

9 Still religious parties in Belgium?

The decline of the denominational cleavage in Belgian consociational democracy

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Introduction

In classical models of political science, religion has for long been central. When Lipset and Rokkan (1967) developed their model of partisan alignment one of the political structures they identified, one of their so-called cleavages, was based upon religion. Like the other cleavages identified, this was held to be frozen and to stabilize party politics in Western Europe long after the appearance of cleavages following the ‘national revolution’ of the nineteenth century. During the same years in the US, and along similar lines, Campbell included the concept of partisan identification, which is rooted in structural divisions such as race and religion within American society, within his social-psychological model of voting behaviour (Campbell *et al.* 1964).

Nonetheless, in recent decades (at least from the 1970s), the literature on voting behaviour began to mitigate the empirical scope of Lipset and Rokkan’s theory and suggested that traditional linkages between social cleavages and party support were progressively weakening. Critiques of the structural alignment theory have been generally concentrated on the ‘partisan de-alignment thesis’ (Nie *et al.* 1976; Crewe *et al.* 1977; Dalton *et al.* 1984; Lane and Ersson 1997; Clark and Lipset 2001), which translates the thesis of secularization into a voting behaviour perspective. Since World War II, the secularization process has progressively weakened the penetration of religious and class identities within advanced industrial societies in Western Europe (Norris and Inglehart 2004). This phenomenon is translated within electoral and party politics by the shrinking political effect of denominational divides in terms of vote allocation and political mobilization, and also by the emergence of relatively new parties advocating cross-cutting issues such as ethno-regional, Green or extreme right parties (Dalton *et al.* 1984; Dogan 1995; Broughton and Napel 2000).

Whilst there is some evidence in the literature of the presence of religious de-alignment in advanced industrial societies, empirical analysis still shows that religiosity continues to influence electoral behaviour and party support in many societies (Norris and Inglehart 2004; Elff 2007, 2009). For example, in many ‘pillarized’ West European democracies, such as the Netherlands or Belgium

(Lijphart 1981), where the citizens have always been traditionally divided into segmented party and social networks, the relevance of the religious ‘pillar’ has weakened significantly during the last three decades (Billiet 1984; Dekker and Ester 1996; Delwit and De Waele 1999), but conclusions regarding the de-alignment of previously ‘pillarized’ voters still diverge (Hooghe 1999).

Moreover, more recently, after several decades during which the social sciences have been organized around the pre-modern versus modern cultural divide (Wright Mills 1959), the sociological thesis of the progressive death of religion has been increasingly criticized (Berger 1999; Stark 1999; Stark and Finke 2000; Norris and Inglehart 2004; Martin 2005; Taylor 2005; Katzenstein 2006). According to many authors criticizing the secularization thesis, we might consider that ‘secularization is a tendency, not an iron law’ (Norris and Inglehart 2004: 3). Eisenstadt, one of the main critics of the secularization thesis, also postulated a new intellectual prism for approaching the role of religion in contemporary societies and politics.

The concept of ‘multiple modernities’ allows contemporary scholars to apprehend the role of religion within society in a dynamic perspective (Eisenstadt 2000 and 2003; Arnason *et al.* 2004; Wagner 2000; Byrnes and Katzenstein 2006). Eisenstadt postulates that modernization of contemporary societies permeates their secularization, but this process has to be apprehended as a transformation and not as a break or rupture with the past. Religion still occupies a fundamental position in contemporary political systems, even though it does not shape political behaviour, socialization and participation as clearly as it did in pre-modern and modern times.

Moreover, the role of religion in contemporary advanced industrial societies can be defined as being multi-faceted and its impact on the political system is not linear but rather compound (Eisenstadt 2000). With regard to this point, some scholars have also suggested taking into account the relevance of the role of immigration in defining the place and function of religiosity and religious identity within contemporary West European politics (Yang and Ebaugh 2001). Others have argued that religion and ethnicity are often intertwined, especially in the case of immigrant communities, given that religion is one of the key elements in the formation of ethnic cultures (Gordon 1964; Schermerhorn 1978). Immigration may therefore impact on the political role of religion within ethnically compound societies.

On one hand, in many Western European countries one of the larger immigrant communities is of North African (mainly Maghreb) or Turkish descent and mostly of Muslim religious affiliation (Savage 2004: 26). The presence within European societies of immigrant communities of Muslim religious affiliation may not have direct consequences in political terms, but the politicization of integrational dynamics and of specific debates (such as those concerning the presence and use of religious symbols in public spaces, i.e. the recent headscarf debate in France or the crucifix debate in Italy) may lead to the inclusion of a religious dimension within the political issues surrounding immigration.

On the other hand, not only is the religious identity of immigrant communities in several European countries rather distinctive, given the size of the Muslim

communities of immigration origin currently living within the EU's territorial borders (almost 16 million in 2003: Savage 2004), but many members of these communities have now acquired the citizenship of the country of settlement. Thus, an increasing number of citizens of immigration descent and of Islamic denominational affiliation have gained the right to vote over the last decades. Whilst the scientific literature on the electoral behaviour of Muslim citizens is still rather modest (Chebel d'Appolonia 2002), some scholarly attention is being paid to the potential emergence of an Islamic vote amongst immigrant populations (Martiniello 1998, 2005).

On closer inspection, the presence of a specific electoral behaviour of immigrant-origin Muslim citizens within West European countries may constitute a clear example of the heuristic potential of the 'multiple modernities' paradigm. This distinctive behavioural pattern is built upon the intertwining of social, ethnic and religious identities (Martiniello 2005). In this case, the religious identity of socially distinctive groups of citizens can affect their political behaviour in different ways and to different degrees depending on their denominational affiliations. This complex transposition of religious identities to the political arena represents one of the elements composing the analytical prism offered by the 'multiple modernities' approach (Eisenstadt 2008).

It would be interesting, therefore, to adapt and empirically apply Eisenstadt's model in terms of voting behaviour and political mobilization, as an alternative explanatory scheme to the de-alignment thesis for assessing the influence of religion on general political resources. This chapter, therefore, looks at the relevance of religious issues in terms of political attitudes and behaviours in order to attempt an assessment of the role of religion within ethnically compound European societies. It aims at exploring the micro-sociological foundations of the macro-sociological processes identified by Eisenstadt in terms of political culture and political behaviour.

Belgium is chosen as a case study because of the peculiarity of its multiple political communities. Of all Western European societies, Belgian society is the most clearly constructed along multiple cleavages and Belgian political cultures are built upon multiple identities (Lijphart 1981; Billiet and Dobbelaere 1985; Delwit and De Waele 1999). A consciousness of belonging to one of the two linguistic communities (Flemish-speaking and French-speaking) is nowadays part and parcel of the social and religious identities of immigrant groups (Jacobs *et al.* 2002, 2004; Saroglou and Mathijsen 2007). Religious issues in identity formation are thus crossed with ethnic and linguistic dimensions. As a result, Belgian society with its significant degree of complexity constitutes an unusually specific case study in order to investigate the salience of religion in issues of identity formation, political culture construction and political behaviour orientation.

Within this context the impact of religion on voting will be explored first. To what extent do Belgian citizens still vote along religious lines? Do Catholics still support Christian Democratic parties? And are non-religious voters opting for the traditional secular parties (Socialists and Liberals)? On the basis of the analytical

1 tool provided by the ‘multiple modernities’ thesis (Eisenstadt 2000; Wagner
2 2000; Martin 2005) we argue that the religious cleavage is of continuing rele-
3 vance in Belgian party politics. The second issue explored will be the impact of
4 immigration on the link between religion and politics. The hypothesis tested here
5 is that the political behaviour of immigrant-origin Muslim voters is heavily
6 affected by the religious cleavage. This intertwining of the religious cleavage and
7 the immigration dimension may in fact constitute an example of the progressive
8 institutionalization of multiple modernities as described by Eisenstadt (2008).

9 In order to address these two questions this chapter makes reference to two
10 data sources. The first of these is an exit poll survey conducted for the 2007
11 Federal elections in Wallonia and Brussels (N = 2,807). The second is based
12 upon surveys among party members (CD&V, VLD, PS and Ecolo) for a total of
13 2,910 respondents. Religion was expected to be more central to the decision to
14 affiliate to a party than it is to actual voting choices.

16 **Cleavages in the Belgian consociational state**

17 Historically, Belgian politics has been dominated by three main cleavages (Seiler
18 2003; Delwit 2009):

- 19 • religious: secular versus Catholic parties
- 20 • socio-economic: left-wing versus right-wing parties
- 21 • linguistic: Flemish versus Francophone parties

22 The relative importance of the three cleavages has changed in the Belgian state’s
23 175 years of existence. In its first years, Belgium was dominated by the opposi-
24 tion between Catholics and Liberals. The former promoted good relations with
25 the Church, the autonomy of Christianity-based schools and hospitals and
26 respect for Christian values. For the Liberals, the main objectives were a strict
27 separation between State and Church, the religious neutrality of the State, and
28 the spread of state schools and hospitals (Rudd 1988). In fact, the school issue
29 was the main dividing line for the religious cleavage.

30 In the late nineteenth century, a new cleavage emerged opposing the labour
31 movement and the bourgeoisie. Fighting for more social equality, better working
32 conditions and for the universal voting franchise, this movement gave birth to a
33 new secular party, the Belgian workers party (POB), the predecessor of the
34 Belgian Socialist party (PSB-BSP); this transformed Belgian politics from a two-
35 party into a three-party system.

36 This was also the starting point in Belgium for consociationalism, built upon
37 three pillars: Catholic, Socialist and Liberal. Each pillar was made up of a coher-
38 ent set of organizations active in all sectors of public life, enabling the pillar to
39 provide for its members in all aspects of their life, from cradle to grave (Lijphart
40 1981). The 1950s and 1960s were a turning point in Belgian politics. First, reli-
41 gious tensions on the issue of education were settled by the School Pact of 1958
42 involving all major political forces on the Catholic and secular sides. A few

years later, tensions were high along the socio-economic cleavage. The centre-right government (Catholics-Liberals) was locked in conflict with the socialist trade unions and for months there were strikes and demonstrations. But once again, a consensual way out was found, with a pact among all partners which instituted a permanent system of joint decisions between trade unions, business representatives and the government. From that moment on, Belgium no longer experienced disputes along either the denominational or the socio-economic cleavages comparable to those experienced before the end of the 1950s. However, this was not the beginning of a period of serenity for Belgian politics. As Lorwin stated: ‘the School Pact, along with the secular trend of the erosion of old religious and class issues [...] left the way open for more intense confrontation on linguistic and regional issues’ (Lorwin 1971). The linguistic issue was not absent before this period: it had in fact been growing in terms of both activities and successes since the mid-eighteenth century. Yet, on the whole, it remained in the background in comparison to the two other dominant cleavages in Belgian political life (the socio-economic and the denominational). In the 1960s, the linguistic cleavage acquired a new status as the only major dispute as yet unresolved. From this moment on, most political events were discussed with reference to the ethnic division; as Léo Tindemans, former Prime Minister, once said: ‘Even the price of milk takes on a linguistic coloration in this country’.

This ‘ethnicization’ of Belgian politics gradually transformed the political landscape. First, the three traditional parties split along the linguistic cleavage. In addition, new parties have emerged (regionalist parties, the extreme right and the Greens). In this new political landscape the religious cleavage is clearly less central. The traditional party families (Christian Democrats, Liberals and Socialists) have tried to appeal beyond their traditional philosophical group. For example, the French-speaking Christian Democrats transformed themselves from the Parti social chrétien (PSC) to the Centre démocrate humaniste (CDH), leaving aside any reference to Christianity. Moreover, newly formed parties immediately take up cross-cleavage positions on the religious issue.

Such changes led authors such as Blondel and Battezzorre to state that ‘by the 1990s, the notion of ‘pillars’ had ceased to have more than a historical significance’ (Blondel and Battezzorre 2003: 15). Our view is that the picture is less straightforward and may confirm the explanatory relevance of the ‘multiple modernities’ paradigm. Several studies have demonstrated how, within Flanders, Catholics remain mostly within the Catholic pillar (Billiet 1982; Hooghe 1999). The following pages would therefore question the current impact of religion on voting and party membership in Belgium.

Catholic versus non-Catholic voters

Before looking at the voting behaviours of Catholics and non-Catholics, we should first consider the proportions of the two groups in our sample. More precisely, we have divided our respondents into three groups: Catholics, other religions, and non-believers (Table 9.1).

Table 9.1 Religious beliefs of the voters in 2007 (%)¹

	<i>Catholics</i>	<i>Other religions</i>	<i>Non-believers</i>
Wallonia	44.3	10.2	45.5
Brussels	35.6	19.0	45.5
Total	40.2	14.3	45.5

Notes

¹ These data corroborate the figures from the last Belgium-wide survey on religion (*Baromètre religieux 2008*): Catholics 43.5 per cent. Non-believers 27.0 per cent. other religions: 29.5 per cent.

We thus have a sample of 40.2 per cent ‘Catholics’, 14.3 per cent ‘other religions’ and 45.5 per cent ‘non-believers’. There are small differences between the southern region of the country, Wallonia, and the capital region of Brussels. In particular, the size of the ‘other religions’ group is bigger in Brussels, due to a significant proportion of Muslims.

But what lies at the heart of this research is the voting behaviours of these three groups of respondents. The analysis focuses on two aspects. The first aspect presents how each group votes, showing the most preferred party and the least preferred party of the Catholics, non-believers and voters belonging to other religious groups. The second aspect emphasizes the proportion of each of the three groups within the electorate of each of the four main Belgian Franco-phone parties.

In Table 9.2, the voting behaviours of the three groups of respondents are set out. The first element to be underlined is that the CDH, the heir of the Christian Democratic PSC party, is no longer the preferred party of Catholics. CDH comes second with 20.3 per cent of all Catholic respondents. The most preferred party in this group is the Liberal MR party (31.6 per cent). The decision by the Liberals in the 1960s to abandon its secular anti-clerical stance has, in this regard, been very successful. The two other major parties, the Socialist PS and the Green Ecolo party, come respectively third and fourth with 17.9 per cent and 15.0 per cent of the Catholic vote. For the Socialists this is not surprising, as the PS has much more difficulty than the MR in ridding itself of its historic anti-Catholic stance. For Ecolo, open to all religious groups since its creation in the 1980s, this result is more of a surprise.

Compared to their results in the overall electorate, two main differences ought to be underlined. First, the CDH does better among Catholics with 20.3 per cent of their votes and 14.7 per cent in the electorate as a whole. In contrast, the PS does worse among Catholics with 17.9 per cent of all votes in this group compared to 25.5 per cent in the electorate as a whole. MR and Ecolo are closer to their overall results (MR 30.6 per cent and Ecolo 14.5 per cent).

The vote of ‘non-believers’ also deserves special attention. In this group of voters, the most preferred party is the MR (28.2 per cent), followed by Ecolo (22.4 per cent) and the PS (22.2 per cent). Confirming its Christian heritage, the CDH comes last with only 7.6 per cent in this group. This is about 7 percentage

Table 9.2 Electoral success of Belgian Francophone parties in the Catholic and non-believers electorates in 2007 (%)

	Wallonia				Brussels				Total			
	Catholics		Other religion		Catholics		Other religion		Catholics		Other religion	
PS	18.0	33.1	22.6	17.8	37.2	21.8	17.9	35.7	22.2			
MR	27.0	15.2	24.8	38.1	18.8	31.8	31.6	17.5	28.2			
CDH	22.0	18.6	10.4	18.0	13.6	4.5	20.3	15.4	7.6			
Ecolo	16.6	19.3	22.9	12.6	14.0	21.8	15.0	15.9	22.4			
FN	3.2	3.4	3.9	1.7	1.2	1.5	2.6	2.0	2.8			
Other parties	2.8	6.2	6.8	9.0	6.8	15.2	5.4	6.6	10.8			
Invalid/Wasted vote	10.3	4.1	8.6	2.8	8.4	3.3	7.2	6.8	6.1			
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0			

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points below its results in the electorate as a whole. For this first table, we can observe that the two parties most marked by the religious cleavage – the CDH on the Catholic side and the PS on the secular side – are no longer the most preferred party in their respective traditional group of voters. In both groups, the Liberal MR is in the lead, confirming its pluralist stance. However, we should not conclude from this that the religious cleavage is obsolete. The CDH remains more successful among Catholics than in the overall electorate and is the least popular party among ‘non-believers’. In contrast, the PS still faces major difficulties in attracting Catholic voters.

These observations are confirmed in Table 9.3, where the religious composition of the electorates of the four parties is presented. Two parties are dominated by one of the three groups of voters: the CDH by Catholics (59.1 per cent) and Ecolo by non-believers (55.2 per cent). The MR is the only pluralist party with an electorate equally composed of Catholics (45.4 per cent) and of non-believers (45.8 per cent). The PS confirms the limited presence of Catholics in its electorate (32.2 per cent).

Up to this point, we have treated Catholic voters as a homogenous group. However, since Lazarfeld’s Columbia model we know that the more often you go to church, the firmer your religious beliefs are, and the more you are inclined to vote for a religious party. And this hypothesis is once again confirmed for the Belgian electorate. In Table 9.4, we can clearly observe that the heir to the Christian Democrats, the CDH, is by far the most successful party among Catholics attending Mass every Sunday (39.2 per cent). The success of the Liberal MR among Catholics has more to do with its anchorage among Catholics who go to church infrequently (34.7 per cent) or almost never (32.1 per cent).

Religious affiliation and voting patterns in Belgium have been shown to remain correlated to a certain extent. Not all parties are pluralist, some continuing to be marked by their Catholic or secular past. Yet, beyond voting, it would be interesting to ascertain whether religious affiliation correlates with political attitudes. Here again, electoral studies in the 1950s have demonstrated the

Table 9.3 Religious composition of the electorates of the main Francophone parties in 2007 (%)

	<i>Catholics</i>	<i>Other religion</i>	<i>Non-believers</i>	<i>Total</i>
PS	32.2	22.7	45.2	100.0
MR	45.4	8.9	45.8	100.0
CDH	59.1	15.9	25.0	100.0
Ecolo	32.6	12.3	55.2	100.0
FN	40.3	11.1	48.6	100.0
Other parties	27.0	11.7	61.3	100.0
Invalid/Wasted vote	43.5	14.7	41.8	100.0
Total (N)	1,116	395	1,264	2,775

Note
Chi² = 111.865; p = 0.000.

Table 9.4 Religious attendance and votes among Catholics in 2007 (%)

	<i>Frequent religious practice</i>	<i>Irregular religious practice</i>	<i>Non-practising Catholics</i>
PS	18.4	16.9	19.9
MR	17.7	34.7	32.1
CDH	39.2	18.9	13.5
Ecolo	13.3	16.3	12.8
FN	0.6	2.3	4.4
Other parties	7.6	5.0	5.1
Invalid/Wasted vote	3.2	5.9	12.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note

Chi² = 91.647; p = 0.000.

presence of a strong relationship between religious beliefs and conservative political attitudes. In the Belgian situation, where the majority of Catholic voters (51.9 per cent) support right-wing and centre-right parties (MR and CDH), their more conservative profile is not so clear. One can hardly talk of radical conservatism among Catholic voters, except perhaps for societal issues like abortion, gay marriage, and euthanasia (Table 9.5).

Our first indicator consists of self-placement on a left-right scale (0 to 9). The average self-placement of Catholic voters is almost perfectly centrist (4.65) but is slightly more inclined to the right end of the spectrum than the two other groups. Three other indicators have been constructed from a series of policy questions. For these three indicators, the position varies between 1 (most left wing) and 5 (most right wing). On socio-economic and universalism/ethnocentrism issues, Catholic voters confirm their 'radically centrist' stance, but here also they are positioned a little more towards the right end of the spectrum than the other groups of voters. The only indicator on which Catholic voters diverge significantly from the rest of the electorate is on societal issues, on values. The average position of Catholic voters is clearly on the right (3.70), and is one point further to the right than that of non-believers.

What is interesting is that the political attitudes of Catholic voters are close to the traditional positions of Christian Democratic parties in Belgium. These parties have occupied the centre of the political spectrum since the 1960s, except on societal issues where their conservatism has been more pronounced. Even if

Table 9.5 Political attitudes and religion in 2007

	<i>Catholics</i>	<i>Other religions</i>	<i>Non-believers</i>
Self-placement on left/right scale (0–9)	4.65	3.96	4.00
Socioeconomic issues (1–5)	2.63	2.24	2.47
Universalism/ethnocentrism issues (1–5)	2.58	2.34	2.27
Societal issues (1–5)	3.70	3.66	2.94

1 Catholic voters no longer vote massively for the CDH, their political attitudes
2 are still inspired by traditional Christian Democracy. And in order to attract
3 them, the Liberal MR has tried to move towards the centre.

4 Although these elements allow us to think that the religious cleavage still
5 structures the political landscape and determines the attitudes of voters, it does
6 not allow for an evaluation of the exact weight of the religious determinant
7 among other factors in predicting the vote. Discriminant analysis introduces such
8 a hierarchy among variables. Table 9.6 presents the results of a discriminant
9 analysis, by party.¹ For each party, a set of socio-demographic variables (educa-
10 tion, age, religion, and status) and attitudes (the above-mentioned indicators) are
11 included in the analysis in order to evaluate their capacity to predict the vote for
12 the party (in opposition to the other parties). The results confirm the previous
13 observations. The religious factor emerges as a predictive variable for two
14 parties: PS, but also, and especially, CDH. This is not the case for the Liberals or
15 Ecolo.

16 Analysis by party reveals that the religious variable remains the principal var-
17 iable in predicting a Christian Democratic vote. Two other variables also play a
18 significant role in predicting a vote for the CDH: positioning on the universalism-
19 ethnocentrism scale and on the societal scale. This confirms the link between
20 beliefs and attitudes. It is interesting to notice that left-right positioning and posi-
21 tion on the socioeconomic scale do not enable prediction of the vote for one
22 party or another. This highlights the pluralist character of the party in that
23 respect. The Liberal and Socialist votes are instead characterized by the left-right
24 dimension (self-placement and socioeconomic scale), the Liberals positioning
25 themselves on the right side of the scales and the Socialists on the left side. This
26 outcome attests to the primacy of the socioeconomic cleavage for these two
27 parties. However, prediction of the Socialist vote is remarkable for the resilient
28 influence of the religious factor. In the case of the Liberals, the average position-
29 ing on the liberalism-conservatism scale emerges as a voting predictor (with an
30 average anchorage on the conservative side). This factor could be explained by
31 the willingness and ability of the party to attract a large fringe of the Catholic
32 electorate. Finally, the Green vote is remarkable for the salience of the 'new
33 issues' variables, in the sense of a rather liberal and universalistic position.
34 Socioeconomic variables also play a part in the prediction of the Green vote, but
35 in a weaker way than for the Socialist or Liberal vote. Lastly, the level of educa-
36 tion (high) and age (younger on average) also represent predictive factors for the
37 ecologist vote.

38 As a first conclusion, our analysis of the voting behaviours and political atti-
39 tudes of 'Catholic' and 'non-believing' voters in French-speaking Belgium
40 delineated a mixed presence of the religious cleavage. The cleavage can no
41 longer be said in the main to be leading all Catholics towards voting for the
42 CDH, the heir to the Christian Democrats, and inducing them to leave other
43 traditionally secular parties representing the entire group of non-believers. On
44 the contrary, the success of religiously plural parties is confirmed. The Liberal
45 MR party is the most preferred party among both Catholics and non-believers.

Table 9.6 Discriminant analysis of the vote in 2007 by party

<i>Parties/variables</i>	<i>PS</i>	<i>MR</i>	<i>CDH</i>	<i>Ecolo</i>
Education	0.349 2*	0.192 3*	-0.001 -	-0.335 6*
Catholic/Non-Catholic	Secondary education -0.265 4*	Secondary/Higher education -0.165 -	Secondary education 0.839 1*	Secondary/Higher education -0.261 -
Socio-professional status	Non-Catholic 0.25 -	Catholic/Non-Catholic 0.173 -	Catholic 0.057 -	Catholic/Non-Catholic -0.093 -
Age	Worker/Employee 0.093 -	Employee 0.064 -	Worker/Employee -0.217 -	Worker/Employee 0.431 4*
L-R positioning (0-9)	35-54 years 0.886 1*	35-54 years 0.857 1*	35-54 years -0.039 -	35-44 years 0.655 1*
Univ-Ethno scale (1-5)	2.94 0.123 -	5.71 0.169 -	4.47 0.205 2*	3.39 0.587 3*
Socioeco scale (1-5)	2.24 0.535 3*	2.50 0.675 2*	2.17 0.148 4*	1.81 0.470 5*
Lib-Cons scale (1-5)	1.97 0.189 -	3.16 0.249 4*	2.35 -0.470 3*	2.08 0.642 2*
Wilks' Lambda	3.26 0.868	3.65 0.749	3.69 0.960	2.82 0.921
% of good ranking	67.5	73.2	63.6	66.4

Notes

Remarks: for each variable and each party, the table indicates: the correlation between the variable and the discriminating function; whether the variable is kept in the function, the rank of the correlation, and a*; if the variable is not kept in the function, the table mentions a -; the average position of the voters on each variable (mean score mode for ordinal variables). The signs of the correlations are not to be taken into account.

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1 However, some parties have not moved towards religious pluralism, even if they
 2 wish to do so. The CDH largely remains a party attracting Catholic voters more
 3 than all other voters, while the Socialist PS has difficulty attracting Catholics
 4 who may be perhaps frightened off by its remaining anti-clerical traditions.

5 Thus, our first hypothesis is at least partially confirmed. Traditional religious
 6 identities still exert a certain degree of influence on electoral behaviour: even if
 7 religion is not the main voting motive, the strong Christian anchorage of the
 8 Christian Democratic parties remains. Religious dealignment has not completely
 9 diluted the traditional loyalties linking Christian Democratic parties and Catholic
 10 voters.

11 **The Muslim vote**

12 Recently, the issue of religion and voting has been extended beyond the classical
 13 relationship between Christianity and votes. The growing numbers of Muslim
 14 migrants and their access to citizenship have given rise to a few attempts to
 15 understand the potential link between religion and voting among Muslims in
 16 Western democracies. In the Belgian case, it would be interesting to assess to
 17 what extent the relevance of the religious cleavage within the national and
 18 regional political systems is linked to the immigration dimension. Can we
 19 identify the presence of a specific electoral behaviour of immigrant-origin
 20 Muslim citizens, which would constitute an example of the gradual institutional-
 21 ization of forms of multiple modernities?
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23 The second part of this study explores whether immigrant-origin Muslim cit-
 24 izens would be inclined to vote more for religiously based parties (Christian-
 25 Democratic parties or Muslim parties) or if they would rather cast their vote
 26 according to other priorities, like their socioeconomic status or immigration
 27 issues. Would they cast a class-based vote? Or would they support parties which
 28 are 'open' on the issue of immigration such as the Socialists or the Greens?
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30 In Belgium, Muslim migrants are a significant part of the electorate, espe-
 31 cially in Brussels. Moroccans and Turks residing in Belgium, often for more
 32 than one generation, have widely availed themselves of easier access to Belgian
 33 citizenship. No precise figures for the Muslim population are available, but they
 34 are usually estimated at around 300,000 (Texier *et al.* 2006). In the last decade,
 35 Belgians of Moroccan or Turkish origin have entered the political arena in Brus-
 36 sels. In 1994, 14 councillors with these origins were present among all elected
 37 municipal councillors in the 19 municipalities constituting the Brussels-Capital
 38 Region. Six years later, they numbered 86. On the occasion of the last regional
 39 elections in Brussels, 22 of the 72 elected Francophone regional MPs were either
 40 of Moroccan or Turkish descent, mainly affiliated to the two left-wing parties:
 41 PS and Ecolo.

42 However, our knowledge about how Muslims vote in Belgium is relatively
 43 limited. As said earlier, we might expect three voting behaviours. The first would
 44 be for Muslims to vote for a religious party. As no Muslim-based party was
 45 running in 2007 after the failure of the Islamic PJM in 2004 (0.93 per cent in

Brussels), we could expect a vote for the CDH, a party that has abandoned its declared reference to Catholicism but remains a party adopting conservative religious positions on societal issues. The second would be a clear pattern of class voting for the main party of the left, the PS. And the third option would be a preference for either Ecolo or the PS, the two parties with the strongest pro-immigration attitudes (Sandri and De Decker 2008).

The 2007 exit poll survey enables an initial exploration. In the sample, the proportion of voters declaring themselves to be Muslim is 7.5 per cent (3.8 per cent in Wallonia and 11.8 per cent in Brussels). Table 9.7 offers a first insight into how these groups voted in 2007. The first observation is that the Muslim vote is in the main a left-wing vote. 53.6 per cent of declared Muslim voters have supported either the PS or Ecolo, with the Socialists in the lead. The Socialists are particularly successful among Muslim voters since they have attracted 43.1 per cent of Muslims, compared to 25.5 per cent of the overall electorate. A second successful party is the CDH with 18.7 per cent of the Muslim vote as against 14.7 per cent in the electorate as a whole. The least successful party is the Liberal MR with only 14.8 per cent of the Muslim vote as against 30.6 per cent in the whole Francophone electorate. The difficulties experienced by Liberals can be explained by the combination of their secular tradition and, more importantly, their right-wing stance on both socioeconomic issues and immigration. The MR is also the party with the greatest difficulty recruiting candidates of Moroccan or Turkish origin (Jacobs *et al.* 2006).

The electoral success of the PS and of the CDH among Muslim voters would lead us to presume that this group of voters was mainly motivated by either the conservative stance of the CDH on societal issues or by the left-wing socioeconomic stance of the PS. The pro-immigration parties' vote appears at first sight to be less significant, at least if we take into account the poor performance of Ecolo, the strongest pro-immigration party. Since 2009 the CDH is also the first Belgian Francophone party to have a veiled elected representative of Turkish origin and Muslim religion sitting in the Brussels regional parliament.

The variable of the impact of religious practice on Muslim voters does not help discriminate among voting patterns for the four main parties (Table 9.8).

Table 9.7 Electoral success of Belgian Francophone parties in the Muslim electorate in 2007 (%)

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Wallonia</i>	<i>Brussels</i>
PS	43.1	45.3	42.3
MR	14.8	15.1	14.7
CDH	18.7	24.5	16.7
Ecolo	10.5	5.7	12.2
FN	1.4	1.9	1.3
Other parties	4.8	5.7	4.5
Invalid/wasted votes	6.7	1.9	8.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 9.8 Religious practice and votes among Muslim voters in 2007 (%)

	<i>Frequent religious practice</i>	<i>Irregular religious practice</i>	<i>Non-practising Catholics</i>
PS	40.0	48.4	37.3
MR	12.3	15.1	17.6
CDH	18.5	19.4	17.6
Ecolo	12.3	8.6	11.8
FN	1.5	1.1	2.0
Other parties	4.6	2.2	9.8
Invalid/wasted votes	10.8	5.4	3.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

No party is more popular among Muslims practising regularly than among non-practising Muslims and Muslims practising irregularly. In fact, the most significant observation concerning the effect of religious practice is that among Muslim voters declaring frequent religious practice, the proportion of invalid and wasted votes is higher, at about 10.8 per cent. The question remains as to what extent this is related to their refusal to take part in elections or support one of the main parties.

A final element to take into consideration for this first analysis of the Muslim vote in Belgium in 2007 is the political attitudes of Muslim voters. Are they, as their vote for the PS and the CDH suggests, both progressive on socioeconomic issues and conservative on societal and ethical ones? To a certain extent, these expectations are confirmed (Table 9.9).

In the first place, the self-placement of Muslim voters on the left/right scale is more left wing (3.79) than for the rest of the electorate. On socio-economic issues, their attitudes also incline more to the left (2.02), as they do on issues related to universalism versus ethnocentrism (2.20). At the same time, on societal issues and on values, the Muslim group is the most conservative, with an average score of 4.04, the most conservative score possible being 5.0.

Therefore, we may consider it possible to identify a specific electoral behaviour characteristic of Muslim citizens of immigrant origin. Even though the impact of religious practice on the electoral choices of Muslim voters seems to be limited, the preference of Muslim voters for socially conservative parties such as the CDH or left-wing parties such as the PS is quite clear. Muslim citizens vote according to patterns which are different from those of other societal

Table 9.9 Political attitudes of Muslim voters in 2007

	<i>Catholics</i>	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>Non-believers</i>	<i>Electorate</i>
L-R Self-placement (0–9)	4.65	3.79	4.01	4.26
Socioeconomic issues (1–5)	2.63	2.02	2.47	2.51
Universalism/ethnocentrism issues (1–5)	2.58	2.20	2.27	2.41
Societal issues (1–5)	3.70	4.04	2.94	3.36

groups. We can therefore consider our second hypothesis to be at least partially confirmed. We postulated that the political behaviour of Muslim voters of immigrant origin is rather distinctive and we have seen that the Muslim vote is in the main a left-wing vote. Moreover, the relative electoral success of the CDH among Muslim voters and their conservative attitudes on societal and ethical issues show clearly how their voting patterns are affected by the religious cleavage.

Religion and party membership

This last section looks at the relationship between religion and politics from another perspective than classical electoral studies: the impact of the religious cleavage on party membership. In particular, it explores to what extent the cleavage between State and Church still exerts a certain degree of influence not only on electoral behaviour, but also on other patterns of political participation, such as party membership. Party members are much less studied than voters even if theirs is a major role in the political system. They adopt the party manifestos before the election, they elect party leaders, they vote for or against participation to a governing coalition, and they constitute the first pool of recruitment for candidates and elected officials. In this sense, investigating whether and how they are affected by the religious cleavage will tell us more about the impact of this line of division in Belgian politics.

In order to address this issue, the research is based on the data collected from four postal surveys carried out in 2003 and 2006. Four parties were investigated (CD&V, VLD, PS and Ecolo – N = 2,910). In each party, 2,500 questionnaires were sent out to a random sample of party members. Response rates vary from one party to another but all parties have a minimum sample of about 500 party members.² The results cover three aspects: the religious composition of the four parties (in order to assess whether their affiliates are pluralist in denominational terms or still massively composed of members of the respective denominational pillar), the remaining link between party members and traditional pillarized organizations, and the political attitudes of party members.

Religious affiliation of party members

In terms of religious beliefs, party members appear to confirm the persistence of the traditional religious cleavage (Table 9.10). The Flemish Christian Democratic party (CD&V) remains strongly anchored in the Catholic segment, while the traditionally secular PS only attracts a marginal group of Catholics among its members. The CD&V has almost no members who declare themselves to be non-Catholic and 97.2 per cent of all its members are Catholic. For the PS, two-thirds of its members declare themselves to be non-believers (64 per cent) and only one-third are Catholics (33.7 per cent). Apart these two parties, there are two pluralist parties: the VLD and Ecolo. For the Greens, it is not surprising that their members are divided almost equally between Catholics (42.3 per cent) and

Table 9.10 Religious affiliation of party members (%)

	<i>Catholics</i>	<i>Other religions</i>	<i>Non-believers</i>	<i>Total</i>
CD&V	97.2	1.7	1.2	100.0
VLD	64.8	7.0	28.2	100.0
PS	33.7	2.3	64.0	100.0
Ecolo	42.3	3.5	54.2	100.0

Note
 Chi² = 710.213; p = 0.000.

non-believers (54.2 per cent). But for the Liberal VLD, this confirms the legitimacy of its claim to be the only successful party to have transformed itself from a traditional secular anti-clerical party into a religiously plural one: a majority of members declare themselves to be Catholic (64.8 per cent).

When it comes to religious practice, the persistence of the traditional religious stance of the CD&V and the PS is more deeply marked (Table 9.11). If we consider only Catholic party members, the CD&V is the only party to have a large proportion (40.3 per cent) of regular church attenders, and has a minor proportion of non-practising Catholics (9.0 per cent). The VLD, the other party with a significant proportion of Catholic party members, has only a limited amount of regular church attenders (11.6 per cent) and more non-practising Catholics (34.9 per cent). For the PS, the few Catholic members of the Francophone Socialist party either never (40.2 per cent) or almost never (47.0 per cent) attend Mass; the same holds for Ecolo.

In other words, even more than for voters, analysis of the religious beliefs of party members depicts two groups of parties. The first, composed of the CD&V and the PS, consists of two parties which still correspond to their historical image as regards the religious cleavage: a Christian Democratic party almost exclusively made up of Catholic party members and a secular Socialist party with very few religious party members. The second group is made up of two religiously plural parties: Ecolo and the VLD.

Table 9.11 Church attendance among Catholic party members (%)

	<i>Every Sunday</i>	<i>A couple of time per months</i>	<i>A couple of time per year</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Total</i>
CD&V	40.3	13.7	37.0	9.0	100.0
VLD	11.6	7.3	46.2	34.9	100.0
PS	9.3	3.6	47.0	40.2	100.0
Ecolo	19.7	12.6	48.8	18.9	100.0

Note
 Chi² = 258.810; p = 0.000.

Party members and pillars

In the consociational model of democracy prevailing in Belgium at least up to the 1970s, religion and politics were closely related to pillarization: parties were characterized not only by a specific denominational feature but also by their relations with pillar and pillarized organizations (Deschouwer 1999). In this respect, one can investigate whether party members are still enclosed within their pillar and its network of organizations (van Haute and Pilet 2007). This can help us to evaluate the relative strength of the pillars and the relevance of the religious cleavage within Belgian politics. In order to answer this question, we will look at the educational network (official state school versus Catholic school) and affiliation to a mutual health insurance company (Catholic versus Socialist versus Liberal). The education system is at the very heart of Belgian consociationalism. Two networks have historically co-existed: the ‘official network’ of State schools and the ‘free network’ of Catholic schools. Up to the 1958 School Pact, the Catholic party and the secular parties (Socialists and Liberals) adopted opposed positions on the public financing of State and Catholic schools. Traditionally, members of the Catholic pillar were educated in Catholic schools and citizens belonging to the socialist or the liberal pillars were educated in State schools.

In the early twenty-first century, this link between party members and the education network remains strong, at least as regards the CD&V and the PS, but also to a lesser extent the VLD (Table 9.12). More than three-quarters of CD&V party members (77.8 per cent) have been educated in schools belonging to the ‘free network’ (Catholic schools). In contrast, more than four-fifths of PS members have been educated in the ‘official network’ of State schools (82.8 per cent). For the VLD, it is interesting to note that, in contrast to religious beliefs, the educational profile of its members still corresponds to the historical secular roots of the Liberal party. Most VLD members have been educated in State schools (48.8 per cent) and less than a quarter of them have been educated exclusively in the ‘free network’ (22.8 per cent). This under-representation of Catholic schools is even more surprising considering that in 2006–2007 Catholic schools were educating 63.4 per cent of all pupils in Flanders. Finally, for Ecolo, the pluralist profile of the party and its members is once again confirmed by educational and school affiliations.

Table 9.12 School network and party membership (%)

	<i>Official network</i>	<i>Free network</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>More than one network</i>	<i>Total</i>
CD&V	8.6	77.3	5.5	8.6	100.0
VLD	48.8	22.8	15.4	13.0	100.0
PS	82.8	11.0	1.0	5.2	100.0
Ecolo	36.2	53.1	2.5	8.2	100.0

Note
Chi² = 794.539; p = 0.000.

Our other indicator of the pillarization of party membership is affiliation to one specific type of mutual health insurance company. In Belgium the welfare state is a combination of state-based and private organizations. Citizens are obliged to affiliate to a mutual health insurance company (MHIC) which will cover their health expenses, mainly on basis of state funding. Four main mutual health insurance companies exist: three related to a pillar (Catholic, Socialist and Liberal) and one neutral cross-pillar company.

Table 9.13 details the affiliation to mutual health insurance companies of party members. Again, the CD&V and the PS confirm the strength of the continuing incorporation of their members within their historical pillar. Almost all CD&V members are affiliated to the Catholic MHIC (91.6 per cent) while about three-quarters of PS members are affiliated to the Socialist MHIC (77.0 per cent), with only few affiliated to the Catholic MHIC (7.4 per cent). For the VLD, the traditional Liberal MHIC remains the most preferred (46.6 per cent) but with some success for the Catholic MHIC (29.3 per cent) and for the neutral cross-pillar MHIC (16.2 per cent). Finally, members of Ecolo confirm their cross-pillar position in their dominant affiliation to the Catholic MHIC (40.1 per cent) and to the neutral MHIC (33.4 per cent).

This second section on party members has confirmed the picture depicted earlier. The religious cleavage and the pillarization caused by it are still deeply rooted among CD&V and PS party members. Even the VLD has not become fully plural in this respect. Only Ecolo is a truly cross-pillar party.

Political attitudes of party members

Our analysis also aims at determining whether the religious line of division echoes in the political attitudes of party members. Using the same four indicators as those used for voters (see above), Table 9.14 shows that party members declaring themselves to be Catholic incline a little more towards the more right-wing and more conservative positions than members of other religious affiliation. Their self-placement on the left-right scale is on average 3.35, about one point more towards the right end than other groups. They are also a little more ethnocentric. But the main difference is their average score on values and on societal issues. They are clearly more conservative (2.27) on such issues than other religious groups.

Table 9.13 Mutual health insurance company (MHIC) and party membership (%)

	<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Socialist</i>	<i>Liberal</i>	<i>Neutral and independent</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
CD&V	91.6	1.2	1.5	4.9	0.8	100.0
VLD	29.3	6.7	46.6	16.2	1.1	100.0
PS	7.1	77.0	1.1	11.5	3.1	100.0
Ecolo	40.1	19.4	2.0	33.4	5.1	100.0

Note
Chi² = 2659.678; p = 0.000.

Table 9.14 Political attitudes of party members per religious affiliation

	<i>Catholics</i>	<i>Other religion</i>	<i>Non-believer</i>
L-R Self-placement (0–7)	3.35	2.95	2.33
Socioeconomic issues (1–5)	2.27	2.05	1.52
Universalism/ethnocentrism issues (1–5)	2.24	2.33	1.90
Societal issues (1–5)	2.35	2.29	1.99

Now, if we make a distinction between members of the four parties studied in our postal surveys (CD&V, PS, VLD and Ecolo), Table 9.15 confirms that CD&V party members are the most conservative (2.71) on societal issues. The distance between them and the two left-wing parties is significant. However, on other issues, CD&V members are not the most right wing. The VLD confirms its move to the right in the 1960s when the Liberals abandoned their anti-clerical stance to become the main party of the right, attracting both the secular and Catholic *bourgeoisie*. From that moment on, the CD&V has occupied a more centrist position on other issues.

These observations testify that religion and anchorage in a pillar strongly determine membership and choice of party. However, bivariate analysis does not allow evaluation of the weighting of these determinants in the prediction of the choice of the party of affiliation. Discriminant analysis introduces such a hierarchy. This method allows us to identify the most predictive variables for choice of party affiliation.

Table 9.16 presents the results of the discriminant analysis, by party.³ For each party, socio-demographic variables (level of education, age, religion) and attitudes (the above-mentioned indicators) have been integrated into the analysis in order to evaluate their predictive value for affiliation to a given party (as opposed to the three other parties).

The results confirm the previous observations. The religious factor appears on two occasions as predictor of party membership: in the case of the PS and the CD&V. This is not the case for the VLD or for Ecolo. Following the example of electoral behaviour, the religious variable only plays a role for the parties traditionally opposed by the religious cleavage (Christian Democrats and Socialists). These pillar variables partly enable identification of the party of affiliation, especially for the MHIC. Finally, positions on indicators are also significant. On the self-placement and socioeconomic scales, the average position of the Liberals is

Table 9.15 Political attitudes and party membership

<i>Party</i>	<i>CD&V</i>	<i>VLD</i>	<i>PS</i>	<i>Ecolo</i>
Self-Positioning Left-Right	4.03	4.20	2.37	2.18
Socioeconomic Index Left-Right	2.46	2.99	1.79	1.78
Universalism-Particularism Index	2.46	2.92	2.55	1.47
Progressivism-Conservatism Index	2.71	2.12	1.82	1.52

1 on the right side; in the centre for the Christian Democrats, and on the left for
2 the Socialists and the Greens. Green party members are distinguished by their
3 average position on the universalism-ethnocentrism scale (1.52) and the
4 environmentalism-materialism scale (1.87). Christian Democrats are differenti-
5 ated by their rather conservative average position on the societal scale (2.56).
6 Interestingly enough, the basic socio-demographic variables (level of education,
7 age) do not play a role in the prediction of the choice of party. On the whole,
8 party members, no matter which party they belong to, present a rather similar
9 sociological profile: a high level of education, and an average age between 45
10 and 65 years old. These characteristics correspond to those highlighted by other
11 national studies (Seyd and Whiteley 1996). These characteristics correspond to
12 the resource model of participation emphasized by Verba and Nie (Verba and
13 Nie 1972).

15 Conclusion

17 After decades spent off-stage, religion has been returning to Belgian politics
18 since the late 1990s. The rainbow coalition constituted by the Liberals, the
19 Socialists and the Greens has adopted more reforms on societal issues (euthana-
20 sia, gay marriage, adoption by gay couples) than all governments in the previous
21 40 years which included Christian Democrats as the major coalition party. At the
22 same time, the debate about a potential reference to a Christian heritage in the
23 European Constitution was strongly rejected by the Belgian government.

24 In this sense, addressing the presence of the religious cleavage in Belgian pol-
25 itics constituted a relevant research question when trying to apply the paradigm
26 of ‘multiple modernities’ developed by Eisenstadt to new empirical cases such
27 as Belgium. In general, this dividing line had been said to be obsolete since the
28 1950s and the final settlement of the school funding issue. The success of new
29 religiously plural parties such as the Greens and the extreme right was also men-
30 tioned as confirmation of the disappearance of the religious cleavage. However,
31 few empirical analyses at the micro level existed to confirm that religion was no
32 longer a significant variable differentiating between parties. In this study, we
33 have proposed a double analysis of the actual impact of the religious variable: on
34 voters and on party members. Both of these confirm that religion is still present
35 as a factor: it cannot be said to be dominant but it is not obsolete either.

36 The traditional conflict between State and Church still exerts a certain degree
37 of influence on electoral behaviour, is partially confirmed. In the French-
38 speaking community, two traditional parties, PS and CDH, have problems
39 attracting voters from outside their historical religious segment. The CDH, the
40 heir to the Christian Democrats, is still mainly supported by Catholic voters and
41 is having trouble convincing non-believers. The PS is not very successful in its
42 attempt to attract Catholic voters.

43 When it comes to party members, the differences are even more pronounced.
44 The Flemish Christian Democratic party (CD&V) is also exclusively composed
45 of Catholics, and most of these are still enclosed within the Catholic pillar. The

Table 9.16 Discriminant analysis of party membership

Party/Variables	CD&V	Open VLD	PS	Ecolo
Education	-0.012 Sec./sup.	-0.176 6* Sec./sup.	0.202 Sec./sup.	-0.178 Sec./sup.
Religion	0.567 4* Catholic/Christian	0.240 Non-believers/Catholic	0.297 4* Non-believers	0.181 Non-believers/Catholic
Age	0.152 45-64	0.130 45-64	-0.009 45-64	0.127 45-54
Educational network	0.212 6* Free	-0.010 Official/free	0.338 6* Official	-0.147 6* Official/free
MHIC	-0.509 2* Christian	0.199 3* Liberal	-0.047 Socialist	-0.172 4* Socialist/Liberal
L-R Self-placement	0.604 1* 3.95	0.689 2* 4.34	0.243 2* 2.30	0.421 3* 2.08
Universalism-Ethnocentrism	0.219 2.40	0.500 4* 2.76	-0.314 7* 2.45	0.734 1* 1.52

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Socioeconomic	0.304 1*	0.834 1*	0.248 5*	0.321 7*
	2.43 3*	3.02	1.79	1.75
Progressivism-Conservatism scale	0.575 3*	0.323 -	0.092 8*	0.352 8*
	2.56	2.30	1.87	1.64
Environmentalism-Materialism scale (1-4)	0.097 -	0.164 5*	-0.539 1*	0.681 2*
	2.61	2.63	2.94	1.87
Wilks' Lambda	0.662	0.702	0.552	0.480
% of correct placements	81.8	83.2	84.9	87.0

Notes

Remarks for each variable and each party:
The table indicates: the correlation between the variable and the discriminating function; whether the variable is kept in the function, the rank of the correlation, and a*; if the variable is not kept in the function, the table mentions a -; the average position of the voters on each variable (mean score mode for ordinal variables). The signs of the correlations are not to be taken into account.

same holds for the PS, which recruits secular party members who are also enclosed in the Socialist pillar. Only the Liberals have had some success in becoming a cross-pillar party. The importance of these dynamics of enclosure within pillars and the persisting strength of the Catholic pillar contributes to the assessment that the religious cleavage remains relevant within Belgian politics. Therefore, the extent to which Belgium's modernity may be considered secularized has to be nuanced.

Religion also plays a role in political attitudes. Catholic voters and party members occupy the centre of the political spectrum on socioeconomic issues and on universalism versus ethnocentrism. However, on values and on societal issues, they remain more conservative than the rest of the population.

Moreover, the progressive linkage between the religious cleavage and the immigration dimension, also seems to be at least partially confirmed. As a result of the important penetration achieved by the CDH within the Muslim philosophical family, the political behaviour of immigrant-origin Muslim voters is affected by the religious cleavage. Moreover, their vote is in the main a left-wing vote. Specific patterns of political participation by Muslim citizens could be identified. The religious cleavage has not faded away. It has declined but its imprints are still visible.

Notes

- 1 The vote for the *p* party is dichotomized in opposition to other parties, with an equal probability to vote for each group in order to avoid disproportions.
- 2 Response rates: 32.9 per cent (PS-2003), 41.2 per cent (Ecolo-2003), 18.6 per cent. (VLD-2006) and 24.2 per cent (CD&V-2006).
- 3 The affiliation to party *p* is dichotomized towards affiliation to other parties, with an equal probability to join in order to avoid disproportions linked with real probabilities.

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