

Religion and Immigrants' Satisfaction with Democracy: An Alternative View of the Impact of Religious Affiliation and Attendance on Immigrants' Commitment to the Democratic Regime in Germany

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Abstract

This article engages debates about the role of religion on Western and non-Western immigrants' psychological commitment to the democratic regime in practice in Germany from the angle of a social identity and subjective evaluation perspective. I discuss how migrants' religious belonging and behaviour as two components of their religious identity affect their satisfaction with democratic practice and how the effects are dependent on their ethnic group, generational as well as national group membership. The study uses for empirical analysis data measured in two waves (2005 and 2010) from the German Socio-economic Panel (GSOEP) and employs random effects regression models. The panel models reveal that religion is indeed linked to democracy satisfaction of immigrants, yet in a complex way: while individual religious attendance is generally associated with an increase in democracy satisfaction, belonging to a certain denomination has no independent effect regardless of migrants' ethnic origin. Compared to self-identified Muslims with a Turkish ancestry, non-Turkish Muslims from Western/Eastern European as well as other non-European countries are more satisfied with the democratic regime. Moreover, I find for Turks that compared to foreign-born Muslims, German-born Muslims are less satisfied with democracy. Last but not least, in line with the theory employed, the analysis shows that experiences of discrimination and general well-being are driving mechanisms for immigrants' psychological commitment to democracy. In sum, this study can be understood as a first step in understanding complex relations between different group memberships and migrants' confidence in the democratic regime in practice.