



Article

Hidden Dynamics of Religion and Human Rights in Central and Eastern Europe

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Abstract: The relationship between human rights and religion cannot be seen as a relationship between two entirely distinct sets of values. Human rights are deeply rooted in the Judeo-Christian religious tradition. However, throughout history religious institutions have interpreted human rights differently and have supported or hindered their implementation. This paper discusses the relationship between human rights and religion in the social and cultural matrix of post-communist Central and Eastern Europe. Our statistical analysis focuses on Hungary as an example of the region. In our view, the variations in the relationship between human rights and religion in Central and Eastern Europe are primarily determined by the region's wounded collective identity and the resulting overriding national and state security needs. Politically and culturally, the region is characterized by its betweenness, embodied in centuries of vulnerability to the great powers. Therefore, the social status and political discourse of human rights and religion should be tied to this primary regional marker. While examining the relationship between religion and human rights, we should be aware that the primary relationship is between human rights and the collective identity of the nation-state and between religion and the identity of the nation-state.

Keywords: human rights; Central and Eastern Europe; wounded collective identity; LGBTI



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1. Individuality versus Nationalism

In defining human rights, scholarly authors present it as an innate right of the individual, independent of culture, time period, and nationality (Justice in Wuthnow 1998, 437f; Pace 2009; Blau and Moncada 2009). Human rights derive from human dignity, which means the inviolability, 'unusability as mere objects or tools' and inalienability of the human person. Human rights are first and foremost the rights of the person, the individual. They are based on this right of the individual, and from it the rights of the community are derived, known as the collective or solidarity right. These include the rights conferred on different groups of people such as women, children, the disabled, various minorities, etc. The individual and the community of individuals are the beneficiaries of human rights, which include the rights to freedom (including freedom of conscience and religion and the right to freedom of expression). In the evolution of human rights, we can distinguish between first-generation rights, second-generation rights, and third-generation rights. (Galling 1957, Bd.4, S. 1736–39). During the past three decades, scholarship on human rights has shown some regional differences of emphasis. In Central and Eastern Europe, the topics of national and ethnic minorities, the use of minority languages, and the self-expression of minority existence have remained the most prominent (Ruiz Vieytez 2021). By contrast, in the scholarship on Western Europe, the individual aspects are more prominent, especially issues related to the rights of gender minorities. This difference in emphasis is due to the different collective identities and related sensitivities of these two cultural regions of Europe. In regions with a stable social environment and organic social

development such as Western Europe, individual issues are more prominent. In unstable regions such as Eastern Europe, they are linked to stability and the need for achieving it. We agree with Hans Joas (2015), who argued that in the drafting of the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, not only representatives of the Western European philosophical and religious traditions were present, but also representatives of the Far East. Therefore, the Declaration cannot be considered simply a Western product (Joas 2015, 67ff). He further points out that it is a fallacy to contrast the ideal of human rights as emphasized in Western European countries with the shortcomings and failures in their implementation, as seen outside Western Europe. Indeed, the fight against terrorism over the last decade has shown that human rights have been marginalized in the West (for example, in the detention centers run by the United States). Our argument, however, is that the interpretation and reception of human rights differ across cultural regions. Central and Eastern Europe has a more robust tradition of collectivism and thus a stronger tradition of interpreting human rights, which we plan to analyze thoroughly in this current research paper. Regional differences can be observed in the attempts to add to the contents of the original 1948 UN Declaration. The rights of sexual minorities have gradually come to be understood as part of human rights after 2010 (Gary and Rubin 2012). At the same time, there have been several attempts to include national minority rights (cf. Topidi 2021). The former additions were the result of successful interventions by movements and organizations in North America and Western Europe. East-Central Europe typically initiated the latter. An asymmetric lack of understanding of these additions or extensions in the region that did not initiate them should be highlighted (Csergő et al. 2017; Vizi 2018). Just as the 'West' has difficulty understanding the collective sensitivities of national and ethnic minorities, the 'East' has difficulty decoding the rights of sexual minorities. The human rights debates of the last decade reflect this asynchrony. In Central and Eastern Europe, citizens and the political establishment are not only unable (and unwilling) to understand the human rights of sexual minorities, but they see the very extension of individual self-determination as a threat to the national collective. The difficulty in their understanding rests in the fact that 'Western' codes are not used to interpret 'Western' processes in the 'East' (Brubaker 1996). It follows that 'Western' aspirations are given a meaning different from, and independent of, their original intention; this is why they are seen as related to anti-family and anti-nationalism. In addition, Central and Eastern Europe has a more vital civil religion dimension than in the 'Western' thinking. In Christian doctrine and in the social conceptions of the mainstream churches that represent Christianity, nation and family form an inseparable unit. The threat to the nation and family is a threat to the divine order. In Central and Eastern Europe, the religious interpretation of the public sphere draws heavily from the national and nationalist political-based interpretations (see Ayoub and Paternotte 2014; Balázs 2020; Kollman and Waites 2009; Mole 2011; Nyirkos 2020; Péter 2020). In the 'West' the situation is reversed. For historical reasons, national, collective aspirations are fundamentally and primarily an obstacle to the development and representation of individual identity. These aspirations are not acceptable for two reasons. On the one hand, the Declaration of Human Rights and its philosophy are based on the rights of the individual, which are considered to take precedence over collective rights. On the other hand, attempts to assert collective rights are in themselves an obstacle to individual self-expression. Religion plays no role in representing individual human rights in the 'West'. Indeed, the centuries-long opposition of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches to human rights and democracy remains a threat to human rights. This critical ecclesiastical stance seems to influence debates to date, although both the Roman Catholic Church (since the Second Vatican Council) and the Orthodox critical or ecclesiological stance seem to influence the debates to this day, although both the Catholic Church (in the Second Vatican Council and on several occasions thereafter) and the Orthodox Churches (in their social doctrines adopted in recent decades (<https://mospat.ru/en/documents/176-osnovy-sotsialnoy-kontseptsii-russkoy-pravoslavnoy-tserkvi/>), (accessed on 25 February 2023), Stoeckl (2012), 2014; Guglielmi (2021))) accept human rights with different theological emphases. Human rights are threatened by national and religious con-

siderations from the “East” in a “Western” perspective. Perhaps this is also the reason why the recognition of the collective rights of national/ethnic minorities is met with rejection by the UN. For the purposes of our study, East-Central Europe refers to the post-Soviet societies of Europe. The Baltic states, the states of Eastern and Central Europe, and the Balkan states that came under Soviet control after World War II. Therefore, we do not include the non-European provinces of the former Soviet Union, nor do we cover Germany and Austria, which in another sense belong to Central Europe. This political-geographical definition of the region should, however, in our view, be supplemented by a description of its social and cultural heritage. Without this, the study of human rights or religious dimensions would remain a kind of ethereal-theoretical study.

2. Wounded Identity—Vulnerable Institutions

When we emphasize woundedness as the primary marker of the Central and Eastern European region, a metaphorical association is made in the field of human rights philosophy and sociology: a wounded region, vulnerable human rights. While instability is one of the most serious variables in the woundedness of the region, the institution of human rights can also be understood as a response to human instability and vulnerability. Bryan S. Turner has elaborated on this relationship in vulnerability and human rights (Turner 2006). In order to survive, one needs to create defense mechanisms and protective institutions. Referring to Arnold Gehlen, among others, he argues that human culture is in fact an antidote to man’s biological frailty and vulnerability. “Because we are biologically vulnerable, we need to build political institutions to provide for our collective security.” (Turner 2006, p. 26). Society, as an evolved form of human community, allows man’s strong instincts, due to his kinship with animals, not to prevent an accepting and creative coexistence. The institutions, including human rights, which society has at its disposal are capable of keeping instinctive drives in check. “In sociological theory, “institutions” replace “instincts”, because human beings do not have many ready-made instinctual responses to their environment.” (Turner 2006, p. 28). When we argue that a wounded collective identity marks the region, we are aware of the fundamental vulnerability of the human being and that culture and social institutions are closely related to this fundamental vulnerability. The social experience of the Central and Eastern European region is also particularly traumatic. Consequently, the importance of cultural and legal protection systems in this region is also paramount. It is essential to pay attention to this when discussing human rights, as it is one of the institutions that can respond to the need for security in Central and Eastern European societies with their trauma-centered collective consciousness and emotions. In Turner’s work, however, the social institutions themselves are presented as vulnerable. “We create institutions to reduce our vulnerability and attain security, but these institutional patterns are always imperfect, inadequate, and precarious.” (Turner 2006, p. 28). The various political, economic and national powers tend to subordinate social institutions, which are fundamentally concerned with maintaining and serving the common good, to their own interests. However true it may be that human rights are universal in their claim and validity, i.e., independent of age and political system, their knowledge and enforcement are subject to social processes. The history of knowledge and enforcement of human rights is embedded in the history of Central and Eastern European societies, which is the focus of this thesis. The need for stability and security in societies with wounded collective identities has been met by the institution of human rights, marked by its history within the region. We can formulate the same relationship in such a way that the strength or weakness of regional confidence in the human rights institution depends on the wounded identity of the region on the one hand, and on the regional characteristics of human rights on the other.

3. Collective Insecurity

The societies of the Central and Eastern European region are characterized by a wounded collective identity. Of course, each society has its own traumatic historical memo-

ries. At the same time, the Central and Eastern European region is strongly characterized by centuries of geocultural and geopolitical interstices, which result in trauma-centric memories, authoritarianism, and a permanent fear of ethnic and (nation-)state sovereignty (Máté-Tóth 2019; Máté-Tóth and Balassa 2022). The firmly drawn fault lines that separate this region, partly from Western Europe and partly from Asia, have not been diminished in importance by the redrawing of European borders following the fall of communism. The tradition of collective threat in the region has reinforced the already critical need for security. The assertion of (nation-)state autonomy and the need to defend it against real and phantom threats is one of the most striking features of the region's countries. The following quotation is representative of the emphasis on national existence and minority threat in the description of human rights. The specific regional approach is reflected in the term "only". It is a common perception that human rights declare the rights of the individual, the individuum, but not the rights of nations and minorities. "Neither the Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948, nor the United Nations Charter, nor the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 4 November 1950, contain clear language on the protection of the rights of national minorities. The United Nations Charter protects only individual—and not collective—nationality rights". (Illyés Elemér in Háromszék (Trei Sacune, Romania) 6 October 2018. p. 8.—selected quote by authors) The past decades have underlined these inherited traditional fears and security needs for the different countries in the region. These include the Balkan wars, the Velvet Revolution in Ukraine (2005), followed by the Revolution of Dignity and the subsequent annexation of Crimea by Russia (2014). But they also include the tensions between Serbia and Kosovo. The sense of collective insecurity in a region of wounded collective identity is not surprising. We argue that it is collective insecurity, or in other words the collective existential need for security, which is the primary factor to be considered when interpreting the relationship between human rights and religion (Carnevale 2019; Máté-Tóth and Szilárdi 2022; Szilárdi et al. 2022). As the wounded collective identity is considered one of the main markers of the region, one of the most essential elements and manifestations of which is collective insecurity, what Anthony Giddens calls ontological insecurity (Giddens 1986, pp. 50–51, 375), the religious dimensions of the region also show their characteristics in this context. Several authors have pointed out that in this region, especially in its more eastern areas, which are primarily covered by orthodoxy, the interconnection and intertwining between religion and nation, between mainline churches and the state, is strong. The uncertainties inherited from history and strongly experienced in recent decades apply not only to national and state identity but also to religions and religious institutions, which are an integral part of the same set of relations. The state and the mainline church are responding to the emerging challenges with synchronous movements. Their primary interest is to preserve and defend the sovereignty and autonomy they have coveted for centuries and have finally acquired in recent decades. Any process that appears to be a threat to the representatives of the state and the church will be averted by joint action. The role of religions and churches in this region is primarily to seek and protect security. In the decades following regime change, many countries have seen not only state and diplomatic institutions but also churches in close alliance with them, responding to threats to the state and its primary ethnic base. In view of the Russian occupation, which was still in progress at the time of writing, it is obvious to refer first of all to Patriarch Kirill's support for Putin, but also to Patriarch Epiphany's support for President Zelensky. The same model of support was observed in the Balkan wars of 1992–1994, both in the field of state and church cooperation in Serbia and Croatia. The same connection can be seen in Poland between the PiS party and the Catholic Church or in Hungary between the Orbán government and the Catholic and Reformed Church leadership. The desire for collective security, to preserve the security acquired, to ward off the dangers that threaten it, is the legacy of a wounded collective identity in the region, which explains the synchronous feelings and reactions of the state and the large churches. If human rights as a symbol, or the assertion of a specific human right, appears to this logic to be a threat, then collective

action against it is not only not surprising but also self-evident, and when an aspect of human rights coincides with the interests of security and its enforcement, it is in connection with this that the joint support of the state and the churches appear.

4. Nation, Religion, and the Threatened Collective Identity

The Central and Eastern European region is generally characterized by the inextricable intertwining of the importance of nation, religion and family. This conglomerate of values marks what is seen as traditional and normal in public thinking and also appears in (populist) political discourse as a distinguishing feature and as an area of threat that needs to be protected from external attacks. In her 2019 study, Safia Swimlear pointed out this connection, which she used to justify opposition to issues of homosexuality and sexual self-determination. While the author distinguishes between Croatia and Serbia in terms of the weight of religious nationalism, her main findings can be considered valid for other countries in the region too. "In post-communist Europe, we are seeing religious nationalisms being used as collective identity markers in political debates and popular culture. Recent scholarship in this area has argued that "religion and nationalism are intertwined to the degree that religion provides central elements of the symbolics of the nation, and nationalism functions as one of the key materializations of religious inspiration and morals. Religious nationalisms are usually held together by support for heteronormativity, patriarchy, masculinity, and a gendered order or society." Thus, religious nationalists undoubtedly connect homosexuality with a weakening and a denigration of both the nation and the family." (Swimlear 2019, p. 610). In the region, the emphasis on traditional values is closely linked to a general politically constructed national identity threatened by 'otherness' and 'being different'. In the role of the "others" we can find NGOs criticizing the EU but also other NGOs criticizing the nationalist policies and politicians, which advocate the right to sexual self-determination or on behalf of financing public education projects to sensitize the population on sexual tolerance. In the same context, Phillip M. Ayoub, in his 2014 study, analyses the power of religious nationalism to create a collegiate identity and its role in the struggle against sexual self-determination. While the Polish Catholic Church is much more capable of mobilizing against 'external' influences than the Slovenian, the intertwining of national and religious identities and their function of protecting collective identity can be observed in both countries (Ayoub 2014). In several studies, Rebeka Anić has shown that the intensification of the Catholic Church's family protection agenda is characteristic of all countries in the region with a significant Catholic population. The main focus of the Church's family protection is the rejection of sexual self-determination. The author has specifically analyzed the regional reception of the gender-critical works of Gabriele Kuby and has noted that the bishops of the region seem to have had Kuby's works translated and propagated at the recommendation of the Vatican (Anić 2021; Anić and Spahić Šiljak 2020). These analyses also support the central thesis of our study that the discourse of human rights in the CEE region can be adequately understood primarily in terms of the explanatory factor of wounded collective identity. According to the essential logic of this region-specific identity, nation, nation-state, Christianity, and family are part of a coherent set of values. Criticism of any element of this package threatens the whole package. Whether it is a cultural or political movement or system of thought that relativizes the national frame of reference, or that criticizes sovereignty, or that criticizes Christianity, or undermines the traditional family model. This construction of identity, which is particularly characteristic of the countries of the Central and Eastern European region, creates a fault line within the region's societies, along which the region's societies are divided. At the same time, this divide is low in its condemnation of the extension of human rights to sexual self-determination. In perspective, there is a high level of homogeneity in the region, which is further confirmed by a secondary analysis of differential survey data.

5. Illiterate Ignorance of Human Rights

Before moving on to the presentation and analysis of the statistical data, one general interpretative point needs to be made. This is a kind of regional illiteracy on human rights. In the Central and Eastern European region, knowledge of human rights in general was already low under communism and did not increase significantly after the fall of communism. We can therefore speak of a general illiteracy about human rights. During the communist political period, human rights were seen as an American or Western political tool and were completely subordinated to the collectivist approach of the communist doctrine. In Hungary, the 2012 government decree on the National Core Curriculum sets out the obligation to take human rights into account as a general rule. "Citizen participation is the basis for the functioning of a democratic state based on the rule of law and public life, which strengthens national consciousness and cohesion, and creates harmony between individual goals and the common good. This active citizenship is characterized by respect for the law, observance of the rules of coexistence, respect for human dignity and human rights, non-violence and fairness. The school provides pupils with the opportunity to learn about the main rights and duties of citizenship and, in this context, provides education in defense. Participation in public affairs requires the development of creative, independent reflection, analytical skills, and a culture of debate. The learning of responsibility, autonomy, trustworthiness, and mutual acceptance are effectively supported by teaching and learning organization procedures based on the active participation of pupils (I.1)." The requirement for the history curriculum states that the student "be familiar with the functioning of the democratic state, the principles of the rule of law, human rights and be aware of their rights and duties as citizens; (II. 3.4.1.)" in order to "to develop a democratic commitment that values majority decision-making, human rights and citizens' rights and duties as fundamental values"; The same is repeated in relation to civics and ethics/faith and morals (II.3.4.2, II.3.5) In secondary education, a section of the history and theme of human rights is included in the history and civics subjects. The teaching of human rights in primary and secondary schools throughout the region only started after the regime change. The difficulties in integrating the subject were primarily due to the legacy of the state's ideology-centred thinking and education system, and the post-change social experience, marked by disappointment with naive hopes of adopting a 'Western' system (cf. Tibbitts 1994, and the author's further studies). It follows that in Hungarian society, human rights as a legal institution are an empty signifier (Laclau and Mouffe 2014), and as knowledge related to it is rather low, it is a concept suitable for political self-profiling.

6. Churches and Human Rights: Rather Contrast than Harmony

The vast majority of Central and Eastern European countries have signed the UN Declaration of Human Rights and later incorporated it into their constitutions and legal systems. One of the key political dossiers for EU accession was the adoption of human rights. The historic churches—a term referring to main churches present in the countries for several centuries already—are an integral part of society, the constitution and laws apply to churches and church members as much as to anyone else. Therefore, the systemic acceptance of human rights by believers and the churches is evidence of this. The churches, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant, have their own ecclesiological-theological histories of human rights, which have a decisive influence on the participation of churches in social debates on human rights. One of the most prominent themes of this theological history is religious freedom. While human rights declare full religious freedom for the individual, which includes the freedom to choose and change one's religious beliefs and to express and practice one's religious beliefs alone or in a community. This freedom is difficult to reconcile with certain church teachings, which affirm a faith in salvation alone and an exclusive ecclesial communion for the practice and preservation of that faith. In the more than 70 years since the Declaration of 1948, the churches have defined for themselves the possibilities and limits for the recognition of human rights. If we take human rights in a general or symbolic sense, the Churches' teaching is in a kind of contrast-

harmony with human rights. Besides the plurality of religious positions regarding human rights, in the normative teaching of the churches, on the one hand, they acknowledge human dignity, which is the basis of the philosophy of human rights and has solid biblical connotations in the churches. On the other hand, they deny human rights the cultural and ideological status of being the new religious foundation of the modern world. The primary position of all three major Christian denominations on human rights can be summarized by paraphrasing a Bible quote: we must obey God rather than human rights (Acts 5, 19). There are also other Vatican documents (see The Pontifical Council for the Family: The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality. Guidelines for Education within the Family) and scientific works about Eastern Christianity (e.g., Harakas 1982, 1983) substantially supporting these arguments. The subject of human rights has broadened since the millennium, especially as regards the right to sexual self-determination. Although several very high-profile, strong and normative statements have been made by UN authorities in this area, it cannot be said that this broadening of the subject can boast the same general acceptance as the original 1948 Declaration. The right to sexual self-determination and, in particular, the possibility of declaring same-sex partnerships to be marriages, are issues against which Christian denominations are raising their voices, as they are in direct contradiction with their doctrines, which they believe and hold to be revealed and therefore unchangeable. In the Central and Eastern European region, the theme of the extension of Human Rights in the domestic political discourse has the potential to divide society into “us” and “them”. The extension has provoked criticism of human rights by right-wing political forces that invoke Christian traditions. The political agenda of sexual self-determination, which prevails mainly in the USA and Western Europe, caused political forces in East-Central Europe to create resistance. They fear the Christian traditions, which are inseparable from nationalist interests. It has further stabilized the discourse of a struggle between two political and cultural camps in contemporary Europe. For right-wing politics, the most important values are the national preservations of Christianity and traditions, and a different value is in the center for the left-wing: internationalism (including the European Union’s policy of relativising national borders), secularism, and sexual self-determination. This juxtaposition is well illustrated by the following quote, in which the left and human rights are placed on one side, with reference to 68, a Western European event, and on the other side Christianity, which is the religion of the ‘us’, i.e., the Central and Eastern European region. “For the intellectuals from the left, May ’68 marked the beginning of a process in which the primacy of human rights became the political paradigm. For them, yes—but not for those who clung to their Christian religion.” (S. Király, B. in Magyar Nemzet (Hungarian Daily Newspaper) 5 March 2018).

7. The Rejection of Sexual Self-Determination as Regional Common Sense

The rejection of sexual self-determination as regional common sense in CEE (Central and Eastern Europe) can be observed in several aspects of society. The region is known for being more conservative and traditional in its views towards sexuality and gender roles, which can lead to discrimination and intolerance towards LGBTI individuals (see Zhang and Brym 2019). One aspect of this rejection can be seen in the legal system, where many CEE countries have laws that restrict the rights and freedoms of LGBTI individuals. For example, some countries have banned same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex couples, and some have even criminalized homosexuality. These legal restrictions limit the ability of LGBTI individuals to express their sexual self-determination and live their lives free from discrimination. Another aspect is the societal attitudes towards LGBTI individuals, which can often be negative and stigmatizing (Forest 2018; Mos 2020). There is a lack of visibility and representation of LGBTI individuals in the media and public life, which can reinforce negative stereotypes and discrimination. This can make it difficult for individuals to come out and express their sexual identity openly, leading to social exclusion and isolation. Overall, the rejection of sexual self-determination as regional common sense in CEE is a significant challenge for LGBTI individuals in the region. We will support

our claim of the regional significance of this factor by the statistical analysis of publicly available and the most recent data.

7.1. Description of Data Sources—Data on LGBTI Population

Equaldex is an online database and map that aims to provide information about the rights and legal protections of LGBTI people around the world. The Europe Equality Index on Equaldex is a subset of this database that specifically focuses on European countries. The Europe Equality Index includes information on the legal status of same-sex marriage, adoption by same-sex couples, discrimination protections, gender recognition, and other LGBTI-related issues. Each country is given an overall score based on how favorable its laws and policies are towards LGBTI people, with a maximum score of 100. In addition to the overall score, the Europe Equality Index also provides detailed information on each category and how each country ranks within each category. This allows users to compare the LGBTI rights and legal protections of different European countries in a more detailed way. The Equaldex Equality Index measures the overall level of legal and social equality for LGBTI people in a given country, based on a combination of legal protections and social attitudes. The Legal Index, on the other hand, focuses solely on the legal landscape for LGBTI individuals in a country, including legal protections and restrictions related to sexual orientation and gender identity. The Public Opinion Index looks at the attitudes and perceptions of the general public in a country towards LGBTI individuals, as measured through surveys and other data sources. In terms of their specific indicators, the Equality Index includes a broad range of factors, such as anti-discrimination laws, hate crime legislation, same-sex marriage and adoption rights, gender recognition laws, and healthcare access. The Legal Index, as mentioned, primarily focuses on legal protections, including anti-discrimination laws, employment protections, and hate crime legislation. The Public Opinion Index includes data on attitudes towards LGBTI individuals, such as levels of acceptance, support for same-sex marriage, and beliefs about whether LGBTI individuals should have equal rights. While the Equality Index and Legal Index both focus on legal protections for LGBTI individuals, the Legal Index provides a more narrow and detailed perspective, looking specifically at legal protections in various areas of life. The Public Opinion Index provides a complementary perspective, looking at social attitudes and perceptions towards LGBTI individuals. Together, these three indices provide a comprehensive view of the state of LGBTI equality in a given country, incorporating both legal and social factors. (Source: <https://www.equaldex.com/>, (accessed on 25 February 2023)).

7.2. Data on Religiosity—PEW “Highly Religious” Index

The PEW “highly religious” index measures the percentage of adults in a given country who consider religion to be very important in their lives. The index is based on survey data collected by the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan think tank that conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, and other studies on important issues facing societies around the world. The “highly religious” index is part of the Pew Research Center’s larger effort to study the role of religion in public life and the ways in which religious beliefs and practices shape attitudes and behaviors. The index is based on a question that asks survey respondents how important religion is in their lives, with possible responses ranging from “very important” to “not at all important”. The percentage of respondents who answer “very important” is used to calculate the index score. The index is a useful tool for researchers, policymakers, and others who are interested in understanding the role of religion in different countries and regions. It can be used to compare levels of religious commitment across countries, to identify trends over time, and to explore the relationships between religion, politics, and social issues. The PEW percentage of adults who are “highly religious” index is updated periodically, with the most recent data available from surveys conducted in 2015–2017 and presented in 2018 (Source:

<https://www.pewresearch.org/interactives/how-religious-is-your-country>, (accessed on 25 February 2023)).

7.3. LGBTI Population in Central and Eastern Europe

The situation of LGBTI people in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Western Europe differs significantly, with significant disparities in terms of legal protections and societal attitudes towards LGBTI individuals. In general, Western European countries tend to have more progressive attitudes towards LGBTI individuals and more comprehensive legal protections for their rights. Many Western European countries have implemented policies and laws to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, recognize same-sex partnerships, and allow for gender-neutral identification documents. These countries have also taken steps to promote LGBTI inclusion in areas such as education, healthcare, and employment. In contrast, many CEE countries have been slower to implement such measures and often lack comprehensive legal protections for LGBTI individuals. Some countries in the region have even passed laws that actively discriminate against LGBTI individuals, such as “propaganda” laws that prohibit the promotion of homosexuality to minors. Societal attitudes towards LGBTI individuals in CEE countries are also often more conservative and intolerant, which can lead to discrimination, harassment, and violence against LGBTI individuals. However, it is worth noting that the situation in CEE is not uniform, and there are differences between countries in terms of LGBTI rights and acceptance. Some CEE countries, such as Estonia and the Czech Republic, have made significant progress in recent years in promoting LGBTI inclusion and implementing legal protections for LGBTI individuals.

7.4. Table to Show the Basic Distribution of the Data by the Different Countries

The table (Table 1) provides information about the equality of LGBTI populations in various countries. It includes data on three aspects: the equality of LGBTI population, legal equality of LGBTI population, and public opinion on equality of LGBTI population, based on the public opinion of the general population in various countries. Additionally, the table presents information on the percentage of highly religious populations and whether the countries are located in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). According to the data, Norway, Denmark, and the Netherlands are the countries with the highest levels of equality for LGBTI populations, scoring 86, 85, and 84 percent, respectively. On the other hand, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lithuania, Romania, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Latvia have the lowest levels of equality for LGBTI populations, scoring less than 50 percent. Legal equality is higher in the countries with higher overall equality scores. For instance, Norway, Denmark, and the Netherlands, which scored the highest in overall equality, also scored the highest in legal equality. Meanwhile, Poland, Romania, and Lithuania, which scored the lowest in overall equality, also scored the lowest in legal equality. Public opinion on equality of LGBTI populations varies significantly among countries, ranging from 76 percent in the UK to only 17 percent in Greece. Countries with a higher percentage of highly religious populations tend to have lower public opinion scores on equality of LGBTI populations. Finally, it is worth noting that all of the countries in the table, except for Portugal, are located in Central and Eastern Europe. The countries in this region tend to have lower overall equality scores for LGBTI populations compared to Western European countries.

The data in the table highlights significant disparities in the equality of LGBTI populations across different countries, with some countries performing much better than others. The findings suggest that LGBTI populations are generally more equal in Western European countries than in Central and Eastern European countries. This could be due to differences in cultural attitudes towards LGBTI populations and the legal framework in place to protect their rights. It is also clear from the data that legal equality is an important factor in overall equality for LGBTI populations. Countries with legal protections for LGBTI individuals tend to have higher overall equality scores. This underscores the importance of legal protections in ensuring that LGBTI individuals are treated equally and have access to the same

rights as their heterosexual counterparts. Finally, the data suggests that public opinion plays a significant role in shaping the equality of LGBTI populations. Countries with more positive public attitudes towards LGBTI individuals tend to have higher overall equality scores. This highlights the need for ongoing education and awareness-raising efforts to combat prejudice and discrimination towards LGBTI individuals.

Table 1. Basic data of PEW and EQUALDEX distribution, most recent.

Country	Equality of LGBTI Pop	Legal Equality of LGBTI Pop	Public Opinion on Equality of LGBTI Pop	Highly Religious Population	CEE Country
Norway	86.00	98.00	73.00	17.00	0.00
Denmark	85.00	96.00	73.00	8.00	0.00
Netherlands	84.00	98.00	71.00	18.00	0.00
Spain	84.00	98.00	70.00	21.00	0.00
Germany	83.00	100.00	65.00	12.00	0.00
UK	82.00	87.00	76.00	11.00	0.00
Sweden	81.00	92.00	71.00	10.00	0.00
France	78.00	93.00	63.00	12.00	0.00
Switzerland	78.00	87.00	69.00	12.00	0.00
Belgium	77.00	87.00	67.00	10.00	0.00
Finland	75.00	87.00	63.00	13.00	0.00
Austria	74.00	92.00	57.00	14.00	0.00
Ireland	73.00	86.00	60.00	24.00	0.00
Portugal	69.00	89.00	50.00	37.00	0.00
Czech Republic	67.00	74.00	59.00	8.00	1.00
Italy	65.00	75.00	54.00	27.00	0.00
Greece	62.00	86.00	38.00	49.00	0.00
Estonia	59.00	83.00	36.00	7.00	1.00
Croatia	58.00	82.00	33.00	44.00	1.00
Hungary	55.00	70.00	39.00	17.00	1.00
Latvia	51.00	76.00	27.00	15.00	1.00
Bulgaria	50.00	75.00	25.00	18.00	1.00
Slovakia	50.00	62.00	38.00	29.00	1.00
Poland	48.00	56.00	40.00	40.00	1.00
Romania	47.00	68.00	25.00	55.00	1.00
Lithuania	46.00	65.00	26.00	21.00	1.00
Bosnia and Herzegovina	43.00	69.00	17.00	46.00	1.00
Serbia	43.00	67.00	19.00	32.00	1.00

Source: Own editing based on PEW Research Center and Equaldex data. (Accessed: 26 February 2023).

7.5. A Graphical Representation with a Trend Line

Based on the data, we created a visualization of the position of the countries, combined with a trendline (Chart 1). The x-axis could represent the percentage of the population that identifies as highly religious, while the y-axis could represent the percentage of the population that supports equality of LGBTI individuals. Each data point in the scatter plot would represent a country, with the x-coordinate corresponding to the percentage of the population that identifies as highly religious in that country and the y-coordinate corresponding to the percentage of the population that supports equality of LGBTI individuals.

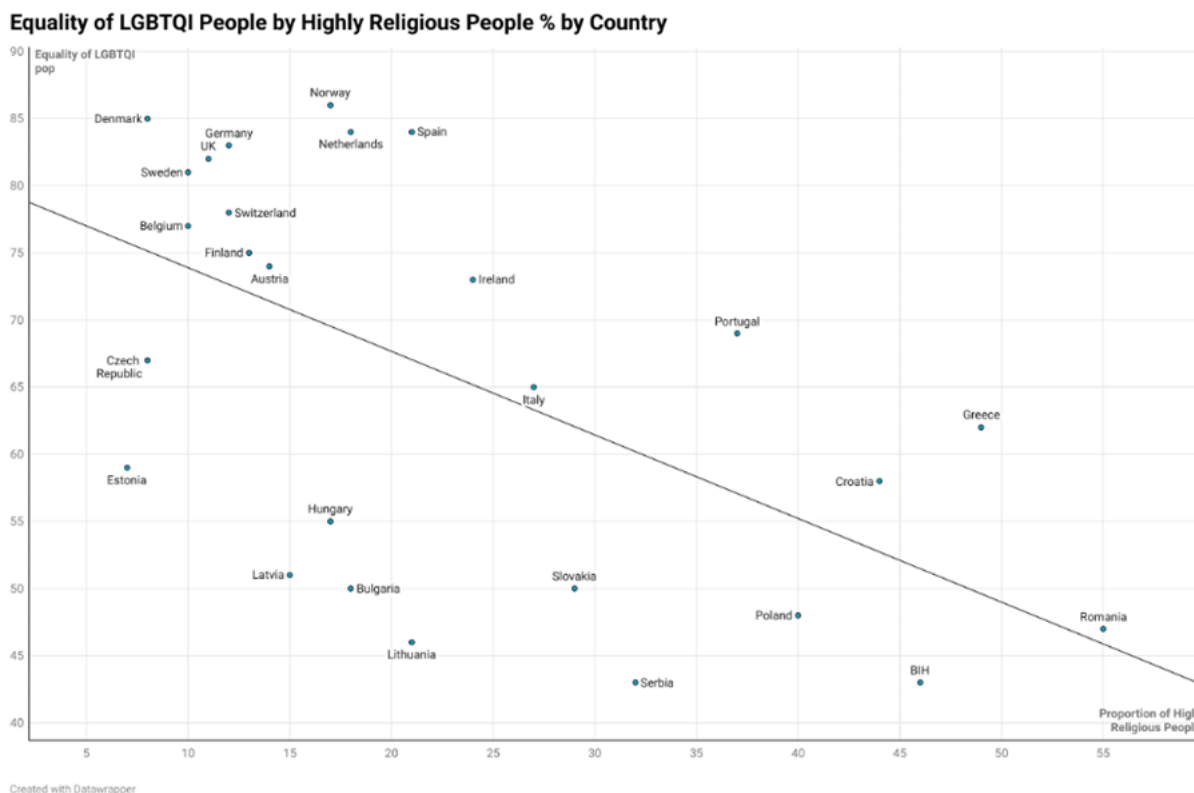


Chart 1. Graphical representation of the data. Source: author’s own editing.

7.6. Statistical Test of Our Hypothesis with Analysis of Variance

We selected analysis of variance as a statistical tool to test the significance of our findings based on the data so far. Our H0 was: there are significant differences between CEE and Western European countries in terms of LGBTI population equality and public opinion on LGBTI issues. Western European countries may have higher levels of equality and public opinion on LGBTI issues compared to CEE countries. However, there may not be a significant difference between the two country groups in terms of the percentage of highly religious population, although the difference in means between the two groups is relatively large. The figure (Figure 1) presents the results of an ANOVA (analysis of variance) test for four variables related to the LGBTI population in Europe. The variables are the equality of LGBTI population, legal equality of LGBTI population, public opinion on LGBTI equality, and the percentage of highly religious population based on the Pew Religiosity Index. The country groups used for the analysis are CEE (Central and Eastern European) and Western European countries. The ANOVA test assesses whether there are significant differences between the means of the variables for the two country groups. The first column in the table shows the source of variance, which is divided into two categories: Between Groups and Within Groups. The Between Groups category represents the differences in means between the two country groups, while the Within Groups category represents the variability of the means within each country group. The second column shows the sum of squares, which is a measure of the total variability in the data. The third column shows the degrees of freedom (df), which is the number of observations minus the number of parameters estimated. The fourth column shows the mean square, which is the sum of squares divided by the degrees of freedom. The fifth column shows the F-statistic, which is the ratio of the mean square for the Between Groups category to the mean square for the Within Groups category. The final column shows the level of significance (Sig.), which is a measure of the probability that the observed differences in means could be due to chance. The results of the ANOVA test show that there are significant differences between the means of the variables for the two country groups. For all three variables related to LGBTI population, the F-statistic is high and the

level of significance is less than 0.001, indicating that the observed differences in means are very unlikely to be due to chance. This suggests that Western European countries generally have higher levels of equality and public opinion on LGBTI issues than CEE countries. For the variable related to highly religious population, the F-statistic is lower and the level of significance is 0.081, indicating that the observed differences in means could be due to chance. This suggests that there may not be a significant difference between the two country groups in terms of the percentage of highly religious population. However, it is worth noting that the difference in means between the two groups is still relatively large (17 percent for Western Europe vs. 30 percent for CEE), and the level of significance is close to the conventional threshold of 0.05.

Country groups: CEE and Western European		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Equality of LGBTQI Population	Between Groups	4576.190	1	4576.190	88.401	<0.001
	Within Groups	1345.917	26	51.766		
	Total	5922.107	27			
Legal Equality of LGBTQI Population	Between Groups	2771.503	1	2771.503	54.741	<0.001
	Within Groups	1316.354	26	50.629		
	Total	4087.857	27			
Public Opinion on LGBTQ Equality	Between Groups	6912.429	1	6912.429	60.697	<0.001
	Within Groups	2961.000	26	113.885		
	Total	9873.429	27			
Highly Religious Population % - Pew Religiosity Index	Between Groups	584.074	1	584.074	3.287	0.081
	Within Groups	4620.604	26	177.716		
	Total	5204.679	27			

Figure 1. Results of ANOVA Analysis.

8. A Battle of Securitization in the Field of Religion

For a region-sensitive interpretation of the discursive status of human rights, we draw on the viewpoint expressed by Jelena Subotić in her book “Yellow Star Red Star” (Subotić 2019). The author focuses on Holocaust memory in Serbia and other post-Yugoslav states, comparing the specificities of memory politics there with memory politics (remembrance politics) in the Baltic States. On the basis of her analysis, she concludes that regional variations in Holocaust memory are determined by the respective states and the response of the region to ontological insecurity. While in Serbia the hegemony of the narrative of anti-communism overshadows the commemoration of the crimes of anti-Semitism, in the Baltic states the ideological demands of EU accession have determined the politics of Holocaust remembrance. In Serbia, the response to ontological insecurity is the intensification of nationalism, and in the Baltic States, the need and demand for EU accession. For the post-communist region as a whole, Subotić summarizes her findings by arguing

that the regional specificity of Holocaust interpretation and memory can be adequately understood in terms of the states' existential insecurity. "What explains the apparent need of so many postcommunist Eastern European states to revisit the Holocaust now, seventy-five years after the war has ended, and control the way in which the Holocaust is remembered, understood, and interpreted? The argument I have made in the book is that these developments can best be understood as actions of profoundly ontologically insecure states." (p. 206). This approach, in our view, also applies to the proper interpretation of the discursive status of human rights. While the states of the region primarily consider the maintenance of their (nation) state independence and autonomy as central to their political agenda, this also determines their political attitude towards human rights. While the individual aspects of human rights have been integrated into constitutions and national legal systems under the compulsion of EU accession and membership, the main focus of their policies is on the collective aspects of human rights, i.e., the inalienable right of ethnic minorities to self-determination. What Subotić says about the memory of the Holocaust can be paraphrased for human rights. "The problem is that the cosmopolitan understanding of Human Rights [Holocaust memory] as developed in the West does not fit narratively with the very different set of understanding of Human Rights [Holocaust memories] in post-communist Europe. This lack of fit is evident primarily in the lack of centrality of the individual Human Rights [Holocaust] as the defining aspect [memory] of the twentieth-century experience across the post-communist space." (p. 10) The perception and interpretation of Human Rights in the East-Central European region can be explained by collective insecurity, in our conceptual framework, by a wounded collective identity.

9. Conclusions

Our main area of study was the Central and Eastern European region, but we have put it into comparison with Western Europe to find the most important differences regarding our studied question: the perception and content of human rights in the two different areas. In conclusion, the present study found that accepting LGBTI self-determination in Europe varies significantly between Western and Central European regions. While Western Europe generally embraces the idea of sexual self-determination, Central Europe tends to reject it. The strong influence of religion on the acceptance or rejection of LGBTI rights as basic Human rights was found in both regions. Yet, it was not a statistically significant factor that could explain the regional differences. Instead, the root of the CEE opinion can be traced back to its collective identity that was wounded by its tumultuous history. The rejection of LGBTI self-determination in Central Europe challenges the region's efforts to create a more diverse and tolerant society. While progress has been made in recent years, there is still much work to be done to ensure that all individuals are treated equally and with respect. The findings of this study call for the development of new approaches to addressing the underlying reasons for rejecting LGBTI rights in Central Europe. In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of recognizing the complex factors that contribute to the differing attitudes towards LGBTI rights in Europe—and their acceptance to be or not to be part of the set of fundamental human rights. The results of this study provide valuable insights into the challenges facing Central Europe in its journey towards creating a more inclusive society (EUFRA 2020). The obstacle in the way is again the wounded collective identity of Central and Eastern Europe, acting as a dividing line between this and other regions.

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