particularly severe was the Susurluk scandal, which exploded on November 1996 and revealed undeniable connections between Çiller’s DYP, police officers, and organized crime (Hürriyet, 2001; Meyer, 1998). Erbakan sough to minimize its impact, supporting a law aimed at curbing the press’ investigation and defending the DYP’s delegates’ parliamentary immunity. This strategy proved costly, with many supporters resenting his inability to deliver on this most basic aspect of ethical politics (Yavuz, 1997, p. 74).

By late 1996, the RP’s balancing act aimed at mobilizing religion, appeasing the NSC, and remaining in government had put Erbakan in an increasingly unsustainable position. On February 28, 1997, the military-dominated NSC issued an eighteen point memorandum advising the RP government to initiate a series of wide-ranging reforms aimed at curbing Islamist activities in the state and society (Yavuz, 2003, pp. 275-6). Known as the “February 28 Process”, it was in fact an ultimatum backed by the threat of direct intervention. Faced with this threat, Erbakan signed the document but delayed its implementation. Instead, he tried to negotiate and maneuver himself into a less disastrous outcome. In July 1997, amidst escalating threats and protests, he resigned in the expectation that Çiller would be given an opportunity to re-form the government.
However, President Demirel, under pressure from the military, gave ANAP’s leader Mesut Yilmaz the choice to form a coalition that excluded the RP.

In the months between the issuing of the memorandum and Erbakan’s resignation, the judiciary launched a prosecution of the RP. The basic premise for the judiciary’s arguments was that the party’s activities threatened the principle of secularism protected by article 2 of the Constitution. More specifically, the court highlighted the party’s efforts to permit the wearing of the Islamic headscarf in universities, its plans to expand religious education, speeches by Erbakan in which he referenced the Constitution of Medina as a model for judicial pluralism, and his Iftar with Sufi leaders (Kogacioglu, 2004, p. 448). These policies neatly mirror the diverse set of religious mobilization strategies used by Refah, covering appeals to identity (headscarves and education), doctrinal references (Medina Act), and associational links (Sufi leaders).

The guilty verdict was handed down on January, 1998, and the party was officially closed down. Five party leaders, including Erbakan, were also banned from politics. They were not alone in bearing the brunt of secularist reaction. In December 1997, Istanbul Mayor Erdoğan was arrested for reciting verses by nationalist poet Ziya Gökalp at an RP rally, which combined martial imagery with religious allusion in a way that suggested Islamic militancy. A wide variety of businesses owned by religious associations or prominent religious conservatives were shut down, as were dozens of media outlets sympathetic to the RP, including newspapers, television channels, and radio stations (Yazuz, 2003, p. 246).

The years following the soft coup witnessed a growing schism between the traditionalist (gelenekçiler) and reformist (yenilikçiler) camps that had formed within the
RP during the 1990s (Mecham, 2004; Özel, 2003). The traditionalist group was linked to Erbakan and the MSP old guard, while the latter pragmatic-reformist camp was led by a new generation of leaders clustered around Erdoğan and Gül. The choice was between accepting an opposition party role, in which the organization would pursue assertive religious mobilization at the cost of short-term exclusion from government or the substantial tempering of religious mobilization for the sake of becoming acceptable to the various existing veto-wielding powers (Atacan, 2005, p. 194).

The stage in which this debate took place was the short-lived Fazilet Partisi (FP – Virtue Party). The party was formed by ex-RP members and led by Recai Kutan, a founding member of the MSP (Yeşilda, 2002, p. 65), but Erbakan continued to operate as the de facto head of the party. Kutan argued that Refah’s failure was a product of the limitations imposed upon Turkish democratic processes, and saw convergence with the West’s democratic institutions as a viable pathway for removing many of these constraints (Dağı, 2005; Yılmaz, 2005, pp. 405-6). However, Fazilet was only able to secure 15.4% of the vote in the 1999 elections, a notable decline from its 1995 performance. Moreover, when a Fazilet representative attempted to wear a headscarf at the swearing-in ceremony she ultimately prevented from doing so by shouts and threats from other deputies (Toprak, 2005, p. 177; Mecham, 2004, p. 348). The incident led to a judicial process against Fazilet, with the state prosecutor contended that the party had become a center for anti-secular activity.

The poor performance of the party in the 1999 elections and the prospect of prompt closure exacerbated the division between traditionalists led by Erbakan and Kutan and reformists represented by Erdoğan and Gül. The party faced a stark choice between
on the one hand, striving to consolidate its religious constituency, transforming society from the grassroots, and loosening secularist restrictions, or on the other, working within the system and presenting itself as a viable governing party before both the NSC and the public at large. At the party congress on May 2000, Gül mounted an official challenge to Kutan’s leadership, obtaining 45% of the delegates’ votes and thus narrowly losing to the traditionalist camp (Yeşilda, 2002).

When Fazilet was closed down in 2001, it almost came as a relief to many of its members, who seized on the opportunity to launch their own political vehicles. Kutan and the traditionalists acted first, organizing the Saadet Partisi (SP – Felicity Party), emphasizing their continuity with the Milli Görüş tradition and its approach to assertive religious mobilization. A month later, Gül formed the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP – Justice and Development Party) as an organization committed to the reformist vision of pursuing change while operating within the existing system.

**Conclusion**

The religious mobilization strategy that yielded the RP its electoral success was a response to the growing power of religious associations in a highly restrictive electoral arena. After several failed attempts to reproduce the MSP’s niche-party strategy during the 1980s, the RP adapted to the institutional constraints posed by the high vote threshold and moved towards the center. This effort was bolstered by its ability to maintain close relationships with dynamic religious associations and businesses. Meanwhile, in striking contrast to Özal and the early ANAP, the traditional parties of the center-right underestimated the strength of these groups, facilitating their convergence around the RP.
The coexistence of seat-seeking reformists with an old guard committed to assertive religious mobilization repeatedly caused strains within the RP. These were eased by electoral success in the early 1990s, but became exponentially more severe following the 1997-8 crisis. Although the division was exacerbated by military intervention, it reflected a profound division within the Turkish religious community. The collapse of Fazilet in 2001 set the stage for a direct confrontation between these two approaches to mobilization.

**Religious Mobilization in Contemporary Turkey (2002-2011)**

**Introduction**

Regularly described as an “earthquake” (Insel, 2003) and a “tsunami” (Özel, 2003), the 2002 election dramatically altered the political landscape of Turkey, not least because it endowed a party with an “Islamist pedigree” (Sayarı, 2007) with an overwhelming majority in the national legislature. However, while the political transformation wrought by the election was sudden, the causes behind it were not. The immediate factors behind the outcome were those discussed above: voter discontent with the established parties on the left and the right, and the split with an ageing traditionalist wing that allowed the AKP to present itself as a fresh, new party rather than the heir of the troubled Erbakan administration. But the ability of the AKP to position itself as the beneficiary of other parties’ misfortune and its timely break with the Milli Görüş tradition were the fruit of longer processes tied to the constraints and incentives created by political institutions and religious community structures.
Despite the important challenges and tensions that have emerged during its decade in power, the AKP’s style of religious mobilization has remained notably constant. It includes robust but largely informal ties to religious associations and recurrent appeals to conservative notions of religious identity, while rejecting Islamist labels and doctrinally-based policy proposals. As the party completed its first decade in power, its critics’ concerns increasingly focus on the concentration of power in the hands of the party, rather than on the dangers of a sudden Islamist turn that haunted the party’s early years in power.

Underpinning this increasingly consolidated religious mobilization strategy are the same set of institutional and structural patterns that had propelled the RP to electoral success in 1995 and the AKP in 2002. A highly restrictive and disproportional electoral system rewards coalition building and discourages all but the most discontent religious voters from supporting alternative electoral vehicles like the SP. At the same time, a well-coordinate but pluralistic religious associational environment provides ample resources for mobilization, without endowing any single religious authority with the capacity to veto electoral participation in order to monopolize religious representation.

The continuity of the dominant religious mobilization model belies the notion that it depended on other contingent factors, such as the threat of secularist military intervention or international pressure by the EU. Thus, despite diminishing possibilities of EU ascension and the contentious but significant reduction of military autonomy, the AKP government has largely remained committed to its electorally successful approach to religious mobilization.
Structural Foundations

The religious community structures that facilitated the rise of the AKP continued to expand with the party in power. The religious group most often associated with the AKP is the Gülen Movement (Yavuz, 2003; Gözaydın, 2009). This increasingly influential transnational network, built around the teachings and personality of Fethullah Gülen, has secured a substantial presence in Turkey’s public sphere. It includes a robust network of media outlets, including the major daily newspaper Zaman, the Samanyolu television channel, and the Burc radio station. The growth and diversification of these media outlets has effectively endowed the AKP with a friendly voice in an arena that had once been largely dominated by secularist forces (Yavuz, 2006). In seeking to shape public discourse, the Gülen Movement also produces academic journals and funds frequent symposiums and conferences, often with an international dimension. The Gülen movement’s investment in expanding education also provided the party with a useful, if indirect, mechanism for coordinating voters (Maigre, 2007, pp. 40-1).

Other religious associations have also continued to flourish, and the salience of the Gülen Movement is often overstated because it engages directly with an international audience and is particularly active in academic debates. Despite its increasingly well-coordinated sphere of public religious activism, the Sunni community in Turkey remains deeply pluralistic. This remains the case both in terms of the broad range of opinions expressed in its media outlets (Somer, 2011) and in the diversity of its local and transnational associations (Kuru, 2005). More conservative associations, such as Milli Görüş and the Suleymaci movement, remain significant players with a substantial transnational resources base and distinctive preferences in terms of public policy.
In addition, the continuing expansion of conservative business associations has a distinctive impact on Turkey. The country’s gross domestic product has grown at a rapid pace during the AKP’s tenure, driven by the continuing expansion of Anatolian capital and halted only a briefly by the 2009 global crisis. This has facilitated the consolidation of MÜSIAD and its affiliated religiously-oriented businesses, which have directly and indirectly channeled significant skills and resources to the governing party organization. The growth of pious but business-oriented groups puts pressure on the party to abstain from explicit appeals to religious identity and doctrines in favor of a more tempered and pragmatic approach (Gumuscu & Sert, 2009, pp. 963-4).

Many of these religious community associations provide significant direct and indirect support for the AKP, both in terms of activists and resources. Yet their diversity also creates opportunities for potential competitors. Milli Görüş and its supporters remain linked to smaller religious parties, keeping the SP afloat even as it consistently fails to secure parliamentary representation.

**Institutional Constraints**

Political institutions have played both a long- and a short-term role in the AKP’s success. In the long term, the constraints imposed by the vote threshold, buttressed by the threat of military intervention, empowered reformists who advocated limited religious mobilization and sought to secure a broad conservative constituency. This gradually drove a wedge between them and more traditionalist elements willing to risk electoral defeat in order to secure the doctrinal integrity, Islamic identity, and particular associational foundations of the party. Ultimately, debates as to the best way to overcome
the threshold contributed to the formation of a party with an unambiguous commitment to reaching power through elections, rather than by bringing about radical social change.

In the short term, the electoral threshold allowed the AKP to take maximum advantage of the political crises that followed the 1997 coup. This consequence was ironic in the eyes of many observers because those mechanisms that had been established to encourage the emergence of parties palatable to the military now locked them out of the legislature, instead delivering success to their competitor (Önis & Keyman, 2003). There can be little doubt that the magnitude of the AKP’s victory in 2002 was greatly enhanced by the 10% threshold, which allowed it to capture two thirds (66.4%) of the parliament with only a third (34%) of the votes. In the highly divided electoral field, the only other party to cross the threshold was the CHP, which had been reconstituted in 1992 and whose poor electoral performance in the 1990s had prevented it from becoming mired in the scandals of that decade. In 2002, its 19.4% of votes yielded almost a third of the legislative seats, making it the standard-bearer for the opposition to the AKP.

For the other parties, the results of the election were little short of devastating. The DYP and Anavatan both captured fewer than 10% of the votes (although the DYP came close) and jointly they secured 14%, suggesting that, once again, their inability to coordinate had cost secular conservatives dearly. These parties, habituated to participating in government and lacking significant social roots, found exclusion crippling. The MHP, which had appeared poised to become a dominant force in 1999 (Yavuz, 2002), also failed to cross the barrier, with only 8% of the vote. The DSP, which had led the government since 1997, suffered the greatest loss, with its support plummeting from 22% to 1% of the vote. Finally, while the AKP flourished, the SP
proved unable to cross the 10% threshold, despite its nation-wide organization, suggesting that it bore the brunt of public rejection from the Erbakan government.

**Religious Mobilization under the AKP**

Despite the fact that many of its leaders were prominent members of the RP, religious mobilization under the AKP differs in important ways from that of its predecessors in the Milli Görüş tradition. This is most saliently in its move away from explicit appeals to religious identity and its abandonment of doctrinal positions (Cizre, 2008; Hale & Özbudun, 2009; Keyman & Öniş, 2007; Yavuz, 2009). One of the most noticeable of these shifts relates to changes to its main symbols. While Milli Görüş parties used labels primarily as a way to reference religious concepts, the new party’s acronym, pronounced “ak” for short, translates to “clean” and signals an effort by the party’s to distance itself from corruption (Yavuz, 2006). Its party banner no longer featured the Islamic crescent used by RP and FP, and still used by the SP, but rather a light bulb. While cleanliness and light are certainly no lacking in religious connotations, these labels and symbols marked a clear departure from the Milli Görüş tradition, which emphasized continuity by relying on terms from its own religiously-infused canon.

More broadly, party leaders have repeatedly rejected the general Islamist label, preferring to present the AKP as a party of “conservative democrats” whose personal values are informed by religion (Çavdar, 2006; Turunc, 2007), much like the Republican Party in the United States (Insel, 2003). Erdoğan and his affiliates have been adamant in their rejection of Islam as a source of public policy, repeating ad nauseam the argument that religion is a source of norms and values that give meaning to the life of individual
Muslims, but does not offer a program that can be directly implemented to solve political, economic, and social problems (Gumuscu & Sert, 2009, p. 958). Thus, notions of a distinctively Islamic “third way” and an interest-free economy, or the more general resistance to liberal market economics, which gained prominence during the MSP and RP eras, are notably absent from the AKP’s rhetorical repertoire (Hale, 2005). This shift is most dramatic when comparing the AKP’s attitude towards the European Union, which was considered highly suspect by the RP, but which the new party went out of its way to embrace during its first years in government (Yavuz, 2006). Rather than subjection to the whims of a “Christian club”, as Erbakan had described it (Daği, 2005, p. 9), the AKP leadership saw in the Copenhagen membership criteria an opportunity to weaken the strictures imposed on political mobilization by the architects of the 1982 Constitution and thus ease many of the extra-electoral restrictions faced by the party (Önis, 2006).

Bearing in mind the dramatic changes in Turkey’s economic, social, and political environment, religious mobilization under the AKP bears a stronger resemblance the style of Özal’s ANAP in the 1980s and to a lesser extent to Demirel’s AP in the 60s and Menderes’ DP in the 50s. In contrast to its efforts to distance itself from the Milli Görüş lineage, this is a legacy that the AKP prefers to embrace (Daği, 2008, p. 27). Indeed, many AKP members came from the ANAP, including prominent figures like Cemil Çiçek, who had been a minister of state but left Anavatan amid the internal crises of the 1990s and became Speaker of Parliament under Erdoğan. Like these other hegemonic center-right parties, the AKP relies primarily on ties to religious associations, rather than appeals to religious identity or the inclusion of religious doctrine in policy programs, to mobilize religious voters. Also like its center-right predecessors, the AKP justifies its
efforts to curb Turkey’s assertive secularism not in the language of religious obligation, as was sometimes the case with the RP, but rather in terms of human rights and democracy (Kuru, 2005; Dağı, 2008).

The religious mobilization strategy used by the AKP also has some highly distinctive elements. First, the ties that link the party to the religious community are clearly more robust than those of its center-right predecessors. The rapidity with which Anavatan’s relationship with religious orders dissipated following the death of Özal points to the contingent nature of the ties between this highly personalist organization and its religious supporters. Similarly, while Demirel cultivated the explicit support of many Nurcu communities in the 1960s and 70s, the DYP faced few internal constraints when it moved away from religious appeals in the 1990s. Finally, Menderes, while able to seize upon religious sentiment when he found it necessary to motivate his base, had been a CHP deputy with a clear commitment to the Kemalist project, and his party’s ties to organized religious groups were both conditional and limited to the lower levels of the organization. In contrast, the AKP actively developed far more coherent and robust connections to religious groups.

In most cases, such as its links to the Gülen Movement, the ties between the party and religious associations remain the subject of significant speculation in both media and the academy (Park, 2008). Yet to some extent the opaque quality of these ties is the product of the legal environment in which the party operates. In addition to fear of secularist reaction, the AKP is bound by the severely restrictive quality of Turkey’s political party law, which establishes the organizational format that must be followed by all parties. This law bans political organizations for extending to the village or
neighborhood level, although all major parties get around this by maintaining informal representatives (Özbudun, 2006, p. 550). Consequently, the strategies used by parties below the municipal level are not discussed in the official party literature or the discourse of its leaders, which provide much of the material used by academic observers. Despite this shortcoming, it is apparent that the AKP’s organization does differ in important ways from its competitors, in that it invests far more resources in intra-party education and communication infrastructure (Özbudun, 2006, pp. 550-3). The high frequency of its seminars and the volume of its internal communications bear a closer resemblance to the mass-party strategy pursued by the RP than to the more personalistic catch-all approach of most of its competitors.

A second caveat relates to the party’s references to religious identity. While the party’s cautious approach to these appeals recalls that of its center-right predecessors, the historical ties between its leadership and the Milli Görüş endow their actions with new meaning. In some ways, the AKP’s leaders can scarcely avoid making appeals to religious identity, since their careers and personal lives are replete with broadly recognized references to the struggle of devout Muslims vis-à-vis the secular state. From the time Erdoğan spent in prison for reciting a poem to the uproar caused when the wives of Erdoğan and Gül appeared in public wearing headscarves, the AKP is identified with religiosity to an extent that makes many of its public acts symbolically charged. Secularist forces in Turkey are highly sensitive to these displays of religion in the public sphere, and there is little reason to believe that the AKP’s more religious supporters are indifferent to them. Consequently, to argue that the party does not engage in appeals to religious identity appears disingenuous. Instead, the party seeks to limit their resonance in
order to avoid alienating centrist supporters for whom debates over secularism are secondary to concerns regarding economic growth and effective governance. The robustness of the AKP’s internal communication and its efforts to educate local cadres reflect not only the desire of its leadership to maintain control over the party apparatus, but also a commitment to preventing local activists and candidates from taking stances that will be used to accuse the party of relying on religious symbols or claims.

The AKP’s limited religious mobilization strategy has proven remarkably well-suited to the institutional and structural environment in which it operates, and consequently endured a number of dramatic changes in the domestic and international environment. Specifically, it remains in place despite the entrenchment of the AKP in power, the decline of its domestic opponents in the military and the judiciary, the erosion of EU-based incentives, and the rise of friendly Islamic movements and governments in the region.

During the final years of the decade, the AKP has come to concentrate more political power than any party has held since the fall of the DP, but this has not brought about a change to its religious mobilization strategy. After dominating the legislature during its first five years in tenure the party expanded its vote share to 46% in the 2007 elections, marking the first time a governing party did so since the CHP in 1977. Nevertheless, because a third party, the MHP, was also able to cross the threshold, the AKP actually netted a lower number of seats (62%) than it had in 2002. The outcome was replicated once again in 2011, with the party securing 49.8% of the vote but only 59% of seats. With these results, the AKP has consistently been able to form single-party governments, operating without substantial legislative checks on its authority.
During its tenure in power, the AKP has faced down challenges from both the judiciary and the military, effectively reducing the autonomy and political influence of these important constraints on its mandate (Abramowitz & Barkey, 2009; Cizre, 2011; Polat, 2011). This has come as a shock to its opponents, and for many it signaled the fragility of the established secularist order in Turkey. Critics of the AKP see the declining autonomy of the military and the reduced assertiveness of the courts as a signal of its growing authoritarianism (Bali, 2010). This was particularly concerning for those that saw the AKP’s limited approach to religious mobilization as a result of explicit checks on the part of the military (Atacan, 2005; Özbudun, 2006; Taniyici, 2003). Yet despite its growing influence and escalating concerns about the concentration of power, the party’s approach to religious politics has not been substantially modified. In addition, recurrent surges of concern triggered by specific appeals to religious identity, as when Erdoğan spoke of raising a “devout generation” of Turkish youth (Hürriyet Daily News, 2012a), are largely consistent with the limited mobilization strategy that has characterized the party since its formation.

The strategy has also proven resistant to changes in the international environment. While many observers have pointed to the possibility of joining the EU as a crucial incentive for moderation (Grigoriadis, 2004; Bac, 2005), the stagnation and decline of ascension prospects have not pushed the party towards a more assertive style of religious mobilization. Similarly, the success of pro-Islamic governments in the Arab world as a consequence of the 2011 Arab uprisings did not lead the AKP leadership to emphasize its Islamic credentials, but rather to tout its liberal reading of secularism (Hürriyet Daily
News, 2011). The shifting pattern of international incentives has therefore not brought about a corresponding change in established patterns of mobilization.

Conclusion

At the end of its first decade in government, the AKP continues to engage in the virtually the same style of religious mobilization that brought it to power in 2002. The strategy has remained in place despite a substantial accumulation of power, the erosion of the AKP’s most explicit secularist constraints, and a changing international environment. Continuity is driven largely by the incentives and constraints derived from the institutional environment and the structure of Turkey’s Sunni community.

The ongoing disproportionality of the electoral system encourages the AKP to secure its dominant position at the center by avoiding potentially divisive doctrinal appeals. It also protects the AKP from potential competitors by effectively drives voters and resources away from more assertive religious organizations like the SP and the recently established Halkın Sesi Partisi (HSP – People’s Voice Party). With little chance of entering the national legislature, these smaller organizations remain unattractive for all for the most dedicated supporters.

At the same time, a well-coordinated, pluralistic religious community provides the party with a plethora of potential partners, while depriving any single organization from becoming a potential veto player. Even the powerful Gülen Movement, despite its media resources and transnational networks, cannot hope to effectively monopolize religious representation. The significant but clearly bounded appeal of more assertive religious movements, like Milli Görüş, and the limited influence of the state’s Directorate of
Religious Affairs have also contributed to sustaining the diversity of Turkey’s religious associational arena. In doing so, they have indirectly buttressed the AKP’s approach to religious mobilization.

Conclusion

Religious mobilization in Turkey has taken on a variety of forms since the beginning of multiparty competition in 1946. During the six decades that followed, multiple parties mobilized religion. Some, like the DP and the AP, engaged in limited religious mobilization. Others, like the MSP and the SP, put forth assertive models. Still others, like the ANAP and the AKP, adopted selective forms of mobilization that rejected doctrine while embracing associational linkages. These apparently idiosyncratic variations responded to incentives and constraints largely derived from the frequently modified electoral system and the growing organizational capacity of Turkey’s Sunni community.

Section II shows how the combination of a highly disproportional electoral system and a weakly coordinated religious community structure encouraged party leaders to adopt a limited approach to religious mobilization in the 1950s. The DP formed only weak, local ties to religious associations, rapidly purged its most outspoken religious members, and remained highly cautious in its use of appeals to religious identity. In contrast, assertive competitors like the MP were unable to secure sustained voter support or maintain a well-coordinated support base.
Section III highlights how the relaxation of electoral constraints and the growth of religious associations facilitated the gradual emergence of a party dedicated to assertive religious mobilization. In the aftermath of the 1960 coup, the AP leadership initially replicated the DP’s limited mobilization strategy. But growing pressure from rising religious associations, combined with a growing confidence in the electoral system led to the emergence of the MSP as a significant, niche-oriented competitor for its more religious supporters. The permissive electoral environment produced a fragmented legislature, granting the MSP more political influence than its votes alone would have suggested.

Section IV traces the growing power of religious parties, driven in large part by an increasingly well-coordinated religious community, and their gradual shift away from assertive religious mobilization as a strategic response to a restrictive electoral system. The ANAP seized upon the opportunities created by the 1980 coup to secure a dominant position, supported by religious mobilization through associational ties. At the same time, the new environment made niche-party strategies unviable, eventually convincing key members of the RP, descendant of the MSP, to expand the party’s appeal towards the center. The success of the RP coincided with the adoption of a selective mobilization strategy that, while making significant concessions to the assertive mobilization model, was not entirely dissimilar to that of the early ANAP.

Finally, section V describes the stability of religious mobilization under the AKP, shaped by a robust but pluralistic associational environment and restrictive electoral institutions, which has remained in place despite substantial transformations in the domestic balance of power and the international environment. The strategy adopted by
the AKP is an upgraded version of the one successfully pursued by the late RP, combining associational linkages with cautious appeals to religious identity, with less emphasis on doctrine and the straightforward rejection of the Islamist label.

In addition to these consistent correlations between institutions, structures, and patterns of religious mobilization, the examination of the Turkish case also yields significant insights regarding the temporal dynamics of religious mobilization. Questions of sequencing and speed of adaptation stand out, given the number of parties that disappeared and emerged during since the 1940s and the variety of environments under which they have operated.

The success of particular religious mobilization strategies has an enduring impact on subsequent patterns of mobilization. Thus, despite its ignominious end, the success of the DP directly affected the strategies used by the AP, despite the changes to the institutional environment. Similarly, the MSP legacy guided the strategies of the RP and the SP, even when this proved as much of a hindrance as an advantage in electoral competition. The AKP benefits from its RP roots when it indirectly leverages religious identity, as well as from the associational infrastructure built during the latter’s tenure. Thus, the mobilizing infrastructure developed by religious parties, including their associational links, symbols, and doctrinal platforms, often became the foundations for their successors. They guide ensuing patterns of religious mobilization, encouraging continuity despite changing conditions.

This does not mean that parties are defined by their predecessors or placed in a strictly path-dependent situation. The AP inherited the DP’s mobilizing infrastructure, but updated it by developing more open linkages to growing religious movements. The
ANAP shed most of its religious mobilization infrastructure during the 1990s. Similarly, the RP broadened its appeal by toning down the MSP’s more doctrinally informed proposals, and the AKP took this process a step further by refusing the Islamic label altogether. Mobilizing legacies reduce the costs of adopting established strategies, but other factors can ultimately outweigh their influence.

In terms of speed, Turkish parties appear remarkably slow to adapt to major instances of institutional change. Modifications to Turkey’s institutional environment have been sudden and dramatic, driven by coups that sought to fundamentally transform the landscape of political competition. Electoral institutions have been one of the military’s preferred instruments in this regard. Yet political parties have occasionally taken as long as a decade to respond to them: the MNP did not appear until 1969, even though institutional incentives for religious niche parties to emerge were in place as early as 1962, and the RP remained committed to assertive mobilization until the early 1990s, a full decade after the establishment of the restrictive national vote threshold. Why the delay?

Two explanations emerge from the historical analysis carried out in this chapter. First, new electoral institutions were developed to explicitly challenge prevailing models of organization, whether the mainstream party strategies of the DP or the niche-party strategy of the MSP. Party leaders and activists invested in pre-existing strategies of mobilization balked at moving in a fundamentally different direction. In this regard, the radical quality of the post-coup institutional reforms may have effectively reduced their effectiveness in the short term. More limited reforms, which encouraged parties to move away from prevailing strategies without nullifying their investments, might have
achieved similar results in a shorter time. Second, the slow response speed also resulted from the military’s attempts to directly shape the outcomes of post-coup elections. By manipulating rules to favor their preferred representatives, the military recurrently dulled the effect of incentives for adaptation among their more popular and deeply rooted rivals. In this fashion, the military has often stood in its own way when attempting to shape the Turkish party system. Patterns of religious mobilization change over time, but they often resist direct manipulation.
CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

In the early decades of the 21st century, there is a striking contrast between religious political parties in Catholic and Sunni majority countries. Catholic parties seem increasingly indistinguishable from their secular counterparts, and instances of assertive Catholic engagement in electoral contests look like exceptions to the rule. Sunni parties, in contrast, appear to be on the ascendant. They pursue effective religious mobilization in the electoral arenas of a dozen countries, and the wave of uprisings in the Arab world may translate their appeal into real opportunities for meaningful political change. This is a dramatic reversal of the situation in the mid-20th century, when political Catholicism was at its height and Islamic parties seemed doomed to marginality. The scarcity of comparative work that moves across boundaries of tradition and examines its evolution over time has made it difficult to draw lessons from this transformation of global religious politics.

The ongoing process of globalization, and specifically the diminishing cost of transnational movement and communication along with the uneven but seemingly unrelenting convergence on elections as the key mechanism for adjudicating political power, makes the comparative study of religious parties more substantively important and methodologically feasible than ever before. At this historic juncture, we need models of religious politics that can provide a fuller understanding of the conditions under which religious mobilization takes place and how it changes over time.
This dissertation has sought to provide a clear account of how two key causal factors, religious community structures and electoral institutions, come together to shape religious engagement in the political arena. It has done so by proposing an original analytical framework for studying religious parties and by engaging in a carefully contextualized, in-depth analysis of Mexico and Turkey. By tracing the evolution of religious political engagement in these critical cases over six tumultuous decades, it demonstrated that patterns of religious mobilization in both traditions are affected in similar ways by structural and institutional factors. It highlighted the contingent character of their contemporary situation and revealed its roots in the structural trends unfolding within their religious communities. Moreover, it demonstrated the ways in which political institutions, particularly those relating to electoral rules, directly affect the how religious activism became active in elections. The findings from the cross-national statistical analysis reinforced the argument that these effects are present across a broad range of cases.

This conclusion has four goals. First, it summarizes the empirical findings from the case studies and the cross-national statistical analysis. In doing so, it highlights the ways in which the variety of evidence presented in each section connects with the broader analytical framework. Next, it engages in a systematic re-examination of the analytical framework that guides the dissertation, exploring the various points at which it could be enriched by further research and theoretical fine-tuning. Third, it engages in a more speculative discussion of the future of religious mobilization in Mexico, Turkey, and the broader universe of Catholic and Sunni countries. Using the framework developed in this dissertation, it suggests a number of ways in which current trends may lead to unexpected
changes in currently predominant patterns of mobilization. Finally, it suggests ways in which this contribution can aid the process of integrating the study of religious politics into mainstream research on comparative politics.

Summary of Findings

The case study chapters and the cross-national statistical analysis contain a broad variety of evidence regarding the impact of religious community structures and electoral institutions on patterns of religious mobilization. This section provides a brief synopsis of the arguments and findings as they pertain to each of these two key causal factors. In doing so, it points out the causal effects and mechanisms posited by the analytical framework and observed in the statistical analysis and the case studies, demonstrating how they fit together to generate a coherent and compelling explanation for trajectories of religious mobilization that can be effectively applied across religious traditions and regime types.

Community Structures

The first part of the analytical framework put forth in this dissertation is that the relative strength of clerical and lay associations shapes the use of religious mobilization by political parties. When clerical hierarchies are better organized than their lay counterparts, they tend to resist attempts by politicians to mobilize religion in the electoral arena. Clerical authorities often view religious parties as competitors who undermine their role as representatives of the religious community. They are also
concerned with potential secularist reactions by the state, which directly threaten the
integrity of the religious institutions that underpin clerical authority. In contrast, lay
activists typically find religious parties to be a useful means for gaining access to
legislatures and increasing public visibility, which in turn serve as platforms for
spreading their message and gaining new supporters. In contrast to clerical authorities,
lay leaders are often less dependent on traditional institutions, instead relying on informal
networks that can better withstand conflict with the state. Thus, when lay associations are
better organized than clerical authorities, political entrepreneurs seeking to mobilize
religion are more likely to find crucial allies in civil society.

The statistical analysis in chapter 2 provided a first test of the plausibility of these
hypothesize causal dynamics. To do so, it relied on Sunni-majority as a proxy for lay
dominance in the religious community. This was not an entirely unreasonable assumption
for the twelve years following the end of the Cold War. During that period, the Catholic
hierarchy maintained national bishops’ conferences with permanent secretariats in
virtually every country, while its lay associations were often highly fragmented and
ideologically divided. In contrast, Sunni clerical bodies were typically disorganized or
coop ted by national governments, while lay-led movements such as the Ikhwan and the
Jamaat maintained robust transnational organizations. Sunni-majority was found to have
a significant positive correlation with the first two dimensions of religious mobilization,
appeals to identity and associational linkages, with a less clear impact on the use of
doctrine. Yet using religious majority as a proxy measure for religious community
structure has clear and important shortcomings. It fails to account for the substantial
variety of clerical capacity within each tradition or the more striking differences in the
presence and robustness of domestic lay associations. Moreover, it has few resources with which to challenge civilization-based models that argue that the relative abundance of Sunni mobilization derives from the inherently political nature of Islam vis-à-vis a Catholicism that has embraced the separation of church and state. Finally, the Sunni-majority measure is invariant over time, and therefore cannot capture the dynamic quality of religious community structures.

The case studies of Mexico and Turkey provide more convincing evidence of the hypothesized effects of community structures. In Mexico, lay associations provided the impetus for the formation of both the PAN in 1939 and its smaller, more religiously assertive counterparts, the Sinarquistas’ PFP in 1945 and the PDM in 1979. Early episodes of mobilization took place in a context in which Catholic lay associations remained highly mobilized while clerical authorities were weakened by prolonged conflict with the state (Meyer, 2003; Pérez Franco, 1999). Individual bishops attempted to keep the PAN from pursing assertive religious mobilization and to redirect the energies of the Sinarquista movement away from the electoral arena. When lay activists attempted to push the PAN to pursue open appeals to religious identity, prominent members of the clerical hierarchy openly sided with its more liberal party members in opposing the move. As lay associations fragmented and the capacity of bishops increased in the decades following the Second Vatican Council, members of the hierarchy began to engage the state directly and publicly, sidestepping the partisan mechanisms of the PAN while indirectly encouraging its success. As its lay foundations fractured and bishops became more visible, assertive, religious niche parties like the PDM lost their foothold in the electorate. In contrast, the PAN consolidated a selective mobilization strategy that
abandoned distinctive doctrinal positions and gradually de-emphasized its associational ties while articulating limited appeals to Catholic identity.

In Turkey, the first episodes of religious mobilization took place in a context in which both clerics and lay activists were weak and disorganized. The Directorate of Religious Affairs, or Diyanet, an administrative state agency aimed at regulating Islam, formally headed the nation’s network of mosques and employed their imams. However, it purposefully eschewed ties to the deeply embedded Sufi networks that maintained an informal presence across the country (Erden, 2008; Gozaydin, 2008). Lay activists, in turn, lacked substantial resources through which to coordinate their efforts and resist secularist pressures. Thus, during the 1950s the DP opted to engage in a limited form of selective mobilization, while the more assertive MP failed to develop the grassroots support that may have helped it endure in a hostile secularist environment. Over the next decades, the gradual strengthening and consolidation of lay organizations and movements empowered activists while the formal clerical networks remained detached from the expanding religious associational sphere. As a result, mainstream political parties found it increasingly useful to pursue associational mobilization strategies. Niche parties, in turn, found in these movements the support they needed to solidify their appeals to identity, associations, thus becoming a credibly political alternative for the most devout members of the electorate. The resilience of the Milli Görüş parties despite repeated sanctions by the secularist state testifies to the solidity of its associational foundations.

This development and evaluation of the analytical framework represents an important contribution toward explaining differences in religious mobilization across and within traditions. When comparing contemporary Catholicism and Sunni Islam, the
coherence of the clerical hierarchy in the former typically contrasts with the multiplicity of powerful voices claiming authoritative status in the latter. Yet the dynamism and historical specificity of this situation must be kept in mind when contextualizing these comparisons. The case studies demonstrate that the ability of various actors to direct religious mobilization and commit to particular courses of action varies significantly over time. While Mexican bishops could only issue ad hoc suggestions reprimands in the 1950s, by the 1990s they had established a solid apparatus for disseminating their united views on political and social issues. In Turkey, the ability of lay groups to contest the interpretations of Islam proposed by the state-sponsored Diyanet was once very limited, yet it grew dramatically as new associations and movements gained ground in civil society. The gradual quality of these shifts and their responsiveness to local context suggests that even when religious traditions are subject to similar pressures across countries, there will be significant variation in their ability to encourage or constrain political action.

**Electoral Institutions**

The second part of the analytical framework guiding this dissertation focuses on the impact of electoral restrictions on religious mobilization. Unlike sectarian community structures, which affect the overall incidence of religious mobilization, electoral institutions discourage religious mobilization through small parties and encourage it in

---

13 This addresses concerns voiced by Schwedler regarding Kalyvas’ model of credible commitment by religious parties (Schwedler 2011; Kalyvas 2000). While Kalyvas astutely points out the role of religious authorities in signaling commitment to democratic processes, his implicit claim that Catholic authorities are always capable of shaping religious activism while Sunni ones are not is highly problematic. Moreover, it fits awkwardly with his seminal work on the limits of clerical power during periods of Catholic party formation (Kalyvas 1996).
larger ones. In other words, the pressure to engage in religious mobilization comes from civil society but the way in which this engagement occurs is shaped by institutional constraints. High electoral thresholds reduce the legislative payoffs to be had from forming niche-oriented parties that focus exclusively on mobilizing religion through appeals to sectarian identity, associations, and doctrines. In contrast, they increase the gains from forming broader coalitions that can secure broad voter support, encouraging religious activists to share power in larger, mainstream parties.

The statistical analysis in chapter 2 provided some evidence of this effect across a number of elections in Sunni and Catholic majority countries. By examining religious mobilization by major parties, it found that mobilization was positively correlated with the presence of restrictive electoral institutions. In contrast, religious mobilization through minor parties was significantly reduced in the presence of restrictive institutions. The reduction in small party mobilization is consistent with conventional expectations regarding the mechanical effects of disproportionality on small parties (Duverger, 1954; Cox, 1997). Yet the positive effect of restrictions on religious mobilization by major parties, particularly along the associational dimension of mobilization, suggests that restrictive electoral rules do not simply exclude religious activists from the political arena. Instead, when organizing independent niche parties is unfeasible, religious groups become more likely to form links to major parties, wielding influence within these mainstream political organizations.

However, the statistical analysis has a number of limitations. Due to the restricted period under observation and consequently limited within-country variation in electoral laws, it fails to capture the effects of institutional changes over time and relies instead on
variation across countries. In addition, the measures of restrictiveness underestimate actual range of electoral institutions by collapsing it into either a dichotomous or a four-level ordinal variable. In addition, it does not take into account the full range of electoral institutions used by regimes to organize electoral participation, such as party registration requirements, mixed electoral systems, or alternative compensatory mechanisms such as the allocation of additional seats to minor parties.

The case studies of Mexico and Turkey captured the effects of institutional mechanisms with greater clarity. In Mexico, the electoral system was modified over the course of forty years in a way that gradually reduced its restrictiveness. Parties initially competed in single-member plurality contests for seats in the national legislature. This, complemented by the dramatic resource advantage held by the ruling party, virtually ensured that the opposition would capture only a handful of seats. Nevertheless, the PAN emerged as the second largest party as early as 1943 and the smaller, assertive PFP entered the electoral arena in 1945. After a very weak electoral showing, the latter was closed down almost immediately. In contrast, the PAN endured and over the next two decades it increasingly depended on religious mobilization. The inclusion of a weak compensatory mechanism in 1962, which granted additional legislative seats to small parties, was insufficient to make the electoral system meaningfully inclusive but enough to alter patterns of religious mobilization. The system diminished the relative influence of religious activists within the PAN, but was not permissive enough to allow the entry of a new assertive competitor. The results were a reduced emphasis on religious mobilization by the PAN, particularly through associational ties, and a growing crisis within the party. This lasted until the late 1970s and 1980s, when a series of electoral reforms made the
system notably more permissive. As a result, a new assertive religious party, the PDM, entered the competition, while the PAN moved decisively away from doctrinal mobilization, adopting instead a selective strategy that combined limited associational ties with weak appeals to religious identity. The eventual failure of the PDM and the success of the PAN reaffirmed the commitment of the latter to selective mobilization.

In Turkey, electoral reforms proceeded much more drastically, shifting the country back and forth from highly restrictive to highly permissive institutional environments. From 1947 to 1960, the country operated under a de facto multi-member plurality rule, which gave enormous supermajorities to the largest party. In this context the assertive MP, despite its apparently strong start, failed to consolidate a foothold in the electorate and faded rapidly from the legislature. The DP attracted many religious activists, but generally avoided pursuing religious mobilization in a sustained fashion. Following the 1960 coup and the subsequent electoral reforms, the system became far more proportional and permissive. The mainstream AP initially adopted the DP strategy, albeit with slightly more emphasis on associational linkages. Eventually, however, a more assertive religious competitor emerged in the form of the MSP, a niche party that mobilized religion assertively along all three dimensions and drained the AP of some of its associational support. The re-instatement of electoral restrictions following the 1980 coup caused another gradual readjustment, with the centrist ANAP adopting selective mobilization. However the RP, descendant of the MSP, initially sought to replicate its previously successful assertive strategy despite clear electoral disincentives. Yet by the mid 1990s the RP had shifted toward selective mobilization, and by the early 2000s its main successor, the AKP, had committed to a strategy that strongly resembled that of the
ANAP in the 1980s. A dissident successor of the RP, the SP, attempted to return to assertive mobilization, but consistently failed to secure a spot in the national legislature.

One key contribution drawn from these findings is that electoral laws have remarkably consistent effects on religious party strategy across a broad range of contexts, ranging from mid 20th century Mexico to early 21st century Turkey. This contradicts the notion that religious activism is uniquely unresponsive to institutional incentives, as repeatedly suggested by some analysts of Islamic participation in elections (e.g. Waterbury, 1994; Tibi, 2008). Of course, these rules did not prevent individual religious activists and candidates from pursuing strategies that fit poorly with electoral incentives, and many prominent party members publicly signaled a desire to adopt either more or less assertive mobilization strategies at various junctures. Yet the strategies adopted by party leaders tend to remain remarkably close to those expected by a parsimonious emphasis on electoral institutions.

In summary, the case studies of Mexico and Turkey provide concrete evidence of the causal relationships proposed in chapter 2 and suggested by the cross-national statistical analysis. They identify specific connections between the decisions taken by party leaders and the changing institutional and structural contexts in which they operate, for example showing that the growing influence of clerical authorities vis-à-vis lay activists reduced the influence of party leaders who favored associational and doctrinal mobilization in 1970s Mexico, or how a restrictive electoral environment played into the decision by Erbakan and his supporters to expand their appeal by forming a broader electoral coalition and de-emphasizing appeals to religious identity in the 1990s. By
pointing out the specific role played by religious structures and electoral institutions in shaping religious mobilization, they go beyond correlations to indicate recurrent causal patterns.

The historical case studies do more than reinforce the statistical findings. By extending the analytical framework to include a temporal component, they not only lend clarity to the causal argument but also open an entire new area for theorizing. Changes in structures and institutions led to shifting patterns of mobilization in recurrent ways, and thus raise the possibility of constructive theorizing about timing, speed, and sequences of change.

The contrasting speed at which structural and institutional changes took place frequently had a direct impact on the decisions of party leaders and the intra-party struggles between them and candidates. In particular, rapid changes in institutional rules often contrasted with the slower shifts in religious community structures. Thus, leaders of the PAN in Mexico and the RP in Turkey who were heavily invested in associational mobilization clashed with rising cadres motivated by the greater electoral opportunities derived from new institutional configurations. These conflicts were resolved only gradually, and in sharply different ways, due in large part to the growing influence of the clerical forces in Mexico and lay ones in Turkey.

The case studies also suggest that sequencing played a strong part in shaping the two countries’ patterns of religious mobilization in the electoral arena. In Mexico, the relaxation of restrictive electoral rules occurred after concentration of clerical authority and the pluralization of lay associations had made religious mobilization more difficult, effectively impeding the formation of a resilient religious niche-party. In contrast,
Turkey’s relatively early experience with successful religious mobilization in the 1970s made it difficult to displace religious activists from the electoral arena by imposing electoral restrictions in the 1980s. These trends suggest potentially important theoretical refinements that could be explored in further studies.

In addition to these suggestive diachronic patterns, the case studies also reveal potentially important deviations from hypothesized expectations and consequently suggest important potential revisions. The timing of the PDM’s failure in Mexico, which coincided with the greater competitiveness of the presidential race, points to a potentially significant omitted factor in the analysis. Similarly, the endurance of relatively influential niche-party organizations in Turkey long after the establishment of restrictive electoral rules points to the need to explore parties operating outside the national legislature. A more complex model derived from these insights could be re-tested with new data or process tracing in other cases, thus paving the way for further research that builds on this analysis and thus contributes to knowledge accumulation.

The next section briefly sketches out some of the possibilities that emerge from the dissertation regarding avenues for further research. They are far from comprehensive, but illustrate the myriad ways in which the analytical framework proposed by this dissertation can contribute to a broader research program focused on religious parties.

**Beyond the Basic Model**

The analytical framework in this dissertation has relied on a number of important simplifying assumptions. With regard to religious community structures, it assumes a
relatively clear distinction between clerical and lay actors, a discernible mobilizing advantage by one of these two groups, and equivalence between internal coordination and mobilizing capacity. In terms of institutions, it focuses exclusively on electoral rules, sideling other key institutional features such as patterns of executive-legislative relations and political party laws. For both variables, these assumptions greatly facilitate comparisons across and within cases by enabling the systematic classification of various contexts and revealing important causal dynamics at work.

Using these simplifications, we can describe Turkey in the 1990s as a lay-led religious community due to the presence of well-coordinated lay movements and the absence of a socially embedded clerical authority. Its institutions, in turn, could be simply described as very restrictive due to the high national vote threshold. During the same period, Mexico could be classed as a clerical-led environment due to the organizational capacity of the local Catholic hierarchy and the fragmentation of its lay community. Its institutions are relatively permissive, given the sizeable proportional component of its mixed electoral system. The presence of assertive mobilization in Turkey and selective mobilization in Mexico could thus be accounted for in terms of these structural and institutional features.

While useful for establishing clear co-variation and for comparing overall patterns of mobilization across cases, these simplifying assumptions do not always fit comfortably with the evidence on the ground, and the case studies sometimes strain these analytical restrictions. What happens if we relax these assumptions? The following sections briefly describe some suggestive findings from the historical case studies that can pave the way
for future research. The first three address potential refinements to the structural argument, while the last two focus on the institutional one.

**Clergy and Laity**

Throughout this dissertation, the boundary between clerical authorities and lay activists is presented as a straightforward, publicly recognized distinction between professional, authoritative interpreters of religious tradition and other engaged members of the faith community. Yet the clerical-lay boundary is historically contingent, and occasionally becomes blurred and contested.

Sunni Islam lacks a formal clerical apparatus, but this does not mean that there are no bodies of specialized providers of religious services who are recognized as such by their fellow coreligionists. Under the Ottomans, the Caliphate, the şeyhülislam (head of religious courts and education), and other formal institutions created an organized framework within which Islamic scholars established their credential (Erden, 2008). Among Sufis the difference between sheiks and disciples was clear, and the use of heredity as a basis for authority in most orders reaffirmed the distinction (Yavuz, 2003: 136). Moreover, prominent orders such as the Nakşibendi maintained robust ties to the religious establishment during the late 19th century, and thus the two forms of clerical authority were mutually supportive (Mardin, 1991).

In contrast, the boundary between clerical and lay spheres has been more ambiguous during the period covered in the case studies. The sharp legal lines between imams hired by the Diyanet and other non-sanctioned but popularly recognized religious authorities blur the distinction between specialized religious service providers and lay
activists (Gözaydın, 2008; Ulutas, 2010). The status of Sufi leaders, which remain some of the most influential religious voices in the country, is particularly complicated by state policies designed to limit their effective participation in the public arena. Finally, the presence of neo-Sufi groups and communities, such as the Nurcu movement and its offshoots, pose further complications insofar as they frequently combine hierarchical authority with significant interpretive autonomy for their followers.

This ambiguity directly affects the strategies of religious leaders and activists. Faced with this state-sanctioned clerical establishment from which they are formally excluded, but in which their members have often participated in practice, Sufi communities have come to share many of the characteristics associated with lay associations. For decades, they relied on informal networks and their influence over individual politicians in order to retain their relevance in the face of secularist restrictions. As a concrete example, Sheik Mehmet Kotku’s advocacy of assertive religious engagement in the electoral arena appears less an idiosyncratic exception to clerical abstentionism and more as an effect of the partitioned clerical arena.

Mexican Catholicism also experienced periods during which the clerical-lay boundary became temporarily blurred, albeit in a different manner than in Turkey. These were linked to broader trends in global Catholicism, such as the emergence of corporatist lay associations in the early 20th century and the rise of ecclesial base communities following the Second Vatican Council, but directly shaped by local conditions. Thus, while in Turkey the question has often been about the clerical status of particular religious leaders, in Mexico the boundary has been informally challenged by the expanding scope of lay authority.
Pope Pius XI’s endorsement of Catholic Action as “the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy” (Pope Pius XI, 1951) had a particularly powerful resonance in a country where the clergy were legally disempowered and struggling to recover from decades of persecution. Clerical advocates of lay movements repeatedly emphasized that their only legitimate role was as instruments in the hands of the hierarchy (Lelotte, 1947; Alonso, 1961). However, in Mexico the weakness of the clergy meant that lay leaders occasionally acquired personal followings and a degree of influence that raised concern among the clergy. Most notably, the more mystical factions of the Sinarquista movement led by Salvador Abascal exhibited a devotion to their leader and a rejection of church-state accommodation that in many ways blurred traditional lay-clerical boundaries (Abascal, 1980; Serrano Álvarez, 1994). The resilience of Sinarquismo in the face of official disapproval by the hierarchy may thus be linked to this relative religious autonomy from clerical supervision.

In the 1960s and 70s, the question of lay religious autonomy and authority was raised once again by the spread of progressive Catholicism and ecclesial base communities, which empowered the laity and entrusted it with greater responsibility in order to facilitate Catholic reengagement with the poor. The willingness to embark upon doctrinal innovation exhibited by lay partisan leaders during this period thus coincides with a growing ambiguity about the specific interpretive authority of the laity. The reinforcement of clerical prerogatives during the 1980s thus dealt a direct blow to an important faction within the party.

Relaxing assumptions about a sharp clerical-lay boundary can provide important insights about the conditions under which religious political mobilization is more or less
feasible beyond the Mexican and Turkish cases. Historically contextualized studies of other countries and traditions, from Hindu political activism in India to Pentecostal participation in Sub-Saharan Africa, may benefit from considering how the distinctiveness of clerics as professional providers of religious services has varied over time. In addition, if ambiguous distinctions between the two groups facilitate religious mobilization in the political arena, as the above discussions suggest, then efforts by secularist governments to delegitimize clerical authorities may ironically lead to greater religious engagement in the political arena. Similarly, situations of internal religious crises in which clerical status becomes disputed may enhance the political involvement of religious actors even as they appear to weaken the community as a whole. Analyzing these dynamics may open up new avenues for constructive interdisciplinary work between political scientists and scholars of theology and history.

**Clerical and Lay Hegemony**

The model used so far assumes that at any point in time either the clergy or the laity has a clear mobilizing advantage. Yet the case studies reveal that, even after postulating a clear distinction between clergy and laity, there are situations in which no clear clerical or lay hegemony exists. This can occur either because both clerical and lay bodies are very weak, or because they are both effectively engaged in the public sphere. The dynamic quality of religious community structures, whereby clerical and lay mobilizing capacity fluctuates over time, suggests that these scenarios are not unique or necessarily rare, and that communities may experience prolonged periods of disputed or uncertain predominance. Moreover, the evidence presented in the two case chapters
points to a direct link between these kinds of community structures and prevailing patterns of religious mobilization.

In 1950s Turkey, the DP leadership easily overcame the apparently daunting challenge posed by the more assertive MP and paid a negligible cost when it turned against its most religiously outspoken members. It did so without significant collaboration from clerical authorities, which were still divided over support for the government. The timing and ease with which Menderes and Bayar moved from wooing to rejecting religious activists indicates that the latter were unable to independently mobilize large segments of the Turkish population and that the DP leadership was well aware of their weakness. Had assertive religious groups been able to sustain collective action to split the party’s conservative base, the strategy adopted by the DP might have more closely resembled the selective mobilization strategies used by mainstream parties in later decades.

In Mexico during the 70s, the debate between doctrine-oriented abstentionists and pragmatic participationists was indirectly influenced by the balance of power between lay and clerical authorities. González Morfín and the doctrinal faction drew support from a growing progressive tendency within the Catholic Church, rooted in lay associations that had grown following the Latin American Bishop’s conference in Medellín. In contrast, Conchello and the pragmatists found indirect support in the Mexican hierarchy’s efforts to consolidate its leadership at the expense of rising lay activists. Thus, the struggle between González Morfín and Conchello was tied to the balance of power in the broader Catholic community. The reestablishment of clerical supremacy in the late 1970s and early 1980s corresponds quite neatly with the declining relevance of the doctrinal faction
of the PAN, and almost certainly contributed to its marginalization by pragmatists within the party.

While these two instances are insufficient to generate a clear set of theoretical expectations about the consequences of ambiguous or contested authority, they suggest that the absolute level of organization attained by these groups has independent significance. Turkey in the 1950s shows that when both clerical and lay associations are weak, religious mobilization is likely to be limited and fragile. In contrast, when both clerical and lay associations have significant capacity, as in Mexico during the 1970s, mainstream parties may face internal schisms over the proper role of religious mobilization in electoral campaigns.

Situations in which clerical and lay capacity are roughly balanced have taken place across a broad range of cases, and may indeed by a distinctive feature of situations in which religious traditions are undergoing contained internal transformations. Moving beyond the dichotomous lay-led versus clerical-led religious community structure framework used so far in this dissertation may facilitate its application to potentially crucial cases. These include situations in which rising lay activists confront traditional clerical hierarchies, as in the African Sahel, or those in which a rising hierarchy seeks to reestablish itself as an effective authority after prolonged exclusion from public affairs, as in the ex-Soviet Union.

**Mobilizing Capacity and Internal Coordination**

This dissertation has treated mobilizing capacity and internal coordination as effectively synonymous. There was good reason for this simplification: the connection
between mobilization and coordination is intuitive to scholars of social movements (e.g. Tilly, 1976; McAdam, Tilly & Tarrow, 2001; Diani, 2003), and the collective action problem has long been considered the primary obstacle to effective group involvement in politics (Olson, 1971). When considering whether groups within faith communities can effectively facilitate or impede religious mobilization by religious parties, it made sense to ask jointly about their capacity and coordination. Yet relaxing this assumption and re-examining the evidence from the case studies reveals thought-provoking differences that can guide further research.

When it comes to religious mobilization, coordination matters more for certain types of action than for others. In order to meaningfully facilitate mobilization, lay associations need to possess a degree of coherence, but they do not need to be encompassing or include a plurality of the politically engaged laity. At its height, Mexican Catholic Action provided a unique and crucial source of support for the PAN, but its progressive offshoots managed to shape doctrinal policies without ever incorporating more than a small fraction of Catholic activists. In Turkey, politically active organizations like Millî Görüş and the Gülen Movement maintain strong networks and associational foundations, but have never approached hegemonic status within the Sunni community. The ability to effectively support and endorse political mobilization requires robust associations, but not a monopoly over lay activism.

In contrast, effective vetoes appear to require a more substantial degree of encompassing coordination by authorities. When religious authorities are divided, one clerical faction’s veto can be undermined by an endorsement from another. During the Cristero conflict in the 1920s, divisions among Mexico’s bishops greatly impeded their
effective intervention (Meyer, 1973). As late as 1994, the exposure of disagreement within the Catholic hierarchy was sufficient to prompt a rapid withdrawal from direct engagement in political debates. In Turkey, the diversity of voices speaking for and against religious mobilization has prevented direct attempts to constrain assertive religious mobilization. Notably, the death of Said Nursi and the growing pluralism of the Nurculuk community corresponded to the abandonment of the political restraint that had characterized the movement and a growing participation in religious mobilization by assertive parties. During the 1970s, divisions regarding the appropriateness of assertive mobilization weakened the MSP, but no party was able to block escalation of religious rhetoric.

This asymmetry between clerical and lay capacities has implication beyond the Mexican and Turkish cases. The higher threshold for veto actions than for endorsement poses a challenge for clerical authorities and lay leaders hoping to avoid partisan entanglements, particularly in rapidly growing religious communities with relatively low clerical capacity, as is the case for various Islamic and Christian denominations expanding across Sub-Saharan Africa or for Pentecostals in Latin America. It also signals potential difficulties for those seeking to promote depoliticized religious communities in situations where clerical establishments have been severely weakened. The enduring presence of a few substantial associations committed to religious mobilization might be sufficient to sustain religious parties in permissive electoral arenas. The situation across much of the Arab world, where clerical establishments have suffered from decades of state manipulation, thus suggests that religious parties will continue to play a major role
in their political arenas regardless of any secularist commitments that opponents may embed in their new constitutions.

Executive-Legislative Relations

The institutional argument in this dissertation has focused exclusively on electoral rules, but the effect of these rules can be buttressed or undermined by other key features of the political and legal landscape. In particular, patterns of executive-legislative relations directly affect the behavior of parties and the evolution of party systems (Linz & Valenzuela, 1994; Mainwaring & Shugart, 1997; Elgie, 2005; Samuels & Shugart, 2010). The effects of presidentialism or parliamentarism are too many to discuss here in any detail. Instead, I will focus on two that figure prominently in the case studies, and thus simply point to the possible benefits of considering their role in shaping religious political engagement.

Presidential contests typically exert a powerful influence over the outcome of legislative elections, especially when these are held concurrently (Amorim Neto & Cox, 1997). Parties that cannot credibly compete for the presidency operate at a clear disadvantage, and elections with a limited number of presidential candidates consequently tend to produced more aggregated and nationalized party systems (Hickens & Stoll, 2011). Religious parties seeking to compete for legislative seats are therefore forced to take into account the dynamics of presidential competition, at the risk of suffering a potentially severe penalty at the ballot box. Niche party strategies in particular may suffer in these situations, as the salience of key issues on which electoral success depends on its role in the presidential contest, where the party has little influence.
The impact of executive-legislative relations is not restricted to the electoral campaign, but extends to the formation and maintenance of governments. Presidents are rarely hostage to the support of small parties. Even presidents elected with the support of smaller parties and coexisting with a proportional legislature can and frequently do turn their backs on their electoral partners once upon reaching office (Stokes, 1997; Samuels & Shugart, 2003). In contrast, the combination of parliamentary regimes and proportional elections often leaves ample room for minor organizations to wield significant influence in government. The need to maintain the confidence of the legislature makes it much harder for Prime Ministers to ignore their allies or fail to deliver promised cabinet positions. The prospect of securing such a role can act as a powerful lure for devout activists and political entrepreneurs, who may thus experience a more powerful incentive to form and maintain religious niche parties in parliamentary regimes than in their presidential counterparts.

Comparing two episodes of religious mobilization covered in the case studies highlight the contrast between presidential and parliamentary systems. In presidential Mexico, despite a relatively permissive electoral environment and a decade-long presence in the legislature, the PDM never came close to wielding any political influence. Once the presidency became the focus of electoral competition, its already limited fortunes declined rapidly. The 1988 election, in which a split in the PRI made the presidential race competitive for the first time in decades, led directly to a collapse in popular support for the PDM and its exit from the political arena.

\footnote{For the sake of brevity and clarity I leave aside the question of semi-presidential regimes, despite its relevance in the post-1982 Turkish regime, what scholars call “parliamentarism with a more than symbolic presidency” (Heper and Çinar 1996: 493), discussed in chapter 5.}
In contrast, the governments formed by Turkey’s fragmented parliament during the 1970s depended on the support of small parties to sustain their precarious hold on executive office. This dramatically expanded the influence of the MSP, which used its positions in government to consolidate its electoral base and gain access to new avenues for influence. Although the fragility of the coalitions in which it participated meant that the party only remained in office for a total of three years, these periods facilitated the development of an enduring and deeply entrenched party organization.

The ongoing scholarly debates about the advantages and disadvantages of presidential and parliamentary systems have clear implications for the study of religious parties beyond the cases of Mexico and Turkey, particularly when combined with the arguments about electoral rules put forth in this dissertation. Thus, the combination of parliamentary systems with proportional representation may create unique opportunities for enduring assertive religious mobilization, while presidential regimes, often considered more prone to political instability, may create incentives for parties to adopt more selective forms of mobilization.

**Political Party Laws**

A second institutional factor affecting religious mobilization relates to party registration requirements and other laws directly governing parties (Tavits, 2006, 2008; Moroff, 2010). Party laws are not often included in models of political competition, as they are assumed to play a secondary role compared to district magnitudes or vote thresholds. Yet laws governing political parties can directly affect the types of organizations that form in a particular context and shape the strategies adopted by party
leaders. In the case of religious parties, there is a particularly important role for restrictions on partisan uses of religion. According to the Religion and State Database, 19% of countries had some form of constitutional restriction on religious parties in 1990, a proportion that rose to 30% by 2002 (Fox, 2004).

The high threshold for party registration played a prominent role in blocking the formation of assertive Sinarquista parties in the 1960s and 1970s, when the proto-party leadership consistently attempted but failed to register its organization. While the inability of the party to gain sufficient support to satisfy registration criteria can be attributed in part to the restrictive electoral environment discouraging potential backers, the substantial requirements of the registration process were the immediate cause of its failure. In addition, the conditional registration finally granted to the PDM in 1978 reduced its ability to endure electoral setbacks, such as the unexpected decline in support in 1988, costing the party the chance to consolidate its gains and compete independently in subsequent elections.

Explicit legal restrictions on the use of religion by political parties at first appear to be the most direct instrument for preventing religious mobilization. Yet while substantial party registration requirements directly enhance the effect of restrictive electoral laws, explicit legal restrictions on religious parties are a double-edged sword. These restrictions frequently coexist with religious parties, as suggested by the statistical analysis and demonstrated by the case studies. The analyses of Mexico and Turkey further demonstrated that parties use formal legal restrictions as grievances to mobilize devout voters through indirect channels, particularly associational links and doctrinal
references. Nevertheless, the restrictive impact of these laws also has an observable negative impact on mobilization.

Like registration requirements, restrictions on the partisan use of religion have been used to close down political parties, most notably in Turkey but also in the case of the PFP in Mexico. As this last example suggests, the use of legal sanctions against religious parties is usually limited to small organizations that can be excluded without undermining the electoral arena. The two notable exceptions to this came in Turkey, when the RP (1998) and the FP (2001) were closed down despite their significant electoral presence. The first of these closures was particularly controversial, and no doubt affected the strategic calculations of party leaders (see also: Cizre & Çınar, 2003). However, the rapid revival of their candidates and supporters through the AKP and SP demonstrates the limited ability of legal sanctions to fundamentally transform patterns of religious mobilization.

There ubiquity of party registration requirements and the growing frequency of specific restrictions on religious parties make these issues an important factor to consider in addition to electoral rules and legislative-executive relations. The relative absence of comparative research on party laws suggests that scholarship on religion and politics may be well-positioned to make substantive contributions along this area. In particular, the extension of competitive elections to much of the Arab world may make this an increasingly pressing question in years to come.

Summary
These remarks on possible refinements to the basic model used in this dissertation highlight a number of possible avenues for further research on the politics of religious parties. These refinements apply to both parts of the analytical framework. Regarding religious community structure, rethinking the boundary between clergy and laity, considering the independent effects of each of these two groups, and delving more deeply into the difference between capacity and coordination, could produce a more robust and accurate account of how religious communities enter the political arena. In terms of electoral rules, paying more attention to executive legislative relations and party registration laws can create fruitful links to other areas of institutionalist scholarship.

The contributions of the model proposed here are nonetheless important. Most political studies of social cleavages still tend to treat religious communities as monolithic actors, focusing exclusively on the preferences and decisions of a narrow set of leaders. This dissertation demonstrated that paying closer attention to the internal structure of religious communities can yield significant insights about when religious groups are most likely to mobilize in the electoral arena. In doing so, it contributed to filling an important and longstanding gap in the social cleavages approach to the study of political parties. Paying more attention to how these community structures are challenged and maintained, the distribution of influence among their members, and the asymmetric challenges they face in trying to achieve political goals offers distinctive opportunities for further theoretical gains.

Similarly, the vast literature on the effects of electoral institutions on political parties has been insufficiently leveraged by scholars of religious politics, and this dissertation provides only a glimpse of the potential benefits of bridging this division.
Formal institutions matter for religious groups no less than for their secular counterparts. Religious political entrepreneurs often benefit from robust associational networks, but their capacity to engage these in electoral competitions and to benefit from their support varies depending on the institutional environment in which they operate. The statistics and case studies presented so far strongly suggest that restrictive electoral institutions seriously hamper their ability to form niche parties and encourage them to form broader alliances. Yet the effect of other key factors, like executive-legislative relations and party laws remains terra incognita.

Catholic and Sunni Parties in the 21st Century

What does this research suggest about the future of Catholic and Sunni parties? So far, this dissertation has been cautiously concerned with explaining existing patterns of religious mobilization in a clearly bounded set of cases. However, its findings have clear implications about the kinds of changes that are more and less likely to facilitate or impede religious mobilization by political parties. This final section speculates about potential changes to prevalent patterns of mobilization, both in Mexico and Turkey and, more tentatively, in the broader set of Catholic and Sunni majority countries. While the arguments are necessarily tentative, they show the applicability of the concepts and categories developed in this dissertation to the analysis of current religious trends and political developments.

At the most basic level, this dissertation warns against assuming that current styles of religious mobilization are unalterable or driven by fixed theological properties
of religious traditions. The contemporary contrast between Catholic parties that engage in selective mobilization and Sunni parties that pursue assertive mobilization is a contingent product of specific historical factors rather than a result of doctrinal disagreements over what is due to God or Caesar. Patterns of religious mobilization are not carved in stone, and it is not inconceivable that the next decades will witness the decline of predominant forms of mobilization and the rise of new religious parties.

**Catholic Parties in Mexico and Beyond**

In Mexico religious mobilization appears to have stabilized at the dawn of the 21st century. The PAN continues to pursue conventional mainstream party strategies, that is, maintaining flexible ties to religious associations and formulating limited appeals to religious identity in order to try to sustain its advantage among devout Catholic voters and activists. There are no signs of a more assertive religious party waiting in the wings. What changes are more or less likely to produce a shift in this outcome? Some observers have noted a poor fit between the social doctrine of the Catholic Church and the liberal approaches of the Fox and Calderón administrations, and suggested this may create space for a Catholic competitor to the PAN (Blancarte, 2008). Proposed constitutional reforms aimed at removing the remaining restrictions on religious participation in the public sphere, particularly regarding media ownership and the political rights of priests, have also raised questions about the possibility of greater religious influence over electoral contests (Rojas, 2007).

Yet the ideological distance between religious and political authorities and the lifting of secularist restrictions are, in themselves, insufficient to bring about the
formation of new, more explicitly religious parties. The disincentives to assertive
religious mobilization combining doctrinal, associational, and identity-based appeals
remain firmly grounded in the electoral institutions and the structure of the Catholic
community. Moreover, given the current institutional and structural context, the PAN has
few reasons to purposefully modify its current approach to religious mobilization, and
limited resources with which to do so.

Indeed, if the hierarchy continues to maintain a high degree of coordination and
the laity remains fragmented, the most likely trend is the continuing erosion of Catholic
mobilization in the political arena. The PAN inherited much of its religious mobilizing
capacity from its historic partnerships with lay associations formed during earlier periods
characterized by different community structures. Some of its associational linkages
remain in place, but they have been largely displaced by secular mechanisms for
recruiting new members and raising campaign revenues. Appeals to religious identity are
perhaps more resilient, relying on a reputation effect that can be recurrently reaffirmed at
relatively low cost. But reputations are also fragile and difficult to repair when seriously
damaged. A series of high-profile corruption cases or an open conflict with the hierarchy
may at any point sharply diminish their effectiveness.

The situation in Mexico is by no means unique. Many of the small Catholic
parties identified in the cross-national statistical analysis are survivors from the period of
progressive lay activism that followed the Second Vatican Council. Most of these have
been in steady decline for decades due to the reduced capacity of their associational
connections, and will almost certainly vanish unless they can find new lay movements
from which to draw supporters and resources. In Catholic East Europe, religious
mobilization is often tied to nationalist identities and associations, and this may make it more resilient. Moreover, many countries in the region have relatively permissive parliamentary regimes, making niche party strategies viable. However, the ability of parochial nationalist movements to invoke the universalist doctrines of the Catholic Church is probably limited.

In this context, the emergence of more autonomous lay associations or the fractionalization of the church hierarchy appears to be the most powerful potential drivers for assertive Catholic party formation. From this perspective, the spread of charismatic movements represents one of the most significant ongoing shifts within the Catholic Church. Charismatic Catholic groups typically eschew political involvement, in sharp contrast to Liberation Theology and other progressive movements. Yet the material covered in this dissertation suggests that formal attitudes towards politics matter less than substantial mobilizing capacity and relative autonomy from clerical frameworks, both of which charismatic movement possess and which create significant opportunities for mobilization. This has not gone without notice by the hierarchy, and while many bishops embraced the charismatic renewal as a means to combat the spread of Pentecostalism they have long been wary of its potential impact on their authority over the laity (Chesnut, 2003). Charismatic movements with a strong personalist dimension, such as El Shaddai in the Philippines, are particularly interesting potential candidates for mobilization, as their politics may depend on the preferences of their individual leaders (Wiegele, 2005; Hefner, 2010). The success of this type of lay movement could become an engine for more direct participation by laity in the political arena. While charismatic movements remain a small proportion of total Catholics, they represent a disproportionate
number of practicing members in many developing countries. Moreover, these organizations need not expand to incorporate a plurality of the Catholic community before they can become effective partners for political entrepreneurs.

A second conceivable source of change would be a weakening of the Vatican’s control over bishops or growing conflicts within the ranks of Episcopal conferences. Due to the fragility of clerical veto power, this need not require a schism or full-fledge revolt among the clergy. More mundanely, it might entail growing dissention about the priorities of the church, which might create more opportunities for lay activists to pursue partisan projects aimed at preserving traditional values or promoting alternative interpretations of Catholic social doctrine. However there is very little to suggest that these kinds of processes are currently taking place.

In either of these cases, Catholic party formation would be a consequence of shifts and schisms taking place within the Catholic community. The electoral systems operating in individual countries play an important role in determining their manifestations in the electoral arena, but institutional reforms alone are unlikely to independently alter the status quo. The future of Catholic political engagement will be largely determined by the transformations taking place in the church itself.

**Sunni Parties in Turkey and Beyond**

The situation in contemporary Turkey bears some similarities to the Mexican case, but the underlying dynamics suggest far more possibilities for the future of religious mobilization. Like the PAN, the AKP faces significant challenges in balancing its largely inherited resources for religious mobilization with the pressures of competition in a
highly disproportional electoral environment. The tendency toward pragmatic electoralism is made more severe by an extended tenure in power. This risks eroding its relationship to religious movements, as the availability of state-derived resources dampens incentives to maintain solid ties to more demanding local partners. Moreover, the ossification of its highly centralized internal governing structures poses a real threat to a broad coalition party, which must be able to accommodate the political ambitions of a diverse set of cadres or risk the spread of corruption in its ranks. This represents a clear danger for a party built around the notions of personal morality and clean government, and risks alienating more informed religious activists.

On the ground, much of the debate centers on the diminishing influence of the secularist military and courts. These Kemalist institutions, which act as formal guardians of the secularist state, experienced a sharp decline in their power and autonomy during the tenure of the AKP. For some, this is a sign of deepening democratization, while others bemoan the end of checks and balances. Yet the analysis so far suggests that this trend may not be as significant as its advocates and critics have made it out to be. Although the threat of intervention by the military and the courts plays a prominent part in Turkey’s public debates, the degree of religious mobilization currently used by the AKP responds first and foremost to the logic of elections, rather than to external secularist threats. In contrast, there are other institutional changes underway that presage potential changes.

Long awaited constitutional changes are likely to have a substantial impact on the manifestation of religion in elections (Hürriyet Daily News, 2012). Should they include the abandonment or lowering of the 10% national vote threshold, it may make room once
again for a more assertive religious party in the legislature. This may breathe new life into the increasingly unstable organizations sponsored by Milli Görüş. This movement has been struggling after a decade outside the legislature and the death of Erbakan. A lowered barrier for entry could provide the opportunity to revitalize its political cadres, or create new opportunities for collaboration with other religious associations and thus lead to the formation of an alternative devout coalition. In contrast, the inclusion of a directly elected presidency, another of the proposed constitutional changes, might exert a centripetal counterweight to greater electoral proportionality.

Other constitutional changes may have an impact through their effect on the structure of the religious community. The constitutional debate includes proposals for the reform or abolition of the Diyanet, which could dramatically reconfigure the institutional environment for religious authority and open up more room for collaboration between imams and the popular religious leaders (Doğan, 2011; Bozkurt, 2012). A greater integration between state-sanctioned and informal religious authorities could contribute to the gradual enhancement of clerical efficacy in the country. In the long run, this could increase clerical authority and its ability to act as a check on more assertive attempts to mobilize religion. Beyond these institutional reforms, it seems unlikely that there will be a sharp decline in the vibrancy and diversity of Turkey’s religious associational arena.

Taking a broader view, the future of Sunni political parties appears both more and less predictable than that of their Catholic counterparts. On the one hand, three decades of successful Islamic mobilization have endowed many Sunni majority countries with vibrant religious associational spheres. States’ attempts to co-opt religious authorities while manipulating sectarian tensions to split the opposition have done little to create
viable intra-communal checks on religious political engagement. Consequently, religious mobilization in one form or another seems almost certain to remain an important feature of elections of many Sunni majority countries for the foreseeable future.

On the other hand, the momentous shifts taking place in the Arab world create enormous possibilities for new religious mobilizers to emerge and for established ones to undergo significant changes. The successes of Ennahda in Tunisia and the Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt confirm that religious parties are well positioned to be the main beneficiaries of the new political environment. Two of the most frequently voiced arguments about the likely impact of the Arab uprisings are that the collapse of authoritarian regimes will empower assertive religious parties by removing secular checks on their influence, and that electoral success will temper religious mobilization by exposing party leaders to the realities of governance. Yet this dissertation raises doubts about the relative impact of secularist restrictions and incumbency. Instead, it points to the importance of the rules that will shape elections, and the possibilities for structural reforms within the Sunni community.

The institutional rules set up to govern elections will affect how religious mobilization unfolds, encouraging parties to pursue either more or less assertive styles of mobilization depending on the degree to which they create opportunities for niche parties to prosper. The electoral systems inherited from authoritarian regimes will continue to be subjected to ongoing reforms, although it seems very likely that new electoral systems will include a substantial proportional component. Yet the continuing popularity of mixed electoral system and the various possible patterns of executive-legislative arrangements
make it difficult to foresee their final shape, and thus the precise kinds of constraints and incentives they will provide for religious parties.

The uprisings are also likely to have a direct impact on the structures of religious communities in the Arab world. These have long been shaped by authoritarian efforts to co-opt clerical authorities and restrict autonomous mobilization by lay associations. In places where uprisings result in the dramatic reconfiguration of these relations, they may have a lasting effect on religious mobilization. The emergence of new patterns of secularism, where state-religion interaction becomes less exploitative and one-sided, could create real opportunities for mutually beneficial accommodation between states and religious communities. These effects are likely to take some time to unfold, as established lay movements have deep roots and clerical authorities are often habituated to operating on the margins. Nevertheless, they represent a potentially dramatic turning point for the transformation of religious parties into vectors for democratic change and consolidation.

**Toward a New Approach to the Study of Religious Politics**

The study of religion and politics is entering a new stage of development. While a decade ago it operated largely at the margins of political science, innovative research and growing awareness of its broader relevance have produced an increasingly robust collection of research programs and scholarly publications dedicated to the subject. The very success of the subfield brings new challenges. It is no longer sufficient to make general claims about the existence of broad trends like secularization or religious
resurgence. Rather, scholars are increasingly pressed to demonstrate not only that religion matters, but *how* and *when* it matters.

Moving forward entails a number of important tasks, not the least of which are breaking down longstanding barriers to systematic comparison across religious traditions and building bridges to other bodies of work in political science. This dissertation has sought to make a contribution along both these fronts by setting up an analytical framework that can be used to study religious parties across traditions and by developing and testing a set of claims that both draws on and contributes to established theories of political party development.

Comparing religious politics across traditions requires theories and analytical frameworks that can recognize similarities while accounting for the distinctiveness of particular religions. The definition of religious parties offered by this dissertation does so by identifying three dimensions of religious mobilization that can be observed across religious traditions while allowing for distinctive manifestations in each one. Appeals to identity, associational linkages, and doctrinal references necessarily take different forms in Catholic and Sunni contexts, if only because the sets of symbols, associations, and doctrines in each tradition are different. The approach leaves significant room for judgment in measurement, but this is an advantage given the uncertainty and complexity of the topic (Schedler, 2012). This is not the last word on how to define religious parties, but rather a targeted contribution to an important and, given the global context, increasingly pressing conversation.

Causal arguments based on religion need to formulate testable hypotheses about the effect of particular traditions that do not treat these as univocal, ahistorical forces.
There are observable empirical correlations between specific traditions and political outcomes such as the use of religious mobilization in elections. Yet identifying correlations is not enough, not only because they may prove spurious (Stepan & Robertson, 2003), but also because they tell us very little about how and under what conditions traditions contribute to bringing about observed outcomes. This dissertation’s focus on the structure of religious communities identifies an important feature of religion that can vary both across and within traditions, and which interacts in significant ways with institutional incentives and constraints. In order to test this proposition, the mixed-method research design of this dissertation goes beyond cross-national correlations in favor of carefully contextualized, comparative case studies. By establishing the scope of particular claims and examining how they interact with other potentially relevant factors, we can open up avenues for more fruitful comparison across traditions and over time.

Building bridges to other research programs in the discipline is at least as important as comparing across traditions. The goal of this effort should not simply be to borrow concepts, measures, and theories developed elsewhere, but rather to use insights from the study of religious politics to enrich and improve them. In this fashion, religious politics can contribute not only by expanding the scope of phenomena that political scientists can address, but by improving the models that are already in use.

This dissertation’s emphasis on the two key variables of religious community structure and electoral institutions aims to provide this kind of constructive engagement. The dissertation draws these concepts from research on political parties and adapts them to the study of religious organizations in ways that directly contribute to addressing important questions about the politicization of social cleavages and the contrasting effects
of institutions on different kinds of parties. The importance of religion for party formation has long been acknowledged by scholars, but efforts to move forward in this area have been stymied by an inability to explain why religious cleavages make their way onto the political arena in some contexts but not in others. This dissertation proposed that the varying structure of religious communities represent an important piece to the puzzle. Similarly, the finding that restrictive electoral institutions do not simply reduce the attractiveness of religious niche parties but rather channel religious activists towards mainstream parties, encouraging the latter to engage in religious mobilization, represents a contribution to established institutional accounts of the role of electoral rules in shaping party strategy.

These contributions form part of a broader, ongoing effort to integrate religion into the study of politics. Too often, the growing salience of religion is perceived as a challenge to the secular foundations of political science. There is much to be said about the need to reconsider what we think we know about politics in light of the growing importance of religion, and established models in a range of subfields may indeed prove inadequate to address the emerging range of religiously-infused political phenomena. However, as this dissertation demonstrates, the integration of religion can also be made into an opportunity to enrich and reinvigorate well-established areas of the discipline. Insights gained from exploring the increasingly complex and contested frontier of secular and religious politics will doubtlessly challenge orthodoxies on both sides. Yet by breaking down old boundaries and crafting new frameworks and arguments, scholars can contribute to the consolidation of this thriving area of inquiry.
References


http://www.merip.org/mero/mero110510


