Ingrid Storm

«Christian Nations»? Ethnic Christianity And Anti-immigration Attitudes In Four Western European Countries

Abstract

Despite a general decline in religious belief and practice in Europe, questions of national religious heritage have become increasingly salient in recent public debates about immigration and integration. Using data from the 2008 International Social Survey Programme (Religion III module), this study explores associations between individual religiosity and attitudes to immigration in four Western European countries: Great Britain, the Netherlands, Ireland and Denmark. Multivariate analysis reveals contrasting associations. Identifying with a Christian religion makes one more likely to think immigration is a threat to national identity, whereas regular church attendance reduces this effect. Despite national differences, the results from all four countries indicate a prevalence of Cultural or Ethnic Christianity, where religion is used to identify with national traditions or ethnic heritage rather than faith.[1]

Keywords: Christianity; Europe; immigration; national identity; religious identity

Immigration and religious identity

In many Western European countries, immigration and the integration of ethnic minorities are high on the political agenda. While previous debates were mainly centred around issues of crime, deprivation, racism, and the economic integration of migrants, they have increasingly been focused on issues around culture and religion, indicating anxiety about loss or diffusion of national cultural identity among the majority population (Schnapper 1994: 138). For example, Sides and Citrin (2007) showed that preference for cultural unity and homogeneity are more important predictors of negative attitudes to immigration than are economic concerns. Moreover, in many countries in Western Europe, because the majority of non-western immigrants are Muslims, and the majority of Muslims are immigrants or immediate descendants of immigrants, «immigration» is closely associated with «Islam» to the extent that they are almost synonymous (Casanova 2007: 61). As a consequence, the national identity and Christian her-

itage of Western European countries are frequently mobilised as an argument against the immigration of religious minorities. It is thus appropriate to ask to what extent being Christian is associated with viewing immigration as a threat to national identity.

Religious identity without religiosity

In general, Christianity has become less important in Europe over the past century. The decline in traditional religion is evident whether one measures it by the political influence and power of religious institutions, the numbers in the pews on an average Sunday or the popularity of the most common religious beliefs. In the UK for example, Church membership fell from 27 percent of the population in 1900 to 10 percent in 2000, the number of clergy fell by 25 percent in the same period, and the percentage of people who believe in God declined from 43 percent in the 1950s to 26 percent in 2000 (Bruce 2002: 66–72). This has led the secularisation paradigm to be dominant for most of the same period (Swatos and Christiano 1999). Nevertheless, some proponents of this paradigm can be criticised for ignoring the many people in Europe who have abandoned traditional forms of Christian belief and practice, but who nevertheless embrace a Christian identity. According to survey research, approximately half of the European population «are neither regular churchgoers nor self-consciously nonreligious» (Voas 2009: 155; Storm 2009) and cannot easily be classified as either religious or nonreligious. Grace Davie (2007: 140) uses the concept «vicarious religion» to describe the situation in modern Europe, arguing that many think religious traditions are important, but do not feel inclined to become involved as long as there are others who believe, worship and uphold moral standards and there are opportunities for religious ritual on special occasions. Such tacit approval of religion is difficult to measure, but examples can be found in the continued popularity of cathedrals, pilgrimages and religious rites of passage (Davie 2006).

However, the survival of religion in its own right depends on the existence of a living tradition. As Callum Brown (2001) points out, Christianity has lost its «base of discursivity» in modern Britain, meaning that many people lack the language, cultural capital and social expectations to engage in religious practice. With loss of religious human capital (Iannaccone 1990), religious identity only becomes meaningful when it «finds some major social role to play other than mediating the natural and supernatural worlds» (Bruce 1996: 96), for example by being associated with other cultural identities.

Demerath (2000: 127) uses the term 'cultural religion' to describe those situations in which «religion affords a sense of personal identity and continuity with the past even after participation and in ritual and belief have lapsed». A similar concept 'ethnic religion' is used by Hervieu-Léger (2000:157) to describe how religious identities can survive in otherwise secularising countries by serving as a marker of ethnic belonging and cultural heritage. References to religious tradition in reaction to loss of collective identity can be found to a varying degree in all European countries, she argues. While economic uncertainty and political crisis may make such responses more acute and threatening, they are not necessary for these developments to take place in more mode-

rate or less widespread forms. As examples she cites the importance of the Lutheran state church in Sweden and Finland and *Front National*'s use of Christian imagery to mobilise support in France. The reason why this traditionalism finds popular resonance in economically stable and relatively egalitarian societies is that a threat to identity is not necessarily a threat to material wealth or liberal values. Rather, the references to religion may function «to preserve a sense of community which is in danger of being trivialized by the material and moral uniformity of the welfare state» (Hervieu-Léger 2000: 160).

Like the majority of the individuals in its populations, European nation states as collectives appear to hold ambiguous and contradictory attachments to religion. Curiously, the countries that have retained a state church, such as Britain and Denmark, are among the most secular countries in the world measured by individual beliefs and attendance. The images of European countries as essentially Christian or essentially secular are used interchangeably depending on the context, and on the «other» that it is contrasted with. Discussions about the integration of Muslims in particular often construct an opposition between Islam on the one hand and Christianity, democracy and liberalism on the other. An alternative account contrasts secular modernity with all forms of religion (Kinnvall 2004: 758).

This paper explores the individual attitudes to religion and how they are related to religious affiliation and practice in four European countries, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark and Ireland. First, the association between religion and attitudes to immigration are presented both generally, and for each of the countries separately. In the second part of the paper, the relationship will be analysed using quantitative survey data from the International Social Survey Programme.

Christianity and anti-immigration: Is there a relationship?

If Christianity is still a salient part of national identification in modern Europe, and if worry about immigration is mainly due to feeling one's national identity threatened by cultural diversity, then we would expect there to be an association between xenophobic attitudes and Christian identification. However one could also plausibly argue that exposure to and assimilation of Christian moral teachings would make one less prejudiced and more likely to welcome people of different backgrounds. For example, in a previous study, Scheepers et al. (2002) found that while religious affiliation is positively associated with ethnic prejudice in Europe, the more religion is an important part of people's lives the less prejudiced they are likely to be. Billiet (1995: 231) shows how among Flemish Catholics, church attendance has an indirect negative effect upon ethnic prejudice by decreasing two important predictors of prejudice, namely utilitarian individualism and feelings of political powerlessness and distrust. These attitudes are transmitted through weekly sermons as well as through social organisations and Christian institutions. Kristin Strømsnes (2008) also showed church attenders in Norway to be generally more tolerant of marginal groups in society. American studies show similar associations between religious involvement, social engagement and tol-

erance. Putnam (2000) sees churchgoing as part of a broader pattern of social involve-ment and public engagement and observes a «tie between religion and altruism» (Putnam 2000: 67). Wuthnow (2003: 425) shows that «the vast majority of church members believe in norms about overcoming racial differences». It is thus an open question what exactly the relationship between Christianity and attitudes to immigra-tion in Europe looks like. The main question explored in this study is whether Christian identification and church attendance make one more or less likely to think immigration is a threat to national identity in Western Europe.

Further, this relationship may vary between Western European countries. Despite having in common a Christian heritage and a relatively secular present, there are a number of important variations between European nation states. The levels of indivi-dual religiosity, religious pluralism and the main denominations, the institutional rela-tionship between church and state, the number and origin of immigrants and other aspects of religious and political history are all important variables that can only be included through a comparative study. Great Britain, Ireland, the Netherlands and Denmark represent four different models of Western European Christianity. There are established churches in Britain (England and Scotland) and in Denmark, but not in the other two countries. Denmark and Ireland are both religiously homogenous whereas Britain and the Netherlands are more pluralist. The Irish population has maintained a relatively high level of religious involvement, whereas the other three countries are among the most secular in the world. Moreover the majority denominations differ: In Denmark it is Lutheran, in Britain Anglican, in Ireland Catholic and in the Netherlands the Reformed Protestant and Catholic populations are almost of equal size. As for the levels of immigration, Britain and the Netherlands are both former colonial powers with relatively high levels of immigration from non-European countries. Denmark has a shorter history of large-scale immigration from outside Europe, but its immigrant population from non-Western countries has grown rapidly in the past few decades. Finally, Ireland's immigrants have been few and mainly from other European and pre-dominantly Catholic countries. The following sections provides short introduction to religion and immigration in each country, before introducing the quantitative data ana-lysis.

Great Britain

Although Great Britain is a state of three nations, England, Scotland and Wales, it is possible to talk of a British National identity from the mid 18th century onwards (Colley 1992: 315). Protestantism was an important forger of British identity from the start not least because it distinguished Britons from their Catholic neighbours in both Ireland and continental Europe (Colley 1992:316). Moreover, British colonialism in Asia and Africa provided multiple «others» against which the British appeared remark-ably culturally similar to each other by comparison (Colley 1992:324).

Despite its established Churches, Britain is not and has never been religiously homogenous. Methodism, Baptism, Quakerism and others Christian groups emerged

and grew independently of the established Churches throughout the period that Beck-ford (1991: 179) calls «The great age of religious creativity», after the reformation until at least the late 18th century. The Catholics represent another significant religious minority. However, their internal diversity in terms of culture, ethnicity and class has prevented them from forming a separate political community comparable to those found in continental Europe.

Currently, Britain can be described as largely secular. While the country is formally religious in the sense of having established Churches in England and Scotland, this has very little bearing on the life of British citizens (Voas and Day 2007: 95) Data from the 2008 British Social Attitudes Survey supports this. Forty-three percent of the British population regard themselves as having no religion, almost half identify themselves as Christian (23 percent Anglican, 9 percent Roman Catholic and 18 percent Other Christian) and 6.7 percent belong to non-Christian religions. More than 70 percent of those with a non-Christian religion describe their racial or ethnic background as non-white. The largest minority religion is Islam (2.7 percent in the 2001 census) followed by Hinduism and Sikhism (ONS 2001). In 2007, an estimated 6.3 million (10.6 percent) of the total population of the UK were born overseas (Ellis and ONS 2008: 22). It is possible that the large scale migration particularly from South Asia has contributed to identification between Christianity and Britishness. Abby Day (2009) found that many British people identify with a religion based entirely on family tradition or ethnic background rather than faith. Recently the British Nationalist Party have also attempted to create an opposition between Islam and Britishness by referring to Britain is a «Christian country» (Bartley 2010; Ford and Goodwin 2010: 20).

The Netherlands

Unlike Britain, the Netherlands does not have a state Church, but the levels of religiosity and religious diversity in the population are comparable. According to the International Social Survey Programme 2008, 26.6 percent of the population is Roman-Catholic, 11.5 percent are Protestant and 8 percent are (Orthodox) Reformed while 42 percent classify themselves as having no religion. Widespread secularity is a relatively recent phenomenon however. During the 19th Century, church denominations competed for power by infiltrating institutions and organisations resulting in a system known as pillarisation. Each pillar consisted of institutions that had secular functions and religious identities. Everything from schools, sport clubs and newspapers to trade unions and political parties were organised along denominational lines (Lechner 1996: 258). This made religion one of the most important aspects of social identity and during the first half of the 20th Century, the Netherlands was arguably one of the most religious countries in Europe (van Rooden 2003: 125). The last 50 years has seen a rapid process of secularisation brought about by the expansion of the welfare state and the cultural revolution of the 1960s, and this has been accompanied by a gradual erosion of the pillars. Many institutions have formally kept their confessional identities, but the churches have lost much of their actual influence over these institutions.

Since the Second World War, there have been successive waves of immigration to the Netherlands from former Dutch colonies in Indonesia, Surinam and the Antilles, as well as guest workers from Southern Europe, Turkey and Morocco. Multiculturalism was the main policy approach to the integration of immigrants during the 1970s and 80s partly because this fitted seamlessly into the already existing system of pillarisation (Vasta 2007: 716). However, in the 1990s this approach was criticised for furthering segregation between ethnic communities (Vasta 2007: 717), beginning an intense public debate about the need for cultural integration of minorities and particularly about the compatibility of Islam with western values. Mainstream political culture has gradually turned away from multiculturalism towards a more assimilationist approach. At the same time, pride in a civic conception of Dutch national identity has been replaced by an increased concern about culture, ethnicity and religion (Vasta 2007). However, while Christianity is the majority religion, and has been historically important for Dutch history, much indicates that people in the Netherlands see their national identity as primarily secular. The high degree of religious pluralism, combined with the secularity of the state may explain why many see religion as a private affair (Bruce 1990: 230).

The Republic of Ireland

Ireland is characterised by a strong relationship between Catholic and national identity, which primarily has its origin in struggle for independence from Britain in the 19th Century (Girvin 1993: 382). The nationalist movements defined Ireland by its agrarian economy, Irish language and Catholicism in opposition to its industrialised and protestant neighbour. Since then the Catholic Church has exerted strong influence over both public institutions and social norms. However, from the 1960s onwards, the homogenous and isolationist discourse of the nation was gradually replaced by a more «inclusive Irishness» (Kornprobst 2008: 417). Rapid economic modernisation and urbanisation along with changes in media and technology also led to a value change towards more individual and liberal values. The expansion of the welfare state has also removed the Church's previously held monopoly in health, education and other areas of social welfare and caused the previously held cohesion and unity of the Catholic Church in Ireland to fragment and decline (Inglis 1987: 226). Nevertheless, it is important not to overstress the changes that have taken place. In general Ireland has been remarkably stable politically since the partition (Girvin 1993: 380). Moreover there is a continued importance of religious traditions and religious identity in Ireland, and on most issues the Irish remain morally conservative compared to the rest of Europe (Girvin 1993: 386). However, «it is no longer necessary to be seen as a good practising Catholic to have social prestige, as confirmed by the general drop in church attendance since the 1990s» (Penet 2008: 149). As Ireland is reimagining itself as a modern pluralist nation, the association between religion and the nation has become more tenuous. The majority of the Irish population still identify as Catholic and religious (86 percent according to the ISSP 2008), but their Catholic identity has become more privatised and individualised (Penet 2008: 150).

Denmark

Denmark is characterised by a relatively strong connection between church and state despite having a relatively secular population. The Danish National Church is important primarily as an institutional provider of rituals both for the nation state in the form of royal or governmental ceremonies and private rites of passage. A similar arrangement can be found in the other Scandinavian countries, and is often known as the «folk church» model. The folk church can be seen as creating and upholding a set of common values in the population through use of symbols and rituals (Lüchau 2009: 375). The most popular role and function of the National Church is the performance of rites of passage: funerals, baptisms, confirmations and weddings (Bruce 2000: 37). These are practiced by the majority of Danes, including those who are not religious. For example, in the 2006 cohort, the baptism rate was 75 percent (Rosen 2009: 34). The Church also acts as a state registrar of births, naming and deaths, a role which brings all members of the Danish society into contact with the National Church at some point in their lives, regardless of denominational affiliation (Rosen 2009: 32). The membership rate is also remarkably high compared to other countries. In January 2009, 81.5 percent of the Danish population were members of the Danish National Church (Lodberg 2009: 12), despite only around two to three percent attending Sunday services every week according to the ISSP 2008. Members pay a church tax which amounts to less than one percent of annual income, but according to Rosen (2009: 35) it is likely that this is seen by most Danes as an economic contribution towards a public good, rather than as a statement of religious adherence.

The homogenous population of cultural Christians and the high rates of membership in the church make this «belonging without believing» (Davie 2007: 141) form of religion possible. Nevertheless, Danish society is rapidly becoming more religiously and ethnically pluralist. In the 1960s Denmark opened its borders to immigration of guest workers, mainly from Pakistan, Turkey and Yugoslavia. The number of immigrants from non-western countries in Denmark increased from 10 000 in 1967 to 246 000 in 2009 (Togeby 1998: 1141; Statistics Denmark 2009: 36). While this is still only 4.5 percent of the population, urban segregation means that in some districts they constitute a majority (Togeby 1998: 1138; Blom 2006). The popular resistance to immigration and ethnic diversity evident from the popularity of the Danish People's Party can be partly attributed to an impression of cultural incompatibility between «Danish values» and Islam. According to Jensen (2008: 390), the special status of Lutheran Protestantism as a catalyst for Danish national culture, «people from other religions are likely to be seen as 'not Danish'» and Rosen (2009) found that many Danes retain a Christian identity to signal cultural heritage rather than belief.

Data

The data used in this study come from the International Social Survey Programme's 2008 module on Religion in Great Britain, the Netherlands, Ireland and Denmark (ISSP 2008). The ISSP is a continuing, annual program of cross-national collaboration

in surveys carried out by research organisations in the participating countries.[2] In each country a representative sample of around 2000 respondents was surveyed. Although they are designed for comparability the survey questionnaire varies slightly. In the four countries included in this study, the ISSP Religion survey was expanded to include additional questions funded by NORFACE (New Opportunities for Research Funding Agency Co-operation in Europe) on specific aspects of religion, among them the experienced relationship between religion and national identity and whether immigration is a threat to national identity.

Christian affiliation and attendance

Table I shows the breakdown of the population of each country by their Christian affiliation and attendance. Two variables were combined to construct the categories: belonging to a Christian religion and Church attendance monthly or more often. The Not Christian category includes both nonreligious and people affiliated with non-Christian religions.[3] As the table shows, about half of the British population identifies as Christian, but among the Christian half of the population, the majority is only *nominal* Christians. These are the people who say they belong to a Christian religion but who also report going to church less often than once a month. Less than 13 percent of the population are observant Christians, that is those who attend church monthly or more. The figures for the Netherlands are very similar, but with a slightly larger proportion of observant Christians and people who are not at all Christian and a smaller share who say they are Christians without regular church attendance. In contrast, in Ireland more than half the population attend church monthly or more often, and only nine percent do not belong to a Christian religion. Finally, by far the largest group in Denmark is the nominally religious. Here the respondents were asked whether they were a member of a religious organisation (rather than whether they belonged to a religion), and more than eighty percent of the respondents were members of the Danish National Church. Despite such high membership however, the Danes are not particularly active churchgoers. Only 7.3 percent of the church members, less than in any of the other countries, attend church monthly or more often. Despite their differences, it is worth noting that in all the countries the nominally religious make up a sizable proportion of the population.

Table I: Categories of Christian involvement (%)

	Great Britain	Netherlands	R. of Ireland	Denmark
Not Christian	46.8	47.5	7.7	14.6
Nominal Christian	36.5	33.2	34.5	76.8
Non-christian churchgoer	3.9	2.8	1.3	1.4
Observant Christian	12.7	16.4	56.6	7.3
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(2236)	(2843)	(2048)	(1916)

Attitudes to immigration

The populations of the four countries also vary considerably in their attitudes to immigration. This can be seen in Table II, which shows the frequency distributions in each country on the question: «Please say whether you agree or disagree with the following statements. Immigration is a threat to our national identity?»[4]

In Great Britain, almost two thirds of the population (64.1 percent) either agree or strongly agree that immigration is a threat to national identity. In the other countries this figure is between 36 and 39 percent. It is not obvious why there is such a substantial difference, but it may be related to the larger share of non-western immigrants and descendants of immigrants in Britain compared to the other countries. An alternative interpretation is that national identity in Britain is considered to be less stable and more easily threatened by outside influences.

Table II: Immigration is a threat to national identity (%)

	Great Britain	Netherlands	R. of Ireland	Denmark
Strongly agree	29.0	7.4	10.3	17.3
Agree	35.1	29.2	28.7	18.7
Neither agree nor disagree*	14.0	-	18.5	21.3
Disagree	15.8	36.5	24.3	14.4
Strongly disagree	5.3	14.6	10.6	25.4
Don't know / Refused	0.8	12.3	7.6	3.0
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	2247	1864	2049	1971

* The category «Neither agree nor disagree» was not available in the Dutch survey questionnaire. This difference should not have an impact on the multivariate analysis, since the variable was recoded to a binary variable (agree/disagree) for the logistic regression.

In order to see whether this attitude is associated with Christianity, a crosstabulation of agreement with the statement «immigration is a threat to national identity»[5] by category of Christian involvement is shown in Figure 1.[6] Those belonging to Christian religions are considerably more likely than non-members to hold this attitude in the Netherlands and Denmark, but there is no apparent difference between nominal and observant Christians. In Britain and Ireland this attitude is more associated with nominal Christianity than with church attendance. In Britain there is very little difference between observant Christians and non-Christians. It is interesting to note that even without controlling for age and education, in none of the four countries does church attendance by itself make one *more* likely than other Christians to think immigration is a threat to national identity.
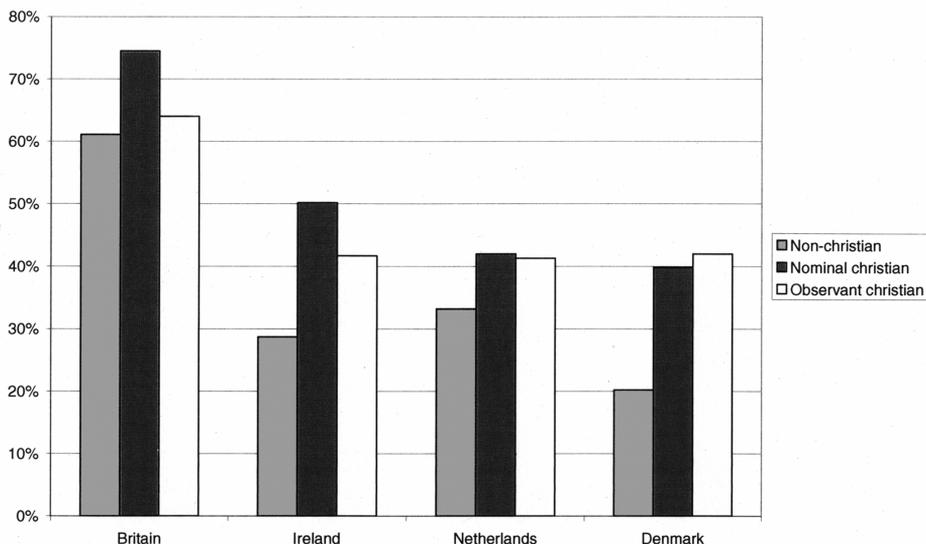
Figure 1. Immigration is a threat to national identity by category of Christian involvement (%).
GB: N= 2218, ²=50.644 (P=0.000); IR: N= 1892, ²=18.531 (P=0.000); NL: N= 1637, ²=29.919 (P=0.000);
DK: N= 1850, ²=45.073 (P=0.000)

Multivariate analysis

In order to establish whether there is a relationship between Christianity and attitudes to immigration it is necessary to control for other sociodemographic and attitudinal variables that may influence the results. A binary logistic regression model was fitted in all the four countries with the recoded dichotomous variable «Immigration is a threat to national identity» as the dependent variable. The results are shown in Table III, IV, V and VI. The models are slightly different for each country due to the fact that different variables were available in each survey. This makes it inadvisable to directly compare the size of the coefficients, but one can nonetheless get an impression of the differences and similarities across countries by comparing the significance and direction of associations.[7] The regression was done in two steps, the first controlling for sociodemographic variables and religion, and the second adding value and attitudinal variables that were thought to affect the dependent variable.

In all countries the first model controlled for age, gender (female), education (A-levels, equivalent or higher qualifications),[8] social class[9] and a binary ethnicity variable.[10] To measure religiosity the model includes an eight-point scale measuring church attendance from (1) «never» to (8) «Once a week or more»[11] and a five point scale measuring belief in God (from (1) «I don't believe in God» to (5)«I know God exists and have no doubts about it». Dummy variables for Anglican, Protestant and Catholic affiliation were also included as independent variables depending on how prevalent these are in the respective countries. In Denmark the question about affiliation relates

to membership in the Protestant folk church. The reference group includes those identifying as non-religious, non-Christian and other Christian.

The second model introduces a variable measuring whether the respondent thinks it is important to be Christian to be truly British, Dutch or Danish, or whether it is important to be Catholic to be truly Irish. A ten point political self placement scale going from (1) left to (10) right was also included to control for ideological or partisan effects. The remaining variables in the model differ between the four countries, depending on which variables were available. In Ireland a question asking whether nationality is important to the respondent was included, but this was not only available in any other country. However, in Britain, a dichotomous variable was included to indicate whether the respondent has an English identity.[12] Also in Britain, the Libertarian-Authoritarian scale, which is a continuous measure made up of six items about authority, punishment and obedience,[13] was included in order to test whether authoritarian value-orientation could be an underlying factor explaining both religiosity and national identity, as suggested by the psychological literature on conservatism (Altemeyer 1981; Jost et al. 2003). In the Netherlands, Ireland and Denmark the respondents were asked their attitudes to various religious groups ranging from (1) Very positive to (5) Very negative. Attitudes to Muslims were included to test whether this may explain any association between Christianity and anti-immigration. However, the model also controls for attitudes to religion more generally by including similar questions about Christians and Atheists. Because these variables were not in the British dataset, the British model instead has a variable measuring agreement with the statement «Nearly all Muslims living in Britain try to fit in» on scale from 1) Strongly disagree to 5) strongly agree.

Table III: Logistic regression for Great Britain: «Immigration is a threat to our national identity»

Great Britain						
	B	Exp(B)	S.E.	B	Exp(B)	S.E.
Constant	-0.012	0.988	0.285	-3.498**	0.030	0.527
Age	0.003	1.003	0.003	0.000	1.000	0.003
Female	-0.063	0.939	0.103	0.030	1.031	0.113
Higher Education	-0.483**	0.617	0.118	-0.048	0.953	0.133
Social class I-II	-0.578**	0.561	0.153	-0.401*	0.669	0.170
Social class III i-ii	0.157	1.170	0.140	0.090	1.095	0.154
White ethnicity	0.864**	2.373	0.193	0.747**	2.112	0.207
Church attendance	-0.057*	0.945	0.028	-0.049	0.952	0.030
Belief in God	0.025	1.025	0.048	-0.048	0.953	0.054
Anglican	0.755**	2.128	0.141	0.542**	1.720	0.153
Catholic	0.093	1.097	0.186	0.054	1.056	0.200
Important to be Christian to be British				0.311**	1.365	0.072
English identity				0.691**	1.995	0.123
Authoritarianism				1.108**	3.029	0.101
Muslims try to fit in				-0.402**	0.669	0.054
Political Right				0.001	1.001	0.002
-2 Log likelihood	2292.053			1976.016		
Cox & Snell R Square	0.095			0.233		
Nagelkerke R Square	0.131			0.321		
Df	10			15		
Sig	0.000			0.000		
N	1922			1922		

*P<0.05, **P0.01

Notes for reading the logistic regression tables:

B: These are the values for the logistic regression equation for predicting the dependent variable from the independent variable expressed in log-odds units. Positive values indicate a positive association between the independent variable and the dependent variable, and negative values indicate a negative association. The stars * and ** indicate that the association is statistically significant at the 95% level and 99% level respectively.

Exp(B):This is the exponentiation of the B coefficient, which is an odds ratio.

S.E.: This is the standard error around the coefficient for the constant.

Table IV: Logistic regression for the Netherlands: «Immigration is a threat to our national identity»

Netherlands	1			2		
	B	Exp(B)	S.E.	B	Exp(B)	S.E.
Constant	-1.026**	0.359	0.349	-3.917**	0.02	0.528
Age	0.005	1.005	0.004	0.008*	1.008	0.004
Female	-0.446**	0.640	0.113	-0.375**	0.687	0.126
Higher Education	-0.601**	0.548	0.116	-0.476**	0.621	0.131
Social class	0.000	0.999	0.003	-0.001	0.999	0.003
Born in the Netherlands	0.806**	2.239	0.256	0.992**	2.696	0.295
Church attendance	-0.053	0.948	0.034	-0.098*	0.906	0.041
Belief in God	0.027	1.028	0.051	0.011	1.011	0.06
Catholic	0.379**	1.461	0.135	0.247	1.28	0.151
Protestant	0.306	1.358	0.197	0.166	1.181	0.222
Important to be Christian to be Dutch				0.636**	1.889	0.109
Negative to Christians				-0.386**	0.68	0.091
Negative to Muslims				0.875**	2.399	0.071
Negative to Atheists				-0.061	0.941	0.08
Political Right				0.006*	1.006	0.002
-2 Log likelihood	1838.488			1574.121		
Cox & Snell R Square	0.055			0.215		
Nagelkerke R Square	0.074			0.291		
Df	9			14		
Sig	0.000			0.000		
N	1481			1481		

*P<0.05, **P0.01

Table V: Logistic regression for Ireland: «Immigration is a threat to our national identity»

Ireland	1			2		
	B	Exp(B)	S.E.	B	Exp(B)	S.E.
Constant	-1.875**	0.153	0.392	-3.170**	0.042	0.499
Age	0.006	1.006	0.004	0.007	1.007	0.004
Female	-0.066	0.936	0.107	-0.012	0.988	0.109
Higher Education	-0.531**	0.588	0.126	-0.436**	0.647	0.130
Social class	0.113**	1.120	0.037	0.084*	1.087	0.038
Born in Ireland	1.224**	3.399	0.282	1.046**	2.848	0.286
Church attendance	-0.040	0.961	0.025	-0.062*	0.940	0.027
Belief in God	0.069	1.071	0.053	0.072	1.075	0.055
Catholic	-0.120	0.887	0.186	-0.339	0.712	0.192
Nationality important				0.061*	1.063	0.031
Important to be Christian to be Irish				0.318**	1.374	0.060
Negative to Christians				0.231**	1.260	0.069
Negative to Muslims				0.135*	1.145	0.068
Negative to Atheists				-0.253**	0.777	0.069
Political Right				0.077*	1.080	0.035
-2 Log likelihood	2048.928			1985.684		
Cox & Snell R Square	0.043			0.082		
Nagelkerke R Square	0.058			0.109		
Df	8			14		
Sig	0.000			0.000		
N	1535			1535		

*P<0.05, **P0.01

*Table VI: Logistic regression for Denmark: «Immigration is a serious threat to our natio-
nal distinctiveness»*

Denmark	1			2		
	B	Exp(B)	S.E.	B	Exp(B)	S.E.
Constant	-1.846**	0.158	0.469	-5.859**	0.003	0.718
Age	0.010**	1.010	0.004	0.009*	1.009	0.004
Female	-0.535**	0.586	0.117	-0.320*	0.726	0.136
Higher Education	-0.675**	0.509	0.129	-0.473**	0.623	0.151
Social class	-0.017	0.983	0.039	-0.075	0.928	0.046
Born in Denmark	0.733*	2.082	0.348	0.626	1.870	0.402
Church attendance	-0.097*	0.907	0.046	-0.182**	0.834	0.059
Belief in God	0.136*	1.145	0.054	0.099	1.104	0.069
Folk church member	0.763**	2.145	0.188	0.470*	1.600	0.219
Important to be Christian to be Danish				0.609**	1.839	0.115
Negative to Christians				-0.223*	0.800	0.110
Negative to Muslims				1.077**	2.936	0.079
Negative to Atheists				0.035	1.036	0.093
Political Right				0.116**	1.123	0.030
-2 Log likelihood	1778.754			1405.935		
Cox & Snell R Square	0.078			0.282		
Nagelkerke R Square	0.108			0.391		
Df	8			13		
Sig	0.000			0.000		
N	1489			1489		

*P<0.05, **P0.01

In all the countries church attendance has a significant negative association with the
dependent variable in either one or the other model,[14] or both in the case of Denmark
(Table VI). In other words there is no indication that church attendance would increase
negative attitudes to immigration. On the contrary, even when controlling for ideologi-
cal and attitudinal variables, regular churchgoers appear to feel *less* threatened by immi-
gration than those who attend church less frequently.

Despite this however, in three of the four countries a Christian *affiliation* appears
to have the opposite effect. Those with an Anglican affiliation in Britain (Table III) or
a membership in the National church in Denmark (Table VI) are considerably *more*
likely to think immigration is a threat to national identity. The effect is reduced with
the introduction of attitudinal variables indicating that it is mediated by some of these.
In the Netherlands (Table IV), being Catholic is associated with thinking immigration
is a threat only in the first model which does not control for other political attitudes,
and Protestant affiliation has no significant effect. Nevertheless this result indicates a
similar tendency of affiliation and attendance having opposite effects. Ireland (Table

V) was the only country that did not show any significant association between religious affiliation and attitudes to immigration. This could be partly explained by the exceptionally low variance in religious affiliation (86 percent of the sample is Catholic), but the variance in Denmark is almost as low, so presumably it is also because in Ireland immigration is not associated with religious diversity to the extent it is in the other three countries. As for belief in God, it is only significant in Denmark and only in the first model where it has a positive association with the dependent variable.

Higher education is negatively associated with anti-immigration in all the four countries. However, the education coefficient is reduced, and in Britain it loses significance in the second model, indicating that the effect of higher education is mediated by values and attitudes towards minorities. The effect of higher education in Britain may also be reduced by its correlation with professional and managerial social class (Pearson's R=0.399) which was significantly negatively associated with the dependent variable.[15]

Among the attitudinal variables introduced in model 2, agreeing that being Christian or Catholic is important for being of one's nationality is significantly positively associated with the dependent variable in all the countries. In other words, those who think immigration represents a threat to their national identity are also likely to think religion is an important part of this identity. In Britain those who identify as English are more likely to feel their national identity threatened by immigration. In Ireland, thinking that one's nationality is important also makes one more likely to feel that it is under threat. In Britain, as hypothesised, authoritarian attitudes make one more likely to agree with the dependent variables. Not surprisingly, thinking that Muslims in Britain are trying to «fit in», makes one less likely to agree that national identity is threatened by immigration. Similarly, in the three other countries a negative attitude to Muslims significantly increases anti-immigration sentiment, whereas the reverse was the case with attitudes to Christians in Denmark and the Netherlands. Ireland differed from the others in that a negative attitude to Christians was positively associated with the dependent variable. On the other hand a negative attitude to atheists, which was insignificant in the other countries, was negatively associated with the dependent variable. It appears that while a distinction between attitudes towards Christians and Muslims is important in the Netherlands and Denmark, in Ireland the distinction between religious and nonreligious is more significant for the relationship with attitudes towards immigration. Again, this may be due to the fact that immigrants to Ireland are more likely to be Christians from Eastern Europe and Africa than Muslims. However it can also be read as support of the tendency that in Ireland, people who are more religious or more positive towards religion are also more positive towards immigration. Not surprisingly, those placing themselves to the right on the ideology scale are generally more likely to think of immigration as a threat to national identity, but this variable was insignificant in Britain.

Discussion

In many European countries both Christianity and secular rationalism are seen as an integral part of national history and identity. Despite a general decline in religious belief and practice among Europeans, questions of national religious heritage have become increasingly salient in recent public debates about immigration and integration policies. However, it has so far been unclear whether this phenomenon can also be observed in the ways in which individuals' national and religious identities are connected. The purpose of this research has been to explore whether there is a relationship between individual Christian identification and church attendance and thinking that immigration is a threat to national identity in four Western European countries: Great Britain, the Netherlands, Ireland and Denmark.

The results show that in all these countries, people with a Christian identity and people who think Christianity or Catholicism is important for nationality are also more likely to think immigration is a threat to national identity. However, in all the countries nominal Christians are on average as likely, or more likely, than observant Christians to think that immigration is a threat to national identity. Multivariate analysis reveals a more complex relationship, where affiliation and attendance work in opposite directions. Identifying with a Christian religion generally makes one more likely to think immigration is a threat to national identity, whereas regular church attendance reduces this effect.

In general, Christian practice as measured by church attendance has either a negative or no significant relationship with anti-immigration. In other words, Christian service attendance if anything is likely to make one less rather than more worried about immigration. This is broadly consistent with other findings from European and North American studies of the effect of church attendance upon prejudice and tolerance (Billiet 1995; Eisinga et al. 1990; Scheepers et al. 2002; Strømsnes 2008; Wuthnow 2003). However, there is no evidence in this study that religious beliefs by themselves lead to more positive attitudes to immigration, and it is not clear by what mechanism church attendance and tolerance might be related. Billiet (1995) attributes it to «values of solidarity, charity and social justice» (Billiet 1995: 231) which are transmitted through weekly sermons as well as through social organisations and Christian institutions. If this was the case, however, one would expect church attendance to have a similar effect as education. But while the effect of education appears to be mediated by tolerant attitudes, there is no evidence of such an indirect relationship with respect to churchgoing. The coefficients for church attendance *increased* rather than declined when social attitudes were controlled for in all countries except Britain, indicating that churchgoing is more associated with libertarian or non-authoritarian values than with solidarity with outgroups, although more research is needed to establish the precise mechanisms.

The results from this study also show that irrespective of church attendance, Christian identity, affiliation or membership is likely to make one more sceptical of immigration, at least in countries where the «immigrant» is read as «non-Christian». This may be interpreted as evidence of «ethnic religion» (Hervieu-Legér 2000: 157) or «cultural religion» (Demerath 2000) in which religious identity is primarily an expression

of national tradition or ethnic heritage rather than personal faith, ritual observance or active membership in a community of adherents. Nominal affiliation in Britain and the Netherlands and passive membership in Denmark may be a way to identify with one's own family, local community or national cultural heritage and institutions. A concern for one's national cultural identity may in turn increase the experience of threat from immigration.

The exception is Ireland where being Catholic is not significantly associated with thinking immigration is a threat to national identity. The immigrant population in Ireland is smaller and more Christian than in the other countries. This makes religion a less salient issue for determining attitudes to immigration even though religion is generally much more important to the nationality in Ireland compared to the other countries. Paradoxically, the high levels of religiosity may also account for the lack of association between religion and anti-immigration. Because Catholic identity in Ireland is almost always accompanied by high church attendance or a religious upbringing, the Irish may be more likely to associate «Catholic» with faith and ritual, whereas for someone without this religious 'capital' (Iannaccone 1990) it may simply be an identity label.

The results from Britain (Table III) indicate that authoritarianism may account for some of the association between Anglican identity and anti-immigration. Cross-cultural personality and value studies have found the values of tradition, conformity and security to be closely related to one another and these are all related to both religious beliefs and nationalist attitudes (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). Feeling one's collective identity to be threatened by diversity could thus result in a religious response. As Kinnvall (2004: 759) points out, «religion, like nationalism, supplies existential answers to individuals' quest for security by essentializing the product and providing a picture of totality, unity and wholeness». However, the results also suggest that the Anglican identity that is most associated with anti-immigration is not an expression of religious belief or of belonging to a religious community. Rather it is those with a merely nominal affiliation to Christianity who are most likely to think immigration is a threat. Perhaps those who associate Christianity with nationality or ethnicity do so in part because their Christian identity is lacking in other content. It is also conceivable that not attending church is an expression of secular liberalism, which could be accompanied by a scepticism towards religion in general and the beliefs and behaviours of religious minorities in particular. Thus, while a conceptual link between religious and ethno-national identity accounts for some of the variation in attitudes towards immigration, uncovering the specific mechanisms of the association between nominal Christianity and anti-immigration requires further research.

In summary, there is no evidence that Christianity per se, and certainly not church attendance, makes one any more likely to hold xenophobic attitudes. However, a Christian identity is associated with thinking immigration is a threat to national identity, particularly in Britain and Denmark. This could be because «Christian» is used as a label to signify ethnic heritage and cultural tradition rather than faith. These two countries both have a state church and relatively large Muslim immigrant populations, and thus religion may be a salient feature that distinguishes the immigrant «other» from the

«native», particularly among those whose Christian identity has no spiritual content and no practical implications.

Notes

[1] I would like to thank David Voas, James Nazroo and anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions and advice.

[2] The questionnaire was drafted in British English and then translated to other languages using standard back translation procedures (ISSP). In Great Britain, the ISSP was conducted as part of The British Social Attitudes survey (BSA), administered by National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). In the Netherlands the ISSP is managed by The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP). In Ireland the survey is managed by the Social Science Research Centre of University College, Dublin and conducted by the Survey Unit of the Economic and Social Research Institute. In Denmark the ISSP 2008 Religion survey was conducted during 2009 by a team of investigators from six different research institutions. Weights were applied to adjust for bias in favour of individuals in smaller households except in Denmark, where a simple random sample was drawn from a national register of all Danish citizens.

[3] In each country the percentage of the «Not Christians» who belong to a religion is 7.5 percent in Britain, 12.4 percent in the Netherlands, 4.7 percent in Denmark and 3.8 percent in Ireland.

[4] In Denmark the question statement was «Immigration represents a serious threat against our national distinctiveness» («Indvandring udgør en alvorlig trussel mod vores nationale egenart»). In the Netherlands the question wording was directly translated from English («Immigratie is een bedreiging voor onze nationale identiteit»).

[5] The variable «Immigration is a threat to national identity» was recoded into a dichotomous variable with the responses «Strongly agree» and «Agree» coded as 1 and «Neither agree nor disagree», «Disagree» and «Strongly Disagree» coded as 0.

[6] The non-Christian churchgoers (Table I) were excluded from the graph on the grounds that this group is too small and too diverse to generalise from.

[7] No Pearson's R correlations among the independent variables was larger than 0.65 and hence multicollinearity should not be a problem.

[8] This was originally coded as a 7 point scale from 0: No qualifications to 6: Postgraduate degree, but was reduced to a dichotomy with upper secondary, A-levels and higher education coded as 1 and lower secondary, O-levels and below as 0. Repeating the analysis with more education categories or as a continuous variable yield similar results.

[9] In the Netherlands, Ireland and Denmark the social class variable was a 10-point scale of self-rated socioeconomic status with 10 as top and 1 as bottom. In Britain this variable was not available, and instead two dummy variables for social class based on the Registrar General's classification were used: class 1–2 (professional and managerial) and class 3 (non-manual and manual skilled occupations) respectively, using class 4–5 (partly skilled and unskilled occupations) as the reference category. Repeating the analysis for Britain treating social class as a continuous variable does not change the overall model results.

[10] In Britain it is customary to ask about ethnic classification and here the variable included is white(1) vs. non-white (0). In the other countries the respondents were asked their country of birth, and here the variables indicate whether or not the respondent is born in the Netherlands, Ireland and Denmark respectively.

11 The values on this scale varied slightly. In Britain the highest value was «once a week or more», and in Denmark the Netherlands and Ireland it was «Several times a week».

12 The reference category was people identifying as British, Scottish, Welsh or other.

13 For each of the six items the respondent was asked to choose from five responses ranging from agree strongly to disagree strongly. The precise phrasings of the statements were as follows: a. Young people today don't have enough respect for traditional British values. b. People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences. c. For some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence. d. Schools should teach children to obey authority. e. The law should always be obeyed, even if a particular law is wrong. f. Censorship of films and magazines is necessary to uphold moral standards.

14 In Great Britain (Table III) church attendance is significant in the first but not the second model, but in all the other countries the coefficient and significance increases in the second model when controlling for attitudinal variables. This may have to do with the difference in the variables included in Great Britain.

15 In Ireland social class was slightly *positively* associated with anti-immigration, whereas in the other countries it was insignificant. In Denmark and the Netherlands being male increases one's probability of feeling threatened by immigration, whereas gender is insignificant in the other countries. Denmark is the only country where age is independently significant with higher age being positively associated with the dependent variable. In all the countries a white ethnicity or being born in the country significantly increases the probability of a negative attitude to immigration, but in Denmark country of birth is insignificant in the second model, possibly due in part to the overlap with church membership (Pearson's r= 0.332).

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