This article questions a widely shared assumption that posits the incompatibility of religious politics and democracy. Using evidence from an analytically significant case, Belgium, it explores the political and institutional conditions under which religiously motivated aliberal political actors integrate successfully into democratic institutions. The interaction of three factors is shown to be crucial: a political shift affecting the religious actor negatively, the existence of competitive institutions, and a centralized religious structure. The main theoretical implication is that democratic consolidation can be the contingent outcome of self-interested political strategy rather than the result of the pursuit of normative principles. The article underlines the institutional and political context in which religious movements are embedded (as opposed to their political theologies) and the centrality of agency and strategic calculation. It advocates placing the study of religion and politics in a more broad theoretical perspective and the study of democratization in a wider historical context.

DEMOCRACY AND RELIGIOUS POLITICS
Evidence From Belgium

STATHIS N. KALYVAS
New York University

It is a common belief that religious fundamentalism—the appeal for a return to the literal reading of a holy text and its application to politics and society—is a major threat to democracy. Concern about the expansion

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *Research for this article was funded in part by New York University's Institute for Advanced European Studies. I thank Emmanuel Gérard, Staff Hellemans, Emiel Lamberts, and Boris Libois for their help in Belgium and Jan De Maeyer for providing me with access to KADOC's facilities in Leuven. For their comments on previous versions, I am grateful to Stefano Bartolini, Ivan Ermakoff, Staff Hellemans, Marcus Kreuzer, David Laitin, Gabriella Montinola, Adam Przeworski, Alex Schuessler, Daniel Verdier, and Libby Wood as well as participants in the "Catholic Politics and the Politics of Catholicism" panel of the Tenth International Conference of Europeanists, the New York University Politics Research Colloquium, and the European University Institute's Comparative Politics seminar. The usual caveat applies.*

COMPARATIVE POLITICAL STUDIES, Vol. 31 No. 3, June 1998 292-320

and impact of religiously inspired politics is widespread, and the demise of communism has turned Islamism into the most dangerous enemy of liberal democracy (Sartori, 1991). Religious politics is thought to be structurally inimical to democratic development for two reasons. First, it is highly ideological, hence, intolerant and not amenable to compromise—a crucial aspect of democratic politics: The "injection of religion into political controversies tends to hamper working out the pragmatic accommodations needed by a functioning democracy" (Reichley, 1986, p. 801). Second, fundamentalist movements promote an aliberal and antisecular project that openly defies the very foundations of liberal democracy, not to say modernity altogether.

This article presents empirical evidence to qualify the thesis of the structural incompatibility between religious politics and liberal democracy.[1] It demonstrates that under certain political and institutional conditions, successful religious mobilization in politics is compatible with democratic development. Religious movements entering politics with a theocratic and aliberal project can possibly consolidate democracies. In particular, I provide evidence to support the following two claims: Democratic development is possible in the initial absence of an ideological commitment to democracy by major political actors, and the mechanism of the gradual evolution of aliberal political forces toward democracy can be strategic self-interest rather than normative commitment. The main theoretical implication is that democracy can be the contingent outcome of self-interested political strategy rather than the result of the pursuit of normative principles. This article stresses the need for a sustained focus on the institutional and political context in which religious movements are embedded, as opposed to their political theologies and assorted religious scriptures and traditions; it underlines, as well, the centrality of agency and strategic calculation in the process of democratic consolidation.

I provide empirical evidence from the widely overlooked European experience. Nineteenth-century Europe, a region in which extremely intense political conflict coincided with the building of liberal democratic institutions, experienced the rise of aliberal religious movements and parties that challenged the very foundations of the emerging liberal order (Kalyvas, 1996). Explaining the ways in which these movements were incorporated into liberal regimes carries empirical and theoretical relevance that transcends the European 19th century.

1. In this article, democracy is minimally defined as a regime in which governmental offices are filled as a consequence of contested elections (Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, & Limongi, 1995).

I focus on Belgium, an analytically significant case. Linz (1978) has underlined the need to study "old democracies" because they "were once new, beset by the risks facing all new democracies" (p. 8). Belgium is one of the few democratic regimes that have enjoyed a stable existence for more than a generation. Yet, to reach this point it had to overcome formidable challenges, including acutely polarized politics around religion. Although aliberal Catholic movements were created almost everywhere in Europe, only in Belgium did a Catholic party win an electoral majority and govern without allies.[2] Yet, not only did Belgian democracy survive but it gradually expanded. How was that possible, given that it was for a long time supported only by the Liberals and opposed by almost everyone else? I show that three factors combined to create a dynamic that made possible the democratic evolution of the Catholic movement and the consolidation of the fledging democratic regime in Belgium: a political shift negatively affecting the religious actor, the existence of competitive institutions, and a centralized religious structure.

I begin with introductory remarks about religion and democracy. Then, I provide some background on the Catholic movement and the Belgian case. I unpack the Belgian Catholic movement into its three components—moderate political insiders, radical grassroots outsiders, and a centralized church—and analyze the structure of interaction among these actors. I critically examine a number of arguments that address the democratic evolution of the Catholic movement and I introduce an alternative argument based on the interaction between political and institutional contexts. I show that the consolidation of Belgian democracy was the contingent by-product of the self-interested strategic actions of the Church and the moderate Catholics. I close with a discussion of the interaction between ideology and strategy.

RELIGION AND DEMOCRACY, NORMATIVE COMMITMENT, AND SELF-INTEREST

The relationship between religiously motivated politics and democratic development can take four different forms, depending on the ideological underpinning of religious mobilization and the institutional context in which it unfolds: The agent of religious mobilization can be motivated by democratic (or nondemocratic) principles and values, and this mobilization can develop under an authoritarian or democratic regime. Table 1 maps this variation.

2. During the same period, the Netherlands had a government based on a coalition of Protestant and Catholic parties. However, these parties' denominational differences led to their mutual neutralization with respect to their overarching political project.

Table 1
Religious Mobilization

	Democratic	Nondemocratic
Institutional context democratic	DD	DN
Nondemocratic	ND	NN

Note: D = democratic; N= nondemocratic.

Table 1 illustrates a central problem in the study of religion and politics. Research is usually based on a truncated sample in which religion is politically activated by nondemocratic actors in an authoritarian context and results in authoritarian outcomes (Cell NN). In other words, context and values covary in an authoritarian direction. Yet, the outcome is accounted for by an exclusive reference to the values held by the religious movement, leading to a potentially biased inference. Moreover, the results of such research are generalized (often implicitly) to the hypothetical cases of Cell DN (Cell DD is considered to be empty). There is a reason for this bias: Religious mobilization has seldom been successful, particularly under democracy. Electoral majorities are rare instances in general and religious mobilization, like class mobilization, has rarely resulted in electoral victories (Przeworski, 1991, p. 36). Thus, overwhelming attention is paid to very few cases: In this context, Iran looms gigantic.

Instead, I focus on a case in which ideology and institutional context can be disaggregated. I ask the following question: Can religious movements, even when ideologically hostile to liberal democracy, sustain a liberal regime? If yes, how? My intention is to specify when the logic of political competition within a liberal regime and the constraints imposed by competitive politics on political actors shape political action in an opposite direction from that predicted by ideology. If the politicization of religion and the rise of aliberal religious movements is not inherently destructive of democracy, it is necessary to identify the conditions under which ideologically motivated actors make choices that go against their own principles.

The debate about religion and politics is part of the larger issue of democratization. According to the relevant literature, democratic consolidation[3] requires a commitment to democracy by the main political and social actors: "The absence of serious conflict among politically significant groups

3. Democratic regimes become consolidated when "all politically significant groups regard its key political institutions as the only legitimate framework for political contestation, and adhere to the democratic rules of the game" (Gunther, Dianandouros, Nikiforos, & Puhle, 1995, p. 7).

over the acceptability of the basic framework of political contestation [is] central for regime sustainability and democratic persistence" (Gunther et al., 1995, p. 15). Accordingly, a broad indicator of consolidation is "the absence of a politically significant antisystem party or social movement" (Gunther et al., 1995, p. 13; Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 16). As Przeworski (1991) remarks, "The literature on democracy is full of the language of values and moral commitments" (p. 24). According to this view, democrats make democracies.

It follows that democracies in which significant political forces are antidemocratic remain unconsolidated and their prospects are grim. Demonstrating that democratic development is possible in the initial absence of an ideological commitment to democracy by major political actors lends support to an alternative view of democratization (and democracy), which posits that the compliance of political actors to democratic rules is independent of their ideological preferences and may result from the strategic pursuit of their interests under certain institutional conditions: Democracy is a spontaneous and self-enforced equilibrium (Przeworski, 1991). In other words, democracies make democrats.

Because of their ideological bias, religious movements are an ideal testing ground for determining whether the strategic pursuit of interests is a better predictor of political action than ideology. Furthermore, showing that actors who place an extreme emphasis on doctrine and ideology act strategically on the basis of cost-benefit calculations, even when this means sacrificing their core principles, allows for the specification of the mechanisms through which principles are subverted by pragmatism.

Belgium satisfies the following requirements: It has a religious cleavage coupled with religious mobilization, an ideological preference for an aliberal/nondemocratic regime by the agent of this mobilization, competitive (although not necessarily all-inclusive) political institutions, and democratic consolidation (instead of breakdown) following an electoral victory by a party associated with religious mobilization. By narrowing the empirical focus to a case in which a religiously inspired party had the practical possibility of restricting or destroying a parliamentary regime through its unshared control of the government for a period spanning 30 years, but did not, I isolate the elements that account for the nonauthoritarian evolution of religious politics.

CATHOLICISM, LIBERALISM, AND DEMOCRACY

The ongoing debate on religion and politics has surprisingly overlooked Catholicism. Despite being considered an integral part of the Western tradition, Catholicism has routinely been singled out as hostile to democracy. For

instance, Huntington (1991) has pointed out that "Catholicism was associated with the absence of democracy or with limited or late democratic development" (p. 75). During the second half of the 19th century, the Catholic Church produced an ideological project (best expressed in the 1864 papal encyclical *Quanta Cura* and its annex, the *Syllabus Errorum*) whose opposition to political liberalism, democracy, and human rights was "implacable" (Hehir, 1993, p. 15). The Catholic Church (hereafter referred to as the Church) denounced liberalism; the freedoms of speech, conscience, religion, and press; the doctrine of progress; the separation of state and church; the legal equality of cults; the sovereignty of the people; and the modern conception of civilization. It condemned as a grave error the belief that a regime that did not repress the violators of Catholic religion could be good.

The Church became the agent of sustained religious mobilization by building a Catholic mass movement. A political expression of integral or ultramontane Catholicism, this movement acquired a structure equivalent of the Church's: Hierarchical and stratified, it was based on "the absolute power of bishops over priests and priests over laymen" (Gabbert, 1978, p. 643). Built outside of liberal political institutions, this movement sought their destruction. Like early socialists, the Church thought that liberal democracy was not a viable regime. By creating a distinct Catholic society (or subculture) within secular society, a real country that is hostile and opposed to the legal country, it sought to build a *societas christiana* (Christian society) that was based on restrictions of individual freedom, organicist conceptions of representation, and fusion of state and church. Supreme authority would be wielded by spiritual leaders, and all ideological or religious projects contrary to Catholic dogma would be forbidden (Birnbaum, 1991, p. 580; de la Cueva, 1996, p. 248; Zwart, 1997, pp. 243-245). Although such a project appeared utopian to many, the prospect of an authoritarian regime closely associated with the Church was certainly not unrealistic: witness, among others, Franco's Spain, Salazar's Portugal, Concordat, and, later, Dollfuss's Austria and Vichy France.

However, not only did the Catholic movement not destroy democracy but it ended up consolidating it. As Linz (1978) points out, "Some of the political movements identified with the Catholic Church and inspired by the fulminations against the liberal democratic state of the *Syllabus* were to become the strongest supporters of various democratic political systems in the second half of the twentieth century" (p. 29). This paradox has been identified as well by Berger (1987): "Paradoxically, despite the church's hostility to the state and its attempts to encapsulate Catholics in a world as impermeable as possible to the influences of secular and liberal society, the impact of this subcultural development was in many ways to consolidate and stabilize the

political and social order" (p. 128). Despite its obvious significance, however, this paradox has never being explained.[4]

An immediate explanation of why Catholic movements did not undermine democracy is simply that they were rarely able to run their countries and, thus, apply their program. Under these conditions, they indeed had to recognize "that their theocratic ideals were no longer realistic" (Zwart, 1997, p. 244). However, this explanation does not hold for the case of Belgium, in which a party supported by and identified with a Catholic movement won a landslide victory in the 1884 elections and governed the country alone and without interruption for the following 30 years. The Belgian Catholic government did not reverse the liberal political institutions that it had inherited and even proved quite moderate in the implementation of clerical reforms, often displeasing the Church. This development stands in sharp contrast to the "slow and arduous journey towards political democracy of the institutional Church" (Papini, 1993, p. 49), which officially accepted democracy only in 1944.

BELGIUM: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Belgium was created in 1830, following a revolt against the king of the Netherlands. The new kingdom acquired a liberal constitution, which guaranteed individual freedoms and allowed the Church to develop freely. The compromise between Liberals and pro-Catholic Conservatives, known as unionism, was reflected in the nonpartisan cabinets that governed the country until 1847. Still, this compromise was fragile. It was, moreover, an elite arrangement that excluded the immense nonvoting majority of the Belgian population.

The growing division of the political class led to the emergence of partisan politics. This division was primarily fueled by the Liberals, who first formed a party in 1846, as well as the first partisan Belgian cabinet in 1847. After 1857, they began to challenge the constitutional compromise by introducing policy measures that reduced the power of the Church. Although mild, these measures had a big effect on Catholics who felt that the constitutional pact was violated by the Liberals (Laury, 1979, pp. 51-53). Conservatives, although generally defending the rights of the Church, were not a religious party. When they decided to form a political organization to compete with the Liberals in

4. For instance, it has been argued that the transformation of the Catholic movement was due to "diverse causes and numerous factors," such as the mutations of the Church and the pontificate, general psychological and generational factors, "social mutations," ideological and political pressures from adversaries, and the "will to defeat the liberal supremacy and leave the Catholic ghetto" (Vecchio, 1987, p. 7). Obviously, these arguments beg the question.

1858, they named it *Association Constitutionelle Conservatrice*, a name denoting both their support for the constitution and their conservative (as opposed to openly Catholic) outlook. Although the Liberals grew increasingly anticlerical, the Conservatives kept a moderate stance, thus provoking the ire of the episcopate and the hostility of many Catholics who felt unrepresented (Lamberts, 1984b, p. 52; Simon, 1961b, p. 13). Altogether, the combination of Liberal anticlericalism and Conservative moderation led a growing segment of Catholics to agitate for the formation of a truly Catholic party, which would promote an aliberal constitutional revision as a first step toward a clerical evolution of the regime. Polarization around the issue of religion culminated following the 1878 Liberal victory. Liberals passed an education law that drastically reduced the Church's privileges. The Church responded by mobilizing its flock. The conflict, known as "school war," quickly escalated into a "true ideological civil war" (Witte & Craeybeckx, 1987, p. 54). The Conservative victory in the 1884 elections marked both the mutation of the parliamentary Right into a confessional party based on the mass Catholic movement and the consolidation of the Belgian liberal regime.

Political movements are rarely monolithic, and the Belgian Catholic movement was no exception. To explain its evolution and transformation, it is necessary to focus on its internal dynamics in a way that is sensitive to the political context in which it is nested. Three actors can be distinguished: the Church, expressed by both its national and transnational leadership (the episcopate and the Vatican);[5] the moderates of the parliamentary Conservative Party; and the radicals, controlling the Catholic press and the grassroots associations.

During the late 1870s and early 1880s, a "harsh struggle" (Simon, 1961b, p. 11) took place between moderate conservative parliamentarians and radical Catholics, with the Church acting as the arbiter. The focal issue of this conflict was the aliberal revision of the Belgian constitution. This conflict between "the ultramontanes and the liberal Catholics, anticonstitutionals and constitutionals, [or] intransigent and moderates" (Simon, 1961b, p. 11) was eventually resolved by an intervention of the Church in favor of the moderates prior to the crucial 1884 elections. Radicals were eliminated from the Catholic movement before the Catholic victory at the polls. This intervention accounts for the moderate evolution of the Catholic movement. Understanding, therefore, the trajectory of the Belgian Catholic movement requires a precise answer to the following question: Why did the Church, given its

5. Lay Catholics and low clergy were excluded from the government of the Church. The episcopate maintained the lower clergy in "the strictest obedience" and exercised an authority that was "quasi-dittatoria" (Simon, 1961a, pp. 30-31).

antidemocratic and antiliberal leanings, choose to support the moderates? Fortunately, recent historical research and published archival material allow for a precise answer to this crucial question.

THE ACTORS

The Church

The Church played an active role in the formation of the Belgian state and accepted the 1830 constitution, which preserved its power and influence. Still, it viewed its acceptance of the constitution as a compromise, a modus vivendi, that did not respond to the Catholic ideal (Simon, 1961b, p. 28). As Simon (1961a) points out, "We cannot say that the [bishops] had a constitutional spirit" (p. 29). In the 1860s, as the Vatican became increasingly vocal about its rejection of liberalism, some theologians attempted to cope with the growing contradiction between practical politics and ideological principles. They came up with a distinction between the thesis (i.e., the truly Christian society in which the division between civil and religious spheres did not exist) and the (liberal) hypothesis (i.e., the situation imposed by the circumstances). As long as the Belgian constitution provided a framework within which the Church could freely develop, the hypothesis was accepted. This fragile balance was upset in the 1860s when the Liberals became increasingly anticlerical, challenging the constitutional pact and undermining the Church's support for the constitution. During the 1870s, most bishops adopted at least a moderate version of the ultramontane theses (Lamberts, 1984b, p. 52; Witte & Craeybeckx, 1987, p. 87). By 1878, the episcopate was evenly divided about openly condemning the constitution. However, it permitted the agitation of the radicals against the constitution and the parliamentary Right (Soete, 1986, p. 46).

The Ultramontanes

The Ultramontanes were a small but growing and very influential group composed of deeply faithful lay Catholics, mostly of landed noble or upper bourgeois extraction. They set up close-knit associations whose project, epitomized by the motto *Instaurare omnia in Christo* (Restore everything in Christ), was the "restoration of the social reign of Jesus Christ" (Simon, 1956, p. 108; Vander Vorst-Zeegers, 1965, p. 265).[6] Although relatively few, prob-

6. The most important groups were the Croisés de Saint Pierre (founded in 1871) and the Confrérie de Saint-Michel (founded in 1875). Their chief ideologue was a law professor at the Catholic University of Louvain, Henri Périn (1815-1905). Leaders included the engineer and

ably even a minority among Catholic elites, the Ultramontanes were far from marginal. They enjoyed wide legitimacy within the Catholic world and were taken seriously by their opponents; they were very close to prominent bishops, expressed the aspirations of the lower clergy, controlled almost the totality of the Catholic press, and were building a growing network of popular associations. As a result, their influence was disproportionate to their size. Indeed, the Conservative leader Charles Woeste (1878, p. 166) observed in 1878 that although the radicals were political outsiders, their influence in the country was quickly growing. Likewise, the Liberal leader W. Frère-Orban placed the two groups on equal footing when he remarked in 1879 that "there are two Catholic parties, one favorable and the other hostile to the constitution" (cited in van Zuylen, 1955, p. 1906).

The Ultramontanes' political weight flowed from three sources. The first was their ability to influence public opinion through their newspapers, which dominated the Catholic press.[7] Only one important pro-Catholic newspaper, the *Journal de Bruxelles* (*JdB*), whose influence was limited to the Catholic nobility and upper bourgeoisie of Brussels, supported the parliamentary Right and the constitution; an open war was waged against it by all other Catholic newspapers and many bishops, including the Belgian archbishop Mgr. Dechamps (Vander Vorst-Zeegers, 1965, pp. 295-300, 304). Second, the Ultramontanes had a close, almost intimate, relationship with the Roman Curia during the tenure of Pope Pius IX and were openly supported by half of the Belgian episcopate.[8] In fact, although the bishops were divided about tactics, they were, in terms of ideology, closer to the Ultramontanes than to the moderates. Auguste d'Anethan, a prominent member of the parliamentary Right, complained in a 1878 letter to archbishop Dechamps that "what makes

architect Arthur Verhaegen (1847-1917) and the wealthy Ghent textile industrialist Joseph de Hemptinne (1822-1909). This is an example of their ideas: "Question: Can you cite deviations to the law of God which we are never allowed to tolerate? Response: Yes, such are the freedom of consciousness, of cults, of the press, and others of the same kind, proclaimed by the revolutionaries at the end of the last century" (Hemptinne, 1877, pp. 7-8).

7. The ultramontane press included the *Bien Public*, *Le Catholique*, *Le Courrier de Bruxelles* (representing the ideas of the Confrérie Saint-Michel) and the weekly *La Croix*, all funded by de Hemptinne. According to Lamberts (1984a), these militant newspapers diffused the ultramontane ideas among "all strata of the population" (p. 60). P. de Haullevile, the director of the moderate *JdB* (cited in Vander Vorst- Zeegers, 1965), called the *Bien Public* "a work of absolute religious devotion administered, so to speak, by a confraternity of Catholic writers" (p. 168).

8. Pius IX's support for the radicals was open and unequivocal (Lamberts, 1984b). The same was true for most nuncios. According to Simon (1956), the nuncio, Mgr. Cattani, "was one of those responsible for the fervent, even mystical, thrust of the ultramontanes" (p. 37). As van Zuylen (1955) put it, the Ultramontanes "knew that they were encouraged and supported in the Curia by personalities of the first plan and had all reason to consider themselves representatives of the real opinions of the Holy See" (p. 1723).

the situation grave, is that all [ultramontane] newspapers . . . have at least received public encouragement from the bishops . . . whereas the episcopal hostility against the *Journal de Bruxelles* has been evident and, in any case, there has been an instigation to cancel subscriptions to this only instrument of the Parliamentary Right"[9] (cited in Vander Vorst-Zeegers, 1965, p. 257). Moreover, the lower clergy enthusiastically supported the most radical ultramontane theses (Vander Vorst-Zeegers, 1965, p. 175; Woeste, 1927, p. 204).[10] As Vander Vorst-Zeegers (1965) concludes, the "very high level of harshness" reached by the conflict between the two Catholic camps was due to the fact "that the ultramontanes felt supported by ecclesiastical authority" (p. 273). Finally, the publication of the *Syllabus* fueled the growth of ultramontanism. The official outright rejection of liberalism legitimized the ultramontane movement and made possible the open critique of the Belgian regime. After the *Syllabus*, there could be no doubt: Insofar as ideology was concerned, the Ultramontanes represented official Catholicism.

The Conservatives

The Conservatives kept a moderate stance on issues related to state and church relations. Although opposed to liberalism in principle, they recognized that the circumstances forced them to accept the constitutional regime as the least bad (Vander Vorst-Zeegers, 1965, p. 294). As one of them put it, "For us, the ideal would be a Christian monarchy. . . . We can loyally accept a situation which is quite away from this ideal, but under one condition only, that . . . a God-State is not established against us" (Hauleville, 1876, p. 138). Conservatives were concerned about the defense of the Church's rights but not at the cost of their more immediate political goals. They refused to be exclusively associated with religion and the Church, were opposed to the adoption of a religiously oriented political program, and argued that religious agitation would be harmful to both party and church (Kalyvas, 1996, pp. 58-60; Vander Vorst-Zeegers, 1965, p. 294). Above all, Conservatives rejected the formation of a confessional party (Preneel, 1982). As a prominent Conservative, Adolphe Dechamps, said, "The constitution of a Catholic party is a peril, a misfortune for everyone, and particularly for religion" (cited in Soete, 1986, p. 201). As political insiders, the Conservatives were politically stronger than the Ultramontanes. They had total control over candidate

9. In fact, Dechamps rejected d'Anethan's repeated pleas for a public episcopal approval of the *JdB* (Vander Vorst-Zeegers, 1965, p. 257).

10. According to Woeste (1927), "*maints ecclésiastiques négligeaient l'hypothèse pour la thèse*" (p. 149).

nominations for elections, and they used it to lock the Ultramontanes out of parliamentary politics. This situation was resented by the Ultramontanes, who began to challenge the Conservative political dominance.

THE CONFLICT

During the second half of the 1870s, the Ultramontane attacks against the Conservatives and the constitution reached new heights (van Zuylen, 1955, p. 1713). Following a public petition to the king alluding to a constitutional revision in a Christian direction (1875), the Ultramontanes issued a political program and attacked the Conservative Right, thus launching a public debate about the constitution in Catholic newspapers and reviews. The moderates accused the radicals of seeking "to substitute constitutional politics with theological ones," aspiring "to overthrow all our political organization," and "unfurling a revolutionary flag," 1878). This conflict peaked in 1878, creating a climate of "mistrust, even hatred" among Catholics (Vander Vorst-Zeegers, 1965, pp. 253, 297).

The 1878 elections were won by the Liberals who, exceeding all expectations, initiated their most resolutely anticlerical program. On July 10, 1879, they passed the van Humbeck law, which stipulated that the state would take over primary education. The Church was pushed out, particularly through the abolition of its right to inspect schools, the replacement of clerical by lay personnel, and the reduction of religious instruction in primary schools. This law, dubbed by Catholics as *loi de malheur* (law of misfortune), was followed by a government-initiated break of diplomatic relations with the Vatican (1880), a law on secondary education (1881), and a law making attendance in primary schools compulsory (1883). The impact of the Liberal victory and its aftermath was, thus, momentous. Ultramontanes and moderates braced for what appeared to be the most crucial confrontation within the Catholic camp. The former published a political platform, whereas the latter drafted a memorandum to the Vatican. These documents shared one point: the demand for the direct and unequivocal elimination of the other side. For the Church, this amounted to choosing an exclusive political agent.

The Ultramontanes made their most ambitious public bid for the leadership of political Catholicism just before the 1878 elections. In a pamphlet titled *Catholique et Politique*, they laid out their ideas and drafted a realistic ("possible" as they called it) political program (Verhaegen, 1878b, p. 3). Its main thrust was the denial of the possibility of a separation between religion and politics. A central place was reserved for attacking the parliamentary Right, which was accused of being exceedingly moderate when it came to matters of religion and of lacking not only a real program but also the program

"of the Church itself" (Verhaegen, 1878b, pp. 4, 6, 8): If Conservatives accepted as individuals the authority of the Church in their private life, they ought to do the same as politicians in their political life. The pamphlet proposed the wholesale and immediate substitution of the parliamentary Right by a truly Catholic party "frankly hoisting the catholic flag in both public and private life" (Verhaegen, 1878b, p. 14). Although they promised to initially respect the constitution, this respect was to be both conditional and temporary. Indeed, they flatly rejected the constitution: "We believe, together with the Church and like the Church, that the principles which flow from the Belgian Constitution are false and subversive, that the separation of Church and State is bad, and that the Constitution, in itself, is bad" (Verhaegen, 1878b, p. 15). They pointed out that the constitution was nothing more than a pact, which was unfair to the Church and carried no moral implications. Therefore, they agreed to "tolerate" it so long as the Catholic Church "would permit us to do so," without forgetting that this toleration was not justified by the constitution itself but by the attitude of the Church (Verhaegen, 1878b, pp. 3, 16). Given the right opportunity, they would seek a constitutional revision.

At the same time, the Ultramontanes sent a confidential memorandum to the episcopate making a clear bid for their entry into party politics or, as they put it, for the "Catholic restoration" of the Conservative Party. They stressed the opposition between the parliamentary Right and the Catholic country, which, they argued, grew every day because both sides "march rapidly in opposite directions." "While Catholics follow the papacy," the memorandum claimed, "the Right becomes *liberal catholic or state catholic*" (cited in Simon, 1955, p. 148). They argued that the Catholic cause was condemned irrespective of the electoral outcome: If it won, the Right would quickly become indistinguishable from the Liberals, whereas if it lost, it would be incapable of inspiring the Catholics. The Church ought to "choose truly catholic candidates [to] modify in a substantial, though gradual way, the deplorable parliamentary situation of the Catholic party" (cited in Simon, 1955, p. 153).

The 1878 Liberal victory intensified the ultramontane offensive because "liberalism in power accomplished the demonstration begun by the previous [Conservative] cabinet, of the incompatibility between constitutional freedoms and freedoms for the Church—even its existence," 1878). The defeat of the Right proved the failure of its moderate strategy and provided the opportunity for its overhaul into a "plainly Catholic party" (Simon, 1956, p. 108; Verhaegen, 1878a, p. 7). The *Bien Public* demanded the introduction of the "integral formula of Christian public law" (Vander Vorst-Zeegers, 1965,

p. 253); regional committees of "Catholic interests" were planned, and in June 1878, the ultramontane leader, Périn, announced that the time had finally come to publicly announce the constitution of a Catholic party (Simon, 1956, p. 326).

Conservatives reacted aggressively. They linked their fate to that of the Church: "If the present situation goes on, the parliamentary right will not be able to continue its mandate; it will be increasingly weakened; the liberals will grow in power and audacity and, under their persistent action, the faith of the populations will be singularly compromised" (Woeste, 1927, p. 160). Reacting to the neutrality of the episcopate, they drafted an official party memorandum (August 20, 1878) asking the pope to condemn the ultramontane attacks against the constitution and their party. They argued that the division among Catholics was detrimental to the interests of the Church and that unity had to be reestablished on a pro-constitutional basis. They switched the debate from values to strategy: "What divides us is not a question of doctrine but one of action (*conduite*)." They finally asked the Holy See to halt the ultramontane attacks and bestow advice of "political wisdom, prudence, and moderation" (cited in van Zuylen, 1955, pp. 1719-1720). The reception of this memorandum in the Vatican was hostile, and the instructions of the papal Secretary of State Cardinal Nina to the nuncio (October 1, 1878) were negative. Nina reiterated the condemnation of the principles of the constitution and recommended no church intervention in the inter-Catholic conflict (Simon, 1956, p. 110).

The papal reaction shows that in 1878 it was by no means obvious what side was going to prevail. While Conservative parliamentarians controlled the political game, the Ultramontanes were making substantial inroads in Catholic public opinion by promising to be implacable on issues related to the Church's interests, by proclaiming their ideological orthodoxy and their commitment to Catholic principles, by advertising their close links to the Vatican, and by connecting to the Catholic masses through their network of charitable organizations and newspapers in a way that Conservatives could only dream.[11] The attitude of the bishops throughout the conflict was "hesitant" and dominated by "incertitude" (Simon, 1961b, p. 25), and they appeared to be swinging over to the radical side. As Simon (1956, p. 111) concludes, the liberal hypothesis was very precarious in 1878.

11. In their 1878 memorandum, the Ultramontanes argued that the existing Catholic associations, the Catholic circles, were ready to follow them (Simon, 1955, p. 152). The impressive mobilization of these organizations in the 1884 elections demonstrates the mass potential of radical Catholicism.

THE OUTCOME

The Catholic conflict was resolved by papal intervention on February 22, 1879. In an audience he gave to Belgian journalists, Leo XIII pointed out that although the Belgian constitution consecrated principles that he could not approve of, it had proved good in practice for the Belgian church. Therefore, he asserted, Belgian Catholics should not only abstain from attacking the constitution but should also defend it (van Zuylen, 1955, pp. 1733-1734). This message put an end to the conflict and settled the dispute about the nature of the regime with a clear stand in favor of the liberal institutions; it also spelled the death of the ultramontane movement. Following the papal announcement, the Belgian church openly endorsed the moderates and moved swiftly against the radicals, forcing the ultramontane press to stop its attacks against the constitution and the Conservative party and purging some prominent radical leaders.[12] The Church's decision in favor of the parliamentary Right contributed to the consolidation of the young Belgian democracy. With the help of an unprecedented mass mobilization orchestrated by the Church, the rejuvenated Conservatives (now referred to as the Catholic Party) won the 1884 elections. Although they reversed most of the anticlerical Liberal legislation, they followed a moderate course, refusing to grant the most extremist version of the Church's program. Most important, the Catholic party did not challenge the country's liberal institutions.

Why did the Church abandon the Ultramontanes? Did this decision reflect a shift in its ideological preferences? In the following, I survey a number of arguments that seek to account for the decision of the Church, respectively stressing personalistic or ideological factors, sociostructural variables, the preferences of the electorate, and the effects of the political context. I then introduce and support an alternative explanation that stresses the interaction between political and institutional contexts.

Most historians explain the decision of the Church through a personalistic perspective: The death of the intransigent Pope Pius IX in 1878 and the election of the more pragmatic Leo XIII pushed the Church toward the moderates (Lamberts, 1984b, p. 78; Soete, 1986, pp. 47-48). The papal shift was certainly important: Leo's ascension to the papal throne appears to coincide with the resolution of the intra-Catholic conflict. However, it took

12. Some attacks still took place but were marginal instances. Périn was forced to resign his position at the University of Louvain and retire from public life following a papal condemnation (August 3, 1881). This "sounded the end of ultramontanism" and was "a real and definitive victory for the parliamentary Right" (Vander Vorst-Zeegers, 1965, p. 283). In 1881, the *Revue Générale* published a telling article titled "The End of the Catholic-Liberal Dispute."

an entire year for Leo to condemn the attacks against the Belgian constitution. (He ascended in the papal throne in February 1878 but only pronounced his decision in February 1879.) In the meantime, the Vatican openly supported the Ultramontanes as suggested, among others, by Cardinal Nina's negative reply to the Conservatives' memorandum and the October 1878 congratulatory papal telegram to the ultramontane newspaper, *Bien Public* (Simon, 1955, p. 11; 1956, p. 110).[13] This lag strongly suggests that Leo's decision was more than the product of his personal views. Moreover, and most important, it is not enough to explain the Vatican's stance. For all its centralization, Rome still allowed (or was forced to allow) some degree of autonomy to the national churches. As Simon (1961b) said, "the devotion of the bishops to the pope was real, but as direct inheritors of the apostles they were still persuaded that their episcopal rights allowed, even required a relative originality and a certain independence in the spiritual management of their dioceses" (p. 27). In the past, the Belgian church had supported the Belgian constitution despite the Vatican's dislike of it. Now that the constitutional compromise had been challenged by the Liberals, the Church could have found ways to support the Ultramontanes if it so wanted, in spite of the papal decision.[14] Therefore, it is necessary to explain what led both the Vatican and the Belgian church to support the parliamentary Right in 1879.

Another argument stresses sociostructural variables and implies that there was really no choice for the Church because both capitalism and liberal democracy were securely established during the second half of the 19th century and could not be possibly threatened (Witte & Craeybeckx, 1987,

13. See also Nina's (October 1878) comment on the acceptability of "the free doctrinal discussion of the laws and the eventual modifications that could be brought to these laws" (van Zuylen, 1955, p. 1727). We also know, from his private discussions with the Belgian *chargé d'affaires* during the same period (March to September 1878), that Leo displayed a conciliatory bent (van Zuylen, 1955, pp. 1725-1726). Van Zuylen (1955) correctly refers to "oscillations of the Curia's pendulum" (p. 2080).

14. The Belgian church ignored Vatican directives in a number of instances: In 1879, it pursued a hardline strategy against the Liberal education bill despite a papal directive to the contrary. The Belgian bishop, Mgr. Doutreloux, declared to the nuncio (cited in van Zuylen, 1955), "The Holy-Father cannot order us to do things contrary to our consciousness in order to serve motivations of temporal order" (p. 2079). As the nuncio remarked to Woeste in this respect, "I have obtained nothing from the episcopate, despite my efforts" (Woeste, 1927, p. 168). Likewise, the Liberal leader, Frère-Orban, pointed out to the nuncio (cited in Vander Vorst-Zeegers, 1965), "What value can I attribute . . . to Rome's promises of mediation? Either they are dead words, or the bishops laugh at the Holy See's moderation advice" (p. 221). As van Zuylen (1955) concludes, "The Pope was tired of the resistance of the Bishops. He left them free to act in their way and under their own responsibility" (p. 2080).

p. 88). This argument exaggerates the stability of the regime[15] and wrongly assumes that capitalism and liberalism go hand in hand. However, given social pressure, liberal institutions have often been sacrificed by the liberal bourgeoisie to save capitalism. A credible socialist threat could have led segments of the liberal bourgeoisie to trade political liberalism for the protection of their economic interests.

The existence of real choice for the Church could also be denied by an argument underlining the moderate and centrist character of the Belgian electorate, which alternated its support between Conservatives and Liberals. In addition, the (majoritarian) electoral system would have heavily penalized a split of the Catholic vote into competing moderate and radical factions. Hence, it was rational for the Church to endorse the moderates, and the radicals stood no chance. This argument was often put forth by the Conservatives in their effort to win the endorsement of the Church: The Conservative leader, Charles Woeste (1878), referred to a "thirty year experience [which] has established that in Belgium, majorities are formed and unformed by the shift of an intermediary group, which has no clear [political] coloration and moves sometimes to the right and sometimes to the left" (p. 170). Yet, Woeste's argument was quickly refuted. In 1884, the Conservatives ran the most clerical campaign in their history (this is when they became the official Catholic party) and won. What is more, they remained in power for the following 30 years. Apparently, the floating intermediary group ceased shifting sides and clung to the Conservatives precisely when the latter moved to the right.

In addition, politics in Belgium during this period can hardly be described as moderate. Passions were heated and politics were acutely polarized. Demonstrations, counterdemonstrations, and street battles between Catholics and Liberals were common. Warnings that a civil war was imminent were frequent (M. V. Lynen, cited in Haulleville, 1876, pp. 128, 139). As the Liberal *Revue de Belgique* put it (June 14, 1876; cited in Haulleville, 1876), "The antagonism of our parties is not a political struggle anymore; it is from now on an essentially religious struggle. . . . It is the 16th century which begins anew. . . . We FATALLY march to CIVIL WAR, with no other possible outcome than the proscription of liberalism or the destruction of the church" (p. 133). This was flamboyant rhetoric but nevertheless reflected the prevailing mood.

On a more general level, the argument about the electorate's moderation assumes that voters' preferences are not affected by the political process.

15. In the beginning of the 1880s, Belgium had a per capita gross national product (GNP) of approximately $600 (in 1960 funds); this is well below Germany's GNP in 1919 ($710) or even 1933 ($1,474 in 1985 funds) (Pound, 1990, p. 353; Przeworski, 1996, p. 5).

However, this is not necessarily the case. Because of its powerful influence over its flock and its huge organizational network, the Church had the unique capacity, even in the context of a system of limited franchise and majority vote, to muster if it so chose considerable support for the radicals—by both increasing turnout and shaping the political preferences of its followers.[16] The image of Belgian peasants marching to the polling station on election day behind their priest is a typical illustration of this influence. In fact, available electoral data indicate that the victory of the church-backed Conservatives in 1884 was the result of the mobilization of the Church and its lay associations (Falter, 1986). Simon (1956) underlines the significance of a Catholic endorsement: "The only way to get efficient action from the Right, was to have it recognized by the Holy See as the most authentically Catholic" (p. 74). Clearly, the Church's backing combined with the climate generated by Liberal anticlericalism could have "clericalized" the Conservative electorate even more, turning radical Catholics into a credible power contender. What was needed was time because setting up a new political organization is a slow and arduous process.

Finally, it is possible to point to the impact of the political context: The Liberal victory in 1878 and the shock of the anticlerical reforms led Catholics to close ranks and join forces. Still, this argument begs the question, Why should Catholic unity have taken place under the Conservatives' banner? Moreover, the Liberal victory did not unite the Catholics. Quite the contrary: As the Conservatives pointed out in their memorandum to the Vatican (August 20, 1878), "It was possible to hope that the results of the 11th June [elections] would dissipate the [ultramontane] blindness. Unfortunately the opposite has happened and the trouble grows from day to day to the great profit of our adversaries" (cited in Woeste, 1927, p. 159).

I introduce an alternative argument that stresses the interaction between political and institutional context: The Church picked the moderates because the Liberal victory, by negatively affecting the Church, increased the utility of a future Conservative cabinet. In addition, the institutional context favored political insiders over outsiders, allowing for the possibility of a future Liberal defeat. In turn, because the Conservatives derived their political credibility and their power vis-à-vis the Church and the Ultramontanes from the liberal institutional context, they made their alliance with the Church conditional on the latter's unequivocal acceptance of the constitution. Hence, the consolidation of the democratic regime in Belgium was the contingent by-product of the self-interested strategic considerations of both the Church

16. In Italy, the Church was able to persuade a very substantial proportion of the electorate to abstain from voting until 1913.

and Conservatives.[17] To elaborate, the Church could support either the Ultramontanes or the parliamentary Right. This choice had crucial political consequences. Supporting the Ultramontanes meant challenging the liberal regime. Although the Church did not possess extra-parliamentary means of subverting the regime, backing the radicals undermined the liberal institutions regardless of the electoral outcome. Even if the Ultramontanes did not win, their mere political presence with the endorsement of the Church would undermine the regime's legitimacy and "drastically reduce the confidence of other actors in democratic institutions" (Przeworski, 1991, p. 28). If, on the other hand, they won, the breakdown of the liberal regime would be likely. If the radicals were allowed to govern, they would go ahead, apply their program, and curtail the liberal institutions; whereas if the Liberals decided not to comply with the electoral result and prevented the radicals from assuming power, they would have undermined the very institutions they sought to promote.

Choosing the Ultramontanes and winning was the Church's preferred outcome because its position would be greatly enhanced. Losing, however, would be costly because of the Liberal's retaliation for its disloyal stance. Backing the parliamentary Right and winning was a second best: The regime would remain liberal and its own position would not vary greatly. Losing would be costly but less than in the ultramontane scenario. Prior to the 1878 Liberal victory, the Church avoided having to choose between moderates and radicals. The bishops could afford to be divided over whom to support and allow the intra-Catholic conflict to linger. The refusal of the Conservative government to deliver policies satisfying the Church made the radicals an attractive option, but the Church hesitated to outrightly side with the radicals, given the risks entailed.

The 1878 Liberal victory altered the political landscape. The initial reaction of the Church included timid but eventually futile efforts to reconcile radicals and moderates. The van Humbeck education bill took the Church by surprise. As the nuncio, Mgr. Vannutelli, pointed out (cited in van Zuylen, 1955), the school bill is "far worse than everyone expected it to be" (p. 1909). Faced with big losses, the Church could no longer afford to waver; it decided to pick and fully back an exclusive political agent and made Catholic unity its top priority. The critical importance of the Liberal victory is confirmed by the most authoritative Belgian historian on this issue, A. Simon. Simon (1956) points out that "it was [the Liberal leader] Frère-Orban who indirectly

17. Although it was a contingent by-product of their self-interested strategic considerations, this outcome was foreseeable, whereas the emergence of a confessional party, also a contingent by-product of similar calculations, was not (Kalyvas, 1996).

provided the opportunity for the political and confessional unity of Catholics. The 1879 education bill and the break-up of diplomatic relations [with the Vatican] were *the decisive instance*" (p. 74, italics added). However, although the Liberal victory explains the Church's decision to choose, it tells us nothing about the content of the choice: Why (and how) did the Church pick the moderates?

The Liberal victory altered the payoffs attached to the Church's two options. The reduction of church privileges meant that the Church's postelectoral status quo was worse than the preelectoral one. Once the Church experienced true anticlericalism, it could no longer accuse Conservatives of being closet Liberals. Moreover, the Conservatives, stung by their electoral defeat and the ultramontane threat, offered concessions to the Church in the form of a more proclerical program. Hence, the utility (to the Church) of a future Conservative government increased. Furthermore, the Church needed to reverse the anticlerical reforms quickly. The Liberals' continuing presence in power represented a big (and rising) cost for the Church and made swift action a necessity. Although the Church set up a vast network of Catholic schools, it could not sustain it for a long time without state financial support: The longer Liberals remained in power, the harder it would be for the Church to provide Catholic education. This factor placed a premium on political actors who could credibly promise to quickly deliver a Catholic victory (i.e., political insiders rather than outsiders). Finally, once the Church committed itself to a single, clearly defined political strategy and fully supported its chosen political agent, it raised its probability of success by enforcing Catholic unity and mobilizing the previously undermobilized faithful, hence making the median voter more clerical. This, rather than structural, personalistic, or ideological factors, best accounts for the decision of the Church. According to Simon (1956), "Leo XIII did not see clearer than Pius IX: the facts were clearer" (p. 31).

The Liberal victory that set the Church in motion was nested in a larger institutional context. Institutions were significant in two ways. First, they made a future Conservative victory plausible because a regime in which "parties lose elections" (Przeworski, 1991, p. 10) was in place: A pro-Catholic victory in the next round could realistically be assigned a nonzero probability. As Przeworski (1991) has observed, "If outcomes were either predetermined or completely indeterminate, there would be no reason for groups to organize as participants" (p. 13). Because institutions define the realm of what is possible, they help shape political strategy. Second, the institutional context made a Conservative victory more plausible than an ultramontane one because existing political institutions favor, at least in the short term, political actors integrated in the political system. The Conservatives already had a

political organization in place. The Church's need for a quick reversal of the anticlerical reforms favored political insiders with a long experience and knowledge of the existing political system. Moreover, because of their position within the political system, Conservatives controlled the definition of what was politically possible. As one Conservative wrote to Archbishop Dechamps, "Have therefore, Monseigneur, a little confidence to the politicians who are heading the country's business; they see things from up close . . . and they are, allow me to say, better positioned than the episcopate to know what is politically possible" (cited in Vander Vorst-Zeegers, 1965, p. 164). The Ultramontanes could not supply credible promises to the Church and were at a disadvantage once the Church decided it needed an agent that could produce quick results—a point of which Conservatives did not fail to remind the Church. The radicals would find "not a single man in the Parliament to support them" (d'Anethan to Mgr. Dechamps, cited in Vander Vorst-Zeegers, 1965, p. 178).

The institutional context also had a more indirect, although very significant, effect: It structured the daily behavior of politicians in a way that insidiously subverted their individual ideological preferences. The nuncio, Mgr. Vannutelli, made this point beautifully in a memorandum he sent to the Vatican in 1876 (cited in van Zuylen, 1955).

> [Conservatives], despite their intimate convictions dictated by their faith and their submission to the Holy Father, are often forced in public life to act following opposite principles. This is not the effect of a latent perversion of their consciousness, even less of a will rebellious to the teachings of the Church; it is, rather, a tough necessity of their situation. In fact, by being Ministers, deputies, senators, magistrates, they are forced to act, each in his own sphere, following the principles of the Belgian Constitution and laws. Yet, the Belgian Constitution and the organic laws are based upon the principles of the most narrow liberalism. Thus, it is impossible for the public acts of these functionaries to be presented outside without the mark of liberalism, which is imposed upon them not by their free will as rulers, but really by the necessity to govern following the Constitution. (pp. 1714-1715)

It is now possible to clearly discern the contingency in the process of democratic consolidation. The striking fact is that neither the Church nor the Conservatives had in mind the future of liberal institutions when they engaged in the process described previously. The Church had one overriding concern, its influence in society (i.e., keeping education Catholic and maintaining diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the Belgian state, hence reversing the liberal laws. As Simon (1956) points out, "the Church appeared willing to sacrifice much" (pp. 37-38) to get back the privileges it had lost. Clearly, the Church was not interested in enhancing the regime. "Demanding

fidelity to the constitution" was for Leo XIII "the best *practical*) way to preserve the religious interests" (Simon, 1961b, p. 13; italics added). Likewise, the Conservatives did not defend the liberal constitution because they believed in it—in fact, many did not. Even their own justification for supporting the constitution was made in terms of political strategy rather than ideology. They were concerned about loyalty to the liberal institutions for two practical reasons. First, a loyal stance served their goal of reelection by making their action more credible and efficient. As their leader, Charles Woeste (1927), argued, "If we want to stay a political party, exercising its influence upon the destinies of the country, the attacks against the constitution must cease" (p. 155). Second, such a stance strengthened their position within the Catholic camp (i.e., vis-à-vis the Church and the Ultramontanes) because their power was derived from their position in the Liberals' regime. In short, the Belgian case constitutes a clear instance in which the legitimacy of a democratic regime emerges in a contingent way from strategic choices rather than normative values and principles.

No choice would have been possible in the absence of a centralized religious structure. The Church's ability to enforce unity under the leadership of the moderates was crucial.[18] The radicals were silenced and their press altered its political line; Henri Périn, the chief radical ideologue, was forced out of public life. Only a centralized institution like the Church could have achieved such a feat, which simultaneously subdued the radical Catholics and appeased the Liberals. At the same time, the Church managed to keep the radicals within its ranks and under its control. By adopting a tough stance on the question of education, by pushing the Conservatives toward a more clerical direction, and by providing incentives for the radicals to focus on social organizations, the Church displayed a superior ability of management and made sure that most radicals did not desert the Catholic camp after their defeat.

STRATEGY AND IDEOLOGY

The fact that strategic rather than ideological considerations were at the center of this process is discernible in the way that Conservatives convinced the Church to back them up. Both participants and historians note that in reaching its decision, the Church acted in a pragmatic or practical way. For instance, Simon (1956) reports that Mgr. Vannutelli, initially a radical, "abandoned the field of principles to join that of political opportunity"

18. The Church's enforcement ability was later confirmed when a Flemish popular Catholic movement led by Abbé Daens was repressed in a similar fashion during the 1890s.

(p. 37). This is not to say that ideology and values did not matter. Ideological issues pervaded Belgian politics, and political actors were accordingly highly motivated by values. Indeed, the Liberals and the Church aggressively promoted societal projects that were "clearly opposed" from an ideological point of view (Simon, 1961b, p. 29). Even when the Vatican took a stand on the issue of the Belgian constitution, it did so in a way that remained ambivalent. As Simon (1956, pp. 11-12) points out, Leo's support to the constitution was not an admission of the hypothesis, which was implicitly condemned, but rather a tactical move. The importance of ideological concerns and the permeability of the boundaries between religion and politics is further underlined by the presence of many theological considerations in the political debate. For instance, the *JdB* was accused by the Ultramontanes of sinning because it was published on Sundays. The result of this heavily ideological climate was that parliamentarians often had to consult with bishops about a great number of issues (Simon, 1955, p. 25). In turn, the Belgian episcopate was composed of theologians for whom ideas and principles mattered a lot. These were generally not people with an innate (or cultural) attraction to moderation and pragmatism. According to the nuncio, Mgr. Vannutelli (report to Cardinal Nina, cited in van Zuylen, 1955),

> This resistance [of the Belgian bishops to papal directives for moderation] is not the result, in my opinion, of a clear perception of the truth (clearly the opposite). . . . To begin with, the majority of these Bishops always thinks obligated to follow the opinion of the most fanatic and extreme [people]. If professor A, and journalist B argue that all [public] schools must be condemned, how it is possible that we, the Bishops, appear to be less pure and less zealous? This tendency to follow the opinion which is considered the purest, is even more manifest in the episcopal reunions, because everyone fears to be accused by a colleague of servility vis-à-vis the Government, of court flattery, or of lack of zeal and courage. (p. 2076)

The presence of these ideological and cultural attributes is hardly surprising. What is surprising is that these actors entered cost-benefit calculations and ended up acting in a way that can be called pragmatic, despite such attributes. This is an important point that contradicts arguments that discount the likelihood of democratization in the presence of religiously motivated political actors. A quick survey of the debate that followed the 1878 elections illustrates how the Church made the leap from principles to political opportunity and provides insights into the microprocess through which religiously motivated actors make cost-benefit calculations and end up acting in a pragmatic way.

Interestingly, even the radicals felt obliged to make a strategic argument. Right after the elections, they published a pamphlet titled "To Catholics: Defeated, What We Will Do." This pamphlet, which obtained the imprimatur, the Church's official permission to be printed, was widely reproduced in the Catholic press. The parliamentary Right was accused of having failed to "place the political question into the religious field" (Verhaegen, 1878a, p. 4). The way to go was "to definitively abandon the strategy that just collapsed, forego the policy of material interests, concessions, oratory precautions" and form "a political party, Catholic before everything else" (Verhaegen, 1878a, pp. 7-11). However, the radicals, being political outsiders, could not credibly guarantee the Church a quick reversal of the anticlerical reforms; as a result, they reverted to maximalism. As the ultramontane bishop of Tournai, Mgr. Dumont, put it, "In the interest of religion I prefer [electoral] abstention than the triumph of liberal Catholicism [the parliamentary Right], which I have decided to fight all my life as a graver error than open hostility [to the church]" (letter to Robiano, October 13, 1878; cited in Simon, 1955, p. 161). Obviously, most bishops and the Vatican could not share such a view.

Contrast the radicals' arguments to the those put forth by the Conservatives: What divides Catholics, the latter argued, "is not a question of doctrine but of action" (van Zuylen, 1955, p. 1719). Woeste (1927) pointed out that "no doctrinal issue divides [Catholics]; it is a question of action [*conduite*]" (p. 155), whereas the Conservatives' memorandum to the pope reiterated that "it is not a question of doctrine; in that field there can be no disagreement between Catholics. It is a matter of action, a practical question of application" (cited in Woeste, 1927, p. 159). The transition from the world of ideology to that of action was made possible by the distinction between absolute and relative goals. The Conservatives argued that "by wanting that which we regard as the absolute good, we often jeopardize and lose the relative good," (1877). The implication was clear:

> The only efficient mission at this point is to group and reorganize our forces while illuminating liberalism's flaws; not to spend time raising difficult and purely theoretical questions bound to divide us and abate our electoral action. We must never sacrifice principles to love of popularity; but we need with the same care to avoid useless unpopularity. (Woeste, 1878, p. 171)

The point was made that the "confusion between politics and religion" was only benefiting the Liberals (d'Anethan to Mgr. Dechamps, July 4, 1876; cited in Vander Vorst-Zeegers, 1965, p. 237). Of course, switching the terms of the debate from doctrine to strategy could be accomplished because the Liberal victory had altered the political parameters and the institutional

context created political insiders who could credibly argue that they were able to deliver the goods. The role of these insiders was crucial: They translated, so to speak, the requirements of political expediency, opportunity structures, and cost-benefit calculations to a language that was understandable by the Church.

CONCLUSION

Once it made its mind, the Church backed the parliamentary Right as its exclusive political agent. Hundreds of associations mobilized, and in 1884, the Conservatives won a resounding victory. Making good on their word, they overturned the liberal educational reforms. Yet, this was a bittersweet victory for the Church. Besides sacrificing its bigger goals, it quickly found that the Conservatives resisted many of its demands (such as the Church's monopoly on education) and governed moderately, a fact that provoked church complaints. Conservatives were able to resist the Church's pressure because they had proved that they were the ones who knew how to beat the Liberals.

The victory of the Conservatives reinforced decisively the democratic institutions of Belgium at the modest cost of a slight clerical bias in governmental policies. An important danger for the regime was eliminated, and new political and social groups were integrated into the liberal institutions. The credibility of the Conservatives was cemented, and the perception that moderation and attachment to the constitution was the Church's best strategy acquired hegemonic status. In Simon's (1956) terms, Conservatives "gave reason to the hopes" of those who supported "the freedoms" as a way to increase the influence of the Church (p. 75). A virtuous cycle was initiated, leading to the construction of a tradition in which the liberal constitution became "one of the central symbols of Belgian nationhood" (Conway, 1996, p. 276). When the 1889 papal instructions to the nuncio mentioned the party's division into hardline and moderate factions, they instructed the nuncio "to maintain the balance between these tendencies without forgetting that it is the moderates who made the electoral victory of the Catholics" (cited in Simon, 1961a, p. 171).

In short, moderation (and through it democracy) became self-enforcing. This is the main reason why interwar "Belgian Catholicism manifested little of the long-standing hostility to liberal parliamentarism evident in many other predominantly Catholic countries" (Conway, 1996, p. 271). This became clear in the 1930s when the Belgian church, contrary to the Italian or Austrian churches, opted for democracy and condemned the fascist movement, REX, despite its Catholic roots. By the same token, this process operated as an

evolutionary mechanism that weeded out ideologically motivated actors and reinforced pragmatist ones. The remarkable fact is that this outcome was achieved not as a result of some process of ideological or civic learning but from purely self-interested actions. The consolidation of Belgian democracy was, thus, contingent on the process of political competition. Self-interest ran parallel to the preservation of democratic institutions, and democratic legitimacy was generated endogenously through the political process: Democracy made democrats.

The Belgian case suggests that the presence of a group of politicians integrated into existing institutions and associated with a religious movement reinforces democratic institutions. Their fate is usually linked to the institutions within which they operate. Thus, contrary to conventional wisdom, links between churches/religious movements and parliamentary groups can be conducive to democratic consolidation. The existence of a competitive institutional framework matters a lot, but it has to be reinforced by a particular political context: Paradoxically, the radicalization of the Liberals, by leading to church moderation, proved beneficial to the democratic institutions. Had the Liberals not radicalized when they did, the Church might have remained ambivalent or might have allied with the Ultramontanes, a potentially disastrous prospect for Belgian democracy.

Ideology can be a poor predictor of political action. An exclusive focus on the ideology of the Belgian church would have predicted a totally different course of action from the one actually followed; a similar exclusive focus on the ideology of the Indian or Turkish religious parties can seriously underestimate their capacity to play by the rules of the democratic game. This is why the bias toward ideology in the study of religion and politics can produce extremely misleading results. Values do matter, but they have to be placed in a more broad political and institutional context. This point carries particular relevance for the study of contemporary religious fundamentalism, which is dominated by an overwhelming emphasis on ideas and religious traditions.

In short, democratic consolidation was made possible through the combination of a political shift, which affected the Church negatively; the Church's centralized structure; and the presence of competitive institutions. The implication is that religious mobilization in politics is not necessarily destructive of democracy even when it is permeated by an aliberal and antidemocratic ideology. Interestingly, the situation facing the Catholic Church parallels the predicament of socialist parties. The Church operated within a regime it disliked and under a state controlled by its enemies. This striking analogy is less surprising than the fact that it is negated when it comes to the study of religious politics: Unlike the Left, the main assumption about religious movements has been that they cannot possibly integrate into a liberal demo-

cratic framework. The Belgian case suggests that this assumption should be strongly qualified. Clearly, when placed in a more broad theoretical perspective, the study of religion and politics gains as much as the study of democratization gains when it is placed in a wider historical context.

REFERENCES

Berger, Suzanne. (1987). Religious transformation and the future of politics. In Charles S. Maier (Ed.), *Changing boundaries of the political: Essays on the evolving balance between the state and society, public and private in Europe* (pp. 107-149). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Birnbaum, Pierre. (1991). Catholic identity and universal suffrage: The French experience. *Social Science Journal, 129*, 571-582.

Conway, Martin. (1996). The right in inter-war Belgium. *European History Quarterly, 26*(2), 267-292.

de la Cueva, Julio. (1996). The stick and the candle: Clericals and anticlericals in Northern Spain, 1898-1913. *European History Quarterly, 26*(2), 241-265.

Falter, Rolf. (1986). De Kamerverkiezingen van 10 juni 1884 [The parliamentary elections of 10 June 1884]. In Emiel Lamberts & Jacques Lory (Eds.), *1884: Un tournant politique en Belgique: De Machtswisseling van 1884 in Belgie* [1884: A political shift in Belgium] (pp. 9-43). Bruxelles, Belgium: Publications des Facultés Universitaires Saint-Louis.

Gabbert, Mark A. (1978). The limits of French Catholic liberalism: Mgr Sibour and the question of ecclesiology. *French Historical Studies, 10*, 641-663.

Gunther, Richard, Diamandouros, P. Nikiforos, & Puhle, Hans-Jürgen (Eds.). (1995). *The politics of democratic consolidation: Southern Europe in comparative perspective*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Haulleville, Prosper de. (1876). Vainqueurs que ferons-nous? [Winners, what will we do?]. *Revue Générale, 23*, 125-141.

Hehir, J. Bryan. (1993). Catholicism and democracy: Conflict, change, and collaboration. In John Witte Jr. (Ed.), *Christianity and democracy in global context* (pp. 15-30). Boulder, CO: Westview.

Huntington, Samuel P. (1991). *The third wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Kalyvas, Stathis N. (1996). *The rise of Christian democracy in Europe*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Lamberts, Emiel. (1984a). Het Ultramontanisme in België, 1830-1914 [Ultramontanism in Belgium, 1830-1914]. In Emiel Lamberts (Ed.), *De Kruistocht tegen het Liberalisme: Facetten van het ultramontanisme in België in de 19e eeuw* [The crusade against liberalism: Facets of ultramontanism in Belgium during the 19th century]. (pp. A[AU: PAGES?]). Leuven, Belgium: Universitaire Pers.

Lamberts, Emiel. (1984b). Une offensive de Pie IX er des Ultramontains radicaux contre la législation matrimoniale en Belgique, 1875 [An attack of Pius IX and the radical ultramontanes against the marriage legislation in Belgium, 1875]. *Revue d'Histoire Ecclesiastique, 79*(1), 50-78.

Laury, Jacques. (1979). *Libéralisme et instruction primaire, 1842-1879: Introduction à l'étude de la lutte scolaire en Belgique* [Liberalism and elementary education: Introduction to the study of the school struggle in Belgium]. Louvain, Belgium: Éditions Nauwelaerts.

Linz, Juan J. (1978). *Crisis, breakdown, and reequilibriation.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Linz, Juan J., & Stepan, Alfred. (1996). Toward consolidated democracies. *Journal of Democracy, 7*(2), 14-33.

Papini, Roberto. (1993). Christianity and democracy in Europe: The Christian democratic movement. In John Witte Jr. (Ed.), *Christianity and democracy in global context* (pp. 47-63). Boulder, CO: Westview.

Pound, N.J.G. (1990). *An historical geography of Europe.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Preneel, L. (1982). Mouvements catholiques et expériences des catholiques en Belgique [Catholic movements and experiences of the Catholics in Belgium]. In E. de Jonghe & L. Preneel (Eds.), *Theorie et Language du Mouvement Catholique: Problèmes d'Historiographie* [Theory and discourse of the Catholic movement: Problems of historiography] (pp. 117-137). Leuven, Belgium: Universitaire Pers.

Przeworski, Adam. (1991). *Democracy and the market: Political and economic reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Przeworski, Adam. (1996, August/September). *Why democracies survive in affluent countries?* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco.

Przeworski, Adam, Alvarez, Michael, Cheibub, José Antonio, & Limongi, Fernando. (1995). *Economic and institutional conditions of durability of democracy, 1950-1990.* Revised version of a paper prepared for the Conference on Consolidating the Third World Democracies: Trends and Challenges, Taipei, Taiwan.

Reichley, James A. (1986). Democracy and religion. *Political Science and Politics, 19*(4), 801-806.

Sartori, Giovanni. (1991). Rethinking democracy: Bad policy and bad politics. *International Social Science Journal, 129,* 437-450.

Simon, Alois. (1955). *Catholicisme et Politique: Documents Inédits (1832-1909)* [Catholicism and politics: Unpublished documents (1832-1909)]. Wetteren, Belgium: Scaldis.

Simon, Alois. (1956). *L'hypothèse libérale en Belgique: Documents inédits (1839-1907)* [The liberal hypothesis in Belgium: Unpublished documents (1839-1907)]. Wetteren, Belgium: Scaldis.

Simon, Alois. (1961a). *Instructions aux nonces de Bruxelles (1835-1889)* [Instructions to the nuncios in Belgium (1835-1889)]. Bruxelles, Belgium: Institut Historique Belge de Rome.

Simon, Alois. (1961b). *Réunions des évêques de Belgique, 1868-1883: Procès-Vebaux* [Meetings of the Belgian bishops, 1868-1883: Minutes]. Leuven-Louvain, Belgium: Nauwelaerts.

Soete, Jean-Luc. (1986). Les catholiques et la question du programme, 1878-1884 [The Catholics and the question of the program, 1878-1884]. In Emiel Lamberts & Jacques Lory (Eds.), *1884: Un tournant politique en Belgique: De Machtswisseling van 1884 in Belgie* [1884: A political shift in Belgium] (pp. 45-68). Bruxelles, Belgium: Publications des Facultés Universitaires Saint-Louis.

Vander Vorst-Zeegers, J. (1965). *Le "Journal de Bruxelles" de 1871 à 1884* [The "Journal de Bruxelles" from 1871 to 1884]. Leuven-Louvain, Belgium: Nauwelaerts.

van Zuylen, Pierre. (1955). La Belgique et le Vatican en 1879 [Belgium and the Vatican in 1879]. *Revue Générale Belge, 21,* 1707-1734, 1901-1915, 2065-2081.

Vecchio, Giorgio. (1987). *Alla ricerca del partito: Cultura politica ed esperienze dei cattolici italiani nel primo Novecento* [Searching for the party: Political culture and experiences of the Italian Catholics in the first part of the nineteenth century]. Brescia, Italy: Morcelliana.

Verhaegen, Arthur. (1878a). *Aux Catholiques: Vaincusé que ferons-nous?* [To Catholics: Defeated, what will we do?]. Bruges, Belgium: Imprimerie Classique de Saint-Augustin, Desclée de Brouwer et C^{ie}.

Verhaegen, Arthur. (1878b). *Catholique et Politique* [The Catholic and politics]. Bruges, Belgium: Imprimerie Classique de Saint-Augustin, Desclée de Brouwer et C^{ie}.

Witte, Els, & Craeybeckx, Jan. (1987). *La Belgique politique de 1830 à nos jours: Les tensions d'une démocratie bourgeoise* [Politics in Belgium from 1830 to the present: The strains of a bourgeois democracy]. Brussels, Belgium: Editions Labor.

Woeste, Charles. (1878). La Chute du Ministère Malou [The fall of the Malou ministry]. *Revue Générale, 28*, 157-171.

Woeste, Charles. (1927). *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire contemporaine de la Belgique, Vol. 1* [Memoirs intended to serve for the contemporary history of Belgium]. Bruxelles, Belgium: Librairie Albert Dewit.

Zwart, R. S. (1997). Christian democracy and political order in the Netherlands. In Emiel Lamberts (Ed.), *Christian democracy in the European Union (1945-1995)* (pp. 242-253). Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press.

Stathis N. Kalyvas is assistant professor of politics at New York University. He is the author of The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe *(1996, Cornell University Press). His research focuses on democracy, religious politics, political conflict, and the formation of collective identities.*