

DOES RELIGIOSITY MATTER? Explaining right-wing extremist attitudes and the vote for the Alternative for Germany (AfD)

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ABSTRACT: In recent years, an intensive scientific discourse has developed on the reasons for the rise of right-wing populist movements and parties throughout Europe. In the German debate, religion and religiosity play only a minor role, whereas the economic deprivation theory is part of many quantitative studies. Against this background, we discuss reasons for right-wing extremist views and for the vote for the German right-wing populist party *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD). To explain the role of religiosity in this context, we use Theodor Adorno's arguments and differentiations within the concept of "The Authoritarian Personality" (Adorno et al. 1950). By analyzing data of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP subsample within the German General Social Survey ALLBUS 2018 (n=1629), we find that, in the highly secularized region of East Germany, commitment to church is negatively correlated both with right-wing extremist attitudes and the vote for AfD. We assume that this has to do with the Christian doctrine of charity and tolerance as well as with the political position of the church, especially in East Germany. This tolerance reflects Adorno's type of the "radical Christian," which is characterized by an intrinsic religious motivation. Our data also reveals that a belief in supernatural powers is positively correlated with right-wing extremist attitudes, which reflects Adorno's type of a "superstitious person," which is characterized by weak ego and an ethnocentric worldview. Our findings underline the necessity of opening the black box of religiosity by differentiating the religious factor.

KEYWORDS: right-wing extremism, right-wing populism, authoritarianism, religiosity, AfD.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, an intensive scientific discourse on the reasons for the rise of right-wing populist movements and parties throughout Europe has emerged. Although religion and religiosity play a role in electoral research, it is astonishing that they hardly play a role in

the research on the election of right-wing extremist and right-wing populist parties and in the research on right-wing extremist attitudes. While it is true that the imprinting power of religious–political milieus is losing importance, it still does exist and can explain, in addition to other factors, why people vote for such parties. This is of interest because in their identity policy, right-wing populists in Europe refer to a Christian–Jewish tradition (cf. Hidalgo, Hildmann and Yendell 2019). Not without reason, a right-wing populist movement with its origins in East Germany calls itself Patriots Against the Islamisation of the Christian Occident (PEGIDA). Based on a very diffuse reflection on Christian values, this identification is also used to split the world into “friends” and “enemies”, into “we” and “others” and into “the good” and “the evil”. This division becomes visible when right-wing populists and right-wing extremists derogate Islam and Muslims, whose immigration and alleged infiltration of the “Western” and even “Christian” culture must be prevented. Against this background, the question also arises as to whether religion and closeness to a large Christian church may act as an immunizing factor regarding the vote for right-wing extremist parties, as churches tend to have a cosmopolitan outlook, to promote charity and are partly engaged in helping refugees. The Protestant Church might have an even stronger effect in East Germany for two reasons. First, it supported the “peaceful” revolution in its commitment to reforms in 1989, and before that it was a place for peace and environmental activists. Second, in East Germany the Protestant Church is a minority in a highly secularized society. This constellation may lead to a return to Christian core values.

Germany is a particularly interesting case for sociologists for several reasons. Since the federal election in 2017, for the first time in the history of the Federal Republic and for the first time after the end of National Socialism in Germany with the AfD a party is in the Bundestag, in which right-wing conservative but also far-right politicians act. The AfD is extremely successful, especially in the new federal states in the old GDR area. Relative to the population, the majority of right-wing extremist crimes also take place in this region. Thirty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the two regions still differ in terms of religious–cultural and socio-economic aspects. East Germany does not have the economic strength of West Germany, none of the companies listed on the German stock index have their headquarters in East Germany, and East Germans earn less than West Germans and have fewer assets. The term “Wendeverlierer” (loser of the revolution) describes people who did not profit from the introduction of a market economy and who had better living conditions in the GDR. These people and younger generations who are economically deprived are regarded as most likely to be prone to right-wing authoritarianism and to support the AfD. In addition, the two regions differ with respect to the religious field. In East Germany, about 80% of the population is non-denominational; together with the Czech Republic, the region is regarded as the most secularized in the world. In West Germany, two thirds of the population has a denomination. The lack of attachment to Christianity and its associated moral values could possibly be a factor in the greater susceptibility of those without a denomination to right-wing extremism and populism. It would be interesting to know to what extent non-ecclesiastical forms of religiosity play a role in this situation. Ever since the 1950s, aspects of esoteric–occultist ideas in a racist–mythological world view have been discussed in connection with the discourse on the success of the National Socialist ideology (e.g., Reich 1933, Goodrick-Clarke 2012; filmic: “The Occult Conspiracy” 1998).

Within the research on right-wing extremism, an important social–psychological distinction is that attitudes and behavior are two different aspects. A person with right-wing extremist views might not necessarily behave accordingly; for example, they might not vote for a right-wing extremist party. However, in recent years it has been found that in Germany people with right-wing extremist views vote for the AfD, whereas before the refugee crisis (which peaked in 2015) Germans with such attitudes voted for the established parties (Brähler et al. 2016, 78; Decker and Brähler 2016, 124ff). Against this background, we discuss the reasons for right-

wing extremist views and the reasons people vote for the German right-wing populist AfD party, with a particular focus on the role of religiosity.¹

2. RESEARCH ON RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM IN GERMANY AND THE VOTE FOR THE AfD, WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON RELIGIOSITY

Research on right-wing extremist behavior and attitudes

Since reunification in 1990, there has been much research on right-wing extremism in Germany. Whereas studies in the 1990s focused on right-wing extremist behavior, the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study (formerly known as the Center Studies at Leipzig University) tried to fill in a research gap and since 2002 have focused on right-wing extremist attitudes and their causes (Decker and Brähler 2018). The result of a consensus group of German researchers, this study conducts representative opinion surveys every two years, thus enabling the observation of right-wing extremist views over time. The study is based on a definition of right-wing extremism that we also relate to. According to Decker and Brähler, “Right wing extremism is a pattern of attitudes which are strongly associated with beliefs of inequality. In the political sphere, these manifest themselves in the affinity to dictatorial forms of government, chauvinist attitudes, and the trivialization or justification of national socialism. In the social field they are characterized by antisemitic, xenophobic and social Darwinist attitudes” (2006, 20).²

Based on this definition, a questionnaire with 18 questions on six dimensions of right-wing extremism was developed and used in all waves of the survey. It can be concluded that since 2002 the proportion of people in Germany with strong right-wing extremist views has declined slightly from 10% to 6%. However, there is a difference between East and West Germany. Whereas in West Germany the proportion of people with right-wing extremist attitudes decreased from 11% to 5%, in East Germany the proportion has remained basically the same since 2002 (8% in 2002 vs. 9% in 2018) (Decker et al. 2018, 87). A recent study used a regression model to analyze the factors that influence right-wing extremist attitudes (Decker, Yendell and Brähler 2018, 172-175). The strongest factors are authoritarian attitudes and a conspiracy mentality. There are also smaller factors, such as the lack of recognition as a person and as a citizen, harsh parental punishment, mistrust, the estimation of the German economy and one’s own economic situation as bad, gender (men are slightly more likely to have right-wing extremist views), low education and region (people in East Germany are slightly more likely to have right-wing extremist views). The study highlights the importance of an authoritarian mindset vis-à-vis the development of right-wing extremist views rather than societal factors, although there are some hints that the pressure of a neoliberal economy has a certain effect on the dynamics of authoritarianism.

Another series of prominent and well-received studies in the German discourse on right-wing extremism is that of Wilhelm Heitmeyer and his co-authors, who focused on right-wing extremist behavior (Heitmeyer 1988; 1989; 1992). Based on qualitative interviews, Heitmeyer and his co-authors see a causal correlation between a capitalistic form of production and a consequent cultural erosion against the background of individualization combined with disintegration, insecurities regarding action, and experiences of powerlessness and isolation with right-wing extremist orientations. The theory speaks of *victims of modernization* who are likely to be prone to right-wing extremism. As this theory highlights societal and economic factors over other factors, it has been widely criticized because in the eyes of the critics it cannot sufficiently explain why people do not use other (conventional and democratic) methods of

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² Authors’ translation.

political articulation (Pfahl-Traughber 1993a; 1993b). In addition, the theoretical conception is not coherent and leads to opposite conclusions (Neureiter 1996, 212).

Research on the role of religiosity related to right-wing extremism

Religion and religiosity as factors to explain right-wing extremism or behavior do not play an important role within the discourse on right-wing extremism in Germany. Usually, religiosity is basically treated as a socio-demographic variable. This is why most studies are content with the question of confession, sometimes the frequency of church attendance, and the self-assessment of one's own religiosity. Based on the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study, Pickel and Yendell (2018) do not find any significant differences between Catholics, Protestants, and those with no denomination in terms of right-wing extremist attitudes, anti-Muslim sentiments, antiziganism, xenophobia, and antisemitism (Pickel and Yendell 2018, 221-223). Previous waves of the same study do not show a consistent picture (see also Rebenstorf 2018). In 2010 (Decker et al. 2010), the Protestants had the highest scores on different dimensions of right-wing extremism. In 2012, the respondents without any confession (Decker, Kiess, and Brähler 2012) had the highest scores on different dimensions of right-wing extremism, and in 2014 and 2016 (Decker, Kiess, and Brähler 2014; 2016) Catholics were the main supporters of right-wing extremist views. Another concept relevant to the study of right-wing extremism is that of group-focused enmity. This concept views group-specific prejudice as part of anti-democratic mentalities (Zick, Küpper, and Wolf 2009). In a study based on data from the Deutsche Zustände study, Küpper and Zick found that Protestants have the most racist views, whereas the non-denominational have the least racist views (Küpper and Zick 2006). Other studies by both authors show only small effects and only regarding a few minorities (for instance, not Muslims) (Küpper and Zick 2014). In a comparative country study, both authors conclude that there is actually a correlation between religiosity and prejudice in that the more religious people are the more prejudiced they are. But they also conclude that the effect of religiosity is very weak and that not every form of religiosity is problematic (Küpper and Zick 2010)³. The main reasons religious people tend to be more prejudice are a low level of education, their authoritarian and social dominance orientation traits, their rejection of cultural and religious diversity, and their support of a "Leitkultur", a German term for a dominant or mainstream culture. Such beliefs not only go along with prejudice but are especially common among religious people and can partly explain their higher levels of prejudice (Küpper and Zick 2017, 133).

Research on reasons to vote for the AfD

In the past two years, there have been many studies on AfD voters. The AfD has been described as a party particularly for men, workers, and non-academics (Süddeutsche Zeitung 2017) The AfD is particularly successful in sparsely populated East German regions with an ageing population and regions in West Germany with a large population of industrial workers (Franz et al. 2018). Other determining factors for voting for the AfD include the refugee issue, fear of social decline, and dissatisfaction with the living conditions (Kohlrausch 2018). On an emotional level, the AfD vote is explained by the perception of a cultural threat, political disaffection, fear of globalization, terrorism and refugees, nativism and an illiberal understanding of democracy (S. Pickel 2019; S.Pickel and G. Pickel 2018). A study by Pickel and Yendell (2018) reveals that anti-Muslim sentiments are a very relevant factor in explaining the AfD vote⁴. Other important factors are gender, trust, subjective individual deprivation (regarding one's own economic situation as bad), a conspiracy mentality, and right-wing

³ See also the summary of the GMF studies by Rebenstorf (2018, 317–318).

⁴ For the state of Saxony, Yendell and Pickel (2019, 11) constate that 82% of AfD voters are against Muslim migration to Germany.

extremist views. A study by Schröder (2019) also underlines the significance of xenophobia vis-à-vis the AfD vote. An interesting result of that study is that when xenophobia is included in regression models, the deprivation factor loses its significance. A study by Yendell et al. (2018) reveals that authoritarian attitudes and narcissist personality traits are much more common among AfD voters than among other voters.

Research on religiosity and voting for the AfD

Regarding religiosity, the same problem as in the study on right wing-extremism is reflected. Most studies do not take religiosity into account. A few studies show the same pattern: it is mainly people with no denomination that vote for the AfD (Yendell et al. 2018) and not people who are church-associated (Allensbach 2018). In this context, the differentiated analysis by Siegers and Jedinger (2019) is revealing. By analyzing data from the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES), they found that denomination mitigates the voting behavior of people with right-wing populist views. That is, supporters of right-wing populist statements who are Catholic tend to vote for the Christian Democratic Union, those who are Protestant tend to vote for the Social Democratic Party, and those who are without a denomination vote for the AfD, regardless of region (East or West). This also confirms a well-known correlation. Traditionally, Catholics vote for the Christian Democrats, whereas Protestants vote for the Social Democrats, although in recent years church-associated people have tended to vote for the Green Party because the churches in Germany have a strong focus on ecological issues (Siegers and Eder 2018, 19). To date, there are only studies that relate a connection between denomination and church attendance to the choice of the AfD. However, just as in the context of right-wing extremism, we know little more beyond these few indicators (different forms of religiosity, religious content, and references to God or something divine) in the context of right-wing extremism and vote of AfD.

This state of research only shows that religious affiliation has no or only weak connections with right-wing extremism and right-wing populism (AfD). The relevance of the religion factor remains an open question until such time that other more differentiated aspects of religious and spiritual attitudes and practices are included in such analyses. Against this background, we are interested in whether the religion factor in a differentiated operationalization gains more weight in explaining right-wing extremism and right-wing populism (AfD). In particular, we ask about the contextual dependence of the relevance of the religion factor and of the opposing tendencies of different religious orientations.

3. RELIGIOSITY AND ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION AS THEORETICAL CONCEPTS TO EXPLAIN RIGHT-WING EXTREMIST AND THE VOTE FOR THE AfD

There are several theories to explain right-wing extremist views and behavior. These theories mainly have their origin in the social psychological research on prejudice as one of the most relevant characteristics of right-wing extremism and the ideology of disparity. Our focus is on the role religiosity plays. We also control for economic deprivation, which has a long tradition in research on right-wing extremism.

Because religiosity has been more or less neglected or if considered has often led to incoherent results in the research on right-wing extremism and/or electoral behavior, we open up a black box. In particular, we have little knowledge of the way in which religiosity impacts right-wing

extremist. However, we find valuable hints in a study on authoritarianism by Theodor Adorno (Adorno et al. 1950; Adorno 1999).

In the prominent and often-used f-scale, Adorno includes a subscale that he called “superstition and stereotypy” (Adorno 1999, 55ff). The content of the five indicators of this subscale deals with astrology, fortune, the scientifically unexplainable, a catastrophic end of the world, and a supernatural power. It is noteworthy that these indicators do not contain any specific Christian terminology. They even partly contradict Christian doctrine. From Adorno’s point of view, superstition is obviously related to ethnocentrism, and it contains a tendency to shift the responsibility of an individual to external powers beyond his control. Superstition is an indication that the “Ego” has already given up because it can no longer determine its own fate.⁵

In his discussion of religious concepts that occur in the qualitative interviews of the authoritarianism study, he highlights both immunizing and problematic functions of Christianity. On one hand, it can function as an immunizing factor, as the Christian doctrine of universal love and the idea of ‘Christian Humanitas’ grants minorities the same rights as majorities (Adorno 1999, 281). In addition, the emphasis on “spirit” tends to prohibit natural characteristics such as “racial traits” and has the function of denigrating others based on their descent. Problematic for Adorno is when people lack interest in the content of religion and, for instance, only go to church because it is a societal convention or perhaps to satisfy one’s parents (ibid, 285). For Adorno, this is a part of authoritarian conventionalism. He also writes that the opposite of such religiosity is when people take religion seriously in an internalized way (ibid). The fact that a human being takes his religion seriously and thinks about it is a sign of independence. This form of religiosity, which underlines the content rather than the distinction between those who belong to a Christian religious community and those who do not, focuses on love and compassion, which have nothing to do with conventionalized religious patterns of thought (ibid). Adorno constates that those who are affiliated with “official Christianity” would tend towards ethnocentrism and the denigration of other religious groups, in contrast to those who are intrinsically religious (he even calls them “radical Christians”) and who are willing to act in a different way.

Summing up Adorno’s thoughts on the connection between authoritarianism, religiosity, ethnocentrism, and prejudice, there are actually three main types of religiosity that are particularly interesting: 1) Christians who identify with a religious community because it gives them social status and personal security but who at the same time lack an interest in the content of religion and who tend towards ethnocentrism, 2) intrinsically religious Christians who think about their religion and who have no ethnocentric views, and 3) people who believe in superstition, which usually goes along with ethnocentrism.

The first two types more or less suit the distinction of an intrinsic and an extrinsic religiosity made by Gordon Allport and Michael Ross (1967). Whereas an extrinsic religiosity serves to prove one’s own religiosity within a community in order to gain social status and personal security, an intrinsic religiosity is lived for its own sake. Allport and Ross believe that an extrinsic religiosity is accompanied by more prejudice and an intrinsic religiosity is accompanied by less prejudice. Their own study did not completely confirm the hypothesis because of a non-expected group of “indiscriminately proreligious people” that scored high on both the intrinsic and extrinsic scales. Allport and Ross come to the conclusion that this

⁵ A newer concept, however, which fits an authoritarian dynamic is that of conspiracy mentality (Imhoff and Decker 2013). This is based on the idea that political decisions are made by rationally calculating people who act in the background. The conspiracy is carried out by certain groups or individuals in secret and with mostly evil intent. These groups or people would control societies down to the smallest unit. This protects those affected from dealing with the complexity of societal problems and makes it possible to direct authoritarian aggression against specific groups and persons, as they are easily detected and targeted (Decker et al. 2018, 122-23).

group is particularly intolerant, as they have a “dogmatic mind” that leads to undifferentiated perceptions (see Allport and Ross 1967, 441). The authors call this group the “muddleheaded” (ibid).

Because the previous models on the relationship between religion and prejudice have so far produced no reliable results, Rebenstorf suggests that for an empirical examination of this context, a model of religiosity must be taken into account that goes beyond the usual characteristics of denomination, church attendance, self-assessment of religiosity, and attachment to one’s own religious community (Rebenstorf 2018, 319). She argues that a model that largely lives up to these demands is the Centrality of Religion Scale (Huber and Huber 2012), which expressly stands in the tradition of Allport and is associated with the model by Charles Y. Glock (Huber 2003, 2009; Huber and Huber 2012). In this model, religiosity is divided into psychologically and sociologically defined core dimensions:

- Intellect that consists of themes of interest, hermeneutical skills, styles of thought and interpretation, and bodies of knowledge. An indicator of the intellectual dimension is the frequency of thinking about religious issues.
- Ideology that in the personal religious construct system is represented as beliefs, unquestioned convictions, and patterns of plausibility. A general indicator is the aspect of the plausibility of the existence of a transcendent reality.
- Public practice, which refers to the assumption that religious individuals belong to religious communities that express themselves through public participation in religious rituals and communal activities (e.g., church attendance for Christians and Friday prayer for Muslims).
- Private practice, which means that religious people devote themselves to transcendence in individual and private rituals (e.g., prayer and meditation).
- Religious experience, which means patterns of religious perceptions and a body of religious experiences and feelings that have an emotional connotation (e.g., experiencing transcendence as a “one-to-one experience” that corresponds to a dialogical spirituality pattern and “experiences of being at one” that correspond to a participative pattern).

Another relevant and prominent explanatory approach we will discuss is *deprivation theory*. In the struggle for scarce resources, members of one group tend under unfavorable macroeconomic conditions to disparage members of a different group. In particular, it is people with low social status that in times of crisis tend to construct images of an enemy (McCutcheon 2000, 88-89). Besides such an objective disadvantage, this theory also points to the perhaps even greater importance of *relative disadvantage*, which denotes the subjective perception a person has that he is socially disadvantaged, even if (at first glance) that person may in fact not be objectively disadvantaged in relation to the community as a whole. Rippl and Baier (2005, 645) distinguish between *individual* disadvantage, which is when a person considers himself to be disadvantaged, and *collective* disadvantage, which is when a person considers his group (for example, Germans) to be disadvantaged. Rippl and Baier believe that what has a significant influence on xenophobic and Islamophobic attitudes is primarily the feeling of collective discrimination. Research findings support the deprivation thesis, but its proponents argue that it is subjective rather than objective economic disadvantage that plays a more significant role when it comes to such attitudes (Decker et al. 2016, 2010; Becker 2007; Edinger and Hallermann 2001; Winkler 2003).

In connection with the discussion of the reasons for right-wing extremism and choosing the AfD, the modernization losers thesis (including Götz 1997; Spier 2010; Bergmann et al. 2017, 2018; Kroh and Fetz 2016; Lengfeld 2017, 2018; Lux 2018; Tutić and von Hermann 2018; Rippl and Seipel 2018) is often discussed. The key arguments can be regarded as part of a deprivation

thesis. Susanne Pickel outlines the modernization theory as follows. In particular, workers and people with low formal education are subject to increased economic costs in the context of globalization processes and job insecurity (job loss, precarious employment) (cf. S. Pickel 2019). This insecurity increasingly affects other social classes; relatives of the middle-class people fear the loss of wealth and traditional values (ibid). The factors are precarious working and living conditions, relative deprivation and feelings of being disadvantaged, and the fear of globalization (ibid). In the German academic discourse, there has been a controversial debate on the modernization loser thesis. Whereas the studies of Lengfeld (2018) and Schröder (2018) reveal no relevance of the theory and underline emotional factors, a study by Rippl and Seipel (2018) in the form of a reaction to the studies of Lengfeld reveals that economic deprivation does play a significant role in explaining the vote for the AfD, even if the impact is not as strong as that of the cultural backlash factor.

4. METHOD, DATA, AND OPERATIONALIZATION

In order to answer our research question, it is necessary to analyze a population survey that contains enough indicators for a differentiated analysis, particularly the religiosity factor. The ALLBUS 2018 dataset contains 3477 cases. Of these, 2387 cases are from West Germany and 1090 cases are from East Germany. In about half of this sample (total: $n = 1724$, West Germany: $n = 1198$, East Germany: $n = 526$), the International Social Survey Programme's (ISSP) religion module was also integrated, which is particularly relevant to our research question. Therefore, we restrict our analysis to the ISSP subsample. Due to our research question, we analyze the data of individuals with German citizenship (total: $n = 1629$, West Germany: $n = 1118$, East Germany: $n = 511$).

To statistically validate this restriction, we performed univariate variance analyses (ANOVAs) with the two subsamples (ISSP, non-ISSP) as a factor. Regarding the dependent variables of our regression analyses, there were no significant differences in either West or East Germany. Regarding the independent variables of our regression analyses, only two variables showed significant differences and only in West Germany. In the ISSP subsample in West Germany, both the church ($F = 11.784$) and education ($F = 4.209$) are slightly lower. There were no differences between the subsamples for the two dependent variables and for seven out of nine independent variables. Therefore, the restriction to the ISSP subsample can be considered well justified. In the following, all calculations refer to this subsample.

In the dataset, cases from East Germany are over-represented. Because we are interested in a comparison between West and East Germany, we work with the unweighted data in our analyses. Due to the larger number of cases in the East, the opportunity to work out internal dynamics in the East more clearly arises.

Variables

In the following, we describe the variables in the statistical analysis against the background of theoretical considerations. All variables are pooled in the following way: weak to strong, low to high, little to much, and bad to good. The precise formulations of the individual statements and questions are given in the Appendix.

Dependent Variables

- Right-wing extremism: a scale from 1 to 5 for 10 reliable items on right-wing extremist attitudes. The scale is calculated from the average of all 10 items, whereby missing items in

a case are replaced by the mean of the case on the scale (Cronbach's alpha West Germany: .82; East Germany: .82). All items contribute to the increase in the reliability of the scale.

- Probability to vote for the AfD is a question on how likely it is the respondent will vote for a party, here AfD, on a scale from 1, very unlikely, to 10, very likely.

Independent Variables

- Religious affiliation: This item reflects the affiliation with a religious community. In West Germany, the respondents belong to one of two churches. At the same time, they represent the vast majority in the sample at 69%. The second strongest group is the non-denominational at 26%. By contrast, non-denominational populations in East Germany predominate at 74%, and 20% belong to the Evangelical Church. The remainder are distributed among Catholics at 4.4% and other churches and religious communities. The different composition of the variable 'religious affiliation' in West Germany and East Germany can be expected to function differently in those social contexts. In West Germany, the majority of the population has a religious affiliation, with the number of Roman Catholics being about equal to the number belonging to regional Protestant churches. In contrast, in East Germany only a minority has a religious affiliation, mainly with the Protestant Church.
- Commitment to church: Scale from 1 to 5 for two items (frequency of church attendance and participation in other church events). Both items are recoded to five levels according to the recommendation of Huber and Huber (2012, 720); reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha): West Germany, .78; East Germany, .82. The scale is calculated from the mean of both items, with one missing item being replaced in each case by the mean of the case on the scale. The scale is a measure of the general strength of the dimension of public practice. Among other aspects, it represents the involvement in the official religious discourse of a church and religious community. Therefore, it can be expected that of the stronger this dimension is the more likely it is that a respondent will take on official church positions, such as to reject right-wing extremism and vote for the AfD. In West Germany, the attachment to church is too more or less the same parts related to Protestants as well as Catholics, whereas in East Germany it is to a great extent related to the Protestant church.
- Attachment to God: Scale from 1 to 5 for two items with five levels each. Item 1: The frequency of prayer is recoded from 11 to 5 levels according to the recommendation of Huber and Huber (2012, 720); Item 2: The approval of the statement 'God deals with every person' on five levels; reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha): West Germany, .79; East Germany, .84. The scale is calculated from the mean of both items, with one missing item being replaced in each case by the mean of the case on the scale. The scale consists of one item each of the dimensions of private practice and religious ideology. Neither item represents a measure of the general strength of these dimensions, as it would require the consideration of other forms of practice (e.g., meditation) and images of God (e.g., impersonal principle). Instead, they measure a certain religious orientation, namely the attachment to a personal God that is typically for Christian piety.
- Belief in supernatural powers: Scale from 1 to 4 for four items, each with four levels, asking whether lucky charms, fortune tellers, miracle healers and horoscopes really work. The scale is calculated from the average of all four items, whereby missing items in a case are replaced by the mean of the case on the scale; reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha): ABL, .80; NBL, .79. The scale measures a practice related to low-threshold belief in supernatural

powers that does not require faith in a personal God. Classical Christian theology rejects most of these concepts. Therefore, this scale measures non-Christian religiousness.

- Gender: Man (0) / Woman (1)
- Age
- Education (ISCED 2011): eleven levels
- Subjective estimation of one's own social class: five levels
- Personal income, categorized: 22 levels
- Estimation of the current economic situation in Germany: five levels
- Estimation of the economic situation in Germany in one year: 5 levels

3. DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

The descriptive analysis of both dependent and independent variables indicates differences between West and East Germany. Not surprisingly, the findings from previous studies are confirmed by the comparison of means (see Table 1). East Germans have significantly more right-wing extremist views than West Germans. If in relation to the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study a cut-off value of the aggregated 10 items of right-wing extremism of 35 is set (which is a mean of 3.5 of the total scale), then 3.3% of West Germans and 5.7% of East Germans can be considered to have right-wing extremist views. As expected, it also turns out that East Germans have a higher probability of voting for the AfD.

	Right-wing extremism (***)		Probability of voting for the AfD (***)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
West Germany	2.17	0.67	1.94	2.17
East Germany	2.39	0.71	2.70	2.82

TABLE 1: Right-wing extremism and probability of voting for the AfD. Source: ALLBUS 2018, own calculations; ANOVA: $p=***<.001$

There are also differences between the independent variables to the extent that West Germans are significantly more likely to belong to a religious community than East Germans (75% vs. 26%). West Germans are on average more committed to church and have a higher level of average attachment to God; they are on average significantly younger than East Germans; they more often classify themselves as being on a higher level on the social ladder than East Germans; they have a higher per capita income; and they are more positive than East Germans regarding the current economic situation in Germany. No significant differences were found regarding education or the estimation of the economic situation in Germany in one year (see Table 2). Particularly noteworthy is the lack of a significant difference in the level of belief in supernatural powers. This indicates first that this belief is independent from the teachings of Christian churches and second that a subset of religion remains in highly secularized societies. Presumably, the differences between the two regions in the expression of right-wing extremist attitudes and the probability of voting for the AfD are due to the different manifestations of the independent variables.

	West Germany		East Germany	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Religious affiliation (***)	0.75	0.43	0.27	0.45
Commitment to church (***)	2.13	1.00	1.64	0.85
Attachment to God (***)	2.49	1.30	1.61	0.98
Belief in supernatural powers (n.s.)	1.87	0.71	1.80	0.71
Age (**)	51.17	18.14	54.07	17.16
Education (n.s.)	4.23	1.78	4.41	1.74
Assessment of own social class (***)	2.88	0.67	2.65	0.64
Per capita income (***)	11.47	4.27	10.21	3.91
Current economic situation in Germany (*)	3.83	0.78	3.73	0.83
Economic situation in Germany in one year (n.s.)	2.79	0.065	2.84	0.063

TABLE 2: Differences regarding the independent variables by region. Source: ALLBUS 2018, own calculations; ANOVA: $p=***<.001$, $p=**<.01$; $p=*<.05$

4. RESULTS OF THE MULTIVARIATE ANALYSES

4.1 Factors that explain right-wing extremist views in West and East Germany

The first step of the multivariate analysis reveals that religious affiliation correlates positively with right-wing extremist views in West Germany ($\beta=.1$). There is no such effect in East Germany at this level of analysis. In the second step, the indicators commitment to church, attachment to God, and belief in supernatural powers are added, and the picture is different in the two parts of Germany. Whereas in West Germany the commitment to church is not significant, it is quite a strong indicator in East Germany ($\beta=-.024$) such that the greater the commitment the less likely East Germans are to have right-wing extremist views. At this level of analysis, pure religious affiliation still plays a significant role in West Germany (.09). In East Germany, the control of commitment to church and two other religious variables leads to a significant positive correlation with pure religious affiliation ($\beta=.014$). Interestingly, non-Christian belief in supernatural powers is positively correlated with right-wing extremist views in both models (β West $=-.015$; East $=.023$). However, the change of the adjusted r^2 is minimal (.02 in the model for West Germany and .08 in the model for East Germany). The indicators do not have high explanatory power.

In the third step in the model for West Germany, all added indicators of socio-demography and deprivation are significant. In the model for East Germany, the assessment of the economic situation in Germany in one year and the estimation of one's own social class are not significant, whereas the other added indicators are significant. Belief in supernatural powers as an explaining factor are relevant in both models, and the betas are not much weaker than in step 2. The church commitment factor is still significant in East Germany but not in West Germany. Two reasons could play a role; these are the commitment to church in East Germany, where the majority that is without a denomination is more often intrinsically motivated than in West Germany and therefore more linked to the political position of the church. In combination with the engagement of the church during the revolution and the fight for democracy and the church position on tolerance and supporting refugees, attachment in East Germany is positively correlated with pro-democratic attitudes and negatively correlated with right-wing extremism. However, the other indicators that have been added in step 3 have higher explanatory power than the change in the adjusted r^2 of .017.

West Germany (N=906)	M1	M2	M3	East Germany (N=430)	M1	M2	M3
Religious affiliation	0.10*	0.09*	n.s.	Religious affiliation	n.s.	0.14*	n.s.
Commitment to church		n.s.	n.s.	Commitment to church		-0.24***	-0.12***
Attachment to God		n.s.	n.s.	Attachment to God		n.s.	n.s.
Belief in supernatural powers		0.15***	0.14***	Belief in supernatural powers		0.23***	0.19***
Social class (subjective)			-0.08*	Social class (subjective)			n.s.
Per capita income			-0.07*	Per capita income			-0.14**
Economic situation in Germany (current, subjective)			-0.11**	Economic situation in Germany (current, subjective)			-0.14**
Economic situation in Germany (in one year, subjective)			-0.09**	Economic situation in Germany (in one year, subjective)			n.s.
Gender			-0.14***	Gender			-0.09*
Age			0.13***	Age			0.19***
Education			-0.23***	Education			-0.20***
Corrected r ²	0.01	0.03	0.20	Corrected r ²	0.00	0.08	0.24
Change r ²	0.01	0.03	0.17	Change r ²	0.00	0.09	0.17

TABLE 3: Factors that influence a pattern of right-wing extremist attitudes in West and East Germany (regression model). Source: ALLBUS 2018, own calculations; dependent variable = scale of right-wing extremism (see Appendix); details on independent variables in the Appendix; standardized regression weights; $p=***<.001$, $p=**<.01$; $p=*<.05$

In addition, factors of economic deprivation that have betas between .07 and .14, the socio-demographic variables also play a role. The strongest factor is education (-.20 in West Germany and -.23 in East Germany), followed by age (beta=.13 in West Germany and .19 in East Germany) and gender (-0.14 in West Germany and -.09 in East Germany). Less educated and older individuals are more likely to have right-wing extremist views. Men have extremist views slightly more often than women. In particular, the factor of low education has been confirmed many times as a factor explaining right-wing extremism. However, low education also correlates with authoritarianism; therefore, it would be interesting to see how the model would change if the concept of authoritarianism is considered. Unfortunately, authoritarianism items were not considered in the ISSP and ALLBUS 2018. With an r^2 of .20 (West Germany) and .24 (East Germany), both models have relatively high explanatory power.

In terms of our research question, it is particularly interesting that among the tested indicators the commitment to church has a negative context in relation to right-wing extremism, whereas non-Christian belief in supernatural powers has a positive context. Against the background of the theory of authoritarian personality, this fits well with the reflections of Adorno (1999). On one hand, we find a kind of authentic identification with the church, which particularly has power in East Germany and which has an immunizing impact vis-à-vis right-wing extremism. On the other hand, Adorno's assumption that there is a connection with belief in supernatural powers that he has characterized as superstition and right-wing authoritarian attitudes is also confirmed. Finally, the finding that religious affiliation becomes positively correlated with

right-wing extremist attitudes if it is controlled by commitment to church that is negatively correlated with right-wing extremist attitudes may reflect the contradictory effect of formal and intrinsically motivated membership in Christian churches, as Adorno reported.

4.2 Factors that explain voting for the AfD

In the first step of the analysis, religious affiliation plays no role in either West Germany or East Germany. In the second step, a very interesting result is revealed. Whereas the commitment to church plays no role in relation to the probability to vote for the AfD in West Germany, it does have a negative impact in East Germany. With a beta of $-.21$, this factor is relatively strong. However, the r^2 is only $.03$.

With the addition of the deprivation indicators in the third step as well as the socio-demographic indicators, the impact of church commitment, which is the only significant religiosity factor, decreases slightly in the model for East Germany (beta= $-.014$). However, in West Germany none of the religiosity indicators play a role.

West Germany (N=890)	M1	M2	M3	East Germany (N=425)	M1	M2	M3
Religious affiliation	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	Religious affiliation	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Commitment to church		n.s.	n.s.	Commitment to church		-0.21^{**}	-0.14^*
Attachment to God		n.s.	n.s.	Attachment to God		n.s.	n.s.
Belief in supernatural powers		n.s.	n.s.	Belief in supernatural powers		n.s.	n.s.
Gender			-0.16^{***}	Gender			-0.18^{***}
Age			-0.09^{**}	Age			-0.13^{**}
Education			n.s.	Education			n.s.
Social class (subjective)			n.s.	Social class (subjective)			n.s.
Per capita income			n.s.	Per capita income			n.s.
Economic situation in Germany (current, subjective)			-0.11^{**}	Economic situation in Germany (current, subjective)			n.s.
Economic situation in Germany (in one year, subjective)			-0.11^{**}	Economic situation in Germany (in one year, subjective)			-0.10^*
Corrected r^2	0.00	0.00	0.06	Corrected r^2	0.00	0.03	0.10
Change r^2	0.00	0.00	0.07	Change r^2	0.01	0.03	0.08

TABLE 4: Factors that influence the probability to vote for the AfD (regression model). Source: ALLBUS 2018, own calculations; dependent variable = probability to vote for the AfD (see Appendix); details on independent variables in the Appendix; standardized regression weights; $p=^{***}<.001$, $p=^{**}<.01$; $p=^*<.05$.

In the model for West Germany, some of these variables of deprivation are the only ones that can explain the vote for the AfD (current economic situation and economic situation in one year; beta for both = $-.11$). Social class and per capita income play no role in West Germany or East Germany. As expected, gender plays a role. Men are more likely to vote for the AfD (West Germany: beta = $-.016$; East Germany: beta = $.018$). There is a small but very weak correlation between age and the vote for the AfD (West Germany: beta = $-.09$, East Germany: beta = $-.13$). Education plays no role in either model. However, the r^2 of $.06$ for the West German model

and of .10 for the East German model are very low. The indicators have a higher explanatory power in explaining right-wing extremism than in explaining the vote for the AfD.

In summary, it can be seen that the same indicators that were tested in the models for right-wing extremism cannot explain the vote for the AfD. However, commitment to church again is a striking factor in the East German model in that it functions as an immunizing factor in relation to the vote for the AfD. Regarding right-wing extremist attitudes, we assume that belonging to a church in East Germany has to do with the religious motivation of the church members, the political position, and the GDR-specific history in terms of the democratization efforts of the Protestant Church in East Germany. Also very revealing is that the deprivation indicators are relatively weak, and only subjective collective deprivation or the assessment of the German economy as bad influences the vote for the AfD, whereas indicators such as per capita income and social class play no role. However, gender is the strongest factor and underlines the significance of the relationship between masculinity and voting for a right-wing populist/extremist party (Yendell et al. 2018).

5. CONCLUSION

Adorno's prominent theory on authoritarianism is a useful concept to understand the various roles religiosity can play in relation to right-wing extremist attitudes and the vote for the AfD. First, only a formal affiliation with church is positively correlated with right-wing extremist attitudes (if at all). This reflects Adorno's type of status-oriented member of a church. Second, in the highly secularized region of East Germany the commitment to church is negatively correlated with right-wing extremist attitudes and the vote for the AfD. We assume this has to do with the Christian doctrine of charity and tolerance and with the political position of the church in East Germany, where only a minority of the population belong to a religious community. This reflects Adorno's type of 'radical Christian' that is characterized by an intrinsic religious motivation. Third, the belief in supernatural powers is positively correlated with right-wing extremist attitudes in both West Germany and East Germany. This reflects Adorno's type of superstitious person that is characterized by a weak ego and an ethnocentric worldview.

These results show that the correlation of religion and religiosity on one side and of authoritarianism and prejudice on the other is complex and contradictory. It seems that the context of a highly secularized area stimulates the critical potential of Christian beliefs against authoritarianism and prejudice. Of course, this finding should be investigated in other studies to confirm its generalizability. Further, it is clear that the content of religious beliefs matters. Whereas Christian beliefs can become an antidote against authoritarianism and prejudice if the church is in a minority position in society, the belief in supernatural powers in both societal contexts is positively correlated with right-wing extremist attitudes. Overall, these findings underline the necessity of opening the black box of religiosity by differentiating the religious factor. This requires a multidimensional model of religiosity as proposed by Huber (2003, 2009) and Huber and Huber (2012).

Of course, there are some limitations in our study. On one side, it would be interesting to differentiate the religious factor further by integrating additional orientations, such as religious fundamentalism and religious pluralism. This may increase the explanatory power of the religious factor. On the other side, it is also desirable to integrate measures of authoritarianism and social dominance orientation that are frequently applied in studies on authoritarianism. In this way, the interplay between religious and non-religious variables could be investigated more deeply in complex hypothesis models.

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APPENDIX

1. Right-wing extremism: "I am proud to be German", "It's about time we found the courage to have strong national feelings again", "In some circumstances a dictatorship is a better form of government", "National Socialism also had its good sides", "If it hadn't been for the holocaust Hitler would be regarded as a great statesman today", "Because of its many resident foreigners, Germany is dominated by foreign influences to a dangerous degree", "Foreigners should always marry people from their own ethnic group", "The Jews still have too much influence", "There is something peculiarly different about the Jews which stops them from fitting in with us", "I can understand that people carry out attacks on homes for asylum seekers".

Answers: do not agree at all, tend not to agree, neither ... nor ..., tend to agree, completely agree

2. Probability of voting for the AfD: "There are a large number of political parties in Germany. Each one of them would like to have your vote at elections. Please tell me, for each of the following parties, how likely it is that you would ever vote for this party.

Please use this scale.

1 on the scale means that it is very unlikely for you.

10 on the scale means that it is very likely for you.

You can differentiate your answers using the numbers in between.

3. Religious affiliation: May I ask what religious denomination you belong to?

Answers: the Roman Catholic Church, the German Protestant Church (excluding free churches), a Protestant free church, another Christian denomination, another, non-Christian religion, no religious affiliation

4. Commitment to church:

4a. Attending church service (Item 1):

As a rule, how often do you go to church? Or if the respondent is not Christian: As a rule, how often do you go to church or to a mosque, synagogue or other house of God?

Answers: more than once a week, once a week, one to three times a month, several times a year, more rarely, never

4b. The frequency of church activities (Item 2): How often do you take part in the activities or organizations of a church or place of worship other than attending services?

Answers: never, less than once a year, about once or twice a year, several times a year, about once a month, two or three times a month, nearly every week, every week, several times a week

5. Attachment to God:

5a. Frequency of praying (item 1):

About how often do you pray?

Answers: never, less than once a year, several times a year, about once or twice a year, several times a year, about once a month, two or three times a month, nearly every week, every week, several times a week, once a day, several times a day

5b. Personal God (Item 2): There is a God who concerns himself with every human being personally.

Answers: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree

6. Belief in supernatural powers:

6a Good luck charms sometimes do bring good luck.

6b Some fortune tellers really can foresee the future.

6c Some faith healers do have God-given healing powers.

6d A person's star sign at birth or horoscope can affect the course of their future.

Answers: definitely true, probably true, probably false, definitely false (recoded)

7. Gender

8. Age

9. Education (ISCED 2011): primary education, lower secondary, upper secondary, post secondary, short cycle tertiary, bachelor level, master level, doctoral level

10. Subjective estimation of one's own social class: There is a lot of talk about social class these days. What class would you say you belong to?

Answers: lower class, working class, middle class, upper middle class, upper class

11. Income: less than 200 EUR, 200–299 EUR, 300–399 EUR, 400–499 EUR, 500–624 EUR, 625–749 EUR, 750–874 EUR, 875–999 EUR, 1000–1124 EUR, 1125–1249 EUR, 1250–1374 EUR, 1375–1499 EUR, 1500–1749 EUR, 1750–1999 EUR, 2000–2249 EUR, 2250–2499 EUR, 2500–2749 EUR, 2750–2999 EUR, 3000–3999 EUR, 4000–4999 EUR, 5000–7499 EUR, 7500 EUR or more.

12. How would you generally rate the current economic situation in Germany?

Answers: very good, good, partly good/partly bad, bad, very bad

13. What do you think the economic situation in Germany will be like in one year?

Answers: considerably better than today, somewhat better than today, the same, somewhat worse than today, considerably worse than today