

ANTI-CORRUPTION ATTITUDES IN POST-COMMUNIST SLOVAKIA: “HELLFIRE AND DEVIANCE” OR POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION?

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Abstract

The literature on corruption-related attitudes tends to focus on developing countries, test rational-choice theories, overlook religious influences, and neglect post-Communist but developed nations such as Slovakia. Academically, this article aims to test the validity of the “Hellfire and Deviance” and political-socialization theories of attitudes toward bribery by performing multivariate, Logistic regression analysis of the Slovak subsample of the 2022 World Values Survey. In particular, this study intends to find out whether: 1. an increase in belief in the afterlife drives opposition to bribery and 2. more frequent church attendance reduces support for bribery. This article finds that tolerance of bribery decreases with belief in the afterlife. Religious attendance also reduces pro-bribery views, but only among elderly Slovaks who grew up under Communism. Affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church or another Christian denomination seems to dampen enthusiasm for corruption indirectly by boosting church attendance and belief in the hereafter. Overall, these results strongly support the first theory and weakly confirm the second. The findings suggest that religion holds promise as a way to combat the scourge of political corruption in post-Communist, democratic Slovakia.

Keywords: Slovakia, Corruption, Public Opinion, Religion, Political Socialization.

INTRODUCTION

Few will dispute that Slovakia suffers from political corruption, with the murders of journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kušnírová in 2018 being exhibit A (Šoltés and Vörös, 2015; Urbániková and Haniková, 2022; for an expression of popular disgust at the killings and their perpetrators, see the cinematic work of filmmakers Biermann and Čengel-Solčanská, 2020). Although Slovakia is a “consolidated democracy” according to Freedom House (2023), Transparency International (2022) ranks the country in the

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top third of all European Union member states on its measure of corruption. And although corruption is an important problem in itself, its constantly rising level is one of the indicators of the democratic backsliding that has been observed in Europe and around the world over the last few decades (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018; Diamond, 2021).

One possibly related development in the effort to stop public turpitude in Slovakia occurred after the unpopular and allegedly unethical Fico administration lost power in 2020 to a coalition of anti-corruption but generally socially conservative, church-linked² or religion-friendly parties led by Prime Minister Igor Matovič (Csanyi, 2020; Ondruška, 2022; Zvada, 2022).³ This present-day situation suggests it may be worthwhile to see if religion could be useful in the fight against corruption as scholars such as Marquette (2012) have suggested previously. After all, one would hope that parishioners would learn in church that it is wrong to give and receive bribes, for example. The political utility of religion might seem all the more appealing since in 2018 Pew Research ranked Slovakia the 12th most religious European country out of a total of 34 nations (Evans and Baronavski, 2018). Because the Slovak Republic is also relatively religiously diverse (Roman Catholics make up 56 percent, non-religious or “unknown” individuals 30 percent, Lutherans 5, Greek Catholics 4, and Calvinists 2: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 2021), one should be able to analyse the effects of religious affiliation more easily.

Of course, like all European Union countries, Slovakia is experiencing secularization; since Slovak independence, the percentage of residents who belong to one of the 18 officially recognized religious groups has dropped from 84 percent in 2001 to 69 percent in 2021, and the percentage of non-religious citizens has nearly doubled from 13 to 24 over those same years (Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, 2023). At the same time, the transition from the end of Communism to the dominance of western

² Despite the relative recent success of more socially conservative/religion-friendly parties and the inclusion of the Christian Union [KÚ] in the governing coalition in the National Council in 2020, most political groups that have explicitly affiliated with the Roman Catholic church or Christianity have generally performed poorly at the polls. To take the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) as an example, one can see that in 2020 they received only 4.65 percent of the popular vote in the National Council election and none of the seats. The KDH's results were almost identically dismal in 2016 (4.95 percent of vote and no seats). As late as 2012, however, the Christian Democrats had garnered 8.82 percent and 16 legislative representatives, having essentially replicated their success from 2010 (8.52 percent and 15 seats: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 2023).

³ For comparable, corruption-related partisan shifts in Czechia and Slovenia see Klvaňová (2016).

postmodernism has apparently affected the moral values of both Catholic and secular Slovaks. Within the Roman Catholic or Greek Catholic churches, the proportion of representative parishioners who believe bribery is “never defensible” has declined from 59 percent for the Slovak portion of Czechoslovakia in 1990 to 46 percent in independent Slovakia in 1998 through 44 percent in both 2017 and 2022. At the same time, the equivalent fraction of “never-bribery” but non-religious Slovaks began at 47 percent in 1990, dropped slightly to 44 percent in 1998, continued to decline to 35 percent in 2017, and rose modestly by 2022 to 42 percent (Haerpfer, et al., 2023). Thus, though church-going Slovaks seem more sceptical of corruption than secular citizens are, even believing Catholics appear to have lost some of their commitment to a few strict ethical standards over the last three decades of liberal democracy.

What might explain this change in attitudes? The existing literature on the roots of corruption-related public opinion often focusses on developing countries (Simbine, et al., 2011; Lavena, 2013) and employs rational-choice theories such as the principal-agent (Rispel, de Jager and Fonn, 2016) or collective-action models (Marquette, Pavarala and Malik, 2014; Herath, Lindberg and Orjuela, 2019). Relatively few rigorous, quantitative investigations have thoroughly explored the influence of religion on individuals’ views of corruption, and post-Communist, highly industrialized societies such as Slovakia are also under-studied (but see Ivlevs and Hinks, 2018). A handful of social scientists has examined corruption attitudes in Slovakia but has not concentrated on the effect of religious variables (Wallace and Haerpfer, 2000; Anderson, 2006; McGee and Tusan, 2008; Pawelke, 2010; Gallina, 2013).

Major exceptions to most of these generalizations include Shadabi (2013), Sommer, Bloom and Arikan (2013), Valdovinos-Hernandez, Szymanski and Grabowska (2019), and Gokcekus, Ekici (2020). Among these publications, Shadabi (2013; but see La Porta, et al., 1997) finds that neither the proportion of Christians or Muslims in a country nor that state’s regulation of religion has any significant effect on average levels of perceived corruption in that nation. Valdovinos-Hernandez, Szymanski and Grabowska (2019; see also Treisman, 2000) report that the percentage of Roman Catholics in a given state—but not the proportion of adherents of other religions—correlates positively with average perceptions of corruption in that country. And Gokcekus, Ekici (2020) determine that corruption is seen as flourishing in especially religious societies regardless of the religion dominant in a country. These first three investigations mainly analyze the roots of public

perceptions of whether corruption occurs, not whether it is morally justified or excusable. Sommer, Bloom and Arikan (2013), in contrast, conclude that religion does promote more anti-corruption attitudes in democratic states or pro-democratic individuals but not in authoritarian regimes or people. But regardless of which dependent variable they examine, these studies disagree on whether various forms of religious identity or practice influence corruption-related public opinion.

Academically, this article aims to test the validity of these two major theories of attitudes toward bribery by performing regression analysis of a Slovak public-opinion survey collected in 2022. In particular, this study intends to find out whether: 1. an increase in belief in the afterlife drives opposition to bribery and 2. more frequent church attendance reduces support for bribery. In contrast with much previous work on corruption attitudes, this article focusses primarily on the potential effects of religion variables in a developed but post-Communist country, Slovakia, where actual corruption has been especially corrosive to democracy and human rights. By performing OLS and Logistic regression analysis of the Slovak subsample of the 2022 World Values Survey, this article aims to test two social-scientific explanations of why ordinary respondents excuse or condemn bribery, a common form of corruption around the world. After setting out the theories to be tested and the specific hypotheses to be evaluated, this study describes the data to be examined and the statistical methods to be employed. The article then reports on the findings of the quantitative analysis and concludes by discussing the implications of these results for social-scientific theory and for public policy.

1 THEORIES

This article focusses on the validity of two religion-related theories of attitudes toward corruption: “hellfire and deviance” versus political socialization in churches. The psychologically oriented, “hellfire and deviance” explanation holds that fearing retribution in the afterlife will affect one’s willingness to engage in or, presumably, even orally approve of such unethical behavior as political corruption (Hirschi and Stark, 1969; Perrin, 2000). The theory of cognitive dissonance would make a similar prediction (Festinger, 1957). And prominent international religious authorities have clearly condemned bribery and other forms of corruption. According to the Roman Catholic Church, the largest religious group in Slovakia, “among the deformities of the democratic system, political corruption is one of the most

serious because it betrays at one and the same time both moral principles and the norms of social justice” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, paragraph 411). And as far back as 1878, Pope Leo XIII praised earlier Pontiffs for resisting the temptation to “be led by . . . bribes into unworthy compliance” (Leo XIII., 1878, paragraph 7). At least some Catholic laity in Slovakia likewise seem to have adopted Pope Francis’ view that “corruption is . . . blasphemy” (quoted in newspaper blog by lay Roman Catholic author Martinický, 2018; see also blog post by Old Catholic priest Kováč, 2017).

According to the hellfire and deviance explanation, then, respondents who believe in heaven and/or hell will be more anti-corruption in deed and word (e.g., in a survey question on the morality of bribery) because they are afraid of being punished in hell or failing to make it into heaven given their actual misdeeds in this life or even their condoning of other people’s transgressions (cf. King James Bible, 1769/2008). Slovaks who believe that the afterlife is a myth, on the other hand, should according to this theory be more likely to tolerate bribery and other forms of political corruption because these respondents are not worried about eternal retribution.

A second, more sociologically based explanation looks at the attitudinal, or social-contagion effects of interacting with members of a religious group such as clergy and laity. According to Pearson-Merkowitz, Gimpel (2009, p. 175; see also Wald, Owen and Hill, 1988), who summarize the large American literature on political socialization in congregations,

“those who voluntarily assemble for worship services and who observe and listen carefully are likely to receive certain messages about what things they should pay attention to, care about, and act upon—and often these cues are not ignored. . . . This is especially true when clergy address certain issues frequently and when they address issues that are salient to their congregations and to society.”

Starting even before the murders of Ján Kuciak and Martina Kušnírová, the leaders of the Slovak Roman Catholic Church have publicly and repeatedly condemned political corruption in the country (Slovak Bishops, 2002, 2017; Luxmore, 2020). In reaction to the horrific murders of the two young Slovaks, the leaders of the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Greek Catholic, Orthodox, Reformed, Jewish, Baptist, and Methodist faith communities in the spring of 2018 penned a strongly worded, open letter to then-Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini in which they “reject[ed] corruption in any form,” viewing it as “a sin against God and humanity,” and called on “public

representatives and civil society” to “eliminate corruption from Slovak society” (Zvolenský, et al., 2018). And even the very controversial, allegedly extremist Roman Catholic priest Marián Kuffa claims that corrupt Slovak officials “have invalid confessions if they know at the moment of absolution that another bribe awaits them in a few days” (quoted in a newspaper blog by Roman Catholic writer Martinický, 2019).

In the context of contemporary Slovakia, then, the political-socialization explanation suggests that respondents who attend church frequently would, at least *ceteris paribus*, be less likely to tolerate corrupt practices such as bribery. Overall, Slovaks who belong to some religious community—even if their attendance is infrequent—should receive more direct or indirect anti-corruption messages from their religious leaders and co-religionists⁴ and so prove more hostile to political malfeasance. With the fall of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia during the Velvet Revolution, in contrast, atheists and other secular Slovaks are arguably less well-organized than Christians and so less likely consistently to hear pro-transparency cues in their social networks (even assuming that a church-like association for non-believers were equally opposed to political corruption).

2 DATA, METHODS, AND HYPOTHESES

Academically, this article aims to test the validity of these two major theories of attitudes toward bribery by performing regression analysis of a Slovak public-opinion survey collected in 2022. In particular, this study intends to find out whether: 1. an increase in belief in the afterlife drives opposition to bribery and 2. more frequent church attendance reduces support for bribery. Proponents of the hellfire and deviance explanation would hypothesize that respondents who are more likely to believe in heaven, hell, and the afterlife in general should also be less tolerant of bribery. Advocates of the political socialization model, however, would hypothesize that greater integration into a religious community—as measured by religious attendance—will cause believers to condemn bribery.

To evaluate these hypotheses, this article analyses data from the Slovak subsample of the World Values Survey (Haerpfer, et al., 2022), which was conducted from January 20 to February 23 of 2022 using

⁴ According to the Slovak subsample of the 2022 World Values Survey (the dataset analyzed in this article), 85 percent of secular respondents said they never attend religious services, while only 12 percent of Roman Catholics and 16 percent of “other Christians” never went to church.

Computer-Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI) in the Slovak language. The interviewees consisted of 1,200 residents of Slovakia aged 18-90 chosen by multi-stage, random proportional selection. Data were weighted to make them comparable to official 2021 Slovak census statistics for age, sex, education, ethnicity, urbanicity and region (Kosnáč and Podolinská, 2022a), and bivariate Logit was used to estimate the determinants of respondents' tolerance of bribery (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics of the variables).

After a search of data archives for relevant surveys and items, the best question from a publicly available dataset appeared to be one about bribery from the 2022 WVS.⁵ The original item used a 1-10 scale of moral acceptability and reads, "Please tell me about each of the following activities, whether you think that it is always defensible, never defensible, or something in between? . . . Taking a bribe to complete one's work [Prosím, povedzte mi pre každý z nasledujúcich činov, či si myslíte, že môže byť vždy obhájiteľný, nikdy obhájiteľný, alebo niečo medzi tým? . . . Prijať úplatok pri plnení svojej práce]" (Kosnáč and Podolinská, 2022b, p. 15). Unfortunately, this original version of the variable was highly skewed (mean = 2.84; adjusted Fisher-Pearson standardized moment coefficient = 1.097, SE = .071), with 44.5 percent of the valid respondents affirming that bribery is "never defensible [nikdy obhájiteľný]." All efforts to transform the variable mathematically into a more normal, ordinary least-squares-appropriate distribution proved futile. This study therefore opted to convert the ordinal measure into a simple dichotomy of "never defensible" = 0 versus all other categories = 1 and to analyse the data using bivariate Logistic regression.

To operationalize the religious variables, this article used self-reports about whether the respondent believes in life after death, hell and/or heaven (combined into an ordinal measure ranging from believes in none = 1 to believes in all three = 7) and how often she or he attends religious services besides weddings and funerals (ranging from 1 = "never, practically never" to 7 = "more than once a week"). The interviewers also asked about the person's religious affiliation ("Hlásite sa k niektorej náboženstvu alebo náboženskému vyznaniu? Ak áno, ku ktorému?"). Besides the 306 nonreligious respondents (the base category used as comparison and hence not transformed into a dummy variable the way the other religious

⁵ One might desire a more ideal survey that asks Slovak respondents several questions about various forms of corruption, but the 2022 WVS seems to be the only recent, publicly accessible dataset that was conducted in Slovakia and included both a question on the perceived morality of some form of corruption and items on religious practice and belief in the afterlife. Unfortunately, the author lacked the financial resources to fund an entirely new survey on these topics in Slovakia.

groups were), Roman Catholics made up the bulk of the interviewees. The remaining individuals, coded as Other Christian, included 80 Lutherans, 43 Greek Catholics, 16 Calvinists, 1 Eastern Orthodox believer, and 4 “other Protestants” (likely US-style evangelical Protestants). Only 1 respondent identified with an “other religion” and was grouped with the nonreligious interviewees.

Demographic and political items included education level ranging from 1 (no education) to 9 (doctorate), income in deciles, age in years, sex at birth, broad region within Slovakia (Central [Žilina and Banská Bystrica] and Eastern [Prešov and Košice] with the remaining, Western regions the base category), population of hometown in categories from under 2,000 to 100,000 or more, support for the historically dominant but allegedly corrupt (cf. article by Slovak journalist: Širotníková, 2020) political party SMER – sociálna demokracia (DIRECTION: Social Democracy) of former Prime Minister Robert Fico, support for the other existing parties (OĽaNO [Ordinary People and Independent Personalities], Sme rodina [We Are Family], Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie [Christian-Democratic Movement], Hlas [Voice], Sloboda a solidarita [Freedom and Solidarity], Alianca [Alliance], Progresívne Slovensko [Progressive Slovakia], and Republika [Republic]) that had at least 50 valid identifiers in the 2022 dataset (with the base category being supporters of all other, smaller parties), lack of partisan identification, reported political conservatism on a left-to-right scale, and Hungarian ethnicity.

Table 1: *Descriptive statistics*

Variables	Mean or %	Min	Max
Tolerate bribery	54.7%		
Belief in afterlife (BA)	4.1	1	7
Religious attendance (RA)	3.5	1	7
Roman Catholic (RC)	62.5%		
Other Christian (OC)	11.9%		
Education (ED)	4.4	1	9
Income (IN)	5.2	1	10
Age (AG)	48.2	18	90
Female (FM)	51.4%		
Eastern regions (ER)	28.2%		
Central regions (CR)	24.2%		

Urbanicity (UR)	3.4	1	7
Hungarian ethnic (HU)	7.8%		
SMER supporter (SM)	9.9%		
OĽaNO supporter (OL)	5.3%		
Sme rodina supporter (SR)	6.8%		
Kresť-dem supporter (KD)	5.9%		
Hlas supporter (HS)	14.3%		
SASKA supporter (SA)	9.4%		
Alianca supporter (AL)	4.3%		
Progres-SK supporter (PS)	4.4%		
Republika supporter (RP)	4.3%		
Nonpartisan (NP)	24.5%		
Conservatism (CN)	5.7	1	10

Source: Slovak subsample of 2022 World Values Survey

Before proceeding to the regression analysis below, it would be useful to describe the parameters of the dataset (see Table 1). Overall, 54.7 percent of all valid respondents said that accepting a bribe was sometimes defensible. On a scale of 1 to 7, the average level of belief in the afterlife (in general as well as belief in heaven and hell) was 4.1, or a moderate degree of belief. On a similar 1 (never) to 7 (more than once a week) scale of church attendance, the average was also moderate, at 3.5 (once a year or only on special religious holidays). Among valid respondents, 62.5 percent were Roman Catholic, and 11.9 percent belonged to some other Christian denomination. Educational levels ranged from none to doctorate, with a typical interviewee having graduated from high school but not begun university. Income is measured in deciles from 1 to 10, with the mean value obviously being located around the 50th percentile. The youngest respondent was 18 years old, and the oldest respondent was 90, with a mean age of 48.2 years. 51.4 percent of the valid informants were coded as female. 28.2 percent of the interviewees lived in one of the eastern regions (kraje), and 24.2 percent in the central regions. Urbanicity ranged from settlements of under 2,000 to those of more than 100,000, but the average respondent resided in a town of about 7,000 inhabitants. Ethnic Hungarians such as those living along the border with Hungary made up 7.8 percent of the sample. And the plurality of survey participants supported the political party Hlas (14.3 percent), followed by SMER (9.9 percent), SASKA (9.4 percent), Sme Rodina (6.8 percent), Christian Democrats (5.9 percent), OĽaNO (5.3 percent), Progressive Slovakia (4.4

percent), and Alianca or Republika (both 4.3 percent). About a quarter of the sample (24.5 percent) did not express a partisan preference. Finally, the average respondent scored 5.7 (centrist) on a political conservatism scale that ranged from 1 to 10.

3 FINDINGS

The first theory tested is “hellfire and deviance.” According to the first column of regression coefficients in Table 2, respondents who believe in heaven, hell, and the afterlife in general as opposed to none of these concepts are indeed especially likely to condemn bribery ($b = -.091$, $p < .001$, odds ratio = .913). Since this regressor is an attitudinal variable, one may plausibly argue that it is not causally prior to more concrete independent variables such as religious attendance. These data thus confirm this first explanation.

Table 2: *Logit models of pro-bribery attitudes in Slovakia: bivariate analysis with religion variables*

X	B	SE	OR	B	SE	OR	B	SE	OR
BA	-.091 ^x	.023	.913						
RA				-.048	.027	.953			
RC							-.108	.138	.898
OC							-.272	.204	.762
B ₀	.560 ^x	.113	1.750	.358 ⁺	.113	1.431	.287 [*]	.116	1.332
N	1,154			1,163			1,183		
R ²	.018			.004			.002		

Source: Slovak subsample of 2022 World Values Survey. X = independent variable. B = unstandardized Logit coefficient. SE = standard error. OR = odds ratio. B₀ = constant. R² = Nagelkerke R². * $p < .05$. + $p < .01$. x $p < .001$.

As a test of the second, political-socialization theory, this study independently estimated the equation with church attendance in the second regression column of Table 2. Here, the coefficient for this regressor was anti-bribery but just barely failed to reach traditional levels of statistical significance ($b = -.408$, $p = .075$, odds ratio = .953). Another way to evaluate the socialization hypothesis is to look at religious affiliation by itself. But Slovaks who said they belonged to either the Roman Catholic Church ($b = -.108$, $p > .05$, odds ratio = .898) or another Christian denomination ($b = -.272$, $p >$

.05, odds ratio = .762) were no more likely than secular respondents to say that bribery was never defensible, at least before controlling for the other religious regressors and controls.⁶ This second interpretation thus finds very weak support in the data, suggesting that political socialization alone is not directly influencing corruption-related attitudes. At most, socialization in the congregation might directly affect one's views on the afterlife, which could in turn cause a change in one's opinion on bribery.

Table 3: *Logit model of pro-bribery attitudes in Slovakia: religion variables plus controls*

Variables	B	SE	OR
Belief in afterlife (BA)	-.137 ^x	.035	.872
Religious attendance (RA)	.041	.045	1.041
Roman Catholic (RC)	.337	.202	1.401
Other Christian (OC)	.163	.263	1.177
Education (ED)	-.112 ⁺	.039	.894
Income (IN)	-.005	.042	.995
Age (AG)	-.007	.004	.993
Female (FM)	-.270 [*]	.134	.763
Eastern regions (ER)	-.397 [*]	.166	.672
Central regions (CR)	-.509 ⁺	.168	.601
Urbanicity (UR)	-.019	.033	.981
Hungarian ethnic (HU)	.056	.354	1.058
SMER supporter (SM)	-.317	.300	.728
OĽaNO supporter (OL)	-.742 [*]	.336	.476
Sme rodina supporter (SR)	-.182	.327	.834
Kresť-dem supporter (KD)	-.503	.343	.605
Hlas supporter (HS)	-.313	.270	.731
SASKA supporter (SA)	-.666 [*]	.289	.514
Alianca supporter (AL)	-.833	.489	.435
Progres-SK supporter (PS)	-.392	.364	.675
Republika supporter (RP)	-.178	.379	.837
Nonpartisan (NP)	-.292	.256	.747
Conservatism (CN)	.048	.036	1.049

⁶ If one includes all four religious variables in the equation at once, the results for the religion regressors are very close to those reported in Tables 2 and 3.

Constant	1.777 ^x	.455	5.911
N	1,017		
Nagelkerke R²	.079		

Source: Slovak subsample of 2022 World Values Survey. *B* = unstandardized Logit coefficient. *SE* = standard error. *OR* = odds ratio. * $p < .05$. + $p < .01$. ^x $p < .001$.

Finally, the regression estimates in Table 3 control for socio-economic, demographic, and political variables that might directly influence bribery views or indirectly alter them by first influencing any causally significant religion variables (e.g., one's region and gender might affect levels of belief in the afterlife, which in turn would help determine one's opinion on bribery). Even after correcting for these non-religious characteristics, the final regression still yields a statistically significant coefficient for belief in an afterlife ($b = -.137$, $p < .001$, odds ratio = .872). The variables for religious attendance, Roman Catholic, and Other Christian, in contrast, all fail to produce any statistically significant direct effects. Overall, then, this dataset supports the "hellfire and deviance" theory over the political socialization interpretation.

Yet one major caveat is in order. In Table 3, religious attendance by itself does not achieve statistical significance. If one combines it into a multiplicative, interaction term with age, however, the new interaction variable is negatively signed and statistically significant ($b = -.004$, $p < .05$, odds ratio = .996, range = 18 to 602). Bizarrely enough, however, attendance itself becomes statistically significant but positively signed ($b = .253$, $p < .05$, odds ratio = 1.287). The effect of religious attendance, in other words, depends on the age of a particular respondent. Simple algebra reveals that the critical age is about 63, meaning having been born around 1959 for respondents in a 2022 survey. Interviewees older than 63 should be less likely to approve of bribery the more often they attend church. Younger Slovaks, on the other hand, should be conversely and perversely more apt to tolerate bribery the more frequently they go to religious services. A 90-year-old, for example, would have a net coefficient for attendance of $-.107$ (i.e., opposition to bribery increases the more the person attends church), while his or her 18-year-old grandchild would demonstrate a net effect of $.181$ (i.e., tolerance of corruption would increase with more religious practice). In the Slovak political context, this age difference seems to correspond roughly to whether one mainly grew up and was hence politically and religiously socialized during the totalitarian rule of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) from 1948 to 1989 or after the return to democracy

following the Velvet Revolution. Theoretically, then, these more nuanced results indicate that political socialization via church attendance⁷ does help explain some Slovaks' anti-bribery attitudes, but only for today's senior citizens who grew up under Communism, when traditional religious expression was officially disfavored (Doellinger, 2013, pp. 20-25). Slovaks who chose to attend church despite Communist opposition may have developed strong ethical values that remain with them today. Ironically, their children's and grandchildren's generations do not seem to have acquired equally firm moral commitments when growing up in church in free and democratic Slovakia.

Although not the main focus of this article, various background variables did produce statistically significant results. In particular, education appears to boost support for clean government ($b = -.112$, $p < .01$, odds ratio = .894), as does being a woman ($b = -.270$, $p < .05$, odds ratio = .763). Slovaks living in the central ($b = -.509$, $p < .01$, odds ratio = .601) or eastern ($b = -.397$, $p < .05$, odds ratio = .672) parts of the country are *ceteris paribus* more critical of bribery than are those from the urbanized west, including greater Bratislava. This finding contradicts the popular stereotype of Easterners as being more tolerant of organized crime and related public turpitude (for a cinematic example of this stereotype, see Bebjak, 2017). Age, urbanicity, income, ethnicity, and political conservatism had no effect, but identification with the political parties OĽaNO ($b = -.742$, $p < .05$, odds ratio = .476) or SASKA ($b = -.666$, $p < .05$, odds ratio = .514) was associated with greater hostility to bribery. Indeed, the very powerful (close to .5), anti-bribery odds ratios for both of these party variables indicate that they are the most substantively important regressors in the equation. On the other hand, planning to vote for candidates from SMER, Sme Rodina, the Christian Democratic Movement, Hlas, Alianca, Progresívne Slovensko, or Republika as opposed to the comparison category (intending to vote for someone from the remaining, smaller Slovak parties) did not have any effect on bribery attitudes.

Table 4: *OLS model of belief in afterlife: direct effects*

Variables	B	SE
Religious attendance (RA)	.596 ^x	.274

⁷ Parallel interaction terms between age and Roman Catholic and between age and Other Christian did not produce any statistically significant results.

Roman Catholic (RC)	1.328 ^x	.166
Other Christian (OC)	1.544 ^x	.217
Education (ED)	-.057	.030
Age (AG)	.001	.003
Female (FM)	.236 [*]	.114
Eastern regions (ER)	-.289 [*]	.140
Central regions (CR)	.128	.145
Urbanicity (UR)	-.049	.028
Hungarian ethnic (HU)	.702 ^x	.218
Constant	1.325 ^x	.274
N	1,162	
R²	.463	

Source: Slovak subsample of 2022 World Values Survey. B = unstandardized Ordinary Least-Squares coefficient. SE = standard error. * $p < .05$. ^{*} $p < .01$. ^x $p < .001$.

Tables 4 and 5 expand the analysis to include models of the direct determinants of the two major, arguably causally prior religious variables, a respondent's belief in the afterlife and one's religious attendance. If one includes from Table 3 all the plausible potential causes of these now-dependent variables (Levin, Taylor and Chatters, 1994; Argue, Johnson and White, 1999; Rachmatullah, Ha and Park, 2019), the regression in Table 4 suggests that attending church, being Roman Catholic or other Christian, being a woman or ethnic Hungarian, and hailing from the western or central parts of Slovakia all boost one's faith in life after death. Education, urbanicity, and age had no significant effect, however.

Table 5: OLS model of religious attendance: direct effects

Variables	B	SE
Roman Catholic (RC)	2.723 ^x	.120
Other Christian (OC)	2.219 ^x	.178
Education (ED)	.066 [*]	.026
Age (AG)	.022 ^x	.003
Female (FM)	.325 ^x	.098
Eastern regions (ER)	.652 ^x	.120
Central regions (CR)	.096	.126
Urbanicity (UR)	-.067 ⁺	.024

Hungarian ethnic (HU)	-.426*	.189
Constant	.119	.238
N	1,181	
R²	.417	

Source: Slovak subsample of 2022 World Values Survey. B = unstandardized Ordinary Least-Squares coefficient. SE = standard error. * $p < .05$. [†] $p < .01$. ^x $p < .001$.

Table 5 likewise indicates that higher religious attendance, which earlier analysis suggested increases anti-bribery views among Slovaks raised during the Communist era, in turn is directly caused by being Roman Catholic or other Christian, being older or a woman, and living in eastern Slovakia or a rural area. Going against modernization theory, education similarly boosts religious practice in the Slovak Republic. In contrast, belonging to the Hungarian minority tends to depress religiosity. Substantively, the large absolute values of the coefficients for religious identification (over 2.0) reveal that one's level of religious practice is principally determined by one's prior religious commitment to one of the established Christian denominations active in the country. If one was born and raised in the Roman Catholic church and continues to identify with this religious group, one is presumably more likely to attend mass at least sporadically and so register a higher level of religiosity than would a life-long atheist.

To summarize the religion-related regression results in Tables 2-5, one may reasonably conclude that belief in the afterlife directly undermines pro-bribery attitudes in the general Slovak population. This attitudinal variable is in turn directly affected by religious attendance, religious identification, and several control regressors. Similarly, frequent church attendance militates against tolerance of bribery via a direct effect—but only for elderly Slovaks who came of age during the Communist dictatorship—and indirectly for all citizens by helping to determine their degree of faith in the hereafter. The behavioral variable church attendance also seems to be affected by the pro-participation norms one encounters in the Roman Catholic or other Christian communities. Lastly, affiliating as a Roman Catholic or other Christian primarily appears to influence corruption views indirectly by partially causing one's degree of belief in the afterlife and one's religious attendance.

CONCLUSION

Overall, data analysis strongly confirms the “hellfire and deviance” theory and partly supports the political-socialization explanation. The findings

about the anti-corruption effects of religion in democratic, developed Slovakia thus echo results by Sommer, Ben-Nun Bloom, Arikan (2013) about the interplay between regime type and religion, though the observed interaction between religious attendance and age might diverge slightly from their predictions. This article's conclusions definitely conflict, however, with La Porta et al.'s (1997) claims about the pro-corruption influence of "hierarchical" religions such as Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. This study's results suggest that at least in some political circumstances, religion may be a useful tool for fighting corruption in post-Communist, developed countries, not just authoritarian or semi-democratic states in the developing world.

Within Slovakia itself, this analysis indicates that Roman Catholic leaders should continue to speak out about the political cancer of corruption and that they should encourage parish priests to be more vocal about the problem and to link believers' relevant behaviour in this life with the expected reward structure in the hereafter. Unfortunately, at least one sociological study concluded that ordinary parishioners were unlikely to hear these issues addressed in homilies by their own local ministers (Juran and Ondrasek, 2020). Given the regression results for Other Christian, it appears that non-Roman Catholic religious leaders are also preaching against corruption, but more could undoubtedly be done, even if doing so provokes some temporary conflict in one's congregation (see blog post by Old Catholic priest and political activist: Kováč, 2017).

In the scholarly world, it would be ideal for social scientists to conduct on-the-ground, long-interview- or observation-based field work in other developed countries of Central and Eastern Europe to determine the exact mechanism through which religion affects attitudes, if it does in a particular setting, or how religious individuals may nonetheless rationalize continued corrupt actions, if it does not (see: Marquette, 2011; 2013). Any differences between Communist versus democratically socialized respondents would be of particular theoretical and historical interest for the region. Yet such intensive qualitative research would unfortunately demand much more time and funding than is typically available to one faculty member. Teams of investigators from the various countries or even farther afield could nonetheless coordinate their efforts to ensure that this vital and strategically important region of the world is not overlooked in empirical research on religion.

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